

Unfamiliar Territory



Poems, Prayers, Meditations, and Songs
Volume I

Mary Campbell

With photographs by Luc Viatour*

"UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY: POEMS, PRAYERS, MEDITATIONS, AND SONGS"

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Cover: istockphoto.com

Published by Zero Gravity
3538 Dewey Avenue
Omaha, Nebraska 68105-1376

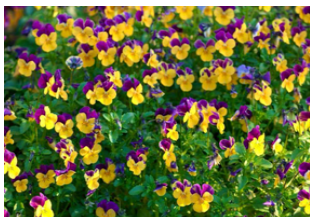
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Printed in the U.S.A. on 30- to 100-percent recycled paper processed chlorine-free



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Andre Karwath



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To my little
bright-eyed
bird



Unfamiliar Territory: Eventually Irresistible

These poems span three decades of groping for God. Some of them are light and airy, a few arose out of despair, one or two are incomprehensible even to me... but where the question is, "Are you there, God?" the answer is always a jubilant "Yes!" Where the question is, "Can I have some money, God?" the answer is often tediously familiar: "What happened to your allowance?"

- One of my favorite prayers (it is not in this book) begins, "Our Father, who's lost in Heaven, what would be thy name?" It is a very good prayer when you're 3.

(The pray-er who originated this poignant question to her Creator also loved to sing, "Put Your Hand in the Hand of the Man Who Spilled the Water" and her personal version of "Jingle Bells": "...O'er the fields we go, laughing all the way (Ha! Ha! Ha!). Bales of cocktails ring, making spirits bright....")

As my friend the Reverend Bruce Hurley once said to Mrs. Goodbody — who believed one should pray for Others, never for oneself, and definitely not for things like parking places or "Please, God, don't let this touchdown be called back" — "God sorts out our prayers."

- Unapologetically I refer to God in this book as "he" or "him" and also as "Father-Mother." One prayer is addressed to "Saints and Angels." A Jewish friend of mine once asked me why Gentiles pray to anyone besides the One God. Why Jesus? Why Mary? ...which led to the following dialogue (recounted pretty much verbatim):

My conversation with Daniel

M—Well, of course I can't say for sure, but I suspect it's because the Jews have so much, you know, *history* with the Almighty, and all those centuries of study and the Dark Ages that weren't *dark* in the Byzantine Empire or wherever, and those unbelievably gifted scholars interpreting the Torah, you know, and, well, I ask you, *six orders* of the Mishnah, the Tosefta and Gemara—two Talmuds—and your *midrashim*—my goodness, the *Zohar*, and all this between pogroms and being sent packing, while, you see, *my* ancestors were so much more *flexible* about religion, maybe I mean *pragmatic*, simply adopting the gods of the most recent invaders—Angles, Saxons, Jutes, or do I mean Vikings? and the Saxons again, quite frequently, really, they just came burning and pillaging and carrying off virgins, and coming back when they ran out of virgins, so of course they seldom made it out of port and eventually just stayed on—oh, and I was forgetting the Romans, who drove my *other* ancestors into the highlands, where they were reincarnated as birds.¹

D—What kind of birds?

M—Penguins.

D—Really?

M—Well, I don't think so, Dear. Pheasants, perhaps.

D—I forget what we were talking about.

M—I was saying that while the Jews were probing deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the One God, the Celts were being polytheists worshiping various gods and goddesses, same gods, different names, in charge of this or that, and the highland Celts who had run off with the Druids kept on dancing around festal fires or whatever they did, and some of it was sure to stick, and perhaps that's why some Christians



Angels on earth

¹ When the Romans invaded Britain during the first century C.E., they destroyed the Druidic monasteries. The Druids and their followers literally headed for the hills. Isolated in Ireland and the mountains of Scotland and Wales, their religion flourished and has never entirely disappeared. My Welsh and Scottish ancestors probably participated in human sacrifice. Julius Caesar, in *De Bello Gallico*, wrote that the Druids administered such sacrifices in times of affliction—war and disease—to placate the gods. One practice involved building "effigies of great size interwoven with twigs, the limbs of which are filled up with living people which are set on fire from below, and the people are deprived of life surrounded by flames. It is judged that the punishment of those who participated in theft or brigandage or other crimes are more pleasing to the immortal gods; but when the supplies of this kind fail, they even go so low as to inflict punishment on the innocent."

Sadly, I can't help thinking that Caesar meant to say, "[T]he people, surrounded by flames, are deprived of life" rather than "...life surrounded by flames," which might suggest that there were *another* kind of life, one surrounded by tuberous roses, perhaps, or Malaysian trumpet snails, that the people got instead. But that would be too much to hope for.

pray to saints and angels and the Holy Mother and seek God with the heart rather than the intellect, and that makes them easy prey for intellectuals, wouldn't you say?

D—Ah! So you're like the proverbial boorish museum patron: You're not an expert on God, but you know her when you see him. The names of God are problematic, aren't they?

M—Well, one can hardly say "the deity formerly known as God," can one? Most unsatisfactory, so I think that God was quite *sensible* in simply appearing among us to show us who he is, loving, you know, and not at all warlike, and powerful in the spirit instead of with javelins or catapults, and sending angels who looked like us except without spots—such beautiful men and women, and of course those lovely dogs, which I know some people scoff at, but there are many who believe that dogs are angels, and not all of them are under a doctor's care, the people, I mean, not the dogs, as a rule.

■ This is all to say that I am an apologist for the arbitrary use of masculine or feminine appellations for God, since *any* name is "problematic." The gender problem is not a big issue with me. I am content to touch God's hem as he walks by. After all...

■ *If you could wrap your mind around God, he wouldn't be God*, as St. Augustine observed in the fourth century C.E. (St. Augustine was known for his sense of humor, which no doubt served him well as the "Bishop of Hippo.") So to know God, you have to enter into the mystery, where you can no longer pretend that you are in control.

■ Eustace Higby-Jones tells this story:

Prayer and meditation are doorways to hidden dimensions of God. Imagine yourself in the foyer of a grand mansion. The floor is oak, light brown, richly grained, burnished and spotless, gleaming under a great skylight filled with morning sun. The walls are marble the color of a hen's egg. And all around you are huge paneled doors of dark, shining mahogany.

Each door is carefully lettered with black enamel: One is marked "Hidden Dimensions of God." Others have labels such as "Golf: 36 Holes," "All You Can Eat, \$5," "PTA," "Law School," "Marx Brothers Film Festival," "Dr. Ramon de Ramon: Botox, Liposuction, Collagen Implants," and so forth. The "Hidden Dimensions" door is open, the others are closed. You choose "Law School." Another time you choose "All You Can Eat, \$5."

There are no *wrong* doors. You go where you need to, to get to where you're going. But always, in every place, there is a "Hidden Dimensions of God" door, standing open, mysteriously bright inside—fearfully, beautifully, heartbreakingly bright—and eventually, when the time comes, irresistible.



■ A word about *sin*: Longing.

■ A few phrases about *original sin*: A child of God created not quite complete, not quite perfect, like a luscious cherry pie with a piece missing. As if God kept a small but essential part of us in Heaven... giving us freedom with a lifeline.²

The pie doesn't feel the emptiness. It doesn't crave satisfaction. We do, which is just as well, or why get out of bed?

We get hungry, we grow food and eat. We get thirsty, we find water and drink. We get cold, we build a house. We get anxious and fearful, we do all kinds of crazy things.

Only God can restore a broken spirit. If you replace the missing piece of pie with salsa, you don't have a whole, perfect, restored cherry pie. What you have is a big mess, which you stick in your refrigerator on Death Row next to the Gift Box of Exotic Cheeses.



Cherry pie with salsa

² The *Fred Phelps Heresy* is the delusion that God has made an exception in your case. He has filled your longing with righteousness and he has anointed you with power. You are his deputy, obligated to speak and act for him and to enforce his commandments. You are to comfort the widows of slain soldiers, for example, by reminding them that "military funerals are pagan orgies of idolatrous blasphemy where they pray to the dunghill gods of Sodom and play taps to a fallen fool."

- You may write in this book. That's what the lines are for. I'm not trying to fill a page quota. Write down any thoughts, insights, questions, expressions of disgust or outrage, and other reactions my words inspire. Please send them to me. I need them. Your perspective is different from mine.

You will see pattern and design where I am overwhelmed by darkness and confusion, as in my basement, which is the North American headquarters for Things That Go Bump in the Night. You think I'm kidding? There are bats Down There and, occasionally, Up Here. Once I had to leave my front door open all day because a bat was straddling the top of it just when I was going to work. More memorable was the time two bats flew out from behind the shower. One minute I was showering, the next I was naked in the living room, having gotten there without traversing the distance in between, making me the only human being who has ever, literally, made a quantum leap.

- Perhaps this book will become a family heirloom, and future generations, discovering it in an ancient trunk in the attic, sandwiched between layers of yellowed newspaper clippings and once-vivid photographs, will gaze at it in wonder and awe. "Ooh," they will say. "Look at this! I've heard of this. I think it's called 'paper'!"

Heaven on Olix

For two or three years a Jehovah's Witness visited me regularly—for the sole purpose, it appeared, of convincing me that Paradise would be located on Earth, as opposed to Somewhere Else, which seems to me a complete waste of zeal, like being passionate about the nutritional benefits of beetroot.

I tried to quash these discussions with comments such as, "You know, my fourth life was on the planet Olix, and it was prettier than Earth, and nobody had psoriasis"; or I would say I had had a vision of Paradise and it had eight moons. My friend, whose name was Ellen, always looked alarmed when I spoke irreverently, either because she feared that in my case the location of Paradise would turn out to be immaterial or because she thought I was On Something. She didn't give up on me, though, as luck would have it.

(This was during the eighties in Hutchinson, Kansas. Years later, living in Tucson, I was on the circuit of a Jehovah's Witness whose visits I looked forward to—a gentleman in every way that counts. He drove a school bus on weekdays and went to school at night so that he could open a therapeutic massage practice, though he must have been close to 60. I actually cried happy tears when he told me he had graduated and formed a partnership with a chiropractor.)

One summer morning, as Ellen and I debated cheerfully on the front porch, I commented that Heaven's actual *geography* didn't matter to me, that Paradise will be... well, a paradise wherever it is, and that if Earth is the place, fine, but I hoped there wouldn't be centipedes or WalMart.

The woman positively *glared* at me. Between clenched teeth, she replied that "we couldn't both be right." Such was her outrage that I had to wipe spit off my glasses.

Then she turned on her heel—I'd never actually seen anybody *do* that—and flounced off in a manner that might have been grand had she not stumbled on the third step, breaking off the aforementioned heel and dropping an armful of *Watchtowers*. Ellen was last seen (by me, at any rate) huffing down 11th Avenue, as arrogantly as a person can huff when she is carrying one of her shoes.

So I didn't get to tell her about my sister, who lived in another time zone and who had called me rather early that day. When I complained groggily that it was only six o'clock, my sister said, "No, it's three minutes after seven." Weren't we both right, the difference being only one of location? Hadn't the same sun risen over her house that rose an hour later over mine?

- I believe that all roads lead to God, though from many directions using a variety of maps. And we get distracted. Me, I see bunnies in the forest, I wander off....

We might be on the Right Road with the Wrong Person. There are some scary folks out there, all bound for Heaven. Sometimes I look deep into their eyes, searching for the holy spark, the divine presence that I know lies within.³ Sometimes I look deep into their eyes and run like hell.



Mary Campbell
March 5, 2007

³ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*

Vegetable Garden

Prayer's like planting vegetable seeds.
You poke them in the ground in spring
and pull the weeds that would surround
and choke them as they germinate. In
short, you have to nourish them with
food and water; then you wait, but not
so long, it only seems that way. Be patient;
soon the strongest grow and
flower. Then a nubbin of zucchini , pepper,
bean, or pumpkin peeks out from the
foliage, and you feel like it's your
birthday. Woe to any cheeky rabbit
who perceives a meal in store and
tries to steal your marvelous romaine
before it's ready to be harvested.

Some will fail, some won't come up at
all, but they enrich the soil to nurture
seeds you plant another season.

If the seeds don't grow the way you think
they should, is that a reason to
believe that planting seeds won't do you
any good?



Praise and Gratitude



Back from the Grave

An Arizona Arbor in Summer

This is why I live here,
this immaculate occasion once
a day. Desert turns to fairyland,
early-morning light turns drab
dead gray to glory, wind stirs
sunlit leaves like thirty kinds of
lettuce, green and gold, green
and gold, limb motion whispers;
creosote and squat mesquite
quiver in devotion —
sweet-smelling, sunlight-drenched, still
cool and fresh and equal to the
coming heat.



Whatever dark things happen in the night,
the morning sunlight washes them away
and we accept another virgin day.
I wonder—How can people find
the world such a contaminated
kind of place when sunlight
reaches into every pore of
being—sanctifying, desiccating foul
detritus of anxiety and indolence?

And when we let it in, the purifying sun
burns away the rubble and the wreck of yesterday.
All forgiven! Nothing to regret, no debt to pay,
and we are not the creatures of our past, tainted
by allegiances that didn't last, crippled by a
choice to take a winding road that led to
nothing but experience.

We're as we were that first day of the world
when we were set upon a mountaintop and given
everything our lives could hold.

June 1997

See More Sunrises

The whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. —Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature
Nature is the opposite [that is, reflection] of the soul, answering to it part for part.... The ancient precept, "Know thyself," and the modern precept, "Study nature," become at last one maxim. —Emerson, The American Scholar



Journalist and child advocate Richard Louv discusses the problem of nature deficit disorder in his new book, Last Child in the Woods. "Never before in our history have children been so separated from nature," Louv tells The Early Show co-anchor Harry Smith....

Louv claims that, according to recent research, lack of direct contact with nature is connected to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He also cites statistics showing [that] children who play in nature perform better at school....

"Biologically, we are still hunters and gatherers.... What happens to the human organism when you take nature away from it and replace it with television and computers? I call that 'cultural autism' where children's use of the senses is reduced to the size of a screen, like a computer. Only in nature are we using our full senses all at the same time in a positive way." —CBS, The Early Show, May 9, 2005

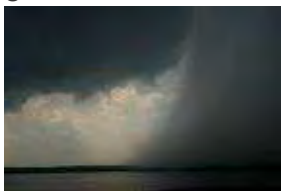
You know those bromides people use to cheer you up? *Tomorrow is another day. It's always darkest before the dawn. Hope springs eternal. Every rose has its thorns. Every cloud has a silver lining. Into every life a little rain must fall. Above the clouds the sun is shining. After the rain comes the rainbow.*

Don't they just make you want to spit?

When you're wallowing in discontent (for whatever reason, from a bad hair day to a compound fracture), do you really want to hear Ethel Merman booming, "I've Got the Sun in the Mornin' and the Moon at Night" or have some perky Pollyanna reminding you that *he is happiest who hath power to gather wisdom from a flower?* Why do people say these things?

Because they're true

After we've been living on earth for a while, observing the patterns and cycles of nature—day and night, summer and winter, storm and sunlight, decay and renewal—we begin to internalize and generalize from the natural world. We learn to



take certain things for granted and to not be disconcerted by them—thunderstorms, for example (unless we are a certain type of dog that perceives every storm as a New and Completely Unexpected Type of Event and quivers under a bed until it's over).

The same is true of the household routine. Mom and Dad go out for dinner and Mrs. Featherstone, who makes us go to bed immediately because she doesn't want to be disturbed during *Jackpot Bowling* on television, comes to babysit, and we put our goldfish, Wilbur IV, who has died, into her purse. But we endure Mrs. Featherstone because we know that Mom and Dad will come home while we're asleep and Mrs. Featherstone will go back to her cave.



So when I read about these children who have been kept in closets and basements for years, I am doubly appalled. Besides the general horribleness of it, imagine what it must be like

to have no firsthand knowledge of the basic cycles of life and nature—to literally *not know* that every morning brings a new dawn.

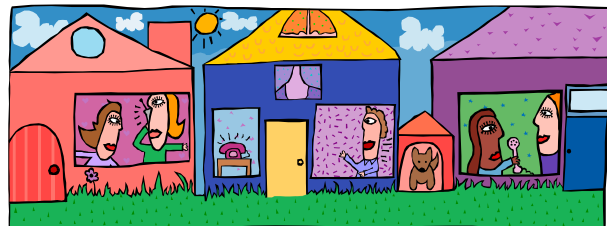
Millions of tiny diamonds

On a magnificent summer morning I watched the sun rise over the Missouri River and the prolific farmland of western Iowa. The hills across the river were invisible under a great white pillow of cloud through which poked a few church spires and grain elevators. So much vapor rose from the river itself that it might have been on fire. Gradually the bright green and yellow fields came into view and the vapor turned crystalline, like millions of tiny diamonds ascending, hovering, and rising again.

It dawned on me, as it were, that such displays are always available and much more satisfying than whatever I am usually doing when the sun comes up (sniffing at a pile of clothes to see if they're clean, licking the bottom of a frozen-yogurt carton, looking in the mirror and frowning at my jowls).

I vowed to spend more time outside the closet I keep myself in... to watch more sunrises and

remember that we really *are* new every morning... to grow more flowers and walk outdoors in every kind of weather except "obscenely cold" or "the U.S. Weather Service has issued a tornado warning for eastern Douglas County because a funnel cloud has been sighted in the general vicinity of Mary Campbell." But, hey! I live in a basement.



Household Hint: How Not to Look Like an Unmade Bed

Keep dirty clothes and clean clothes in separate heaps so you don't have to sniff them. Some people fold their clean clothes and put them in drawers or closets.

In Arizona I hung my just-washed clothes on a clothesline in the sun. In the summer, by the time the last of the load was up, the first items hung were usually dry. Ideally, they would be very slightly damp. I would smooth them on a clean table, fold them carefully, and put them in a large, rectangular, well-ventilated basket—the clothes that might otherwise require ironing on the bottom, heavier things like jeans and towels on top. The combination of dampness, warmth, hand-smoothing, and weight did as good a job of "ironing" as an actual iron. In the ventilated basket, left outside or on the porch, mildew didn't have a chance to form.



Now that I live in Nebraska and have no yard to speak of, I apply the same principle except I put the slightly damp, carefully smoothed items on the dryer and set heavier items, fully dried, on top of them. It's a good idea to put something smooth, such as a dishtowel or pillowcase, between your cotton blouse and your bath towels. Otherwise your blouse might end up covered with towel dents. As long as the dryer is running, the bottom layer of clothes will dry quickly.



You can do this with things like rayon dresses, too, on which you don't want conspicuous "fold marks" to appear. Fold them carefully and place them under the heavy items, as above. After, say, half an hour they should be smooth but still damp. Hang them on padded hangers, preferably not in a crowded closet. Smooth or pull to get rid of any incipient fold marks.

Is this making any sense to you at all? If not, please send me a self-addressed stamped envelope and I will mail you a set of illustrated, step-by-step instructions.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Small Comfort

God who made us and sustains us— God, immortal and mysterious— God, synonymous, and more, with life, love, beauty, and the peace that passes understanding:

When we are ungrateful, even our complaints are manifest of sweet abundance: air and water; bread and butter; shelter from the cold; and your embrace when we surrender deep in prayer—as babies, weary even of exploring all the wonders of the world, its lights and colors, sounds and textures, burrow into Mother's shoulder, fearless in her equanimity.

Yet we fancy ourselves victims of ungentle circumstance now and again. Perhaps a small annoyance, not attended to, becomes infected. Swollen, red, and tender to the touch, it spreads to the extremities, and farther — others suffer the contagion. Thus can friends on Saturday be enemies on Sunday, and, by Monday, legion.

Gratitude does not require the sky to be forever blue, or that the sun appear at every moment we consider opportune. Not every day is halcyon, not every month is June, and there are bitter winds that penetrate each layer of protection, entering through skin and bone to pierce the heart. Small comfort then to know that even when the sun's invisible behind the storm or hidden by the circle of the Earth, it shines as bright and will be visible precisely when it ought to be. Small comfort too are food and shelter — even friends, if friends remain (we might have driven them away). A few are stubborn: let them in, for they can rub our feet and startle languid faculties awake — the ones that sense not heat or cold but grace.



We are not patient, though, no matter that we've had our share of warm, fair days and peaceful nights. We hear the thunder of a distant storm; we witness human cruelty, we wonder at the blind impartiality of nature, and we are bewildered at the magnitude of evil, at the unpredictable caprice of fate, or doom. Disaster may be out of sight but looms in some malicious posture, poised to strike when least expected. So we watch and worry, like a sentry whose antagonist has neither form nor name; and we neglect whatever bounty has accrued in our distraction.

We forget to feast. We lack the energy and appetite for our accustomed satisfaction. Those who suffer and survive have told us they were somehow more alive than when the breezes were benevolent and calm. They learned to be astonished that amid catastrophe and cataclysm, life goes on.

You have warned us to beware the sleek vocabulary of the merchants of salvation.

When they speak, their words are vacant. When they pray, their prayers are memorized and animated, artful, eloquent, and uninspired. Their lines are well rehearsed, but had they truly died and been redeemed, their phrases would reflect (it seems to me, and I have been there) something of the grave; not so articulate —

there are no words; would be forever fresh, a quiet wonder—if they had been saved. If one has been to the abyss and fallen in, then one is humble, having little need to understand, no reason to pontificate... but rather one is moved to celebrate the mystery and to be newly grateful, day by day by day.

Having suffered condemnation, having been appraised and come up short, and having then been lifted and embraced — one cannot judge, cannot condemn. The court has been adjourned and all the prisoners released. We have no jurisdiction; it is not our place to round the sinners up and put them back again. Our duty, then, is light and brings us joy: To know as friend a stranger, one who will, like each of us, be tried; and one thing more: To gratefully remember how the tide that swept us out to sea — when we, in mortal danger, cried out, “Save me!” — pulled us gently to the shore.



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Recipe: Comforting Fruit Salad

8 oz. lowfat cream cheese, softened
 8 oz. nonfat strawberry (or other fruit-flavored) yogurt*
 ½ cup marshmallow cream
 1 cup fresh strawberries, sliced thick
 1 sliced banana if you're serving the salad right away
 ½ cup seedless red grapes
 1 12-ounce can pineapple chunks, very well drained**
 1 12-ounce can chunky fruit cocktail, very well drained**

Whip the cream cheese and marshmallow cream until they're so smooth and tempting you want to eat the mixture with a spoon. Take one large bite to make sure the texture is lump-free. Have another bite to be absolutely certain. Take bowl, spoon, good book and go back to bed. Start recipe again later....

Add the yogurt and mix by hand until smooth. Take a few more tiny bites. If you like it sweeter, add your sweetener of choice—sugar, Splenda, stevia, or marshmallow cream.

Fold the fruit into the mixture. Refrigerate until ready to serve

** Sugar-free or regular ** If packed in fruit juice, save to drink later; if in syrup, rinse well.*



*God of all bounty, source of abundance, generously you provide.
 Nourish each guest at our banquet today in body and spirit beside.*

Back from the Grave

The healing process for any of life's... sorrows can begin the moment we stop resisting them. Tightly closed hands are not in a position to receive anything—not even comfort. — Catherine Marshall, To Live Again

One of the things that is being engendered in me is a fuller trust in the universe that whatever I need will arrive. I may not always appreciate it if it is wearing a grim mask, but it is clear that whatever comes my way should be welcomed. —Toinette Lippe, Caught in the Act

Who can resist the allure of the illusion of control? Which among us doesn't want to feel that we have control over our lives, our destinies, and Mr. Tooth Decay?

Older Baby Boomers will remember television commercials for Colgate Toothpaste with Gardol, the Invisible Protective Shield that made your teeth impervious to all manner of things, from bacteria to rogue torpedoes.

To illustrate the point that after the sun explodes and incinerates the planet, only cockroaches and Gardol will remain, the spokesman⁴ in the commercial stood in what looked like a big empty room. After saying the words *invisible protective shield*, he paused to rap twice on what looked to the television audience, sitting on the edge of its collective seat, like empty air but turned out to be *a huge sheet of clear but solid material* (you knew this because when the man rapped you heard a rapping noise), ostensibly Gardol..

If you were listening to but not looking at the television, you might have thought the spokesman was rapping on the quadruple-reinforced-steel



door of a bank vault. I seem to remember one commercial where Whitey Ford actually threw baseballs at the Gardol, but I might be making that up.

Mothers everywhere probably bought Colgate by the case, relieved to not have to worry about Mr. Tooth Decay any more so they could go back to worrying about polio. Actually, I'm pretty sure the Salk vaccine predated Gardol and it was time to start worrying about the Bomb.

'We will bury you'

In a public-spirited campaign to warn all U.S. citizens about the Bomb's lethal potential, a virtual army of men carrying black briefcases called on everyone's parents and made appointments to

come back when all the children were home. The men were friendly and well spoken and wore tailored suits and lied through their teeth about the actual reason for the appointment, implying it was something "educational." Our parents were pushovers for anything educational. We had the *World Book Encyclopedia*, *Childcraft*, the *Book of Knowledge* (all with annual supplements), and the *Great Books of the Western World*.



The men did not ever say, "We are bomb-shelter salesmen and we are going to frighten the wee-wee out of your children so that they will cry and beg and hound you until you buy a bomb shelter."

With the family gathered 'round, shiny pennies in their loafers and Gardol on their teeth, the men showed black-and-white films, narrated by the Voice of Doom, featuring scary music and atomic blasts and Hiroshima victims and the twisted, demented face of Nikita Krushchev snarling, "We will bury you." Then the music became cheerful, like the soundtracks for school film strips about handwashing, and there were scenes (in color) depicting Mom, Dad, and the kids, everyone clean and coiffed and shiny-faced, with Lassie wagging along behind, all emerging from their backyard bomb shelter the day after the blast. Even their lawns and flower gardens were intact.

Unfortunately for all the children of America whose parents had not loved them enough to purchase bomb shelters, the salesman's scary pitch was reinforced by school air-raid drills. Excruciatingly strident alarms would sound and we would troop placidly, single-file, to the first-floor hallway (which was below-ground and windowless). We sat side by side on the floor, leaning against the wall with our legs apart, knees in the air, never mind that we

⁴ Spokesmen were usually men back in the fifties, except for Betty Furness (Frigidaire) and Dinah Shore ("See the USA in your Chevrolet").

girls were wearing dresses and these were coeducational drills.

But before the boys had a chance to satisfy their prurient curiosity, we were instructed to place our heads between our knees and our hands on the backs of our necks. Had there been an actual attack, anthropologists of the future might have thought we were opposing military formations of mutant toads facing off for battle.

The secret of serenity

If I felt any sense of relief from the knowledge that if the Bomb fell during school none of the radioactivity would get on the back of my neck, my brother lost no time in setting me straight. He knew way too much about radiation poisoning and other horrors of nuclear war, and what he didn't know he made up. When I went running to my parents I wasn't so much tattling as looking for comfort. Make no mistake: I was tattling, but I wasn't faking the hysteria as I usually did.

Mom and Dad were furious with my brother (but not as much as with the bomb-shelter salesman) for scaring me. In fact, they were obviously more upset with my brother than they were about the impending holocaust, which I found comforting.

I had a lot of trouble falling asleep that night, though. My dad let me sit on his lap, which he hadn't done for a long time because he had bad knees. He talked about the Russians and the U.S., about the wars he and Mom had lived through, and about the Depression. He promised to take care of us if anything bad happened, and he promised that God would take care of us all. He even quoted the Bible to me, for probably the first and last time in his life.

He did not say this entire passage, just the "therefore take no thought" part near the end:

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

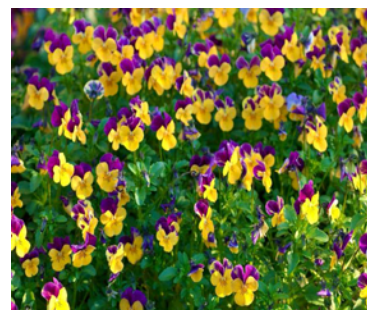
Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ...For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. —
Matthew 6:25-34



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Thus Do You Make Smooth the Way

God, your grace and mercy overrun the borders of the sea, submerge the shore, and upward still they surge to flood the valleys stretched between high peaks; and when the tides abate, we see how they have smoothed the way that you have given us to tread. And in those streams as well is strength from Heaven sent to quell whatever arrogance of fate or circumstance would dare unmake your work in us. And you, expecting nothing, no reward, no adulation, do not test our faith; you but implore that we accept the blessings from the sea, and feast, and rest.

Our striving is superfluous; our purpose we shall recognize no matter how surprising and how unlike our design, though we shall find it to be bliss and pay no mind to difficulty. Now we wait, like lilies of the field, for the appointed time to be fulfilled, when we shall find our perfect work, our necessary place.

If we anticipate the day of our emerging, then we chafe at the delay, we rise too soon; a sharp, unseasonable frost defies our expectations; or too late, and brief our thriving in the searing heat.

Creator, we are new today, as at our birth; refreshed, at peace in you, and radiant. The cycle is unceasing; we need only pray, and celebrate, wherever we abide, the tide returning. Since we are not made for patience, or have not yet learned serenity, you with exquisite artistry arrange the stars and planets, drench the thirsty plain, and change the seasons, while the birds race skyward and squirrels chase each other for our entertainment — all for us, this world, this universe.



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For Joan, January 2007

Undeserved

When God plants the pattern of an oak tree in an acorn, it certainly is His will that the acorn become an oak. —Catherine Marshall, *To Live Again*

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't feel unsure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone. —Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Inauguration Speech, May 1994



The difference between people and acorns is that acorns don't think they have to deserve being oak trees. Wherever they happen to land, they check out the spot with tiny acorn eyes. If it suffices, they turn their little acorn faces upward to soak up sunlight; they reach down for water, food, and stability. (If the spot doesn't suffice, I'm not sure what they do; I don't think there are tiny acorn legs. I could be wrong.)

Why aren't people more like acorns? What are we trying to prove? Whom do we want to impress? Why do we keep a running inventory of our faults?—especially when we never measure up; we're never *something* enough—kind, pretty, young, tall, thin, sensitive, smart—or (the worst) we are “an inadequate parent.” How, amid all the glories of the universe, can a coffee stain on a white suit ruin, absolutely ruin our day?

Or is it just me? I don't think so, because my mother told me once that, deep down, everyone else was just as insecure as I was, which I think she meant as reassurance.

Possible reasons people are reluctant to seize their blessings and display their talents

1. The Protestant work ethic
2. Echoes of their parents' admonishments about “showing off”
3. Capitalism (“There's no free lunch”)
4. Misinterpreting “Love thy neighbor as thyself” to mean “Love thy neighbor instead of thyself”

Vocabulary: What Is a Spitwad?

spitwad (n). A bit of paper chewed up and formed into a ball that is small enough to fit inside a straw or a dismantled mechanical pencil. Today, toy stores sell newfangled spitwad launchers.



Basic spitwad

Back when I thought the only point in living was to make a handsome, smart, generous man fall helplessly in love with me, I started noticing that drop-dead-handsome men didn't always have drop-dead-gorgeous wives. The wives were attractive, but they had something else I couldn't identify at the time. The word I was looking for, I now realize, was *character* or *self-possession*.

You get a little older, you meet more couples who are crazy about each other not because their spouses meet most of the requirements on a checklist but because they bring out the best in each other. Each sincerely wants the other to be happy and fulfilled. The middle-aged guy you work with sends his “bride” flowers not because she's a great cook or makes a lot of money but because she's his best friend, even when his teeth are in a glass beside the bed.



I love to think about grace. It means that a bad day can end well, and that you can make a Giant Parenting Mistake and not have it come back to haunt you years later in the form of finding out that your son, who you thought was in motor-home tax valuation, is actually the infamous “thong thief” who breaks into luxury homes but never steals anything except scanty panties.

Grace is all about being lavished with joy, which you can't earn because it would become just another project that didn't come out perfectly. Grace arrives with the original package we didn't deserve either—the gift of life.

So be of good cheer if you never made your bed without being asked and were the kid who aimed spitwads with lethal accuracy at the turkey wattles of Miss Nagel's upper arms in seventh grade. Those sins have long been paid for. Anyway, Miss Nagel had no business wearing that sundress.

On This Side

Over on the other side, there is a quiet cottage on a grassy slope, where trees protect and decorate and cast their pleasing shadows on the water; and where children, hyacinths, and roses, cucumbers, and peppers grow, and snowy linens hung to dry are blowing in the breeze. Inside, bread rises in the oven, herbs depend from oaken beams, and last night's chicken in its steaming broth becomes this evening's stew, tomorrow's casserole. An old man and a young man and a boy are sharing rituals and mending fences, while a woman, unaccountably serene, sips coffee, shuts her eyes, and says a prayer of thanks for all that providence provides.

But on this side are broken shutters, dusty shelves, unanswered letters, leaves in piles, and moldy flower beds; and seams half-sewn on half-done dresses; half-forgotten words in half-read books; and pressing obligations half-remembered, half-despaired of.

Morning struggles through the cloudy panes of windows — gray and half-neglected or, perhaps, defied. A pallid beam succeeds at last and penetrates the barrier. It comes to rest upon the drooping pothos, which persists in barely living, never mind the diffidence its garden is.

The ray of sullen light turns motes of dust to fireflies. At first they float at random; then they glide; then, whimsical, they dance as if to challenge gravity or chance; as if they *will* their time aloft, to have an audience, to shine like stars.

They catch the sun and flicker. They have won a moment's glory. Soon it ends, but they have shone.

On the other side are peace and order; on this side is eagerness to cross the wide, intimidating border, to be purposeful and more, to yet achieve, to meet and to exceed an expectation, even one—to finish what's begun; half-perfection wishing to be whole, to be forgiven for attaining less than paradise. But for all that, this side is painted with the brush that, dipped in heaven's glory, must in time adorn the swale with yellow clover and, today, in dust makes manifest the morning stars.



This Side Revisited

*The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.*

—Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses and Underwoods*

*All Nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear: Whatever is, is right.*

—Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*

I live in a state of what I prefer to call “creative disarray.” Across the river, where I yearn to be, are the neat, well-cared-for houses of my sister, a professional organizer, and my daughter, who has an orderly mind. They are my role models.

What I strive for: ● a reasonably tidy life and environment ● keeping up, not catching up ● plans that work ● flexibility when they don't

In 1995 my car was stolen from a parking lot—keys in the ignition (always), doors unlocked, windows open. Otherwise I would misplace my keys, you see, or lock them in the car.

My cars are never the sort people want to steal, so I was mad as a box of frogs when someone did. I walked around and around the parking lot, as you do when you're sure there must be some mistake... roaming and looking, roaming and looking, until everyone had left and the lot was empty.

Two weeks later: Darned if I didn't get home to find that I'd been robbed.⁵ Someone just walked in the unlocked door and took the camera, the television, and the stereo.

The following week: “These things just keep happening to me,” I complained to our pediatrician as he was writing a Ritalin prescription.

“Maybe you have attention-deficit disorder,” he said without looking up.

“That's a great tie you're wearing,” I said. (It was a Daffy Duck tie, for Pete's sake, who wouldn't be distracted?)

Three weeks later: I walked out of a psychiatrist's office, clutching a prescription for Adderall, after two days of testing. These days I'm more attentive, less distractible, but I still have to work at

keeping track of my keys. When I go grocery shopping, I lock the car and affix the key ring to my purse strap. Otherwise my keys will end up in Produce. I don't know why, but it's almost always Produce, not Dairy or Baking Needs.

It is the first week in March. I will probably send Christmas cards on Friday. I might ask the recipients to think of them as being nine months early, not three months late. It's the only way I'll ever catch up.

I don't intend to give up on getting to the other side. Everybody needs a destination. But this side, I have found, receives no less a share of God's glory.



Household Hint: How to Neaten Up a Very Messy Room

1. Clear a space somewhere (bed, dining table).
2. Gather up all the stuff that isn't where it should be and set it in the cleared space.
3. Sort the stuff according to where it belongs: kitchen stuff in one corner, clothes to hang in the closet in another spot, and so forth.
4. Clear the bed (table, sofa) one area at a time. Take the dishes to the kitchen. Then hang the clothes. Then fold the T-shirts and put them away.

Ta-dah! Time to start on the next room.

Note to ADD persons: Do not “take a break” after step 3. If you don't know where to put your stuff, you either have too much stuff or not enough storage.

What to keep, what to toss: Remove anything that's dead—is useless and brings you no pleasure. Store items of sentimental value in clear plastic boxes labeled with a list of the contents. For detailed instructions, ask my sister, Pipi. I always forget what to do with the boxes.

⁵ A word about words: Strictly speaking, I wasn't robbed. The word *robbery* denotes theft by intimidation or violence. *Burglary* is accurate only to a point; someone entered unlawfully with the *intent* to steal, *plus* committed theft.

Vocabulary: What Is Attention-Deficit Disorder?

Both of my sons were quick learners in kindergarten and first and second grades—before the math problems got more complex, having two or three steps. My older son, in particular, never quite caught on to cause and effect. Long past the age when children typically have a healthy respect for car traffic, he would dart out into the street, just on a whim. He seemed to require a certain amount of excitement.

Some scientists hypothesized that kids with ADHD (attention-deficit disorder with hyperactivity) had abnormally low blood pressure, which they would stimulate by agitating their environments. That theory proved false, but it illustrates how ADHD kids are decidedly uncomfortable when things are too quiet.

There's no lab test for ADHD, though some researchers have observed differences in cranial structure. In any case, so many people have been medicated for what might or might not be ADD in recent years that the diagnosis itself has become suspect: "The kid is just a brat suffering from lazy, inconsistent parenting."

After nine years of my older son's wreaking havoc everywhere he went, a psychiatrist delivered a diagnosis of "profound" ADHD and prescribed a stimulant, which worked wonders... when my son took it. I could always tell when he had. First, his handwriting was regular and readable, and, second, you could have a real conversation with him. My younger son was less hyperactive but just as distractible. He started taking ADD medicine before his junior year in high school. His grade-point average went from 0.6 to 4.0.

The list below describes "combination" ADHD—a mix of ADD and ADHD symptoms, which can be present in children and adults:



- Restlessness; fidgeting, getting up and walking around in class or at a meeting
- Distractedness
- Impatience; frustration at having to wait
- Interrupting; blurting out answers in the middle of the questions
- Inattentiveness in conversations, lectures, etc.
- Trouble following instructions, especially oral ones
- Jumping from activity to activity
- Failing to complete tasks; having great ideas but difficulty following through
- Lack of interest in quiet play (building with Legos, for example)
- Difficulty relaxing, even sitting through a movie or television program
- Forgetfulness
- Impulsivity, recklessness

Lots of kids and adults have some of these symptoms some of the time. When most of the symptoms apply to you or your child and they are unrelenting, severe, disruptive, and ultimately destructive, you need professional help, whether it's from a naturopath, a medical doctor, a specialist in cognitive therapy, or a Christian Science practitioner. As a child experiences failure after failure, his self-esteem suffers. School dropout rates are higher and substance abuse is more common among kids with ADD or ADHD than in the general population. Their job prospects are dim.

When my older son was in his teens and early twenties, I spent more time in courtrooms than most judges. I had a demure outfit I called my "mother of the felon" dress. This boy, now 28, is my hero. He never gave up. He gets frustrated; he always bounces back. God has big plans for him.

What I learned: Surrender. Acceptance of the way things are at any given moment. Trust in the goodness of God. The recognition that my son is wiser and more capable than I've given him credit for. The solace of prayer. The futility of control. The certainty that there is an answer to every question, a solution for every problem.

As my friend Tiffany's e-mail signature says, "Life is hard but God is good. Let's dance!"



This Is Eden

Beautifully trooping down a wooded path at nine a.m., the time allotted to the River Hike, in single file through what we call a “forest” in Nebraska, we were guided by an Ogallala Sioux who knew the flora and the fauna well, and who could tell the stories that his fathers learned from their fathers—ancient lore and honest truth congruent. When we began to hike the river path, the air was crisp, as early April often is in shady places where we stood. A warming breeze blew from the south; the feel of dappled sun was pleasing, and the faintly clapping leaves of poplar sang. It felt like being in a painting by Monet, not quite awake, part of the balmy scenery, and nothing was required of me, so I could dream. His quiet voice was calming, reverent, alive with awe at the profound simplicity of trees in early stages of awakening from winter, and the hardest and boldest of the flowers—the most impervious to frost and hungriest for sunlight.



With half an ear I listened to the monologue; the other half was elsewhere, I confess, until the man said something, gently, that arrested my meandering attention. Unsentimentally (or we would all I think have been embarrassed, contemplating, suddenly, our shoes), he said “Thank you” to the earth on which we trod, for bearing us, and to the flowers for their blooming, to the trees for shade and beauty and the fruit that they would yield in time. Through his eyes I saw Eden, and I realized how Eve and Adam must have felt, or ought to have—the gratitude for being in a paradise created just for them, a place where all is sentient and more, benevolent, and eager for their happiness.

The impression has remained with me, one of humility and continual astonishment, and brings me peace. And I’ve known people to be grateful for the oddest things.

“Thank God,” a Roman Catholic nun instructed me, when I was young, “for everything: for being stranded on the highway, out of gas” (I cringed, remembering an incident on Old Route Sixty-Six), “for every adverse circumstance is compost for the garden you are growing.”

Such advice is seldom taken at the moment, but I know that I have benefited from it, meeting trouble with a greater equanimity than otherwise I might have done.

Why shouldn’t I, if he can—this descendant of the People who were systematically cut down by destiny deemed “Manifest” and thus ennobled, but for whom? A few at first,

assisted by technology and able to bestir their fellow citizens to racist fervor, skilled at propaganda, to a thirst for land, which turned too soon to gluttony, too easily to genocide, too comfortably ascribed to godliness and righteousness. And yet the man in front of us this April morning thanks the ground he walks on and the stream for water, even if it flows less clear and clean and deep than in his fathers' time... and this is not to say the People had no scoundrels of their own, but, saints and sinners, all were powerless and decimated in the end.

Yet he is grateful for the sky and so, because of him, am I.

For Pipi, 2005



*Great
Blue
Heron
and
young
Bald
Eagle on
the Platte
River in
central
Nebraska*

Recipe: Food for Day Hikes

What you take to eat on the trail depends on

- Outdoor temperature
- Weight and size of food and containers
- Length of hike (an hour? all day?)
- Nutrition (especially protein and high-quality carbs)
- Temperature control for perishables



Water. If it's hot outside and you're hiking vigorously, you might need as much as a quart of fluid per hour.

I don't like water. I can hardly force myself to drink it. But I love cherry-flavored carbonated water, which is sweetened with Splenda. At home, I make up a few

gallons at a time of cherry water mixed with orange juice (about 4 parts water to 1 part juice) and Emergen-C (raspberry, 4 packets per gallon).

The night before your hike, fill your water container(s) and put them in the freezer.

Food for energy and endurance

- "Trail mix." Equal parts raisins and dry-roasted peanuts. Add M&Ms, chocolate chips, Cheerios, cashews, coconut, or other ingredients for a heartier mix.
- Hard-cooked eggs. Keep them cool in a lightweight insulated bag and throw in a few frozen gel packs.
- Bumblebee tuna and crackers. Just peel off the lid and spread the tuna, already mixed, on the crackers. (Don't buy the "kit," which has to be mixed. Get the premixed, pictured below.) Remember to take a bag for your trash.
- Fresh fruit. Boy, there's nothing like a Granny Smith apple when you're hot and hungry. Some of the virtue is lost—but the combined tart and sweet flavors are ambrosia—with **fruit dip—equal parts whipped softened cream cheese and marshmallow cream**—or caramel dip. Spoon the dip into a small plastic container or snack bag and keep it cool until you're ready to use it.
- Single-serving fruit cocktail or pudding. You need more fat and carbs when you're physically active, but don't overdo it.



A Season's Fallow Field at Rest



I believe that when I die I shall be someone's little child again, and at my birth the aunties and the grandmothers will say, "She is an old soul." I've seen a few, just liberated from the womb, born wise, with ancient eyes like deep, pure, pristine pools alight with clarity. I shall be one of these... serene, at ease with bliss, and intimate with holiness.

Once, when I had given death permission to accept me there and then, I glimpsed that feared, benighted passageway (the very one, it's said, conveys departing souls to Heaven), and the glory it gives way to in the end; and isn't it, I wondered, isn't death just being born again?

I shall not want to go ... though the seed of what I shall become is even now astir in earth softened by the thaw: I, a pale, sturdy stem, made for a moment's innocence, drawn without volition upward by the slanting sun.

But this is only what I know, not what I hope for. Now I cling to what is near and pleases me. Experience has taught me that I shall be satisfied and peaceful, just as long as I can find you when twilight comes. Yet not I but the Almighty binds perfection, intimating more than what we know of mystical and endless love that never, ever ceases to amaze.

At dawn, the first and bravest ray, familiar as the roadside clusters of sweet clover, buttercups, and goldenrod in a Nebraska summer, can still astonish — but the spark is not the sun, and we are promised nothing less. If we only knew it, we have just begun to love, and there is time enough; someday we shall be grateful for the interruption — just a season's fallow field at rest.

Blessed indeed are they who go with certainty that they are needed elsewhere for a space; that in the vastness of the universe, there is a place in which their ministrations are required; and they are content to slip away.

When I'm no longer where you are accustomed to, regret my going if you must, but know I live, and not so far away. And I do not forget you. Will you look for me?

Look for me in commonplace and sacred spaces. Look for me in prayers and hymns and growing things... the calm vitality of a supple reed in shallow water just at evening, at the cusp of autumn.

Look for me where there are children. Set your cynical imposture aside and be astounded. Don't you know that nothing is coincidental? If you, having found me, disallow your intuition... if you walk away, I will run behind and tug your shirttail, and whine and wail till I turn blue; and you will gather courage, as if to contemplate a Gorgon, instead of loveliness too compelling to embrace for fear of losing cognizance of time and place. And there you will remain a bit, nonplussed, bemused, and ill at ease, fumbling for your pipe and flask or the equivalent; but in the end you will be satisfied, not all at once, but by degrees, that I still live just as I promised.

Summer 2006—In memory of Lydia

Improvisation

If a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing badly. —Peter Macdonald

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries....
We must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*

—Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

God's time is the best time; be you faithful, and your conflict shall end with glory to God, and the reward of peace to your own souls. —William Penn

In 1985 I received a five-thousand-dollar inheritance. It was more than enough to buy the computer I wanted—a TRS-80 Model 4. It came with two floppy disk drives, not the usual single drive, which required you to insert the program disk, wait for the program to load, then replace the program disk with a data disk. (I didn't yet have a modem, but if I had it would have been the cradle type that you wedged your telephone receiver into.)

Besides the TRS-80 I bought a daisy-wheel printer with three fonts. It was the prince of printers in 1985. Those few who had home computers generally used dot-matrix printers.

My plan—my lifelong dream, in fact—was to be a stay-at-home mom with a stay-at-home job.

The thing to do at the time

All my market research was done at the smallish Hutchinson Public Library and in personal interviews. I spent weeks writing an elaborate business plan, and then I said the hell with it and placed an ad in the newspaper classifieds offering to do résumés.

I did it on impulse. Nowhere in my business plan were résumés mentioned. None of my interviewees had said, "What this town really needs is a good résumé preparer." It just seemed like the thing to do at the time. I took "the current when it serves," though I had no notion of it.



Tandy's TRS-80 Model IVP. "P" stood for "portable."

My first résumé client was a hospital administrator. He was a lovely man and very appreciative of my ability to write cover letters stripped of the stiff verbosity that characterizes the writing of so many professionals. He kept coming back for new cover letters, and I got to know him fairly well.

Before he left town to take a job elsewhere in Kansas, he suggested I call his friend Jane Lee, who had recently moved to Hutchinson, opened a marketing and PR firm, and occasionally used freelance help. I did as he suggested, and it changed my life.

Jane and I were a perfect fit. What she taught me about marketing and business practices could fill several books and a companion CD. Better still, she became a treasured friend, a mentor, and a referral source, and she offers me generous hospitality when I am in her part of the world.

Bach's *Cantata 106*, "Actus Tragicus," is subtitled *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*—God's Time Is the Best Time. Since it's a funeral cantata, I suppose that Bach was thinking more about passing on into the Afterlife than into a new career or a life change such as getting married or buying a house. But "God's time" applies to those kinds of passages as well, I think. He offers us, in the fullness of time, a tide that leads to abundant life. If you're not ready, you may have to jump in anyway and pray that you'll grow fins.

Vocabulary: What Is Analysis Paralysis?

analysis paralysis (n). Inertia; postponing decisions by excessive research, brainstorming, and so forth. Delaying decisions when the opportunity cost of further analysis exceeds the benefits. **Example:** Finding the very leather coat you've been wanting, at 75 percent off, you go home to "think it over," consult Consumer Reports, compare prices at other stores, etc. When you decide to buy the 75-percent-off jacket, it's "just been sold." Oops! Too late....

[illegible]This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.