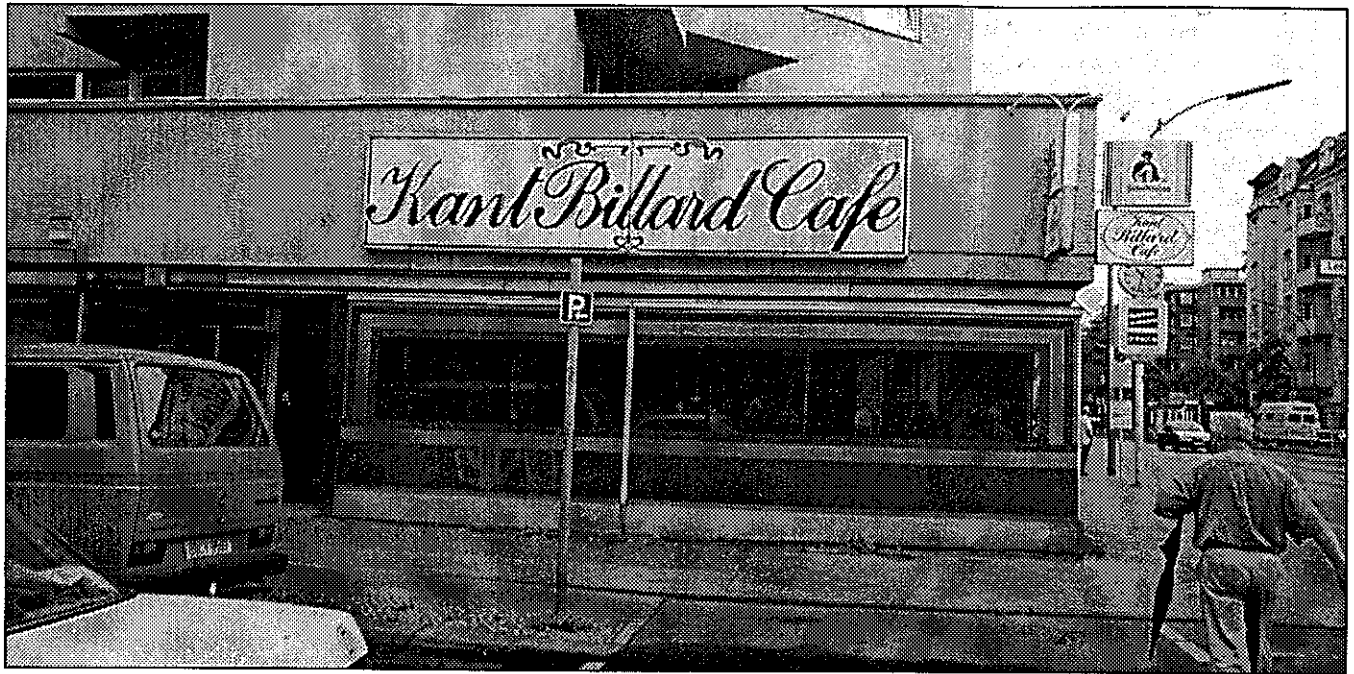


PHILOSOPHERS ON HOLIDAY

Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday--LW

Volume III, no. 1 Summer 1999



Dear P on H Editors:

I have astounding news to share. Remember all that stuff we learned about Immanuel Kant being this mousy little guy who never left Königsberg and did the same boring things at the same time each day? Well forget it. I think I've discovered The Secret life of Immanuel Kant. First of all, the hotel. Why would someone name a hotel after some obscure academic way over in East Prussia? My theory is it was named after him either because he stayed here so often or because he actually owned the hotel (think about how hotels are so often named after their owners: Hilton, Radisson, Sheraton, Marriott). Then, it would make sense that they also named a street after him. People don't name streets after philosophers, they name them after real estate developers! In the picture [p.10] you can see the intersection of Kantstraße and Leibnitzstraße—not to honor their philosophical prowess but to show thanks to them for all the great tourist trade they brought to Charlottenberg—the section of Berlin where they hung out. Besides the hotel there is also a Pension Kant, a Kant Billiards Café (where he hustled the tourists, I hear), and a Kant Casino!! I'm telling you, this guy led a double life!

As you can see from the enclosed card [reproduced on p.10], the actual name of this hotel is the Best Western Kanthotel, which raises new questions. If Immanuel was the best Western Kant, who were the Eastern Kants? If anyone has any information about these heretofore unknown Kants (were they philosophers or real estate developers?), please let me know.

Linda Lopez McAlister
University of South Florida
(mcalister@chumal.cas.usf.edu)

See more Kant photos on p. 10!

From the Editors

Ahhhh, summer. The shortest three months of the year. Ours positively flew by. We spent two delightful months of it in Blue Hill, Maine, in the second floor of a colonial house, hammering away at our laptops. Our living room windows afforded a lovely view of the town harbor, enabling Lisa to undertake a serious investigation of the tides. (She feels much better equipped to teach Descartes now.) Each day, after we'd worked long enough to feel virtuous, we'd head out in search of adventure (Lisa) and/or an opportunity to increase aerobic capacity (Peg): hiking in Acadia National Park, biking at Cape Rossier, climbing Blue Hill, swimming in Third Pond, and kayaking in Blue Hill Harbor all lay just outside our door and down the road a piece. And while she was here, Peg developed a real taste for lobster. Okay, just kidding.

In this issue, we welcome several new writers to our list of august contributors. Lisa's mom, Carol, tells us everything she didn't want to know about flying to Bangor, Maine. Linda Lopez McAlister graces our front page, with her investigative report on the secret life of Immanuel Kant. Mecke Nagel and

Naomi Zack give us yet more reasons not to dance. And Ray Boisvert covers the international beat, with his report from the Quebequis front.

As always, we welcome your contributions. We especially invite you to submit to two special issues. The Millenium Issue is slated for Winter 2000; submissions are due January 7 (plenty of time for you to recover that system that crashed on January 1). We're also planning a Cemetery, Gravestone and Memorial Marker Issue, tentatively scheduled for Spring or Summer 2000. (The sooner you send us your graveside musings, the sooner we publish.)

TRAVEL NOTES

While driving to Kennebunkport, Maine one weekend, Peg noted the following sign: "Mini Golf Course. Open to the public." Does this mean that there are *private, exclusive* mini golf courses??



If you're ever in midcoast Maine on a Monday night in the summer, check to see if the local steel drum band is playing somewhere. We caught them in Bucksport. Their island sound left people arriving at the concert from their sailboats wondering if they'd been blown off course and landed in Jamaica. Nope, no Trinidadians in Bucksport; just a bunch of Yankees with a love of the steel drum. (Okay, so we liked them *less* when they started regular rehearsals behind our house.)

About the motto

We borrow our motto from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein suggests that philosophical problems emerge when we forget how words function in ordinary circumstances. When language "goes on holiday," we *create* our own thorny, knotty problems--and then we proceed to chew on them for a thousand years or so.

Our 'zine was born out of our recognition that when philosophers *go* on holiday, we also tend to thrum up thorny little problems that keep us worrying all the way across Montana. Philosophers, unleashed in the ordinary world, are *dangerous*--or, at the very least, highly amusing. Of course on a good day, we can also be rather insightful. (Paying way too much attention to the ordinary *can* produce real wisdom every once in awhile.) *Philosophers On Holiday* attempts to bring all things philosophical and holiday-related together in one place; the danger, the amusement, the bumbling, and, yes, the occasional pearl of wisdom

Philosophers on Holiday

A quarterly 'zine

Editors Peg O'Connor and Lisa Heldke
Staff Columnist Abby Wilkerson
Movie Reviewer, Immobile Reporter Barb Heldke
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Submissions We always welcome your essays, editorials, artwork, advertisements, photos, puzzles, letters, rants.

Direct all correspondence to:

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Wilkerson's World

TRAVELERS' ADVISORY

When traveling to an unfamiliar city, travelers are often inquisitive about the safety and comfort of the public transit system. The Washington, DC area (where I live--yes, I am a Beltway insider, that's a geographical fact) is known for its safe, clean, and convenient Metro system.

Here, even the eccentrics try to comport themselves in a manner befitting the dignity of the nation's capital. Well, everyone who's not President, at least. Or holding basically any kind of elected office. But I digress. Recently my friend Cindy was headed downtown one weekday morning, surrounded by suits and running shoes as usual, when she began to hear someone singing at the other end of the train. The singer turned out to be a man in a suit, clutching a pole in one hand and a briefcase in the other--not an unusual sight, except for the satin¹ cape flowing over his conservative suit. That, and the fact that he was singing a slow dirgelike tune that went like this: "Saaa-tan/Is part of God's creaaaaa-tion/He should not be me-et/With condemnaa-tion."

So DC. Even our freaks are buttoned down and presentable here. In Chicago, on the El, people sing, dance, solicit gambling, make out and do all sorts of things without a second glance from anyone. On the Metro, troublemakers who should know better are ejected from the train for eating a bagel. Propriety is big business here. We don't have Satan-worshippers, we have K street lawyer-type liberals pleading for tolerance for Satan.² When we speak of the devil's advocate it's not just a figure of speech. Welcome to Washington.

1. Satin: see "Our Fate Was In Her Hands," *Philosophers on Holiday*, vol. II no.3. Coincidence? I think not!
2. Not to be confused with "Sympathy for the Devil."

TRAVELS WITH CHRIS

My big travel adventure this summer was with my brother Chris.¹ We spent some time in Albuquerque and Santa Fe with the editors of this publication (we have to hold our staff meetings somewhere--where do you think your subscription money goes?), and then took a couple of days to drive to Dallas, where he lives on a ranch. I was in Albuquerque for the National Women's Studies Association, where Chris astutely observed that there were many attrac-

tive women, and hardly any other men, and yet somehow he might have a lot of competition.

We all engaged in some playful world traveling,² including Mecke Nagel, who went to the plaza with us one afternoon. She took one look at the gun rack in Chris's truck and asked, "Chris, do you really use this to store guns?" "Yes," he said. What else does one do with a gun rack in a pickup?

If you take the drive from Albuquerque to Lubbock, don't pass up the opportunity to stop in at the Billy the Kid Museum in Fort Sumner, right on Highway 84. My only disappointment was that the gift shop had no postcards of any of the museum's Carlos C. Clancy paintings of the Kid, in which Billy always sports an appropriately deranged expression, and his legendary tiny feet are always depicted as well (although I should note that the gift shop is well-stocked with copies of *The Good Side of Billy the Kid*). For those whose tastes run in other directions, there is always something of interest, such as the collection of commemorative coins and Charles and Di memorabilia right across from the gun that killed Billy. Who could resist a place like this? On your way out of town, be sure to stop at Sprouts Cafe (named for the owner, not the food, I can assure you). Sprout is famous for his sourdough biscuits, which were fresh, hot, and tasty, even late in the afternoon when we showed up, although they are not actually made of sourdough, nor are they really biscuits. During the winter they save up the leftover biscuits, observing the arrival of spring with the annual Biscuit Toss. They don't let them harden to the lethal stage, in case any children or small animals are in tossing range.

Be sure to stop at All Booked Up, Larry McMurtry's bookstore in Archer City, Texas, which is not that far out of your way on the Lubbock³ to Dallas⁴ leg of the trip. We saw Larry himself unpacking boxes of books. Miraculously, there were the Kate Bornstein, Sapphire, and Nancy Mairs titles I'd been looking for, as well as all the J. Frank Dobies that Chris could want, and more.

But the best part of the trip, which may have to become a ritual element in future trips we take together, was the Exchange of Matchbooks. After we left the Museum and partook of Sprout's biscuits, Chris solemnly said, "I have something for you. Keep this and never forget the Billy the Kid Museum." He handed me a matchbook, hot pink and emblazoned, of course, with the likeness of Billy. He could not have expected what would transpire the next day at the Four Sixes Trading Post, where you can stock up on everything from spurs to Twinkies

"With Chris" continued p.8

Pantheon Gastronomique

This issue features a rather offbeat eating establishment, with only one item on the menu—and that one only in season. But when those wild blueberries are ripe, they're free, plentiful, organic and delicious.

Mostly, though, you come to this place for the ambience. It's the kind of place you find described in a children's book, like *Caddie Woodlawn* or *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* as everyone's favorite swimming hole/pond/lake—the kind of place no one believes exists in the real world. A fantasy lake. But it exists, just outside of Blue Hill Maine on Route 15. In the summer months, just drive out of town until you see a sandy spot on the righthand side of the road where two or three cars have parked. Park your car, get out and follow the path into the woods for a tenth of a mile or so. You'll come upon a lovely clear, rock-bottom lake (named Third Pond—inexplicably, everything smaller than the ocean here is a pond), just cool enough to refresh. Warm up on the giant rocks cropping out among the evergreen trees, munch on some of those sun-warmed blueberries, and then get in the water. The daring may choose to jump from the rocks (it's good and deep here in places), but the more cautious can enter gradually from a convenient low spot. After a cavort or a swim (the trip across the pond is a nice piece of exercise), climb out (use the handy rope someone has installed) and let the sun dry you while you eat some more blueberries. Take out the bag of your favorite potato chips (blueberries and chips are the perfect flavor combo on a hot day) and the bottle of cold water you cleverly thought to pack.

Dining doesn't get much more low tech—much more idyllic—than this. Oh, but watch the ants in your swimsuit.

Major Regrets

In June, your editors traveled to Albuquerque to attend the National Women's Studies Association Convention. There we were joined by West Texans Abby "World" Wilkerson and her brother, Chris—people who *know* their Tex-Mex from their New Mex from their Mex in the food department. We knew we could trust them to ferret out *the* places to dine on New Mexican* cuisine during our stay in the city.

And indeed they did. Within minutes of arriving in town, Abby struck up a conversation with a friendly and knowledgeable bus driver, who told her that the best place for New Mexican food in all of Albuquerque was the M & J Sanitary Tortilla Factory. We filed away that information, promising ourselves to make a trip there soon.

Time passed. We had several swell meals at Little Anita's, a small chain of New Mexican restaurants with a branch in our hotel parking lot. I could be happy indeed if I ever heard that Little Anita's had decided to open a branch in St. Peter, Minnesota. We had a terrific meal at El Pinto, a giant restaurant where we dined *al fresco* and were serenaded by a really terrific band. We even made it to Santa Fe for one wonderful meal at the famed Café Pasqual. But always the Sanitary Tortilla Factory stood like a beacon before us, beckoning us hither. This was going to be the place that made all the rest of these places look like McMexican.

Now I know what you're thinking. You're thinking I'm going to tell you that we went there and it was terrible. Well you're wrong. We never made it. It just didn't happen. Abby and I (Lisa) were particularly crushed. We consoled ourselves by saying that probably this bus driver had a leatherette palate anyway, and didn't know beans about New Mexican food.

And then came the independent confirmation of his assessment, in the form of the July issue of *Gourmet* magazine. In the "Two for the Road" column authored by road food demigods Jane and Michael Stern. In a special article on the restaurants of Route 66—Southwest portion. You guessed it: "The best native New Mexican food in Albuquerque is made at M & J Sanitary Tortilla Factory, across from the bus station" (p.52). I knew it. And reader, we didn't eat there.**

***Jokes We Can No Longer Make Department:** On a television sitcom popular in the 1970's the lead character remarked, "I just tried that new Mexican restaurant in town," to which another character replied, "Gee, I've never had New Mexican food before." Name the show *and* the two characters for the toothbrush.

**Critical readers may be surprised to learn that I would even have considered eating in a restaurant that was not only called a *factory*, but a *sanitary* factory at that. Given my rule about avoiding shacks, huts and factories, this may seem just a tad two-faced. Sure, there was the recommendation from a genuine local, but that shouldn't matter. A rule is a rule, isn't it?

Well, yes it is. But a corollary is a corollary, too. And, in light of the M&J Sanitary Tortilla Factory incident—combined with an analysis of some ethnic cook-

Contest Results!!



Results for our "Theories of Not Dancing" Contest were slow to trickle in, but they were well worth the wait. The SUNY system produced two winners. Mecke Nagel, of SUNY Cortland, offers the following:

Marx/Gramsci:

Rather than musing over mind-body hierarchies or specific anthropological expressions of a spirit of levity, we need to assess the ideological moment vis-a-vis the locality, the organizers, and purpose of the (public) dance to see whether a particular dance is of revolutionary or at least counter-hegemonic mould. As with other expressions of playfulness, dance is also ideologically suspect and needs to be interrogated on its bourgeois or even fascist allegiance. I'd rather dance with Emma Goldman than with Leni Riefenstahl!

Naomi Zack, of SUNY Albany, offers the following taxonomy:

There are two kinds of dancing:

- (1) An undeliberate and unmeditated series of bodily movements, with some discernible rhythm, which have no function beyond themselves.
- (2) A deliberate and meditated series of bodily movements with some discernible rhythm, which have no function beyond themselves.

What used to be called California free style is an example of (1); the foxtrot is an example of (2). Both (1) and (2) may be done by one person, two or more persons, or between persons and animals, as for example those who dance with cats.*

Not-dancing is not all things or even all actions which are not dancing and neither is it the contrary of dancing. Rather, not-dancing is not doing (1) or not doing (2) or not doing (1) and (2).

Not-dancing may have causes, as well as reasons, which include physical debility, psychological aversions to and fear of dancing, and also vices of character and disposition that limit or prevent bodily movement, such as laziness.

While there is an important socially-constructed dimension to both dancing and not-dancing, the prevalence of dancing in all cultures might lead some to speculate about the existence of a universal grammar of dance which has some (undetermining) genetic foundation.

*See Heather Busch and Burton Silver, *Dancing with Cats* (Chronicle Books).

FYI re: PonH

Nearly every day, we get calls and letters from our many subscribers saying, Girls, we just cannot keep up with all the departments at *PonH*. We are dying to submit something for the next issue; can you remind us what all of them are?

Yes, eager would-be contributors, we could. Herewith, a handy clip 'n save chart, listing all the departments and subdepartments of the *PonH* empire. As a special bonus, we've listed any contests that are still active.

Regular Departments

1. Travel Notes: any odd bit you notice on your own travels. Short and long submissions welcome
2. Pantheon Gastronomique: reviews of restaurants off the beaten path, serving really decent food.
3. Restaurants We Never Visited: obvious. Accompanying photos desired.
4. Where Are They Now? Current occupations of famous philosophers. Photos preferred.
5. Sports Report: philosophical musings on the latest sporting or leisure event of note.
6. Did They Really Say That? a.k.a. Creative Hearing Department
7. Recipes
8. Puzzles
9. Songs
10. Gossip

Contests

1. Cheap Ploys (from Vol.II, No.2): What would *your* favorite philosopher be used to hawk? Recall that, with Wittgenstein, it was tweed.
2. See pages 4, 5 and 12 of this issue for three new contests!



barb's briefs

Bulworth. Warren (Beatty), WHAT WERE YOU THINKING!!?? The most aggravating sound track (music, action sequences, dialog—all of it) yet. Half way through I remarked that an inmate ready to go to the electric chair, having finished her final meal and faced with the prospect of seeing this a second time or getting on with the execution would definitely climb right into the chair and say "please—not that!"

DEPARTMENT OF GOOD ADVICE

The frequent traveler knows there's a lot of advice out there—much of it bad. Advice on where to stay, where to eat, where to shop... you've heard it all. But perhaps no advice is so perilous, so fraught with danger as the advice on how to get to where you're going.

That's why good advice, like the kind Cliff Piper doles out, really stands out in our mind. Cliff Piper operates Cliff Piper Radio Control (A Full Line Hobby Shop) at Gretchell's Corner, Vassalboro, Maine. If you've ever tried to get to midcoast Maine from the interstate, you've probably made his acquaintance. We did—after we missed the turn 16 miles back, in Augusta, and stopped at his shop at 7 p.m. on a Sunday night. Despite the day and the hour, the shop was open. Lisa walked in the door, hollered "hello", and was met by Cliff himself. As she explained her plight to him (the map of Maine clutched in her sweaty little hand), she noticed that he didn't seem to be listening to her. In fact, he seemed to be busying himself with some papers in a rack on the wall.

Imagine her surprise when Cliff handed her one of the big yellow sheets, on which were emblazoned the words "YES, YOU HAVE MISSED ROUTE 3 TO THE COASTAL AREA OF MAINE! NO, YOU ARE NOT STUPID, YOU ARE ONLY ONE OF A GREAT MANY TO HAVE STOPPED HERE FOR DIRECTIONS...." Number 84 this year, Cliff informed me.

What followed were meticulous directions for how to get back onto Route 3, along with a map, and an invitation to send Cliff a postcard, letting him know how our trip was. Cliff even pointed out the route on the map for me, before sending me on my merry way.

The directions worked perfectly. And we got to drive through a couple extra cute towns, to boot.

Hope this works as well as a postcard, Cliff!

BACK IN THE HUNT

Peg writes:

In Volume II, no. 3, I began what I intended to be a series on the ins and outs of the job market. Well, I was having so much fun this spring, I forgot to write an installment for the last issue. But as we move into the fall semester, and those readers (and editor) who are back in the hunt for the coveted tenure-track slot, our thoughts turn to late December. No, not the end of the semester or the Feast of St.

Cholesteria (Vol. I, no. 3) or Hanukkah or Christmas. But the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association, the place to see and be seen. (However, no one wants to be seen skulking around the barn-sized "ballroom" [a euphemism if ever] for a table interview where you've been cooling your heels for more than an hour waiting for interviewers from a very well-known university to show up. This is a true story, by the way.) Oh, is that bitterness rearing its head? Back on task.

Let's just imagine that you've sent out over forty applications. You applied only for jobs where you meet at least three of the Areas of Specialization (AOS) and at least two of the Areas of Competence (AOC). Now, some of you not familiar with the state of hiring affairs in philosophy might draw the conclusion, "Why there are plenty of jobs out there for all the eager beaver philosophers." Using my best pedagogical voice reserved for intro logic, I'd tell you this conclusion does not follow from the premises. The problem is in the breadth of the job descriptions. It is not all that unusual for a job description to contain five or six AOS's and just as many AOC's. Your forty applications are out there, in the hands of members of interviewing committees. The process of selection for interview is rather mysterious to me. Perhaps some reader who has undertaken this task might provide some insight into this process. I have no doubt that, for people who are concerned with fairness, and have both empathy and memories of their own job hunts, this review of applications is a difficult and troubling undertaking. But, as my favorite philosopher reminds us, that of which we cannot speak we must pass over in silence. So, I'll pass right over that subject to the subject of the telephone.

In mid-December, there is nothing louder than the silence of the telephone. For all the time it doesn't ring, you remain convinced that the cheap piece of plastic you bought at Target that is shaped like a cow must be broken or the service to your house alone is on the fritz. So, you pick up the phone, hear the dial tone, and quickly hang up because you know that someone from an interviewing committee is getting a busy tone. Damn. Another interview opportunity wasted. When the phone does ring, a major anxiety crisis ensues. Sometimes it rings when you're in the bathroom (and you are convinced that it rang *because* you were in the bathroom so you find yourself going in there even when you don't have to go) and that provides its own problems. I won't go into those problems. When you do answer the phone, no matter who it is—your

The Hunt continued p. 8

HAND SIGNALS FOR CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

How many times have you found yourself listening to a paper at a conference, wishing you could somehow convey a message to the speaker without waiting for the question period? You don't necessarily want everyone else in the room to be privy to this message, but you want to make damn sure the speaker knows. We, too, have felt this frustration, and we now have found the solution. While searching the web for information about sea kayak paddling techniques, we came to a web page labeled "Hand signals for sea kayakers" that listed all emergency and nonemergency signals one might need. For example, beckoning with your index finger means "Come here," while throwing air over your shoulder means "Ignore my last signal." As a service to our readers, we have generated a set of conference hand signals we hope will become a universal language. Please commit these to memory.

Signal	Meaning
Sketch a circle around ear with index finger	Circular reasoning
Grasp throat with both hands	I'm choking on your convoluted French logic
Make the Jr. Birdman mask:	Your argument won't stand up to close scrutiny
Place thumbs in ears, waggle upright fingers	I know you are, but what am I?
Hold nose	This argument was moldy when Socrates was a lad.
Make a slicing motion, using hand as a "blade"	Splitting hairs
Shade eyes with hand	Another glaring omission

The Hunt, cont.

beloved mother, best friend, long lost soul mate for whom you've been pining for the last 12 years—you just don't want to talk to them and Tie Up the Line. (If you had call waiting, you wouldn't have this problem, but you're opposed to this new technology because you find it rude when people say to you "can you hold on while I get this other call" and before you know it, you're in AT & T limbo.) So, you quickly disconnect with a quick promise to call back sometime in late March/early April. You pick this date deliberately because the job-hunting season begun in October is usually over by then, and the little runner-up job-hunting season starts in March and interviews don't happen until late April.

So, when you've just hefted a rather large forkful of some chewy delicacy and your water glass is empty, the telephone rings. You swallow in such a way that you need to do a quick self-Heimlich maneuver, and you run to the faucet to slug down some water to clear your throat. You pick up the phone, and lo and behold, it's Simon Simpleton (you think to yourself, that can't be right. Who would have such cruel parents? You scream to yourself "Stop stop stop. Pay attention to what the man is saying.) Meanwhile you are flailing about your house looking for your date book (to write down all the interviews times and locations) as well as the *JFP* so you can remember where this place is and what the job description is. Finally, you have assembled all your

necessary equipment when Professor Simpleton says, "So let's just reconfirm the time," and to your horror, you realize he has been speaking the whole time. In a rather polite voice, you say, "Yes, please tell me the time once again so I don't double book." As soon as you say this, you think to yourself, "What a horse's ass!! What was I thinking? Double book!!" Quickly put aside those thoughts and listen careful to the man on the phone, and tell him that you are looking forward to meeting him in Boston. Hang up the phone right now before you get into more trouble.

With Chris, cont.

even if you don't live on the ranch. He stops there because he favors a particular kind of official Four Sixes tube socks, available only there, and yes, because he loves all things Texas. My moment came when we were leaving and I spotted a plastic jug filled with matchbooks. "Never forget the Four Sixes Trading Post," I said, and handed him his Sojourner Truth matchbook.

1. A.k.a. Christine Hollywood, but that's another story.
2. Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception" (in *Making Face, Making Soul*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua).
3. "One of the best sights I've ever seen/Is Lubbock in my rearview mirror." Mac Davis
4. "If you've ever seen Dallas from a DC9 at night"--or a pickup headed in from Lubbock--"Well, Dallas is a jewel, Dallas is a beautiful sight." Joe Ely

Genuine Leather Uppers, **Synthetic Soul**

Barb "*The Brief*" Heldke writes:

The title of this article actually inspired it - how could such a title not be "used" once imagined. It came to me the way Arlo gets a song lyric. Or a scientist gets an invention. All at once. Suddenly. Without effort.

A while back I broke down and bought a pair of Reicker's - those funny looking shoes you think must be made in Germany. I hadn't ever tried them on. Too pricey for "play" shoes. But my legs were aching, my casual shoe wardrobe was lacking and there was a sale!

I tried on the style I thought I liked - the box said the model was "anti-stress" - another great selling point in this time of "maximum stress, minimum shopping time". My rust brown slip-on shoes made of Nubuck from Eddie Bauer had barely survived a muddy trip to a Renaissance Faire. So I bought dark tan. Bear in mind we are in Northampton. Two hours from home so this was a "no turning back" decision. We went and ate lunch. Tradition and conservatism set in and I decided "if there is a black pair in my size it is a sign from God that I should buy black and I should exchange them". I exchanged them.

I wore these shoes a few times - they looked weird on me but not as weird as the Birkenstocks I admire on other people's feet but that always look stupid on me. They were comfortable—even without socks and during the break-in-period they did not cause pain. Then on about the fourth wearing as I was putting them back in their box I realized that they are made in Tunisia! This should have sent me off for a world atlas but it was time to go to sleep so I still am not exactly sure where we KEEP Tunisia. (More about my geography problems on another day.)

That got me reading more of the inside of the shoes - most of which IS in German (maybe Tunisia is a former colony or a local subsidiary of Germany?). And there it was - "leather uppers, synthetic soul"...or at least that is what my eyes saw. It brought to mind all the other shoe labels. Adding "genuine" in front of leather is popular. "Manmade" appears more often than "synthetic".

All leather shoes are my favorite—"souls" and all! Cuervo something or other. I like "real" things. But even expensive dress shoes are less and less that way. Fake insoles are my biggest gripe. Leather insoles dry out without smelling, much like the animal that contributed the leather does after a day at the beach. (A commercial or pointer to a "don't kill

animals for clothing" article probably belongs here and I leave that to my capable editors.) Then there are the "lifts" or heel caps on dress shoes. Designed for obsolescence. Designed for people who buy new shoes every season. I have one pair with some new space age material that doesn't wear out. Seems smart to me. I actually am about to pitch the shoes - having worn them out without having to schlep around for new "lifts" on them a time or two while they were still good. And shoe laces. Another "you are supposed to throw these shoes out more often so that you don't ever need to find the right style laces" insult to frugality.

Over the years I've graphed in my head the relationship between the source of the shoes and their components and price. I figured out that the "genuine stuff" comes from countries where the labor is cheaper—offsetting the cost. I stopped when the big, over-decorated, often with "air" or "blinking lights" athletic shoes became so popular. And so pricey. There was no logic to that. The recent trend in cheaply made, "fake everything" in mid-priced shoes made in China blows my theory.

We could go on. The wedgie period. The clog era. The resurgence of Keds. The "looks like a pump, feels like a sneaker" brand. But what about the "soul" and the "genuine whatever an upper would be"? It's how the world has become. We try to "think" with our "upper" (head) self in a way that is solid and good and honest. But the "soul" of our being now is too artificial. Too motivated by "getting by", "making do", "meeting the schedule", "not making waves". We recycle and buy whole foods locally grown and subscribe to "The Progressive" or "Green Times" but it's going to take more than that. And maybe I have to "vote with my feet/shoes" and do the "more" of it.

Barb "*Don't Call Me Imelda*" Heldke reports that she sat out the clog era because "I had a 'bad toe' during that period. But I did once have some sandals with thick wooden soles. Nearly flat, but a good inch and a half of wood. I once spooked a cow walking down the path at the county fair when I fell off my shoe being clumsy. Poor cow."

Have a Favorite Grave?

Write and tell us about it for the "Cemetery, Gravestone and Memorial Marker" special Issue of *PonH* slated for Spring or Summer, 2000

How We Spent Our Summer Vacation, or: Ever Heard of Business Express Airlines?

Carol Heldke writes:

Before classes ended at GAC last spring, the *Phil on Hol* editors extended an invitation to Mom and Dad Heldke to visit them while they were “doing their summer work” in Maine. We could hardly refuse this great offer, especially when a trip to the travel agency came up with such ridiculously low fares for the trip. We really couldn’t afford to stay home. It does pay to be a Senior Citizen. Rules for the trip:

- 1) Dress casually
- 2) Pack light
- 3) Plan to do relaxing things, read and walk in the a.m., sightsee in Maine in the afternoon.

It has been awhile since we did any trips by air alone. We secretly think the kids doubt our ability to do that, and we do admit that a hearing problem is a handicap at such times, but everyone rolled out the red carpet for our departure. We had an overnight stay at niece Donna’s “Motel 6,” and an early trip to the airport, to give us ample time to have something to eat and to get on our plane. (And to engage in my favorite activity—watching people. At this time, I’m considering a career writing character studies. Where do you find more characters than an airport?)

Minneapolis to Boston was a breeze, even though we were next to the noisy engines of the plane. We had a nice breakfast [ed. note: not possible!] and enjoyed the flight. Off at Boston, got on a shuttle to go to the Business Express terminal for our next flight, but NOT YET! The agent was determined we would all march to his music. A mix-up at Business Express, and no information on the board. Someone sent us back to Northwest. We walked back, only to find that we’d been in the right place before. So, back we shuttled.

We were to have more than an hour to wait for our scheduled flight (for which we had confirmed seats) but WAIT! that plane was cancelled due to fog. At two p.m. FOG! In Wisconsin, the fog is all gone by 10. So, we got put on Priority Standby for the next flight. That sounded good to us, so we called Jay in New York, who was serving as “message central” for us travelers without cell phones. Lisa and Peg could call him to find out about any delays.

We know a lot now that we didn’t know then:

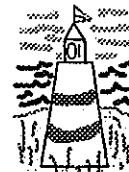
- 1) “Priority Standby” means nothing;
- 2) Information boards tell nothing, and even that is a lie;

- 3) You are unable to understand the announcements, even if you have good ears;
- 4) Being nice gets you nowhere.

About 8 p.m. [ed. note: not a misprint], after returning from one more trip to the phones, who do we see standing in line to get a booking, but Bruce Norelius, a face from home! [Ed note: also a familiar name to regular *PonH* readers for “Atlas Shrug”] We knew he lived in Maine, but we didn’t know he would show up to offer reassurance and to tell us “It’s always like this here.” He tried to convince the agents we should have his confirmed seat on the next flight, but of course two people could not use one seat. So he left, we stayed, the hour grew later, and everyone called back and forth trying to find out what would happen next. It was now nearly 10 p.m.

Richard was “standing by,” patiently hoping our names would be called for the next flight. There were more people circling around the boarding agent than that little plane would hold. It was now time for affirmative action. I went to the desk to ask why, when we came in at noon with a confirmed seat, we were still waiting to get on a plane at 10 p.m. The same story; if weather causes a cancellation, you automatically go on standby. Okay—but how long? Now I’m getting sacred. I said “you either decide what you will do with us tonight, or we better be on the next plane.” A quiet little agent who had been very patiently listening to me began to punch information on her computer. She whispered “give me two minutes,” I did, and she did. She tore our boarding passes out of the book and handed them to me. I motioned to Richard, we picked up our carryon bags, and headed for the gate. I don’t know what happened—and some daggers certainly passed between the two gate agents—but we did get on the plane. The flight was beautiful, and Peg and Lisa seemed genuinely happy to see us. [Ed note: we were—and not only because we’d been in the Bangor International Airport for eight hours.] The entire rest of the vacation was wonderful. The trip home was uneventful. The memories will be with us for years.

All that because we jokingly talked about trying to get “bumped,” if the opportunity arose. We never got the chance.



Where are they now?



Okay, so it seems implausible that Franz Kafka, a man most well known for turning a perfectly ordinary man into a cockroach just for the heck of it, would open a resort in northeastern Wisconsin in his golden years. But there you have it; sometimes truth *is* stranger than fiction—even when the fiction in question is *Metamorphosis* (*The Castle*, *The Trial*, and everyone's favorite, *The Penal Colony*.)

Unfortunately, we didn't have time to stop and check out the facilities at Kafka's Resort in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, so we can only imagine what they include. But that, dear readers, is where you all come in. What sorts of amenities do you imagine you might find at a place named Kafka's Resort?? Send your suggestions to *PonH*, Hotel California Department. ("Kafka's Resort, where you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave.")