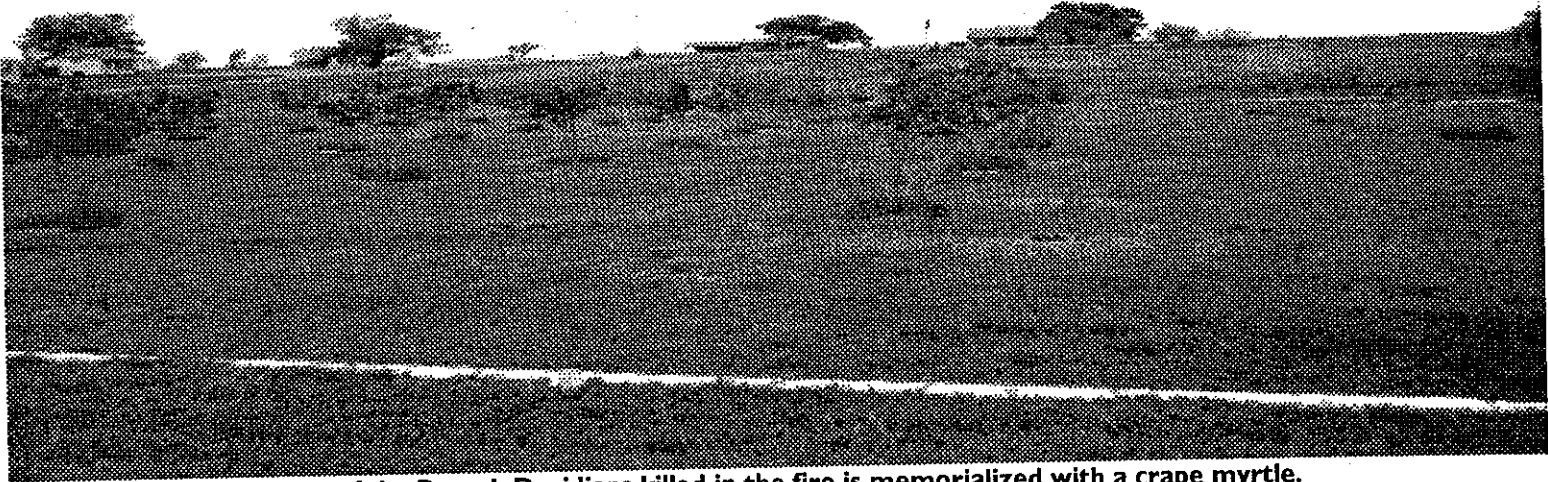


PHILOSOPHERS ON HOLIDAY

Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday--LW

Volume III, no. IV
Spring, 2000



Each member of the Branch Davidians killed in the fire is memorialized with a crape myrtle.

Peg writes: Fort Lauderdale. Daytona Beach. Cancun. Key West. These are some of the more popular spring break destinations. Waco, Texas usually doesn't make the list. But to Waco we went over our spring break, to participate in a conference co-sponsored by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and Baylor University, on academic freedom at religiously affiliated colleges. We were invited because someone at the AAUP knew that Gustavus has domestic partner benefits, and this makes us among a rather small number of such colleges having these benefits. (As one of the people from Baylor said to us after our presentation, "Either you all are from a different planet or we are.")

One of the conference activities was a tour of the Branch Davidian Compound, located 15 miles from Waco. With a not insignificant amount of uneasiness, Lisa and I decided that we wanted to go on this tour. What we knew of the Branch Davidians came from the television coverage during the standoff. We knew neither the history of the group, nor its own internal divisions. Prior to our tour, two Baylor professors spoke about the history of the group (originally they were part of the Seventh Day Adventists who came to Texas because of the openness of the land and the hands-off attitude of Texans). In World War II, they were pacifists. Never a large group, they lived quietly on their land, never attracting the attention of the local sheriff. Internal divisions were quite deep, and Vernon Howell, who later changed his name to David Koresh, attempted to kill another prominent Davidian, who was himself mentally ill and who was later incarcerated for killing his neighbor.

See Waco, p.3

From the Editors

Welcome to this big, big issue, marking the end of our third year of publication. We have reports from around the globe--from China to Ethiopia to Scotland (Maryland) to Waco (yes, that one). In these pages, you'll also discover the secret of vummanhood. The fastest reviewer in the East gives us a triple header.

The office is in receipt of a rare first edition of the 1938 classic, *Philosopher's Holiday*, by Irwin Edman. While your editors have long heard tell of the existence of this Book-of-the-Month Club selection, we'd never seen a copy for ourselves. Imagine our glee when a parcel containing the delightful volume arrived from Jay Benjamin ("PR for the Founding Mothers," Fall/Winter 1999-2000). As the *Book-of-the-Month Club News* notes, "That Mr. Edman is really philosophic, which, as he points out, is very different from being a professor of philosophy, need not frighten the reader; it will, on the contrary, create the philosophic mood, which is a very pleasant one." Needless to say, we have adopted Professor Edman (for he is *also* a professor of philosophy) as our patron.

We're excited about the upcoming Cemetery, Gravestone and Memorial Marker issue, coming in Summer or Autumn of 2000. Where is your favorite philosopher (or philosophic person!) buried? Write and tell us! We are soliciting ideas for future special theme issues. Send them on a picture postcard to the address at right.

Check out our website:

<http://www.gustavus.edu/~poconnor>.

News flash:

PEG HAS A JOB!!!

Yes, that's right folks; a real, live tenure-track job right here at *Gustavus*. Starting in the fall of 2000, she'll be assistant professor and director of Women's Studies. It's time to plant the rhubarb and put in the built-in bookshelves.

Thanks to everyone out there who made this position a reality.

We plan to start the Philosophers on Holiday publishing house/travel bureau on campus as soon as a suitable suite of offices can be appointed.

Philosophers on Holiday

A quarterly 'zine

Editors Peg O'Connor and Lisa Heldke
Foreign Bureau Joanna Crosby
Leonard Harris
Staff Columnist Abby Wilkerson
Staff Vumman Brita DeRemee
Movie Reviewer, Immobile Reporter Barb Heldke
Production Assistants Carol and Richard Heldke
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Archivist: Ann O'Connor

Subscriptions Send your check for \$10 for a one-year subscription. Make checks payable to Philosophers on Holiday!

Submissions We always welcome your essays, editorials, artwork, advertisements, photos, puzzles, letters, rants.

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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

Waco, Continued

It was David Koresh who was responsible for the stockpiling of weaponry; he exerted an almost messianic control over his followers. By the time the standoff began, the Branch Davidians no longer lived at the compound; it is more correct to say the Koreshians were now the ones living there.

One of the Baylor professors personally knew Koresh. (Koresh as an aspiring musician would drop off cassettes of his music with this professor who was working for a music magazine. The music was no good.) This professor was a bit of a daredevil, and when the standoff began, he went to Kinko's, had his photo taken, and made a laminated badge for himself that he used to gain access to the innermost ring of law enforcement circling the compound. Not once was he asked for more identification.

Once the presentations by the Baylor professors were over, about twenty of us boarded a bus for the ride to the compound. About two miles from the compound, they pointed to where all the media trucks were parked, and from this vantage point, we could see sites familiar to us from the television. As we moved closer to the compound, they would point to where different law enforcement agencies were stationed. Finally, the bus turned down a side road no different from the hundred of others in the area, and we came to the driveway of the compound.

One of the things that surprised and upset us was the realization that no one had informed people living and working at the compound that we were coming. As we were driving into the compound, one of the tour leaders wondered aloud how we would be greeted. He said that they had been friendly the last time he had been here. I wasn't worried that we would be met by violence of some sort. It just seemed wrong to me that a site of terrible and tragic violence suddenly became a tourist site assumed to be open to view at the discretion of the curious.

At the entrance of the compound are signs from a variety of individuals and groups. The land of the compound is in legal dispute. The followers of David Koresh claim the land rightfully belongs to them because, even though Koresh had not paid income tax, he had paid the property taxes up until the end. Contesting the

See Waco, p. 16

I Lost it on a Toyota

Leonard Harris, philosopher at Purdue University, sends this post from his sabbatical in Ethiopia:

December 28, 1998

I lost it. I know full well that I lost it somewhere after the beginning of the New Year according to the Julian calendar. Although I live in a society that goes by the Gregorian calendar, Ethiopia, and the New Year occurred in September of the Julian calendar, and Christmas occurs on January 7th, I know that I lost it according to anyone's calendar shortly after the period known--erroneously--as New Year's on the Julian calendar.

It was the morning of January 4th, Monday, in Nechisar National Park, Arba Minch, Ethiopia, and I was holding on for dear life atop a Toyota Land Rover. I had on my safari Bob hat, jump suit pants, jump suit jacket, basketball tennis shoes, and a tee shirt that read "My Money and My Kid Go to Hampton University." The kid that goes to Hampton University sat inside. The kid that plays saxophone sat on top of the Land Rover with me. I blamed him for my loss. But really it wasn't his fault. I actually climbed on top of the Land Rover before he did, although the idea came from him. He had ridden on top of a Land Rover from the top of Entoto Mountain the Saturday before, while Nawatu and I sat, with all of our sanity, inside.

In Nechisar National Park, we saw zebras, dik-diks, crocodiles, bushbuck, hartebeest, kori bustard (largest flying bird in the world), and hornbill birds. We stopped and took pictures of the animals we saw. Nawatu walked fairly close to a herd of zebras grazing in the bush and took his picture. Jarrard and I walked as close as we could to a troop of baboons and, turning around, saw a small herd of gazelles by the Land Rover. We took a picture before they dashed off.

From the Land Rover we could see straight down into the Rift Valley, Lake Chamo and Lake Abaya. Looking down on the lakes was not frightening; looking down from the top of the Land Rover on the hills we were climbing was absolutely breathtaking and scary. I looked behind me, down the mountain on a dirt road full of rocks on an incline that looked like this: \. The

first time I looked down I was sure we were going to fall backward. I quickly turned to the front of the truck, grabbed the front of the luggage rack (did I mention that we were sitting in a luggage rack, reduced to disposable luggage?). I tried to distribute my weight by laying flat and trying to convince my son to do the same. I was ignored. To make matters worse, we passed by a group of Guji people, a language group that live in and near the park. I climbed down, quickly made acquaintance, took a group picture, spears, animal backpacks, flies and all. I climbed back up on top of the Land Rover. I did this willingly.

I started contending that I was on top of the Land Rover because Jerrard was on top of the Land Rover and that I had acquiesced to role reversal, allowing my sons to decide what I should do.

The idea of role reversal had been working very well. On our way back, for example, from two cities in the east of Ethiopia, Harer and Dira Dawa, we were at the airport and Jarrard could not find his passport. Nawatu traced every stop we had made from the hotel in Harer to the airport at Dira Dawa where someone could have touched any of our possessions. I listened to him and followed his safety warnings from teh on. Jarrard's passport was fortunately in the camera case, but if it had not been, we would have known exactly where to start looking. We walked throught he camel market in Dira Dawa and I did not get any closer to the camels than was suggestd by my sons. In Harer, we walked through the old walled city, acclaimed to be the fourth holiest city in Islam. Christians were only allowed in the walled city in this century. The boys shopped on their own for presents for their mothers, negotiated the price, paid, and kept exploring the city. I was not in charge. However, I wanted to visit the inside of Jim Mosque. Well, as luck would hve it, it was the month of Ramadan; Muslims fast during this month, but in Ethiopia, Coptic Christians also fast. (I was told, but I do not know, that both will arrive in hell about the same time because both are very fast--pun, pun, pun on the word fast-I made a funny, I made a funny.) I was unclean, since I was not a Muslim and hand not performed ablution; I was stopped at the courtyard. Jarrard had waited for me and shepherded me out; Nawatu had left and returned to the hotel. I got the idea and also returned to the hotel.

Jarrard and Nawatu negotiated with cab drivers more often than I, to set the price for a cab hire in Addis Ababa, although I thought I had the system of negotiation well under control. I soon learned that I had been paying from one-third to twice as much as necessary for every ride. (I still tend to tip more than necessary. Suspect it will take time for me to mature.) So role reversal was working very well, until the Land Rover ride.

I lost it. Sanity, or at least behaving in a way that will not produce and reproduce undue fear, has escaped me. And responding with sense has moved to another humble abode. I was terrified riding on top o fthe Land Rover, but I did not get down. Stubborn. That's a word for "lost it." Since my rear end and sides are almost recovered, I will go on a jog today with a group, the Hares, somewhere in the Entoto mountains around Addis Ababa--the same mountains that I was lost in three weeks ago for about half a day and was rescued by my good sense of direction just before nightfall (well, actually, I ran into the rescue party just as they were about to fan out for the search). Maybe, just maybe, I will find what I lost.

Phil Gal Traveler Grounded

Lisa writes: I am writing this entry on the ground. You have no idea how much pleasure I derive from this fact. I am on the ground, rattling along on the not-at-all-smooth tracks of Amtrak's Empire Builder route, returning to St. Paul from the spring American Philosophical Association in Chicago.

Usually I'd be returning from this particular convention by plane. And I hate to fly. Thus, my current happiness-cum-euphoria, for *I am on the ground*. Every time I use the bathroom--every time I nearly fall off the toilet when we go over a big bump (or whatever those things are on the train track that cause the train to lurch dramatically every mile or so)--my heart catches in my throat for a moment, until I remind myself "you're on the ground. You are not in a situation in which the plane is just about to fling itself onto the ground, because it's not a plane and you're already on the ground." Okay, so that's the real truth of the matter. I don't hate to fly. I'm terrified to fly.

See Planes, p. 13

joanna@china.edu

Morgan State University philosophy professor Joanna Crosby spent the fall semester teaching in China. She sent us the digest version of her emails back home. We're presenting them to you here in serialized form. Watch for the next episode in our summer issue.

Subject: a test of space management skills

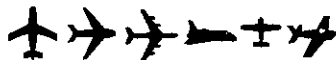
Okay, I have a little test for you. Take everything you will need for the next four months, and I mean everything (clothes, shoes, toiletries, books, hobbies, videos, kleenex, bandaids, cough medicine, etc., etc., etc.) and put it into two pieces of luggage. No really, go ahead.

Now try to lift it.

This is my reality.

While many things are more available in China, most things still are not, particularly those little things we come to rely on without even knowing it. So, I am trying to get all of this, including teaching material for four classes whose topics I have yet to be told, into two bags, and have the whole package weigh less than 140 lbs. (Don't tell the people who gave me my Ph.D., but I am picking books by weight!)

Joanna



Subject: How to get to China without paying extra for your baggage

A quick story, before I get thrown out of the English department for rest time, (11:30 until 2:30). Very civilized, unless, of course, you have things you wish to accomplish.

When I arrived at the Baltimore airport, I had two very heavy bags. I think I had, including carry-ons, approximately 200 lbs., (the scary thing is, when I unpacked, it looked like not much at all!) I was told it would cost \$50 to get this to LAX, and another \$400 to get this to China; the bags had already been put on the conveyor belt, and could not be retrieved. Luckily, I was flying to LAX on United and to Shanghai on American. I told them to take the bags off the plane in LA

and I would repack, and pay \$100 for an extra bag instead of \$400. Highway robbery, really!

Of course, when I got to LA, the bags did not come off the plane, I went to the luggage counter, they said the bags did not come off the plane, I was feeling rushed to get all the way down to the international terminal (no small feat at LAX) so I trusted the lovely United personnel, and decided to just go for it. What else could I do? I figured American could just deal.

Well, I wasn't flying American, exactly, I was flying China Eastern. This meant, most importantly, very little English language programming on the plane. Thank the maker for my 1,000 page novel. Lordy!!

I arrived in Shanghai, finally, lugged my way to baggage claim, spotted Don, (aka, My Hero), grabbed a trolley, and waited for my bags. Which did not appear. Panic began to set in.

Until, in the next carousel, a United flight unloaded and there were my bags. Both of them, as heavy as when I had given them to the agent in Baltimore, and me not out a penny.

Part two: getting your bags to Wuhan

a. Make sure you have a flight.

Don't trust travel agents; they know bupkis! Needless to say I arrived on Tuesday only to find out the flight was cancelled. So, we dropped my now three bags, thanks to My Hero, back at his office (Don lives on the 6th floor, no elevator, you do the math) and tried again on Wednesday.

b. Make sure you have a Jeanne Marie.

JM, (also short for Just Marvelous) used her advanced powers of persuasion to convince the little chippie at the check in counter that:

- i. I had been on an international flight and deserved to take 70 lbs per bag to wuhan,
- ii. My flight had been canceled the day before,
- iii. National Day had caused my delay,
- iv. I should not have to pay for excess luggage.

Needless to say, we love JM.

Joanna

See China, p.10



barb's briefs

A three-fer from the fastest reviewer in the East.

If you aren't tired of the Northern Ireland conflict movie genre and are having trouble finding something in the "new releases" section of your local video store, try "The Devil's Own," starring Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt (along with a number of other recognizables like Treat Williams - who must really BE a bad guy since he never plays anything else). Of course the continued confusion about whether Hollywood is pro-IRA or not abounds but all the visible "bad guys" in the IRA are conveniently dead at the end, so you be the judge.

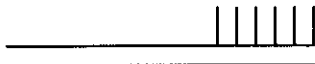
Brad does what appears to be a good Irish accent (and is devilishly handsome with a beard) and Harrison is just being Harrison, but who can complain about that?

For a long, rainy weekend, try combining this with reprises of "The Crying Game" and "The Boxer."

And now, for a little trip down memory lane.

"Klute" (1971): Update the cars and the gadgetry, exchange Fonda and Sutherland (BtB's favorite!) with Stone and Ford or someone like that and this film would easily stand up to today's audience needs. It is very good indeed.

Contest Results!!



We have a winner (pretty much)! Faith Hawkins, swept all categories this month, with answers to both the New Mexican food question (partial credit) and the Kafka's resort challenge. Herewith her answers.

Faith guessed that it was Ted Baxter, the incompetent news anchor on the Mary Tyler Moore show who said "I've never had New Mexican food before." Excellent guess Faith, but it was Ted's

loveable and ditzzy girlfriend Georgette (what was Georgette's last name?) who uttered that memorable line.



We asked: "what sorts of amenities would you expect to find at Kafka's resort?" Faith replied that she imagines the radio station would feature "All Beatles--All the Time." (Think Gregor Samsa here, folks.)

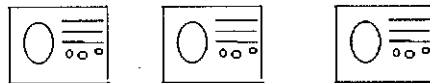
TRAVEL NOTES

In Texas, it's pronounced Babbist, thank you very much.



Barb the Brief's pal France is moving to France-- along with her horse and miniature dog Sandy. She writes:

"Just re-checked the bill of lading for the moving van. In part it reads: bed, chest, armoire, whip, nightstand...."



So, there's this radio program in D.C. called the Earnest White Radio Show. While it in fact is a blues program moderated by an African American guy named Ernest (thus making it the Ernest White Radio Show), I've always thought it would be a great name for a talk show featuring well-intentioned Anglos working on overcoming their racism through sincere conversation.

Well, now I've found Earnest's brother, Ben White, in Austin, Texas. Peg figures that the more radical Ben is a race traitor. ("Ben White, but I'm not any more.")

hey, you. yeah, you. subscribe to poh-- okay? quit mooching off your neighbor.

OVERHEARD AT AIRPORT

Peg writes: Let me be blunt right at the outset. I am not a fan of cell phones. Call me old fashioned, but for me, they should be in my category of credit cards. When I got my first credit card, I pledged to myself that I would only use it in emergencies. My definition of emergencies has evolved as I have gotten older. My father informed me that one has to use the card and pay it off in order to build credit, so that one can have a good credit history when it is time for a house loan. So, one must spend money in order to be a suitable person to whom financial institutions will loan money. But I still don't like using my credit card all that much. Now I am learning that my credit card company probably does not like me all that much. Credit card companies drop people like me because they can't make money off the interest rates when I pay the amount due. Citibank hasn't dumped me yet, and if they do, our fine readers will be pretty close to the first to know.

Back to the task at hand: I hate cell phones, in large part because they are ubiquitous and invasive and intrusive to anyone else who happens to be in the vicinity. Whenever a ring sounds, people start patting their suit coats like an officer pats downs a suspect. Really. How many pockets can one have in their blazer big enough to hold a cell phone? I will return the size issue below. Or one starts frantically spilling the contents of his or her bag, as if the Holy Grail or Franklin Mint Faberge Egg were almost within one's clutch. I have a list of pet peeves, and the current chart topper is people who talk on their phones in restaurants. This peeve becomes even more egregious when the person on the phone is not alone at the table. If anyone ever answered her phone and commenced a conversation, I would bid adieu to my dining partner and take my leave. Try me. Don't even get me started on people who drive cars while talking on the infernal instrument. I have had several close calls with one-hand-occupied-with-phone-drivers who try to turn corners and shift with the one "free" hand.

This spring, I spent a fair amount of time in airports. At one gate, there were fifteen other passengers waiting, ten of whom were using cell phones. I kid you not. I suspect this is a combi-

nation of several competition-based factors including: "Show me yours and I will show you mine" and "mine is smaller than yours" and "I can sound more pompous." I have borne witness to a variety of cell phone stylistics, and I feel as if I could give expert testimony in a court of law if ever called as a witness. I have found that there is an inverse relationship between the size of one's phone, and the size of a man's ego, is it? The smaller the phone, the bigger (in the sense of ego and self-assessment) the man. Highest on the cell phone chain is the man who must truly pat all this pockets looking for his tiny instrument. Similarly, there is also an inverse relationship between the importance of the subject matter and the volume and duration of the call. To wit: in the Minneapolis airport in February, I sat in the same gate area as a well-dressed, forty-year old white man. No word of his conversation escaped my ears (blocked as I tried to make them). This gent made two phone calls to Los Angeles (I told you I could hear everything he said, including what time he would be home and whether or not the garage door will be open) to talk to his son's pee wee league hockey coach. I know that, even though Charlie is only nine years old, his moves are a lot smoother than all the other kids. It took two phone calls to convey this message. I also know that one of these calls was interrupted by his wife calling. His cell phone has call waiting. I remember when call waiting first became an option available for an additional monthly fee. Once again, it was for emergencies. My local advertisement featured a woman stranded with a flat tire. Thanks to call waiting, she could call her husband to come to the rescue. So once again, emergency only devices become luxurious "necessities." This call waiting interruption was how I came to know about the garage door. This man was not to be distracted from his task at hand. Using my keenest sleuthing skills, I deduced that Mr. Loud Chatty Cathy was the assistant coach on this team. He was angling for his son to start because his defensive skills were superior. At this point, I knew so much about his family that I was tempted to ask to see photographs. He probably has digital ones on his laptop. But I digress.

My other astute observation was about the manner of dialing. Some adopt a fairly aggressive posture and you can hear their fingers punching

See Overheard, p. 15

Pantheon Gastronomique

IMBY (In My Back Yard):

Ed's Sunset Superette

Lisa writes: Ever been to St. Peter around meal-time? If so, chances are good that you've eaten at our house. St. Peter is not what you'd call a good town for eating. Let's put it this way: when Gustavus opened up its new student cafeteria last fall, it quickly became the most popular lunch spot in town. Add in Mankato, twelve miles away, and you still won't be able to entertain your stomach for more than about a day without repeating yourself. In a place like this, an eater like me exhausts the eating-out options in the first month or so, and then stays home a lot, perfecting her thin crust pizza.

So, imagine my surprise—no, my utter embarrassment—to learn of Ed's Sunset Superette in North Mankato. Its existence came up ever-so-casually one day, in a conversation over the dinner table (in the cafeteria, of course). Someone mentioned that a new Mexican restaurant had just opened up in Mankato—a Mexican restaurant that didn't think Velveeta was a fine Mexican cheese. This place, our informant told us, serves *menudo*.

Now, I don't happen to eat *menudo* (a.k.a. tripe, a.k.a. the insides of the insides of a steer), although my favorite cookbook title is *Make Mine Menudo*. But I do know enough about Mexican food to know that a place that serves menudo is not going to be mistaken for Taco Bell. So I was impressed.

One of the other diners at our table was less so. "I've been there," she said dismissively "And it's not anywhere near as good as Ed's." Ed's? Who/where/what was Ed's???? Was this another new Mexican restaurant in Mankato?

Not exactly. First of all, Ed's Sunset Superette isn't a restaurant. It's more of a, well, a superette—a teeny tiny supermarket with a lunch counter. Second, it's not new; one source tells me he's been going there for at least fifteen years. (Where have I been?) And third, it's not in Mankato—it's in North Mankato—in the part of North Mankato that someone we know describes as Better Homes and Gardens Land.

Ed's is *not* the kind of place you expect to find in Better Homes and Gardens Land. First of all, it's smoky—as in cigarette smoky. (As in, the plastic bags smell like smoke.) Usually this is a Very Bad Sign in a food establishment. For some reason, I find myself utterly able to overlook it at Ed's. Second, it's sorta cluttered, messy and congested. There's a lot of stuff in Ed's. A lot of stuff. And it wasn't a very big gas station to begin with, so Ed has had to make very creative use of space. Ed doesn't sell gas, though there are some hay bales for sale out where the gas used to be.

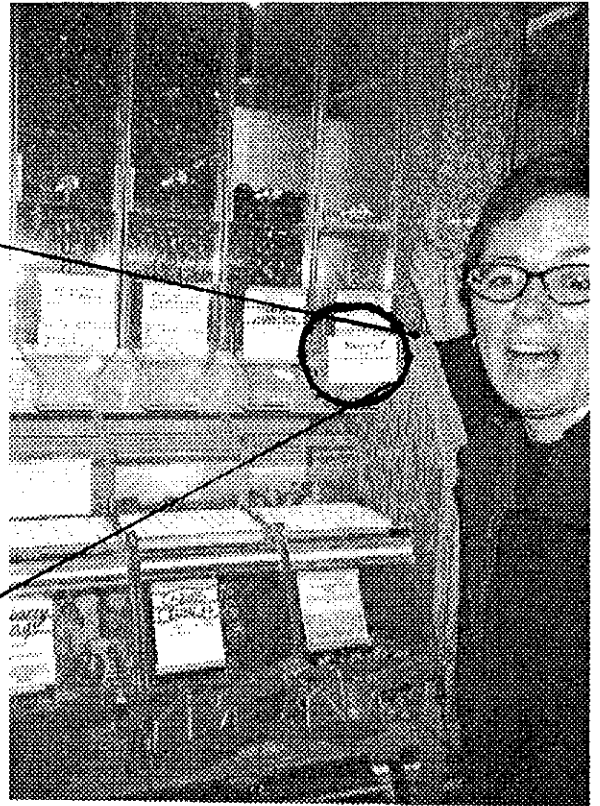
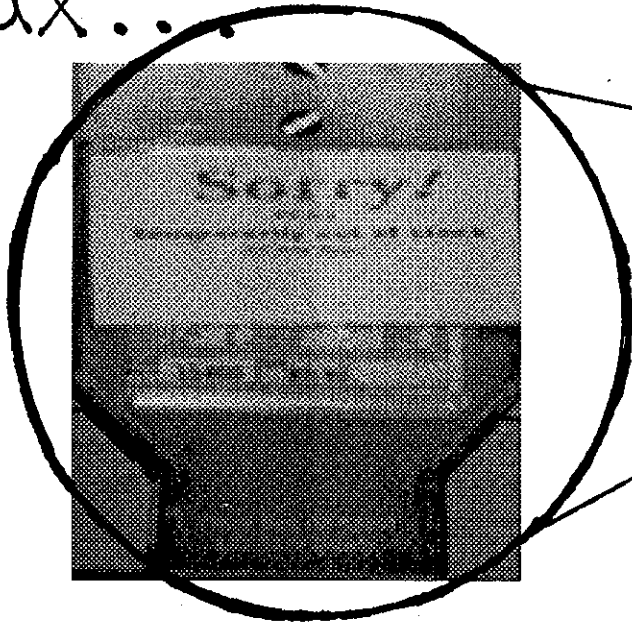
So, anyway, the food. Ed's is (mainly? not inadvertently?) a Mexican grocery store. It's the only place I've ever seen cactus paddles in southern Minnesota, the only place I regularly find key limes. It sells corn tortillas in four-inch-thick wads, not those little dainty six packs they sell in most supermarkets around these parts. It sells Chihuahua cheese, made in Mexico. It does not sell Velveeta. And everything it sells is behind the counter; no browsing at Ed's.

Ed also has three square feet of counter space on which he has installed a tiny portable steam table, from which he will ladle some of whatever he has made that day onto a limp paper plate. You may take that plate over to one of the three (sticky) tables wedged in by the video display, sit down, and transport yourself to heaven. Ed is one hell of a cook. I do not know why; I haven't yet gotten the nerve to ask him. (Ed is a kind of an intimidating guy—pretty big and pretty quiet. If the U.S. had had a war with Mexico recently, I would have said he'd been a POW during it, and that he'd learned to cook during his incarceration.)

On a recent outing to Ed's, I took Peg The Squeamish, and our friends Suzanne and Gaston, both of whom know their way around Mexico and Mexican food. Meat eaters both of them, Suzanne and Gaston made for the steak tacos. Gaston also lapped up some *menudo*, brave boy, and Suzanne had a tamale. We veggies stuck to pinto beans and rice—no sacrifice, let me tell you. Clean plate club members all around. (I'll give the homemade tamarind juice a pass next time, however; it had a decided cigarette overtone.)

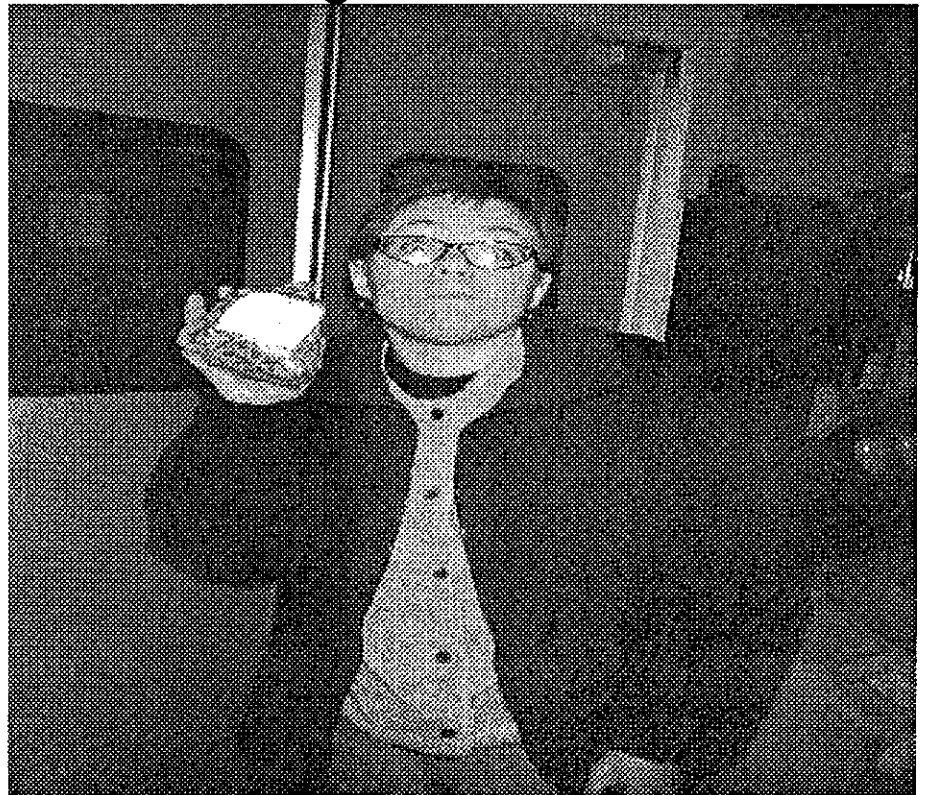
Ed makes a salsa with tomatoes, mangoes and habaneros that will make you weep with joy and pain all at the same time. You can buy containers of it to go. In fact, I have one sitting in the refrigerator right now. Gotta go...

Glad Corn Redux...



On a recent trip to Minneapolis, Abby was horrified to find the Wedge Coop out of G.C.

But shock turned to pleasure, when she saw the barrel o' G.C. at the St. Peter Coop. All is right with the world.



China, continued

Subject: a Xian adventure

Well, I promised you an adventure, so here it is. Michael, myself, and the lovely Aussies, Carol and 12 year old Josie, all planned a trip to Xian (pronounced shee-ahn) the oldest city in China, its first capital, starting point of the silk road, and home to the 6,000 terra cotta warriors, guarding the tomb of China's first emporor, Qin (Chin), dating back some 2,200 years. We had only three days to explore this cultural mecca, and adventure followed us all the way.

Saturday morning, Michael and I arose at 6:15 a.m. in order to have a good breakfast and calm morning. A car was to arrive at 7:40 to take us to the airport. At 6:45 there was a knock at the door; Carol was there, completely dressed, including lipstick and earrings, inquiring about when the car was to arrive. It seems that my clock was an hour off and the car was 5 minutes late. You've never seen two people get dressed so fast. Luckily we packed the night before.

The car never showed, so at 8:15 we took off in a taxi for a 45 minute ride in order to catch a 9:35 flight. Needless to say, we were a bit frazzled.

About 100 yards into the ride, the taxi driver wanted to pull over and make a phone call (!!); in no uncertain terms, we told him to put the pedal to the metal and get moving. Which he did, about a mile later, into another vehicle. You've never seen people get out of a taxi, get their bags out of the trunk and into another taxi so fast. Like rats abandoning a drowning ship, so said Carol.

Luckily (!?) the flight was delayed 90 minutes for fog, even though the second driver got us there in time! What a guy.

The first afternoon in Xian we walked to the Muslim quarter and found the Great Mosque. While much of the language was Arabic, the atmosphere was pure China. The Mosque is composed of several courtyards, each with a different theme, yet all inspiring meditation and calmness. It was so beautiful, really the epitome of my expectations of China. The paradox that it was a Mosque only added to the mystique. We could have spent all day there, and Josie nearly converted on the spot.

Just outside the Mosque is a gauntlet of merchants who have been visited by a few too many tourists. They know just enough English to be annoying, and the trinkets they have on display captured all of us as we walked by. It took a concerted effort to visit the Mosque before indulging in the spectacle. (I am of the opinion that everything is for sale in China. Communists my foot.) Buyer beware, even though I am dividing by eight, we had to be keen negotiators. While 10 yuan doesn't sound like much, principle quickly overshadows exchange rate, and I think we struck a few very good bargains.

In the Muslim quarter, we also discovered a lovely (well, will you believe quaint and as clean as they come in China?) dumpling restaurant, with a proprietor who spoke enough English (we've come to call it Hinglish) to amuse and confuse us. A very sweet man, and the dumplings were so good, we went back the next night.

The university guest house where we were able to stay for about \$22 a night was relatively clean, but I've never slept on a bed that hard in my entire life!! Weehowdy! I think the pillows were made of old rolls too stale even for the Chinese.

On this day we were headed east of town, about 45 miles, to the location of the terra cotta warriors. When I saw an exhibition of artifacts from the first emperor's tomb in Memphis about five years ago, never did I think that I would be in China, let alone Xian, looking at them for myself. The site is truly awesome, dude. If you don't know about them, get on the net and check it out. Each warrior had a unique face, and is sculpted with posture and features that really brings him alive. They have found three separate pits with soldiers, war chariots, archers, horses, etc., all larger than life (about western sizes) originally painted bright colors that have since faded, and buried to protect emperor Qin. It is a sight on par with the pyramids.

Love,
Joanna

Subject: should blondes be added to the endangered species protection act?

"Gentlemen might prefer them, but brunettes can finally relax, blondes are dying out."

So opens a story that appeared in both *China Daily* and *21st Century* in early October. Appar-

ently, social Darwinism is hard at work; blondes are reported as an "endangered species" overrun by more "mobile, darker-haired gene carriers."

The culprit? International travel. This has promoted the mixing of gene pools and the 'darkening' of Scandinavia and northern Europe, reported as the traditional home of the blonde.

It is said that Africa is expected to have a significant explosion in population soon, which is expected to lead, through more international travel, to "their dark genes [absorbing] fairer ones all over the world."

Luckily (!) though, we can genetically engineer blondes, so they won't disappear forever. One might wonder; has the reporter never heard of peroxide? Better yet, we will soon be able to "tweak our genes" in order to achieve bloneness.

The fascinating aspect of this article is the lack of alarm at the loss of the blonde. It seems as though blonde hair, being a recessive gene, is only on a journey of genetic predestination of being replaced by its dominant, and thus stronger, genetic corollary. Blondes, of course, stand out in a country where there are none. My 12-year-old Aussie friend, Josie draws unabashed stares for the 'long, luxurious blonde hair' that runs down her back.

I should add that in both papers, this story was placed on the same page with a picture from an international festival of tattoo artists that convened in Warsaw in October. The picture shows a blonde model in black leather pants, whose naked torso is being painted by a blonde, bereted and gender-ambiguous tattoo artist. Her hands are on her hips, and she has something close to a sneer on her face.

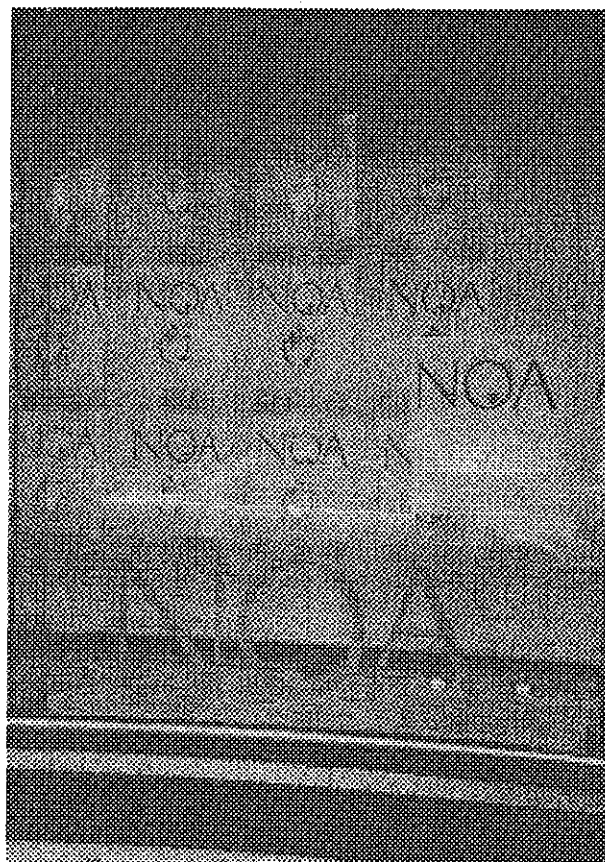
I love this country.

Joanna

To be continued....

The Cemetery, Grave
and Memorial Marker
Issue of PonH is slated
for publication in
Summer or Fall, 2000
Submit!!!

**You've read the article. You've
adopted the philosophical stance.
Now...**



WEAR THE FRAGRANCE

NOA. The Natural Ontological Attitude, a philosophical position developed by Arthur Fine as a response to the scientific realism/antirealism debates.

The attitude that seeks to ground scientific belief in reasonable practice--and to understand that belief in those terms--seems a reasonable stance to adopt. ... That is, exactly, NOA, the natural ontological attitude. (*The Shaky Game: Einstein, Realism and the Quantum Theory*)

NOA. The first perfume to be inspired by an ontological stance. The first scent to say "And Not Anti-realism Either."

NOA. At fine philosophy department stores everywhere.

VUMMEN/VIMMEN (PL)/VUMMANHOOD

Minneapolis Brita DeRemee has been an artist since birth. She is currently working on the art of mothering three small boys... and ruminating on the nature of vimmen.

In 7th grade I wrote a "paper" for a music class entitled "The Singing Swedes". In this paper I proclaim that after "spending FOUR whole hours at the Library", I had become a bona fide scholar and critic of operatic voice and could determine down to the zillionth of a decimal point (i.e. - a 4.999999) that the Swedes were much better at singing than the rest of the world. I got an "A" on it, certainly only because it was original and full of gall, not because it was well researched or held a spec of truth. I believed I had proclaimed the Truth, but secretly knew that the FOUR WHOLE HOURS I had spent at the library were simply a scholarly facade. (I don't think I actually found "singing Swedes" in the card catalog). I created a cover illustration of singing yellow-haired people and attached a cassette tape I had made from my Dad's LP's in hopes that these additions would make everything look official and thereby relieve me of any burden of proof of my claim.

Thirty years later this paper is a hilarious read and I still turn red with embarrassment if someone gets hold of it. It's an example of everything you shouldn't do for a research paper. I fear I may not have evolved beyond that point and that I may be on the verge of writing yet another "Singing Swedes". I am not a scholarly person and am in awe of well-read academic types who spend 4 hours and more at libraries. I envy their depth and oozing of their knowledge of history, politics, economics, ideas, etc. They are the people who write. And in that respect I have no business embarking on a Writing Project. But for the time being I will set all those concerns aside. I will become a 7th grader and unabashedly put forth some ideas that spring from sources other than scholarly research. I shall write about "Vummunhood" and being a "Vummun".

Six years ago I pushed out my first son. Along with motherhood I acquired a consuming preoccupation with trying to explain what it meant, where all my time and energy were suddenly going, and the overwhelming sense of purpose it had. The mess of thoughts consuming me needed

a concept beyond motherhood, beyond home-maker and feminist. I wanted something that held onto the great female tradition, but I needed to update it, and I didn't want it to be exclusively female. I wanted to give this motherhood thing a job description so I might have a way of comparing it to other means of human production (i.e. - jobs in the industrialized realm). Two more sons later, for reasons of sheer personal necessity, I am setting out to define "Vummunhood" --- which, by the way, may be as daunting as, for example: taking care of two busy preschoolers in diapers, while being totally sleep-deprived, sporting a 102 degree fever and recovering from a vaginal delivery of a 9 pound-plus baby who was nursing and throwing up all over me. But alas, I must.

My dad has been throwing around the vummun concept for quite some time. He holds great respect for "vimmen". He has been passionately in love with a Vummun, my mother, for over 40 years. Dad even makes a sport of spotting "vimmen" and has his own endearing humor to go along with it. In church on Easter morning as we all sit listening, lined up in the pew, he leans over and silently mouths out "Vimmen, why do you weep?" We all snicker. Dad's endearing humor set aside (no I won't try to explain it), I comprehend his sincere reverence and deep appreciation for vimmen.

I was in the thick of thinking about my dad's vummun references and thought I'd send him a quick e-mail to ask where he got the idea. His e-mail response:

"Dear Mux, Interesting you should pose the question about my "vummun" concept. I'm not sure how it should be spelled but your phonetic spelling is as good as any. I developed the concept based on my experience with an old German neighbor of my grandparents DeRemee on East 3rd Street. He was born in Germany, as was his wife, who was a strong imposing woman. He always referred to his wife as "vummun" which I understood to be a term of great respect... She was no woman libber for sure, but, also for sure, she was the navigator for the entire family in the sea of life. The pronunciation is obviously German. Herr Schultz also used literal translations of German terms in English, such as sleeping room (Schlafzimmer) where he and his Vummun slept. It's funny to me at least because of the sound but also for the image it conjures. Gotta Go, Dad."

I had imagined Dad's vummun to be large-framed, maybe 50 or so, with practical hair, a print dress, support hose and oxford shoes. She looked very much in charge of the home front, a stereotypical Haus Frau. But it wasn't so much her appearance that snared me, rather it was that I knew what she did, I knew how she spent her time and energy. It was her function, not her form. I have seen so many real life versions of Vummen. They're everywhere; they're of all ages, sizes, races, and means. I know what they do and that they sport a range of fashions. I am a Vummun. In fact, the survival of my three very young sons requires that I be one. In most cases motherhood brings on a state of Vummunhood, but Vummunhood isn't the exclusive property of mothers. Vummunhood is the state of 1) knowing of what it takes to protect and nurture life coupled with 2) an active devotion to that said purpose. It's a complex, messy occupation loaded with work.

Something else about Herr Schultz's Vummun (a vummun of the previous century, circa 1940) that snares me is her self-respect and her power. Contemporary society seems to make being a Vummun and having self-respect somewhat of an oxymoron. The nature of Vummunhood being self-sacrificial, it's hard for it to do a smooth waltz with these Me and More Times.

But waltz we must. And on that note, I ask you, are you a Vummun? Do you know one? Undoubtedly, you have known at least one and she/he may, or may not, have been your mother. "Vummunhood" invites your stories. My hope is that your stories will help me in my task of defining and describing Vummunhood in its multitude of forms, and that in giving it a good description we might elevate its incredible purpose. So write.

Yes, do! Send your musings on vummanhood to PonH, Vummanhood Department, 1002 Riverview Hills South, St. Peter, MN 56082. Attach them to your subscription!!!



Procrastinator's Corner

Red Hook, NY, 3/30/2000

Barb the Brief reports: The following yellow sticky note is affixed to Jay's computer:

Reminder: TO DO ASAP--install
Y2K fixes to Windows

Planes, continued

Increasingly terrified with each passing flight, if you must know. I'm okay, sort of, so long as there is no turbulence--and I mean *no* turbulence. I have a zero turbulence policy. One bump and I begin to clutch whatever I can find that looks solid.

And I do mean whatever I can find. When I fly alone, I usually turn to my seatmate and casually mention that, in the unlikely (ha!) event of turbulence, I may just reach out and grab them suddenly, unexpectedly by the arm. I issue this little public service announcement for one very good reason; *I have really* clutched the hand of a total stranger on more than one occasion.

One time the person I grabbed happened to be a psychologist. Who specialized in fear of flying. No kidding. (Look; you grab enough people on planes and sooner or later you're gonna grab a psychologist. I was just lucky on the specialization.) So, anyway, this psychologist gave me a few pointers ("Breathe" was one of her biggies, as I recall), before turning back to the conversation she was having with her long-lost best friend who just happened to be seated on her other side, totally by accident. (It was quite a flight for coincidences, I tell you.) I can't blame her; I mean, there's nothing *I* hate more than being somewhere, enjoying a bit of leisure, and having someone come up and try to get me going on the realism-antirealism debate, or the identity of indiscernibles. (I mean, if they care *that* much, they should just make an appointment like the rest of my clients.)

So, anyway, I'm terrified to fly. But aside from that five minutes of free advice, I've never sought to do anything about it.

By "do anything about it," I of course mean "do what *other* people count as doing anything about it." I personally think I've done a *lot*. But then, you see, *I* think that the "it" about which something needs to be done is "risking one's life needlessly by throwing oneself up into the sky." *Other* people think the "it" is what *they* term "my irrational fear." The Roseville philosopher and clinical diagnostician Corrinne Bedecarre has patiently explained to me a dozen times that I have what any student in Psychology 101 could diagnose as a phobia--an irrational fear. "These things are incredibly treatable," she tells me every time we fly together. "They're the big success story in

psychology. Way better than lobotomies, for example."

Phobia. Irrational fear. Treatable. These words do not, as we say, cohere with my reality. My reality is that when we are hurtling through thin air in a paper towel tube wrapped in aluminum foil and we suddenly begin rocking from side to side while lightning flashes around us--while all that is happening and the flight attendant is calmly reporting that we have reached a cruising altitude at which portable electronic devices may safely be used, and all the other passengers go on placidly reading their John Grisham novels or munching on those foul honey roasted peanuts that pass for food on the airlines these days, or talking in an outside voice about some rare desert rodent they have just spent six months studying in the remote regions of northern Kenya, I am *well* within the bounds of reason to begin to panic uncontrollably and to squeeze the hand of whoever is nearest to me until they cry out in anguish from the sheer pain of my grip. It is everyone else who is unreasonable. I am sane; they are stark staring nuts.

This is most certainly true.

And of course there is nothing more dog-with-bone-ish than a philosopher who is convinced that she is operating on the side of reason in the face of overwhelming disagreement; nothing more likely to make said philosopher dig in her heels and insist, all evidence to the contrary, that being crazy with fear is just what the situation calls for.

(This, CB tells me, is all part of the phobia. I try not to feel betrayed when she says that--try not to feel like she has deserted Φ for Ψ , abandoned the *real* APA for its young, upstart cousin.)

CB isn't the only one who's been enlisted in the campaign to cure me of my rationality. I have folders stuffed to capacity with articles sent to me by concerned friends and family. These articles detail two-day seminars guaranteed to help me manage my fear of flying (guaranteed--or you can attend the seminar again); they list the names of psychologists who specialize in fear of flying; and they recount do-it-yourself remedies for the fearful. Our own reporter, Ann O'Connor (who, unbelievably, overcame her own considerable fear by *becoming a flight attendant*) even offered me her genuine stewardess wings to wear as a kind of talisman.

I've even tried a few of the home remedies. For example, the minute I get on the plane, I ask the flight attendant for a plastic stirring stick, which I chew on rhythmically for some reason I can't now remember but that has to do with concentration. I eat those vile peanuts. I've taken up knitting again, as a way to keep my hands and mind busy in a harmless way. I even go so far as to breathe at regular intervals during the entire course of the flight.

And sometimes something works, sort of. During our recent trip to Texas, for example, I knitted away happily during the trip down, which meant that Peg could hold her *People* magazine with both hands and turn the pages whenever she liked. "This is it," I announced, "this is the cure for my fears."

Or, it was incredibly smooth flight. On our return, the turbulence was so terrible (it was *too*) that all I could do was clutch Peg's hand and eavesdrop like crazy on the conversation in the row in front of us. (Look, I was *scared*, not *incapacitated*.)

So, it's back to the drawing board. But I have to say, my heart really isn't in this. I'm awfully attached to my way of thinking ("Classic phobia symptom," I hear CB saying). And I'm very unenthusiastic about the prognosis for my "recovery." All those little clippings tell me that I won't recover from my phobia; I'll simply learn to manage it. In other words, I'll still be scared rigid, but I'll still be able to blink or something.

What is the point? If they can't make me stop being afraid to fly (and what possible reasons would ever convince me that it's not rational to fear climbing into a paper towel tube commandeered by someone I've never met before and who may well be pulling a double shift, loaded with total strangers, at least some of whom may have a personal score to settle with some branch of the federal government, and headed for thin air, the one element that, to my recollection, *none* of the pre-Socratics said made up everything that was)--if their goal, I repeat, is not fear eradication, of what possible good is a fear management program?

I just came back from the bathroom. Boy, I have a hard time convincing myself I'm on the ground when I'm locked in that windowless cubicle. Even the soap dispensers look air linear.

Overheard, continued

out the numbers. Others suddenly pick this time to be secretive, and they hunch over their phones as if they are punching in their ATM pin number, or are worried that you will get this number and call it immediately so that the original caller will get a busy signal.

There are also important stylistics to talking on the phone. I've noticed that people with cell phone usually are the ones doing all the talking. This could mean that these cell talkers (hereafter "cellers") are "conversing" with people not on cell phones. Or may be all the people on cell phones are talking to each other, and no party involved in the alleged conversation is listening, but the rest of us nonparticipants are. Also, cellers rarely are sitting, unless it is at the table next to you in the restaurant where you hoped to enjoy a quiet meal. They like to pace, and the louder the voice, the heavier the footfall and the quicker the stride. The most dangerous celler to encounter is the dreaded combination-- pacer and arm waver. They can first knock you down with a flailing arm, and then step on you (while cursing you to his phone mate or to other cellers of the pack). Silence is disappearing at an alarming epidemic rate. I, for one, plan to continue to remain a cell phone dissident.



Wilkerson's World

Abby, the B&B maven, checks in: It was time for an end-of-the-semester venture beyond the Beltway (and not just to the suburban Trader Joe's for such necessities as soymilk, marinated beans, and frozen mango chunks (sadly, they don't carry Gladcorn yet)), so we headed for St. Michael's Manor, a Scotland, Maryland B&B once so plagued with spirits that it stood empty and unsold (and, we are told, undisturbed by the ghost-savvy locals) for fourteen years. Along with these legends, you can sample the dry red and white wines made on-site, use the paddleboat or canoe in Long Neck Creek (more like a river), swim in the pool, or sit on the pier and watch the wildlife. Breakfasts are hearty and tasty.

After the Dicks, its current owners, bought the house and opened it for guests, the ghosts con-

veniently turned out to be of the merry prankster variety, poking sleeping guests in their beds and running down the stairs giggling in a ghostly yet hysterical fashion. At least that's what Joe says; Nancy remains skeptical, even though their daughter, a minister, claims to have performed an exorcism, releasing eighteen souls in the house, and another three thousand or more outdoors, mostly Confederate soldiers who died in the nearby prison camp which later became Point Lookout State Park. An unspecified number of civilians, presumably Union sympathizers, also were imprisoned and died there as well. One is impressed that the ghostly spirits of the house were able to maintain their high spirits and childish glee all this time, what with the untimely demise with which most of them seem to have met, not to mention the nearby events which might have disturbed less hardy souls.

As for the needs of corporeal travelers, food choices are limited, especially for vegetarians. Joe describes the cuisine as Southern Maryland Fried. Nancy suggested Courtney's at the end of Wynne Road, right on the water. Our "waterfront table" overlooked a pickup-filled parking lot and several large piles of lumber, and yes, a nice view beyond of the Potomac River flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. Let's just say the restaurant decor is on the unprepossessing side, and the salad bar runs to iceberg lettuce, but the fish dinner (fried or broiled, plus the salad bar and a roll) gets you as nice and fresh a piece of fish as you are likely to get anywhere. Plus, the Killian's Red is served up in pre-chilled, insulated fluor-escent green plastic mugs. When is the last time you were served beer with such a flourish? One of the owners catches each day's fish right off the dock behind the restaurant, and the other cooks it up, as well as seasonal desserts like the delicious blackberry cobbler I dutifully ordered for the sake of nutritional balance. Overheard conversation: a man noting that he'd had occasion only twice in twenty years to go to D.C., once to study dinosaurs at the Smithsonian when he was attending St. Mary's City College, and later when he had to drive someone named Julie to the IRS. What he does when he wants to rent "Ma Vie en Rose," gets a hankering for a nice decaf soy latte, or runs out of frozen mango chunks (the horror!), I can only guess.

Where are they now?

You tell us! We're reduced to printing pictures of members of the staff.



Members of the Phil on Hol editorial staff met this winter in Northampton, MA for a high level meeting. From left to right: Barb the Brief, Peg, Lisa and Ann (Hometown Tourist).

Waco, continued

Koreshians is the common-law wife of the Branch Davidian whom Koresh had tried to kill. There are competing signs, each telling their version of what happened. There is a visitor center run by a Koreshian, next to the trailer where the common law wife of the former leader of the Branch Davidian currently lives. On top of that, various militia groups have erected monuments here, indicting the government for its actions.

None of the original buildings of the compound remain. When we visited in late March, followers of Koresh were in the final stages of erecting a new church on the site of the destroyed church. Behind this new church is a pool, where followers of Koresh have marked places where they accuse the government of stealing evidence. There are posts erected around the compound, marking different actions

of government officials, including the paths the tank-like vehicles were taking.

The most striking thing about the compound for us were the 87 crape myrtle trees planted in neat rows facing the church. On the day we were there, we could hear the wind blowing through the leaves. The gentleness of this sound was deeply unsettling, and I found it difficult to walk the rows. There was one tree for each church member who died, and each has a memorial marker giving the person's name, age, and country of origin. There were some children, some people over sixty, but the majority of people were in their twenties and thirties. Some of their photographs hang in the visitor's center, and I recognized some of the names. These moments of matching names to faces made real what the television images had made unreal.