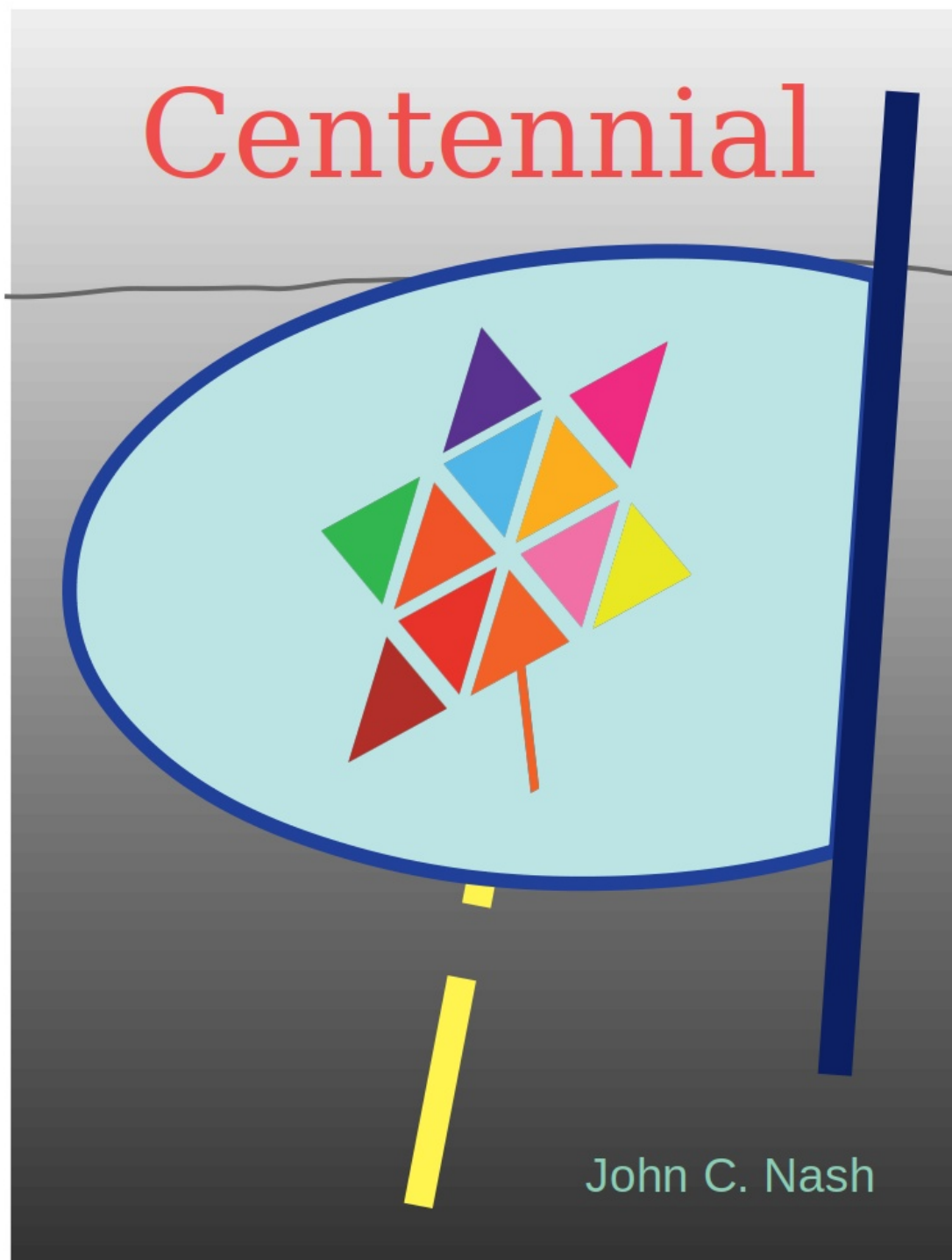


Centennial



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Part 4 of the **Thursday Afternoon** series

J. C. Nash

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Centennial – Part 4 of the Thursday Afternoon Series

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Canada

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Baby-boomers were nearing adulthood. Survivors of World War II and Korea were discovering middle age. The US military-industrial complex was trying to gouge profits out of a futile and morale destroying war in Vietnam.

The people among the family and friends of Martin Tremblay are finding their way through personal and professional challenges as Canada gears up for the Centennial of Confederation. Can we recollect that time of hope and optimism, and see it reflected now, half a century later?

Preamble

Centennial is a work of fiction. However, some of the characters mentioned were or are real. I have tried, within the bounds of the writer's freedom to tell a story, to use historical events, situations, and context. Also there are anecdotes borrowed from other areas of life and mixed in. However, in some cases, I was unable to determine the historical detail of how things were done, or what was feasible and likely. In such cases, I have had to make a best guess, but am open to learning the actual story and context.

I would appreciate hearing of any errors in the historical context, and can be contacted via by email at *nashjc_at_ncf.ca*.

John Nash, Ottawa, 2019

January 1, 1966 – Martin

Saturday

It was New Years morning. The first day of 1966.

My head felt three times its normal size, my nose was plugged up and my throat was dry from breathing through my mouth all night. I'd slept a bit, but in an on-and-off way. Despite the date, the only drink I'd had last night was some rum in a hot lemon and honey. We'd gone to bed at nine.

I looked over to the other side of the bed. The lump there was making snuffling noises. Better not risk waking Michelle, if she was indeed asleep.

We'd been supposed to spend New Year's Eve in Brockville with my parents and my sister and her family. Then December 30, Michelle and I started to come down with this flu or whatever it is. It was full blown by breakfast for the two of us, and by lunch Andrea started sniffing, though she seems not to be quite so bad as Michelle and I. She'd really been looking forward to seeing Penny's daughter Joan who was about the same age – fifteen, going on sixteen.

For some reason the fact that today was the start of the Canada and Quebec pension plans kept popping up in my mind. Not that anyone would be in the office, of course.

I looked at the clock – already 8:15. Hmm. Need to pee. So I eased out of bed and went to the bathroom. I'd left my dressing gown hanging on the hook on the back of the door, so rather than go back to bed, I put on the gown and went downstairs, intending to make another

lemon and honey. But Andrea was ahead of me, about to pour hot water from the kettle into her mug.

“Hi Martin. Happy New Year”, she said.

“Yes. Happy New Year to you too. How’re you feeling.”

“A little sniffly, but not too bad.

Want a hot lemon?”

“I came down to make one. Do you think your Mom would like one too?”

“Is she awake?”

“I’m not sure. I didn’t want to wake her by asking.”

“Yeah. ‘Are you awake?’ is a pretty silly question. If you’re asleep, it could wake you up, and if you’re awake you probably know someone is moving around the room.”

“Let’s risk making one for her. I suspect she’ll be awake soon enough to benefit from it.”

I guess I should explain. Andrea is my step daughter. Michelle and I married last year – guess I’d better not forget the anniversary at the end of the month. January 30. It would be a Sunday this year – good for celebrations, not for quick shopping if I forgot a card or present.

Funny. I’d got used to September 6. September 6, 1947 in Ghent, with a second ceremony in Ottawa on December 20. But Clara had died of breast cancer early in 1964. January 23. Rather close to my new anniversary. Michelle made sure we had a quiet toast to her.

Clara and I only got sixteen years together. It went by quickly, along with Anna’s birthdays. Since Clara was a widow and Anna – then Annje – was three when we married, our anniversaries could raise some eyebrows if folk who didn’t know us well heard the numbers. There was

that girl whose parents had the skating rink in the back yard – oh yes, Katie Smith – who’d said “Annie’s parents are getting married” before thinking through how it might be interpreted by her parents. Oh well, it had all worked out. Except, of course, for Clara getting cancer.

It always gave me an awkward feeling that I now had a wife who I loved just as much. Perhaps worried about losing more. And we both had daughters. Anna – I still wanted to say Annje or Annie – was finishing her fourth year of physics. She was essentially top of her class. Hell, not far from top of her university year. Already married to a graduate student in statistics – Peter – the son of my family physician, Jim Sinclair, who I’d met when he was the MO of the RAF squadron I was in through France and Germany. My father was the logistics guy at the High Commission in London when war broke out in 1939, so we kind of got stuck there. I finished school and started University at Oxford – physics, like Anna. But when Penny’s husband – her first husband, not Joe – was shot down over Holland in ’43, I couldn’t stay in Oxford, so I joined the RAF as a wireless mechanic.

Unlike some of his medical colleagues, Jim Sinclair wasn’t opposed to the British NHS, but the demands it put on his time and energy as well as the wider opportunities for his boys led him to come to Canada, where he already had been in touch with me. So Anna and Peter knew each other from their youth.

Last Autumn they had a big scare when Peter was hit by a drunk driver who jumped onto the side-walk. He’s still far from fully recovered, and it’s been a big strain on their very new marriage. Still, I think things are getting

settled.

Andrea had finished making the hot lemons, and had put two mugs on a small tray.

“Thanks, Andrea. I’ll take them up to Mom.”

Hmm. Should I say Mom or Michelle? Merged families raise a lot of nomenclature issues. Probably best not to take things too seriously.

I carried the tray into the bedroom. Michelle was lying on her side, clearly awake but not striving to get up.

“Morning Michelle. Happy New Year. How’re you feeling?”

“Don’t really want to think about how I’m feeling. Since I’m speaking, I must still be alive.”

“Andrea made us some hot lemon.”

“That may earn her an extra ten bucks for her birthday present,” Michelle said. It struck me that she must be feeling a good deal better than she was saying.

I set the tray down on the bedside table, and Michelle eased herself up onto her two pillows. I passed one mug to her and sat on a chair we had in the room. For a couple of minutes we sipped our lemon drinks.

“Can we keep a low profile today?” Michelle asked.

“It makes no sense to do otherwise if we’re sick. Anna and Peter are with Mom and Dad in Brockville. We can ’phone and say ’Hi’ and suggest they stay over. We’d already decided even before we got sick to have a quiet day today. Pity we missed the party at Barbara and Joanne’s, but we certainly would not have been good guests.”

“Yes. We needed to lie low. Still do, I think.”

“We can give your folks a call later today and see if it

makes sense to go for dinner tomorrow.”

“Yes, Martin. I agree. My folks may be sick too. Haven’t talked to them since Thursday. I’d meant to, then somehow once I was in bed yesterday lunchtime, I just couldn’t seem to get around to it.”

“Do you think we should get up and get dressed? Or back to bed.”

“I think a quiet day around the house. But I’m sure I’ll feel better after a shower and getting dressed.”

I poked my head out the bedroom door and called out “Andrea. Is the bathroom free?”

From downstairs, she called back “I had my shower half an hour ago. Go ahead.”

I went into the bathroom and started the shower, which was in the tub. After I got the water to a nice temperature, I hung my bedclothes on the hook and got in. I was about to reach for the shampoo, when I felt the draught of the door opening, and before I could say anything, Michelle put her head round the curtain and asked “Can I come in too?”

“Of course, at the risk of scandalizing Andrea.” I almost said “your daughter”, then “our daughter” and compromised on “Andrea”. Before I’d finished these thoughts, Michelle slipped in at the far end of the tub, then moved closer, saying, “Oh. I need some of that lovely warm water.”

It’s fortunate Michelle is quite tiny. Claims to be five feet tall, but that would be after some medieval torture on the rack. I’m not a big man, so we fit in the shower together just fine as long as we don’t try to shift around too much. And while I hinted at scandal, our joint show-

ers are more a mix of practicality in washing each others' backs and some playful affection, especially on a day when we're both fighting a cold or flu.

"Do you want your hair washed?" I asked.

"Yes. But not because it needs it. More for the warmth."

"Better slip round me so you get the spray, and I'll help you."

We carefully changed places – the slip and slide of body to body was nice – and we went through the shampoo and rinse sequence.

"If you squeeze into the corner, I can get a bit of the warm spray too," I said, and we managed this. I didn't shampoo, but Michelle was right – the warm spray really did help the stuffy nose heavy head feeling.

"Ready to turn off?" Michelle asked.

"Reluctantly, yes," I replied.

She turned off the valve and we shook off. I opened the curtain and passed her her bath towel, then took mine and we dried off partially before first I, then Michelle stepped out. After drying ourselves, we just combed out our hair. The low winter humidity in the house would be enough to dry our hair in a few minutes, and Michelle kept her hair quite short.

Since Andrea was in the house, we both put on our dressing gowns to return to the bedroom. We found casual, that is, very comfortable, clothes and quickly dressed. It can't have taken us more than a minute or so to do so, and we headed downstairs.

Andrea was in the kitchen.

"There you are. Oh. You've both showered."

She must have noticed that the water only went on once. Michelle answered her more or less directly “Martin had got the water just right, so I stepped in and had him help me wash my hair.”

Whatever Andrea thought, she said “I thought you might like an omelette for breakfast. I read about fruit omelettes, so I’m trying banana and some frozen blueberries. And there’s coffee ready in the pot.”

“Thanks, Andrea. We’re a bit ready for something cheery,” I said.

“I figure I needed it too, having missed all the fun last night.”

Michelle and I sat at the kitchen table and let Andrea cook the omelette, though we did undertake the herculean effort of feeding the toaster. Nobody said very much except small phrases of appreciation for the excellent omelette. It really was different, and less sweet than I would have imagined. When we’d finished, I poured Michelle and I more coffee – Andrea’s cup was still almost full, as she isn’t a regular coffee person.

“Any plans for the day, Andrea?” I asked.

“I thought I’d have a look through my room and see if there’s anything I should put away, give away or throw away.”

“Trying to make us feel guilty!” Michelle commented.

“That may be a bonus,” Andrea said, and stuck out her tongue.

“What about you, Martin,” Michelle asked.

“Probably should do some of that. And think about some goals and plans for 1966.”

“What goals and plans? Better include me.”

“And I’m also part of this household,” Andrea added.

“You both should know by now, even if it’s not quite a year since we made it official, that I don’t make plans without plenty of consultation. After all, we live in a government town, so it’s hard to go to the bathroom without a commission of a few MPs or senators giving approval.”

The ladies both laughed. We must all be feeling a bit better.

“Well, we had said that we would take Andrea to Europe. If we’re going to do that, we need to plan. Charter flights need you to be signed up over 6 months in advance, and regular flights are pretty expensive, even if we are both earning. Which also means we need to put in our request for the appropriate time. It’s unfortunate that unless we make special arrangements, Andrea’s school holidays will mean we’re in high season for travel, but ...” I was getting into too much detail.

“Oh. I’d forgotten. Well, not forgotten, but kind of not kept it in mind. And we do need to plan.” Andrea said.

“Did you want to show Andrea the places you took me?” Michelle asked.

“I’m not sure. In a way, I’d like to go back to some of the places I was in ’44 and ’45, but that might be not so interesting for the rest of you. I’m guessing that we’ll be just the three of us. Anna and Peter can really take care of themselves. They did pretty well last summer on their honeymoon.”

“Yeah. I was a bit jealous,” Andrea said. Michelle and I exchanged a knowing glance. Peter had been observed

to be "dishy" by Michelle, and Andrea was definitely aware of boys, though the jealousy was no doubt mostly about the travel experiences.

"Why don't Andrea and I take a look at the calendar this morning?" Michelle suggested. "Maybe you can make a list of possible places to visit and what we would see there."

"Yes. I can do that. And next week we can look into possible flights, both regular and charter."

We were more or less finished breakfast, and Michelle and Andrea decided that they could discuss the calendar while Andrea was sorting things in her room. I sat in my usual chair in the living room and started a list of some of the places I might want to see again for myself and also show Michelle and Andrea.

Michelle and I had taken our honeymoon in England, and I didn't think that a return so soon was a good use of our time. We'd likely have three weeks, which meant we'd need to be careful with our time, and we also should allow some time for simply enjoying ourselves. So I think I'll leave out England.

So on to the Continent.

France? Well, Clara and I had come to our decision to marry in Paris. I'd also been in Normandy, but in 1944 the B6 airfield near Coulombs was just a flattened farmer's field with runways of SMT or Square Mesh Track – 3 inch squares of wire which was light in weight and did the job of maintaining a roughly flat surface. Except for the dust, of course, which stuck to the grease on the shell casing ejector ports of the 20 mm Hispano Suiza auto-cannon and jammed the guns in less than one

second of firing. The Hawker Typhoon armourers found a quick fix of old magazine pages stuck over the ports with airplane dope. It kept the dust off and the first spent shell casing burst through the paper cover.

Well, it wouldn't be much to see now. Probably just a field. I don't recall anything of the local towns or villages. So not a place I felt a need to return to.

But Paris? Yes, both Michelle and Andrea would want to go there. Would there be some awkwardness with Michelle that it was dear to my memory of Clara? My new wife could have moments of dire insecurity and jealousy, largely unjustified. I'd have to talk to her carefully to find out if there were emotional land-mines in going to Paris. But not going there would probably be difficult.

Belgium? Anna and Peter had been back last year to Ninove, where in 1944 a Teller mine had blown up the truck I was in, and thrown Clara in the ditch and Anna into a bush. Going to Ninove would mainly be to see François and Maria, who had been Clara's neighbours and friends. In fact, their son Max and his wife Julia now lived in what had been Clara's farmhouse, albeit much modified. But if we had a car, it could be a nice stop for lunch or even overnight.

And we'd need to go to Ghent too, to visit Clara's older sister Wil and her husband Joop. And I always had affection for Antwerp and Brussels.

My old squadron, RAF 247 China British, had been a number of places in the Netherlands. We spent several months in Eindhoven, and we'd also been in Helmond, Nijmegen, and Twente and Enschede. They weren't big tourist places. Nor was Uden, where David Stedman,

Penny's first husband, was buried.

If we went to those places, it would likely not be a great experience for Michelle and Andrea. But maybe if we had a rental car and could visit them between places of more general interest, it could add something extra to a more conventional trip. Lots to investigate.

So my list had

Ghent (should I add Bruges?)

Antwerp

Brussels

Ninove

Eindhoven

Helmond

Uden and nearby den Bosch. (I couldn't pronounce the full name.)

Twente / Enschede

Did we want to go anywhere in Germany? Or in the north of Holland? The female contingent would almost certainly want to go to Amsterdam and possibly the Hague, Haarlem and Utrecht. I really didn't know any of those, and really it would be interesting.

January 14, 1966 – Martin

It was a Friday evening. Andrea was with her father for the weekend. We'd both had a busy week at work. Nothing major or exciting, but one of those weeks with lots of administrative detail and annoying but necessary interruptions. We'd been lazy and had beans on toast for dinner, and then took our tea and biscuits and a banana into the living room. I'd put on a record, Beethoven's

Pastorale. Then the telephone rang, so I went to the kitchen and answered it.

“Martin. It’s Penny.”

“Hi sister. How are things?”

My sister Penny lived in Brockville where her husband Joe was a United church minister. A rather good one, to my mind.

“Oh. The usual set of minor disasters and the ongoing ritual of services and Sunday School. Everyone’s doing fine, except for the odd cough and snuffle. With all the kids in school and so many people in church, we have difficulty avoiding the germs. But fine. How about you. Recovered from the flu?”

“Not sure it was the flu, but we were out of action for the New Year festivities. Anna said things went well. Are Mom and Dad OK?”

My parents had bought a duplex where Penny’s son Des, the son she’d had with her first husband David, and his wife Sharon lived downstairs.

“Yes. Doing fine. It’s really working out with Des and Sharon, and I’m kind of relieved they have someone close by in case they need any help, though they seem to be doing well and making connections in the community.”

My father retired from his diplomatic career last year and he and my mother decided to settle in Brockville where there were five grand-kids in Penny and Joe’s household. I wondered if Brockville wouldn’t be too quiet for them, but they seemed to be enjoying the change. Mum – funny I always used the British spelling in my mind – had formed a rather formidable partnership with Sharon, Des’ young wife, who had overcome some pretty

nasty home life and blossomed into the domestic chate-laine of the family. She could cook and sew and garden and knit and keep financial records. From a mousy, defeated girl she'd become a whirlwind of activity and energy. At least that's how it seemed.

"Glad to hear. I'd meant to phone you to catch up, and I really have no excuse."

"That's not what I hear. And in fact the main reason for my call."

"I'm not following what you mean."

"Andrea called Joan last weekend. Apparently you're planning a trip to Europe this summer. So Joan is various shades of green with envy."

"I should probably have told Andrea to keep quiet about things for a bit. But, yes, we're planning a trip. With Anna going there last summer on honeymoon, we thought it would be good for Andrea to see a bit of a different part of the world. I can imagine that it would not be a bad thing for Joan either, but it isn't cheap."

"Precisely. However, Joe and I had been saving – actually for the honeymoon we never had – and Des and Sharon have offered a bit of money in both gift and loan. We were wondering if we covered Joan's costs you might take her along. I realize it's a bit of an imposition. In fact, a lot of imposition. So we've said nothing to Joan. You need to talk to Michelle first."

Penny was ever the minister's wife. She recognized the sensitivities of married life.

"Why don't we hang up and I'll call you back in half an hour?"

"Thanks Martin."

I went back into the living room. Michelle said, “I overheard a good part of that. Is Joan upset that Andrea is getting a trip to Europe?”

“Yes. Penny says that she and Joe, with a contribution from Des and Sharon, and I’d guess Mum and Dad would add a bit, can cover costs if Joan could come with us.”

“Actually, I’d been wondering how we’d manage hotel rooms. They often are set up for just a couple, and occasionally a cot for a child. I’m not sure I’d be comfortable with Andrea having her own room. And if she’s with us ...”

Michelle suddenly looked flustered.

“You’d miss your marital comforts?” I quipped, and Michelle looked relieved. She should know by now she can be direct with me.

“Yes, of course. And it would be crowded. So I’d been wondering how we could handle that, and even wondered about asking Penny if there were a chance Joan could come along.”

“Great minds, etc.?”

“Well, I was worried how the money would be worked out, but it seems they are already thinking in the same direction.”

“Shall I phone back and say that we agree in principle, depending on the details.”

“Yes. Maybe suggest that we’ll send information about what we’re thinking. I can put it together tomorrow and then maybe we can talk next week. But make sure she knows that we’re thinking three weeks starting at the end of June.”

So I called back and Penny said she would very care-

fully say that discussions about possibilities were ongoing, but not make any promises. That seemed reasonable. Michelle would have quite a bit of work to do to get all the information in order. Flight possibilities, hotels, itinerary, car, food, museums. But I know it would be more fun for Michelle and I if we had a room of our own. And probably for Andrea and Joan too.

January 14, 1966 – Michelle

We went to bed quite early. Without any words, Martin extended his arm and I slipped in against him. Somehow I liked the contrast with the winter outdoors, though today had been rather average in temperature and no precipitation.

“Do you think it will work out with Joan?” I asked.

“Well, mainly I wonder if they’ll have enough money. Make sure you put in some figures for everything. There’s not just the flights, but hotels, meals, museums, some trains and buses and trams. And they’d better give her some cash for souvenirs.”

“We’d better make sure also there’s a set of rules about safety. I don’t want the girls doing anything that could get them into danger,” I added.

“Yes. They’re old enough to get into lots of trouble and young enough not to spot the signs of danger.”

“Thanks Martin. We need to present a united message. They’ll try to play us off if they get a chance.”

“Andrea’s fairly level-headed”

“But just sixteen!” I interjected.

“We shouldn’t let the girl’s interests stop us – you particularly – from enjoying some things you’d like.”

“One of the reasons I want us to have our own room.”

“I could enjoy that.”

“You know, Martin, it’s not just for bedroom fun. We need to be able to talk just between ourselves. Especially if the girls want to do something we aren’t really sure about. Before we got together, that was one of the hardest things – not having someone to share the concerns and work out my own feelings.”

“Yes. Sharing the concerns makes them a lot less onerous.”

“Hmm. ‘Onerous’. Not a word I’d choose, but a good one.

But Martin, what do you want from the trip?”

“I think a lot of it is to share remembrances with you, and share places I’ve liked.”

“That makes sense. But anything new?”

“I’ve never been to places like Amsterdam or Rotterdam or the Hague. So maybe go there. I don’t think I want to drive there. Maybe we’ll arrange two rental cars and just for a few days each time. One for Belgium and one for Holland, or rather the Netherlands.”

“Is there a difference?”

“Well, a lot of people use Holland when they are referring to the country of the Netherlands. But Holland is actually just an area on the west coast of the Netherlands. In fact, two of the eleven provinces, and those two are called North Holland and South Holland - rather obvious actually. The big cities of the Netherlands - Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague - are in Holland.

But there's a lot of Dutch people who get shirty if you use Holland for the entire country."

I changed the subject.

"Martin, Do you think there'll be any trouble with getting the girls out of school a few days early?"

"I doubt it. Our trip will have a large educational component, and I think we'll only require a couple of days of the official school year when they are having sports days and so forth.

Michelle, did your admin. folk get back to confirm you have the vacation time?"

"Yes. No problems. Most folk want to be off later in the summer. Choosing late June to mid-July worked out. You told me you got the OK too."

"Yes. Research scientists generally don't have a lot of 'must do' things," Martin said.

"But that could change, couldn't it? You've mumbled some noises about job changes."

"Well, last Fall there was a new unit set up to look into more commercial applications of wireless technology. As you know, I'm technically in the Defence Research Board in the Defence Research Telecommunications Establishment. But a lot of our work is moving out of defence and a good deal of it is not classified any more. Some people want us to become more focussed on things that are generally useful and could help Canadian industry. I think it will go that way.

Anyway, a small new unit was set up last year to look into some of that sort of thing. I had some discreet conversations with the people in the new unit looking at rapidly re-tunable transmitters and receivers. They

posted the job of director, then around the first of October they withdrew it. The rumour-mill says some higher ups didn't think much of the way the first director – the one who was parachuted in from the States – got along with the existing staff.

You may recall I mentioned in November how Hincks at Carleton's Physics Department hinted he might be looking for someone like me. But I don't fancy teaching. Or rather, I don't fancy marking."

"And teaching would keep you tied down during the term times."

"Also I suspect a lot of my work is now closer to Engineering than Physics. Being between subjects can sometimes be tricky. I've heard some workers complain that colleagues treat them as second class citizens for grants and resources because they are either too pure or too applied."

"Oh. I'd never want you too pure," I said, slipping my hand in the front of his pyjamas.

January 21, 1966 – Andrea

Thank God it's Friday. School over for the week. Actually, I don't mind school. But I kind of want to get it over and get on to something else. Maybe University, but I'm not brainy like Anna. Still, I manage OK. Mom and Martin are pretty serious that I should get decent marks. Mom's worse than Martin. In fact, Martin has a nice way of giving me reasons and motivation to do well while telling me he and Mom will support me regardless. And he's good about suggesting that I figure out ways

to work hard but also play and rest. The other day he said “Don’t miss the view as your life train goes along.” I think he saw it in some magazine, but it’s not a bad way to keep from getting too close to homework.

Actually, the idea of the Europe trip is giving me a whole lot of motivation to get good marks. They want to leave a few days before the end of the school year, so I need to show that I’m not going to miss out. Both Mom and Martin have said that I should make sure I planned my efforts, and they’d be there to help me organize so I didn’t get too frazzled.

They’re better than Dad. He and Rachel are kind of OK, and Dad makes ‘proud Father’ noises if I have anything to show. But I don’t think he really understands that it’s important to me to do well, even though I know I’m not a genius. I’m kind of a good solid B, where Anna is clearly A with three pluses. She’s nice to me though, and has pointed out that we each have to find out what we’re good at and what we like. Of course, she can be as nice as Mary Poppins, but the example she’s set with her school work makes it tough for me. I’ll never match her performance, but I’m hoping I’ll put in a good enough show that there’ll be no problems for our summer trip.

One good development is that Joan may be able to come with us. And Mom says the two of us can share a hotel room. We won’t have to cram in with Mom and Martin. I think they both like some time for ..., well, you can guess. Though I’m sort of still working out how they interact. Like on New Year’s Day. They were in the shower together, but I think it was more friendly and helpful than hot and steamy, if you know what I

mean. That's not quite how the movies would play it. Nor how my friends and acquaintances at school would allow. When we were still with Dad, Mom and Dad never went in the bathroom together. And Mom was really awkward about anything to do with bodies.

There's the front door.

"That you, Mom?"

"Yes, and glad to be home. It's not cold, but there's been a sprinkling of snow and I'm always worried the roads will be slippery. Come down and have a cup of tea and we'll plan dinner."

I went down into the kitchen and put on the kettle. Mom must be in the powder room. Yep. There goes the toilet. Here she is now.

"School go OK?"

"Yes, fine. I was just thinking how you and Martin encourage me to do well without piling on a lot of pressure."

"Oh, has your Dad been pushy about marks?"

"No. Not at all. In fact, I don't think he really cares, though he makes nice noises if I show him something or a good report card."

"It would be nice if he were a bit more interested in what you're doing, but things have definitely improved over the last year."

"I hope you won't think this disloyal, Mom, but I think Rachel really makes him toe the line. I think he knows he messed up with you – with us I suppose – and he's a bit afraid it will look bad if it happens again."

"When you put it that way, it doesn't seem disloyal. And I'm glad you're doing OK in school."

“Well, I was also just thinking I had to because of the Europe trip. And also Anna has set a pretty high bar. I’ll never get to her level, but I think I can do OK.”

“Well, Anna has some gifts very few people have. I think you realize that. I’ve been really happy Martin treats each of you as yourselves. He’s sort of the same way with me. One of his special gifts. But don’t flatter him! I don’t want a swelled head.”

We both laughed.

“To change the subject, can you tell me where we stand with the Europe trip?” I asked.

“Well, we’ve reserved our vacation time so we can leave on Friday June 24. That means you and Joan will only need a couple of days off school, and those days are usually not serious work anyway. And we’ll aim to return July 17. However, we may have to juggle a little bit if the flights don’t work. There was the possibility of cheaper charter flights, but you are supposed to be a member of the organization for at least six months in order to qualify. And those flights are sometimes mid-week, which would mess up our leave a bit. We’ll probably look for regular flights, probably more or less the same as Anna and Peter last year from Montreal to Brussels.”

“Do you think Joan will be able to come?”

“I don’t know. I’ve sent Penny a sheet with a trial itinerary and the air fare, hotel prices and what I estimate we’ll have to pay for getting around by car, bus, or train, and some guesses at meals and incidentals. I’ve said I’d like half the costs of a hotel room that the two of you will share, her direct transport fares, and 10 percent of our car costs since we’re going to have that anyway,

though we might get a larger one than we would for just three of us. And I've said she should have money to cover her own meals and incidentals for museums and things like that. Also souvenirs. Martin has suggested she have her own traveller's cheques, and we'll discuss some cash with Penny closer to the time."

"But you think it might be too expensive for them?" I asked.

"Possibly. I know it will be a big disappointment to her, and you'll be a bit let down too, I think."

"Yes. And I'm guessing you and Martin would be more comfortable if Joan and I had a separate room."

"No doubt about it. I find Martin and I talk quite a lot just before we sleep, or just after we wake up. And some of that talk is just between us. Not because it's secret so much, or that it's mushy and romantic. More that it's tentative. We're working out our ideas and feelings as a team. You know I never had that with Bryan."

"How do I say I didn't 'know' but I sort-of did?"

"Let's leave it at that. But, yes, a separate room for you girls would be easier. However, and it's a big however, I will want to have some serious discussions about safety. Everywhere in the world has crooks and bad people, and it's really easy to do something that gets you into a situation you really would like to avoid."

"I guess I know that, but not specifics."

"Specifics can be hard to know in advance. It's more being thoughtful and aware. And also not trusting. People can seem nice, and you should treat them with courtesy. Even take them at face value as long as you don't let them get you into danger."

“Will you let Joan and I do anything on our own?” I ventured.

“You know how protective I am. And you’ll only be sixteen. However, if we talk about what it is in advance and have contingency plans like ‘If this happens, meet here at such and such a time’, then possibly it’ll be OK. And of course I’ll want you and Joan to stick to each other like glue for mutual support and safety. But I can see letting you explore a museum together, for example.”

“So no night clubs?” I teased, but Mom didn’t see that I wasn’t serious.

“Even in Europe you’ll be under-age.”

“Yeah. I realize that. I was just teasing.”

We started to prepare some supper. About half way through, Martin came in, took off his coat and footwear, then came in the kitchen and gave Mom a big hug. Funny how she never seems quite ready for that and it seems to surprise her. In a nice way, of course. Anna and I both like it that there’s this warmth between them. Not that they’re all gooey-gooey. In fact, they can get into some pretty hot arguments, but not shouting and insulting. And they seem to work things out.

In fact, last week, they had quite a back and forth about the itinerary for the trip. I’ll have to look at the map. But it wasn’t a getting mad kind of argument. Just a lots of enthusiasm one.

“Will supper be long?” Martin asked.

“About 20 minutes,” I answered. It’s funny, but I’ve more or less taken over the cooking. I don’t do it all by a long shot, but Mom seems quite happy when I make suggestions for meals. Sometimes I think I’d like to be

a chef. Maybe have my own little café or restaurant. Hmm. Have to give that some thought. I do like cooking, though. Just last weekend at Dad and Rachel's, there was some sort of fuss with Ralph and Stephen and Rachel forgot to put the oven on for the roast pork. So there was a bit of shouting between Dad and Rachel, with some side-swipes at the boys. Before it got out of hand, I mentioned that I'd been looking at how the Chinese stir fry things, and if we cut up the meat I could cook it that way. I even found they had some soya sauce, and I've no idea why. Anyway, it worked out.

Martin went and washed up, then went in the living room to read the paper. Mom took him a beer, then came back to lay the table. We'd eat in the kitchen with just the three of us.

* * *

Just as we finished dessert – an apple pie – the phone rang. Martin got up and answered it. It was Penny, and she had news that if all the arrangements worked out as expected, Joan could come with us. I had to contain my excitement. If I got too bouncy, Mom would start to get awkward.

March 9, 1966 – Michelle

Oh. The alarm clock. I'd set it 15 minutes ahead of usual so I can make a special breakfast for Andrea. Sixteen! I was not quite 21 when I had her. Surely I couldn't have been that young.

I quickly turned off the alarm. Martin stirred, but he didn't wake. He told me once he slept through an artillery attack by some British naval ships in Normandy that were landing shells just a few hundred yards away. Martin also said that one time the Rodney or Nelson had dropped some of their sixteen inch shells short around the trenches where the RAF erks were sheltering. He didn't think he'd be alive the following morning. I wondered how he knew which ships were firing, and he said "They were pretty odd ships. All the big guns were in the front in three triple turrets. They called them A, B and X. But X couldn't fire back or forward, only sideways. B was higher than A or X so fired over them. They call this super-firing. Anyway, we could see the ship with binoculars. It was really funny-looking. Actually once they took out some Tiger tanks with those big sixteen-inch shells."

Well, thinking about battleships when I should be getting breakfast was definitely not a bright idea, so I quickly showered and went downstairs and started making some French toast. Also put out an envelope with a card and a cheque. 'Spending money for Europe – to be used only for travellers' cheques.' Even had that written as a message in the card, along with 'Other presents at the party'. With Andrea turning sixteen today, and Joan on April 21, we'd decided on a joint party on Easter Saturday when the Baker clan could come up. That was April 9, a month from now.

Once we had decided on the European trip, we'd applied for passports for both Andrea and Joan. That was in January and the passports had arrived and been put

in the bank safety deposit box. One less item to worry about. We hadn't managed to find a suitable charter – indeed we were a bit late – largely because we wanted to fly on Friday night. It cost us a bit extra, but we could use our full vacation time. We decided to fly to Brussels as Anna and Peter had, and travel on the ground from there. As yet we were still working out an itinerary, but it was coming together. My sister Nicole, who was Martin's secretary and knew the government travel system, had some connections that helped. I don't think she'll be his secretary much longer, however, as she'd told me she and Stephane were hoping to start a family this year. Nicole was thirteen years junior to me, the baby of the family. But thanks to her I met Martin. Hooray for sisters.

"Is the birthday girl up yet?" Martin asked as he came into the kitchen.

"I don't know. Can you go and check? I'm making French toast for her, and it would be sad if she had to run off to school without enjoying it."

"I'm here, I'm here," Andrea said, bouncing into the kitchen. "Thanks Mom. I love French toast. Oh, a birthday card and a cheque for \$100. Wow! Thanks to both of you."

"Read the rules for the cheque, daughter. It's reserved for travellers' cheques," I cautioned.

"That's OK. It's what I'd use it for anyway. Martin, will you come with me to the bank to get the travellers' cheques. I've never done it before."

"Sure. I was going to offer anyway. You want to make sure to get the counterfoil and have all of them pre-signed

properly with how you will endorse them. And keep the counterfoil separate from the cheques in case they are lost or stolen.”

I wonder why she didn’t ask me. It’s not that I’m annoyed. In fact, it’s a good sign that she involves Martin in her life. Probably she realizes he’s had more experience of travel than I. In fact, our honeymoon to England was my first time outside of North America, and I’ve only been a couple of times to the US.

I set out the French toast and coffee, with a glass of milk for Andrea. Hmm. Wonder when she’ll decide she’s too old for that. My family tucked in, myself included. Even if I was the cook, I must say I got the French toast just right. With a bit of maple syrup, it really hit the spot. In fact it was gone in about five minutes, and we all got up and prepared for our different destinations. Martin would drive me to Booth Street, then head on out along Carling to the lab. I generally walk home, though it is a fair hike. Else I take the bus, though it means a transfer on Bank Street to a generally standing room only one, or sometimes I’ll phone him that he should pick me up as he heads home, though that means I’ve spent extra time at work. Still, when the weather is bad, it’s nice to have the car. I could drive, but parking is getting tighter as government expands.

* * *

Later that day I did walk home, as it was not too cold. Hovering around freezing, but dry. The walk gave me time to think. Should I be looking to advance in my

career, whatever that was. I liked the work I was doing with maps. And I liked the people I worked with.

Generally government jobs were considered "safe", but that meant income. You rarely got fired or laid off, but you could find your unit closed down and everyone chasing transfers. Or some busybody could reclassify your work, discovering in the process that your job should be a level 2 instead of the level 3 in your category. Then you'd be "red circled", meaning you didn't get demoted, but if you left the position would be downgraded. And there were some conditions on advancement, so you pretty well had to seek a better job.

It just felt tiring when the present situation was so comfortable. Sure, more money would be nice, but we weren't poor. But my training didn't quite match the work I was doing, and I really should think of the future when Andrea would leave home.

That thought had me stop in my tracks. A man walking a few paces back had to dodge me. But she would leave, just as Anna had. It wasn't wrong or bad or inappropriate, just how life worked.

And I'd better start to at least give those things, and my so-called career, some thought. Maybe do like Martin and make some lists, even if they were thrown away right away.

March 11, 1966 – Andrea

Friday evening. Anna and Peter had invited me to have dinner with them and go to a movie. Sort of a treat for my birthday. They asked what movie I'd like. Though I

wasn't sure I'd like it, I chose the "Sound of Music", and it turned out that there was a dinner and movie deal at the Nelson and the restaurant next door.

"So. You're sixteen. Almost grown up, but not quite, which is a big frustration," Peter said after we'd ordered our food.

"Yes," I replied. "I'm thinking a lot about what I'd like to do. Also hoping that the trip this summer will give me a bit of a wider viewpoint."

"Good for you, Andrea," Anna chimed in. "Have you yet any ideas about what you might like as a career?"

"Well Mom and Martin, and occasionally my Dad and Rachel, talk about university and studies. I guess that's important, but I'm not sure yet if it's really me. I have to work hard for marks, so maybe I should be looking at something that isn't academic."

Anna said, "The main thing with marks is to have good enough ones to have a choice. Even some fields that aren't particularly intellectual need qualifications that require courses in university or a technical college like OVC."

The Ontario Vocational Centre Ottawa was established just last year. The provincial government had initiated Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology like the community colleges in the US. But I didn't really know what subjects they might offer.

"Leaving aside what you need to study, what sort of thing do you think you'd like to do?" Peter asked.

"The things I really like are making stuff and cooking. But that sounds like being a housewife, and I sort of want to be able to do it as a job."

“Like running a restaurant?” Peter said.

“Or writing a column for a magazine?” Anna chimed in.

“I guess so. Really, I’ve not thought too much about it yet. But when Anna talked about the party where you two met up at the end of 1964, she talked of all the nice things Peter’s Mom cooked, and I kind of wanted to find out about the recipes. But turning that into a career ... I just don’t know.”

“At least you’ve some ideas,” Peter said. “And I think you already talked to my mother about treacle tart, and she has loads of recipes. She loves talking about food and cooking. When I see her this weekend, I’ll mention this conversation and say you’ll be in touch.”

“Really! That’d be great. And even if I don’t turn it into a career, I’ll learn to make some neat stuff.”

“To change the subject, are you excited about Europe?” Anna asked.

“Excited is an understatement. I guess you guys had a good time there last summer, and Joan and I want to see it all.”

“Yeah. We had a nice time. But sometimes you can try too hard to, in quotes, ‘see things’ and miss out on simple pleasures,” Anna said.

“Like what?” I asked.

“Oh, just people in a street, or enjoying a *wafel* bought from a vendor. Nothing monumental, though there’s lots of monuments. But I think some of the monuments get too much attention.”

Peter added “And sometimes it’s not all fun. Anna and I got separated in Antwerp and it kind of shook

both of us up a bit. We hadn't planned what to do if we found ourselves, you know, sort of lost or separated. And I had the train tickets, but didn't have the address of where we were staying etc. After that we made sure we agreed what we'd do if we got separated, and made sure we each had our own tickets and the meeting places and fall-back, because it wouldn't be difficult to miss the first rendezvous if you got lost in the winding medieval streets of those old places."

"I'll make sure I talk to Mom and Joan about that. But knowing Martin, I'll guess he'll already be thinking about it."

"Wow. You're getting to know how Dad is!" Anna said admiringly.

April 9, 1966 – Martin

Michelle and I got to bed rather early, as it had been a tiring day, though a rather happy one. Sixteenth birthday parties for both Andrea and Joan. Andrea had asked if she could invite her step-brothers Ralph and Stephen. When she did so, it was clear she was nervous about upsetting her mother, but Michelle didn't show any sign of being ruffled. Later she'd told me that her main concern was that Bryan would be present on the excuse of bringing them. However, she needn't have worried, as they came and went by bus. It seems that during the time Rachel was a single parent, they got used to managing their own transport. In many ways, it saves a lot of effort for parents. But perhaps one needs to be aware of dangers for girls, especially if they are alone.

As Michelle snuggled in against me, she said “The girls liked the travel purses we gave them.” As a prelude to our own honeymoon, I’d given Michelle such a purse. Relatively small, with a shoulder strap long enough to go across the body for security, plus belt loops as well. It had good closures and internal compartments for money, passport, spectacles, and a bit more. Compact but sufficient. It had worked very well, and we got similar purses, had a cobbler add the belt loops, and also put on a leather A on one and a J on the other to make them unique.

I’d noticed Andrea had a notebook she used to write down recipes and ideas about food and cooking. It was a form of diary I suppose, but not the kind where you record daily events. I’d made sure that I had the size of that notebook by folding a piece of paper to its dimensions one night. The notebook would fit comfortably in the new purse, and there were slots for pens and pencils too. Since I did not know the size of any camera Joan might bring, the girls’ purses were a bit bigger than the one I’d given Michelle, since she uses an Instamatic which is pretty small, as is my Pax M4. Well, the purses won’t take a single lens reflex like a Pentax S-series.

“Let’s hope they work as well for the girls as for you.”

Despite the birthday party, we had a couple of hours discussion of trip details. Joe Baker gave us a letter from him and Penny to say Joan was permitted to travel with us and that we were *in loco parentis*. He said “Joan. You remember that. Their word is law, though I know you are pretty sensible, so I’m fairly certain there’ll be no problems.” Quietly, he’d mentioned that he thought

that the letter might be important for border officials who might be suspicious of teenage girls travelling with a couple of a different name. It may be sensible to get a similar letter from Bryan. I read somewhere about a case where one parent of a divorced couple tried to get the children out of the country to one where there was no extradition treaty and different parental laws. We're not going to be doing anything nefarious, but no need to have any troubles with authorities.

"Do you think the party went well?" I asked. It had been quite noisy, but in a celebratory way. A couple of times I noticed Michelle looking a little less joyous than she might.

"Oh, the party was good. Everyone seemed to have a good time and liked the buffet – I feel a bit embarrassed that Andrea did so much of the work for that."

"But? ..."

"Oh, I don't know. Just that she's almost grown up, and it makes me feel"

"Old?"

For this I got an elbow in the ribs.

"No! ... Well, sort of. Middle aged I guess."

"I'll be 42 this summer, so I'm middle aged. You're still a spring chicken of 37."

We'd celebrated Michelle's birthday – which was March 27 – by flying to New York City on the night of Friday March 25. I'd managed to pre-arrange tickets to 'On a Clear Day You Can See Forever' for the Saturday. I wouldn't rate it terribly highly, but it was enjoyable, and overall we'd had a nice time as tourists, and flew home on Sunday night.

“And truthfully, we can’t do anything about it,” she said more brightly.

“Except to live as well as we can.”

“Hmm. Yes.

Can you scratch my left shoulder blade?”

* * *

May 6, 1966 – Andrea

Friday night, and Glebe had a school dance. I went with Susan Grafton. She and I were in the same grade. Ralph McNeil came with us as Susan’s guest. They’d met when Dad asked if I wanted to invite a guest to a summer barbecue last August, and hit it off in a quiet sort of way. Not a sizzling romance, but they’d had a couple of dates. I went alone this night. After an hour or so, I’d had a few dances with different guys, though two with Norman Jackson. He was 18 and in Grade 12, so two years ahead, but he seemed to have taken notice of me around the school. He was OK. Some girls thought he was kind of cute, but a lot of it was his pretending to be a ’bad boy’. He smoked, which I didn’t like, as I always found I could smell the stale tobacco on him.

I’d had a couple of coca colas, and around 9 I needed the wash-room, so went out into the hall and into the Girls’. When I came out Norm was further down the hall. He called out,

“Andrea! Over here.”

Like an idiot, I went over, and he grabbed me and pulled me into an unlit classroom.

“Hey. You’re really a great chick. How about we stay in here and do some serious necking?” Norm said, putting a hand round one of my breasts.

“Take your hands off!” I yelled.

“Come off it. You’re no goody-goody. I’m told you had to leave Immaculata.”

I didn’t have a chance to reply. He pushed me against the wall, one hand still on my breast and I felt his other hand under my skirt.

“What say we get these panties off?”

The door flew open, and it was Ralph and Susan.

“Jackass! Get your hands off my sister.”

Norm stepped back. “Sister? Sure. Like she has a brother, and he’s never been seen at the school before.”

“Why not? I’m at Ridgemont. Captain of the Judo Team. City champions, if it makes any difference.”

Norm shrunk back, even though he was a good four inches taller than Ralph and probably weighed fifteen pounds more.

“OK, OK. Who needs missy prissy anyway.” And he started to leave the classroom.

“You better mean that. As my Dad’s drill sergeant used to say, ‘otherwise we’ll have your balls for a necklace’.”

When Norm was gone we checked the hall and quietly stepped outside.

I said, “Ralph. I didn’t know your Dad was in the military.”

“I think he was for a while. Maybe. But I got the expression from you, when you re-told one of Martin’s expressions you’d overheard.”

Susan said, “And I didn’t know you were captain of the Judo Club.”

“I’ve been to half a dozen sessions. Maybe not quite captain.”

We laughed. Perhaps a bit nervously. And decided maybe it was time to go home.

Later, as Ralph and I left Susan’s and headed for the bus to Alta Vista, I said to him, “Thanks for what you did tonight. I really appreciate it.”

“It was actually Susan who spotted Norm watching you, then following you out the hall. She didn’t figure you and he were an item, so she suggested we check to make sure. We saw Norm hanging around the hall, then heard him call you, and as we were coming to see why he’d called you over, we heard you telling him to get his hands off.”

“Do you think he’ll give me any more trouble?” I asked Ralph.

“I sort of doubt it. You could file a complaint if you wanted. He did assault you.”

“It might bring more trouble to me than I want. I really just want him to stay away from me.”

“We should probably write down what we remember – each of us separately – and make sure those accounts agree. Just in case he does try anything else,” Ralph suggested. “But he may be just being a jerk, like perhaps I was when we first met.”

When I first stayed over with Dad and Rachel when Ralph and Stephen were there, they’d found my bra and waved it around. Yes, jerks.

“Should I mention the incident to Dad?” I asked.

“In a way yes. And no. He may go crazy and make more trouble than you want. But Norm may try it on with some other girl. We sort of don’t want that.”

“I think that we should write things down as you said. Can you call Susan in the morning?”

“Yeah. Sure.”

“If we get the same story from each of us, then we can discuss whether to go further. At the very least, we’ll have something to contribute if Norm does anything else.”

“Yeah. Makes sense.”

* * *

Our written notes turned out to tell the same story with so few differences we were surprised. But after we thought about what to do for a few days, we simply decided to put the notes together and we made a copy at a local printer where they had a photostat machine.

For a few weeks I was pretty skittish about running into Norm at school, but I soon noticed he seemed nervous around me. Then one day I found a small note had been pushed into my locker. It said, simply,

Sorry. N

May 11, 1966 – Martin

A workshop relating to antenna testing methods was being held in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and I was one of Canada’s representatives. There were some Europeans and some industrial people too. Over 80 in to-

tal. It started Tuesday morning and would last to Friday around mid-day. I had a flight booked for Friday evening from Baltimore airport.

The National Bureau of Standards had moved here in 1962, so everything was pretty new, situated in typical American suburbia. NBS had us staying in nearby motels. The meeting was mostly pretty dry technical material. Nonetheless, it was important to pay some attention, as there were ideas that would lead to standards in forthcoming equipment, and some of those choices could be critical for Canadian ventures. When you looked at television, for example, the Brits had their 405 line screen system, the Americans 525 lines and the Europeans 625 lines. And there were consequences for broadcast signals and for antennas, which were my area, though I didn't do much with TV. The French even have an 819 line system, which they've wanted to get more widely adopted so their companies have an advantage, but it looks like that will eventually be orphaned.

Lunch was a sandwich buffet. The day was quite clear and the temperature was in the low 60's Fahrenheit. I got a sandwich and a 7up. There was a large verandah area with some benches surrounding the building where we were meeting, so I went out and sat on one of the benches. As I was eating, a trim, forty-something blonde woman I'd seen at the meeting approached.

"Mind if I join you. I'm Althea Rushmore from Texas Instruments in Dallas."

Even if she hadn't mentioned Dallas, her accent might have sufficed.

"Martin Tremblay, Defence Research Board in Ot-

tawa.”

“I’ve read one of your papers, but just at the moment I forget what it was about. Except, of course, that it concerned antennas, but given the workshop, that’s pretty much a certainty,” she added.

“You have the advantage of me. I don’t think I’ve seen any of your work.”

“You wouldn’t. My job with TI is as a project manager. Mainly getting all the people and resources together to get a job done. And, even if I’m saying so myself, I think I do a pretty good job.”

We chatted about the kinds of work we were doing. There was a certain caginess about details. Despite the title of the institution in which I worked, very little of what I did was under wraps from a national security perspective. A little of what I did, and probably a lot of Althea’s work, had commercial implications, but more on the detail level than the generalities. After all, antennas were often in places where they could be seen, though some of the special features could be disguised or hidden under cowlings or protective covers. But the fact that they existed was a necessity for wireless communication.

After lunch, there were more sessions. Today’s ones did not have particular consequence for the work in my group in Ottawa. I was mainly keeping an ear open for ideas we might want to explore, and I made a few notes. At the break, I even made sure I gave one of the speakers my card with a note on it to ask him to send me his technical report. Another participant gave me his card to ask for one of my reports. A typical workshop.

Given the size of the NBS campus, there were buses

– old and rather bumpy school buses – to take us back to the motels. I was wondering what I would do for dinner. There were a couple of indifferent restaurants within walking distance. But as I was getting off the bus, Althea called over,

“Martin, a group of us are going to try a local Indian restaurant. Do you want to join us? I’ve a rental car if you don’t mind a bit of a squeeze.”

“Thank you. Yes.”

“Great. Meet here in fifteen minutes.”

Indeed it was a squeeze, as six of us packed into the rented Chevy. Fortunately, Althea had rented one with the standard bench seats. At least the restaurant wasn’t far. Althea seemed to know the way, and gave the explanation:

“These days TI is doing a lot of government contracts. The Vietnam War is part of that, but NASA and the cold War contribute, so we get to DC pretty frequently.”

Over dinner I sat between a British scientist from the National Physical Laboratory and an American university professor from North Western. Perhaps there had been an overload of antenna talk, so we talked mainly about education and how it affected our children. Both men – Althea was the only woman – had teenagers at or about to go to university, so we had a common interest. The meal went by smoothly.

I was a bit nervous about getting a receipt for dinner. While we were supposedly on a per diem for the US and Canada, we had to provide receipts for some things. I found it safer to just have receipts for everything I could. However, I need not have worried. When I went to the

toilet, I discretely asked at the cashier if a receipt could be provided and he handed me one with the amount blank. Of course, the area was full of government people and those dealing with government on expenses. This was clearly part of the local practice.

When we got back to the motel, Althea stopped at the front door and let everyone out, but said, “Martin, do you mind staying with me until I’ve parked and escorting me in. I don’t like being on my own in a parking lot at night.”

“Of course,” I replied. What else could I say?

After we’d parked and were walking toward the building, Althea asked “Would you be interested in talking about your career plans? TI might have some openings.”

With the discussions going on at DRTE, this might be an opportunity, even though I felt that my life really was based in Ottawa. Still, one should at least listen.

“One should always watch for opportunities,” was my reply.

We were at one of the doors to a ground-floor room. Althea said,

“You’d better come in, then, and we can discuss it over a drink. Oh. I don’t have ice. Here’s the ice bucket and my key. I need to freshen up.”

I didn’t know exactly where the ice machine was, but found it easily enough and came back. Not quite sure of the etiquette, I knocked before using the key to enter. There was a bottle – it looked like Bourbon – and two glasses on the small table. Althea was sitting in the single armchair in a dressing gown.

“Had to get out of that girdle. Men are lucky. Can

you pour please?”

Hmm. This was not quite what I had expected. I set the ice on the table, put some in each glass, and added the whiskey. I think I’d only had Bourbon once before, so I made mine very small.

“How much?” I asked.

“Oh, about double what is in that glass. You don’t like Bourbon?”

“Never quite acquired the taste. That is, compared to scotch. I grew up in England.”

“Really. I’d assumed you were always in Canada.”

I related a capsule history of my education.

“Wow. Oxford. Was it terribly upper crust?”

“No. I found it rather egalitarian. There was some old-fashioned class structure among some of the students, and some amusing historical traditions, but for the most part you were judged on what you could do, how you could think. But you have to remember that I was there during and just after the War. Perhaps in the peacetime 20s and 30s it was different.”

“Were you in the War?” Althea asked.

I related how I’d come to join the RAF and my experiences in northern Europe, including how I’d met Clara and Annie.

“What about you? Did the War affect your life?” I asked, since Althea must be about my age.

“Yes. In a big way. But I wasn’t in the fighting or even nearby.

I grew up in Dallas, and until Pearl Harbour I was more interested in chasing boys. Didn’t pay any attention to the outside world. But once things got hot, the

men disappeared and I ended up at TI, except it was called GSI then. In fact, three employees bought out the company the day before Pearl Harbour. They were doing geophysical work, but during the war made electronics for the military. I started on the assembly line as a seventeen year-old, but realized pretty quickly that was kind of boring. By the time I was nineteen, I was running a small factory.”

“At the end of the War, a lot of women were pushed out when the men came home.”

“Tell me about it!. GSI kept me on, but I had to take the job of secretary to a moron who didn’t know half what I did about the work.”

“But you hung on until things improved?”

“Better. I’d met an old school buddy who’d gone into the Navy in Signals, and he got a job elsewhere in the organization. We hit it off OK, I guess, and we got married at the end of 1947. And Bozo, my boss, is always trying to feel me up. So one day I arranged with my husband to have lunch, and I see him coming across the parking lot just as Bozo is trying to get his hand up my skirt. So I say, ‘Oh no, please don’t’ loud enough that my husband hears as he is coming down the hall and he bursts in and catches Bozo with his hand in the honey-pot. I choose that moment to knee him hard enough that he may still not be able to get a hard-on. There’s some harsh words, but Bozo knows how it might get awkward, so he helps get me get a promotion to a different unit, and I haven’t looked back.”

While I admired Althea’s chutzpah, I was uneasy about our current situation. I liked the conversation. She was

very attractive and sexy, and in a state of very informal dress. Hmm.

“Is your husband still with TI too?” I asked as a way to remind us both of realities and responsibilities.

“No. He’s gone to California to work with Fairchild. And we divorced in the early 50s. I got pregnant, but it turned out to be an ectopic pregnancy. I was lucky, since it’s pretty hard to diagnose definitively, but my surgeon saved my life, though not my fertility. However, Charlie wanted kids, and pretty soon he found a willing floozy. Still, I’ve been able to have fun without worrying about getting knocked up.”

Althea’s intentions, or at least inclinations, were becoming clear. I’d soon have to make a decision. And I can’t say I wasn’t interested in her. Also intensely curious. I’ve had just four women in my life, and they’ve all been great experiences for me. Indeed, I still hold intense feelings for three of them – Clara who died, Margaret who had to go back to Scotland to look after her ailing mother, and now Michelle who is such a wonderful partner in everything. I don’t want to have to keep from Michelle any experience that I find interesting and exciting, and enjoying Althea would not be something I could share with Michelle, but I’d want to.

“Althea, I may be flattering myself, but have you told me what you just did to introduce the possibility that we share some pleasure.”

“Wow. You Canadians are so much more polite than most guys I meet. With some of them, I’d already have my legs pointing to the ceiling. Yeah. I’d like to have some fun. You’re a nice looking man.”

“Well. I’m actually very interested, and not just in sex. I like talking with you. I like your spirit as well as ... er ... well, the obvious.”

“Thanks. That’s appreciated.”

“But I guess I haven’t said that I’m practically a newlywed, and I’m not sure I want the ... I guess confusion ... that could result. And in the past couple of years two people very close to me have suffered some extreme consequences of VD. And they were very respectable, but in each case someone close to them managed to give them an infection, possibly unknowingly.”

“I guess that could wilt your cucumber.”

I laughed, and so did Althea. I said,

“Can we keep in touch? I’ll be honest that I currently think my life is going to be centred in Ottawa, and with my wife Michelle. But I really like you, and enjoy your company. If my situation were different, I doubt you’d still have the dressing gown on.”

“Well. In the past, though I don’t like to admit it, I’ve had some guys all awkward and running away. Those that weren’t all over me. You’ve told me face to face how you feel. I can respect that. Perhaps if I’d found a guy like you, I’d still be with him.”

We both stood, and I was about to head to the door when she came up to me and put her arms round me and kissed me full on the lips. I could feel that she’d removed more than just her girdle. Though slim, she had a well-proportioned bust and her breasts pressed into me. Parts of me responded involuntarily.

She pulled away, saying “Glad to know you really are interested. Look after yourself, Martin.”

“You too, Althea.”

May 14, 1966 – Michelle

Andrea was with us this weekend. She’d go to her father for the long Victoria Day holiday next weekend. Martin had spent the morning doing some grocery shopping then tidying the yard. We’d had rain Thursday, but yesterday and today had been quite nice. At least dry. Now he’d gone off to Pascal’s to look at some tools and other hardware. While it would be nice to spend some time together, it’s nice to have a bit of quiet time and read my entirely forgettable trashy novel.

Andrea is upstairs sewing. She seems to like to work with her hands and to cook. We spent the morning together making some dishes in advance for the next week or so. Things we can freeze or will keep. She finds recipes, then works out how to simplify them. I asked her, “Why do you always want to simplify them?”

I was a bit surprised by the answer.

“Mom. It’s not laziness. Well, not the laziness that means you don’t do anything. Sort of wanting to be able to quickly prepare things that are nice and have ways to do them that let you use what you have or make some changes. Maybe will work well even if the oven temperature is a bit lower or higher because you have something else to cook at the same time.

I suppose I want recipes that are forgiving, if you can say that.”

“Daughter, where do you get these ideas? I don’t think I’ve ever talked about household jobs that way.”

“Dunno. Not from Dad. And I don’t think from you either. Maybe indirectly from Martin. Remember how he makes cocoa by sprinkling the cocoa on the milk in the pan as it’s heating. And he doesn’t add sugar because it used to be rationed. But I now find I like it without sugar too.

And have you notice how he often thinks about how to do jobs rather than jump right in?”

“I hadn’t thought about it until you said so. But yes, he does tend to think before he starts. It’s one of the things I like about him, though maybe at first I wondered if it indicated he wasn’t much interested in some task or other.”

“But Mom, I don’t want you to think my interest in cooking – or sewing and knitting and stuff too – mean I’m all domestic and want to get married really young and have a pile of kids.”

“Oh. Well, I hadn’t thought about that either. Er... you must be starting to think your mother doesn’t think about her family at all.”

“No. ’Course not. Just that some Moms might get that idea. It’s just I like learning about food and clothes and furniture and, well, stuff.”

“Well, good for you. I’ve got to say I’m very happy you aren’t out running around and getting into trouble. And we talk more than we used to. You know, about serious things.”

“Yeah. I know. Some of that comes from Anna and Martin too.”

“From what Anna has said to me, I think it was because she was becoming an adult as her mother – Clara

– died. I gather she talked to Martin, sometimes asking him some awkward questions. But it did mean they learned how to deal with delicate subjects.”

“Hope you won’t think this is ... er ... I don’t know – disloyal – but I find I can talk to her and sometimes Martin about things that I guess I’m less comfortable talking to you about.”

In fact, this did make me feel uncomfortable, but I rather wanted Andrea to be able to talk to people like Anna and Martin who generally were very well-grounded.

“I won’t pretend that I don’t sometimes feel that you are drifting away from me ...”

“But I’m not Mom! What are we doing now but talking about stuff?”

“Well, that’s what I was about to say. I want you to be able to get reaction and advice from people who I consider reliable. But I’m still the Mom who remembers you as a baby and a toddler and a First grader. Letting go isn’t easy.”

Andrea simply came over and gave me a big hug. It felt good, but with a huge dose of wistfulness.

We went back to working on some pies for next week. Andrea had some recipes from Ellie Sinclair – I was rather hoping she might make some shortbread, but she wanted to make a steak and kidney pie for Martin. We’d had to ask around at the butcher counter to get the kidneys. And I was preparing a cherry pie – tinned filling – and a couple of apple ones using some not-so-great apples that were on special last week.

Andrea said “I’m not sure the kidneys are really worth the effort. I don’t much like the smell, and they need

soaking and removing the membrane. And you need to get them fresh.”

“So you’re having second thoughts?”

“Well, not about trying them once. But I can’t see that just steak and no kidney pie isn’t just as nice.”

“Simplifying, like you were saying.”

“Yeah. Exactly.”

May 23, 1966 – Martin

Andrea was at Bryan and Rachel’s for the holiday weekend. We’d pretty well stopped keeping to a schedule as we were constantly having to change it. Instead, Andrea had set up a cork-board in the kitchen and put a calendar on it where she pencilled in where she would be. There were always items crossed out and moved, but she was good about making sure we knew where she was going or where she was, and there was a list of phone numbers and names and addresses beside the calendar. She had a bed and a wardrobe at her father’s house in Alta Vista, for which she had a key. And she was sixteen now. As we’d noted previously, old enough to seem a woman, but still young enough to make lots of mistakes. Though I didn’t think she’d make too many. Of course, one mistake or accident could be enough to ruin your life.

Michelle stirred beside me. It was nearly 8 in the morning. We’d had a barbecue at Michelle’s parents yesterday. We’d eaten too much. We always eat too much at the Lacroix’ events, a testimony to the good food.

“What’cha thinkin’?” came a voice in my ear.

“That I always eat too much at your parents.”

“Me too. Well, we’ve no plans for today. I’ll declare the kitchen closed and we’ll fast.”

“I doubt you’ll keep to that promise, but we can certainly take it easy and just have small amounts.”

“I’ve not had a chance to hear much about your meeting in Washington. Was it useful?”

“I suppose so. Those workshops are rather a necessary evil in that they allow different agencies and companies to align the technology so it all works. Even though it really doesn’t – the different systems aren’t really compatible, but we make some rules that allow enough cooperation that communications can be kept going.”

“Was there anyone interesting there?”

Oops. Careful! But no sense in being overly closed-mouthed.

“There was a woman project manager from Texas Instruments. She said they were looking for people like me for some of their upcoming work. But I don’t think we’re in any position to up-stakes and move to Texas, and I told her so. However, I did say I’d like to keep in touch in case there were suitable opportunities.”

“Meaning?”

“I’m not sure if I really meant anything in particular other than keeping in touch allows one to learn about developments. And you never know, they might set up a lab in Canada, though given how the Americans work, they seem to only do very boring stuff here. The old branch-plant economy syndrome.”

“Yes,” Michelle said, “It can be a bit frustrating to see people getting lots of attention south of the border who aren’t as good as some of the folks here.”

“Michelle, are you happy with your job, or am I hearing some discontent?”

“I think happy enough for the moment. We – meaning you and I – are still getting a lot of things sorted out on a personal and domestic level. Oops. That sounds as though there are problems. There aren’t.”

She was silent for a moment, then said, “Actually Martin. It may be that I’m as happy as I’ve ever been in life, and you are a major factor in that. Thank you. Probably lowers my ambition level. But the job pays reasonably well and it isn’t all rush-rush and crisis. We have lots to do and we keep at it steadily. So probably best to stay put unless something changes. I think that in a couple of years I might want to consider other possibilities, but not just yet.”

“That makes sense. And, Michelle, I can say that I too am as personally happy as I’ve ever been. For which you are a big part, so thank you too.

At work, I don’t really have any complaints either. On the other hand, I suspect what you just said is the heart of my slight disquiet, that is, ‘unless something changes’ and I think it will.”

“Hmm. I may have forgot to tell you, but there’s a rumour – I think it’s true – that the Ministry of Mines and Technical Surveys is going to become the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Resources. There’s apparently some draft legislation about to go through the house, with the name change later in the year. But the scuttlebutt is also that Jean-Luc Pepin will stay minister.”

“Noises I’ve heard are that he’s considered competent.”

“It’s hard to know when you’re in the trenches.

But going back to your situation. Do you have any idea what you’d like for your own career? We’ve talked a bit from time to time about things we do, but not really about aspirations. And as I’ve just said, I haven’t really given my own situation too much thought. Probably been more occupied with house and home.”

I was quiet for a moment, then said “I think like you, ‘house and home’ has been the main preoccupation. Not ignoring work, but not letting it be a real priority. We’ve only just passed our first anniversary. Last year a lot of our free time was spent working on the cottage or else relaxing there, apart from some short trips. And we did have two weddings close together. Nicole and Stephane on the first weekend in July and Anna and Peter three weeks later.”

“Aren’t you forgetting our honeymoon?” Michelle snuggled in close to me.

“How could I? But it was early in the year. We’ve not had any big trips together since.”

“True. I’m looking forward to a month from now.

But you know, Martin, last summer working on the cottage and spending time there was important. It built us as a team, you and I.”

“Very wisely noted.”

I kissed her and slipped my hand under her nightie.

“Stop it!”

“Why?”

“Because I want to take a shower first. Then you can have your way with me. Or else I will with you.”

June 29, 1966 – Andrea

Antwerp isn't quite how I'd imagined it. But then Mom says England last year was totally unlike what she'd expected. Even if we have movies and television, I guess you can't get the real feeling of a place, and movies often edit out all the time it takes between places, even if they are quite close together.

The weather today was a bit cool with some short showers, but we could still walk about. Leaving Ottawa in the middle of a heat wave meant it was a bit of a shock getting off the 'plane in Brussels. Antwerp is almost no distance away, but the Belgians treat it like Ottawa relative to Montreal or Toronto. Our hotel is pretty close to the Antwerp Central railway station, and most of the old part of the city is close by. I say 'old', but Martin pointed out that Antwerp got more V bombs, that is, unmanned planes and rockets, than London. Our first walkabout was up the Keyserlei. We were supposed to be heading for the Plantin Museum, which is about early printing, and indeed we did go there. But it made sense to see what was about us along the way. When we got to number 15 on the Keyserlei, Martin was looking around for something by a cinema called the Rex.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

"I thought there might be a plaque, but there doesn't seem to be."

"What for?" Joan asked.

"Well, just before Christmas 1944, there were 1100 people inside the cinema when it was hit by a V2 at about half-past three in the afternoon. 567 people were killed

of which about 300 were Canadian, British or American servicemen and perhaps servicewomen, and about 300 people injured. That was the worst number of casualties from a single rocket in the whole War. And this was only a couple of weeks after a V2 hit Teniers Square about a hundred yards up the street here. We'll be there in a few seconds. There was a British motor convoy going through just after noon and 160 were killed. And the blast broke water mains so the whole square flooded and there were apparently bodies and parts of bodies floating around with debris and unexploded ammunition, while some vehicles were still on fire with people inside while their wheels were in water. So really horrific. But I don't see any memorials at all. Odd."

We were quiet as we walked on and the street name changed, but I forget to what, though it was the same actual street. Then the name changed again to Meir.

Martin started to sniff, and said, "Hmm. I smell Belgian waffles, in particular the *Luikse wafels*. Let's see if we can find them."

We spent a couple of minutes trying different directions before we realized they were further down the street, on the cross street, which was quite narrow for the traffic it had, including two tram lines. And there was this counter open to the street and the lady behind it had a couple of waffle irons.

Martin said, "Ladies, what would you like. For myself, I will recommend the *Luikse wafels*, which use a bread dough base rather than a batter. I guess there are doughnuts that are made with a yeast dough as well as those made with a pancake-like batter."

I didn't know that. I've always thought doughnuts were made from a batter, but now I think about it, there was a recipe I saw that said you rolled out a dough and cut it into the rings and fried them, then the 'holes'. Have to do some checking. Anyway, that's for another time. These waffles smell divine.

"I'll follow your suggestion, Martin." I said. In fact all of us but Mom did. She chose a Brussels waffle, which seems to use a batter, and she had strawberries on it, while the rest of us just had ours plain. We won't need lunch!

As I said, we did go to the Plantin Museum. It was an occasion when Martin suggested that we agree a time and all meet by the entrance and we could explore separately, but Joan and I decided to stick together. Martin bought a couple of guides in English. It would have been awkward otherwise, as most of the descriptions were in Flemish.

I was glad Joan was with me. It turns out she has a friend whose father is a printer, so she knew a bit about how some of the things in the museum would have been used. We sure take for granted all the stuff we read, but early on it was a huge amount of effort to produce books. Even more before Gutenberg and others figured out how to do printing with lead type.

We went back to the hotel a bit after 4 and rested until 6. I was sort of going to ask if Joan and I could explore the park near the hotel, but when we got back from the Museum I was actually ready for a rest. And I wasn't upset that we took a tram to the *Grote Markt* – the Big Market – and found a restaurant just off the square for

some supper.

I saw this item on the menu called *waterzooi*. The name looked neat, so we asked the waiter about it. He didn't speak English very well, but had decent French so we were able to learn it's a sort of chicken stew, and actually a dish associated with Ghent. I decided to try it, and it was really good. I made some notes on what was in it, and I think I'll be able to make a reasonable approximation. I think leeks and celery are important. I suspect that you can put in potato and carrots if you like. The liquid is thickened. Flour obviously, but maybe they use cream and possibly egg yolk. Likely there are many variants, some richer than others. I'll have to see what I can do.

Mom had something called a *vol-au-vent* with salad and *frites*. Belgian *frites*! With mayonnaise, not ketchup. This was a pastry cylinder, complete with a pastry cap, filled with shrimps in a sauce. I scored some frites as Mom couldn't handle the big bowl they put beside her plate that had the vol-au-vent and salad. I got a bite of the vol-au-vent, and Mom tried the *waterzooi*.

Martin chose something called *varkenshaasje* with *witlofsalade*. He knew that it was pork and that *witlof* meant some sort of salad green. It was actually pork tenderloin in a mustard sauce, and the salad green was, it turned out, endive according to Mom. I've never had it. Martin gave me a bite. Kind of bitter, but probably OK in, as they say, moderation. I didn't try the pork, as mustard doesn't get me excited, though a lot of people seem to like it.

Joan was going to have the *Steak Tartaar*. Even used

English on the menu. We told her ‘tartare’ means finely chopped and served raw. She switched to a beef stew called *stoofvlees* in Flemish. It came with a salad and *frites* too. We exchanged a bite. All the food was good.

I’ve made some notes about the meals. The food isn’t really that different from what we have at home in its basics. I think it’s the way it’s presented. At home we would have a beef stew and put the potatoes in the stew. Here it’s more a stew that is mostly meat, then you serve it with *frites* and a salad, which turns it into something that seems – to us – unusual. But doing that could be interesting if you were running a restaurant back home, as the meals would seem foreign or exotic, but wouldn’t have the kids making silly faces or puking on the floor. Of course, kids will probably leave the salad after devouring the stew and fries. Especially if the salad has a lot of *witlof*, that is, endive. On the other hand, the sophisticates who would spurn stew would probably pay double for *stoofvlees met witlofsalade*. Though they might turn their noses up if you used the simpler Dutch word *sla* for salad. I’ll have to talk to Ellie Sinclair and see what she thinks about trying some of these out.

The desserts were kind of disappointing, except for the names in Flemish or French. Essentially they had vanilla ice cream, vanilla ice cream with apple pie, vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce, chocolate mousse, etc. They did offer a *mokka* tart – a cake with heavy chocolate-coffee icing. I’ve tried something like that in Ottawa at a bakery, and I guess some folk think it’s the bee’s knees.

There was, however, a cheese plate, and I chose that to the surprise of the rest. Mom and Martin shared an

Appeltaart met ijs. Joan took the Dame Blanch, that is, chocolate sundae, but she said later that Dairy Queen does it better.

My cheese plate had a well-aged Dutch Gouda. Martin has taught me to say Gouda the Dutch way. This had the flavour I expected, but it was much more pronounced. I liked it a lot. The usual Dutch cheese we get is mild and it's certainly OK, but this was at a new level. There was also a nice Camembert and an interesting goat cheese. More notes for my book. I'm pretty sure that apart from Camembert, I'll not be able to find the others back home.

July 6, 1966 – Michelle

It's been an emotional day, though those emotions were not expressed in stormy outbursts. Indeed, we'd all been very quiet. This was really a day for Martin to revisit the places he'd been in early 1945. We'd got away from Eindhoven in the newly rented car by nine, and we were in Helmond by half-past, as it was only about 10 miles. But there was nothing left of the airfield, which had the designation B86. If it weren't for the big seminary nearby, Martin would not have been able to figure out where the runway had been.

"They've completely redeveloped the land. And the runway would have gone right across that road and then the lake there to the east. Of course, it was pretty muddy and wet when we were here. The pilots got to stay in the seminary – Christus Konig or Christ the King."

"Do I get the feeling you were in a tent?" I asked.

“Yes. Pretty basic. Didn’t wash for a few weeks I think. And there wasn’t a lot of water – well, clean water for washing and cooking – so we were sharing shaving water and several of us got a skin infection called impetigo.”

“Jim Sinclair must have been pleased,” I said with obvious sarcasm. “Is that when you started growing a beard?”

“No. About a year later. There was supposedly some regulation against beards, though it may have been one of those things that people thought were true, but weren’t. Probably for the pilots, now I think about it, because they had oxygen masks. The Typhoons often leaked exhaust gas into the cockpit, and a couple of pilots – nobody in our squadron – got carbon monoxide poisoning. I don’t think anyone died of this directly, but the flyers had to use oxygen all the time, and the mask doesn’t work if you have a beard. Probably all any of the erks needed was approval from a superior officer. But I never asked, but started growing my beard in 1946, when I thought – correctly as it turned out – that it might let me avoid razor rash.”

After this, we drove north to Uden and saw the grave of David Stedman, Penny’s first husband and Des’ father. Martin has told us it was learning about David’s death in this area when his Halifax was shot down that pushed Martin to join the RAF. There’s a very moving picture of Martin’s first wife Clara by the grave. We have it on a wall in the house with a few other pictures of her. When Martin and I got together, I realized that trying to hide the fact they’d had a good marriage and a strong family

with Anna wouldn't be a good idea. And that choice has been a wise one. We're able to use the memories as a jumping off point to talk about our own situation and feelings. Two years ago I'd never have thought I'd have as close and loving partnership with someone.

But today, I think Martin needs my support – my silent support. Words aren't what he needs. But I've made sure to slip my arm through his when there's been a chance.

In Nijmegen, Martin said nothing looked familiar, but that they'd only driven through in 1945. But he'd found Eindhoven, where they spent a good deal of the Autumn and Winter of 1944-45, rather similarly strange, and there's clearly been a huge amount of reconstruction. The Allies bombed Eindhoven pretty heavily because of the Philips factory, which the Germans were using to support their own war effort. A lot of Dutch civilians died there.

The distances in the Netherlands aren't great. The distance to Enschede from Eindhoven wasn't more than a hundred miles as the crow flies, and even with our slightly circuitous route and stopping for lunch it was not much after 4 p.m. when we got to our hotel. It was a bit out of the centre, near a recently established technical college, *Technische Hogeschool Twente*. Don't ask me to pronounce that middle word. It's all in the back of the throat.

The hotel was an old mansion, and it turned out we got two rooms with a shared bathroom. Rather nice. But coming in, we had an unexpected exchange with the lady who runs it.

“May I have your passports please?” she asked.

We had gotten used to this ritual. The hoteliers were required to verify the identity of their guests and, if further required, provide documentation to police, so they copied down names and addresses and passport numbers.

And we had different names! I had decided soon after we married to use my maiden name for work and formalities, so I was Michelle Lacroix on my passport. I’d even got a new one this year. Martin was Tremblay, and Andrea was Corcoran while Joan was Baker. So there were sometimes raised eyebrows, though I gather Dutch women keep their maiden name for formalities.

After the manageress finished with copying down the information, including our relationships, she asked, in impeccable English, “Not many foreign tourists come here. May I ask if you were one of the liberators?”

Martin answered, “Yes, I suppose so, though my time here was, I think, the saddest of the whole War.”

This was new to me. There was an awkward pause, and Martin continued, “I was with the RAF, even though I’m Canadian. I was ground crew, and on April 11, 1945,”

At this point, I noticed the manageress go white as a sheet, but Martin kept going, “we moved up from Helmond to prepare the airfield. There were some other air force people who were supposed to do that, and they’d got the brick runway more or less fixed after all the bombing by both sides, but there was still a lot of clearing up to do. The commanding officer arranged to have some local people help. We usually paid them with the funny special money – we called it scrip – or else with food,

which was actually more welcome.

Anyway, we got things tidy and the Typhoons came back from a mission. Typically they were shooting up German anti-aircraft – flak – positions to make it easier for airborne landings. Or to stop supply trains. But the Germans had good AA crews and lots of them, and our planes often got damaged.

But with the Liberation – I think you say *Bevrijding* – there was a lot of excitement and euphoria. The Dutch people lined up not far from the runway to welcome the planes. Unfortunately, one of the aircraft had a damaged undercarriage. Maybe a brake line shot away so the aircraft slewed into some people. Two were killed. It was so sad. All we could do was tell them to go home.”

There were tears running down his face, and that of the manageress, who said, “One of the two men was my brother. That you remember is, despite being sad for me today, something for which I am grateful, Mr. Tremblay.”

I guess Andrea and Joan and I were also fighting back tears. We got our keys and went to our rooms. As we were opening the doors, I asked, “Martin, do you want to lie down for a while?”

“No, I’m tired of driving, and a little mixed up with the experiences today, but not too tired overall. I suspect I’ll start to fade early. Just now it would do me good to go out and walk about, then find some dinner.”

We agreed to a 15 minute freshen-up period, then went out. Our hotel was situated next to the Hengelosestraat, a straight road that led to the centre, about two kilometres away. The weather was not hot, not cool. A bit

cloudy but no rain. I asked the girls to walk a bit ahead, but keep an eye out that we were still following. They could choose where to go, or if they weren't sure could ask us. Once off the main road, we ambled through the shopping streets. Martin said that like other places, it all seemed very different, though he did say the market square was recognizable. But there's clearly been a lot of reconstruction everywhere. And even back home without war damage, things are redeveloped.

We found an Indonesian Chinese restaurant for supper. Andrea was very curious about the dishes, and made a number of notes in her notebook. I've a feeling she'll be testing ideas on us when we get home. There were some shrimp crackers – at least that seems to be the translation of something that on the menu was written *krupuk* – that were particularly intriguing to us all. Andrea asked “I'd like to be able to ask how they're made, but I don't think anyone on the staff speaks much English.”

Fortunately a man at a nearby table said “Maybe I can help and translate.” It was still a struggle, as the staff were Indonesian, but eventually they brought out some packets of what looked like dried fingernails. Very strange. Then they offered to show Andrea how they were fried, and let her go back into the kitchen and see. She said they tossed a few of the pieces of the material from the packet into hot oil and they almost exploded to about 15 times their original size. From the packet, the man helping translate said they're made with starch and shrimp meat, but that there were other varieties using different material for flavouring. Andrea says she's going to see if any Chinese groceries along Somerset Street have

them when we get home.

* * *

July 17, 1966 – Andrea

My mind is wandering a good deal. Anna has picked us up from Dorval Airport. The flight from Brussels went fine. I read a book I had brought along and hadn't touched up 'till now. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. She talks a lot about dancing and some about clothes. Not much about food. I wonder if there's a reason for that.

I half thought Peter would come with Anna, but the car – the one they got new from Belisle around Christmas as Peter was just out of hospital – would have been a bit crowded. Mom's either asleep or dozing. Martin's in front and he's staying awake and talking to Anna. That's good. It's only late afternoon, but she's already driven more than two hours to get to Dorval, and has the same to get home.

Just realized I nearly said 'Dad' for Martin. He's starting to be like a father, even though my real Dad – Bryan – is still around and I see him regularly. Suppose I could get all antsy about the confusion, but actually I'm really glad Mom and Martin got together. She was always OK to me, but I know she was not super happy like she is now. And calmer too, I think.

Martin's pretty practical. I was thinking of getting a whole lot of the spices for Indonesian food, but he pointed out that we didn't know what the rules were

about bringing them into Canada. He also said to be sure to get them in proper commercial packages, with printing that said what they were, even if in Dutch. I found some under the brand Conimex – Ellie had told me about these when we spent a Saturday morning cooking this Spring – so I’ve a couple of packets of *Bami* spices and small bottles of *Sambal Oelek* and *Sambal Manis*. Apparently *Oelek* is the hotter one, and *Manis* means ‘sweet’. I’ll have to try to figure out what is in the spices and see if I can mix my own. They may not be in the Chinese stores, of which there aren’t too many in Ottawa. Then I remembered that Barbara and Joanne had served *Bami* for a midnight snack for the 1965 New Year. I could ask them.

For presents, I’ve got a lot of boxes of chocolate flakes. I thought of getting the hail – *hagelslag* – but I like the flakes better. And with the hail I can’t get the name the Dutch use – *muisjes* or ‘mouse droppings’ – out of my head. Yuck!

Actually have 7 boxes each 300g. Good job I didn’t load my suitcase coming here – well we did have three cans of maple syrup for people in Ninove and Ghent, and I carried two of them as I had packed light. So I’ve boxes for Ralph and Stephen and Dad as well as one for Anna and Peter, one for Ellie, and two for me. And one because 7 seemed an odd number! Well, I’ll share with Mom and Martin, but I think Mom may have some too. I’ve also two packages of *bokkepootjes* – goats’ feet. Actually little meringue sausages with chocolate on the ends. I’ll give one of those to Anna and Peter. They were pretty helpful in making suggestions of what to watch

for, and the introduction to Ellie. I bought myself a nice souvenir cheese slicer with Delft blue Dutch designs on the handle. It may be a souvenir, but I know I'll use it. I think Mom called it a cheese rabot. 'Rabot' in French is a plane, like a wood plane, and I can see why she'd call it that because of how it works. And finally a packet of *speculaas* biscuits and a tin of *Haagse hopjes*. The latter are kind of coffee flavoured humbugs. Sort of weird, but I like them. Better be careful, however, they're likely bad for teeth. Don't need more cavities. Had two at my last check-up that had to be filled, and I hate the dentist's drill.

The cookies meant packing was not so easy. Fortunately I have a Samsonite suitcase – not the biggest they sell, the medium size – that has a hard case of fibreglass. Great until you have to carry it. Dad and Rachel gave me that for my birthday, so they must have found out about the trip before I could tell them. I think Dad and Mom are talking again. Or maybe it's Rachel and Mom. I would never have thought that would happen. They're not friends or anything, but manage to communicate so day to day life works smoothly.

For Rachel, I've got a pair of little silver earrings in the shape of Dutch clogs I found in a little store in Amersfoort. We stopped there for lunch and a look around. Perhaps I didn't have to get her anything, but these were pretty inexpensive. While they're really a novelty item, they actually look quite nice, and she has lots of earrings and wears a different pair each day. They were really easy to pack!

I guess what I think is the biggest part of my luggage

is the memories. And not the ones I sort of expected to have. I'm going to have to read up on how the Allies went across Europe to get a sense of where and when things happened. That little exchange between Martin and the lady in the hotel in Enschede was so intense. Her brother killed in a stupid accident at the moment of liberation. Awful. Martin doesn't say lots, but I'm beginning to understand some of the things he almost doesn't say.

The other big part of what I'm bringing back is my notes on things I've seen. Mom will be chuckling that it's all about food. Well, she's mostly right. But the trip really widened my view, and we didn't even go to France. Or Germany. Or Italy. Or Spain. Have to start saving for that. Of course, I didn't mention England, but nobody seems to think England, well Britain, has much to offer in the way of food, though there's lots of other stuff there that's interesting.

Yikes! I'm being really stupid – about half of what Ellie makes is out of her experiences in Scotland. Shortbread, treacle tart, Welsh cakes, mince pies, sausage rolls, cheese straws, Dundee cake, and so on. If thinking about it made you fat, Anna would need a dump truck instead of a car for me.

So the trip was great, but it's made me hungry for more. And hungry doesn't only have to do with food. Have to think about how I can make and save some money. And get some sleep too!

August 2, 1966 – Michelle

The civic holiday had gone well. Martin and I spent Saturday and Sunday at the cottage, but came home yesterday morning. Andrea had been with Bryan and Rachel, but Bryan had some meeting or other with some folk from Quebec, and they took their holiday on St. Jean Baptiste on June 24, so Andrea decided to come home – it's nice she thinks of our place as home. It turned out well for me because she wanted to try out *Bami Goreng*.

She told me, “Mom. It really just means ‘fried noodles’, so I don’t actually have to make it precisely like we had in Holland. Talking to Ellie, I’ve learned you can mix and match a lot of different ingredients as long as there’s noodles and they’re fried. This time I’m going to use the spices from the package, but I went to the library and from what I found there and from Ellie, I can probably make my own spices that are fine.”

The meal was pretty good. It was the TV news later that gave us indigestion. There was a shooting in Austin, Texas. 13 killed and more than 30 wounded by a gunman atop the University main building tower. So sad. And senseless.

It was such a contrast in mood to Saturday. Martin and I had the cottage to ourselves. We took a swim, then Martin came up to the porch to read, but I sat on the dock under an umbrella we’d set up. Then I took another dip to cool off and came up to the cottage.

“Does the cottage still have nice views?” I said, remembering how we’d come to be lovers and eventually

spouses.

Martin looked up, realized a bit late that I'd stripped off my swimsuit, and didn't quite manage to dodge the wet garment as I tossed it at him.

"That'll cost you!" he warned.

"Really. You promise?" I teased, standing legs apart with hands on hips.

Martin got up to grab me, but I skipped off into the bedroom, where I hid behind the door. He came in, but before he could see me, I grabbed his shorts and pulled them down. While he was extricating himself from his swimsuit, I hopped on the bed and said "I don't mind how much it costs, as long as you're gentle."

Andrea's notebook – excerpt

Bami Goreng
=====

Spices:

Conimex seems to have several powdered spices, some dried vegetables, probably onions and stuff. Maybe garlic powder.

My approximation (current guess in July 1966):
turmeric, cumin, coriander, ginger, chilli powder, garlic powder, onion powder, maybe some pepper, lemon grass powder.

Likely drop "powder" for onion and garlic and lemon grass and ginger if you have fresh.

According to one library book, the Indonesians also use LAOS powder, which is something called

"Greater Galangal root". I haven't found that yet.

Krupuk: Chinese grocery had some packets of "shrimp flavour chips". Turned out ok when fried in Mazola, Do Indonesians use something else? Maybe peanut oil or safflower oil.

Found egg noodles at Chinese grocery. Not quite same as in Holland, but there are several varieties. Probably tolerant of variation.

How: dice meat, (pork, but could use chicken, possibly shrimp) Brown in oil in large pan. Chinese have a thing called a wok, but Dutch oven worked OK (and is flat bottomed for our stove)

Add finely chopped veg. to pan. I used onions, some garlic, leek, carrot, bell pepper and mushrooms. I think that is more than was in Bami in Holland. I added water and soy sauce to Conimex (about 1 1/2 tablespoons) and mixed in cup to de-lump, then added to meat mixture.

Noodles boiled in water until soft, then drained and added to the meat mix and stirred well.

Note: difficult to stir. Ended up halving meat, making two sets of noodles and stirring them into hot meat ("frying") then put in casserole and kept hot in oven to blend flavours.

Could have fried egg (sunny side up), but that needs to be served right away. Can also use shredded thin omelette, which I did, and used as garnish on top of casserole.

Condiments: Sambal oelek, soya sauce, toasted coconut, crushed peanuts.

* * *

August 22, 1966 – Martin

Today's my 42nd birthday. Actually it's been a pretty ordinary day. Michelle and Anna decided we'd celebrate yesterday at the cottage, and today I just went to work as normal.

For the last week and a half, of course, we've been rather preoccupied with the news of the collapse of the partially completed Heron Road bridge on August 10. In the middle of a Wednesday afternoon, workers were pouring concrete for one of the long spans of the reinforced concrete bridge when the scaffold and mould for the concrete collapsed with a number of workers on it and under it. Apparently it's the worst ever industrial accident in Ontario with currently 8 dead and over 60 injured, some of whom may not survive. It cast a pall over the city, even now.

I'd asked Michelle for a relaxed celebration day, and she and Anna did a great job of bringing my wish to reality. They invited a lot of family and friends and we had a real crowd, but the invite was for a potluck buffet and guests were asked to bring a chair, hammock, air mattress or whatever you felt allowed maximum relaxation, including a swimsuit and a towel, possibly a book or some other no-stress pastime. I have to say, people took the invite to heart, and since we had pleasant but not too hot weather, they could spread out around the cottage property. There was, of course, more than enough to eat and drink, though I suspect the word had been

put out to not bring a lot of alcohol, though I did get some presents of wrapped bottles. Everyone was there by one in the afternoon, and we did open some wine at that time and I was suitably toasted. I gather Michelle and Anna and Peter quietly made sure each car had a sober driver.

As the birthday boy, I circulated and chatted with just about everyone, catching up on some news that I seem to have somehow missed. Or perhaps our household missed. The Brockville contingent was able to present the new baby – named David after Des’ father – that Sharon had delivered on the First of June. Their first child, given that Sharon’s first baby died at birth before she and Des married. That unfortunate baby had been conceived under nasty, criminal circumstances. I’m glad our family was able to give Sharon a second chance. She seems to be making a good job of it. My parents are the beneficiaries of her new energy and happiness, since they live upstairs from Des and Sharon.

Mum and Dad came in the same car as Des and Sharon and their great-grandchild. I asked Mum, “Has the baby made much change in daily life for you.”

“Not in a negative way. Except it is a bit daunting to be Great Grandma. The fact we’re upstairs and Des and your father put in some insulation between the floors means there’s not any serious noise. And I do love having a baby around again.”

“Better focus on the Great in Great Grandma.”

Mum laughed, “Excellent advice!”

Actually, it’s Saturday that I think was most important this weekend. Not long after I met Michelle, I’d

helped Andrea learn how to sail – Michelle had the cottage as part of her divorce settlement, and there was a Sunfish. Saturday after lunch, Andrea asked, “Martin, do you feel like a sail?”

Now Andrea is perfectly capable of sailing solo, and the Sunfish is probably easier as a one-person boat. And Joseph, who seems to be more or less her boyfriend, though they insist it’s just friendship, was here, reading a book. But I got the sense she wanted to talk, and my hunch was correct. As we did a gentle, slightly upstream reach across the river – the breeze was as usual from the West, and the Ottawa is wide here as it heads down toward Montreal – Andrea said, “Can I talk to you about what I want to do?”

“Do you mean soon, or are you talking about career and life?”

“Oh, career and life.”

“I think by now you know I try to be a good listener.”

“Yeah, that’s why I wanted to talk to you. And I don’t have any fixed plan or anything. In fact, I probably just want to talk so I can figure out for myself what I want to do.”

“That makes sense. It often helps just to verbalize ideas, and we force ourselves to be more organized and rational. But someone else can and should ask questions.”

“Yeah, but Mom or Dad probably will want to add their own opinion.”

“And I won’t?”

“You’re more cagey about it. You ask questions that make it difficult to avoid issues. But that’s OK, ’cause

it doesn't seem preachy or 'You really have to ...'."

"Talking of 'really have to', perhaps we should tack, then close haul so we have a long time to the other side."

"Yes indeed. Ready about! ... Hard a' lee!"

Andrea knew the drill, and we came about smoothly. I was on the main-sheet and she was at the tiller.

"So tell me what you've been thinking," I prompted.

"Well, it's probably pretty obvious that I like cooking and learning about food. And I like quite a lot of things that have to do with household management and crafts, but food more than the rest."

"To say your Mom and I had noticed would be an understatement. And we're pleased that you have the interest and that you are getting to be a pretty amazing cook."

A couple of weeks ago she'd made *Bami Goreng* for us. Actually I think in part for me as an early birthday present. She continued, "But I think a lot of people think of that as a road to becoming a housewife. I'd like to have a career that lets me do some of those things. When I had dinner with Anna and Peter, we touched on that, and they asked about managing a restaurant or writing a food column. I guess they might be possibilities, but I'm sure there's stuff apart from the food I need to learn about."

"Recognizing that is important. Your Mom and I, as well as others in the family, can surely help you find out. But I'm guessing there's more you've been thinking about."

"Yeah. It's sort of that Mom and Dad have been talking about 'When you go to university' and so on. I'm

not sure that's the right way for me, and I don't want to get into a big argument. There's money set aside for my education. I'm not sure if it has to be used for particular courses."

"I remember Michelle saying you had a savings account for that, so probably you can use it for whatever you like. Though, as you are observing, some uses might raise objections."

"And I don't want that! I want to do well and make them proud, and do well for myself too."

"So you are thinking of not going to university. But would you consider some other form of training?"

"Yes. Of course. But possibly something like an apprenticeship. I don't know if you saw me chatting to a girl in a bakery in the Hague. She spoke good English and I was asking about the *Bokkepootjes* and how they were made, and she said she had just started as an apprentice and didn't know the answer, so she went and got the baker. Do we have apprentices here?"

"In some trades, yes. In the food industry, I think not. There is one famous school, the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, but it's more the hotel side than the restaurants. Then for chefs there's the Cordon Bleu, but that's probably pretty pricey, and in France."

"And I'm not sure that I want to do stuff that's super-fancy. I like to figure out how to do straightforward things that are really nice. So many of the everyday things are not really great – just think of packaged white bread, or some of the cellophane-wrapped cakes. Or some tinned stuff – all salty sauce and not much else. I guess some people like those things, but I think that

there could be better products.”

“Would you be prepared to try a business of your own?”

“What? Me?”

“Well, someone has started every business we see around us. It may or may not be something you want, but you could think about it. Or even try something out. Maybe look into Junior Achievement.”

“There’s a group at School. Guess I could see what it’s about when we go back.

Oh! I see some swirls on the water over by the point there. Let’s tack and I’ll close haul us toward the Quebec side for a while.”

We came about again. I said, “You know, even if you didn’t do Junior Achievement, you might think of a part-time business to see if you like being your own boss. But do talk to Mom and I about it.”

“And Anna and Peter. Actually, Peter was talking about some statistical stuff. I think he said Statistical Quality Control, and he was complaining that businesses here in Canada didn’t use it. I asked him for an example, and he said there was this guy who taught Quality Assurance to businesses, and he would arrange that at the first lunch whoever was the biggest boss-type there was served just behind the mail-room clerk.”

“And?”

“The cafeteria staff were tipped-off to give the mail-room guy a huge serving and a tiny one to the big boss. It usually led to a big uproar, and the quality man could point out that quality was about consistency in sizes and tastes and such. I’m not sure I want to have to learn all

about the statistics, but I can keep that idea in my head. Peter also said that the Japanese have hired Americans who worked on production in World War II to improve their products. He said a lot of traditional quality assurance was inspection of the product, but the Japanese were moving to working on measuring and improving the process so the product was always good and they didn't need to inspect. I can use that idea too."

"Yet you haven't thought about being your own boss?"

"Gee, Martin. Maybe I had but didn't realize it.

But how should I start?"

"You're just starting grade 11. You're allowed to stop school after grade 12, which is two more years, though most students complete grade 13, which is needed for university. So we've some time for you to think and maybe try some ideas, as well as to talk to people in different jobs – nothing quite like finding out what the job is really like."

"You think people will talk to me?"

"Most people are flattered to be asked about what they do. Especially if they really like it or really hate it. In the latter case, you want to know so you don't get stuck in the mud, so to speak."

"Yeah."

She was silent for a while, and the boat clawed slowly to windward with the sail hauled in close to the midline. Then she added, "Anna pointed out I should be careful to try to maintain my marks and my courses so I had choices. She said she'd heard of some people who wanted to do something particular and had done lots of subjects of interest, then found that university or college

needed a math course or a science course.”

“It may be a good idea for you to make a list of possible careers and the prerequisites, and we can look up what you’ll need to have to apply. And, of course, the costs and time. We should include the new vocational colleges here in Ontario too. They may be more suited to what you eventually decide you want to put your hand to.”

“It seems a lot to have to do.” Andrea sounded daunted.

“You’ve a reasonable amount of time, and you are starting to think now, which is good.

If I may venture an opinion that your Mom may not like, I suspect you may find that a business of your own might be the most satisfying and rewarding, both personally and financially. Though it does have the most risk. And even for business you need to learn how to manage books and money and personnel, and for food, lots of health and hygiene regulations.”

“Yes. Since you mentioned it just a few minutes ago, I find my mind is going a mile a minute thinking of what I might do as a sort of trial.”

“When does school start up again?”

“September 6. There’s going to be a Welcome Fair for new students. The Student Council wants to set up booths to sell things to raise some money for uniforms for cheerleaders. Maybe I could set up something neat for snacks. It’d be cute to have a *Wafel* Wagon, but the nice *Luikse wafels* take a lot of time to make because the dough has to rise. And Brussels waffles are messy to eat if you put strawberries or syrup on them.”

“What about *poffertjes*? You figured out how to use a muffin tin for round-bottomed muffins to make them

the other week and they were as good as those we had in the street in Appeldorn.”

“Hey, yes! That would work if they let me have a hotplate. If it were outside I could use a Coleman stove, which would heat better I think.”

“If they let you do it, I’ll help you make a jig so the muffin tin doesn’t slide around on a hotplate.”

“Thanks Martin. I’m excited by the possibilities. Have to work out the costs and prices, including for a sign and any extra equipment.”

“Ready to try to see how fast this tub will go?” I said, sensing we’d probably reached a good point to break the discussion for now.

“Yeah. Let’s do it! Ready to gybe?”

Almost before I could reply she put the tiller over and round we went. I loosed the sail and we were on a broad reach. The boat thrummed against the water and rose onto a plane with a swish of the wake. Andrea took us straight to our dock, then rounded up perfectly so I could simply step off and tie off the painter so we could un-rig. She’s getting good at a lot of things, including thinking about the future.

Andrea’s notebook – excerpt

Poffertjes

Use a round bottom muffin tin or a madeleine pan.

Getting even heat is a bit of a problem.

Batter for poffertjes

Yeast: 1 teaspoon instant yeast; 1-2 tablespoon
milk; mix yeast in milk. Prob should not be
cold milk

Warm further 1 1/4 cups milk

In bowl, mix 1 cup each buckwheat flour and
reg. flour, 1 teaspoon sugar, and 1/2 teaspoon
salt. Stir in 2 eggs and about half the milk
until smooth.

Add yeast mix.

Beat in rest of milk.

Cover and let sit an hour.

Grease hot pan and put a dollop of batter in
each.

Turn when solid and brown other side.

Sprinkle with powdered sugar, or fancy
them up in other ways.

Thoughts:

- if I need to make a lot of anything,
I need to have all the shortcuts worked out
- Rate of production of poffertjes:

12 per batch (1 pan), 24 if 2 pans
2 mins cooking
6 per serving, so at most 4 servings
in 2 mins or 2 servings /min

!! Not fast enough!

- consistency of results is critical for happy customers. If you've got the cookies different sizes, kids will fight over who gets the biggest one.
- May need to experiment (and measure?) to get taste and texture right
- Then need to ensure same every time
- Simpler process will make it easier to keep consistency and train "staff"
- Want recipes that can tolerate a bit more or a bit less cooking or a bit higher or lower temperature. "forgiving".
- minimize the manual steps

September 2, 1966 – Michelle

It's late. We're in the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec for the Labour Day weekend. Martin suggested it as a treat for ourselves. Andrea was with Bryan and Rachel for the weekend. They were going to stay in Ottawa and had a bunch of things planned, including some getting ready for the start of school.

The desk staff of the Chateau were efficient. We'd managed to leave a bit early from work. Not quite kosher, but we got off at 3 and were here a little after 9:30. It will be nice when there's divided highway all the way.

When we were in our room, I asked, "Tired?"

Martin replied, "Yes. The last hour of driving was about one more than I was ready for, even though we'd swapped a couple of times and stopped for something to eat."

We'd had a hamburger each and shared some fries at a diner along the way. Even each had a malted milk.

"Bath?" I asked.

"Is that a plain bath, or a bath with intent?" Martin asked back.

"I'm sure we'll find out."

Despite the innuendo, we settled into the tub, me in front, and allowed the rush and bother of the week and the drive to soak away.

"Do you think Andrea was very disappointed to realize that her idea of *poffertjes* would not work?" I asked. I'd meant to talk about this in the car, but somehow we'd been focused on the road or else just listening to the radio.

Martin replied quietly – after all his mouth was not far from my ear – “I think she would have liked to do something evocative of the Netherlands, like the *poffertjes* stall we bought some from. But I never had the chance to suggest to her that the rate of production would mean sales would be low. She figured out for herself that she would have trouble setting up even two pans for cooking them. That’s only 24 *poffertjes*, and a serving is typically a half dozen at least. But they take about 2 minutes a batch to make. So at the very best only a customer every 30 seconds, or 120 an hour.”

“How many students were expected?”

“Several hundred at least, and the Welcome Fair is likely not going to last much more than an hour. And, of course, there was also some concern that the pans and hotplate were a safety risk as well as a set-up and take-down chore.”

“So what’s she going to do?”

“She’s decided to have a table called Dutch Delight anyway, but to have pre-cooked items. She’s learned how to make *bokkepootjes* and *speculaas* as you know, and she found that a couple of supermarkets carry rusk that is close enough to *beschuit* that she can offer some savoury canapes with Edam and Gouda cheese that she found at a Deli on Bank Street. Ellie Sinclair also showed her how to make *pepernooten*, which are like tiny ginger-snaps. And she’s making some *appel beignets* and *oliebol*, though those are essentially the same thing. If she has time, I think she plans to make some *banket* and some *marsepein*, that is marzipan.”

“You know, I’m almost annoyed she talked to you

about this rather than me.”

“She didn’t exactly hide what she was doing, but perhaps she shared more about the details with me. Um. ... Maybe also because she’s been talking to me about her future.”

“That too!” I was getting a bit annoyed.

“When we went sailing the day before my birthday celebration. She’s worried that what she is hoping to explore as a possible career might be considered as less than acceptable to you and Bryan.”

“Really! She’s scared of our reaction?”

“Your reaction to what I’ve said may be an indication that her concern has at least a semblance of a foundation.” Sometimes Martin could be annoying with his observations, even if he was right.

“Martin, do you think I’d oppose her, or – you know – belittle her ideas?”

“I don’t think you would, but I think Andrea has only heard you talk of her going to university. I gather Bryan also talks about when she goes to university.”

“She doesn’t want to go to university?”

“What she said to me is that she’d like to find a career that uses her interests and abilities with food and possibly sewing and crafts, but not as a housewife. And she is not sure university is the best route to such a career.”

“She’s hinted the same to me. But how will she find such a career?”

“I suggested she talk to some people in the food sector who do different jobs to learn what they like and do not like about their careers. False dreams are dangerous. And I also said we should try to learn what some of the

new community colleges may be offering. I mentioned the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. And – possibly foolishly – I said she might think of being her own boss and starting a business, though I did point her at Junior Achievement to give that idea some structure.”

Phew. I didn’t know all this.

“I feel a bit left out,” I said.

“I don’t think she intended that, but I think she wants to use the Welcome Fair as a try-out of doing something in the way of a food business. If it doesn’t work, there’s no great disaster. If it does – and I’ve told her to keep notes on costs and time and revenues, though the profits go to the cheerleader uniforms – then she will have some data to aid future choices.”

“Isn’t she too young to be running a business?”

“Maybe. But she has grades 11 and 12 to finish before she can leave school.”

“So she’ll be at least 18 before anything comes about?”

“I’m not sure. And I’ve not talked to her about it. But suppose the Welcome Fair idea works. She could consider doing some modest catering for events to earn a bit of money and learn whether that is an opportunity she would like to take further.”

“But Martin, should she? Is the income not too uncertain?”

“For you and I and Bryan – all of us civil servants – the whole concept seems plagued by risk. But there are plenty of businesses that have been established through much more danger and challenge. There may also be risks if you are too negative.”

“Meaning?” I asked.

“You know. The age-old teenage complaint that old people never understand.”

“That she won’t talk to us? Is that what you mean?”

“I guess so. We have been lucky not to have either daughter close us out of what they are thinking. Andrea is talking to us, so I think we should listen, ask good questions in as positive a way as possible, and try to let her get to the answers herself.”

“But kids often ignore anything parents say. They get a silly idea and ...”

“Has Andrea done that?” Martin intervened quite sharply.

“No. You’re right. She hasn’t. But do you think she’ll take our questions seriously?”

“So far she’s seemed quite eager to get our opinions, so I think we have some obligation to try to keep that dialogue going. And especially to tell her when we don’t have answers, but that we’re willing to help her find them. If she’s going to be a success at any business, she’s going to have to learn to find out things and plan and execute her ideas properly.”

“That all seems so alien to me.”

“Yet your Dad is a successful contractor.”

“Yes. I always seem to just think of how things were at home. Because Nicole and I were the girls, I think he didn’t talk to us about the business side of his life, but maybe I’ll see if he’ll talk to Andrea.”

“Good idea. Now how about putting some more hot water in this tub. And maybe consider how I can curl your toes.”

I didn’t say anything, but I could think of some won-

derful ways he could get my toes to curl. And I could curl his toes at approximately the same time. And no alarm clock for the morning!

September 5, 1966 – Andrea

Labour Day. I was at Dad and Rachel's in Alta Vista. The house had a big back yard, and they'd put a screened porch on the back which was a nice place to be lazy. Ralph and I decided to start early, and by 10:30 were each on a chaise-lounge chair reading. Dad had gone with Stephen to fly model airplanes. Somehow he'd never had the chance as a kid and Stephen has a big interest and several models with engines. So the two of them took off right after breakfast, for which I'd made French toast.

Rachel was pottering in the garden down at the bottom of the lot. She'd probably join us in a while.

Ralph said "I really liked that French toast you made for breakfast."

"Thanks. It's a good use for bread that's getting a bit stale. The French call it *pain perdu*, possibly for that reason."

"That jam – did you make it?"

"Yeah. We had some blueberries at the cottage and some strawberries that were a bit ripe as well as an apple that Nicole bit into and found a maggot. Well, half a maggot!"

Ralph laughed. I continued, "I cut up the apple and there were no more maggots so I simply boiled it and the other fruit with some sugar and put it in a jar in the freezer. It wasn't worth doing all the hot water bath."

“All the better for us.

I’m rather glad you like cooking.”

“You know, it’s not because ... well ... for being a housewife.”

I felt I had to make sure he knew.

But Ralph surprised me. He said “When I see you cooking or making stuff, I don’t see any ‘hausfrau’ look. There’s something else that I can’t quite describe, but it’s like you’re getting ready to fight a battle and getting your army prepared.”

“Wow. You see that.”

“Nah, not really see it. But I get some sort of signal like that. Maybe like you’re the chef of a fancy restaurant or the chief designer for a fashion house.”

Words stuck in my throat. I hadn’t talked to Ralph about this sort of thing. And I couldn’t think of any way he’d overhear me talking to Martin or Mom or Anna and Peter. In fact I couldn’t think of any occasion he’d met Anna since Remembrance Day 1964, and he’d never met Peter that I knew about.

“I ... I ... can’t think how you figured that out. Have you talked to Anna or Peter or Martin?”

“Isn’t Peter Anna’s husband? No. I’ve not talked to anybody. It’s just how you seem when you’re doing stuff. Focused. Paying attention. Trying to learn and improve.”

“Am I that obvious?” I asked, worried Dad would pick up on it.

“Probably not to other people. Mom and Bryan are pretty busy with their jobs and each other. Stephen is always working on his models or stuff like that.”

“And you? How come you notice?” I wanted to know.

“Well. Until Mom and Bryan got together, I’d not really talked to girls. You know. Outside of school and stuff. And when you first came into our lives I was a bit of a jerk. So was Stephen, but he sort of copied me. But now I like that I can ask you about things from a girl’s – woman’s – point of view.”

“Couldn’t you ask your Mom?”

“Nah. She was pretty hurt when our Dad abandoned us. There’s a shell she’s built up, and I think there’s still a lot of pain underneath. I’m really proud of how she’s managed to keep our family going. She let my Dad do what he wanted – always put him first, let him do what he wanted. He became less and less reliable, and eventually just left and apparently dropped out. Mom thinks he had some sort of breakdown, and she’s worried about Stephen and I. Had us see a psychologist.”

“How old were you when he left?”

“I was about ten when he left. My Mom’s parents fortunately helped. Got us through the first two years when Ralph and I were too young to be left on our own.”

“I was about 12 when Mom got sick because Dad infected her. She had to have some pretty serious surgery. Dad didn’t want her to divorce him, but she thought he might be still be tom-catting around.”

“Gee. I didn’t know all that. We’d sort of guessed there was something, but Bryan and Mom didn’t tell us anything in detail.”

“I don’t think I was supposed to know as much as I do,” I agreed.

“Your Dad seems to have realized he was in the wrong.

He seems a lot more careful. But I know my Mom watches him pretty carefully. Her experience with my Dad has made her super-vigilant.”

“But not able to talk to you about stuff that’s kind of personal. My Mom was like that.”

“You say ‘was’. Can she now?”

“I think Martin and Anna have helped her. Me too.”

“Maybe indirectly me too, because I can talk to you like this.”

“I suppose so. And it was helpful to talk to you about Norm.”

We were silent for a couple of minutes.

“So you said you could talk to me about girl’s and stuff?” I said.

“Yeah. Not everything I guess. But you give me a different perspective. Make me think about odds and ends I’d not consider otherwise.”

“I guess it works both ways. I’m not, like, really interested in airplanes, but I’ve learned some stuff from Stephen, and it’s clear he’s learning about building things and making them work. And when you and I talk, there’s, as you say, a different perspective.”

“Kind of a pity you’re my step-sister.”

“Really?”

“Well, you’re nice looking and easy to be with. So the sort of girl – young woman – who’d be nice to go out with.”

Well, that was a new perspective! I could only respond with “Oh. Hadn’t thought of that. But thanks for the vote of confidence.”

“You’re welcome.

Here comes Mom. Oh. Oh. She looks like she has a job for us.”

Rachel came up onto the porch. “Can you two couch potatoes help me put a frame around those plants? I want to see if I can keep them going until close to Halloween.”

I saw Ralph getting ready to make an excuse, so said “Have you got the frame material ready?”

Rachel replied “Yes. I got Bryan to put it out before he and Stephen left. And also the tools are just by the bottom of the steps here. It doesn’t need to be covered yet. I’m going to use plastic sheet, but want a box about a foot high. There’s some 1 by 2 for stakes and some old fence planks. They’re already down by the bed, and I’ve put in sticks to mark the corners. And a stool for sawing if you need it.”

“Ralph and I can do it. Then we’ll have lunch. And maybe after, I can get you to help me hem my skirt so it’s ready for tomorrow.”

Rachel said “Is that the plaid skirt? I thought it looked fine.”

“It’s about an inch or so below my knees. I’m not aiming for a miniskirt, but just at the top of my knees would be a bit more up to date.”

“Yes. I can help you do that. But would your mother approve?”

“She’d object to very short. But I noticed the latest skirt she bought for herself is at the length I want.”

“Yes. That seems to be the trend these days. Or else slacks. I guess there’ll soon be a fuss in the schools over whether girls can wear slacks.”

“When I was at Immaculata, there was always a bit of uproar when a new girl showed up in a sleeveless blouse when it got warmer toward the end of the school year. It’s easier at Glebe.”

Ralph and I got up and went to the bottom of the garden. We didn’t say much after I suggested “I’m not good at sawing, so if you cut some stakes, I’ll pound them in, then we can measure and fit the planks.”

That’s what we did, but when we had the planks to size, we realized that we couldn’t nail the planks to the stakes because the stakes would shift. The stakes were set up on the outside of the planks. I was about to suggest that we pull the stakes and nail the planks to them, then put the ”walls” back, when Ralph said “Not to worry. We just need one stake in the center of each side on the INSIDE of the wall to hold the planks in place.”

“Hey. That’s right. And easy.”

* * *

Rachel was pleased with how quickly we did the job, and with the box itself. After lunch, she had me put on my skirt and stand on a chair and she pinned the hem and I tacked it up on her sewing machine. I didn’t cut any material, so ironing took a little extra work, but if Mom complains too much I can take it down again. I don’t think she will, though. Rachel had me put it back on and she said it looked nice. If it was too short, I’m pretty sure she’d complain.

Dad and Stephen came back. They were pretty tired.

I think lots of activity with the model 'planes. But they seemed happy. Dad got a beer and Stephen a pop and they flopped into chairs on the porch. Good job it's spacious. Rachel was doing some needlepoint, so I went and got lemonade for Rachel and Ralph and myself. I knew there was a bag of chips in the cupboard, so I emptied it into a big bowl and got out some smaller bowls too – might as well avoid lots of getting up. Rachel fortunately had a fairly large tray.

“Gee. Thanks Andrea,” Rachel said.

For a while we went back to our books. Dad was snoring a little. Stephen had a comic book, but I noticed he was asleep too. Ralph and I were reading. He had some sort of science fiction book. I was reading Margaret Lawrence's *The Stone Angel*. There's lots of noise about banning it. Guess that's because of the sex bits. But it really isn't – what's the word – salacious. I sort of like it, but it's really quite sad.

Around 4:30 Dad woke up and set about starting the barbecue. Steaks! I've not cooked steaks, so I'll watch carefully. I'm not sure that barbecues aren't rather inefficient. You have to get them going with lighter fluid which isn't very nice-smelling. Then wait until the coals are ready. And after you've done cooking, there's a lot of heat left that you could cook with. And still you need to use the stove for the baked potatoes unless you start the coals really early, and then they'd probably be too hot anyway.

Stephen decided to go in the garage and clean up his model plane and then do some repairs. I guess it had a bit of a crash, but they apparently got in several flights.

Rachel went into the kitchen, so Ralph and I were left on the porch. Out of the blue he asks “Andrea, can I ask you something?”

“Sure. Go ahead.”

“Well, there’s this girl who was in my class last year. Justyna. And she’s kind of smart, but a bit awkward. And she wears clothes that are home made, which are quite colourful but not so much like most kids wear. Some of the guys say crude things about her, either because of her clothes or because her family came from Poland. I think she was born there, but she’s been in school here since Grade 1.”

He stopped, and there was a pause, so I filled in the gap. “You think you’d like to ask her out? I thought you’d been dating Susan.”

“Susan and I are good friends, but we’ve both kind of realized there’s no great chemistry. We’ll stay friends though, and if one of us needs a date for some event, possibly go out again. But, yeah, I’d like to ask Justyna out. I just don’t want guys saying things.”

“You can’t really do much about that. And I think sometimes boys – probably girls too – pick on kids who are solitary or different. In fact, maybe if you asked her out, they’d realize she’s not such an outsider. Though you can never tell, I suppose.

You know, I’ve gone out a few times with Joseph March. We’re not going steady or anything, but I know him well enough to suggest a casual date. Maybe a double date would be less formal. You know ‘I’m going with some friends to a movie. Want to come along?’”

“That’d be great, Andrea. And it would be easier to

ask that way the first time. And easier to get to know each other without the pressure of one on one, especially if she turns out to be the silent type, which I actually doubt.”

“I actually want to catch up with Joseph. He’s a bit shy. I can use the same type of invite. A little white lie. Can you look up what’s on so we can choose something decent. Nothing worse than ‘What do you want to see?’ then ‘I dunno. What do you want to see.’ If we select something you and I both want to see, at least we aren’t sitting through something boring or awful.”

“Good idea. I’ll look in the paper tomorrow and ’phone you. Saturday evening, right?”

“Yeah. Saturday’s best. Let’s try to get the choice of movie sorted out by tomorrow night. You may have to be careful about films that will go off later in the week, though. And once you’ve done that, I’ll try to think of a place we can eat.”

“Don’t make it too expensive. I’m a bit tight on cash just now. Mom gives us a pretty good allowance, but it has to cover clothes and books and buses. In fact everything but house and food at home.”

“Good for her! You and Stephen will know how to budget.”

“I’m learning, but sometimes it’s tough.”

“I’ll make sure I touch base with you about where we eat. Or we could suggest a picnic if the weather’s OK. That’s less expensive and we can ask our dates to contribute without it being a big embarrassment.”

September 5, 1966 – Martin

We were driving back from Quebec, leaving after a leisurely breakfast.

“Did you have a nice time this weekend?” I asked, rather assuming I’d get a positive answer from Michelle, who was in the passenger seat. We’d change drivers in a half hour or so.

“Oh yes. It was good to get away just by ourselves.”

“Don’t let Andrea hear that.”

“Oh. It’s not just Andrea. I love my family, but get-togethers can be ... well, noisy. Busy! I liked this weekend because we did a few tourist things, but mostly we walked and talked and – you know – other stuff.”

“Is ‘other stuff’ the new official nomenclature?”

Michelle laughed, then said, “Martin, two years ago you introduced me to the possibility that I could really enjoy my body. I’m so appreciative that I don’t know how to express it.”

“Well, I’ve rather noticed you express it very well during the ‘other stuff’. I think the noises add to the very, very nice time I have.”

“That’s good to know. And goes some distance to letting me feel less guilty about expressing gratitude.”

“To go back to family, do you feel the gatherings are stressful for you?” I asked, as I wasn’t sure how Michelle felt.

“No, not stressful. Just that the bustle of life sometimes doesn’t seem to leave enough time for us. We’ve both talked about jobs – though happily not this weekend, and that was rather appreciated.”

“Actually, it hadn’t occurred to me. That is, I didn’t consciously decide to avoid the subject.”

“Nor me. But we seemed to want to enjoy the present.”

“Yes. Precisely. But I guess we’ll be tossed back into the fray tomorrow morning.”

“Yes. And I said I’d ferry Andrea and her baked goods to school for the Welcome Fair.”

“Would it help if I do that? I carefully checked that I had no obligations until 11.”

“Oh. Yes. That would be a relief. I don’t want to be late for work as there’s someone new taking over in a sister group to ours, and there may be some sort of spontaneous meeting called to say hello. And I did plan to pick her up with any leftovers or containers.”

“I wondered about the return journey. I could probably do that too ...”

“No. I’ll take care of it. It’ll give me a chance for a chat with Andrea to find out about her weekend and how the Welcome Fair went.”

“Good idea. If I remember Anna at that age, she’ll have lots to talk about, some of which is a cover for trying to ask about subjects she finds awkward.”

“You mean ‘other stuff’, to use our name?” Michelle asked.

“Actually I think of ‘other stuff’ as the fun part of sex. But I’d suspect if she wants to talk about sex, it will be about less fun aspects like contraception and behaviour and things like that. But Andrea has been doing a lot of thinking about her future, so she may want to talk about her thoughts in that direction. And from what I seem to be hearing from her lately, she’s far from making up her

mind.”

“Yes. I must keep that in my mind, and also remember to ask and listen, not be the voice of command.”

“Michelle, that’s a tall order for you, I know. But if you can be her friend before being her parent, I think it will go better for us all.”

“Thanks for understanding. It doesn’t come easily for me. I’m used, as we were saying, to the noisy family meals.”

“I like them, but I think I know what you mean about the noise and bustle.”

“Yes. And this year there’ll be excitement for Stephane and Nicole, of course.”

“Oh. Why?” I asked.

“Oops. I thought Nicole would have told you, since it will mean you have to find a new secretary. She’s pregnant.”

“No she hadn’t said, though it isn’t that much of a surprise. They’ve been talking about family since they married over a year ago. It’s hardly going to be a child that causes tongues to wag unless she produces a baby that’s green with purple stripes.”

“Better not say anything like that where she can hear. You may not know that when she learned about Sharon’s baby that died, she managed to keep up appearances all day, then cried the whole evening at home.”

“Oh. That I didn’t know. I’d have given her the afternoon off.”

“That would have been worse. She likes to be very professional, but she’s also a terrible softie in some ways.”

“And you know that with some of the ideas about

jobs you and I have been sharing, it's not impossible that when she returns to work – if she does – I may not be there. Her job is with my position rather than with me.”

“Has there been some development? You haven't said anything.” Michelle seemed a little anxious.

“No. Nothing at all recently. But I think we both know that it would be silly of me not to keep my eyes and ears open. Things change, and we shouldn't just let them happen to us. Though I must admit, I'd be really happy if I knew that things would just go on as they are. I like what I do, and don't really want to have to spend a lot of effort really to find another situation just like it.”

“That's sort of how I feel too. I guess we both are a bit stick-in-the-mud.”

“But if we were real sticks in the mud, we wouldn't even talk about it,” I countered.

“True.

By the way, how is Anna doing with her doctoral studies.”

“Rather well, I think. She had a discussion with Prof. Hotchkiss last December, and they both got quite enthused about her looking into standardization of measurements relating to optical lasers.”

“Is that likely to be a good topic for her? I know lasers are in the news.”

“Yes. There's lots of interest and some popular excitement. But she will be looking at the details that are important for making them work in lots of practical applications.”

“Won't she have to do a lot of course work first?”

Michelle asked.

“I’m not sure of the details, but she has to pass comprehensive exams next year I think, so she’ll take some courses for that. But during the summer, she had work with some people at NRC that relates to measuring power in and out of some lasers that will likely get used for welding or other industrial processes.”

“I’ve not had a chance to learn how she got along at NBS,” Michelle said.

Anna had been sent for a week to learn from and share information with some workers at the National Bureau of Standards. By coincidence, she stayed in the same motel I’d used in May, and the manager had said they’d given her the same room as another guest with the name Tremblay. She got to tell them it was her father.

“Yes, we need to catch up. But when she phoned after getting back, she said she’d picked up a lot of ideas, but it will mean plenty of reading to understand and get them in order.”

“We did see them around the time of your birthday. I hope you weren’t disappointed that I only got you a book, and a silly one at that.” Michelle said. She’d given me a book that actually was a plain paper notebook.

“I’ve actually started to use it to put down ideas about what I want to do with my career, and to keep a list of possible contacts with addresses and phone numbers and notes. I can also staple in business cards. I’ve set aside pages at the back so they can be in alphabetic order.”

“So much for silly. You managed to make it sensible. Double embarrassment for me.”

“Why be embarrassed? You gave me something I like

and use. Gifts don't have to be expensive or – well – posh to be liked and appreciated.”

“Martin, I love how you make everything I do for you seem special. Thank you for a marvellous weekend.”

She paused, then added “Thank you for a wonderful life since I met you.”

September 10, 1966 – Michelle

The weather was giving us a bit of extra summer, so we decided to spend Saturday and Sunday at the cottage. We'd probably have come anyway, but it was nice to have warm, comfortable temperatures. We finished a light lunch and Martin was planning to barbecue some hamburgers for supper. We had some marshmallows to roast afterwards.

“Mom. How'd you like to come out on the Sunfish with me?” Andrea asked.

“Shouldn't I be here when Anna and Peter arrive?” It was a rather silly excuse, and Martin popped the bubble.

“I'll be here. It'll do you good to get your sea legs.”

Of course, that was just as silly.

“OK, OK. Is the Sunfish ready?”

“Yeah. I rigged it while you set out lunch,” Andrea said, as I realized I could have known that by stepping onto the porch and looking out.

A short while later, Andrea was steering us across the river. I was told to take charge of the main sheet. I more or less remembered how to do this.

“I'll try not to dump you in, Mom.”

“You're referring to my first sail with Martin?”

“Yeah. I gather it was special.”

“Well, I won’t tell you all the details. But, yes. It was special in a very ridiculous way. Or at least it became ridiculous.”

“Tell me after we’ve tacked. I don’t want to get too close to the Quebec shore in case there are some dead-heads in the shallower water.”

We came about surprisingly smoothly. My daughter was very comfortable in the boat.

“I guess it’s time you knew the story. And you might as well hear it from me.”

“Anna said you’d told her and that it was a very nice story, but that you had to tell me yourself.”

“I’m glad she takes that view. It wasn’t my finest hour.”

“Oh. I don’t understand.”

“Well, to put it simply, we gybed and I got dumped in the water. We got righted and Martin pulled me aboard, but we needed to come in. When we’d got the boat unriggered and I took off my life jacket, I was still wet, and wearing just shorts and a T-shirt.”

“Oops. Wet T-shirt, and you don’t usually wear a bra,” Andrea said. Hmm. It was rather uncomfortable that my daughter was so aware of my underwear habits.

“Exactly. But Martin whistled and made a crack about the cottage having great views. You’ll remember that I was not very confident back then about my ... er ... attractiveness as a woman. And after Bryan, I was not interested in a boyfriend. So I got really mad. Blew my stack, told him I’d said I wanted nothing to do with, well, sex. And I was so mad I told him he might as well

see why I felt that way – meaning the operation scar – and I took all my clothes off and threw them at him.”

At this Andrea was laughing so hard the boat wobbled and we had to adjust a bit to get it moving smoothly again. I continued.

“Well, Martin just smiled and said he saw a very attractive lady wearing nothing but a scowl. That surprised me, and started us talking about things. I guess the rest you sort of know.”

Well, I hoped she did and wouldn’t ask about things that are quite important to me, but that I’d rather not discuss with her.

“Better tack again,” she said.

Ah. Saved by the bell. We went about smoothly. Andrea really was a good sailor. When we’d settled the course, she said, “Mom, What did you think of the things I made for the Welcome Fair?”

“Oh, yes. I’d meant to tell you how wonderful they were. And somehow I didn’t get to it.”

“I think the phone rang, then I went out to Susan Grafton’s.”

“Yes. I guess so. Anyway they were wonderful. And I notice there were none left, so I assume you sold them all.”

“Yes. I’d planned to keep a few samples for afterwards, but there was so much demand we sold them all, and the principal actually came by before we opened and told us to increase the prices by 50 percent. My table made the most money of all. And that was after the money we were allowed for the costs of making the things.”

“Yes. The ingredients are not free.” I’d actually been

a bit concerned we were expected to donate them all. While Martin and I could afford it, I was worried that there might be a presumption of that, which could be a definite hardship in some families. And cheerleader uniforms weren't exactly a necessity, despite what some students, teachers and parents might think.

Andrea said, "I've got the numbers. If it had been for just me, I'd have made a profit of \$90. Of course, that doesn't include an allocation for rent and equipment."

"But surely it wasn't really a business, was it?" I asked.

"Mom. I know it's not supposed to be, but I thought it would be good to see how well it might work in real life."

Was this Andrea's way of trying to talk to me about a career as a cook, or something like that. She should go to university. I want to tell her that, but ... Martin's advice was ask questions and listen. He's right, but it's not easy. Especially for me.

"Real life? Does doing that sort of thing interest you as a career? Or as a housewife?"

"Not as a housewife, even though people talk about cooking that way. You know, men's hearts and stomachs. No. I'm wondering if I can turn my interest in food and crafts into a good career. But I've a lot to learn, particularly about what people actually do, what they earn, the qualifications needed for some of the jobs, and whether they enjoy their career."

"Good for you. If you need any help with contacts, I'll do my best, but I can't say I know too many people who are in the food industry."

“Thanks Mom. I know you and Dad both want me to go to university. And if there is an appropriate program, I’ll want to do it. Anna’s said to watch my marks and my choice of courses so I have the right prerequisites. But I have to work hard to get B’s. A’s are really tough for me.”

I could sense her anguish. But what she’d just said was practical and showed great maturity for a sixteen-year-old.

“Andrea, you’re thinking carefully and being realistic. You can count on having support from Martin and I, and I’ll try to talk to your Dad to ask him to keep an open mind.”

“Thanks Mom. Ready about!”

We tacked away from the Quebec shore, then Andrea opened up into a wide reach toward our dock on the Ontario side. We didn’t talk much, but both of us came onto the porch smiling after we’d put away the boat – neither of us wanted to have to do it when it was time to drive home and we would be tired.

“Hi Anna, Peter,” I said. There was a hubbub of greetings.

Martin calmed it all down by asking “Shall we open a bottle of wine? I’ve a white chilling.”

There was general agreement, and Martin added “Andrea, there’s some club soda if you want that with a splash of the wine.”

Martin believed that young people should be introduced to alcohol gradually and carefully. It had rather shocked me at first, but now I tend to think that the ‘none at all, then as much as you can guzzle’ or else un-

supervised under-age drinking are a lot more dangerous.

Andrea replied, "OK. I'm a bit thirsty after being out in the boat, so lots of soda and not much wine.

I'll put out a bowl of chips."

September 13, 1966 – Andrea

It was Tuesday night. I was busy working on some homework. An essay for English. I'd done the maths homework. While lots of kids complained about that, I generally didn't have a pile of trouble with it. Better keep mouth shut, though. I don't want to be asked to help. Not because I'm unwilling to help, but I find I need as much time as possible for other subjects. It's not that I'm dumb. Just that I have trouble getting ideas written down so they aren't all like a pile of ingredients rather than a pie. Wow. I'm even starting to think in terms of cooking. But maybe that will help.

Oh. There's the phone. Probably Ralph about Friday. We're planning to go with Joseph and Justyna, but Justyna said she had to confirm first with her parents. I don't know if that's the truth and they're kind of strict, or perhaps she just wanted to think about going out with Ralph. Maybe ask around to find out if he's OK.

Mom called, "Andrea, It's for you." so I trotted downstairs. But it wasn't Ralph.

"Hi Andrea, it's Bonnie Grafton."

"Hi, Mrs. Grafton, what can I do for you?"

"Well, Susan may have told you that my sister is having a 25th Wedding Anniversary around Thanksgiving, and as a present, Edward and I said we'd host the dinner.

It'll be here at our house. There'll be 10 or 12 people. I was going to call round to some different caterers, but they generally want a bigger group, and a commercial-style kitchen in the venue. Susan said you were doing a Junior Achievement project to try out a catering business, and those cookies she brought home last week were so good, I thought I should at least find out if you might be interested. I realize you aren't yet set up, but, well, it seemed a good idea to ask."

She seemed flustered, but here was an opportunity. Mustn't throw it away.

"I'm very flattered, Mrs. Grafton, and I'd very much like to talk to you about the opportunity. I think that I'd have to talk it over with my Mom, but I'd better find out what you have in mind so I can figure out if I'm capable of doing what you need and want. Should I come by after school tomorrow?"

"Yes, that would be fine. I'm still trying to think what we need myself, so if you have ideas, that would be helpful."

We said our goodbyes and I went and told Mom about the conversation. She said, "Normally I'd be all upset and worried. But somehow I think you should at least find out what she wants and do some calculations."

"Yes. I wouldn't want to lose money. But if I can carry it off, it would be a huge chance to learn whether I'm suited to that sort of thing."

"I'll be glad to talk things over with you, and I'm sure Martin will too."

Before she said more, I said "But Mom, you mustn't do any of the actual work. And if I use the kitchen, we'll

have to make an allowance for costs. I want this to be fully business-like.”

“Then you’ll have to think about someone to assist you. On your own might be difficult, especially if you have to serve the food.”

Oh. Yes. “Maybe Ralph would want to earn a bit of money. And there’s probably a couple of people at school. Susan would normally be one of them, but I’m guessing she’ll be one of the party guests.”

Mom said, “Good luck, but don’t forget school work.”

“I won’t. I’m going back to it now.”

September 17, 1966 – Martin

“Here you go, Andrea, poached egg on toast.”

“Thanks Martin. I’m going to have to learn how you do it. I’ve done a couple, but they’re not as nice as yours.”

Michelle said, “How was your evening last night?”

She was in Mom mode, probing for details of the double date Andrea had arranged with her step-brother Ralph. I figured that a foursome was probably a lot safer than a couple. And my impression was that Andrea didn’t have any interest in getting into trouble.

Andrea replied, “We had a nice time. Had fish and chips at a diner on Elgin. We thought of going to a movie, but decided instead to walk up onto Parliament Hill and look down on the river. It was a bit cool, but we had our coats and gloves.”

“Who did Ralph take?” Michelle asked.

“Justyna. A girl from his school. She’s Polish, and her last name begins with a W and is difficult to spell and pronounce. I wrote it down somewhere.”

“Was she nice?” Michelle was still playing detective.

“Yes. I liked her. Ralph said he was a bit worried about asking her because she wears clothes that are a bit different. Some she makes herself. They’re nice and colourful, but I guess not fashionable. And I suppose she’s considered a bit of a brain, though I think it’s really just that kids can be cliquey. Joseph told me he thought she was cute and friendly, and I hadn’t even asked him what he thought about her.”

“You’ve been out a few times with Joseph.”

“Yeah. You met him when he came over for tea one day when I was planning for the Welcome Fair. We get along well. Not sure why.”

I thought it was time to change the subject, so I said “Are you ready to talk to Mrs. Grafton later this morning?”

“I think so. You’ve seen my two menus and the costing. I’m going to propose that the Grafton’s simply reimburse the cost of food and pay me and Ralph for its preparation and serving. I’m going to ask for \$50. If Ralph just helps on the day, then I’ll give him \$10, or more if he helps in advance. As far as I can tell, my menus will use between \$50 and \$60 in food. The awkward things are spices and things that I’ll only use a bit of.”

“But still need to cost out,” I suggested.

“Yes. And from some of the Junior Achievement literature, in a real situation I’d need to cover the cost

of licenses and my kitchen, taxes and so forth. So I'll charge back the full cost of spices and then I'm going to contribute left-over spices and other ingredients to our kitchen. And \$10 will go to housekeeping here. to cover the use of the kitchen, electricity and pots and pans."

"Wow. You are serious. What are you proposing as menus?" Michelle asked.

"Well, it struck me that the *Bami Goreng* I made after we came home from Holland was rather interesting, and would be different. It also is pretty tolerant of timing. I think that might be important. I want to avoid anything that will need to be served at a particular moment. And I can use pork or chicken or shrimps or a mixture depending on whether anyone has diet issues. I've made a note to ask."

"That might be considered a bit, well, "foreign", I volunteered.

"Yes. So I've also suggested a ham or roast, with baked potatoes and vegetables."

"Are you doing any starter or dessert?"

"Oh yes, but they'll be the same for either main course. I'll do some *hors d'oeuvres*, individual salads, and for dessert some miniature tarts and cookies. The drinks the Grafton's are going to provide, but we'll serve them. And I checked they have enough dishes and cutlery, though if I may I'll bake here. I need to be able to really trust the oven temperature. In fact, I'd better get myself a good oven thermometer if I do this again. Actually I may see if I can find one for this job."

"How much time do you think it will take you?" I was playing devil's advocate.

“I looked at my notes for the Fair and for the Bami and ...”

“You kept notes?” Michelle jumped in.

“Sure Mom. How else am I going to know how difficult dishes are to prepare.”

Michelle was still looking surprised, so I said “Glad to hear you’re keeping track.”

“Yeah. Anyway, I figure about 5 hours for baking and 6 to 8 for the rest. The day of the party will be heaviest, about 5 hours. The other times can be fitted in with my school work and time I’d normally have for other stuff. So I figure Ralph and I should clear \$2 an hour fairly easily, and we should be able to not have to struggle to fit the event into our school schedule, since it’ll be on a Saturday.”

“That’s double minimum wage,” I volunteered.

“Well, I don’t want to be in business for minimum wage,” Andrea responded.

September 24, 1965 – Andrea

I was with Dad and Rachel this weekend. Saturday morning the three of us went shopping at Billings Bridge. Rachel with her list, and me with mine for the Grafton’s dinner. I had most of the items that wouldn’t spoil already. This was to pick up some of the odds and ends.

We went through both the supermarkets. I had the necessities, but I had sort of hoped to find something that was a bit out of the ordinary that would inspire me.

After we put our stuff in the trunk of Dad’s car, he said, “It’s not a bad day, how about we walk across the

bridge and find a coffee up on Bank Street.”

“Great idea,” Rachel said.

“Sure. I can use some exercise,” I agreed.

We walked out of the parking lot and toward the bridge. The side-walk was rather narrow, and Dad said, “Ladies. You go in front. It’s too tight for three across.”

As Rachel and I moved ahead, I noticed she was wearing the tiny silver clog earrings.

“Oh. You’re wearing the wooden shoe earrings. They look nice.”

“Yeah. I like them. They’re different, but most novelty earrings tend to be rather cheap looking and/or they’re too big or garish. You chose well, because these aren’t obtrusive and they look nice. And when people notice them they really find them interesting. One of the best presents I’ve had for several years. So thanks, Andrea.”

Dad said, “Yes, that was thoughtful of you.”

“I don’t like to give or to get stuff that won’t be used. There were plenty of rubbish souvenirs to waste money on. Fortunately, I spotted these, and I’d noticed Rachel wears earrings. Mom doesn’t have pierced ears and nor does Anna.”

“Shall we try that café?” Rachel asked.

We had to cross the road, which took us about a minute, given the busy Saturday traffic. We found a booth in the café and Dad and Rachel ordered coffee, while I chose tea.

“Not a hot chocolate?” Dad asked.

“I’ve been finding a lot of things sweeter than I like. Recently Martin showed me a way to make cocoa easily,

but he doesn't use sugar. They didn't have any during the War, and he got used to it that way. I tried it and I actually like it better. I was kind of surprised. And I find I like tea with just a bit of milk in it. Perhaps my tastes are changing."

"Oh ... " Dad seemed surprised.

"How are your preparations going for the dinner you're cooking?" Rachel asked. I hadn't actually said much to her, but she must have talked to Ralph. He was excited to earn some money.

"I think it's under control. It's a good chance for me to learn how catering works, figure out if I like that sort of work, and hopefully make some money."

"Just don't let it get in the way of getting good marks," Dad said.

"Anna told me to make sure to get a good mix of courses and good enough marks so I'm not blocked from getting into different programs. Getting good marks takes me a lot of work. I'm not dumb, but it's more a battle for me than it is for some others. Anyway, I've not yet figured out what I want to do for a career, so I should keep my options open."

"Guess we can't disagree with that," Dad said. "Have you looked at any of the university calendars yet?"

"I've started to try to find out about different programs, including what some of the new vocational colleges may offer. And I'm talking to different people to learn what they like and dislike about their jobs, and the rewards and requirements."

"But you've got to get your degree," Dad said.

Oh. Oh. Just the discussion I didn't want. But Rachel

jumped in “I think what Andrea said about considering all her options makes more sense. I know several people who went to university and took a general arts degree because they didn’t have any idea what they wanted to do, so ended up with an Mrs., sometimes even without the university degree. Now if she said categorically that she didn’t want to go to university, or that she wanted to drop out and get married, then I’d be concerned.”

Wow. The cavalry had arrived, but not in the expected uniform. And from some snippets of different conversations with her and Ralph, she may have been referring to her own studies. Then I gleaned an idea where her intervention came from as she continued, “The other day your Mom phoned to confirm the calendar and we were talking about the dinner you’re going to prepare, and we got talking about studies and careers because, like your Mom and Dad thinking about your plans, I’m trying to talk to Stephen and especially Ralph to get them to consider their future.”

“Guess I should be more supportive of that, Dear. I tend to get preoccupied with work, but that’s not a good excuse.”

Wow. This is a new Dad! I wasn’t quite sure what to say, but figured something was needed. “Lots of kids just don’t want to face the reality that they’re going to grow up and have to get a job.”

“Seems like we don’t need to be too worried about you in that regard,” Dad conceded, just as the coffee and tea arrived.

October 9, 1966 – Michelle

Thanksgiving dinner – the “real” one – was tomorrow at my parents. The Lacroix clan plus spouses and others like Anna and Peter in a big, noisy food fest. Not that I don’t like those events, but somehow I’m getting to be very appreciative of my own home dinners. Today we were having the leftovers from the Grafton anniversary dinner. There were a few things to do, and it was about 3 in the afternoon. Martin must be somewhere. Oh. I think he’s in the garage checking our cars. My station wagon is 8 – no 9 – years old, and Martin’s must be about the same vintage. Both pretty vanilla American models. Mine’s automatic, but his is manual and I kind of avoid driving it.

Andrea and I were in the kitchen. The *krupuk* had been a great hit, so there was none left in a prepared state, and we were making a bit more for tonight. She’d left a half tray of *bami* for the Grafton’s but there was a full one for us.

“Do you think these aluminum pans are a good way to serve the *bami*?” she asked.

“Well, they’re functional, and you can cover with aluminum foil to keep the food hot and moist. I guess the only issue is that they’re not elegant.”

“Ralph rather cleverly found some varnished wooden slats that he screwed together into a shallow box for them. But ideally I’d like a metal stand which I could put small heaters underneath. I guess that will have to wait.”

“You guys seem to have lots of ideas. I’m rather proud

of you.”

“But still want me to go to university?”

“Yes. I guess so. You don’t want to?”

“I don’t know. In fact, I’m very mixed up about that. I’m hoping the next year will help me figure out what I should do, though I suspect I’ll only get some of the answers I need.”

“I’m beginning to realize the best thing I can do is be supportive and be a good listener.”

“Thanks Mom. I don’t want to be arguing with you. But good, even tough, questions are probably a good thing. I just don’t want to feel we’re fighting.”

“Andrea. You’re being mature about your future. I think that makes it very stupid for me to take against you in any way. I’ll try to be as good a Mom as I can about that.”

“I guess it’s always difficult. How did you decide?”

“Rather embarrassing! I don’t really think I did. I got through high school, then Grandma and Grandpa Lacroix said it would be nice if I went to University, so I took a general arts program and drifted into geography. You seem to have more focus than I did.”

“I think Rachel feels the same way. Dad was asking about my plans and kind of getting a bit – you know – ‘daddish’ about me possibly not going to university, and Rachel jumped in and said that maybe it was more important that I was thinking what I wanted to do. And Dad eased off and agreed.”

“Wow. Not really like him. Or the Bryan I remember.”

“I’m pretty sure he knows he messed up with you. I

don't think I was supposed to overhear, but one time I heard him and Rachel talking. She was saying something about him having gone along with the political pooh bahs when they decided to have a drinking party and got himself in a mess. Dad didn't say much for a bit, then said he wouldn't ever let that happen again because the cost was too high. And Rachel said something odd. She said she knew she put on a tough face, but it was a cover up for her anxiety and loneliness after her husband Bill walked out."

"I kind of felt that way after Bryan and I had our break-up. Do you know how they met?" I asked.

"I guess she was working as an admin. assistant in some government office or other when Bill, her first husband, left. She realized that money would be tight as he wasn't sending her any. I think it took her over a year to track him down to start divorce proceedings. Apparently he was living hand to mouth as a casual labourer out west on some construction stuff.

So she put in for different competitions and got to be the personnel director for one of the agencies that deals with atomic energy. There was some meeting that involved Indian and Northern Affairs and I guess they started talking."

"I don't have much feeling for how well they're suited to each other." I said.

"Ralph thinks that they were both kind of unhappy to be alone. I think they get along well enough, but it doesn't seem like there's the same – I don't know how to say it – maybe energy, that I see with you and Martin."

"Oh. Er ..." I was a bit flummoxed.

“Mom. It’s pretty obvious that you and Martin have a lot of affection for each other, but not in a silly luvvy-duvvy way. That would be pretty embarrassing.”

“Well. I’m glad we’re not a cause of teenage angst.”

“Mom! Well, I suppose you’re right. Even if you were all soppy about each other, it would be OK compared to fighting and stuff. But the way you are with Martin is really nice. I guess it’s not something a lot of kids get to see and appreciate.”

“Thanks.

Now, do you think we’ve enough *krupuk*?”

October 14, 1966 – Martin

Andrea was going to her father this weekend, but he and Rachel had some sort of social engagement tonight. Stephen was going to spend the night at a friend’s, but Andrea asked if Ralph could come to dinner as he wanted to ask me something. I said I’d be home, wondering what was up.

Supper was rather simple – fish sticks, potatoes and peas. For some reason in our household we all found this to be a meal that meant ‘home’ to us.

After we’d finished dessert – some of Andrea’s pastries from the previous weekend – Michelle made a pot of tea and we went in the living room.

I said “How can I help you Ralph?”

“Well, Dr. Tremblay, you know my father walked out on us some years ago. I’m starting to think about a career and the studies I’ll need to get into different jobs. But my Mom didn’t get much chance for formal edu-

cation, even though she's done quite well in the public service. And I find Bryan quite uncomfortable to talk with, at least about my plans and hopes. But Andrea said you were quite helpful to her, and when I've been around here, I sort of got that feeling too."

It seemed to be part of my lot to talk to young people. Not that I objected. So I said "Why don't you tell us what you've been thinking."

"Well, I'm not sure yet, but I'm thinking that I am interested in how organizations make improvements in efficiency. When Andrea and I have been doing things like the Welcome Fair and the dinner the other week, I rather liked looking over the figures and working out the costs of different parts of the meal and the labour content and such."

"As far as I can gather," I broke in, "that sounds like industrial engineering or cost accounting. But I'm not very familiar with either."

"You're doing better than the guidance counsellor at school. He didn't seem to have a whole lot of ideas, just some pamphlets from some colleges and universities."

"I did my Ph. D. in electrical engineering. There's some activity among engineers in the area of improving processes, but I don't know of any formal training programs. They may exist. Then there's the operations research area. We have a group at the DRB, and they were instrumental in getting the Canadian Operations Research Society going a few years ago. I can probably put you in touch with one or two members. It would be sensible for you to learn more from someone actually working in the field. Unfortunately my contacts are at

the DRB – Defence Research Board – and their work may be hush-hush, I don't know. My own work isn't very restricted, and likely to become more public over the next couple of years."

"That would be great. But isn't operations research pretty mathematical?"

"I guess so. But there's also the accounting dimension that you mention. There I'll have to plead ignorance. But maybe it's worth looking up the accounting societies. Unfortunately, they seem to be a fractious lot and have at least two, probably more with the Quebec contingent."

"How do you think I should try to find out?"

"Well, I'll get you a name or two in OR – operations research. And I think you should go to the library and look up the accounting societies. You may even find them in the 'phone book. Then call or write and ask for information on their requirements and education programs. You'll probably get a lot of extraneous rubbish in the form of pamphlets and such to wade through, but also some useful information. You can also write to ask if they have local members who might be willing to talk to prospective future members like yourself."

"Yeah. I guess if they want to grow, they can't be rude to someone asking politely."

"Exactly. But you should, I think, talk to your Mom and Bryan about what you are thinking. They probably know people who can be helpful."

"So you don't think I'm off-base to be interested in the sort of thing I mentioned?"

"Absolutely not. It seems like a possible career. One that could be interesting. However, it seems neither of

us has much of an idea of what is required or what the opportunities are. I'll be interested to learn what you manage to discover and what you eventually decide. The fact you are asking and not just waiting for something to happen is important. Don't stop asking questions and talking to people."

"Thanks Dr. Tremblay."

October 16, 1966 – Michelle

Sunday night. Martin and I retired quite early, and I was curled into his arm.

"Ready for the week?" he asked.

"I suppose so. I hadn't thought about it." I really hadn't. So I countered, "Why do you ask?"

"Hmm. Probably because I couldn't think of something more sensible to say, but wanted to get a sense of how you were."

"Well, I think I'm OK. But also I get a feeling both of us are – how to put it – waiting for something to happen."

"I think I agree," Martin said. This rather left us hanging, since neither of us spoke for what felt like several minutes. I felt his hand caress one of my breasts – or what passes for a breast in my case. I'm rather small that way. Still it felt nice.

"Is your answer to the big questions of life to feel me up?" I asked.

Martin laughed, "If only life were that easy. I'll stop."

"You don't have to. It feels nice. But maybe you have some wisdom on how to deal with the feeling that

something might be about to happen.” I didn’t really want him to stop, but sometimes this is the best time to talk about the things that are so elusive and tenuous.

“Perhaps we should start to think more about where we’d like to be in five or ten years and look into how to do the best job of achieving what we’d like.”

“I’m glad one of us can see the forest for the trees. But I get a horrible feeling there are going to be lists involved,” I said.

“You think lists are a bad idea?” Martin said. He and Clara had worked out that they should get married by making lists of what they each wanted from life and comparing the lists. He and I had tried that too, and while it was somewhat useful, probably the second try was not so brilliantly successful as the first.

“Not a bad idea. Just that they feel like work.”

“Rather like an overly long and not very good sermon?” Martin suggested.

“You’re thinking of this morning. I almost tore a page out of the hymnal to make a paper airplane. Except I don’t know how to make a paper airplane – more a boy thing I guess.”

“Well, this morning the minister would have done better to suggest a minute of silence.”

“Some people would say that a period of silent contemplation was a very good idea as part of one’s spiritual life. I like it when we go to church together, but it’s nicer when the service flows well and doesn’t feel like a duty.”

“Are you satisfied with how things have worked out for you with St. James?” Martin asked.

“You mean relative to the Catholic church?” I re-

sponded.

“I probably don’t have a specific meaning. You were quite ... er ... devout when I met you, and the Catholic church was important to you. Or maybe the spiritual side of it. I know what we got up to as a result of the entirely helpful Sunfish caused you some anxiety. And ...”

“Oh, that’s all in the past. But, yes, I do want to have a spiritual side to my life. I like going to church. I believe that there is a God and that prayers have a place and a purpose and ...”

“You don’t have to convert me, Michelle.”

“No, I suppose I got enthusiastic there. But I don’t think you have the same kind of beliefs I do.”

“Is that a problem?” Martin asked.

Was it? Hmm. I was silent for a few seconds and the silence became uncomfortable, so I said, “No, I don’t think it is a problem. Perhaps a topic for ... I was going to say ‘discussion’, but I think ‘conversation’ is better. More neutral.”

Martin said softly “I don’t think the God I envisage is a very personal one. More a force of good and of creation and moral direction. I’m not sure prayer to that God has any effect, though I’m rather convinced that the collective will and mental energy of many people does somehow influence outcomes, for example, when people pray for someone’s recovery from illness.”

“Could the differences in our views cause us trouble eventually?” I said tentatively.

“Only if one or other of us insists on being right. I can’t say I feel my beliefs are such that you must align

yours with me. And you know I often like being in church as long as I don't have to be a very active participant. I like to be able to quietly meditate. And I enjoy a good sermon and some nice music."

"I guess my beliefs are really for me, so I don't see a problem either. Thank you, Martin. I like it when we talk and share our ideas. Even if we have different views, they don't seem to be a source of conflict. More different perspectives."

"I'm glad you feel that way," Martin said, pulling me closer to him.

October 22, 1966 – Andrea

Saturday evening. Ralph wanted to get together with Justyna, and Joseph had said it would be nice to see me this weekend. Movies and restaurants would cost money. Ralph and I could take a bit from the rewards of the dinner for the Graftons, but somehow I knew Joseph had to watch the pennies. Be nice to learn more about his situation.

Between us, Ralph and I decided to suggest that we have a shared dinner then listen to records and chat. Or even watch the hockey game. Dad and Rachel had a finished rec. room in the basement – kind of nice actually. Dad and Rachel were going out to a movie and Stephen was going along with them.

The four of us had phoned back and forth on Wednesday to settle who would bring what. I was planning shrimp vol-au-vents and asked Justyna to bring a salad and a vegetable. I would get some nice rolls to allow

the sauce to be mopped up. Ralph said he'd handle pre-dinner nibbles and drinks, including tea and/or coffee. He'd apparently found a small espresso pot in a shop on Preston Street – he seemed to have some neat hidden interests. Good for him. Good for us! Spent some of his dinner earnings on this pot. We'd tried it out. A bit fiddly, but it produced some lovely strong coffee. I needed it cut with hot milk, but then we had a wonderful café au lait, though Ralph said I should call it a *latte machiato*. Must look that up.

I asked Joseph – somehow I never call him Joe – to handle dessert, but I didn't want to risk that he'd spend more than he could afford on store-bought goodies, so I suggested he make a chocolate fudge upside-down pudding. The recipe for this was given to me by Granny Lacroix, though I think she said it came from the Betty Crocker cookbook. I gave him the recipe and told him to phone me if any of the ingredients were difficult for him to get, and that I'd provide a mixing bowl and pan to cook it in, as long as he helped with washing up. His positive reaction underlined my suspicion that he didn't have lots of spare cash. More motivation to gently find out what's behind that. I'd make sure there was some ice cream in the freezer to add a bit of contrast to the pudding.

For the vol-au-vent cases, I thought briefly – very, very briefly – of making the puff pastry from scratch. Then I realized that the only smart choices were between making the cases from pre-prepared puff pastry dough, or buying cases already made. I'd seen some at one of the supermarkets at Billings Bridge. They were a bit small,

but would do in a pinch. I bought a couple of packages of these, but also some frozen puff pastry dough. It was the latter I used with some cookie cutters and egg wash to make larger cases. In fact, I found Mom had both a 3 1/2 and a 2 1/2 inch cookie cutter, which proved great for making the cases. I cut circles with the bigger cutter. With the smaller cutter I turned some of these into rings. I built cases using the egg wash to glue two rings on top of each base. The small circles I decided just to cook and possibly use as tops. Or else as the base for an *hors d'oeuvre*. They turned out fine. Have to use the prepared ones another time.

Joseph and Justyna arrived at the same time, just before 5. We weren't going to run very late – people had to get home on the bus, and I was pretty certain Ralph intended to take Justyna home, so he'd have to get back again.

I got Justyna set up at the kitchen table organizing her salad. She'd brought a can of kernel corn as the vegetable, which was fine – saved a lot of work. I set up Joseph at the counter getting stuff ready for the pudding. From experience, I knew it would work OK if we cooked it and then let it keep warm in the oven.

Ralph took orders for drinks. Justyna and I had 7up, while the boys had Coke. There were peanuts and chips to nibble on. Ralph set up the table while I cooked my vol-au-vent filling – I planned to put the cases in the oven with the pudding for a few minutes.

Essentially, I sautéed the onion and garlic, then added in the mushrooms and the chopped shrimp. Finally added a cornflour and milk sauce base with a bit of pep-

per and salt as well as some grated parmesan cheese and simmered while stirring until the sauce thickened. While this was going on, Joseph had made the batter for the pudding and sprinkled on the cocoa and brown sugar mixture for the sauce. Ralph had a kettle boiled, and Joseph poured on the requisite amount of boiling water and we put the pan in the oven. I put the pastry cases in as well to warm. The corn was in a pot on the back burner, along with some potatoes I'd scrubbed and quartered and was boiling. They could be eaten tonight or else be used for breakfast. We were almost ready.

"We can eat!" I pronounced.

Ralph and I had thought of using the dining room, but it was more cosy in the kitchen, so we more or less just had to sit down to dinner. I took out the cases and ladled filling into each and put two on each plate for now. Ralph drained the potatoes and put them in a bowl with some butter. Justyna had tossed her salad with some dressing.

"Looks really good," Ralph said.

"Sure does," Joseph joined in.

"Hadn't we better taste it?" Justyna was her practical self.

But it was good, and I say so even if I'm the main cook today.

We didn't talk much until our plates were essentially empty.

"Anyone want some more?" I asked. "There's two cases and some of the filling left, as well as veg. and salad. And some rolls if the sauce needs mopping up. And today – by special dispensation of the Pope – you're

allowed to wipe the plate with your bread roll.”

The others laughed. But Joseph did later do exactly this. My sauce was good!

It turned out that the boys wanted more, but Justyna and I were happy with cleaning our plates. A few minutes later Joseph said, “Justyna, you said when we went to the movies that you were from Poland. And I know you go to Ridgemont and said you’d been going to the public schools for a while. But my granny was saying most Polish people are Catholic, like Andrea used to be. She went to Immaculata last year. So I was wondering if you used to be too.”

“I suppose I could have gone to a Catholic school, as my parents were nominally Catholic. But we never went to church. Actually my mother was Jewish, but in 1939 when the Germans overran Poland, her parents and brother were killed. She wasn’t at home, having gone to a neighbouring village to deliver some clothes her family – they were tailors – had made for someone. While she was there, the Germans flattened her village, including the church and the synagogue, and the records were destroyed. The woman where she’d gone to make the delivery came back with her. The Germans stopped them, and the woman overheard them saying – in German which she spoke but didn’t acknowledge – they were looking for ”dirty Jews”. She liked my mother, who was then about sixteen, our current age. When the Germans asked who they were, she said who she was, and that my mother was her niece, and she pointed to a smoking ruin which had been my mother’s home. Since my mother was crying, the story was believable.

So my mother acquired a new identity. The woman who rescued her was from Inowroclaw – she had been visiting a relative in a village near Poznan when the Germans invaded. The Germans used the name Hohensalza for Inowroclaw. Anyway, my mother went there with the lady, who had a much older and long-dead cousin who had moved to the village where my mother’s family lived. The lady told the German military authorities her niece’s family was all killed in the bombing of the village, and the records destroyed. It turned out that the lady was of German extraction, and spoke German as well as Polish, so the authorities issued new identity papers for my mother. She thus became Catholic, and quickly learned all the Latin prayers. Since she had studied Latin, that was not too difficult.”

Ralph said “Wow. Changing your identity on top of losing your parents and brother.”

“Yes. Even now she says she has trouble sorting out the original person – Hanna Stein – from her new personage – Helena Schulz. Shulz was the lady’s name too, and a common German name as well. They even changed her birth-date from the 5th of March to the 3rd of May, but kept the same year – 1922.”

I asked – because I didn’t think the boys would think of it – “Do you also have trouble deciding what your history is?”

“Yes. It’s confusing. My Dad was the son of a good friend of Mrs. Schulz. His family was Catholic, but in the War, he hadn’t kept up his religion, though Mom went faithfully, mainly to maintain her cover. Actually Mom didn’t tell Dad her true name until 1947. And

Mrs. Schulz made her do it about a month before they got married, in a Catholic church of course. But Dad's a pretty good guy and stuck with her. However, with all the stuff they've been through, they don't go to church any more."

"Did your Dad manage to keep out of trouble in the War?" I asked, as Martin had mentioned that there were a lot of people made to work in German factories, some paid but still told where they'd work, some as slave labour, often in dangerous and nasty conditions.

"He was sent to work in a BMW factory that made rotary airplane engines in Berlin for the Junkers 88. He'd had some training as a mechanic, so I guess he was selected for that reason. The Germans paid him, but he had to live in a camp that was pretty rough, but he said it wasn't as bad as some of the prison camps."

"Shall we have dessert?" I asked.

Joseph served the pudding. I put out the ice cream just as he was starting to cut the sponge and then spoon the sauce underneath. His eyebrows twitched, as I guess I should have told him about the ice cream. However, he simply asked who wanted ice cream with the pudding – all of us – and he served us each with a nicely presented bowl of pudding and ice cream.

And it was good! Once more silence reigned except for the noise of spoons against bowls and lips smacking. Why did we say that? Hmm.

My thoughts on the origin of odd expressions were interrupted by Ralph, who asked "Should we do the dishes now, or shall we play some records and have tea or coffee or some pop?"

We decided to do the dishes, which with four of us went very quickly. I was designated as the ‘putter awayer’, because I knew where things should go. So Ralph cleared the plates and prepared them, Joseph washed, Justyna dried and I put away.

It turned out we all wanted tea, which made Ralph’s job easy, though he didn’t get to use the new espresso pot. There was a nice tray on which he put the large brown teapot Rachel used for tea for the family and put on four mugs and some spoons with the small milk jug and sugar caddy. He somehow found some cookies that Rachel must have made. Not mine, anyway. We all held doors and made sure he didn’t trip going down to the rec. room.

Joseph put on an LP – turned out it was Rubber Soul by the Beatles. Good choice. He set the volume low enough that we could talk easily. Thoughtful! Most guys seem to want to cause hearing loss.

Justyna said “Joseph. What’s your background? I only seem to know that you’ve gone to school with Andrea for a while.”

Joseph looked awkward. Hesitant. Then he said “There really isn’t a lot to tell. I live with my Grandma and Grandpa because my parents died of carbon monoxide poisoning because the furnace went wrong. I was in hospital for a couple of weeks, but I guess my room had a slightly leaky window and I got more fresh air. I was only 4 at the time, so I don’t really remember them.”

“I knew you lived with your grandparents, but you never said why before,” I said.

“I kind of don’t want people being sorry for me, I

guess. This is the first time I've told anyone, you know, in my own age group."

"It's not something you need to advertise, but you don't need to keep it secret either," Justyna said. "We all have history."

"Yeah. Guess so. And I think your telling about your mother let me see that."

There was quiet for about a minute, then Joseph continued "A part of it is that my mother was a late child of my grandparents, so they were about to retire when my folks died. The house is paid for, but they didn't really plan to be raising a kid at their age, so money's a bit tight. There's always food and a roof, though, so no complaints. But I appreciate evenings like tonight where I can contribute without worrying if I've enough cash."

"I'm guessing no life insurance money," Ralph said.

"No. But young couples often don't have it. My Dad actually did have a small policy, but my grandparents insisted on putting it in an investment for my education. They're really tops."

"You've never mentioned your Dad's family," I said.

"They're somewhere in Alberta, but Grandma says they disowned him when he married my mother. I think they belonged to some fairly strict religious sect. I'd sort of like to know more, but it can wait until I'm of age. I'd hate to upset my folks – my grandparents I mean."

"Surely the people who look after you and care about you are your real folks," I said.

"Yeah. Thanks. I guess it's sort of like Martin is for you. The people who aren't really obligated, but step up to the plate and deliver the runs."

“Good metaphor,” Ralph responded with a big smile.

Andrea’s notebook – excerpt

Shrimp vol-au-vent

1 - 2 cups of peeled and tailed shrimp,
 optionally cut in smaller
 pieces if large
1/2 - 1 cup of sliced mushrooms
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1-2 cloves of garlic, minced
 (or 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder)
Grated cheese (parmesan?) to garnish
 (about 2 tablespoons)
pepper and salt
1-2 tablespoons (corn-)flour
2 tablespoons butter
1 cup milk

Sautee onion and garlic in butter, then
add the mushrooms.

Chocolate fudge upside down cake

Batter:

flour
butter or margarine
milk

sugar
baking powder
cocoa
salt
walnuts or other nuts (chopped) (optional)

Oven at 350 F

Mix all dry ingredients but nuts. Melt fat by putting in milk and warming (can put cup in hot water or briefly in oven. Add to dry ingredients and mix to a smooth batter. Stir in nuts. Put in buttered and floured pan (9")

Sauce

cocoa
brown sugar
hot water

Mix cocoa and sugar. Sprinkle on batter.
Gently pour on boiling water.
Bake for about 40 mins. Serve hot or cold or with ice cream.

November 11, 1966 – Michelle

November 11 – Remembrance Day. Two years ago we'd run into Bryan and Rachel at the ceremony on the Hill.

All awkwardness at first, but it had opened doors to a calmer life, especially concerning Andrea. And I'd learned how Martin knew Prime Minister Lester Pearson from his time in London during the War.

That was not long after we met, when Martin and I were still working things out. Finding we loved each other. Me trying to figure out how I'd keep some sort of spiritual life when the Church – the Catholic Church – was saying I was a bad person for being betrayed and still wanting a normal family life with someone new. Well, I've found I'm OK with St. James United. It's different from the Catholic churches I knew. Different tone and liturgy. But I'm OK with it. And Martin comes with me. I know he's not a believer. Well, he doesn't seem to have a God he talks to. Doesn't seem to accept that there's a God who loves him as such. But he does have a strong sense of goodness and a moral force that draws young people to talk to him and trust him. Sometimes it makes me a bit angry that Andrea and now Ralph want to talk to him about their future. Angry but more in love with him for that ability.

So here we are in the crowd for this year's ceremony. Jim Sinclair and Ellie have come too. We're standing near the Langevin Building. Martin has spotted someone he knows from work and has gone over to say hello before the ceremony starts.

I asked Jim "Jim. When we were in Enschede this summer, we stayed in a pension and the proprietress asked Martin whether he'd been one of the liberators. It led to a quite emotional moment. Martin said that had been the saddest time of the whole War because a plane

had veered into some Dutch people who had helped clear the field. The woman's brother was one of those killed ..."

"Yes. I'd agree that it was one of the saddest times. As a doctor, I saw a few others. But it's one of the reasons we're here."

"Though today is more to honour those who were in the Forces rather than the civilians," I responded.

"Indeed. We tend to forget what we might call 'incidental casualties'. I suspect both Martin and I are more aware than most that War is not just about soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Was Martin very upset ... you know ... about meeting this woman? Things can come back to haunt us."

"I think he was saddened and perhaps a little upset or off-kilter. But we went for a walk and had a nice dinner. And the lady said that though the remembrance was emotional, she was grateful that Martin remembered the incident."

"I remember it too. I had to attend to the injured."

"Oh. Jim. I've been stupid. Of course you would. I'm sorry."

"You don't have to be sorry, Michelle. Today should be about remembering those events. And being grateful to be here with those we love."

* * *

I had invited the Sinclairs back for some lunch. I'd made soup and Martin had got some crusty bread at a small

bakery on Bank Street yesterday. As well, I'd a Camembert cheese, some ham and some sliced tomatoes.

It was good to get the hot soup into us. Sitting at the dining room table, we all ate with some gusto.

Ellie said to me, "Did I hear you mention Enschede just before the ceremony started?"

"Yes. I was telling Jim about how our hotel manager's brother was one of the men killed when one of the 247 planes veered off the runway."

Jim said "Apparently for Martin the saddest day of the War."

Martin added "Yes. Such deaths of civilians by what is essentially an accident at that late time of the War seemed so wasteful and tragic."

"Yes. I feel the same. I had to declare the deaths and try to patch up the injured," Jim responded. "The Typhoon's 14 foot propeller made a terrible mess of the poor Dutch people who'd helped clear up the airfield then lined up to cheer our 'planes and pilots. I was surprised that only two died. But that was, indeed, as sad a day as I can remember."

"You never told me about that before, Jim," Ellie said.

There was an awkward silence for a few seconds. I realized that I'd been the unwitting instigator of it. I said, "Martin hadn't said anything to me either. Perhaps he wouldn't if the lady hadn't asked him if he had been one of the liberators, which brought out the story."

Martin added "I don't think it's a wish to avoid telling about such things, though there may be a question of appropriate time and place."

"Yes. I agree," Jim said. "We all saw plenty of bad

things. And in medicine, there are always unhappy cases. But avoidable deaths and injuries are the worst. Martin. Do you remember Moggie Morgan or was it Morgans?”

“Yes. And I think it was Morgan. Though there seemed to be some discussion about the spelling. I have a picture of his grave and some others who died around that time – you may recall some pilots were fooling around with low level flying and one of them hit a tree. I think there were some other accidents too. Everyone a bit crazy with the excitement of the surrender.”

“What happened?” Ellie asked.

Jim answered, “Morgan somehow acquired a German pistol – a revolver as I recall, not the usual Luger or Browning automatic. Five days after the surrender in May ’45, I suspect he was showing it off to some friends or others. When he put it in his belt, it went off. Looked like a flesh wound, with the bullet going through some soft tissue and out. We didn’t have an X-ray, of course, and even if we did, it wouldn’t see much in soft tissue, so I arranged a cot for him for the night, and we planned to evacuate him in the morning. Trouble was, the bullet didn’t go straight through the flesh. It had made a much less straight path, and nicked an artery. He died of blood loss during the night. Despite being a military MO, I’d very limited experience with gunshot wounds. I’d seen plenty of broken bones, crash trauma, burns and such, but not bullet wounds.

In fact I’m not so unhappy that I never saw lots of bullet wounds, though I do wonder if I’d seen more of them that I might have been more ... suspicious ... of my diagnosis.”

“Is there really any way peacetime medical training can prepare doctors for wounds like that?” I wondered out loud.

“I guess not,” Jim replied. “But perhaps there could be better ways to convey case knowledge and experience to those treating the wounded. In any case, Morgan’s death is now always in my mind whenever I have to deal with a serious injury. Always a thought of what else might have been damaged. I comfort myself – probably foolishly – that this may have saved a half dozen lives over the years.”

Martin said, “Jim. I’d guess you’ve as wide an experience as practically any other doctor in Canada. You dealt with all kinds of injuries and illness in the Squadron, with the diseases and disasters of poverty in Glasgow, and even the situations and scandals of middle class Canada. You were a quite young and inexperienced medic when you had to treat Morgan. It’s not foolishness to think his ghost hasn’t helped others you’ve treated.”

Trust Martin to give perspective to the story.

* * *

When we were in bed and I slid into Martin’s arm, I couldn’t help but hold him closer. The things that had been talked about today were not part of my own history, and it was difficult for me to see Martin as a young man in the chaos and horror that he must have been part of.

I said “It’s funny how Jim hadn’t talked to Ellie about a lot of his experience. I don’t mean detail. Just a sort of outline to let her know something about what he –

you – saw.”

Martin replied “I don’t think it’s a conscious choice to withhold anything. Just that regular life – when you get it back – is so alien to the war life. It’s like it isn’t a part of the real you.”

“Does it ever bother you? Upset you?”

“I don’t think I really know. It certainly colours some of my reactions. I was lucky to avoid an awful lot of the worst kind of experiences. But you couldn’t be anywhere in the belligerent countries, and even in some neutral ones, without seeing terrible things. Or, worse, doing them.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, our pilots strafed, bombed and rocketed lots of targets where there were people, and we know some of them weren’t the enemy. And that was under orders. But some people had tougher choices.”

“Like?”

“After the end of the War – well, the European War – when I was on leave, I was up in London to try to find the families of the two men who died when the Teller mine blew up our truck. I went in a pub to get something to drink – actually a cup of tea – and there were some Canadian soldiers there. They saw my RAF uniform and one of them asked me which outfit and I told them and admitted I was Canadian too, so we started chatting. Comparing notes on where we’d been and may have overlapped. They’d appreciated the Typhoon’s RP, except when it fell too close to them.

These guys had been in the thick of it and lost a lot of men. Then one of them said he’d got used to the fighting

right up to near the end, when one day they were ordered to take a bridge, and there was a big shooting match and a lot killed or wounded on both sides, then a lot of Germans – several times the size of the platoon this fellow was in – surrendered. They were still a few hundred metres from the bridge. They didn't have many men left – maybe just enough to hold the bridge until relieved. And nobody to escort the prisoners to the rear, with lots of weapons lying around on the dead and wounded.”

“That's really an impossible situation,” I said, which did not offer any comfort.

“In almost a whisper, the fellow said they machine gunned the prisoners and moved on to secure the bridge.”

There wasn't anything more to be said. I held Martin tight, and hoped he would never lose his sense of justice and balance.

November 24, 1966 – Andrea

It was a miserable day. Rainy and cold, but at least not icy. Mom and Martin were going out to dinner then to the Little Elgin to see “School for Scoundrels”. I might enjoy that. I like Alastair Sim. He was so good as Scrooge.

Joseph said he'd walk me home. Nice. I didn't like walking on my own this time of year when it was getting dark. Not that Ottawa was particularly unsafe. I just didn't like it. And tonight had the added misery of wetness.

We were about a block from home when a truck came barrelling along the street without watching for puddles.

Leaves had blocked one of the drains. We tried to move aside, but there was a fence and hedge. A tidal wave of cold, mucky water drenched us. If Joseph hadn't held on to me, I'd have fallen over.

"Oh no! I'm soaked, and so are you, Joseph. We'll need to clean our clothes or they'll be ruined. And our shoes."

"Let's get to your place and see what we can do," Joseph said with his usual practicality.

We practically ran the block and a bit to home. I was already so cold I could hardly handle the key. We got inside, but then I realized that we'd drip all over the place.

"Damn. We'll make a mess on the floor and carpet if we go through to the kitchen. I was planning to clean up clothes there."

"I'll take my clothes off here down to my under-shorts and go get a laundry basket," Joseph said. "Is it downstairs?"

"Yes. Turn left at the bottom of the stairs. The light switch is just inside the door to the stairs. Then there's another at the bottom for the rest of the basement."

Joseph undressed quickly. A naughty thought occurred to me that this was an interesting way to get a man out of his clothes. The cold I felt soon killed that. He came back quickly with a pair of laundry baskets. Then it hit me that I'd have to undress too. Oh well. He'd seen me in a two piece swimsuit last summer one time at the cottage.

"Take these downstairs if you can carry both," I said. "I'll go find some dressing gowns."

I ran upstairs and got my dressing gown and found one of Martin's for Joseph. By the time I got downstairs, he had the clothes more or less sorted and was rinsing the bottoms of his slacks and my skirt. My tights were in the sink soaking.

"What's safe in the dryer?" Joseph asked.

"Just about everything as long as the temperature's low. I hate having to worry about dry cleaning stuff."

We quickly rinsed stuff off.

"God. Even my underwear is soaked," Joseph said.

"Here, put on this dressing gown. You're shivering."

"So are you. Even with the dressing gown."

"It's the wet undies. Turn round and I'll get my bra off."

I wriggled out of it and shucked off my panties from under the gown. He did the same.

"Wow. Who'd have thought I'd have a naked man in the basement," I joked.

"Yeah. But we still need to warm up," Joseph answered.

"Let's rinse out the undies and get everything drying, then figure out how to warm up."

It didn't take us more than a few seconds to get the dryer going. We came up to the kitchen and I more or less automatically put on a kettle.

"Does the fireplace in the living room give heat?" Joseph questioned.

"A very little. We'd be better with a hot shower."

"You first then."

"But you got the full blast of the water from the truck, so you should be first."

“OK. Let’s not freeze arguing who goes first.”

I unplugged the kettle – didn’t need more trouble. We went upstairs and I pulled a towel out of the linen cupboard for Joseph. Mine was on a rack in the bathroom already.

I went in the bathroom and turned on the tap to bring up the hot water. Takes a while. Suddenly, I felt cold too.

“What the hell, Joseph. I’m having my monthlies just now, so unless you were to force me, we’re not ... you know ... going all the way. If you want, we can share.”

Joseph looked flummoxed. Embarrassed. Extremely uncomfortable. He sort of fiddled with the front of the dressing gown. Oops.

I said, “Sorry. Maybe that caused some awkwardness.”

“Yeah. Sometimes the bits don’t work as you want them to.”

“Does it bother you?”

“Not for myself. But I don’t want to upset you. You said we aren’t going to have sex, and that’s OK. I don’t have any ... preventatives anyway.”

I decided we were getting cold, adjusted the temperature, and tossed off the gown and stepped in the tub, holding the curtain to keep the spray inside.

“Come on. I’ll just have to take you as you are, and you me.”

Joseph dropped his gown. Wow. I hadn’t imagined it like that. Try not to stare.

“I’ll move the shower head so you get some of the hot water.”

“Thanks. It’s really helpful. I was getting very chilled,” Joseph said.

For a couple of minutes we just enjoyed the warmth.

“Joseph, does it stay like that for a long time?”

“For a while. It’s supposed to last until you go off. You know – let the sperm out.”

“Is it really as hard as it looks?”

“I can’t really know what you think of as hard. I suppose you could touch if you want.”

I did want, and reached out. It seemed quite hard, but as I moved my hand up to the tip, it was softer.

“Ooh. Careful! That’s really sensitive.”

“You mean here. Where it’s sort of like a helmet.”

“Ooh. Yes. Oh no!”

Suddenly there were spurts of a whitish fluid arcing across the tub. One hit me on the hip, the rest tumbling into the tub and swirling down the drain.

“I’m sorry Andrea. Better wash that off.”

“Is that what they call an ejaculation?”

“Yes. Sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. You’ve let me learn. Do you want to look at me?”

“Silly question.”

I stood with my legs apart and Joseph looked at my bits.

“Is the string from your tampon?”

“Yeah. Otherwise it’d be awkward to remove.”

He stood up again. I took his hand and put it on one of my breasts. He moved in and kissed me gently.

“Unfortunately, that had better be enough for today, or we’ll end up doing something we regret,” he said.

I made sure I was rinsed off, and let him do the same, then turned off the water. We stayed in the tub to dry off as much as we could, then got out, finished drying and put on the gowns again.

“Do you mind if I put on fresh clothes?” I asked.

“I think you’d better. Knowing what’s under the dressing gown is a big temptation.”

“Flatterer. Like my Mom my ... tits are pretty small. I’m no beauty queen.”

“But to me you are.”

Wow! This guy knew how to make me feel good.

“Thanks. That means a lot.”

Before things got mushy, I skipped into my bedroom and pushed the door almost closed. I didn’t shut it, as I thought that might be taken as a push-away. If Joseph came in and saw me dressing, I wouldn’t object, but I kind of felt it would be better if he didn’t. It only took me a few seconds to throw on a pair of panties, a sweater and a pair of jeans, as well as a pair of socks.

Joseph was still drying his feet, but he had on the dressing gown. Pity. Though I’d noticed while we were drying his penis had gone softer. Fascinating.

We didn’t say anything as we went downstairs to the kitchen, but I grabbed a hair dryer and took it with me.

“Guess I should have asked if you wanted me to see if I could find you some clothes,” I said.

“I can wait for the dryer. In fact, if you put on some tea, I’ll go see what state things are in. I should phone Granny to let her know I’ll be late, too.”

“Do that first. She might be worried. Tell them you’re staying for some food while things dry. Then bring the

shoes and dry them with the hair dryer at low temperature.”

Actually, we hadn’t been long in the shower. He’d normally just be getting home now, but I know how Mom and Martin like to be kept informed. I guess I do too about things like that. The phone was right here in the kitchen and Joseph made a quick call. He explained the situation as it was, except for the girl in the shower, of course. Then he went to check the dryer.

“Getting there. I think another half hour and they ought to be properly dry.”

“OK. Take a pew to dry the shoes and I’ll make some supper. I was going to do an omelette, so it’s easy to extend. Can you attend to the tea as well as the shoes?”

The next few minutes were rather domestic. Kind of nice. We had our tea and omelette, then I poured us a second cup and put out some rice pudding I’d made a couple of nights before.

“Home made rice pudding. Really nice,” Joseph said.

“Yeah, I like it too. Could easily get fat the way I like food.”

“Me too, with your food.”

We savoured the last bits.

“Joseph. You know we’ve been going out a while. We’re still pretty young, and you know my feelings about going steady before one is in a position to think about marriage. But I want you to know I really like being with you. I don’t have enough experience to know if that’s ... you know ... capital letters LOVE. I’m pretty sure I’m not crazy lady in love with you. But what happened today was really, really nice, and really, really important to

me. The fact we can be together, be close and yet manage to be respectful and gentle with each other. Thanks Joseph.”

“I guess it’s the same for me. I know I’d kind of like to have you to myself, but we’re both not ready to set up house. Still have a couple of years of high school. But I care a lot about you. I’m hoping things work out for us in some way or other. And I really appreciate you ... er ... letting me look at you. It’s not like I imagined.”

“Nor for me. Boy. Bit of a surprise.”

“Really. Hope I didn’t put you off.”

“Unfortunately the opposite. This girl will have to take cold showers.”

Joseph laughed, but he wasn’t laughing at me.

November 26, 1966 – Michelle

Grey Cup day. Andrea and I were in the kitchen this Saturday morning. We were making some lists for Christmas. Food, decorations, presents. What events to plan for!

“We seem to have got infected with Martin’s list disease,” I commented.

Andrea laughed, “Yep. He does like lists. But I don’t mind too much. Lot’s more vices worse than liking lists.”

“I won’t disagree.”

We worked for a bit on the different ideas and had some back and forth on what and how much and so on. Then Andrea said, “Mom, Can I ask something a bit awkward?”

Oh. What was this about?

“I won’t know if it’s awkward until you ask, and if you can ask, I think I’d better pretend at least that it isn’t awkward.”

“Good one, Mom. Thanks. Well, I hope it won’t be too awkward. Umm.”

There was a pause. I wanted to say something. I bit my tongue – it was going to hurt later, but I knew I had to keep quiet to let Andrea speak.

“It’s that girls are talking about boys and stuff all the time, but I don’t get all the fuss.”

“You mean you don’t understand what they’re saying? I’m not a great expert on things, but I’ll try to help you find answers.”

“Thanks Mom. I know it’s not easy for you. But it’s not that I don’t understand the words and sentences. I just don’t see why they’re all so ... enthusiastic I guess ... about doing stupid things.”

I was now not sure at all what Andrea was talking about.

“Why don’t you give me an example?”

“Well, this girl, Betsy ... maybe I’ll leave off her last name. She was saying that she was out with this boy from another school in his Dad’s pickup truck and they parked up at the Arboretum one night. She said she’d made sure she had a bra that was loose enough so he could get his hand in when they were necking.”

I wondered at my daughter. A lot of girls might want to emulate this behaviour. How could I express my support without inadvertently pushing her towards doing the same. I asked, “You don’t find the idea that attractive?”

“Well, I like affection. You’ve probably guessed that I kiss Joseph from time to time. But we don’t go in for necking and petting. It’s only going to get us all excited and, unless we do something about it, frustrating.”

“Good for you. Does Joseph have the same ideas?”

“He’s very focussed on getting ahead. I told you how his parents died when the furnace went wrong with carbon monoxide and he lives with his grandparents. Things are OK, but no frills. I’m really thankful to Grandpere Lacroix for giving him part time work. Pays him a lot more than packing groceries did at Steinbergs. And Joseph is talking about maybe becoming an electrician. Possibly learning about high voltage work with the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario. But that’s a bit far off just now. And that’s why he doesn’t want to get into any situation that could wreck his chances.”

“But you like him?”

“Oh yes. Lots. But we were talking just Thursday night. We care for each other – oops, maybe that’s more than I meant to say.”

I laughed, but put my hand over hers gently. “It’s OK to care.”

She shot back, “But not to get into situations that are out of control.”

“Yes. That’s exactly the issue for most of us around your age,” I agreed.

“Including you?” she asked. That kind of put me on the spot.

“Andrea. I’m not sure Moms have to answer such questions. But in reality, Grandmere was rather strict. I didn’t ever really do much necking. A few kisses from

the very few dates I had before I met Bryan. We met at a Church dance, though he wasn't from our parish. I think he came with a friend or acquaintance. Why he picked me I don't know. I guess I was flattered by the attention. I was only just nineteen. We went out a bit. Some kissing. Had to push his hand away. Then he proposed and we were married a couple of months later.

You've got to remember it was only three years after the War ended. People wanted to recover the sense of home and family. You came along about two years later. I don't think we really had the time or freedom to get up to much mischief."

Andrea said, "Mom, maybe I'm not remembering right, but it seems you and Martin are a lot more ... er ... physical with each other than you and Dad were. You and Martin go in the bathroom together, even share the shower. I can't recall Dad ever going into the bathroom at the same time as you. And Martin will put his hand on your shoulder as he walks by. Did Dad ever do that?"

I didn't really want to answer, but she was right. "Can I just say you aren't mis-remembering?"

"Oh. Yes. Sorry Mom. That was insensitive of me."

"Actually, I'm glad we can at least talk about things. A bit over a year ago I wouldn't have been able to."

"Yeah. I know. And I should make clear, that though I'm kind of interested in learning more about ... well, how sex works, what I meant about you and Martin is more about affection in a kind of everyday way. It's nice. It makes me feel ... I don't know ... secure."

"Oh. Yes. I guess I can say that with Martin there's more communication of feelings and caring than with

Bryan. Part of that is almost certainly maturity, but I think Martin is very observant, then puts his observations to use.”

“Yeah. Nice. But also a bit scary.”

“Scary? How?”

“Sometimes he seems to know what you’re thinking. I know he doesn’t really, but he’s pretty good at guessing.”

I said, “Yes, I suppose he is. And we’re the beneficiaries most of the time.

Can I ask how you want to proceed with Joseph? Like, are you going steady?”

“I’ve told Joseph I don’t think we should go steady. I think it’s better that we can get to know other people too, even if we mostly go out together. So maybe we’re going steadily, but not going steady if you know what I mean. Once you decide to only go out with one person, you might as well start planning a wedding, and it’s far too soon for that.”

“I like your ”going steadily” expression. Joseph seems a nice young man. I was going to say boy, but I think that would be incorrect, as he seems to have a maturity I like. Best of luck to him, and to you too.”

“Thanks Mom. I’m sure there’ll be some rough patches.”

“But now we can at least talk about things more. That can help with the rough patches.”

“Yeah. I feel I’ve got a team behind me.”

“But you’re not ... er ... doing anything with Joseph are you?”

“Unlike one girl whose mother took her to their doctor and had her put on the pill, I’m a bit afraid of consequences,” Andrea said.

“As you know, it’s not just babies,” I said, recalling my emergency hysterectomy for the gonorrhoea my then husband gave me.

“Yeah, I know. Though I doubt that’s a problem with Joseph.”

“And you shouldn’t be having sex before marriage,” I blurted out, then am sure I turned beetroot red. “Oops. I shouldn’t speak, since you must know that Martin and I didn’t wait. I’m sorry.”

Andrea gave a little laugh. “Do you really think you should have waited?”

There was a silent pause. I really couldn’t say I’d have married Martin – or anyone else – if he hadn’t shown me my body could still find pleasure with a man.

“Andrea, I think that after my surgery and divorce, I never thought of ever having sex again. Somehow – well, I’ve told you the Sunfish story – Martin made me curious to find out if I could enjoy my body. I think it was curiosity that drove me to try, and I found out I could enjoy things much more than I’d expected. Truthfully more than with Bryan. Oops. Probably should have kept that to myself.”

“Mom. I think curiosity is a large part of why I’m ... er ... interested. Probably like most kids, or adults. I guess making sure you don’t let that get out of hand is important.”

“Yes. You’ll have to be careful with Joseph. He may be very nice, but biology has a way of taking over.”

“Yeah. I know. But he’s so far shown that he won’t take advantage. On Thursday, you know the big puddle that developed down the street with the leaves blocking

the drain.”

“Yes. What’s that got to do with our discussion?”

“We got totally drenched by a truck. Head to toe. Filled our shoes.

So we rushed home and I got us dressing gowns and we rinsed and dried clothes. Later used a hair dryer on cool to dry shoes after we’d each warmed up in the shower. Well, Joseph dried the shoes while I made us an omelette.

Joseph knew I had on just the dressing gown while we were running around trying to clean up and dry off. And I know he was interested. You know, he was awkward with the dressing gown. But he behaved with courtesy and caring. Though even if he hadn’t, I had a tampon in.”

“Oh. Yes. I saw a Tampax wrapper in the waste basket in the bathroom.

I’m glad Joseph is respectful. Actually, one of the things that made me like Martin was that he said that sex had to be a mutual decision. He said he’d got used to being in a situation where both people wanted to give pleasure to the other, and it wasn’t worth having otherwise.”

“Thanks for telling me that, Mom. I’ll remember it. The idea of it not being worthwhile unless both people want to please the other kind of gives things ... perspective.”

“Maybe we should get back to holiday planning.” I said.

Andrea moved over and gave me a hug. It was a good morning.

* * *

In the afternoon, Anna and Peter came over to watch the game. Ottawa was playing Saskatchewan in Vancouver. Andrea went over to Joseph's after we'd done our Christmas preparation and she'd done some homework. She'd not been invited before, and wanted to meet his grandparents. Before she left, she confided in me that Joseph thought the game would be a useful distraction from having his folks focus on Andrea. Good thinking.

I'd thought of making a dinner, but Anna phoned and suggested we be lazy. She said she'd bring a roast chicken from the supermarket if I'd put on some baked potatoes and tinned vegetables. The latter could go in the oven to be warmed up. We'd eat early so we didn't have to mess around keeping the chicken warm, and we told the men to look after chips and drinks. Worked for us! We ate and then watched the game, though both Anna and I were knitting – Nicole will have her baby in March probably. Hmm. Wonder if she's put in the official notice so Martin can begin to find a secretary.

November 27, 1966 – Martin

Michelle and I had spent a good part of today – after church that is – writing our Christmas cards. A bit late for the sea-mail for Europe, but the rules on those cards always seemed strange to me. Though finding the exact rules was difficult. Anyway, we seem to be too late for surface, so we won't have to worry about whether the envelope is left unsealed and the message is less than

five words.

Pity Ottawa lost the game yesterday. Still, our household isn't one where football is a religion. I've not been to a game for a few years. Probably should try to get to one sometime to refresh the experience.

Tonight Andrea made supper with me as gopher. That girl is a whiz in the kitchen. Nothing fancy, just some macaroni and cheese with a salad. We all seemed a bit tired and after watching Ed Sullivan we came up to bed.

Michelle asked "Can you undo my necklace? This clasp is fiddly."

I undid the necklace and handed it to her. She put it in her jewellery box then pulled her sweater over her head. She wasn't wearing a bra, and I took the opportunity to caress a breast.

"Naughty!"

"You want me to stop doing that?"

"Of course not. Just yesterday Andrea noted that you touch me gently when one of us passes the other. It's nice. She thought so too."

"Hmm. So that's what you ladies talk about when I'm not around."

"Actually, she wanted to talk about ... well, sex."

"Unless you had a panic attack and ran from the room, I sense progress."

"Very much. I'm learning how to talk to her and not let MOM in capital letters get in the way of communication."

We were now in bed, and I offered my arm as usual. Michelle snuggled in. I asked, "Was Andrea bothered about anything in particular?"

“Not bothered so much as feeling a bit estranged from the gossip group at school. Seems some girls are reporting their exploits concerning necking and petting. Andrea thinks it’s an exercise in frustration.”

“I’d agree,” I said.

“Me too, but I didn’t want to seem like I was egging her on to do anything in particular, though she’s obviously curious and interested. But from what she said, I don’t think she feels ready yet, and knows that. She said she isn’t going steady with Joseph, just going steadily. I liked that way of putting things. And apparently they got soaked by a truck that went through that big puddle that developed one street over, so they had to rinse and dry all their clothes, and took showers to warm up. Andrea said Joseph behaved properly, even though they were both only wearing dressing gowns and she could tell he was interested.”

“Sometimes it’s hard to be a gentleman, given the teenage hormones.”

“My concerns exactly. But it was her time of the month – a bit of a damper on things, but not a complete protection. But I’m very happy she’s talking to me, though I’m not sure what I should do.”

“We’ve already talked about what happened with Anna. I got some condoms and made sure she knew where they were. But that might not be appropriate for Andrea. It sounds like she doesn’t feel ready for sex yet herself. And Anna was almost four years older.”

“Yes. As I said, Andrea more or less said she doesn’t feel ready, but is curious. She mentioned that one girl’s mother took her to the doctor and had the Pill pre-

scribed.”

“Would you consider that?”

“Isn’t it more or less making sex mandatory?” Michelle asked.

“Yes. It’s one thing to ensure options are available. Quite another to impose them. If Andrea asked you to approve the Pill, that’s very different from saying she should be on it, just in case.”

“I’ve tried to do as you suggested and listen and be supportive. And it’s helped. Andrea and I can talk about things that would have been impossible to mention a year or so ago.”

“I suspect she wants to know that choosing her own path will have our support, and that there’s no need to follow the example of someone else, especially an example she considers silly.”

“Yes. But I still worry.”

“You’re her Mom. That’s part of the job.”

“Great! I was hoping for some magic that would take away the worry.”

“Doesn’t exist. But it sounds like you have less to worry about than you did before you had your chat with Andrea. It’s unfortunate that our society seems to be unwilling to accept that men and women generally like sex and don’t really live the ‘only in marriage’ precept. Moreover, our society still seems to consider birth control taboo. Condoms are still ‘only for the prevention of disease’. Makes me angry. Still, as a family we can try to keep the barbarians at bay.

On the other hand, the success of Helen Gurley Brown’s book ‘Sex and the Single Girl’ does indicate that there

may be parts of society a bit more open.”

“I started to tell Andrea that sex was just for married people and stopped myself when I realized she knows we didn’t wait. In fact, I had to admit that it would be hypocritical.”

“Wow! That can’t have been easy for you.”

“It wasn’t nearly as bad as I would have thought, or even imagine now. Just seemed to come out, and Andrea was, I think, simply wanting reassurance. Perhaps I did too. Wanting reassurance she wasn’t going boy-crazy.”

I said “Sometimes I think people chase after the opposite sex – or after other people even – because they want or need approval or love. My guess – and a totally unscientific one – is that people who are secure in their sense of belonging and being loved don’t need to chase.”

“Indeed. Now I’d better get some sleep. Lots to do this week.”

We disentangled and rolled apart a little. I’ll have to see if I can do better at letting Andrea know we’ll be there for her.

December 1, 1966 – Andrea

Susan Grafton came over so we could supposedly study together. And we did quite a bit of review of math and worked on our essays for English. Even tried to practice a bit of French. I have it a bit easier, except my Franco-Ontarian local dialect comes with lots of local aberrations which can get me into trouble when I’m supposed to get grammar details right.

We stopped about 8:30 for a cup of tea and some biscuits. I used to say cookies, but Martin and Anna seem to have me converted to Brit-speak. How did that happen?

Susan said “You seem to be getting along with Joseph.”

“Yeah. I like him and can talk to him.”

“Do you ever do ... you know ... well, neck with him, like Betsy and some of the others yack on about?”

“No. We’ve kissed, but I don’t want to mess around. And I think Joseph feels the same. We’re both interested – really, really interested. But you know the expression – fish or cut bait?”

“You mean, do it properly or not at all?” Susan asked.

“Yes. I talked with Anna, and apparently when she was about 20 she decided she wanted to know what it was about. She had a sort-of boyfriend she liked and who liked her. And she’d been talking with Martin about birth control. He was going out with a woman he liked, and couldn’t really deny his own interest, and he got some contraceptives and told Anna where they were. So she and her boyfriend chose a time they could be alone at home and not have to rush.”

“That seems a lot more civilized than what the fast set at school talks about.”

“I think so too.”

“Are you thinking of doing what Anna did?”

“Probably, but not yet. Anna was several years older. She wasn’t really ready to get married, but she could have if something went wrong.”

“People seem to think getting married makes things all right. But I think a lot of the couples who have to

get married probably aren't the best for each other. And they don't get much chance to get to know each other."

"You're right there, Susan.

One of the things I like about Joseph is that we're getting to know about each other."

"How do you mean?"

Oops. Did I want to tell about last week. Well, maybe a sanitized version.

"Last week when it was so wet we got totally soaked by a truck because of that plugged drain – you know, with the leaves – over on the next street. We ran home here and had to rinse our clothes and take a shower – each of us – to get warm. We were just wearing dressing gowns for a while and he was, you know, hard and having trouble keeping the gown closed. But he didn't try anything."

"What would you have done if he had? You remember Norm."

"Somehow Joseph just isn't like that."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I do now. He behaved OK. I think he wants us to be real friends as well as perhaps boyfriend and girlfriend."

"Aren't you going steady?"

"As I told Mom, I prefer to say 'going steadily'. We've agreed we can go out with other people, though we both think most of the time we'll go out together. We're a bit too young not to get to know other people. And too far from being ready to get married."

"You think you'll end up together?"

"I can see that working if things go along as they have

so far. But we're about six years from being finished whatever education or training we do."

"You mean, university?"

"Not sure. You know from what I did for your folks that I'm kind of drawn to some sort of career in food. And Joseph is thinking of looking into a career as an electrician. Maybe with the high voltage stuff that Hydro does."

"I think my folks are set on my going to University," Susan said.

"Mine too, at first. But Mom and Martin have said they'll be supportive of my choices as long as I look into things carefully. That reminds me, do you want to help out with the two parties I've been asked to set up. For money of course. Part of my Junior Achievement project."

"Sure. I'd probably even do it as a favour."

"Can't do that – got to make things run like a real business. Which it's starting to become. Not just fun to do, but also a bit of what I could call Christmas Cash."

"Yeah. Be nice to have some extra."

"Susan. How come you didn't stay going out with Ralph? As far as I know he's OK."

"Yeah. He's a nice boy. Guess there wasn't much chemistry."

"Ralph used the same word – 'chemistry'."

"You talked to him about me!"

"Don't panic. When he started dating Justyna, I asked him what went wrong with you. He said that you were still friends and might go out again, but that there wasn't much chemistry. Like you did. I didn't want to

put my foot in things if there'd been some ... er ... bad feeling. Or invite you both to something and have awkwardness."

"Oh. OK. Guess that makes sense.

I actually found going out with Ralph fine. I think it may just be me. I'm not super interested in boys. Wonder if there's something wrong with me."

"Maybe just a late developer."

"I had my period before you did, if you remember. And had to get three different bra sizes in one year. Took a bit of getting used to these things in front – you're lucky."

"Maybe, but a lot of men seem to be fascinated by big ones. I noticed Mom reading an article about those silicone implants a year or so ago. I thought that was getting a bit desperate. But I think Martin lets her know she's nice as she is."

"I guess we all want to be liked as we are. I just find that I don't get what a lot of the fuss about boys is about.

Maybe I shouldn't say this, but I find I look at least as much at girls as boys."

"You think you might be ... er ... lesbian?"

"That would be pretty bad, wouldn't it? No. I don't think so."

Susan looked kind of stricken. Like she couldn't bear to admit that.

"Mom has two women friends – one of them was her best friend like, forever. And they live together and behave like a married couple. I can't see that it's really anyone's business but their own."

“But isn’t it against the law?” Susan said.

“I think so, but I’ve only heard about men being charged. Though I did hear Dad and Rachel discussing someone they knew who’d been fired from the government service for being a lesbian. I don’t know the details.”

“People can be nasty, even if the law isn’t.”

“Yeah. Skin colour. What you wear. Who you love.”

“Yes.” Susan said very quietly.

I started to wonder how she felt about me. I didn’t want

“Susan. It won’t matter to me if you prefer girls. But you’ll have to be very careful if you want to get, you know, close to someone, to make sure they are OK with it. I know I really like you as my best chum from school, but I’m not sure how I feel about physical stuff.”

Susan looked a bit disappointed for a second, then brightened and said “That’s good advice. Actually for anyone. Like when Norm tried to grab you.”

“Yes. If he’d taken his time and asked me nicely I might even have been interested in a little kiss. I actually enjoyed dancing with him before ... you know. He’s been kind of contrite since. Actually sent me an apology.”

“Let’s hope it isn’t just for show.”

After Susan left, I couldn’t help wonder how I’d react if it had been Susan who’d grabbed me rather than Norm. Not well, I think.

I thought back to last Sunday at Joseph’s. His grandparents, Martha and George Vernon, were really nice. I’m to call them Martha and George, though Joseph uses Grandma and Grandpa. They have a little house in Hintonburg. George used to be with the railway as a con-

ductor – essentially the brake-man on freight trains. I found I was comfortable with them.

December 3, 1966 – Martin

A good day to stay in. Zero degrees out. And expected only 10 for the high. A bit early – not even officially Winter yet. Of course, there'd been the autumn storms. The SS Daniel J. Morrell had sunk on Lake Huron this week with loss of all hands but one. Don't know how the man survived on a life raft for over a day. Apparently the ship split in two. A bad business.

Andrea was at her father's this weekend. Michelle had taken the car to go shopping for groceries. I thought back to the station wagon she had when we met. We'd kept it until a couple of months ago, but swapping vehicles in the driveway became onerous, and we found we rarely were using two vehicles. While the wagon was useful, we decided we could manage with my sedan, which was slightly newer and a bit easier to park. I think easier to drive, though it took Michelle some time to get comfortable with a standard transmission. If we need to move something big, Michelle's father has several trucks of different sizes.

My Saturdays were usually full of tasks, both mandatory and of personal choice. But today my mind was full of something else. Somehow a personnel agency had heard about me. I'd received a telephone call about two weeks ago from a man in Chicago. There was a company in Phoenix, Arizona, looking for an antenna specialist to develop some compact antennas useful for communica-

tions with infantry, police, aircraft, and spacecraft. I'd asked him to send me more information, and a package had arrived – at home, not the office – yesterday. I'd set it aside. Before I even mentioned much to Michelle, I wanted to check out the material.

The salary mentioned on the phone was more than double my present one, almost three times. And there were some interesting perks relating to a vehicle, moving expenses, even an allowance for research materials and journals. But though Mr. McArthur of the search firm had talked a good line on the need for innovation on the antenna front, as I read through the package of information, all I could find were glowing promises that the company – Antentech – could solve any and all issues with antenna design and manufacture.

I read the package through three times, underlining some parts that I thought deserved second thought or investigation. It appeared that if I got the position I would have a department of about a dozen working under me. It was quite an attractive idea.

I heard the car pull into the garage and shortly thereafter the closing of the main garage door. I went to the back door and opened it so Michelle wouldn't have to try to lift groceries and manage the door. Three trips through the side door of the garage got the bags in and Michelle came in and got off her boots, then her hat, gloves and coat, which I took to the front hall to hang up.

"I'll put a kettle on and we'll get those groceries put away," I offered.

"Ooh. I could use that, but I need to pee first,"

Michelle said, disappearing into the powder room down the hall. By the time she returned, the kettle was starting to burble and I had most of the purchases put away. Given the cold day, my share of the duties was the smaller part by a long shot.

We finished the putting away, made tea, and sat at the kitchen table.

“Ah. Nothing like a hot cup of something on a day like this,” Michelle said. “Oh. What’s that you’re looking at?”

“Some information came about that company I got a call about last week.”

“The one you said was looking for someone to lead a team to develop compact antennas.”

“Yes. I didn’t say much about it the other day, as I wanted to think a bit before we discussed things.”

“What! You didn’t involve me in something that could affect us all?” Michelle said hotly.

“Calm down. I didn’t think it worth discussing if I had no interest in pursuing the possibility. Why waste effort and energy and get you all excited or upset if I was going to toss things in the waste basket.”

“Oh. But if you’re talking about it now, you must be interested.”

“Possibly. Or flattered. The salary is getting on for three times my current one. And there are some nice benefits. However, I’m not sure that it will be the right thing.”

“Bryan might make some trouble about Andrea. We’d have to re-negotiate the custody agreement.”

“That was one of the things on my mind, though she

is now sixteen, so it may be that she has ideas of her own. But Andrea is obviously going to be a large part of our thoughts.”

“There’s my career too.”

“I wasn’t forgetting that. Somehow we seem to be getting ahead of ourselves. I haven’t convinced myself that I want this for my own career reasons, let alone weighed the other aspects. Moving, disruption of our family, including being far from Anna and Peter, your folks, and our friends.”

“Martin, does the job look like it would be what you want?”

“I don’t know. This material, which you can read if you want, is all very slick, but it doesn’t really say much about what I’d be actually doing.”

“Do you know this company ... what is it ... Antentech?”

“No. I think I’ve seen their name. But, no, I don’t know them. I think they are reasonably new.”

“So the job might not last if they don’t make a go of it?”

“Yes. That’s another concern. Be stupid to burn bridges and have the new palace burn down too.”

“Do you know anyone who might be able to tell you more?”

“Not really. Well, maybe the woman I met from Texas Instruments would know about them. She’s been head-hunting herself I think from what she said at the meeting in Gaithersburg last spring. I’ve her card somewhere and could at least phone her and ask if she knows anything.”

“That’s a start. And maybe you can think of other

people who might know.”

“Yes. Motorola has a lab in Phoenix. I’ll see if I can find any names of people there that I know. Look at some of the recent papers in journals and ask around.”

“I think you have to, Martin. It would be a big jump for us all.”

“You mean you’d actually consider moving to Arizona? I was rather worried you’d simply say no.” And indeed, that had been my concern.

“Well, I’m not enthusiastic. But we’ve both been talking about our careers lately. There are lots of reasons to say no, but if we don’t keep an open mind we’ll never actually do anything, then may wake up one day with our jobs gone in some reorganization. And you noted that Andrea is growing up. She’s not quite old enough that we could let her live independently, but it won’t be very long.”

“Yes. Oh. I heard a good joke about reorganizations.”

“Government joke?”

“Yes. How can you tell there’s a reorganization going on in a department?”

“All right. I’ll bite. How?”

“People are walking along the corridors sideways so they don’t get stabbed in the back.”

“Groaner! But a good description of the atmosphere in departments being reorganized. We’ve had a bit of that with the new Energy Mines and Resources stuff.”

I said “Anyway, you’ve given me a push to look more closely at Antentech.”

“Martin. One thing you should make sure of is to actually go and look at the place. And meet the people

involved. That is, if it gets that far.

And it would not be a bad idea to go through the motions to get some experience with an interview and so on. When was the last time you had a job interview?”

“Two decades ago. Yes. And if we’re going to move, or even consider it, I think you need to come with me.”

“Yes. Might even be nice to get some sunshine if it’s soon.”

“Indeed. Do you think we can afford your fare to come with me?”

“Yes. If it’s not too expensive. I don’t think I’d be a happy camper if you made the decision to move us somewhere I’d not seen.”

“I’d meant to show you a letter that came from Joe with a Christmas card. Actually it’s with the card on the mantle.” Joe and his wife Julia were friends from my high school days in Sutton in England. He worked in radio communications at Heathrow. “He tells of a colleague in airline communications who got offered a job in South Africa and accepted it, then went home to tell his wife.”

“Oh no. What an idiot!” Michelle said.

“It was Joe’s description of her reaction that I thought rather good. He said ‘There were shouts, tears, and crockery aviation’. I rather like that turn of phrase, though the situation is far from funny.”

“Yes. A good expression for something I hope never happens with us.”

“You won’t find me disagreeing. Wasn’t what we’ve just been doing a counter-example?”

“Yes!” Michelle said, and came over and gave me a

kiss.

December 5, 1966 – Michelle

Monday. And what a day!

Martin had phoned me about 11:30. He'd had a call, as expected, from the recruiter – McArthur – and they were willing to fly Martin out and I could come along. But the timing was very soon. This Saturday to fly out and come home on an overnight flight next Monday night. The tickets would be available for pickup from the Air Canada office tomorrow or Wednesday. Martin would have all day Monday with the Antentech people.

The recruiters were obviously keen. They said if we agreed to pay them \$250 US to cover my expenses, they would arrange everything, including a rental car and hotel. That was actually a bit less than my fare. They told Martin the reservations would be made for car and hotel, but he should pay and submit a claim showing the difference. A bit of an expense, given it was Christmas time. But overall, we decided to go ahead if I could get the time off. I'd need two days – we'd not be fit for work on Tuesday, even if we could get back in time. Likely the flight from Toronto wouldn't get us home until mid-morning.

Fortunately, my boss was agreeable. I decided to be honest about the reason, and he said he appreciated that people have to consider opportunities, though he added with a grin that he'd prefer to be going himself to get some sun.

Martin arranged, when he called, to pick me up on the

way home. Even though the temperature was up a bit from the weekend, I welcomed the ride.

In the car, Martin said “I probably shouldn’t have done, but I used the government long distance system and called Althea at TI. It would have meant coming home to use our phone.”

“Did you get through?”

“Yes. And I’m sort of glad I did.”

“Oh. Not good news.”

“Well. A caution anyway. It seems Antentech is a couple of guys who’ve left Motorola. They apparently have some investor or investors behind them. And they poached one of Althea’s engineers in transmitter and receiver design. But she thinks they may be under pressure to get some military or other government contracts quickly to maintain finances, which is why everything is hurry, hurry.”

“Martin, it could be really bad to get there and then find it all collapses.”

“Precisely. But thinking of your suggestion that it may be good to practise handling an interview, I think we should still go and take a look. It will also help us to figure out what we might want for ourselves – and I mean both of us. You’d need to think of what you would do. We’re more likely to be somewhere like Phoenix as just a couple, at least in a very few years. If you don’t have something that gives you satisfaction, then I doubt we’ll be happy.”

Michelle said “I’m guessing that there are possibly some US immigration obstacles too. That might cause delay. And who knows if I’d be allowed to work, though

I think a woman from work went to New York with her husband who'd been hired by NYU and she got a job there with an insurance company almost right away. They needed someone who had some experience with electronic computers."

"Lots to think about," Martin said. "But you know, we can go and look, and make any decisions once we've got more information. Though right now, my goal is to learn more about how I should do this career stuff. I've been a bit of a stick in the mud."

"But Martin, you've had lots on your plate the last few years with Clara and Anna and ..."

"You! A very special you," Martin cut me off, but I didn't mind at all.

* * *

"You might move to Arizona! What'll Dad say?" Andrea was clearly a bit upset.

"We actually very much doubt we'll take up any offer that might be forthcoming from Antentech," Martin said. "But we think we should go and see what Phoenix is like, and we should use this chance to learn how people get hired and also to work out what we – and that includes you – might consider as possible and beneficial, and what we really don't want. Since Antentech is willing to pay the bulk of the expense for us to do that, Mom and I think that it would be silly not to take a look."

Andrea said "Oh. I guess I'm worried you've more or less decided. Especially as Mom's going with you."

"Actually, it's more the opposite. I'm going because

we're pretty sure we don't think this will work. But not taking a look could mean we miss something that would be important for the long term. Right now, there are lots of reasons not to move. And one of them is how we'd honour the arrangements with your Dad, though I think you know that it's really giving you a stable and supportive home life so you can finish your education."

"But like Anna, in a couple of years or so, I'd be out of your hair?"

"I'm not sure I'd use that expression," I said, "but no matter what we do, at some point you will have your own life. We hope that we'll manage, as we have with Anna, to keep a close connection. To have you a big part of our lives.

There's also Grandmere and Grandpere, and Nicole and Stephane. Especially now Nicole is oops."

"Oh, you mean her baby. The bump is pretty obvious. Anna and I made a bet over a year ago – a sundae at Dairy Queen – about the timing of their first. I think I'll win, since I said spring 1967. Anna said she thought they'd have plopped one by now. Sorry, shouldn't be so crude. We made the bet when Anna's friend Marcia was there. She tends to be rather direct."

December 13, 1966 – Michelle

Homeward bound. We didn't find a convenient Monday night flight, so are flying to Chicago, then changing for Toronto and finally for Ottawa. We won't be home until late'ish, but Anna has said she'll meet us so we don't have to wait. The two-hour time-zone difference is a

good part of that, but at least we didn't have to be up at the crack of dawn.

Martin hasn't said much about the interviews. We actually had supper last night as guests of one of the two principals and his wife – Mike and Joanne. They insisted on first names, and now I can't remember the surnames. They were nice, but

Yes. But! I didn't feel any connection. Our hosts were warm, polite and welcoming. They'd grown up in Texas and New Mexico and met at Arizona State. Two kids and a suburban house. They had vaguely heard about Quebec, where French was used, but Franco-Ontarians weren't even a blip on their knowledge radar. It seemed that television programs were an important part of their conversational menu, so our exchanges kept falling dead. It was a bit awkward.

Talking about schools and education was a bit safer, though they clearly had no real concept of Martin's Oxford background. Am I ever glad he took me there on honeymoon. And what a difference from Arizona State. I went there while Martin was being interviewed and meeting the Antentech folk. Big and brash, but the nearby shops and restaurants were comfortably eclectic and busy. And the weather was, of course, wonderful.

That Martin had married a Flemish widow seemed to interest our hosts a great deal. I think it was a fascination with the War and how it had affected peoples lives. They were about the same age as me, so had not been involved with World War II, and Mike had been in college during Korea. But their kids were teenagers. I noticed a shadow cross over Joanne's face when Martin mentioned that

his comrade Harry had said that of 30 students from his grammar school – I guess it was one that Martin showed me in Tunbridge Wells called Skinners’ – only a half dozen were alive at the end of the War. I wonder if Joanne was thinking of her own children.

Skinners School – it had been founded by the Worshipful Company of Skinners, a livery company concerned with skins and furs formed in the 14th century – had had weekly military training. Martin said Harry joined the Local Defence Volunteers that became the Home Guard before he joined the RAF. Mike was completely astonished when Martin said Harry got the only rifle that the LDV platoon possessed because he had won the school shooting competition. And Mike’s astonishment was greater when Martin pointed out that Harry’s platoon was not much further from the German’s in France than the distance across greater Phoenix, even if the English Channel did make up part of that distance.

The dinner was very nice. They took us to a steakhouse called Durant’s that had been running since 1950. As with so many American meals, I couldn’t finish my steak even though I ordered the smallest one on the menu. Fortunately, Martin ordered the same and I’d only left a little and he finished the meat, which really was very good.

We shared a dessert, a massive banana split concoction. The sharing seemed to amuse Mike and Joanne, but in a positive way. We didn’t drink. It seemed Mike and Joanne were teetotal. We didn’t ask why, and Martin and I had by prior agreement decided not to have anything alcoholic to drink. I’m so small that even a little

can make me tipsy, and we want to be in top form today when we have to change planes and deal with Customs.

We were both tired when we got back to the hotel after dinner and though I think we both wanted to talk, we decided to use the time on the airplane to do that, and somehow were asleep in seconds. Often away from home I don't sleep, but this time we both seemed to wake around 6:30, which allowed us time for a reasonable breakfast – we might not hit mealtimes on the flights – and get to the airport comfortably before our flight just before 10.

After the seat belt sign went off, Martin asked me “How did you like Phoenix?”

“Truthfully, I'm not sure. I liked the weather, though I wonder what it would be like in summer when it's really hot. My guess is that their summer is like our winter, but at the other end of the temperature range. In either case, you have a good period of the year when you can't go outside easily.”

“I think Arizona is going to be popular with people who want warmth, but air conditioning will be a huge industry there,” Martin commented. “But do you think we'd be happy there?”

“I hope you won't be disappointed, Martin, but I don't think I'd fit in.”

“Just the opposite. I was thinking the same thing myself.”

“Phew! That's a relief. I sort of wondered if you weren't thinking you wanted the job.”

“No. Not at all. I think that Mike and his colleague got seduced by this fellow who is the sales leader and who I think is the link to the investor or investors. I didn't

really get a straight story about the corporate structure. They've got a couple of contracts with the military for smaller, more capable radio communications, but may have sold the picture without having the product ready to manufacture. In particular, their prototype doesn't have enough range. They're looking for a saviour."

"And they think Martin Tremblay is that person?" I asked.

"Possibly. I don't know quite what they made of me. I decided before we left Ottawa to be myself, and to present my abilities as honestly as I could. Late yesterday afternoon, they asked me what I thought were the chances they could succeed, and I told them I thought that it was a 50-50 proposition. They also asked me how I would proceed if given the job, and I said that my training and career had been one of trying, testing and measuring, except for the War experience where I was sometimes cobbling together things in a hurry that weren't expected to last very long. I think they were looking at me more as 247 Squadron's Wireless Wizard. That's a different life."

"But important. It's how you met Clara and Anna."

"Yes. But I have some trouble now seeing myself as that 20-year-old in the tiny Belgian farm kitchen."

"And bedroom!" I gave him an affectionate poke in the ribs.

"I suppose," Martin added wistfully. Fortunately, the stewardess came by to offer us something to drink and some nuts before he could get lost in that reverie.

When she'd gone, I said "Martin, I think your experiences in Belgium and Holland gave you a lot more depth.

You wouldn't be the man who rescued me from a rather chaste and boring life without the experiences and people you knew then. One of the reasons I don't think I'd fit in Phoenix is that I found Mike and Joanne boring. And that's not a nice thing to say, but it's the feeling I got. Conversation last night would have been impossible if they hadn't asked questions about your wartime experiences."

"You have a point there. I hadn't quite got round to figuring out why I was uncomfortable, but I guess that's it. I just told you of my misgivings about the company, but I've also got a lot of reservations about whether I'd like living in Arizona. It's not that it's uncomfortable or lacking in things I'd enjoy doing. But maybe it's somewhere I'd love to visit, possibly quite regularly, without necessarily making it my home. And maybe I could never make it my home."

"I feel the same. Besides it's a long way from our family and friends."

"That had not escaped my notice, either."

Another thought came to me. "Martin, do you think that it was worth going through the process of the interview? After all, that was what we talked about last week when the opportunity was presented to us."

"Oh. Absolutely. I think we both needed to figure out how these things work, even if they'll all be a bit different from each other. This invite and trip has forced us to consider what we would like to do, as well as what we don't really want."

"Yes, it has. I suppose I'd better get my own resumé in order too."

“You’re thinking of looking for something else?” Martin seemed surprised.

“No. I’m very happy where I am. It just seems appropriate to keep things like wills, address lists, and resumés up to date.”

“The never-ending battle!”

“I suppose. Like fighting middle-aged spread, except Anna told me that Marcia says ‘It’s not middle-aged spread, it’s just middle spread’.”

We both laughed, and a couple across the aisle glared at us. We smiled and raised our glasses – orange juice – in a sort of toast to them.

December 26, 1966 – Andrea

It had snowed yesterday – White Christmas – but today was clear and not too cold. Since Christmas fell on a Sunday, Joe Baker had a little less work, and the Baker clan were coming for our traditional Boxing Day Beans.

Before they came, I was looking at a newspaper review of the year. The lost nuclear bombs in Spain at the start and the sunk ferry Heraklion with over 200 killed at the end. And it looks like the Rhodesians – at least the non-white ones – aren’t going to have a democratic country.

The Bakers came in two cars. And Anna and Peter came too, so the house was rather full. Usually I’d spend most of my time with Joan, but somehow after lunch she was talking with Peter and Anna at the dining room table – there were some chairs there! There wasn’t any upset between Joan and I, it just worked out that I was on the floor next to Aunt Penny, with a glass of soda and

a splash of white wine that Martin had given me. She isn't really my aunt, but ... well, it's simpler to call her that, since Anna does.

"Is that ginger ale – it's very light coloured?" Penny asked.

"No it's club soda with about a tablespoon of white wine. Martin let me try it a while ago – he says it's good for teenagers to know about drinks in a sensible way – and I rather like it, though I never have more than two over the course of a day like today."

"My brother always was a bit unconventional, even though he gives the appearance of being very staid."

Hmm. "Staid". Interesting choice of word. Not quite how I thought of Martin, but in a way it did fit him, especially if you put him in his research scientist hat.

Penny continued, "Have you started to think what you want to do in University?"

I guess she hadn't talked about this with Martin or Mom.

"I've been giving a lot of thought to what I want to do. What I'd like is a career that involves food or household activities, but not as a housewife. Possibly designing or making things, or being involved in such activities. It may be that a better route to this is via a vocational college, or even an apprenticeship, though I'm looking at university programs too."

"Wow! You seem serious. I guess we automatically think of University, but you're thinking more of what you want as a career. That's good. I just wish I could get Joan to put her mind to such things."

"You went to university, Aunt Penny. Had you a ca-

reer in mind?”

“Frankly, no. I liked languages and studied Italian. The War started, I married David, had Des, and needed a job. Someone thought my Italian might be useful for something in Intelligence, but somehow I got diverted into managing people who needed housing and support because they were widowed or stateless or otherwise lost in the shuffle. Through that I met Joe. All serendipity. Not that I’m complaining. Apart from the obvious nasty bits, I’ve been pretty happy.”

“But with the War, maybe you didn’t have as much choice,” I offered.

“It’s difficult to know. I could have decided to not marry, and then would perhaps have got into something different. Possibly dangerous. I’ve no idea. But I loved David, at least I remember loving him.” Penny looked a little far away. Then she said “It’s a lot different with Joe. David I loved but hardly knew. Joe I got to know and came to love very deeply.”

She paused, then added, “But don’t tell the kids that, or at least not that way. Sometimes I think love upsets them more than hate. I know that’s awful to say, but I think they understand hate better. True loving can be appreciated right away, but it takes a long while to get one’s mind around.”

At that moment there was a fuss with the two youngest children, Gloria and David, and Penny had to issue a stern reprimand. Joan got up from the dining room table and asked if we could go and play some records in my room, and that’s what we did.

January 1, 1967 – Michelle

A new year! And a Sunday, so we went to church. Just Martin and I. Andrea was with her father. We'd seen in the New Year with my parents and sister Nicole and her husband Stephane. Nicole is getting large with the baby she'll have in a few months. A Centennial year baby.

The newspapers and television have been full of the Centennial. A lot of fuss over a particular number. If we had nine fingers, it would be a different number. That's the sort of thinking Martin does. It's starting to be how I think too. Though I do rather like the different projects that the Centennial has inspired. Montreal has its Metro and Expo, and there'll probably be some other things that end in an "O" sound.

So there was this special new year to celebrate. We toasted the change of the year with a modest thimble of scotch, then we let my parents retire while the rest of us went home. Therefore it wasn't a hardship for Martin and I to be here in church because we needed sleep or were recovering from a hangover. We just had to contend with a little snow when we walked to the church.

Oh. I'd better pay attention to the service so I don't give the wrong response. I must be absorbing Martin's way of meditating in church. I'm not sure if he's actually a believer, at least not as the minister would interpret the word. It's one of the things he keeps to himself, but he's always been supportive of my need for church, which surprised me at first.

For a time I thought he just came to keep me company, but I know now that he actually likes to be here,

though I'm pretty sure he doesn't want to be an active participant. He uses the time as a way to think about life – meditation but with hymns and sermon. I wonder if he actually listens much to the sermon. I guess so, because sometimes he'll comment on it. It's a pity there's not a monastery where we could go to sit quietly while Gregorian chant fills a gently lit space. That's a thought I should share with him to get his reaction.

His way of using such times is definitely rubbing off on me. Our trip to Phoenix has made both of us aware that we should keep an eye out for career opportunities. I like my job in mapping, but with my current qualifications I probably can't expect to advance in the field.

Hmm. With Andrea more or less able to look after herself, I could think of doing a Master's degree, which would open up some promotion possibilities. After all, my group at what is now called EMR works with the Canadian Geographic Information System. There's always a big wish list for more features or performance.

I'll have to ask Martin what he thinks.

January 22, 1967 – Martin

Messy weather. It should snow in winter. Not rain. Everything very slippery, and we decided not to go to church. It really was prudent to stay in when Ottawa got freezing rain. Still, I think it's also prudent to not be an American soldier in Vietnam right now. There seem to be a couple of big military operations going on there. I'm not convinced the Americans have either good strategy or good tactics in that conflict. And the New York Times

has reported that the US military are conducting germ warfare experiments in secret. Horrible.

After breakfast – Andrea contributed a wonderful omelette and I had fortuitously got some croissants yesterday at the bakery – Michelle and I took our second cup of coffee into the living room. I was going to skim some of my journals. Michelle had a couple of university calendars.

“Any interesting programs there?” I asked.

“I’m not sure whether I really care much about the proposed programs. I’m more interested in learning about things that will be important in the field in the coming years.”

“Meaning?”

“Well, as I told you when we were walking home from church on New Year’s Day, EMR has been rather near the front of the use of computers in mapping. If I really think I’d like to get ahead in the government service, then I should bend whatever studies I do to that line of work.”

“That’s essentially what we figured at the end of the January First conversation,” I agreed.

“So then, as you suggested, I asked a couple of the guys at work where I might study, and they underlined something I recall you saying, in that they pointed out that it was generally best to find a good person to learn from or with. But I did write away for some calendars, particularly U. of Ottawa, since it is close by. I like my bed-warmer!”

“And I’d miss mine if you go away.”

“One of the fellows at work said part of my problem would be that geography departments are generally slot-

ted into Arts faculties, but the developing field uses quite a bit of computer stuff and also some mathematics.”

“Are you up for that challenge?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I’d like to have a go at it, but I’m not sure of my abilities.”

“It’s interesting how different fields are all needing more computation. Peter is bending his Ph.D. to look into applications of computer files to statistics. And I’ll be surprised if Anna doesn’t end up at least considering computations for lasers. Me too, in that I’m sure there’ll be programs to work out antenna profiles.”

Michelle mused “Maybe it would be easier to do a straightforward Master’s in courses. No thesis.”

“Would that be what you wanted?” I countered.

“I suspect it would be useful if there were more or less traditional government positions where a bunch of people are contenders for head of unit. But it wouldn’t do much for being involved in something new and shiny.”

“And you’d like to be where the action is?”

“In a way. But I worry it might mess up our rather pleasant life,” Michelle said.

“If you want to be with the leaders, should you go for the doctorate rather than a Master’s? Or at least enrol in a program that lets you choose at the end of a year or so.”

“Maybe. In fact, I think that might be wise. Oh. Did I mention that one of the fellows at work said he thought it might be possible to get some support in the form of study leave or being allowed to work part-time. It seems the government has some career development push.”

I said “If that’s available, it could be helpful. Though

I think I'd advise the study leave, even if totally unpaid, over the part-time route. There can be a tendency to call meetings at inconvenient times and expect part-timers to adjust. The study time can be stolen."

"As usual, Martin, you have useful advice."

"Mostly just trying to think how the practical details may unfold. And it can't hurt to go and talk to some of the university folk locally and find out where they are headed. Departments pop up and then fade away as people come and go. And it would be good to get a sense of how they view the application of computers in their field if that is what you want to learn about. There may be either enthusiasm or opposition, especially if you need to learn things that are from the computer or maths people. No sense in trying to force the issue."

"It's a pity it all seems so much work! I think that's why I mentioned the course-only Master's. But you're almost certainly right that I'd not be very satisfied."

"I always found I did poorly when the courses were too easy."

"Hmm. I hadn't thought of that. Anyway, I'll use these calendars from Ottawa and Carleton and Queen's and McGill and see if I can extract the names of possible people to talk to."

"Can you use the government long-distance system to talk to those out of town?"

"I think so. I've already got a plan, actually."

I'm going to suggest I prepare a short report on programs of study that would support our computer-aided mapping efforts at EMR as a resource for staff. I'll offer to do that over and above my regular work. If there's

agreement – and I don't think I'll get objections – use of the phone and photocopier and typing pool will be within bounds.”

“Good thinking,” I said, realizing Michelle had been putting some serious thought and energy into her idea.

February 14, 1967 – Michelle

Martin had brought me to the Green Valley restaurant for Valentine's Day. The weather was frosty, with a bit of snow and quite a bit more forecast for tomorrow, but the restaurant was full and warm.

After we were seated, Martin said “It's not quite three years since I brought Annie, ... er ... Anna, here for her 20th birthday.”

“Still get caught calling her Annie?” I commented.

“Probably because she was still in transition from girl to woman.”

“Yes,” I said, I think a bit uncomfortably, “Andrea is at that stage now.”

“I'm rather glad to have girls, and that we're not in the 'States right now,” Martin said.

“You mean with Vietnam?”

“And the racial nonsense. Georgia has elected a segregationist governor. That can't help. The Civil War was lost by the South over a century ago, but some people are still fighting it seems.”

I said “To change the subject a bit, do you think the Space Program will still go ahead after the capsule fire that killed the three astronauts?”

“I think it will, but there’ll be a delay. From what I’ve been reading and hearing from some scientists at work who have contacts inside, the issue is running a pure oxygen environment, so any spark can set off a bad fire. There were two people killed a few days after the capsule fire in a simulator near San Antonio in Texas. Somehow that will have to be sorted out. There’s no fire brigade in space.”

“Why are they using pure oxygen?” I asked.

“My guess is that they can run at lower pressure, which means less stress on the capsule, so they don’t have to use such heavy materials. But I’ll be surprised if they don’t end up having to use heavier insulation on wiring and things like that.

Oh. Here comes our waitress with our salads. She served Anna and I the time I mentioned.”

March 7, 1967 – Andrea

I was at Dad’s house. The news had stories about Georges Vanier, our Governor-General who had died on March 5, and Chief Justice Taschereau became the titular head of government until a new GG was found. After supper I was doing homework when I heard the phone ring. Rachel called out “Andrea! It’s for you.”

I ran downstairs and took the phone from her. She looked concerned, but before she could say anything, I said “Hello” into the telephone.

“Andrea. It’s Joseph. I’m at the Civic Hospital. Grandad had a heart attack just before 4 p.m. He’s ... dead!”

“Oh. Joseph. I am sorry. Is there something I can do?”

“Granny has sort of gone to pieces. But I think we need to do some things to arrange a funeral.”

“Oh God, yes.”

My mind was spinning. Suddenly it cleared. I said “Joseph, can you call me back in 10 minutes. I’m going to ask Dad if he’ll come with me to the Civic. I’ll guess you need transport home.”

“Yes, we took a taxi. It wasn’t far, but cost more that we really should spend.”

“Call me back, but remember to tell us where you are.”

“OK. In case I forget, we’re in the Emergency waiting room.”

I hung up, then went to the living room. Rachel clearly knew already, and had told Dad. She said “His grandfather died. That’s really terrible.”

“Yes. I’ve asked him to call back in ten minutes. Dad. Can you drive me over to the Civic and we’ll take Joseph and Mrs. Vernon home? I think they also need some advice and maybe help with arranging a funeral. Joseph said Martha was not doing very well coping.”

Dad said “Of course. Rachel. Will you phone Jack and let him know I’ll miss the alumni committee and explain why? It was going to be a long-winded discussion about minor matters anyway. But I can’t say I’ve ever arranged a funeral.”

Rachel said “Bryan. Do you think Martin Tremblay would be able to advise? He did have to bury his wife.”

That was one for the books. Things were polite be-

tween my two families, but they didn't socialize with Mom and Martin, except that Ralph and sometimes Stephen came over.

Dan answered, "Given the situation, I think it's appropriate. As soon as we hear from Joseph again, I'll give him a call."

There was an awkward wait of several minutes before the phone rang and I was able to tell Joseph we'd be there shortly. Then Dad called Martin. They didn't talk long, but Dad asked me to give him the Vernon's phone number and address.

As we drove to the hospital, I said "Dad, I really appreciate this."

"Well, Joseph lost his parents. Now this. If his grandmother is too overcome by grief to manage, it will put a lot on his shoulders, and he is still only about the same age as you, isn't he?"

"Yes. He's about a month younger than me, and I'm seventeen in a couple of days. What a present!" I started to cry quietly.

I could tell Dad noticed. "You really like him?"

"Yes. He's a good friend and I think there could be more. This will make things really difficult for him."

"If his grandmother really can't handle the legal and money things, he is probably too young on his own to sign the contracts and stuff. They'll need a lawyer to handle the will, if there is one. And any pension and property matters. But the funeral will be the first thing. Martin said he'd gather some information for us and be in touch tonight."

We parked at the hospital and found the Emergency

waiting room. Joseph was holding Martha's hand and she was obviously quietly crying.

"Hello Mr. Corcoran," Joseph said. "Thank you both for coming. Grandma, this is Mr. Corcoran. You already know Andrea."

Martha said, "Thank you Mr. Corcoran. I'm afraid I'm all at sixes and sevens."

Dad said, "I'm very sorry for your loss, Mrs. Vernon. Let's get you home as quickly as we can. Is there anything still to be done here?"

He asked the question more to Joseph, who replied, "The hospital administrative person gave me this envelope. It has information about Grandad. They want us to arrange with an undertaker ..."

He trailed off, as this seemed to upset Martha. Dad saved the situation by saying "Let's go then. Let me lend you a hand Mrs. Vernon."

As we arrived at Joseph's house, I saw Martin's car in the street. He got out as we did.

"Hi Andrea, Bryan, Joseph. I assume you are Joseph's grandmother. I'm very sorry about Joseph's grandfather.

Bryan. Thank you for calling. It's never easy."

Nothing was said, but we got inside the house and took off our coats and boots. Without asking, I went to the kitchen and put on a kettle. The house didn't really have a dining room, just a long living room with a table at one end. Martin and Dad seemed to know this was where to go. As there were only four chairs, I brought one from the kitchen, where there was a tiny table and two chairs.

Martin asked gently "Mrs. Vernon, Did your husband

have any particular wishes or plans in case of his death?”

“I don’t think so. He didn’t like to talk about death, anyway.”

Dad asked “Do you know if your husband had a will, Mrs. Vernon? It could be important.”

“I asked him to make one, but he said it could bring bad luck.”

This wasn’t good, I knew.

Martin jumped in. “I think we’d better think first about an undertaker. I would assume from what you have said that George didn’t have anything pre-arranged.”

“Oh, no. After Michael and Angela died, it was all I could do to get him to help me arrange their funerals. And now I’ve got to bury him. Can you give me some help?”

“I can certainly do what I can,” Martin said.

“And I will too,” Dad chimed in.

Joseph asked “Do either of you know a good undertaker? One that isn’t too expensive I hope.”

Martin said “We – that is Anna and I – used McGarry’s funeral home. But Clara, my late wife, knew she was dying and – almost to our horror – arranged her own funeral. That included the cheapest coffin and a cremation. She said we should spend money on life, not death. I’ll see if we can find the records so we can ask a similar arrangement for Mr. Vernon.”

“How will we pay for it?” Martha asked. “George paid all the bills. I don’t know what to do.”

Martin said “Perhaps Mr. Corcoran and I could discuss that and get back to you in the morning when I call with information about the undertaker.”

“Yes. That would be the right approach,” Dad agreed.

There were a few more minutes of polite commiseration, then Dad, Martin and I made our departure.

As we headed for our cars, Dad said “Can we talk for a minute about what needs to be done?”

“Certainly. Shall we sit in your car to do so, or do you want to come to the house?” Martin replied.

This was one for the books. We settled on just sitting in the car. I had my homework and stuff at Dad’s – not the usual situation, but sometimes it happened.

Dad said “If there’s no will, and George did all the bills, Martha may not have access to the bank account.”

“That would be a complication,” Martin agreed.

“If you sort out the undertaker, I’ll see about finding a lawyer to try to expedite access to monies. Ralph says Joseph is a good kid, and I think Andrea thinks so too. Yes?”

“Yes. He really works hard and tries to get ahead,” I agreed.

“I get the same impression,” Martin said. “It would be a shame to mess up his progress. George’s death will be bad enough.”

“I’m willing to donate the cost of a lawyer up to, say, a hundred bucks,” Dad said. “I don’t want to see someone who works hard get blocked by lack of access to money that’s there. We can call it a loan, and they can pay it back if they are able to do so eventually, but I’ll treat it for now as a gift.”

Wow! New Dad here.

Martin said “I’d have to discuss any contribution with Michelle, though I think we could probably advance the

cost of the funeral until the money situation is sorted out.”

“Good,” Dad said. “Andrea. Can you call Joseph in the morning and ask him to try to find any and all documents that might be useful? That includes birth, death and marriage certificates, bank books and statements, cheque books, letters that might indicate intentions, and so on. If there’s no will, it will be important to establish that Martha and Joseph are the rightful successors. I don’t know specifically what is required, but we’d better hope they have enough to sort things out. Oh. Probably add title to the house. That may have Martha’s name on it already, but you never know. And there may still be a mortgage. If there isn’t, let’s hope there’s a quittance.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“It’s a statement from the lender – usually the bank – that the mortgage has been paid off. But it should also be registered and there should be a court document saying so. But a lot of people think the bank letter is enough. Sometimes causes delays in selling property. And Joseph and Martha may need to do that depending on their situation, which we don’t know.”

This was take-charge Dad. I guess that’s how he got his assistant Deputy Minister position.

Martin said “I’ll second Bryan’s suggestion, Andrea. If Joseph needs any assistance, make sure he knows he can ask.”

“I’ll call him in the morning. Dad. Can I have that used concertina file box you were clearing out the other day? I’ll find some envelopes and take them and the file over tomorrow to help organize anything Joseph can

find.”

“I was going to reuse the folder, but, yes, take it. I’ll get another if I really need it,” Dad said.

We said our good-nights and Martin got out of the back seat and went to his own car. Dad and I drove home. On the way, I simply said “Thanks, Dad. It means a lot to me.”

“Does Joseph mean a lot to you?”

“I think so. We haven’t been going out that long, and we know our education has several years to go, so we’re being careful, and not going steady as such. But I like him and he treats me with kindness and respect without being soppy. I hadn’t realized you’d asked Ralph about him.”

“I didn’t. Ralph and I were talking about Justyna and he mentioned you’d double-dated with them. Without me asking, he said he had a lot of respect for Joseph and how he handled his situation. It can’t have been easy for George and Martha to take on a small kid when they were retiring.”

“I think Ralph’s growing up too,” I said.

“Never easy,” Dad punctuated my comment.

March 8, 1967 – Andrea

After school I went over to the Vernon house. When I got there, it was rather busy. Martha’s next-door neighbour was just leaving, having brought a hot casserole so Martha and Joseph would not have to cook. And a Mrs. Nixon – “call me Monica” – who was apparently a long

time friend was there to console Martha, who was still pretty weepy.

There was tea in the pot, so I had a cup and a biscuit. Actually an oatmeal cookie. Store bought, but OK.

"I've brought a file box and some envelopes so we can organize documents," I said. "That is, if you're OK with me helping to sort them."

Martha said "Oh. I don't know where to start. George did all that."

Monica said "Now Martha, I know it's difficult, but this girl and your grandson can get things all shipshape if they're given a little start. But they need to know where to look. It's sad, very sad, but it will be a lot sadder if you can't get at the money George put aside for you and Joseph."

I felt a wave of relief that I didn't have to say that. But would Martha manage to rise above her grief enough to give us a bit of help? She said "You're right, Monica. And I'm so glad you're here. Andrea, Joseph. I hope you'll forgive my wailing. And I will try to help."

Joseph said, "If you just tell us where we should look, granny, we'll do the work. Though it's possible we may need you to tell us about some documents or letters.

Where should we start?"

"I think George kept most things in the desk over there. But there's also an old suitcase – a small one – in the bedroom closet on the top shelf."

"I'll get it," Joseph said.

"May I start to look in the desk?" I asked.

"Yes, dear. But please don't turn everything upside down."

“I won’t. I’ll do one drawer at a time and only take out things that look like they are important. And I’ll label some envelopes and put the documents in them and then into this concertina file box.”

“Ooh. That’s neat,” Monica said.

“My Dad uses them. He’s a civil service manager.”

I nearly said his title, but that might not help the current situation. The important thing was to find documents.

Joseph came back with the suitcase and set it on the carpet. I handed him some envelopes and a pen. “So you can sort items and label the envelopes.”

“What categories should we use?” he asked.

“I’ve already labelled an envelope for ‘Personal Documents’, that is birth, marriage and death certificates. We can separate them later if needed. I’ve also got ‘Bank’, ‘House documents’, ‘House expenses’ – that’s for bills and receipts. The documents one is for title and mortgage. Dad said to look for something called a quit-tance. It’s a statement that a mortgage has been paid off. Martha. Do you know if there’s any mortgage?”

“No. George paid it off. And I remember we celebrated when he got some sort of document with a glass of sherry.”

“Dad said there was some sort of court registration of it. Let’s hope we can find that.”

We started going through things. In a small upper side drawer of the desk, I found the personal documents.

“I think I’ve found some certificates,” I said, and brought the whole drawer across to where Martha and Monica were watching Joseph, who stopped what he was doing.

We found birth and marriage certificates for Martha and George, birth, marriage and death documents for Joseph's parents, and Joseph's birth certificate.

"That's good that they were all together. I'll put them in this envelope and place it in the first slot of the folder," I said as I did this.

"I think the suitcase has mostly photos and letters," Joseph said. "Do you think I'll find anything here?"

"Better look carefully," I said. "You could put things in envelopes and label them so they are not just muddled together."

I went back to the desk, and in another small drawer on the other side from the first one I'd looked in, I found a bank book, cheque book, and some other records. The others were looking at some photos and sorting them, so I quietly put the bank book and cheques in one envelope. Before I did this, I looked at the balance. About \$850. There were some fairly ordinary letters from the bank acknowledging deposits of pension money and similar transactions. I noticed these were more or less in order, but tidied them so they were in reverse date order and put them in another envelope. There were some odd notes that I wasn't sure I understood, so I used a paper clip and put them together, then added a note 'To Be Sorted'.

"Oh, here's something about the house," Joseph said. He had a fairly large brown envelope and had taken out a legal-sized document that was folded. It turned out that this was the deed of purchase, and it listed George and Martha as 'Joint Tenants'.

"Is there anything else in the envelope?" Monica said.

There were some other documents. It turned out one was the Quit Claim, with the bank letter and a sheet of paper with a court stamp on it. Good!

Back at the desk, I looked in the other two small drawers, one on each side. However, they contained things like pens and pencils, some odd items that were likely souvenirs, some old spectacles, some rubber bands, a ruler and some old coins. However, there were two drawers in each of the supporting pillars of the desk.

The top left drawer was packed with small tools like screwdrivers, a small crescent wrench, some different pliers, a puncture repair kit, and things like that. It would need to be checked, but not today.

The top right drawer turned out to have sewing things. Martha said “Oh, I should have told you that was the drawer George told me to use for my repair and darning things.”

“Is there anything in here that might be a document?” I asked.

“There shouldn’t be, but I haven’t looked in ages,” Martha replied.

“I’ll leave it to you unless we discover we are missing something.”

The bottom left drawer was more important. It had slots for file folders. In one slot, I found a manilla folder marked ‘Education Fund’. It turned out to have eight Canada Savings Bonds, each of \$500 denomination. They were in Joseph’s name. There was also a bank book, also in his name, but with George’s name as well. It had a couple of hundred dollars, and I could see that there had been a deposit in the previous Autumn, clearly from the

bonds. There was also a document that turned out to be the will from Joseph's parents.

I slid the manilla folder into an envelope, labelled it, and put it in the concertina file. We were finding things.

There was another manilla folder in the next slot of the drawer. It turned out to be the property tax bills. They were in order, and all but one were marked paid. Oh, oh. The last one was obviously for the present year and was due in a couple of weeks. I put all but this one back in the folder and put them in an envelope. The current bill I paper-clipped to the envelope and added a note 'DUE FOR PAYMENT'.

Another slot in the same drawer had some statements that were obviously George's pension. I made sure they were in date order and put them in the concertina file.

The last drawer contained house payment records. George also had receipts for other things relating to the house. They didn't have a car, so I didn't have to look for records concerning that. I wondered if anyone in the house had a driver's licence. Thinking of which, I'd be seventeen tomorrow, and Mom had said I can start on the path to getting one. We could have begun last year, but things have been pretty busy.

I've not mentioned my birthday to Joseph. At some point I know I told him about the date – maybe even last year – but in the present situation for him I'm not going to talk about myself.

March 14, 1967 – Martin

It was a week after George Vernon died. Andrea's birthday hadn't been explicitly celebrated because, as she put it, she would rather wait until Easter and celebrate it with Joan when things might be more settled. Michelle and I gave her a card and some money on the day itself, and we talked a bit about how life and death could intervene in one's plans.

George's funeral had been yesterday. I'd a meeting at work and didn't go, but Michelle wrote a note for Andrea to take time off school. On the other hand, I did agree to come today to a small office at 56 Sparks Street where a young lawyer named Mantha practised. We'd managed to arrange an appointment at 4:45 so Joseph would not miss any school. I was surprised that Andrea showed up with him, but Joseph and Martha had asked for her to come, and also had phoned to ask if I could, too. Apparently the fact that my first marriage was to a widow with a daughter and, after Clara died, my second to a divorcee with a daughter, and that I established a family for these daughters, was deemed important by Martha. It was clear her emotions were still fragile, but today she was composed.

Andrea had the concertina file, and she had made a list of documents that had been found.

Mr. Mantha read this list through quickly, then said "Whoever organized these did a good job. It saves me a lot of work, even if I bill less."

"It was Andrea," Martha said.

"Well done, young lady," Mantha said. "Now it does

note that no will was found. However, you have birth certificates for the deceased, George Vernon, and for Martha Taylor – which obviously is you Mrs. Vernon – as well as the marriage certificate for Martha and George. There's the birth certificate for Joseph and the birth, marriage and death certificates for his parents. It will be straightforward to establish that Martha inherits, and due to marriage there should be no succession duty."

"Will we be able to use the money in the bank to pay bills?" Joseph asked.

"Sometimes the banks can be slow at transferring the account to your grandmother's name. I will be writing a letter to the bank to ask that funds be released to pay essential bills such as the funeral expenses. I see that Miss ... er ... "

"Corcoran" Andrea filled in.

"That Miss Corcoran has included the bill for the funeral. Oh. It has been paid by Dr. Tremblay," Mantha added.

I said "Yes. I'm Andrea's step-father. When my wife died we had to arrange a funeral, and my late wife insisted on a modest arrangement. I persuaded Mrs. Vernon to allow me to organize the funeral and she can pay me back when she is able."

"Commendable, Dr. Tremblay. I see on the list is noted a contribution from a union local toward funeral expenses."

"George's old union friends were very generous," Martha said.

"And do you have any monies for immediate needs?" Mantha asked.

“My friend Monica helped me sort George’s clothes. We needed something for him for the funeral. And Monica said look in the pockets of all his clothes and we found over a hundred and fifty dollars. Monica thinks we’ll possibly find more in some of his things. She said to look in his toolbox and things like that.”

“I think we can consider such amounts to be house-keeping money,” said Mr. Mantha, “But do certainly look for any valuables or money in all places where they may be concealed.

Now, I note that there is a property tax bill coming due, and I suggest that we think of a way to pay that.”

While I wasn’t entirely happy to do so, I volunteered “I’m willing to pay that and add the amount to the funeral account.”

Mantha responded “That will avoid any awkwardness with the City. But I believe that Mrs. Vernon can already pay with the monies that the railwaymen contributed.”

Of course. I hadn’t thought of that. I said “That will make it a bit easier for my wife and I.”

“I’ll get my assistant to prepare a statement of the different expenses and payments. And I understand Mr. Corcoran is to be thanked for covering my bill.”

Martha said “People I hardly know have been so kind.”

Mantha then said “Now I have something else we should attend to. Mr. March is about to turn seventeen, I believe in a month. That is, unfortunately, over a year shy of being able to fully transact contracts here in Canada.

Now his parents’ will specified that George and Martha would be his guardians in case of their death, and Martha

will therefore continue to occupy that role for another year. However, it seems prudent for us to arrange that Joseph has a guarantee of access to monies should, heaven forbid, anything happen to you, Martha.”

“Oh, dear. I hadn’t thought of that,” said the lady herself.

Mantha continued “I suggest that I draw up a very simple will for you, leaving everything to Joseph but specifying a guardian until he is eighteen. Is there someone who would take that on?”

“I don’t know” Martha looked lost. I noticed Andrea staring at me. She raised her eyebrows. I caught her meaning and said “If there is nobody else, and as the obligation would be for at most one year, I would be willing to act. However, I would feel more comfortable for Joseph if it were stated that my role was to act only to control expenditures beyond living expenses and education. That is, to take charge only if Joseph were to want to spend the money on a fancy car or something temporary.”

Joseph was about to say something, but Mantha beat him to it. “I discern that Joseph is quite sober in his decisions, so that is unlikely. However, I can include a few words that would allow him discretion over living and educational expenses and modest pocket money. Would that work?”

Martha said “Thank you Dr. Tremblay,” before I could mumble my assent.

I asked “Is that OK with you, Joseph. It’s something I hope isn’t actually needed.”

Joseph mumbled, “No. It’s fine. It would be terrible

if you had to, but it seems bad things happen.”

Mantha said “I’ll get my secretary onto the letter for the bank right away, and will have Mrs. Vernon’s will ready by next Monday along with the statement of expenses and any other documents. I don’t think we need to transfer title to the house just now. I’ll get copies of the death certificate and make a list of people who should be informed, such as the pension authorities. If any cheques arrive, please keep them together and bring them to me. You could respond yourself, but thanks to Miss Corcoran, this has been an easier task than it could have been and my secretary knows the form of words.”

We all expressed our thanks and made our way out of the very small offices and down the rather narrow stairs to Sparks Street. My offer of a lift – my car was parked not far away – was readily accepted. The temperature was near freezing, and it was getting towards nightfall. Martha was clearly tired out from all the fuss and bother of the funeral as well as the fatigue occasioned by grief. I’d forgotten that heaviness that comes when someone who is part of you is ripped away.

After we dropped off Joseph and Martha, Andrea moved into the front seat. As we drove, she said “Thank you tons for offering to be Joseph’s guardian if anything happens to Mrs. Vernon.”

“I hope I did the right thing. Also with offering to cover the property tax. Mom may be upset I did that without asking her.”

“Maybe for not asking first, but not for doing it. And I think she’d understand.”

“I hope so. By the way, was Joseph OK with it. He

was very quiet.”

Andrea said “He told me he’s been finding he needs to think a lot. If the money situation doesn’t work out, he’ll have to drop out of school and find a job. That worries him.”

“He shouldn’t worry too much in the short term. He can use his education money, and if he and Martha are careful, they should be able to eke that out for a couple of years. And the house could be sold to give them probably three or four more years living expenses, but which time he could be doing well enough.”

“Probably he hasn’t thought of that. Though it would cut into his education money.”

“If he goes the apprentice route to become an electrician, he may not need it for tuition and books, though possibly for tools,” I added.

“Hmm. Now I hadn’t thought of that.

Joseph also told me he’s a bit worried because he doesn’t feel devastated by losing his grandfather. I think he feels he’s a cold fish. Someone who doesn’t care.”

I said “When Clara died, I think people wondered about Anna and I. We didn’t cry or go around really morose. But I think we were numb. Later on odd things would trigger really intense feelings of sadness. A few months after Clara died, I met a nice woman at a conference. She was teaching at McMaster, and didn’t have a car. We arranged that I would come and stay and we’d drive to Niagara and Stratford over a long weekend. If her mother hadn’t had a stroke and needed care in Scotland, possibly I’d never have teamed up with your mother. But on the way home from Hamilton I

stopped in Toronto opposite the apartment where Clara and Anna and I first lived together in Canada. Actually our first home together. And for about ten minutes the tears just wouldn't stop."

"Oh. I hadn't realized it could be like that," Andrea said. "I'll have to watch in case Joseph gets really sad."

"The best you can do is be there for him, and let him know that. And also reassure him that grief can take many forms. Anna told me she poured her feelings into getting top of her class."

"Really. Wow. That's kind of a positive outlet for the feelings. I'm not sure what I'd do if I lost Mom."

"Well, you would likely still have your father, who seems to be showing his good side to the world lately."

"Yeah. I like him better than I did a year or so ago. I think he has a better opinion of you too."

March 16, 1967 – Michelle

Nicole had gone into labour late last night. Stephane took her to the General Hospital at 6 in the morning. He said that one thing about that time of day was that he was able to park the car after passing her to the care of the staff. The Byward Market was a busy part of town.

Their little girl was born mid-afternoon and I was able to visit this evening. Martin drove me and gave me some money and told me to take a taxi home. I'd have taken the bus, but Martin's judgement of the temperature was good – I would have been very cold and miserable when I got home. As it was, I came in a bit before 9 p.m.

Martin was having tea at the kitchen table and poured me a cup. He asked “Everything OK with Nicole and the baby?”

“They’re doing fine. I think the labour went better than most. The baby is darling.”

“Aren’t they all?” Martin asked.

“I guess they have to be,” I laughed. “Otherwise parents would ask the minister who married them for a refund.”

“Will there be a christening soon?” Martin asked. That was an expression I think more used in the UK than here.

“Probably around the beginning of May. Unless, heaven forbid, the baby gets sick.”

“Meaning there’d be an emergency baptism?” Martin asked.

“Yes. Even if we aren’t as ... er ... connected to the Church as we were, I think we’d consider it bad practise to fail to baptise a child.”

As I said this I wondered if Martin would consider this superstitious, or even simply foolish. But Martin just said “It’s important to maintain the traditions and give the baby a safe home.”

Oh. I did love this man!

March 26, 1967 – Martin

Easter Sunday. And the day before Michelle’s birthday.

Andrea was with us for the weekend, and joined us for church, which was packed, and the hymns were today sung with some enthusiasm. My usual meditative

interlude never materialized.

Bernard and Charlotte were hosting Easter dinner, where Michelle's birthday and Andrea's birthday and the new baby would be celebrated. Stephane and Nicole had decided to call the baby Claire. Later in the afternoon, Nicole told me in a quiet voice that it was her way to honour Clara.

There'd been talk of Andrea celebrating, as last year, with Joan and the Bakers, but somehow the timing wasn't quite right. We were going to sort something out for the Victoria Day holiday.

Today there weren't presents. Michelle and I had given a home-made gift certificate – essentially a promise of money – for Andrea to get either books or equipment or clothing she wanted. Andrea, with participation of Anna had made Michelle a jacket – I don't know when she found the time – that was suitable for all but the hottest and coldest times of year. It had lots of quite large and robust pockets. Andrea said it was “Mom's student jacket” for when she went back to University. This would be unveiled later today.

Dinners at the Lacroix house always had an air of friendly chaos, but today was somewhat less frantic, probably because there was an unsaid attempt to avoid startling little Claire. There was still plenty of conversation and affection. In a strange and wonderful moment, I realized that I wasn't a bystander or visitor any more. I was a family member. It was more than a result of the marriage ceremony Joe Baker conducted for us two years ago. Somehow there'd been some sort of emotional lava flow from the volcano that was the Lacroix family that

engulfed me and Anna.

And as we were finishing dessert, Anna and Peter came in. Charlotte had invited them to the dinner, but they had already agreed to go to the Sinclairs. They wanted to see the baby, and also congratulate the birthday girls, so had arranged to stop by briefly. I wonder if children and their time of arrival is something Anna and Peter talk about. I actually suspect they both intend to wait until their educations are more or less complete. At least young people today have more choices.

Michelle smiled at me from a distance across the table. I smiled back. What were we communicating? Contentment? Yes. That was it. But not the empty contentment that leads to indolence and lethargy. She was gearing up to do an advanced degree. I was – well, not quite sure. But I was ensuring I had my resumé in order along with a binder of my publications. In fact two binders – one at the office and one at home in case of fire or flood.

Was it the Centennial year. Certainly there was a lot of energy around the country.

Bernard brought me back to reality.

“Young Joseph told me you’d agreed to be his guardian if anything happened to his grandmother.”

“Given it will be for at most a year, I thought it would make it much easier for them if I agreed. And hopefully I won’t have to act,” I replied.

“Let’s hope that’s how it turns out. He’s a good worker, and get’s along with people. I can see why Andrea likes him.”

“They both seem very serious about what they want to do.”

“Yes. In the construction business we see a lot of young men who really just want to make money. And a lot of them not interested in doing the work to earn it,” Bernard said.

“Will Joseph stay with your outfit?”

“I don’t think so. I’m sending him to talk with a *copain* who does electrical work. Joseph said he’d like to learn about the high voltage end. Even my friend only does a bit of that, but in my firm there’s just René, and we work essentially on 110 volt circuits in houses and offices. Still, he says Joseph learns quickly and already asked some questions that saved a mistake or two.”

“Yet you’re still prepared to pass him on to someone else?” I asked.

“It doesn’t really do much good to try to keep people when they’re eager to get ahead. And keeping on good terms with them usually comes back, though almost never as you expect. We can’t really give Joseph a good apprenticeship, and he should probably do that and also get some formal education, maybe in one of the new vocational colleges the Province is setting up. Or he may be able to find a training position with HEPCO. He’s got the brains and the right attitude.

But I’d rather put him on the road he wants than keep him in my outfit because I might make a few extra *piastres*.”

“A good philosophy. And it matches my experience that it pays to be open and straightforward. Sometimes I worry I’m too much of a push-over.”

“But you sleep well at night, I think. Like I do.”

Bernard had it right. I did sleep well at night.

April 16, 1966 – Andrea

It was Joseph's birthday, and Mom and Martin said I could give him a birthday party here. Ralph and Justyna were invited, and we told Joseph to bring Martha along.

I decided to make it a lunch party, starting at one o'clock to give us time to set up after church, and finish at the latest by around four. For the food, I had a couple of types of bread rolls, as well as a loaf I'd baked as an experiment. I'd not much experience baking bread, and I did it yesterday. I used whole wheat flour and the bread was quite dense, but rather nice.

People could make their own sandwiches, and I'd got some ham and a couple of types of luncheon meat, some cheddar and some cream cheese. There was some lettuce and sliced tomatoes and carrot sticks, and some pickles and relish. Mom offered to pay me back for the groceries I went out to get yesterday, but I said I had my own money. She smiled and said "Good for you!". I half expected she'd insist on paying, and truthfully I'm still not rich enough that I would have resisted.

As a special treat, I put out my last box of Dutch chocolate flakes. It could be put on the bread, though I'd made some cookies and I'd made an apple cake to serve as birthday cake.

When I invited Joseph, he'd been embarrassed that he'd forgotten my birthday. I told him what Martin had related to me about his own experience of grief, which seemed to help Joseph. However, he did make a fuss that there should be no presents. That's actually what I was going to suggest, but didn't quite know how I'd say it.

Sometimes things just work out OK.

We'd all had a couple of sandwiches. I took a piece of my home-made bread and buttered it, then shook on some flakes, then cut it in two.

"Like half?" I asked Joseph.

"Thanks," he said, taking the proffered piece. "That's a neat idea. Where did you find those flakes?"

"I brought them back from Holland last summer."

Oops. I'd brought back lots, but back then we weren't really going out much yet, so I'd not got a box for him.

"Really neat. I like them."

"Better enjoy today. That's the last until someone goes to Europe. Or we discover a way to have them shipped in," I said.

While we didn't give presents, we did have cards, and I'd managed to make sure we had 17 candles for the apple cake. I didn't ice it – I find too many cakes are all sweet and no other taste – but I did dust it with icing sugar. I'd managed to get it moist inside with a slightly firm crust so it didn't fall apart. Everybody liked it.

May 20, 1967 – Michelle

Martin, Andrea and I were at the Baker's in Brockville. We were having a get-together to give Joan and Andrea a minor celebration of their birthdays and let us all catch up on family news and gossip. We'd decided that staying over was a lot of work for Penny, even though Miriam and Sharon would pitch in. In reality, we knew the household was always busy. In fact Joe had two weddings this afternoon, but would be clear by 3:30 to come and relax –

and charge his batteries for Sunday service tomorrow!

Martin, Robert and Des went for a walk down by the Lake, and they took all the younger contingent bar baby David. No doubt the male part of the crowd was verbally re-playing the May 2 victory of the Maple Leafs which gave them the Stanley Cup.

The baby, now 11 months, was in a bassinet between Sharon and Miriam and dozing. I whispered "He's adorable."

"You don't need to whisper. Around here, he's got used to the general uproar," Penny said.

"Yes, he only reacts to unusual noises, not family chatter," Sharon added.

"Are you serious about going back to school for an advanced degree?" Miriam asked.

"Yes. I've been applying for a study leave from the government and am more or less on track with U of O to register for a Ph. D. in geography, though I might bail out with a Masters' degree if I don't find it fits what I want eventually."

"What do you want to get from your studies," Sharon asked. I'd sort of expected that question, but not from that quarter.

I replied "I want to work on the use of computerized tools for mapping. In particular, we should be able to build data collections that let us quickly figure out where different resources or structures or dangers are. For example, it would be really helpful to have a quick way to check where cables or pipelines are located so workers don't dig them up accidentally."

"And standard maps aren't good for that?" Miriam asked.

“We make maps only periodically, but roads and pipes and wires are constantly being added and changed. It would be really nice to be able to get a quick update. It doesn’t need to be super quality. Crude but accurate is more what you want to avoid trouble.”

“You’ve got the bit between your teeth, Michelle. Martin better be ready to wash his own underpants,” Penny said.

We all laughed, but I quickly said “Martin’s always supportive. And Andrea has almost pushed me out of the kitchen. I’m sometimes afraid to step on the bathroom scales.”

“You too?” Penny and Sharon said together, and we all laughed some more.

Just then, there was a rumble of noise as the walkers came in, joined by Joe who they’d met en route. The baby woke and made a half-hearted effort to cry, but Miriam picked him up and sat him on her lap and he smiled to the crowd that tumbled in.

There were too many of us to sit down for a meal, and we’d decided to eat around 5 so we could leave around 8:30. Martin said he’d drive and wouldn’t have any alcohol after 5, so I could imbibe if I wished, which really meant a couple of small glasses of wine or similar over the afternoon or else I’d be snoozing on the floor. We’d let Andrea drive down as practise. She drove quite well, probably with more caution than I would. I managed a nap in the back seat. Sometimes a car nap is needed!

So when the food was put out – buffet style with contributions from all of us – we filled our paper plates and found somewhere to sit. I did what I’d done the first time

we came here and squeezed into the big armchair with Martin. We managed to grab a TV tray which made eating easier, but fortunately nothing needed knife and fork, just a fork for some items like salads.

“Terrific spread! Thanks to all the cooks,” Martin said.

“Yes, it’s hard now to realize how limited our choices were just 20-odd years ago,” Robert added.

“And apart from the time when my arm got broken, you didn’t really get the full brunt of the effort to keep a household going,” Miriam joined in.

“I’ll not challenge that,” Robert said. “When that V-2 dislodged the brick and broke your arm, I really found it very challenging to shop with all the coupons and ration books and queues. And then when I got home with my meagre purchases, such a sparse choice of food.”

“We were supposed to have it better in the Forces,” Martin said, “But our cooks were really poor. I think there was a six-week period where we had egg and chips for every meal, or sometimes chips and eggs for variety. Those awful powdered eggs, too.”

“We were luckier here, though food was definitely not as good as pre-War,” Penny said.

“Actually, I think we did better with rations when we were on the move later, not long before the surrender,” Martin added. “There were four kinds of meal rations. One was stew with rice pudding for dessert. Our favourite was probably meat pudding with peaches for dessert. I’m sure it wasn’t great in today’s terms, but we liked them a lot more than what we got from the Catering Corps. Our tent let Bill Parkin off a lot of du-

ties – the armourers would even look after his plane – so he could make sure he was driving the lorry – truck – with the good rations. And then others would arrange to steal those rations while he took a pre-arranged pee in the bushes. And we’d find the rations in our tent later.

Also we could scrounge for ourselves to augment what we ate. Given the 247 types who were, shall we say, inventive, we often had things we could trade with locals or the Americans for bits and pieces.

One of our guys met up with a friend in the Engineers who was in a field marked in German as a minefield. However, they’d put up the sign on a potato field and were busy digging up potatoes rather than explosives. And we did better cooking our own than letting the guys called cooks mess things up.”

Funny how Martin came up with these little bits and pieces out of the blue. They weren’t things you could explicitly ask about.

May 22, 1967 – Martin

The weather wasn’t very warm, but we wanted to tidy up the cottage. Andrea came with us and invited Joseph, even though she made clear he’d be helping with the cleaning and tidying.

We got to the cottage at 10, which was earlier than I had expected.

“I’ll get a fire going,” Michelle said.

“Don’t forget the damper Mom!” Andrea chimed in. The two of them had forgotten when we came to work on the cottage renovations about two years ago.

I said, “I’m going to work on getting the water system working, then refill the hot water tank. We drained it and took out the fuse last autumn so it wouldn’t freeze.”

“Can you turn on the propane first?” Michelle asked. We had put in a modest two-burner propane stove – no oven – when we renovated so the water heater could have the 220V circuit. The propane tank was a smallish one designed for trailers and I’d made sure to build a ventilated enclosure outside. We’d need to get another tank soon, but there’d be enough for today.

Andrea replied “If Joseph helps me get the Sunfish out from under the cottage I can check the rigging and sail and make sure no mice or other wildlife have done any damage. And as soon as we’ve got stuff outside, he can come and help you with the waterworks.”

The sailboat was stored under the cottage, which was on posts. We’d managed last year to complete a screen around this foundation, with a door that could be locked. Also to put in some insulation between the floor joists. The screen would not, unless we did a lot more work, keep out small animals, and I wanted it well-ventilated or we’d get mould and rot. Ventilation was something one needed a lot in cottages, but too much could be uncomfortable in cold weather.

We’d left things in good shape when we essentially shut down the cottage last autumn. The cottage could be used in winter for a visit, but without toilet facilities, since we’d got rid of the outhouse. As I opened the propane tank enclosure and checked the everything was clean and fittings were tight, I wondered if we should have done that. Perhaps it would have been smart to

keep it so we could visit, though doing your business in the little house when it was below freezing could diminish the joys of getting out here. Maybe I should look into a portable camping toilet so we can come out for the odd winter visit. Hmm. Better make sure Michelle agrees. Those toilets do need emptying.

I turned on the main valve and closed up, then went to the pump. By the time I'd got the pump enclosure open and detached the hose to prime the pump, Joseph was with me. I sent him to get a bucket of water from the river while I prepared a funnel to pour in the water.

Before he went to the river, Joseph asked "Have you got a filter or an old nylon stocking to put in the funnel?"

"That's a good idea. I think I've got some old nylons in the car for emergency if the fan-belt breaks."

I went and found one, and we poured in the water until the hose was full, waited a bit as the air escaped, then made sure it was as full as we could.

"I think you could screw in the fuse and turn on the pump switch. But yell to let me know when you are switching on, and listen in case I say 'off'," I told Joseph. "Oh, and open up the cold tap in the bathtub first so water can flow."

When Joseph turned on the pump, there was a bit of a hiccup and then I could hear the pump working and feel water flow in the pipe. I went in to see how things were going, and water was tumbling into the tub, sometimes with some air bubbles, and occasionally a bit brown.

"We should let it flow for a while," Joseph said.

"Yes, and open some other taps once we get the water heater filled."

“I saw a hose under the cottage, so we can let the tank flush first,” Joseph said. “René says a lot of heaters would last longer if everyone did that.”

I recalled Bernard mentioning his electrician who Joseph worked with.

So we hooked up the hose to the water heater emptying valve and led it outside, then turned on the cold water input and opened the flush valve. Some brown slurry gushed outside, but was clear within a half minute. Joseph went in the bathroom and I heard him turn off a tap then turn on another.

“I switched from cold to hot,” he said. “We can shut off the drain valve now.”

After we’d done this we cleared away the hose while the tank filled. It was a 40 gallon tank. I guessed 40 US gallons. Sigh. We always were using US measurements, even if they weren’t our legal ones. The tap in the tub was hissing air now. Joseph opened the sink taps a little, and I saw him bend down and open the toilet fill tap a bit too. Then he disappeared into the main part of the cottage to open the kitchen sink taps a bit too. After a while we heard all the taps cough and splutter. As each ran clear we closed them.

“I’ll switch on the water heater if you flush the antifreeze out of the toilet,” I said as I pushed in the fuse block and then turned on the large switch for the 220 V power to the water heater.

I was moving towards the living room – well, the common kitchen, dining, living area of the cottage, but Joseph hung back and put his ear to the heater. “Just listening to see if it is heating. Those cylinder fuses don’t show

you when they've blown."

We waited a few seconds, then he said "I can hear some noise, so I think it's OK. Otherwise we'll need to get a meter and check for continuity."

Clearly he was learning some tricks of the trade.

Michelle had been cleaning the main area. It wasn't really dirty, but there was some dust that seemed to have settled over the winter. Andrea came in and said "Everything seems OK with the Sunfish. It looks like there may have been a squirrel in a corner under some of that wood we saved. Maybe Joseph and I should clean it out before we put the Sunfish back."

Michelle said sharply "Make sure you wear gloves and tie a scarf over your face."

"Good thinking Mom."

They went off to do this, and I turned to checking the screens. There were a couple of minor tears I wanted to patch. I took the screens down on the verandah, then brought them inside to work on the patching. I'd use fishing line to sew patches over the tears for now. Next year maybe replace the screen material on at least one of them. Between tasks I put more wood on the fire – the room was starting to become more comfortable and I could remove my coat. Michelle was wiping out the cupboards.

"Any sign of wildlife?" I asked.

"No. But I'm glad we put the plates and stuff in plastic bags. We washed them thoroughly in the fall, and there's no holes, so we can use them without washing, which now would be in cold water."

I heard the door to the under-cottage storage close

and some fiddling with the padlock. Andrea came in and hung the key on its hook inside one of the kitchen cupboards while I heard Joseph visit the bathroom.

“Lunch?” Michelle asked.

This was met with universal approval. It turned out Michelle had a big pot of pea soup, albeit from cans, steaming on the burner. There was some bread, sliced tomatoes and some cold cuts, all of which we set out on the table and when the soup had been ladled into bowls we sat down. Joseph and Andrea decided to sit on the same side so they could look out the window. Michelle and I took the ends of the table.

There was a rather quiet time while everyone ate.

“Tea?” Michelle asked.

“I’ll put on the kettle,” Andrea said. “And I’ve some nanaimo bars and date slices I made the other day.”

“Nice,” Joseph said. “Thank you Dr. and Mrs. Tremblay for inviting me. It means a lot.”

“We’ve made you work for it,” Michelle said.

“Not so difficult. For M. Lacroix I have to work a lot harder, but the pay has been helpful, and I’m learning a lot.”

“It’s good to see both you and Andrea getting to grips with what you want to do in life. Even if it’s not what you eventually settle into, you seem to be thinking and trying things out. A lot of young people are just drifting, I think,” I commented.

“You mean like the hippies in San Francisco? They’ve declared a Summer of Love.” Michelle asked.

“That’s perhaps one manifestation of a lack of focus. Or perhaps a reaction to the established order and its

materialism, including what is going on in Vietnam.”

Andrea said “I’m still not sure what I really want to do. But I’m learning stuff, which I like. I get quite a ... I don’t know ... rush when I make something that is good.”

“Me too. It’s great to see the lights come on in a new house,” Joseph said.

Andrea asked “But this year it seems both of you – Mom and Martin – are kind of looking to change somehow. I was sort of worried just before Christmas that we’d all up and move to Arizona. Was that for real? You know. If the job had been a good one we would have gone?”

I felt it was up to me to answer, and though I saw Michelle about to speak, I beat her to it.

“I think going to Arizona was a reaction to some conversations Michelle and I have been having about our work. We’re pretty happy together and in our home life, which I think you understand.”

Andrea nodded and made a “Hmm” of agreement. I continued.

“When we got the invite to interview with Antentech, we initially were going to say we weren’t interested, but then – together – we decided that it’s silly to ignore opportunities without investigating them. And it was a chance to see a place where there’ll be lots of things happening. Arizona is growing fast. The weather there is pretty good, though rather hot in the summer. But it offers a lot of people good jobs in a place that isn’t too costly to live well. But for both Mom and I, there were two negatives. First, the job would have had a

lot of pressure to get something working that might not be possible, or not possible with the time and resources available. That isn't how my background leads me to work on problems. I've spent a couple of decades measuring and testing and trying lots of different things to understand them, not racing down the shortest road to some prize that may or may not be worth winning."

Michelle jumped in "The second thing – unless I'm off base on what Martin was about to say – is that we didn't feel at home there. It was terribly nice, but we didn't fit in. Am I right, Martin?"

"Yes, pretty much what I was going to say."

"So it was a wasted trip?" Andrea asked.

"Not at all," Michelle answered. "Martin hadn't been to a job interview for a very long time, and it was worthwhile for the experience. And we got to find out about that part of the world. It would be nice to go there to see the Grand Canyon. We saw a bit from the airplane – just a small piece of the eastern end – as we flew in to Phoenix. And the whole exercise forced us to take stock of where we were and what we wanted from life."

Joseph said "Wow. I didn't think adults had the same sort of things to worry about."

"Perhaps 'worry' isn't the right word," I answered. "But at every age, it doesn't hurt to think about whether your life is giving you the satisfaction you want, and how you might alter things for the better. That's one of the concerns I have about 'turn on, tune in, drop out' that seems to be a popular rallying cry now."

"There seems to be a big division," Andrea said. "We've got the hippies who are rather direct about not being

part of the main part of society, plus a lot of kids and probably adults who just drift along. Then there's people like all of us who are actively thinking about what they should be doing. And with that, we've got the Centennial and Expo '67 and all sorts of new ideas and projects going on. It's a bit confusing."

"Well put. But I don't think Mom and I can give any specific answers for you. As Joseph noted, we're thinking too, though I think Michelle has got her general plan more or less in order to study for a Masters' or doctorate. I'm hoping that my research work and perhaps more particularly the working style will continue within the government. But there are always changes, so I'm going to watch for leads and follow up on any that seem interesting, even if they turn out to be simply useful as a way to keep my interview skills sharp. The two of you seem to be doing much the same, developing skills and knowledge so you have choices."

"I hadn't quite thought of it that way," Joseph said.

"Maybe I had, but hadn't got around to putting words to what I was doing," Andrea added, then changed the subject. "You know I mentioned Expo '67. Do you think we might go there for a couple of days?"

This led us off on a discussion of when and how we might go. I don't know if Andrea meant to include Joseph, but he wasn't specifically excluded, and given that he was generally an easy guest – we never had to ask for help, and tasks were often done before we noticed – I was fairly sure he'd be no problem. We talked about possibilities in terms of time – it seemed that weekends might be very busy, so a couple of weekdays would

be best. Andrea had already learnt that the admission charge was \$2.50 per day, which wasn't too bad. Apparently the food concessions had been very busy. Michelle thought that it would be best to eat a good breakfast, carry some cookies and chocolate, then have a good dinner off-site. Did I detect some prior discussion? Hmm.

"Martin, I have a school friend who lives in Laval. I talked to her on the phone last week. She says we can camp in her basement. There's even a working shower and toilet, though they've not got it fully finished. There's a bus to the Metro which is the easiest way to Isle Ste. Hélène where Expo is located."

I surrendered gracefully. We all found books and Andrea put on some music. We'd acquired a second-hand player last year, and I hadn't noticed she'd put some records in the car this morning. Late in the afternoon, Michelle put a pot on the burner to simmer. Somehow a stew had been made cooperatively by mother and daughter. After our meal, we tidied up and by seven were on the road home.

May 22, 1967 – Michelle

It was just after 10 p.m. as I slipped into bed. Martin put out his arm and I snuggled in.

"Really nice day," he said.

"I agree, but it was hardly anything special."

"But it was. I was with the woman I love and other people I care about. I ate well, had congenial conversation, accomplished some necessary chores without undue effort, read part of a book and listened to some music,

and I end up with a very sexy lady in my arms.”

“What an old smoothie! Though seriously, what you just said is so true. I guess that’s what makes a day special.”

“Indeed. And cuddling like this.”

“That was an interesting conversation about what people should seek in life. It rather underlined what’s been going on with us – all of us there today – in that last few months. We didn’t mention George Vernon. I wonder if we should have?”

“There wasn’t an obvious moment to do so. I don’t think he’s forgotten. In fact, I think Andrea and Joseph may have been talking about him when they went for a walk before dinner along the river road.”

“True. Do you think the two of them are getting too involved?”

“Is that MOM in capitals talking?”

“Not especially. Maybe a little.”

“The difficulty is that if they don’t spend time together and eventually do decide they are a couple, then they’ve missed out on some important formative experiences. And if they fail to at least spend some time to meet and get to know other people, or even to explore their own individual interests that might be suppressed by couple-based ones, then they also miss out. I think the best course for us is to support them when they express such ideas, which Andrea has done. Joseph is a bit quiet, perhaps understandably, but what he does talk about in regard to his future is thoughtful.”

“Well, today they got to hear how we think and work things out. Do you think they understood what we were

saying?"

"Neither of them is foolish."

"Growing up is difficult!" I said.

"Yes. Let's hope it's not too long before we've finished growing up."

I gave him a gentle elbow in the ribs, then decided that perhaps he was right, and also gave him a big smoochy kiss.