

*Metaphor and Meaning
In My Life*

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To

anyone

who

strives

to think, to understand, and to love

We were walking to think, to understand, and to love.

"Walking With My Thoughts"

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Introduction

Without my being aware, metaphor has been a part of my life for longer than I can actually remember. Knowing how I value the “origin of things,” I wish I could know when I first used metaphor. As I sit here and begin what I am sure will be a valuable writing adventure for me, I look up at the poem I wrote when I was seventeen years old and I see the use of metaphor – “Each of these faces a lamp to this darkness below” - and I am confident that I was not aware of the connection between what I wrote and the use of metaphor. As I provide other examples of this usage without specific purpose – or awareness – I then with purpose attempt to understand and explain how the conscious use of metaphor adds meaning to my life

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the 1533 entry links the origin of the word to both Latin and Greek: “to transfer,” with the meaning “The figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object to which it is not properly applicable.” George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their Metaphors We Live By maintain that metaphors extend beyond their literary sense to include our actions. They assert that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature: “We tend to structure the less concrete and inherently vaguer concepts in terms of more concrete concepts, which are more clearly delineated in our experience.” Metaphors help us to define reality, and then we act on the basis of those metaphors. They can help us to structure and understand our experience.

I cite two examples in my professional life that illustrate the use of metaphor, one as an example where metaphor “shapes practice” and another as a figure of speech. I consider an article I published in Phi Delta Kappan (February, 1987) to be one of the most significant I wrote during my professional career. The article, “Reading Level: A Metaphor That Shapes Practice” presented the idea that the metaphor of reading level had a

shaping influence on reading instruction in the schools. The metaphor emerged from the conjunction of two things as different as the position of a point on a surface and a position on an intellectual matter. The connection, supported by a belief that all things variable can be measured with objectivity and precision, found a nurturing environment in the 1980s when so much of our lives was governed by numbers. Such an environment made it questionable whether shift in the metaphorical meaning of reading level would allow for substantive change in reading instruction – or indeed whether a wholly new metaphor had to emerge.

The second example involved my writing with my students. When I was helping students explore ways of introducing poetry to children, I often joined them in writing poems. The purpose of the cited example was simply to encourage poetic thinking. I believed if the students and I actually spent time thinking about and writing our own poems, the chances were greater that the students would lead children in writing poetry once they assumed their roles as teachers in the classroom

One exercise that I used involved observing and writing about ordinary objects. The first step called for the students to observe the object literally and then write words and phrases that would be useful in describing the object. Second, the students were asked to observe the object metaphorically, i.e., look at the object but “see” something else. Notes were likewise made from this observation. The final step called for the students to use the notes in whatever way they chose to write a poem.

In each case I completed the assignment with the students, and at a subsequent class session we read the poems aloud. Much later, I compiled my poems and a photograph of the objects observed and gave the title “Connections” to the collection. An example: a block of wood, then “Severed from the source of life by insensitive hands, the silent, empty veins wait for a new heartbeat. 4-17-86”

I was fascinated by a statement in the Introduction to John Fowles' book The Tree. Barry Lopez, the writer of the Introduction, wrote the following, alluding to the importance of metaphor:

If some intelligence one day looks back at us, it may determine it was not tool making that set us apart, or even our sense of irony, which allows us to live with paradox, but our capacity for metaphor.

The purpose of the writing that follows is to explore my continued use of metaphor as a way of enhancing meaning in my life. Emphasis will be placed on metaphors that I create, with attention to the effect they have on my life. Some will no doubt be questioned as metaphors. I am not troubled by this because the excitement of “discovering hidden likenesses,” Jacob Bronowski’s expression, is sufficient to support the effort to find further meaning in my life. I remember a statement in Robertson Davies’ The Merry Heart that links my writing adventure with my life: “to ask an author who hopes to be a serious writer if his work is autobiographical is like asking a spider where he buys his thread.” Since the writing occurs at different times, there will be overlap and no doubt some repetition when comparisons are made. The approach I am taking is one of a writing adventure; therefore, what occurs along the way is what matters, more so than any attempt to adhere to prescribed rules.

There is no particular order or organizational scheme in presenting the hidden likenesses. I simply wrote as I explored the comparisons.

I am grateful to all the people whose lives have touched mine in different and meaningful ways. Many are reflected in the content that follows. Most recently, my friend and neighbor Matt Jordan whose morning walks with his dog Ginger afforded chats that inspired several of the metaphors.

My sincere gratitude to my son Milton for his kindness and skill in preparing the manuscript for printing.

White light - the Human Race

In 1666, Isaac Newton performed an experiment that changed the way we understand light.

He darkened his room and directed sun light through a prism so the result could be shown on the opposite wall. He was expecting the image to be circular; however, he was surprised to see the rays in an oblong form. The result was different colors, leading him to conclude that “light consists of rays differently refrangible (refracted).” The spectrum was caused by the separation and fanning out of colors, some being more refracted than others. He also wrote that all the colors of the prism being made to converge, and again mixed, reproduced light, entirely and perfectly white.

Newton later included the results of his experiment in a letter to the Royal Society shortly after he was elected a Fellow in 1672.

Following the origin of the word “metaphor” – to transfer – I reach further back from over 300 years ago to billions of years ago to suggest a hidden likeness that has meaning for me.

We do not know, and possibly never will, when life first appeared on the earth. Some estimates place it as early as 4,000,000,000 years ago. The maple I love in my yard and I have a common ancestor if we were able to trace our “family history” to the point where we converge.

We fast forward to the emergence of homo habilis, thought by some scholars to be the first hominin to have diverged significantly from its primate ancestors. Of course, there were other Homo species and relationships have not been settled. It is thought that Homo habilis lived between 2.3 and 1.4 million years ago.

Eventually Homo sapiens appeared on the scene, and it is believed that one hundred thousand years ago multiple forms of Homo sapiens lived in small groups throughout Africa, Southeast

Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, later reaching other parts of the earth. Over tens of thousands of years changes occurred in this group as the species fanned out to different geographical areas on the earth resulting in different races and cultures.

White light and the human race? The whole is made up of parts, each occupying a significant place. For me, this has meaning.

The Lens and World View

The subject of optics has a long history. The word “optics” comes from a Greek word meaning “appearance, look.” The use of lenses, although different from current ones, dates back to ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians. They were further reformed in the medieval Islamic world and by such individuals as Euclid, Lucretius, Ptolemy, Francis Bacon, Descartes, and Newton. Opinions vary concerning evidence of use of lenses in antiquity. The earliest written record of magnification dates to first century A.D: “Letters, however small and indistinct, are seen enlarged and more clearly through a globe of glass filled with water.” (Seneca the Younger, tutor of Emperor Nero, Internet) Between 11th and 13th centuries, “reading stones” were used by monks. These were made by cutting a glass sphere in half. Then, possibly in Pisa, Italy, the first pair of eye glasses were made, although it is not clear the name of the inventor. The invention of the printing press was a turning point in eye glass history.

During the seventeenth century, the Spanish tried different lenses until one pair enabled the wearer to see better. In the eighteenth century the glasses were no longer balanced on the nose; short arms were added to secure the glasses. Ron Chernow, in his biography of George Washington (page 432), gives an account of Washington’s corrected vision. In his older years, Washington would borrow spectacles from his colleagues to see which ones improved his vision. He ordered a pair of silver-framed reading glasses from David Rittenhouse of Philadelphia, a renowned astronomer and optical expert. Chernow quoted Washington, “At present, I find some difficulty in coming at the proper focus,

but when I do obtain it, they magnify properly and show those objects very distinctly which at first appear like a mist, blended together and confused.”

The long history of lenses to improve vision continues.

The world view of individuals varies. This variation no doubt results from cultural background, family, individual thought, education, religion, all experiences that are a part of the individual's life. Gibran, in the Prophet, reminds us in his writing on teaching:

For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.

The Apostle Paul refers to knowledge being imperfect, to speaking, thinking and reasoning like a child, but later giving up childish things, seeing in a mirror dimly, but then face to face, knowing in part, then understanding fully. (1st Corinthians 13:9-12) We all seek clarity, and there are different lenses to assist.

In religion, we have the Judaic, the Christian lens, or perhaps the Islamic, Hindu, or some not bearing a label. Which one makes for greater clarity to remove the “mist blended together and confused”? If we continue to “grind the same lens” through study of that view, our focus is sharpened and that particular view grows in clarity. For the individual who is seeking clearer “vision” in his or her world view - like Washington indicated about his eye sight “like a mist, blended together and confused” – looking through the “lens” serves such a purpose.

As Washington borrowed the lenses of his colleagues, seeking to find the one that brought clearer vision, some individuals through questioning, seeking, and experience try out different lenses and find vision improved and tolerance enhanced.

Who writes the prescription for the lens? For the child, parents and teachers in a particular culture write first. In the words of the Apostle Paul, is this sufficient when we become adults?

The individual must eventually take the responsibility for writing his or her own prescription.

If we accept the words of Gibran, there will never be a universal lens; however, sharing vision in a non-judgmental way, we can “see” the similarities that bind us and the differences that enrich us in a world where diversity is and will always be the rule.

Journal/Diary - Frozen Words for Future Meals

At approximately 5:30 A.M. April 24, 2020 when I was having my early morning coffee alone, I thought of a metaphor that has special meaning for me. I gave my special friend Matt Jordan a blank journal book when he brought the paper, and I told him a metaphor accompanied the gift. We had discussed metaphors, and he shared with me one he is working on. So, I now show the depth of meaning the metaphor has for me.

At Christmas 1944 when I was twelve years old, my mother gave me a small five-year diary that when full I kept in a bookcase along with other diaries that reflect my life at other times. Some of the frozen words from this and other diaries appear below.

February 27, 1945 - Was tardy at school because I helped Daddy plow. First time I ever plowed to amount to anything.

February 28, 1948 - Hauled manure all day. Borrowed Mr. Smith's mule. Preacher's wife cooked supper for us. They ate with us. She played the piano. Someday I hope I can play better.

October 29, 1949 - Had our dance. Took Fran. It was so wonderful. I kissed her goodnight and it is the first time.

April 6, 2017 - My dear Fran is gone. . . . It has been a very difficult day, but one that begins a new chapter in my life, one that will be built on a strong foundation of memories.

We have an experiencing self and a remembering self. The two do not always agree. The frozen words in the diary/journal can help to link the two selves in a way that contributes to meaning in our lives.

On April 25, 2020, I wrote in my diary: “When Matt brought the paper, he told me he wrote in his journal for the first-time last night. This prompts me to begin writing on the metaphor “Journal/Diary as Frozen Words for Future Meals.”

Words - Windows to the Mind

It would be fascinating to know the first word that was spoken by a human and when this occurred in the long history and evolution of the species. We can assume that it was after the evolution of the Broca’s area, which controls speech. Was there sudden increase in the use of words?

Although controversial, the notion of “ontology recapitulating phylogeny” adds interest to the question of the first words spoken by the human child. We can assume that this occurs after the development of the Broca’s area in the individual. Then comes addition of other words that are a part of the individual’s speech community. Do these words provide an early window to the mind of the child?

We have a record of Helen Keller’s first word, linking it to what she experienced as she felt the water. She was deaf and mute after an illness at eighteen months of age. The experience, and the word give us a window to her mind that directed the speech.

I have been communicating with Maggie, my eight-year-old neighbor, since she wrote a thank-you note to me for a stuffed animal I gave to her. In a recent note to me, she wrote the following, “I love getting letters from you. I also have a big stack of letters from you, and I would love for them to keep growing.” It is not difficult to use these words to look inside her mind and see her meaning.

I conducted a class session where I was interested in seeing how students would develop a concept. To do this, I **created a new concept and a word to name the concept** and led the students through an exercise to see how their minds went about arriving at a definition of the word after hearing descriptions of several different scenarios.

I created the word “vasamity” to name the concept of “doing what is acceptable only when someone in authority is observing.” I presented the derivation of the word which gave a clue to the meaning, although no student connected the origin of the word with the later definition.

I asked the students to write a definition of “vasamity” after they heard the first scenario. After each scenario was presented, the students were instructed to revise the definition if the new scenario caused them to change the definition. This continued through five different scenarios. At the end students were asked to suggest what in the different scenarios affected their definition. The discussion was very enlightening as the students shared their individual approach to forming the concept of vasamity. Then they were told that the word “vasamity” was created to name the concept.

Of particular interest to me was the fact that the lesson had an impact on one student and she wrote an essay “On Vasamity.” When I was reviewing my folder on this lesson, I found her essay. She had returned to Opelika to teach and came to see me 32 years after she graduated and told me she remembered the lesson – even the word “vasamity” I took her and her husband to dinner, and before we finished, I returned her “yellowed” copy of the essay with an apology for returning it late – just 32 years late!

The relationship between words and thought present difficulty in “seeing” clearly what the person is thinking. Thoughts are wholes; the thought is broken apart when individual words are used to express the thought. Then the listener must reconstruct the thought by putting it together again. Limited vocabulary can

add to the difficulty in expressing the thought; however, for communication to occur, this process must be completed.

To complicate things further, the speaker can deliberately mislead the listener. The French diplomat Talleyrand is credited with saying that humans were given speech to conceal their thought. The perceptive listener or reader can detect such deception and see through the window to the mind, although this requires special skill.

The proliferation of specialties and the accompanying vocabulary present a challenge for anyone who is not knowledgeable in the specialty; however, those who are familiar with concepts and vocabulary may still use the words as a way of glimpsing at the thought of the specialist.

We can get a glimpse into Emily Dickenson's mind and her attitude toward books when she completed her short poem on the subject:

How frugal is the chariot that bears the human soul.

The view is affected by the very nature of language. The arbitrariness of language is seen in the fact that there is not necessarily a connection between the word and meaning it represents. Additionally, the meaning of words changes over periods of time making it more difficult to understand intended meaning. Often the wanderings of the word "nice" illustrate this point. When consulting the Oxford dictionary, the entry for 1560 is "foolish, stupid"; in 1720, a meaning is shown as "tender, delicate"; another in 1830 is "considerate, pleasant." The meaning at the time still suggests getting inside the mind of the person who is using the word.

On the current scene, the word "awe" suggests how the use of a word can shift, depending on the preference of the person using the word. Again, referring to the Oxford dictionary:

“1756 - Solemn and reverential wonder, tinged with latent fear, inspired by what is sublime and majestic in nature:”

“1784 – Terror, dread – dread mingled with veneration, as of the Divine Being.”

Now contrasting use of the word in 2020: a person is viewing the Grand Canyon and using the word “awesome” when another person uses the word when taking the first bite of a hamburger. As the word is used by different people, it provides a view of the mind with perhaps a link to the metaphor of the lens.

So often I refer to the words of Spinoza: “Nothing is sacred, profane, or impure absolutely and independently of the mind, but only in relation to the mind.” Careful attention to words used can give a glimpse into the mind of the person who uses the words.

Words as Scalpels

The thought of writing on this metaphor came after I received the following sentence in an e-mail from my friend Rishi Rajan:

The craft of writing is in your hands like the scalpel in the hands of a skillful surgeon.

The entry for “scalpel” in the Oxford dictionary in 1742 was “(L. scalpellum, -us, dim. f scalper, scalprum) A small light knife used in surgical and anatomical operations.” The meaning behind the word reaches further back to an Indo-European root “skel,” - to cut.

The parent of the instrument existed in the form of flint and obsidian cutting implements during the Stone Age. John Kirkup, retired surgeon and honorary curator of Historical Instruments Collection of Royal College of Surgeons in England, wrote that circumcisions with sharpened stones was one of the earliest elective procedures, and these evolved into knives used for basic

procedures. Excavations have revealed early instruments as early as 10,000 - 8000 B.C (Ref: Internet).

The transition to the modern scalpel happened when metal blades replaced stone: copper (3500 BC), then bronze and then iron (1400 BC) In 400 BC, the surgical knife was described by Hippocrates. He used the term “macairion” – smaller version of sword. It was a broad cutting blade, single edge and sharp point.

In Rome, Galen used an instrument described as “small sharp blade for specialized use for incision and drainage, tendon repairs and vivisections.” The scalpel became the symbol of surgeons. Romans called it “scallpelius (incisor or cutter).

After the collapse of the Roman empire, surgical innovation continued in Islamic culture.

During the Renaissance, scalpels became more varied and specialized. Barbers during the Renaissance used ornamental scalpels.

In the modern era, hardened alloys such as stainless steel dominated. These had superior corrosion resistance. More recent improvements include zirconium nitride, diamond and polymer coating to enhance the cutting edge.

Words as scalpels?

We know more about the history of the scalpel than we do about the first words that were spoken by humans and the growing ability of humans to think and to transform thoughts into words. Growing vocabulary to facilitate refinement of expression is perhaps more readily determined. Both words and scalpels are neutral; it is the **skill** in using them that matters most, although choosing the most appropriate word or scalpel does make a difference. This is implied in Rishi’s statement.

We need to add to skill: **purpose**. Exploratory or corrective surgery? Questioning, seeking, explaining, inspiring with words?

For example, the French diplomat Talleyrand is credited with saying man was given speech so he could conceal his thoughts. Words can be used to tell the truth or to mislead deliberately, destroying a person's reputation or disseminating pornography. Unnecessary surgery or unsuccessful surgery? Such expressions as "sharp tongue" or "cutting words" add to the hidden likeness in the two. In contrast are "soothing words," "comforting words," "healing words," words that lead the mind to new ideas, clarify thoughts, explore beauty. Purpose and skill behind the hand holding the scalpel and the mind expressing the words reveal the hidden likeness and make the difference.

Note: I asked Rishi to read and react to what I wrote. The following is his response in an email,

May 10, 2020

This is a wonderful piece to read and the depth of your "mining" the word is thought-provoking. I agree with all you have said and would add my thoughts.

As a surgeon, I generally find that surgical treatment is fairly precise, deliberate and decisive. Often, this is why people choose it as a treatment option. The economical use of words to explain deep truths has always appealed to me and can often unmask the motive behind the writer.

Second, as a surgeon, the skill in utilizing the scalpel as a tool is acquired over many years, both in how to use it and more importantly, when to use it. You seem to have mastered this well with your scalpel!

Rishi

I am the Sun

The background of why I choose to write about this metaphor is perhaps important enough for me to attempt a word description.

On May 4, 2020 a mix of memories, thoughts, and feelings resulted in what I referred to in my diary as a “down” feeling. The 120th anniversary of my father’s birth, Sara’s death, the circumstances dictated by the pandemic, a full day alone combined to make a feeling of melancholy. I was sure that Matt sensed this mood when he and Ginger brought the paper. In a text to him, I wrote: “Matt, forgive me for my mood this morning. It’s a mix of a number of things, but I think I understand. They bring temporary sadness but I want you to know that I’ve always been resilient and I always ‘bounce back.’ Thank you for being a friend.” In my solitude, the feeling persisted, even when I turned to sleep in the evening.

This morning (May 5), the residual feeling was evident. The early morning solitude, coffee, and thinking time brought a change. The thought sequence is significant. I said to myself that I believe I am in charge of my thoughts, and yet I have allowed them to exist in a way that is not acceptable to me. In an interesting instant of thought, I recalled William Henley’s “Invictus,” a poem I memorized when I was resisting the tendency of memory loss with aging, and his words, “Out of the night that covers me. . . .” came. I then looked at the beautiful plaque that Maria made for me with his conclusion: “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” There was a slight shift in my thinking. Then I turned to my diary again.

On April 29, I wrote:

When Matt brought the paper, I shared with him my belief that God and Nature are synonymous and “God’s will” is synonymous with natural law. He did not

respond. Then I shared the idea of learning from Nature. A thought while in my cathedral: the sun will appear.

Then I connected with the individual promising to do something. His response, “You are the sun.” I think there is something there to develop.

On Sunday morning, May 3, I sent a photograph and text to Matt from my cathedral:

Good morning from my cathedral. The sun appeared at 5:52 as it promised. We are the sun.

For some reason, he did not receive it, so I re-sent the photograph and “warmed over” message to which he replied, “Very nice. Beautiful picture and thought. Even a warmed over message is wonderful.”

This morning, May 5, I share my resilience with lessons learned or further underscored: we can learn through observing Nature at work because we are a part of Nature, not apart from it; we can direct our thoughts, although determination to do so makes a difference; words matter, and we must be careful in using them; we can by example show and through instruction help our children be able to say, “I am the sun.”

My Life – A line

On November 28, 2017, several months after Fran’s death, I wrote in my diary a simple characterization resulting from my thought during my early morning thinking time:

A new way of looking at my life: what was -- what is – what can be

Linked together in meaningful ways

I reflected on this during the time that followed, sometimes referring to it in my diary. Then when I wrote My Life and Work: A Continual Search, I returned to the idea and included the following on pages 421-422:

My diary reflects my adjustment to what I wrote on the day of her death about the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

Then on November 28, 2017, I recorded in my morning quiet time, suddenly a metaphor with which I close my memoirs. I consider it an important way of projecting what I desire or the remainder of my life. It is simple but filled with meaning for me.

My “vision” was of my life as a line (my spark along the great chain of life) with three segments: “what was,” “what is,” and “what can be.”

The first segment, well-documented in my diaries, shows a richness that I value so much. Entries reflect a life of searching with high and low points. The middle part reflects both the satisfactions I feel and limitations that are a part of me now. The third segment of the line I view in a positive way, and I hope that through secure linkage to the other two, I can emphasize what can be.

There is a full page of definitions of the word “line” in the Oxford dictionary. I have chosen a definition from the Internet:

A straight one-dimensional figure that has no thickness and extends endlessly in both directions.

A line segment: part of a line that is bounded by two distinct points.

As I look for hidden likeness, I think of my life extending perhaps 4,000,000,000 years into the past when the long chain of life had a beginning (a slight limit to the likeness of the endless line, but for comparison, it works for me). The kinship with all things that have lived, live, and will live is beautifully reassuring.

Living things have a life span. The same for me as I define my place along the chain of life. I mention the segments of my life, not as explicitly identifiable as a line segment; however, I linked my life segments with Fran's death, calling on me to make new definitions at that time.

Twenty years ago - in 2000 - I attempted to put some of my basic beliefs into writing. One significant part of that expression was my belief in the importance of growth in my life. The following is taken from the 2000 document:

“The idea of growth has come to be very important to me, primarily because of my own experience. When I consider my own background and realize the kind of growth I have experienced during my lifetime, I have to say that it is one of the most basic parts of my beliefs. I believe so strongly in the potential of the individual. One of the most damaging things we can do to a person is to put him or her in a category and then shape expectations accordingly. I think I have been limited somewhat because of categories, and unfortunately for many years I think my expectations for myself were determined largely by those who were closest to me. It was only in my later years that I came to realize that the "ability categories" in which people are placed are statistical creations, not biologically determined. The fact that the individual is part of the human species makes his potential for growth infinite, not finite. The idea of categorizing people with such labels as Christian, Moslem, etc. as well as more damaging ones, such as "slow learner," and "genius," is not helpful. Once the person is categorized, there is evidence of different expectations. Expansion of concepts and categories

is essential to promote growth. Only labels that liberate should be used.

“I believe that the idea of growth and belief in the potential of the individual formed the foundation for my teaching career. I found great satisfaction in observing the growth of students. After retirement and no further contact with students, I turned more of my attention to plants, where I have found great satisfaction in propagating and promoting growth. There is great satisfaction in observing growth. I have found a similar motivation as I have worked with men in the literacy program. I have also promised myself that my own growth will remain a vital part of my life so long as I am capable of growing. When there are no possibilities for growth, I want to join the plants at the end of the season and die.”

In my early morning quiet time alone on May 13, 2020, I realized another dimension on the “present” line that extends to the “can be” segment. In the belief statement, I moved from observing growth of students in my professional life to growth of plants in my retirement. In this important quiet time, I realized further that my physical limitations now result in limited opportunities for working with plants and observing their growth. Then what? The insight came through thought and making connections: I can continue to cultivate growth in ideas. The possibilities are at the present time endless and exciting. I can move comfortably in the world of ideas even if I graduate from the cane to the wheel chair. So, growth remains vital.

Perhaps the final hidden likeness comes with the extension “endlessly in both directions,” more specifically the future. Here I refer to my concept of collective human spirit that is inclusive, boundless, and shrouded in mystery. I shall continue to pursue it and ultimately make permanent residence, welcoming all whose breath joins mine in the beautiful spiritual world.

Spirit - Breath

On April 6, 2019, the second anniversary of Fran's death. I was alone and I decided to approach the day in a way to keep sadness from dominating my thinking. Reading the words in my diary on the date of her death resulted in my decision to write:

When her last breath blended with the outside air – as it should - I said goodbye.

Linking these words with my continual search for clearer statements of the concept of collective human spirit, I decided to spend time in a more positive way on this day that could be filled with sadness. At least 20 years ago, I began to use the term “collective human spirit,” as seen in my statement of beliefs written in 2000:

An organizational frame that has helped me in more recent time is what I refer to as collective human spirit. Obviously, I don't know what it is, but somehow, I find myself occasionally feeling that I am linked with something that is so much bigger than I. This often happens when I am reading and suddenly feel a kinship with an idea that was set forth centuries before, and I know that I am not alone in my thinking or feelings. At other times, the linkage occurs when I am listening to music. I am deeply moved by music. My mind seems to be linked with something outside myself that brings a great feeling of satisfaction. Often it is just a momentary, though powerful, experience. It also happens as I work with the men I am teaching to read. When there is evidence of a sudden insight on their part, I am made aware that they have connected to something that pushes back boundaries for them and moves them closer also to linking themselves with something significant. The wonder and beauty of the collective human spirit cause me to believe in a kind of immortality. Being human makes it possible for everyone who is a part of the species to be linked to the human spirit if he or she so desires. Those who become disconnected for various reasons can join again.

At that time, I wrote that “I don’t know what it is,” but I have kept searching. A helpful clue was tracing the origin of the word “spirit.” The word comes from the Latin word “spiritus,” meaning breath and wind. It is related to “spirare,” which means to breathe. In Hebrew, “ruach” means wind, breath, found almost 400 times in the Old Testament. In the New Testament (John 3:8), the Holy Spirit is compared to the wind: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.” **The same word is used for spirit and wind.**

Since writing that my wife’s last breath blended with the outside air, I have asked the question “What happened to her breath as it became a part of the air surrounding her?” **It was not destroyed; it simply changed.** Then I moved in my thinking to all of her past breath that had become a part of the air inside the house and everywhere she had been before her death. I looked at the maple tree and concluded that some of her breath, through a symbiotic relationship, could have become a part of the trembling leaf through photosynthesis, releasing oxygen for me.

In a meaningful email I received from Jim Bradley, my soulmate, April 22, 2020, he wrote the following:

I got up at 3:22 this morning just to experience what John wrote about in his poem yesterday. I experienced some different things than he. Will write about them later today. I recently was studying the biochemistry of photosynthesis in my 53-year-old college biochem textbook. I was reminded that the oxygen atoms that comprise the O₂ that plants produce come from the H₂O that plants take in, which in turn come in part from the H₂O that our ancestors exhaled. Therefore, literally, our life-giving oxygen depends upon lives lived before ours.

Margaret Craven in her I Heard the Owl Call My Name wrote of a native American tradition that indirectly links spirit and breath. In the days of great tribal conflicts, before taking his place in the war canoe each man had blown his breath into a strip of dried kelp, tied the strip into a ring, and placed the ring around the neck of his wife saying, "Guard well my breath."

There is a fascinating story that grew out of the close friendship between Henry Ford and Thomas Edison that helps to link spirit and breath. When Edison was on his death bed in 1931, there was a rack of test tubes on a table in his bedroom. In a letter from Edison's son Charles in 1953, he wrote that he asked the attending physician to seal the test tubes with paraffin at the time of Edison's death. He later sent one of the test tubes to Henry Ford with the message that it was a "reminder of both a friendship and the fleeting mortality of even the most successful men" (Ref: Laura Clark, "A Test Tube in Michigan Holds the Air from Thomas Edison's Death Room," Smithsonian mag.com, January 7, 2015) The test tube is on display in the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

I asked my friend Matt Jordan, a paramedic and Deputy Fire Chief with Auburn Fire Department to relate some of his experience in dealing with persons in an emergency situation. His writing appears in its entirety below.

Breath

There is something very personal about being close enough to someone to sense their breath. As a young child I can remember the essence of certain people's breath, my grandmother, for example. It seems as if a gust of wind could come along with that particular chemical make-up, I would immediately go back to the weeks we would spend with my grandparents in north Alabama. A unique conglomerate of Wrigley's Spearmint chewing gum (but never more than a half a stick at once) and whatever brand lipstick she used.

As a professional EMT I developed a different sense of breath. Standard Emergency Medical Technician training involves the study of basic pathophysiology. Breath moved from a personal aspect to the process of respiration. The point of view of a paramedic regarding breath is more specific to measurable metrics-rate and quality, for example. Does the patient seem to have difficulty breathing? Is the patient hypoxic? This is evaluated by going through a regular litany of evaluations, most of which are routed in the patient's base line statistics such as pulse oximetry, skin color and temperature, and normal mental function (what is your name, what day is it, who is the president?)

One of the more fascinating aspects of respiration I discovered upon training as a Paramedic was the reason we breathe. Most would say we breathe to deliver oxygen to the body, but that is not actually what affects the breathing rate of most individuals. Chemo-sensors in the blood stream measure levels of carbon dioxide in the blood and directly stimulate the respiratory drive to increase when levels increase. I was surprised to find out that for most of us bringing in oxygen is an essential by-product of the process. Our respiratory rate is controlled by the drive to push out carbon dioxide.

As an EMT Instructor I utilized this concept. To assist training those who were working on becoming public servants, the concept of pushing out something bad in order to bring in something essential was a helpful illustration. In teaching how to effectively provide respirations we teach more than just push air, or oxygen into the person. Evaluate the other metrics as well. Are

they tolerating the actions? Is their skin color returning to normal? Is their mental status increasing?

Undoubtedly in the process being an EMT there are going to be patients beyond the ability to help. I can still remember the first person I witnessed take their last breath. It is a surreal experience, at first. You question if you are seeing it correctly. As an EMT with a duty to act, the cessation of breathing is a call to action. In the algorithm for witnessed arrest, an EMT would basically move to cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). As a Paramedic you provide an advanced airway, start IV medication, and ensure effective rescue breathing and chest compressions are delivered. You manage the actions to give the patient the best chance to survive the event.

It is thrilling if they do survive. To be a part of someone starting to breathe again on their own. To once again push out the bad and as a by-product, bring in the good. To spur someone to have another day is an amazing feeling. Conversely, I would use this image to purge the many other times when the efforts were not successful. There are some images that are still haunting-the look in the eye of those you are trying to help, and are not able. The complete lack of control a family member of close friend has when you are trying to do your work-when they know the worst is happening and they are now a part of it.

I can remember seeing the last breath go, and with resolve vowing to give my all within my level of training, to aid and assist. I would pray to be able to perform to the best of my ability. Pray to follow the steps we trained on countless times, in the order we trained on, in order to

effectively provide care. To bring back regular breathing. Have them say thank you, receive a Christmas card and a visit to the station with cookies.

When the actions we take are not enough to save the patient we are providing treatment for, the patient for the EMT becomes the family and bystanders. I was always mindful of the circumstances surrounding the situation, it was someone's worst day. As the breath left them, they would cease to function. The brain starts to die within minutes without oxygen. When areas of the brain experience death, memories that make the individual who they are are destroyed. These concepts are significant. It is acceptable that many do not know what to do. As an EMT we are trained to listen, use a tone appropriate with the person experiencing the loss, and provide support to the best of our ability.

As a person now dealing with the complete human experience, I am mindful of my own breath. I try to push out the bad, the idea I could have done more. I breathe in the good, the fact I followed the protocols as we trained, and gave to the fullest extent possible. I say a prayer to myself. I think of the half stick of gum and my grandmother, the breath and spirit which made her so special. I long to be there again.

Matt Jordan

The link between breath and spirit is found in a song "By Breath" by Sara Thomsen. One verse is as follows:

*The air that is my breath is the air that you are breathing
And the air that is your breath is the air that I am
breathing*

*The wind rising in my breast is the wind from the east,
from the west
From the north, from the south, breathing in, breathing
out.*

Another verse moves to spirit:

*The fire in my heart, my soul flame burning
Is the fire in your heart, your soul flame burning
We are Spirit burning bright, by the light of day, in the
dark of night
We are shining like the sun, and like the moon, like the
Holy One*

Conclusion:

By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one.

As I return to the origin of the word “spirit,” I wonder what was in the minds of those who originally linked the word with breath and wind. What happened when there was sudden insight? What other linkages were made?

The linking power of the things unseen, e.g., gravity, wind, and yes breath, is reassuring for anyone who is willing to pause and consider the connections provided. Breath is not destroyed. Perhaps some lingers and some is transformed, but present. Spirit, too, is present, waiting for the individual to make the connection.

Prayer – A Bridge

When thinking of prayer, I realized that the original meaning of the word was not helpful to me in determining the current meaning in my life. The meaning traced to Latin and Old French

“to beg, entreat, ask earnestly, request” is not consistent with my current thinking, as will be explained below.

My thinking has changed through the years, and it is related to an evolving concept of God. I do not have the boldness to think I can “define” God; however, I believe any person’s concept of prayer is related to some accompanying idea of God

I have spent much time thinking, reading and discussing spiritual subjects with others, and the result has been an evolving concept of prayer. Not long ago, I found in the Bible I used when I taught Sunday school lessons many years ago the outline of a lesson I taught on my belief in intercessory prayer. In the notes was a triangle, one angle showing me at prayer, another was God to whom I was praying, and the third the person or situation, the subject of the prayer. My thought was that the prayer caused the triangle to be reduced in size, bringing the subject, God and me closer together, resulting in action on my part. Now the figure has changed; it is no longer a triangle but a bridge from me to the subject.

As I indicated above, any thought of prayer must include some accompanying concept of God. Before pursuing the idea of the bridge, I refer to some of my search for a clearer idea of God.

Several years ago, I decided to resist memory loss in aging by memorizing poems. I invited friends to suggest a favorite poem, and as I learned and recited the poem, I thought of both the poet and the person who suggested the poem. (Another triangle) One that was new to me was submitted by my friend Jorge Saenz in Costa Rica. The translation of the poem by the Russian poet Vladimir Paley follows:

God is in Every Place and Thing

*God is in every place and thing,
Not only in our lucky star,
Not only in the fragrant flower,*

*Not just in joys sweet dreamings bring,
But also in the dark of poverty,
The sightless terror of our vanity,
In hurtful things, where light is not,
In things to bear which is our lot.
God's in the tears of our pain,
The wordless sorrow of goodbyes,
The faithless seekings of our brain,
In suffering itself is God.
It is through life upon this sod
That we must reach the unknown land,
Where with the crimson trail of nails
Lord Christ will touch the wounds of man.
And that is why all flesh must die,
And why God is in all that is.*

I do not think of God as a Being; rather I consider God as all of Being. In my book, My Life and Work: A Continual Search, I wrote that I believe God and Nature are synonymous and what some people refer to as “God’s Will” is natural law. I was interested to read a quote attributed to the astrophysicist Hubert Reeves:

Man is the most insane species. He worships an invisible God and slaughters a visible Nature...without realizing that the Nature he slaughters is the invisible God he worships.

A personal experience with a young friend from Russia when he visited in our home remains vivid in my mind. I took him to Chewacla Park after a storm. As we walked through the freshly washed forest, I made the statement to him that God and Nature were synonymous for me. He in turn made the same statement in Russian. I think that moment was important to both of us and served as a link in the years that followed.

As I continued my search, I confided in my diary, “We create our own reality in our minds, including our concept of God. I eventually reversed the subject-object relationship: Instead of “God created humans,” I believed that “humans created God.” This was a long way from what I wrote to my mother and father in 1951: “The only thing that would make us all feel at peace and have something to look forward to is searching for God through prayer and study.” What did not change was the search.

James Michener, in the chapter “The Bee Eater” from The Source, indirectly shows different interpretations of God. Various views can be traced to Xenophanes (c 570 BC – c 475 BC) who suggested that if animals created a god it would be in their image; triangles would conceive it as having three sides. Greg Iles in The Footprints of God suggests that “God is merely a part of the human brain, an evolutionary coping mechanism that developed to make bearable our awareness of our own deaths.”

We do not know when humans first began to conceive of gods, but it is clear that seeking to understand has been a part of the species’ existence for periods beyond our present comprehension, and the search will continue as long as questions are asked and there is willingness to follow where the questions lead, .

Accompanying my ideas is the belief that the God I identify does not intervene in human affairs, so to request or entreat in the form of prayer would not be defensible. Offering gratitude or praise to a Being that I do not believe exists would also be indefensible. In this regard, I have to explain to myself why the prayer often attributed to St. Francis is important to me, so much so that I say the prayer every day.

Many years ago, Max Prince, a friend of ours from our days as students at West Georgie College, gave us a copy of the prayer. The copy he gave to us reads as follows; we had it framed and it has hung on the wall in our den through the years.

*Lord, make us instruments of thy peace –
Where there is hatred, let us sow love –
Where there is injury, pardon -
Where there is discord, union -
Where there is doubt, faith -
Where there is despair, hope -
Where there is darkness, light –
Where there is sadness, joy*

*O Divine Master, grant that we may not
So much seek to be consoled, as to console –
To be understood, as to understand –
To be loved, as to love
For it is in giving that we receive –
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned –
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life*

A reasonable question: To whom do I pray? St. Francis lived toward the end of the 12th century and into the 13th century. When he prayed “Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace,” how did he conceive the Lord to whom he was praying? How did he view the earth and its relation to other observable parts of the universe? When he prayed, “Grant that I...” what was the authority that would grant him what he asked? We must ask also: What do we know now that he did not know? How does such knowledge change the prayer? Would the changes weaken the prayer? Is outside help necessary to make the person act? If that external power is lacking, is the individual not able to carry out the action?

I recently read God’s Fool, a biography of St. Francis by Julian Green. I was interested to see if I could find any reference to the prayer in the biography. I think now it is generally accepted that the prayer is not traced to St. Francis; however, there is great meaning in the prayer that can make a difference in a person’s life.

What attracts me to the prayer is the emphasis on action. The responsibility is placed on the person to act. It is here that the hidden likeness to the bridge is helpful for me. One end of the bridge for me is the mind of the individual. Spinoza in his Theological-Political Treatise, published in 1670, reminded us

There is nothing sacred, profane, or impure absolutely and independently' of the mind but only in relation to the mind.

If I believe that God is “all of being,” then God is within me. I, too, am a part of being, so I pray to myself for the responsibility for building the bridge. I make the connections through understanding and the will to action.

I have often heard people say to me when they leave, “You will be in my thoughts and prayers.” Not to be cynical, but I have wondered if these have become acceptable parting words in a similar way that “How are you?” is a greeting.

If one end of the bridge is my mind, where is the other end? The words of the prayer help to construct bridges that can make a difference if the connection results in action. The other end of the bridge can connect to people, conditions, beauty, wonder, mystery. The connections are limited only by my own being and will to act.

My experience has taught me that the bridges I have known in my life both as recipient and initiator of connections make me comfortable with prayer as a bridge. I recently received a message from my friend Rishi Rajan and he included a quote, “The man with experience is never at the mercy of the man with an argument.”

Loneliness - An Echo

Before I retired almost 28 years ago this year, I remember a scrap of paper in my desk drawer in my office on campus with a very brief note scribbled on it. The note is missing but I recall the feeling associated with the note and the thought that at some time in the future I would enlarge on the note. Tonight is the time when I call upon my remembering self to help me capture the very sad feeling linked to the note.

At that time, I had a deep feeling of personal and professional loneliness. I valued solitude, but sometimes the solitude deteriorated into loneliness. I often visited mental worlds where others chose not to enter, and I found pleasure in asking questions and following where the questions led me.

I withdrew.

I built an invisible wall around me.

I cried out.

The only other sound was an echo.

Life - A Walk

Many times a life is referred to as a journey. For me, the likeness to a walk fits, as I shall attempt to describe below.

As I begin writing, I am not sure where my mind will lead me. The focus is on a poem I wrote in 1949, and my intention is to try to understand what influenced me to write the poem and then determine why it has been important enough for me to refer to it through the 71 years of my life since I wrote it. I hope also to determine what has changed in my thinking and what has lingered, with emphasis on the meaning the poem has had in my life.

In the attempt to understand how I came to write the poem, I am using entries from the final year of my Five-Year Diary to get inside the mind of the seventeen-year-old who on Thanksgiving Day wrote the poem. (“Frozen words” referred to in another metaphor)

I had had a successful Freshman year at West Georgia College and was entering first quarter of my sophomore year. I knew that the year at the college had opened a new world for me, one very different from what I experienced in high school. A larger world of friendships with much diversity among students and growing friendships with certain faculty, and academic success added to my confidence. A deepening relationship with Fran Jameson and her positive and loving support brought a special warmth that, though later interrupted for a period of time, had a lasting impact on me. (October 18: “Went down on front campus with Fran. Talked about Michael and Melaney”) The course in Dramatics and influence of Dr. William Row reached a climax when I won the leading role in the play *Accidentally Yours*.

An entry on November 12 shows that I had already decided that I was going to become a teacher. I had had the experience of teaching the custodian’s young son how to play some melodies on the piano. (This is described in greater detail in *My Life and Work: A Continual Search*.) I was active in V.R.A. (Voluntary Religious Association), playing the piano for some of the meetings.

The poem has a strong religious emphasis, and I think the diary entries relating to Religious Emphasis Week, beginning November 20, could have influenced me as I wrote. I refer to the program as “very beautiful.” Other entries follow: “He (the speaker) is making some inspiring talks.” “This man is so inspiring. He has said so many things that I’ve always wanted to say. I really feel I’m gaining something.” The entries for the next two days follow:]

November 23

Everybody left for Thanksgiving holidays but me. Went to town. Thought lots to myself. Staying in cabin by myself tonight.

November 24

Spent day alone. Wrote "A Walk With Myself." Evelyn brought me some turkey. Ate supper with Miss Campbell. Been a glorious Thanksgiving day.*

**The title was sometime later changed to "Walking With My Thoughts."*

No more diary entries referred to the poem. I was featured in campus "Spotlight" in the next issue of West Georgian. The poem later appeared in the West Georgian as well.

At some future date, and I have no documentation when this occurred, I used a wood-burning set and burned a copy of the poem onto a piece of plywood and made a crude frame from some kind of bush. I do not remember where I hung the poem initially, and at a later date it was stored in the attic in our 259 Conrey Drive home. Much later, it was retrieved from the attic and hung over my computer desk where it has remained. The poem as it appears on the plywood is shown below.

Walking with My Thoughts

*I went out walking one day - alone with my thoughts.
Where I was going, I do not know. . .
But then someone took my hand and said,
"Come with me."*

*This unknown friend and I walked and talked.
I knew not where we were going, nor did I care.*

*We were walking to think, to understand, and to love.
When walking with these three,
One lives and walks in eternity.*

*Then we reached a mountain extending to the clouds,
And looking below, we beheld the busy world
Where so many were toiling, suffering and unhappy.*

But wait!

*There were many who were looking upward
With faith and hope.
Each of these faces a lamp to this darkness below.*

*There I stood between the world below and God above,
There to choose my course to follow.*

*Then I lifted my head and a light shone on my face.
I listened as harmonious music fell upon my ears.
And I paused as the love of God entered into my heart.*

I stood there.

*How long I do not know, nor do I care.
The important thing - I stood there.*

*Here my friend left me.
I watched for now I could see Him.
Then all was peace and quiet
Save a soft voice in the distance,
"Go, my son, and light the lamps below
That those in darkness may see."*

11/24/49

Kenneth Cadenhead

I shall comment on various lines in the poem, attempting to understand my thinking at the time I wrote the poem, what meaning has lingered and what has changed on the long walk since that Thanksgiving Day in 1949.

***I went out walking one day - alone with my thoughts.
Where I was going, I do not know.***

The fact that I was alone in the cabin and I had been impressed by the content of the guest speaker during Religious Emphasis Week could have resulted in reflection. The exploration that could come from walking without a destination seems consistent with the possible reflective thought while alone. This tendency seems consistent with the earlier satisfaction associated with retreating to the hill behind the dairy barn to watch the sunset and just be alone. The many years that have passed since writing the poem have only enhanced my appreciation for solitude. Also, the exploration of ideas has not only continued, but it has become more intense. Asking questions and then following where the questions lead have grown more important in achieving meaning in my life

***But then someone took my hand and said,
"Come with me."***

I am not certain why I was not comfortable being alone with my thoughts and why it was significant that someone join me on the walk. Was I uncertain about many things and felt more secure if I were not alone? The invitation "Come with me" suggests not only companionship but also direction outside of myself.

Even now on my way to 89 I don't mind walking alone, but companionship in thought is comforting. I do not look for someone or something outside myself to lead me nor do I seek direction in my thought.

***This unknown friend and I walked and talked.
I knew not where we were going, nor did I care.***

*We were walking to think, to understand, and to love.
When walking with these three,
One lives and walks in eternity.*

Several people who have read the poem asked for the identity of the friend. The use of the word “unknown” in the beginning of the poem is no doubt significant. Still the satisfaction of walking without a destination brought simple pleasure. The purpose was then clear: walking to think, to understand, and to love.” This was sufficient. For a seventeen-year-old to reach this conclusion is important. Then to realize that these three are timeless is even more significant. The question remains whether I reached this conclusion alone or was influenced by the “unknown friend.” We don’t know what occurred as they “walked and talked.”

All the walking I have done since that day, I have sought to “think, understand, and to love.”

The thinking has varied at different times, but serious thinking, the desire to understand, and to know love in different forms have never been left behind on the long walk. Neither have I ever doubted the everlasting value of these three that found their way to the page on Thanksgiving Day in 1949.

*Then we reached a mountain
extending to the clouds*

Indeed, the mountain had to be in my imagination because at that time I had never experienced any mountain except Pine Mountain in Harris County. I had never even been to the mountains of north Georgia until the choir from West Georgia College made a trip to the area, and I entered in my diary that it “was the farthest north I had ever been.” No doubt my imagination was aided by my memory of views from Pine Mountain. I think also the idea was linked to my visits to the hill behind the dairy barn, a place that was very important to me, and the various moods I experienced there. (I wrote about this hill in [My Life and Work: A Continual Search](#))

Throughout my life after writing the poem, hills and mountains have been important to me, affording panoramic views. Examples include Brasstown Bald in north Georgia, Kinnoull Hill in Perthshire, Scotland when I was researching Patrick Geddes, Garvock Hill in Scotland when Michael, Judy, Fran and I visited this area where I have come close to concluding was the origin of my Scottish ancestors.

***And looking below, we beheld the busy world
Where so many were toiling, suffering and unhappy.***

I am not sure why these two lines were included except for what was to come next in the way of contrast. They link in an important way to the last line in the poem. Also, even at that time in my life I had a special feel for the underprivileged, and interestingly the lines connect to a short piece I wrote in a composition book shortly after writing the poem. My ambition: "Listen to and seek to understand the problems of any person, anytime, anywhere and do all that is in my power to make that person happy.

This interest in helping others has lingered since the day I wrote the poem. I am moved by people whose lives are imprisoned by poverty, limited environments and unhappiness.

But wait!

***There were many who were looking upward
With faith and hope.
Each of these faces a lamp to this darkness below.***

The contrast is important. Also, the significance of seeing what we look for helps determine whether the attitude is pessimistic or optimistic. A reflection of potential that can be developed adds to a more optimistic view. One of the most important parts of the last line is the linkage with the final line of the poem. There is a strong religious connection that is no doubt related to my convictions at that time.

The optimism implied in these lines has remained with me throughout my life, making me believe generally that any problems created by humans can be solved by humans. Also believing in the unlimited human potential played an important part in my thinking about my role as a teacher. The focus of faith and hope shifted to more confidence in human ability in dispelling the darkness.

***There I stood between the world below and God
above,
There to choose my course to follow***

These two lines are pivotal, pointing toward decision. It appears like a traditional conversion experience. The identity and influence of the “unknown” friend is evident here as a decision is made between the “world below and God above.” Also, choosing the course to follow suggests a major decision will be made. Some refer to such major decisions as a “calling.” Based on what was happening in my life at that time, this might not be an exaggeration.

Moving forward through the years that followed that Thanksgiving Day, there were many decisions that would be made: marriage, further education, family responsibilities, professional changes, retirement, just to name a few. In each case, I stood between what was and what might be, choosing “my course to follow.”

***Then I lifted my head and a light shone on my face.
I listened as harmonious music fell upon my ears.
And I paused as the love of God entered into my
heart.***

(Note: I continue writing on my 69th wedding anniversary, June 3, 2020)

This rather dramatic part of the poem is important in what it represented at the time I wrote and the present. I am not sure of

the meaning of light “shining on my face.” I think perhaps it was the exhilaration of the moment, an awareness of something beyond myself that seemed real at the time, The significance of music in my life at that time, covered well in my book, and at the moment of the writing it added meaning to what was happening. Of course, I cannot enter my mind at that time and know what I meant; however, the importance of religious experience in my life at that time intensified the feeling that something was happening and it seemed to be coming from outside myself. The fact that I used the word “heart” instead of “mind” is important, and this relates to another of my metaphors, “Words as Windows to the Mind.” At that time, I am not sure I would have seen the distinction as important. Regardless, it is clear that I liked the feeling at the time.

Today, instead of a light shining on my face, I think I would characterize it as something “welling up inside me.” There is a shift from the exterior to the interior, perhaps one of the most important changes. The emotion lingers to the present and is no less intense; the physical place changes. The impact of music has not changed; it has only grown stronger as an accompanying and vital energy source in my life. Not love **of** God but love **as** God is a change. As mentioned earlier, “walking to think, to understand and to love” has remained constant throughout the long walk. There have been changes in definitions

I stood there.

How long I do not know, nor do I care.

The important thing - I stood there.

What happened at the time made such an impact that I even at such a young age realized the moment was important. Time did not matter; the mere fact that I had the experience was sufficient, and the implication is that such a moment could be equally as important to anyone who chose to have the experience I had had at that moment. The simple sentence, “I stood there” underscores the impact.

Solitude at the present time in my life is valued, and moments equally potent have occurred many times since that Thanksgiving Day. Awareness of insights, reflection on experience, and continued meaning-centered walks have lingered since that day, and although different in results, taking time to “stand there” remains very important to me.

*Here my friend left me.
I watched for now I could see Him.*

Perhaps these are the most difficult two lines to understand, but I shall attempt to again climb into my mind at seventeen and deal with the question that has been asked, “Who was the friend?” Some of the background I provided for writing the poem helps and the careful reader will no doubt see that the capitalization of one letter offers a suggestion. My strong and conventional religious views at the time, underscored by the recent experience in Religious Emphasis Week, no doubt found their way into the writing experience. I don’t think it is completely divorced from the fictional account I included in My Life and Work: a Continual Search where the friend in that account had promised to be with me “to the end of the world.” This does not help to explain why at the beginning of the poem this friend was “unknown.” However, the capitalization of “Him” in the poem suggests the same friend I identified much earlier in my life experience. The fact that the friend left me at this time suggests that I was confident with what I had gained from the companionship of the friend, and it was not as if I were letting go of a hand in the dark. At the same time, I could “see the friend.” Perhaps “see” meant walking to “understand” had been successful at that time. At any rate, I was comfortable being alone.

What has remained the same and what has changed on the long walk through the years? Perhaps the greatest change has been from “friend as a person” to “friend as ideas that friend represents.” The ideas are more powerful than the person, and I continue to walk with the ideas; they have not left me. The walk continues in order “to think, to understand, and to love”. Additionally, at age seventeen, I had not met Gibran, Emerson,

Montaigne and others who wrote about friendship and the impact relationships have on thinking, understanding, and loving. My walk now is with friends who also walk to think, to understand, and to love, and I did not have these at seventeen. They are a part of me, and I see them clearly.

*Then all was peace and quiet
Save a soft voice in the distance,
"Go, my son, and light the lamps below
That those in darkness may see."*

The beauty of the peace and quiet still moves me. I think I can feel how I felt on that Thanksgiving Day because the feeling comes again and again now. What is so very different is the place of the "soft voice in the distance." Then it was coming dramatically from outside of me with a connection that must have been so powerful for me at the time. I do not in any way diminish its importance because it is clear to me that what happened was the awareness of meaning in my life and the establishment of a clear purpose for living. I cannot be assured that my decision to teach was directly linked to this experience; however, the parts of my life that were "coming together" at that time would support such a linkage. The imagery of "lighting lamps," sensing satisfaction in seeing growth in students, and further beginning my life as a teacher the next year suggest a reasonable connection.

Now on my way to 89 the walk continues with the help of a cane! What about the "soft voice in the distance"? The voice is still present, but it gradually moved inside through the years. The "voice within" is still soft, but equally as powerful. As can be seen in other metaphors that add meaning to my life, definitions matter. Walking to think, to understand, and to love continues to make the walk rich and filled with meaning. My purpose for living has not diminished since that Thanksgiving Day in 1949.

Life – A Flash of Lightning

In 1987, I wrote a poem after observing a late afternoon storm:

*Obedient
to
Nature's design
a
tryst
in the evening storm
issues
a flash of **life**
that
lives momentarily
then
vanishes
into
darkness*

This metaphor – with an unusual use of the word “tryst” – is an attempt to link the attraction of opposites in Nature to create, although short lived, “a flash of **life**.”

Where is the hidden likeness? If we consider the beginning of life as 4,000,000,000 years ago and think of an individual life span, it seems appropriate.

History has shown that great things have come from the “flashes of life’ before they return to the darkness. What the individual does during this relatively short period is what matters.

My Woods – My Cathedral

My reference here is taken from the final page in my book My Life and Work: A Continual Search. I had concluded what became the metaphor “My Life – a Line,” and it followed with an explanation that since my physical limitation caused me to remain close to home on a daily basis, I set up a place in my woods that I refer to as my cathedral. I linked it with the special place in the deep ditch that meant so much to me before I left home at sixteen. I indicated that I made a new altar, which has very special meaning for me. I ended the book with what I recorded in my diary on May 7, 2018, the first time I visited my cathedral. It follows in the next paragraph.

“A memorable experience this morning very early. I took my coffee to my new special place and I sat alone. I shall never forget looking up through the tall trees to the oncoming brightening morning sky. I felt – with John Muir – the cathedral formed by the trees. I even saw the shape of different leaves against the background of the sky. I looked around me and saw things that had special meaning for me: native azaleas, galax, fern, sweet shrubs, bird bath, and statue of St. Francis. I recited the prayer against the background of bird songs. I uttered words from Spinoza: God and Nature are one. I felt a wonderful peace. This was linked with a dream that I had been away from Fran, and when I touched her, and she saw me, she was startled. I don’t know the connection between the dream and my early morning experience, but I accept the mystery.”

There is a second chair in the cathedral that is available for anyone who cares to be with me there. It has been occupied by special people who, I think, understand the significance of this place in my life at this time. The final words of my book reflect the spirit of my cathedral, and I include them below.

“I continue the search that I began so long ago, and I hope to continue it as long as I have my mental faculties. When this is no longer possible and believing that the essence of the person is the mind, I desire that my spark of life (See metaphor), the restless soul vanish as quickly as possible into the darkness. I want then to live in the memory of those who choose to remember and further be linked to the mysterious and beautiful collective human spirit.”

Immortality – Compost

This record is an illustration of the failure to match remembering self and experiencing self. It was reconciled by checking my diary. On June 2, 1979, I wrote the following in my diary:

“Very tired tonight – though a different kind of exhaustion. Worked in garden all day. Garden looks very good.” Then in the margin I find the following note: “Typed notes for later use in writing about an insight I gained today.”

Then I turn to July 21, 1979 for the following entry:

“The following was written in preparation for the seminar on teaching composition, which I am directing for the second time this summer. The idea was first recorded or mentioned on June 3. (actually June 2) Today I made a copy to send to Paul and to Jack Riley. The idea is important to me so I will copy the composition below. It is copied from the typed form I sent to Paul. It was written originally from notes made on June 2. When I gave a writing assignment to my students, I often wrote with them and offered my writing for criticism by members of the

group. The content shows that I thought the concept of immortality should be extended.”

Copied from my 1979 diary:

On Saturday, June 2, 1979, my concept of immortality was expanded. What began as a usual chore – preparing a mulch for my tomato plants – turned out to be an experience which yielded an important insight for me. As I moved my hands through the decaying leaves I had piled near the garden during the winter, I suddenly realized that something dead can sustain life in another form. While I held the damp, decaying matter in my hand, smelled its richness, and watched the tiny creatures scurrying about, taking refuge under parts of leaves I had not disturbed, I knew Nature was quietly at work. Looking more closely, I saw a ragged sweet gum leaf which earlier was a distinct five-point and verdant whole with evidence of life in its complex network of veins. Now, it is following the orders of Nature and becoming another link in the endless chain of energy, the chain renewing itself not by creating or destroying but by changing the form of its parts.

I pressed the damp, warm material close around the sturdy tomato plants, knowing it would temporarily help to hold the moisture in the soil, and then eventually, through decaying completely, it would help to supply nutrients for future plants. At this time, I posed a question to myself: Can I, too, sustain life in another form after I am dead? Prior to this time, I had thought my life would be continued through my children and perhaps through my teaching as I carried out new ideas or helped others to discover important things for themselves. Or perhaps if I wrote something worthy of

reading by those who came after me, my life might continue in another form and for a time provide some kind of sustenance for others. I still accepted these as possibilities.

As I knelt near the tomato plants and felt the heat of the mid-day sun, I was aware that I, a human being – something more than the ragged leaf I held in my hand – must be changed to a form that Nature dictated. The leaf and I share, among other things, two common attributes: life in the form of a definite time span and then a different form dictated by death. These forms are simply parts of being, parts of the whole of life a continuing chain.

My consciousness of being – one thing which perhaps makes me different from the leaf – was enhanced by the experience. While I live I can be productive in a number of ways, and I can be aware of and appreciate how I fit into the total scheme of things. When I die, I, too, will become a new form of energy – still a part of the whole of Nature's indestructible design.

Wonder – the Seed of Knowledge

It was the morning of Father's Day 2020 when I decided to write on this metaphor, one that is among the most important parts of my being. The decision to write came after I posed two questions to my neighbor Matt when he came for the morning visit to bring my paper. I realized that many people would have thought the questions strange, so I decided to write an e-mail to him with an explanation. In the process of writing the e-mail, I realized that it was not the questions that mattered, but the idea of letting the mind probe unfettered, unshackled and follow where the questions lead. Examples came to mind, and I realized that things were coming together in a way that caused me to write about this on the following morning, June 22, 2020.

*I don't know when the idea of following a question where it leads began to be a part of my life. In the Introduction to My Life and Work: A Continual Search I referred to a letter I wrote to Mother and Daddy April 22, 1951, less than six weeks before I married. One sentence in the note expressed a thought that was apparently important to me at that time, and its significance has grown throughout my life. The contexts of the statement have been different at various periods in my life, but I think the words are important both in my personal and professional life: **Life is a continual search.***

On March 19, 1967 I published a brief article in what was then "Perspective: The Campus View" in the Birmingham News. At that time, I was Assistant Professor at Auburn University, and I decided to submit the article. I am unaware of what prompted the article; however, as I reflect on the idea on which the article was based, I realize that it is a part of my basic belief system, becoming more intense through the years. The article begins with a question: "What would happen in our educational system if the evaluation of a student were based as much on the quality of questions he asks as it is on the quality of answers he supplies for questions asked by someone else?" Young children ask questions freely, but when the child moves into a highly structured school environment, his questions are often supplanted by the questions asked by adults. The following paragraph in the article points to the importance of questions in the education of the individual.

Education as searching can operate on all levels – nursery school through adulthood. The questions will differ; the principle of questioning, however, will be the same. Basically, the individual is saying, "I want to know." Encouraging the thirst for knowledge becomes more important than quenching it as far as the teacher is concerned. Then comes the organized search which is education!

In 1968, the search that resulted in a long family history adventure began. The search resulted in the publication of Southern Cadenheads in 1997. After the long search and reflection on the years devoted to the study, the following paragraph from the book yields some insight.

Why does one continue the search? Why does one exert the energy to reach the source of Caddon Water? Apart from the challenge and the pleasure, the walk and search perhaps symbolize the power of a question that subsequently drives one to search for the origin of things. In this case, the search has led to fascinating information, maturing friendships, and indeed lasting kinship with an incredibly beautiful piece of Nature – whether further study renders the connection myth or fact.

There is a date written in the margin of my copy of Francis Bacon's Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning Divine and Human. The date is February 15, 1986. On page 3, I underlined

“for all knowledge and wonder (which is the seed of knowledge) is an impression of pleasure in itself.”

I cannot say for sure, but I am assuming that this was the first time I had come across this metaphor. This was long before I began to explore the idea of collective human spirit. As I reflect on the link between this discovery and my article in 1967, I find some confirmation in the idea.

During the years of research on the Scots artist James Cadenhead, I came across another person whose ideas had an impact on me, and I found many common threads in his and my thinking on education. This person was Sir Patrick Geddes who was best known for his work in town planning; however, I discovered that he had important ideas on education. One of his ideas was based

on Bacon's assertion that wonder is the seed of knowledge, leading to Geddes' belief that the true education was self-education. I had professional leave from Auburn University fall quarter of 1988 to study Geddes papers in Edinburgh and Glasgow, specifically his ideas on education. Subsequently, I published articles on Geddes, the last one being in 1992, the year I retired from Auburn University. The title of the article "Patrick Geddes: Timeless Educational Ideas" appeared in The Educational Forum and I found it an appropriate one to end my professional career, particularly since the ideas were very much a part of my own thinking about education. The ideas presented follow.

1. Wonder is the seed of knowledge.
2. True education is self-education.
3. The individual sees only what he or she brings through the power and habit of seeing.
4. Synthesis of knowledge is essential in an age of specialization.
5. Learning cannot be evaluated with precision in measurement.

On November 15, 2018, Barry Whatley from Craftmaster delivered 44 copies of My Life and Work: A Continual Search. A long way from that first article in 1967, but the spirit persists. On page 422, I conclude:

I continue the search that I began so long ago, and I hope to continue it as long as I have my mental faculties. When this is no longer possible and believing that the essence of the person is the mind, I desire that my spark of life (the restless soul) vanish as quickly as possible into the darkness. I want then to live in the memory of those who choose to remember and further be linked to the mysterious and beautiful collective human spirit.

Thought – Resurrection

Resurrection Fern

Clinging to the limb

of the live oak tree

I, too, live

Nature beckons

--

I die.

A drop of rain

(like thought of a distant soul)

touches my wrinkled frond

I live again.

One of my favorite plants is the resurrection fern. Careful reading of this short poem I wrote several years ago will reveal the hidden likeness: when I think of someone who is no longer living, the person lives again, a part of the collective human spirit.

Desire – A Magnet

*Look deep into Nature, and then you will
understand everything better.*

-- Einstein

There are invisible forces in Nature that control our lives and we most often simply take them for granted, notably gravity. Both natural and man-made magnetism also impact our lives in ways we seldom think about. Perhaps one who holds a compass in his or her hand is more conscious of the presence of the force that directs the needle of the compass.

The magnet produces a magnetic field that is invisible; this field is the most notable property of a magnet. Permanent magnets create their own persistent magnetic field and this phenomenal force has a quality of attracting specific metals. Humans have learned from Nature and have created magnetic forces that have influenced the advancement of science and indeed our lives in general.

Desire is an invisible force within the human that attracts the individual to something. It can be traced to Latin “desiderare” – to long for. This human force has been the subject for study and commentary by numerous philosophers and writers. Aristotle considered reason and desire; Plato offered that the soul is guided by two horses: dark horse of passion and white horse of reason.

In Plato’s Symposium, Aristophanes provided a myth on the origin of love, illustrating the power of desire. Aristophanes (c 447 BC – c 388 BC) was a comic poet of Greece. His presentation follows with humans being different from the way they are at present. Long ago, there were three genders: male; female, and androgynous. They had four hands, four legs, two heads, two sets of genitals. They moved by spinning themselves around cartwheel-like on all eight limbs. Males were descended from the sun, females from the earth, and those who were androgynous were descended from the moon. They began to become a threat to the gods, so Zeus decided to cut each person in two. Then their heads were turned so they could face each other.

Because of their strong desire to return to their original nature, each one tried to find the matching other half and reunite with it. When they found their other half, they would stay together and

be satisfied. Eventually, Zeus moved their genitals around so that they would be facing to the front. By doing this when they embraced they could have sexual intercourse. This meant that those who were originally androgynous could reproduce. Even two males or two females could have sexual satisfaction. This was the origin of our human instinctive desire for other human beings. He indicated further that “love” is the name that we give to our desire for wholeness, to be restored to our original nature. When we find someone with a similar nature to ours, we want to bond with that person and live a shared life. The idea of sharing one’s life with another is a common theme regarding interpersonal relationships. A similar thought is expressed by Aristotle in his writings on friendship. This attraction to our “other half” eases any feelings of incompleteness we may experience in our everyday life.

It prompts me to reach further back into human history to the origin of life. One cell? Then division? First human or human ancestor - one sex? The ancient humorist entertained with his origin of love. Can modern science ever explain – seriously – why men have nipples?

Spinoza in his Ethics wrote that desire is the very essence of man. He proposed the thought that moral virtue and spiritual blessedness are the direct result of essential power to exist, i.e., desire. Hume suggests that reason is subject to passion; it is desire along with belief that motivates action. John Stuart Mill suggests that pleasure is the sole object of desire. In Buddhism, craving is considered the cause of all suffering and the extinction of craving leads to ultimate happiness – Nirvana. The power of the invisible force is not questioned.

The force is real. Can it be managed? The first step is to acknowledge the presence and force of the desire, clearly articulating it and bringing it into consciousness. Can need be separated from desire? What is the cause of the desire? Is the actual attraction to the thing desired or is the desire related to a lack of something? Such analysis calls upon a willingness of the individual to question himself or herself, or seek assistance in

articulating this invisible force within the self. Understanding generates energy; the will directs action

Continual extensive brain research will no doubt in the future shed light on the brain activity that generates various kinds of desire. This knowledge will contribute to further understanding of the role and function of this invisible force in human life.

In 1989, Andy and Edna Cadenhead from Scotland were visiting us. As often was the case when they visited us, we traveled to another place, often to the beach. While walking on the beach, I had the idea for the following poem which as I think of it now relates to this metaphor. It appears below.

Shadow on the Beach

*Dark image of self
sometimes leads. . .
sometimes follows.*

*With strong wind nudging
from behind
Image in front
cajoles —*

I follow.

*The day grows older
and I --- wiser.*

*The fresh breeze bathes
my face
Clear light before me
reveals —*

I understand.

*The empty silhouette
obediently trails behind.*

Time – A Resource

Time as we consider it in our daily lives is a human creation. The earth, sun, and moon do not keep a clock although their action moves in definite patterns, making it possible for humans then through observation to impose measurement and definitions in a way that has meaning. For example, we can say without reservation that one thing all humans have in common: 24 hours in a day. They differ in how they “use” this time.

As it is with so much that is a part of our lives we most often take for granted, at some time beginning with observation, humans began to define and explain as a way of making sense of what was observed. At some time in the distant past, humans noticed what appeared to be the movement of the sun; they observed the rain, the flowering of trees and attempts were made to measure as a way of aiding themselves in various aspects of their lives. Primitive ways of marking the “passing of time” included such things as scratching lines, notching wooden sticks.

The Egyptians used the sundial, and eventually the mechanical clock came into existence, replacing the water clock. As complexity of lives increased so did the precision of measurement

Calendars came into existence, marking days, months, years. Then the definition of time helped to shape humans who through the long history of their existence shaped time.

Now we commonly think of time, like money, as a resource. We not only measure time; we schedule our lives in such a way that we “save” time, “waste” time, “reserve” time, “invest” time, just to mention a few ways we “use” time. Again, the common “bank

account” for everyone is 24 hours in the day and each individual has his or her own private “budget.” Different factors affect the budget, which means that there is not complete freedom in setting and managing the budget; however, the individual must “take stock” occasionally to assess the freedom and realize what factors affect choices.

Imprisonment – Labels

We use words to represent objects, ideas, concepts, and these words make it possible for us to communicate. The words help to simplify the environment despite the fact that people don’t necessarily share the meaning of words used. The words themselves are arbitrary; the meaning resides in the minds of the people who use the words to communicate with one another. This means, of course, that the closer the meaning of the words used the clearer the communication. There is no difficulty if I point to the tree in my yard and identify it as a tree; however the communication is less clear if two people identify the tree with different names: a maple tree, an oak tree. The more complex the classification, the more difficulty in complete understanding between two people viewing the tree. Specialization contributes to knowledge and at the same time can make communication less clear by the less informed. We must not overlook the fact that the words used by the individual reflect knowledge or lack thereof. (See metaphor “Words as Windows to the Mind.”)

The use of words to label people can be a type of imprisonment for the person.

A Life – A River

In the Introduction to My Life and Work... A Continual Search, I decided to use the metaphor Life – a River. I copy two paragraphs below from page 2.

“A human life, like a river, has a visible beginning and end. At the source, the individual life is affected by forces over which it has no control. It is born, determined by what Nature ordered yet altered by circumstances that gave it birth. As it etches its own unique path, momentum increases. It is joined by tributaries; they, too, help to determine the life of the river just as the human life is influenced by other persons and experiences, which help to make the person a dynamic entity, potentially for good or evil along the way.”

“The river visibly ends, but it is reborn in another form; the water cycle is unending. The individual lives on in descendants, the memory of others, what is written or expressed in some form, or provides sustenance for the growth of some other form of life.”

I further linked my life of searching to the river by writing that what drove me to search was a hidden likeness to gravity that drove the river along its path. My search gained momentum through study, experience and the influence of people whose paths crossed with mine.

The metaphor has further meaning in relation to the origin of the surname Cadenhead. The meaning is enhanced by the emotion linked to visits to the burn - not a river - Caddon Water in Scotland. The burn has a visible beginning as it bubbles out of the ground between Windlestraw Law and Deaf Heights in the undulating hills of the Border region. As it meanders through the path etched through the centuries, it is joined by Birop Burn as it makes its way to its end when it empties into the River Tweed. Visits to the area and study linked the beautiful heather and bracken covered hills at the head of the Caddon Water to the farm Cadenhead and the generally accepted origin of the surname. Two of my favorite photographs are found in Southern Cadenheads: The Caddon Water (photo made on Fran's and my first visit to the farm in 1976) and Fran, the four

children and me when we made our family trip to Cadenhead farm in 1986.

Two Differing Metaphors for Teacher

When I was teaching at the university, I sometimes asked my students to choose between two metaphors to characterize their basic philosophy of teaching: sculptor or gardener. Occasionally I combined this assignment with work on poetry and asked the students to express their thinking and feelings on the subject. While the idea of gardener always was more appealing to me, a student in one class challenged my thinking, and I decided to respond by writing on both sculptor and gardener. I found that my experience allowed me to do this without being inconsistent. It was the student's challenge that changed my thinking. The two poems that I wrote thirty years ago appear below.

*The creator
with
incisive
though loving
words
chipped away
dutifully
daily
to
free
the
imprisoned life*

*He
Struck
an
impervious vein*

*coursing
the
emergent being
Two
new images
were
born*

*Words
sown with care
lodge
in the mind
birthplace
of
ideas*

*Querying tines
fashion friendly furrows
of
doubt and faith
as
ordered life
altered
slightly by plan
reaches
for
light
and
fruition*

Birth – A New Island

I refer to My Life and Work: A Continual Search (pages 341-342) for statements about this metaphor that resulted in a poem I copy below.

My diary for that year reflects much professional loneliness. A creative reaction to this feeling resulted in a poem to which I ultimately assigned the title “Nexus” The development of the metaphor of the birth of an island related to my loneliness and my search for personal and professional fulfillment and for the kind of deep friendship that I had desired for a long time. The “highs and lows” were a part of the pattern of my life, a part of searching and valuing mystery. The chosen words in the poem showed both expressed and concealed thoughts. I later discovered Talleyrand’s statement: Man was given language to conceal his thoughts. Several versions of the poem resulted as I continued to revise it. The following was kept in my diary.

Nexus

*In stillness beneath the watery depth,
Silent seething concealed,
A fountain of fiery life
Erupts and splits the calm.*

*Father Earth, in short-lived violence,
(Finding release with only occasional waste)
Obedient to his ancestral sun,
Creates and constructs in ordered fashion.*

*A living seed settles to its place;
Securely anchored there,
Inchoate life grows step by step*

With strong nexus to primeval identity.

*In this deep chamber of darkness
Elements move to established order;
Mysteriously, from the watery womb,
A new creation emerges.*

*Shaping its own space, alone, the island
Waits, inviting cultivation or contamination;
Detached, yet bombarded with diverse minds,
It spawns speciation of thought.*

*Reciprocal sculpting of thought and words
Leads slowly to patterned knowledge;
Beauty, ugliness, good, and evil compete
In the expanding arena of alternatives.*

*Persistent struggle for control,
Pitting primeval passion against younger reason,
Engenders faintly audible cries for something
Not yet known by the human mind.*

As I read the poem at the time of this writing (of my book), I see so much that is hidden, and at the same time I see the influence of my own experience and also what I had been exposed to through my reading and blending of these two parts of my life. A very lengthy and carefully considered reaction came from my late friend Dorothy Gulliver in England. I valued it so much that I kept the letter from her in my diary.

I submitted the poem to several journals, including The New Yorker. Art Coss suggested that it was “obscure enough to appear in The New Yorker.” Alas! It was not published, and therefore it remained in my diary.

I was reminded of the poem when I read Chapter 10, “The Rising of the Son,” in Simon Winchester’s Krakatoa, a beautiful account of the birth of an island.

Secrets – Combination Lock

In one of the writing experiences I planned for my students I placed a small combination lock bank on the table and asked the students to observe and make notes about the physical object itself. Then I asked them to observe it metaphorically and make notes to be used in writing a poem about the object. My usual practice was to join the students in writing and then in a subsequent class session we shared what we wrote. The following is the result of my self-imposed assignment.

*Silent sentinel
In shining armor,
Quietly manning your post,
Are you keeping something in
Or someone out?*

*Symbol of secrecy,
Guarding the unknown,
You possess such power
When curious minds approach.*

*Who knows your language?
Your coat gives a clue.
Numbers in unalterable sequence,
Sealed in the mind of your master,
Move your metallic soul,
And you respond
Obediently.*

The person's secrets help to define him or her. As I think further about this statement, I am reminded of an experience I had when I was writing Potcher's life story. We went to the old church in Boromville and walked through the cemetery. I was moved by the number of graves that were covered by a blank slab of concrete. There was nothing to identify the person buried beneath the blank concrete slab. My thought at the time was that each person laid to rest there had a story to tell and each person had a bank of secrets that could never be known. Lost in the mind of the deceased person was the "combination" that would allow the "soul to respond obediently" if it so desired.

My friend Tom Penton reported in a small discussion group an epitaph he had read on a tombstone that links secrets with the small "silent sentinel" observed by my students and me: **I know something you don't.**

Error – Autopsy

Until I linked these two words, I don't believe I ever seriously wondered what occurred during an autopsy, although I had believed that a careful analysis of error could be a positive thing. It is this linkage that caused me to explore the hidden likeness.

The entry in the Oxford Dictionary for the word "autopsy" is as follows:

1651 – 1. Seeing with one's own eyes; personal observation. 2. Dissection of a dead body, so as to ascertain by actual inspection, esp. the cause or seat of disease; in 1678: post-mortem examination. Also figurative: 1. The defect of autopsy may be compensated by sufficient testimony of a multitude (DeQuincy) 2. This autopsy of a fine lady's poem (Miss Braddon)

It is the broader use of the word – perhaps figurative - that caused me to make the connection that I have attempted to describe

below. Additionally, my friend Matt Jordan used the word in relation to an electrical problem, indicating that the company that had supplied equipment damaged by lightning would take further steps after their autopsy in an attempt to discover the cause of the problem.

A part of the pathological autopsy process is gathering information about the subject, e.g., events leading up to the demise, medical records, circumstances of death. Inspection of the body, e.g., weight and measure, eye color, ethnicity, sex and age, observing the body, injuries, X-ray and bone abnormality, samples of hair and nails all become essential information. The chest is dissected; abdominal and pelvic organs are examined and if necessary, the brain. There is little blood because the heart is not beating. Organs are examined in place. If the brain is dissected, a special saw is used to cut bone but leaves soft tissue. Organs are removed and examined. Body fluids are tested. Afterward, the organs are returned, minus samples. Breast bone and ribs are usually put back, the body sewn shut, and then washed and prepared for funeral directors. Can have open casket funeral or the body is cremated in accordance with law or family wishes.

When I began to make this linkage, which many might think is very strange, my mind took me back to 1969 when I published an article in the Alabama School Journal. At that time, I had returned to Auburn University to work on the TTT Project. We had begun to design a pilot program for prospective elementary teachers based on teacher roles rather than on subject matter content. One of the roles was diagnostician. The proposed change in preparing teachers was profound. Previously, for example, when a test was given, the usual procedure was to mark the errors, subtract the points missed from the possible score, and enter the score in a record to defend the letter grade assigned.

What I proposed in the article was a positive use of errors with emphasis on the cause. The above-mentioned procedure gave no attention to analysis, a factor which could provide extremely important information to the teacher. My thought was that such

analysis could give direction in the learning process, something of value to both the learner and the teacher; this is a mark of a higher level of sophistication when the teacher can tell why a learner makes a particular mistake. The comparison was made between the teacher and the physician. Few people would have confidence in the physician who made prescriptions without some form of diagnosis. It is possible for the teacher to develop proficiency in understanding how the learner thinks. This can be done in part by carefully listening and by analyzing learners' responses. Understanding what prompts a given response is often the clue to correct a misconception or to build new concepts. I cited an example I had seen on a test. A fourth grader was identifying antonyms. He selected "enable" as an antonym for "able." His explanation for this choice was the fact that he thought en was a prefix which meant not. It was apparent that he was associating "en" with the prefix "in" with which he was familiar.

The key is in the use of the word "why." Why will the child respond that 50 cents times 10 = \$50? Why will a child write "studing" for "studying"? Why does he miss a particular word when reading? Why does he miss a particular question in science? Diagnosis includes much more than the mere recognition of an error. It means a look at the way the individual is perceiving the situation. When the teacher has an understanding of the factors which contributed to the error, naturally he or she is in a better position to help the learner correct the error and avoid making the same error again.

Such an attitude on the part of the teacher can lead the learner to become more independent in analyzing his or her own errors. Anything the teacher can do that helps the learner become a more independent learner is a contribution to the life of the learner. There is no question that errors are inevitable. How the errors are treated makes a difference.

Cause of death? Cause of error? Cause of error beyond the classroom? Does it matter? Can autopsy of error assist the individual in understanding himself/herself?

Plato writes on the trial of Socrates, and at this time Socrates is supposed to have uttered the now famous statement: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” He subsequently was sentenced to death for impiety and was accused of corrupting youth. Serious reflective thought can cause the person to examine his or her life, determining what was achieved, degree to which the life has been lived according to expectations, clear failures, errors made - a willingness for self and others to see the life without filters. Further advice given by Socrates adds energy to the sharp reflective thought: “Know thyself.” Why is this important in searching for cause? One lives according to his nature: values, strengths, weaknesses, motivation. It is clear that a person can never fully know himself/herself objectively because the one who knows is behind what is known; however, self-knowledge is not only of value to the individual, it extends to relationships with others. Following much later after Socrates’ words were uttered, the French writer Montaigne built firmly on the idea by insisting that understanding one’s self is necessary to understanding others. This can be accomplished by the individual’s willingness to face himself/herself.

How far do we extend this idea? Is it sufficient to simply identify errors, count them, subtract from the possible score, and let them define the person? Can an autopsy of error apply to complex errors in the life of the individual? As proposed above, the teacher through wise use of errors made by learners can help the learners become more adept in analyzing their own errors and thus add depth to learning. Individuals might then make their own “forensic analysis” in searching for cause in errors throughout their lives. Will this self-understanding enhance empathy and aid in understanding others? There is one prerequisite and it comes from the mind of William Shakespeare when he in Hamlet had Polonius give advice to his son Laertes:

“This above all: to thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not be false to any man.”

The sharp, incisive instrument of thought begins its probe. It frames questions and follows wherever the questions lead. Current conditions are noted. The query reaches back into the past, even to childhood. Connections are made to missing things; nothing is hidden but mystery shrouds the inexplicable. It proceeds even to the genes of the distant past, knowing that there is no answer. Documents containing frozen words are consulted, shedding some light on the error. There is no pain to the physical lifeless body in an autopsy and little blood because the heart is no longer doing what it has done through the life of the person. The sharp instrument of reflective thought penetrates the years; the mind can cause tears to course in willing channels, bringing forth memories, connecting thoughts and experiences. Only if the individual believes that truth matters will he or she persist in the mental autopsy.

The mind is not only a sharp instrument that probes; it is an instrument that makes connections. These connections help to turn information into knowledge; they help to convert knowledge and experience into wisdom. Although cause might not be explicit, insights are clearer and there is a move toward greater knowledge of self. Understanding generates energy; the will directs action, assuring no repetition of the error but realizing the necessity of living with undetermined consequences.

Afterthought

At the end of the physical autopsy, the body is together again, eventually returning to the earth to become a different form of energy. The mind (spirit) lives in the memory of others; frozen words or other forms of expression, (See the metaphor “Spirit as Breath.”) and it joins the beautiful and mysterious collective human spirit that is accessible to all erring humans who choose to seek it and connect.

Change – Mutation

This connection seems to be a reasonable sequel to the preceding exploration of hidden likenesses.

The origin of life is a mystery. Some sources suggest that this occurred 4,000,000,000 years ago, beginning as a simple and one-celled life form. Even today, after billions of years of evolution, most organisms and most species are simple one-celled entities. There is no single path that explains the ascendancy to more complex forms of life; however, mutation is ultimately the only way in which variation enters a species or results in new species, the ultimate source of genetic variation. Mutation is the changing of the structure of a gene – error - resulting in a variant form that may be transmitted to subsequent generations, caused by the alteration of single base units in DNA, or the deletion, insertion, or rearrangement of larger sections of genes or chromosomes. It can occur when a DNA gene is damaged or changed in such a way as to alter the genetic message carried by the gene

Primitive life existed on the earth from a very early date. The oldest known sedimentary rocks contain fossils that show life was in Greenland nearly 4 billion years ago. In the early stages, life remained in its one-celled stage, but through evolutionary diversification, life-forms grew more complex. Multi-cellular organisms evolved. Different kinds of cells with specialized functions evolved, including egg and sperm specialized for sexual reproduction in some organisms. Later speciation resulted in the earliest known members of most of the animal phyla represented on Earth. Over the aeons, small mutations continued, and species changed. The species most successful in the competition for resources were able to reproduce and survive while other species eventually faded from the scene. Hereditary mutations are inherited from parents. They can be either harmful or beneficial, harmful ones decreasing the fitness of the organism and the beneficial increasing the fitness. It is also possible for the mutation to be neutral. This mechanism of change resulted in the emergence of life that populated the earth. Acquired (somatic) mutations occur during a person's life and are present

only in certain cells. These can be caused by environmental factors or an error is made when a DNA copies itself during cell division. Somatic mutations occur in body cells rather than in reproductive cells, eggs or sperm. This change cannot be passed to the next generation.

As is often the case, a new idea that affects my writing comes from my reading. As it relates to this particular case, I read on page 9 of Diarmaid MacCulloch's Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years the following:

*“All the world faiths which have known long-term success have shown a remarkable capacity to **mutate** (emphasis added), and Christianity is no exception.”*

It was the first time that I began to think of mutation in its broadest sense, resulting in change beyond variation in species.

How does Christianity today differ from the teachings of Jesus? How do the teachings of the early disciples and apostle Paul differ from the original ideas proposed by Jesus? How did the changes in what became Christianity occur through the years? The work of individuals and historical events result in mutation, the effect on the evolution of Christianity being subjectively assessed. One example is the influence of Constantine.

During the reign of Constantine (306-337 A.D.), Christianity emerged from being a persecuted community to becoming the official religion of the late Roman world. A turning point for early Christianity was the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. which decriminalized Christian worship. Also, during this time there was a move toward more orthodoxy and ecumenical councils. Constantine was converted in 312 A.D., although he was not baptized until near his death. Regardless of his motivation, his role as emperor to enforce and also to move toward ecclesiastical unity had great impact on Christianity. Christianity expanded throughout the empire.

During Constantine's reign, the First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. resulted in the first attempt by Christians to define orthodoxy for the whole church. Delegates from all regions of the Roman Empire attended; the council was organized along lines of Roman Senate. The purpose was to come up with new church laws, the emphasis being on unifying the laws. Further, the goal was to define unity of beliefs for the whole of Christendom, resulting in the Nicene Creed. The canonization of the Christian Bible followed.

Throughout history individuals and movements – mutations – have continued to affect the evolution of Christianity, e. g., Martin Luther and the Reformation, separation of the eastern and western orthodox churches, the Enlightenment, spread of Christianity to all continents and adapting to different cultures and changes through translation to myriad languages. On the current scene John Shelby Spong boldly writes his book Why Christianity Must Change or Die, suggesting that mutation will persist as Christianity continues to evolve.

The mutation of a human gene occurs at a given time; the mutation of a movement takes place at a given time or over a period of time; the mutation of the “gene” of a relationship between two people likewise occurs at a particular time. The evolution of relationships between people is affected by experiences. The gene becomes experience, and if there is a mutation - an error - in the experience, there is potentially an effect on the future of the relationship. It can be ascertained when the mutation occurred. Perhaps it is instructive to probe the mutation after the fact, although most people perhaps would be satisfied to follow the effects of the mutation without seeking to understand just as they may not question mutation in the evolution of their physical self or changes that have taken place in other aspects of their lives, for example in institutions, through mutation. For those who are curious, exploration of possibilities might not only be helpful in understanding the particular mutation, but also further the understanding of one's self.

Perhaps the most important question is: What caused the mutation? (See Metaphor on Error – Autopsy.) There may be no clear determination of cause; however, the probe can be helpful to the two people involved, provided they are open to such an exploration. There is risk in reaching depth of thought and understanding that might lead to temporary discomfort, and each must determine if understanding is important enough to take such a risk. Are both people willing to ask questions and follow where the questions lead? It might be impossible to answer some important questions, but the mere asking reflects an attitude of openness that can be helpful. For example, what part does heredity play in shaping each individual? Is there a willingness to consider what is deeper than the words or actions that produced the mutation? What can be traced to childhood or earlier experience?

The effect of the mutation will be determined to a great extent by the depth of the relationship between the two people, and this is based on the length of time and how well they have known each other and the nature of the relationship prior to the mutation. For example, the nature of interaction, serious conversation, shared experiences, a sense of humor, a relationship based on honesty and openness. Perhaps added to these characteristics is a basic trust of each other's character.

What can clearly be considered is the existing circumstances at the time of the mutation. While perceptions might differ, considering the different ways of viewing the circumstances can be instructive; a sharing of perception is essential. What are motives? Is anything hidden? Determining whether the occurrence is an isolated event or if it is a part of an accumulation that forms a pattern reaches beyond the circumstances at the moment. What words that are used contribute to the mutation? What role does emotion play? Is there linkage to previous experiences? What follow-up occurs in an effort to analyze the mutation? Perhaps most important, what are the long-term effects on the relationship?

Mutation will continue in humans and institutions, and evolution will persist as long as there is life. Effects will be felt in subsequent generations. There will be an end to the effects of somatic mutation in a relationship between two people. Its effect can cease when memory no longer brings it to consciousness of either person or there is failure through reflection to understand its effect. It can linger in the mind of one.

Under a bright October sky a cool breeze rustles the leaves on the nearby trees that are changing to their autumn coats and the lone mockingbird offers a medley. Peace prevails. A casket rests above the open grave waiting to welcome a body while family and friends quietly approach; the only sound is the crunch of the drying grass after the first frost. It is a gathering of individual, diverse thoughts, and memories. A voice begins to read something familiar to a few. An individual stands on the periphery listening, but mostly thinking. The people leave; the mockingbird keeps on singing.

Obsession – Storm

Everyone has experienced a storm. Perhaps few have wondered about the history of the word or an actual definition. There will be a nod when the word is traced to Proto-Germanic “sturmaz,” meaning noise or tumult. Immediately one hears the roar of thunder and senses the force of the wind, with support for a definition: “A disturbance of the normal conditions of the atmosphere, manifesting itself by winds of unusual force or direction often accompanied by rain, snow, hail, thunder and lightning or flying sand or dust.” Memories of summer storms, hail, tornados, hurricanes, snow are easily recalled. Emotions are stirred and damage remembered. As in so many aspects of our lives, searching for cause adds understanding and depth. So it is with a storm.

A center of low pressure develops with the system of high pressure surrounding it. The combination of opposing forces creates winds and the formation of storm clouds. The result: the

appearance of various types of storms. The thunder storm generates both lightning and thunder. Cloud to ground lightning and wind can result in severe damage.

The idea of storm extends beyond the weather. It surfaces in the visual arts in Joseph Turner's "Slave Ship." It is found in music as well: Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony," and Grofe's "Grand Canyon Suite." Jacob Bronowski, in his Ascent of Man, makes a link between the concept of power in nature and romantic poetry. The idea of extending the study of nature as it is to transforming it in order to obtain power from it, changing one form of power into another, transferred to the poets. He gives an example of the climax of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner": "a storm that breaks the leadly calm and releases life again." (page 282) He went on to write that "poets and painters were suddenly captured by the idea that nature is the fountain of power, whose different forms are all expressions of the same central force, namely energy."

We shift from energy in Nature to the mind of the person where energy moves sometimes in ways that cannot be explained fully in such phenomena as obsessions.

When we turn to the seventeenth century and see the meaning of the word, we find the following in the Oxford dictionary:

The action of besieging; investment, sieg - 1638.

Actuation by the devil or an evil spirit from without; the fact of being thus actuated – 1605.

The action of any influence, notion, or fixed idea which persistently assails or vexes – 1680.

We turn to the Internet for a modern definition:

An idea or thought that preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind.

The storm is born in the mind as it deals with conflicting energy coming from different sources. In the seventeenth century one perhaps struggled with “the devil or an outside spirit from without” just as two levels of air pressure struggle with each other. We can only imagine the struggle with such an invisible outside force that “persistently assailed” the person and the resultant misery.

Turning from the idea of an “evil spirit” to the modern scene where the struggle is with ideas or thoughts that might be related to an outside source, e. g., a person, thing, money, concept – anything that intrudes and causes preoccupation in a destructive way - the struggle is no less intense. Unwanted and repetitive thoughts, urges, or images can persist and add energy to the struggle.

Tracing the source of the obsession, while sometimes painful, can be a worthwhile venture for the person who is not afraid to question and then follow where the question leads. Beginning with one that as yet cannot be answered can lead to speculation: heredity. Is such a question worthwhile even though it at present cannot be answered with any clear documentation? In a serious effort to determine cause (See Metaphor “Error – Autopsy” and “Change – Mutation) a person must not be afraid to be honest in asking and following questions. The probing and connecting functions of the mind can be helpful, even if the ultimate cause is not determined. Turning to childhood environment and experiences can be helpful. The ability to form healthful attachments with other people and things begins early in childhood. Are there experiences or circumstances – although painful to recall – that contribute to the present conflict? What feelings are present when the obsession persists? Does it lead to fantasy? What effect does it have on relationships with others? Can it lead to behavior that not only affects the one with the obsession, but also others? Effects of the storm? Of the obsession? Although action can provide momentary relief, pain and suffering can result in the long term.

We don't know if a person in the seventeenth century would win the struggle with the devil or the evil spirit, and we don't know if individuals now can win in the struggle within the mind. If the person is able to be in charge of thinking and realize that a thought is just a thought and danger comes when the thought is transformed into action, this can be significant. If the thought can be interrupted with insight into the root of the thought, the break can be helpful in the termination of the thought. Or insertion of insight gained through self-examination and reflection can make the distance in the break greater, thus destroying the unwanted thought. Practice of this kind of mental action can lead to a new freedom that is based on understanding. As has been pointed out in previous metaphors, the connecting function of the brain adds to understanding; the will directs action. This is determined by the decision of the individual whether there is a desire to be free of the obsession.

Freedom – Writing

This might seem a stretch, but for me there is a hidden likeness. Many years ago, I wrote a story, and I wish I remembered exactly when I wrote it. The yellowed pages remind me that many years have passed since my idea found its way into a story. There is no doubt a part of me is in this fiction, and I think I want to include it because of the meaning it has for me at this time in my life, particularly since writing has been important for me for a long time, growing in significance in retirement. So, I simply copy the story from the yellowed pages and let the reader decide if the hidden likenesses I see are there.

The Carving

The bus moved slowly along the flat Mississippi country road. Neil sat up in the seat as the driver announced, "Next stop – Roberts Crossing." He stretched his arms, wiggled his fingers, and then settled back, though not too comfortably because he remembered his aunt had told him

to listen carefully for Roberts Crossing. He was tired from the long ride, but his real exhaustion had come from thinking as he tried to understand what had happened to him and what might be ahead.

Neil's mind had known many different thoughts and feelings intimately on this trip he really did not want to make: the loneliness of rejection when his father's brother said he could not move in with him; the uncertainty of going South, especially since he had heard all the tales about the conditions there; sharp pains of sadness as he boarded the bus, knowing he would not see his small mid-western hometown again; and now the fear that he might not fit into his aunt's house in Mississippi, even though coming to live with her and her husband seemed to be his only option.

The braking of the bus reminded him that he had arrived at Roberts Crossing. He was made even more aware when he realized his sweating fingers were clutching the felt-covered book he had kept in the seat near him throughout the trip. As he looked out the window, he saw a man and woman waiting in front of a frame building: the pink gentleness of the late afternoon sky was reflected on her face; his was expressionless, though the heat of many days of sun had burned its way into his skin.

His aunt, small of stature, welcomed him with a warm embrace. Her husband, wearing a faded plaid shirt, overalls, and brogans stood aside and watched. Holding Neil at arm's length, then, smiling and brushing a tear from her cheek, his aunt said softly, "My, you are the spittin' image of Brother, but you sure are tall for fourteen.

His uncle moved only when Neil and his aunt started toward the Model A which was parked alongside the narrow road. His aunt did most of the talking as they rode very slowly down the pavement and turned off onto a dirt road. Neil was beginning to feel a little better; at least one of his uncertainties was settled now that he had met the two people with whom he would be living. He could not help but wonder though why his uncle had nothing to say.

The gray mixture of dust and on-coming darkness made the small house hardly visible from the road as Neil's uncle turned up the driveway. When the car stopped near the front porch, Neil could hear the clear and varied song of the mockingbird as it rose above the chorus of crickets welcoming the evening. The lightning bugs, one by one, quickly identified themselves as they pierced the early evening with their mysterious light. He inhaled the clean, cool air as he followed the couple into the house, holding his small suitcase in his right hand and cradling the book in his left.

Once they were inside, his uncle finally spoke. It seemed as though he had been planning exactly what he was going to say because he spit his words out with no hesitation:

“Now, boy, we need to git somethin’ straight right now. I ain’t ya pa and I know it. Fact is, what I heerd ‘bout him I don’t like. He didn’t b’lieve in the kinda work I have to do. If you gonna live here, you gotta work. If you work, you eat – it’s that...”

His wife interrupted, “Now, Sam, give him a chance. He’s got to get used to us.”

“I know it — and the quicker the better. He can git started in the mornin’. We’ll be workin’ in the bottomland tomorrow. I’ll see how quick he can learn.”

Neil was puzzled at this conversation and didn’t say much except to answer his aunt’s questions as they sat down to the table to eat. He could already see that things were going to be very different for him. His uneasiness returned.

After they finished eating and his aunt’s questions ceased, he left the table and went to a small room which opened out onto the L-shaped back porch. This was to be his room.

As he looked out the window into the darkness which had closed in around the house, those things he had felt on the bus were coming again. He stooped over his suitcase, opened it, pushed aside the shirts and socks and found two small carvings he had carefully wrapped in his clean underwear. He held one tightly in his hands, then moved his right hand slowly across the carefully carved figure. With each indentation Neil was reminded that his father had carved this especially for him when he was ten. The second carving was unfinished.

Neil set the unfinished carving before him on the table by an open window. He sat in the chair, his elbows resting on the table and his hands cupped under his chin. An oil lamp to the left of the carving accented the soft unfinished lines of the carving and cast shadows along the wall. There was enough light for him to see the fingerprints his wet hands had left on the journal as he held it so tightly on the bus. He opened his father’s journal to a page he had read

a dozen times since his father died a week ago. He just could not understand it. He read it aloud as he studied the unfinished carving in front of him.

May 29, 1939

Today as I worked to free the figure from the wood I felt as though something reached inside and fashioned a new freedom for me. As I shaped the form, I, too, seemed to be shaped by some force. This will be my best work because it symbolizes freedom – no longer will I be imprisoned by circumstances I cannot control.

The unfinished carving before Neil was a reminder that his father did not achieve what he wanted to do. But Neil did not understand his father's last entry in the journal. Just what did he mean? He sat very still for a few minutes, then closed the book and continued to sit by the open window.

A clean curtain sifted the night breeze which brought a sweet aroma from the strange white flowers below the window and the smell of a summer shower on the dusty road outside. His nostrils were filled with a mixture of the outside air and the smell of kerosene from the lamp on the table. These smells, the sounds – but not his thoughts – were new to him and he didn't understand what it all meant. He quietly moved to the bed and slept, though not soundly.

As was promised by his uncle, Neil was awakened before daybreak the next morning. He had never eaten breakfast before daylight. This did not bother him as

much as wondering what was in store for him when he reached the field.

After breakfast he and his uncle left the house and walked together to the barn. So far, so good. Neil watched with interest as the rooster flew onto the corner post of the lot and proudly announced the day. There was a freshness in the early morning air as the soft light from the sun, still hidden below the horizon, danced among the beads of dew on the leaves and tall blades of grass. Something inside Neil seemed to be in tune with nature's sounds and his eyes were drawn to things often unnoticed by others.

As his uncle led the mule down the path, Neil walked slightly behind.

"Come on. She won't hurt you."

With this, Neil moved up alongside his uncle, without saying anything. They walked side by side for a while; then his uncle broke the silence:

"Boy, just what did yo' daddy do?"

Neil did wish his uncle would call him by his name, but he didn't feel he could ask him. He simply answered:

"He had different jobs at different times. After Mom died he had a hard time keeping a job. He spent a lot of time making things."

"Like what?"

“Well, he made some furniture and things like that. He sold what he made and that’s how we bought things we needed. We didn’t have a lot, but we made it o.k.”

“I thought he was one them. what do you call it? ...you know ... paints pictures.”

“You mean – artist? He did like most of all to carve things out of wood, but he did this when he wasn’t making things and selling them.”

“You can’t eat stuff like that, boy. The best way to be sure you got somethin’ to eat is to put seeds in the groun’ and grow what ya gonna eat ya self.”

The conversation ended here. Neil knew his uncle just did not understand. He had watched his father work and he knew how much his father liked what he did. And, too, he was able to buy what they needed. They were happy together; that was what counted.

After they reached the field, Neil watched his uncle begin the plowing. It didn’t look too hard. That is, until he tried to plow a furrow the same distance from the one made by his uncle. At first, his uncle just laughed; then he said very sternly, “A man ain’t worth nothin’ if he can’t plow a straight row.”

Some time passed before Neil was able to plow a straight row. He learned to do it because his uncle expected him to, not because he really believed what his uncle said. Each week that passed made him know how different he was from his uncle. This difference made him uncomfortable.

He had no choice; he had to do what was expected of him. But no one could control his thoughts.

The summer months moved on slowly and September arrived. Neil faced another beginning: school. The first day as he walked along the road to school, he felt alone again. He had met two boys at church during the summer and they would be in his grade at school. This helped some but he still was nervous about going to a new school.

As he approached the white frame schoolhouse, he thought of his good friend, Jason in Indiana and wished he were going back to his old school. He really did not have a lot of friends before he came South, but one good friend did make things different. He was sure of this.

Neil hoped he would be unnoticed this first day of school. Things were working in his favor until Miss Smalley, the English teacher, asked the students to tell something exciting they had done during the summer. When Neil reluctantly began to talk, several of the students snickered, and one of the older boys said, 'You sho' do talk funny.'" There was a chorus of laughter in the room.

Trying to ignore the remark, Neil made his description brief and sat down. Even though Miss Smalley scolded the students for being rude and they stopped laughing, Neil still felt their stares. He was humiliated.

Neil was relieved when the teacher stood up and said, "Now I want you all to write something." He would much rather write than talk in class. This had been true even in his former school. Others apparently did not feel this

way because there were numerous groans in the class as the teacher continued.

I know you don't like to write but you will need it. It is also good for you to do things occasionally you don't like to do. Sometimes if we get to be good at something, then we like it. You may choose your own subject. You may write about something you did during the summer or you might write about some experience you have had, one which made you angry, happy, or sad. You decide. Just remember, writing about something can make you understand it better and sometimes it can even make you feel better. You will have thirty minutes."

Neil thought for a few minutes and then began to write. At first it was very hard, but once he got started, his thoughts found their way to the page in some unexplainable way. He could visualize the time he watched his father carve the statue for his birthday. He remembered how his father hummed softly as he carved, and he could see his father's hands gently scraping the final shape.

His thoughts shifted at this time to the unfinished carving, and he wondered again what his father was going to make. Also, he thought of the last page in the journal. What did it mean? He wanted so much to know, but he did not want to share the journal with anyone. He must work it out for himself. The sound of Miss Smalley's voice reminded him he had five minutes to complete his writing, so his thought shifted again

That night at supper Neil's aunt asked him about his first day at school. He simply said, "It was all right."

He did not want to relive the humiliation he felt when all the others laughed at him. And he really didn't think his aunt and uncle would understand about the writing. And he didn't want to tell them about the carving and the journal. So what else could he say?

He left the table as soon as he could, lit the lamp in his room, and went immediately to the drawer where he kept his shirts. He removed the journal, and then he carefully unwrapped the unfinished carving. Sitting in the chair next to the table, he held the carving in his hands and felt the edges that had been left by his father. He opened the book and the page showing what his father wrote on May 29 lay before him. What was the figure his father was trying to free? What did he mean that he, too, was being changed as he carved the figure? Neil heard his own voice ask, "How can I know?"

He sat very still for a few minutes. Then with an instinctive movement of his right hand he turned the page; the emptiness of the blank pages seemed to invite him to write. Without really knowing why, he picked up a pencil and began writing on the clean page which followed his father's last entry. He did not re-read what he had written. When he laid the pencil beside the open journal, Miss Smalley's words entered his consciousness. "Writing about something can make us understand it better and sometimes it can make us feel better." He knew he felt better. The feeling continued as he put the carving and the journal back in the drawer. He stretched his long arms, breathed deeply, blew out the lamp, and made his way through the dark room to his bed. He did feel better, and he slept soundly.

The days that followed were not too different except the air was crisp further into the morning. Too, Neil learned from experience that with planting also came harvesting. He felt more comfortable with the jobs he had to do before going to school and after he came home in the afternoon. He even noticed that occasionally his uncle was calling him by his name. School was about the same except, one day in early December, Miss Smalley asked Neil to remain a few minutes after the other students left.

“Neil, I have been reading your papers very carefully recently, and I have been pleased with what you have written. I would like for you to write an essay for our county competition this year.”

“What would I write about?”

“The general topic is ‘Our Heritage: Freedom’. I believe you could write a very good essay on the subject.”

“I don’[t] mind writing but I’m not sure I could write much on that subject.”

“Just think about it and we can discuss it later.”

That night Neil told his aunt and uncle about Miss Smalley’s wanting him to write the essay. His uncle responded first with a growl, “Writin’ don’t bring food to the table, boy. I done tol’ you what you gotta do if you want to keep food on the table. But if you want to listen to that teacher, go ahead. You just be sure you git ya work

done here before you leave in the mornin' and when you come home."

His aunt, in a reprimanding voice, said, "Now, Sam, Brother was always writing pretty things. I guess Neil is just a chip off the ole block...."

Neil's uncle interrupted, "That's what I'm scared of."

She continued with a more definite tone, "I don't see nothing wrong with it. My brother never done you no harm."

Neil left the room and he could still hear their voices as he sat on the back steps. He listened only briefly; then his attention was turned to the quiet evening outside. The cool air sent him to his room for a jacket before he yielded to the evening's invitation for him to walk.

His mind carried him back to the times he and his father used to walk together. After his mother's death, Neil remembered taking long walks with his father. They didn't talk much; they just walked.

As Neil walked alone now, he knew he was caught in the middle of what his father was and the new life with his aunt and uncle. He knew he was more like his father; he knew it more every day, but he also knew his uncle would not really allow him to be like his father. He was caught; he could not escape.

A few drops of rain fell on his face. The cool air moved more quickly about him, and he zipped the jacket and began to walk more briskly. As he looked up, feeling the

drops of rain on his face, lightning etched a river of light across the dark southern sky. The illumination was gone in an instant; the earth around vibrated, then settled again as the sound rumbled away into the darkness. The force of nature had carved an image in the darkness and Neil saw it.

The rain sent Neil back to the house where he went immediately to his room. The magnetic force of the carving pulled him to the drawer where it was kept. He again took it out and studied it carefully. As he began to rub his left hand across the carving, his right hand picked up a pencil and started to write in the open journal he had placed on the table. He stopped for a moment, his eyes studying the carving again. The lines seemed to converge and form an image dimly perceptible. Then it faded. Suddenly, voices born on different waves met in his mind:

“A man ain’t worth nothin’ if he can’t plow a straight row.”

“He’s just a chip off the old block.”

“Something fashioned a new freedom for me.”

“Writing about something can help us understand it better.”

“The final release from imprisonment.”

He began to write vigorously as though something propelled his hand. His thoughts like liquid flowed through the pencil onto the page; then they solidified as words formed into patterns.

As he wrote, something seemed to be reaching inside his mind and shaping a new image. He closed his eyes for a moment. Then as he opened them and they fell upon his father's carving; he, too, seemed to know this would have been his father's greatest work. At last he understood.

Neil was never quite the same after that December night. He wrote the essay on freedom, but he didn't win the competition because the kind of freedom he wrote about was not what they had in mind. He learned to plow a straight row, but he didn't become like his uncle. He continued to keep his father's journal, but he didn't become like his father. He was different; he was Neil. The carving and journal were destroyed when the house burned in '53, but what they symbolized for Neil was indestructible.

Words – Fossils

Studying the history of the earth is facilitated by the use of fossils. The word comes from a Latin word “fossilis,” meaning having been dug up. A fossil is any preserved remains, compression, or trace of any once-living thing from a past geological age. (Source: Internet) The fossil can appear in the form of body fossils, molds and casts, petrification, footprints and trackways, and coprolites (fossilized feces). They can be large (macrofossils) or very small (microfossils) such as bacteria and pollen, only visible with a microscope. They are formed when remains are covered by sediment soon after death. Minerals in sediment seep into the remains, which become fossilized. It is usually the hard, bony parts; soft bodies rarely fossilize. Amber, fossilized resin, can preserve soft bodied organisms such as ants, flies and mosquitoes.

The fossils become a window to the past. They are most commonly found in sedimentary rock; they can be used to date the sedimentary rock. They can tell about the evolutionary diversification of living things, about their surroundings and conditions under which they lived. Paleontologists can study the fossils and tell how the earth has changed. Where they are found can signal, for example, that at one time present mountains were at the bottom of the ocean. I was made aware of this many years ago when I visited Providence Canyon in Georgia. On display were sea shells that were found inside the canyon, indicating that at one time that area of the state was under water.

Various methods are used for dating fossils. Some can be dated by comparing a fossil to similar rocks and fossils of known ages. Radiometric dating is used by measuring the decay of isotopes, either within the fossil or more often the rocks associated with it. Volcanic rock contains materials that are naturally radioactive. Skilled paleontologists select the most suitable dating technique.

The idea of fossils providing a window to the history of the earth is exciting for me, knowing that there are limited people of my acquaintance who would share my feeling. Often, I think of the chain of life and in my imagination try to visualize what the earth was like as various links are visited. I wonder how many people ever think of a time when the earth was not inhabited by humans or ancestors of humans. What was it like when life actually began as a one-celled simple organism? As fossils are found, dated, and attempts are made to put the live being in an environment, the “view” from the “window” for the paleontologist must indeed be thrilling.

As the fossils provide a window into the physical history of the earth, words are a window into human history. Unfortunately, we cannot find a fossil of the first word uttered that represented the action of the mind of the being that uttered it. We can assume that there was a time in the evolution of the human brain that resulted in the beginning of language. A mutation? (See metaphor “Change – Mutation) What we do know is that the discovery of ancient manuscripts provides insights into human

activity at various periods in history. Just as paleontologists can aid in determining what can be learned from fossils, linguists can shed light on meaning expressed in the ancient manuscripts. No doubt, the accuracy does not reach the same level as the fossils, but the window provides a view, although more subjective. Getting into the mind of the person(s) who produced the original manuscripts is not achievable in the same way as identifying and dating the fossil; however, continual study, placing in context, continual improvement in translation can make the view through the window clearer.

A study of the history of individual words and the evolution of meaning is of value to anyone who is interested in understanding meaning represented by a word. We begin by understanding that language is arbitrary. There is no inherent meaning in a word; rather the word is a symbol for meaning that resides in the mind. It is also necessary to understand that meaning changes through usage, making it necessary to know the context of the time when the word was used. An example is the word “nice.” If we refer to the Oxford dictionary, we see the extensive variation of meaning of the word. A few examples of dates and meaning:

1560 – foolish, stupid

1606 – wanton, lascivious

1555 – strange, rare

1720 – tender, delicate, over-refined

1793 – to have an agreeable, attractive or pretty appearance

There are numerous others, the point being if one is reading a selection where the word is used, it is important to realize that the word represents different meanings at various times it is used. Imagine a conversation between two people during the years indicated above when the word “nice” was used. In our own time, we have seen another example in the word “gay.”

It is important to realize how words make their way into the dictionary, which in reality becomes a catalogue of usage of the

word. I was made aware of this when I was studying the papers of Sir Patrick Geddes, a Scotsman whose work touched different fields. I found that he coined the word “conurbation,” meaning “an extended urban area, typically consisting of several towns merging with the suburbs of one or more cities.” Upon checking, I found that it was in the dictionary, and I decided to determine when it actually was entered for the first time. I contacted a Merriam-Webster editor with the inquiry, and I learned that it was “picked up” for the first time in an article by Lewis Mumford who wrote extensively about Geddes. I was pleased to know the publication and date that marked the appearance of this word in the dictionary for the first time.

In contrast, there is one word that will never appear in the dictionary. I know this because I created the word especially for a class I taught (See metaphor “Words as Windows to the Mind.”) The word “vasamity” is a good one and represents a particular concept that I also created. It worked well for the particular situation for which it was created, and the class session made a sufficient impression on a graduate student that she wrote an essay “On Vasamity.” Her essay was not published; rather it remained in my files for **thirty** years after which I returned it to her when she visited me. It is possible that if her essay had been published, the word could have found its way into the dictionary.

I shall now give a personal example where I wanted some of my words to provide a window into a life that was unfamiliar to my students. When I was leading my students in a discussion on language change, I used my own personal experience to show the importance of understanding the context in which language is used and understood. I lifted certain expressions from my diary I kept beginning when I was thirteen years old and living in the country. Below are some of the words and expressions I shared with the students to see what meaning the expressions had for them. Very few of the expressions had any meaning for the students while practically all would be understood by anyone who had lived in similar circumstances. I later compiled the expressions along with explanations in Expressions With Special Meaning, thus aiding a clearer view when viewing life at an earlier

time. Some of the expressions follow, inviting the reader to see what meaning is behind the words:

<i>January 30, 1945</i>	<i>Never drew as much water in my life</i>
<i>February 1, 1945</i>	<i>Ground cracklings all afternoon</i>
<i>February 12, 1945</i>	<i>Coming up a bad cloud</i>
<i>February 21, 1945</i>	<i>Made Mother a handling rag tonight</i>
<i>March 3, 1945</i>	<i>Take up the meat</i>
<i>March 31, 1945</i>	<i>Broke a trace chain</i>
<i>April 2, 1945</i>	<i>Knocked corn stalks all afternoon</i>
<i>May 19, 1945</i>	<i>Finished bedding out over in the back field</i>
<i>June 1, 1945</i>	<i>Ran out corn middles this afternoon</i>
<i>June 5, 1945</i>	<i>Laid by watermelons</i>
<i>June 7, 1945</i>	<i>Ran around corn over in the backfield</i>
<i>August 20, 1945</i>	<i>Brought some slabs and we cut them</i>
<i>October 11, 1945</i>	<i>The people turned the "juice" on</i>
<i>October 27, 1945</i>	<i>Went to the show</i>
<i>November 23, 1945</i>	<i>Dried up lard all day</i>
<i>January 19, 1946</i>	<i>Took some corn to the mill</i>
<i>February 11, 1946</i>	<i>He might lose his hog</i>
<i>February 6, 1947</i>	<i>Daddy got his teat cups</i>
<i>May 15, 1947</i>	<i>I better hit the hay</i>
<i>May 28, 1947</i>	<i>Had a pound party up at the club house</i>
<i>October 8, 1947</i>	<i>Went on a possum hunt</i>
<i>November 22, 1947</i>	<i>Daddy is still throwing it up to me</i>
<i>January 14, 1948</i>	<i>Got my nose smutted</i>

<i>January 28, 1948</i>	<i>Had the box supper at the Oak Grove school house</i>
<i>February 25, 1948</i>	<i>Daddy had a fit because I went over there</i>
<i>May 25, 1948</i>	<i>Had to turn my ring around</i>
<i>October 17, 1948</i>	<i>Had all-day singing at church</i>
<i>October 26, 1948</i>	<i>It did something to me</i>
<i>January 21, 1949</i>	<i>Learned how to shag</i>
<i>May 26, 1949</i>	<i>Mrs. Copeland told me I would be a flag bearer</i>

I shared the words and expressions with several people in different settings, including a friend and English professor in England. She studied each expression, compared it with a similar expression in England or indicated that it was unknown to her. When she responded to “Learned how to shag,” she gave the following warning, “Be careful how you use the phrase! In England ‘shag’ is slang for sexual intercourse.” Once I shared “Dried up lard all day” with a group of men in a book club; none had ever heard the expression. Rather, some in the group referred to “rendering lard.” Interestingly, when I used the term in conversation with Potcher, a man in his seventies who has lived in the country all his life, he knew exactly what the expression meant.

The words and expressions provide a window on a five-year segment of my life; however, the view will not be clear simply by knowing the words. The explanation in the compilation mentioned above will result in a clearer vision. This simple example illustrates the possibility of using words as windows to human history; however, meaning and context determine clarity of the view.

Thought – Power Switch

Once when I was sitting in my chair, my eyes settled on the light switch on the wall. My mind then began an exploration that resulted in my searching for hidden likenesses in thought and a power switch. My first thought was that with the “click” of that light switch on the wall, I was connected to energy that, although invisible, brought light to the room. I was connected to energy that reaches in an almost unlimited way to all the other people who also had turned on the switch. I was connected to Nature as the energy of moving water was being converted to the invisible energy that was entering my home. I was further connected to the invisible energy of gravity causing the water to flow. I was connected to the water cycle, thus connecting me to the sun and all of Nature. From the beginning, the key word in this metaphor is going to be **“connection.”** If I had not flipped the switch there was only potential energy. As I move about in the house and look for power switches, I realize I can prepare a meal, listen to music, see images that are generated from great distances by making a connection.

I move to my computer and press the power switch. Again, I move beyond potential. I have a question; I inquire, press another key and there is information. I write a message, press another key and the words appear on the computer of my friend in Scotland. I am connected to the world. The energy generated by the printed word finds its way into the mind of another person through the connecting energy of the technology. The technology has made it possible to be connected through invisible waves in the atmosphere, always there, but discovered and used by humans to their benefit.

T.S. Eliot in his Choruses From the Rock asks:

*Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?*

Will Durant in his The Story of Philosophy perhaps makes an oversimplification, but his emphasis on the role of the mind is reasonable:

Sensation is unorganized stimulus, perception is organized sensation, conception is organized perception, science is organized knowledge, wisdom is organized life; each is a greater degree of order, and sequence, and unity. Whence this order, this sequence, this unity? Not from the things themselves; for they are known in us only by sensations that come through a thousand channels at once in disorderly multitude; it is our purpose that puts order and sequence and unity upon this importunate lawlessness; it is ourselves, our personalities, our minds, that bring light upon these seas.

One function of the mind is to make connections. I remember vividly an experience when I was at the beach. I put my foot into the water, and my thought followed, “I am in touch with the world.” This was significant for me inasmuch as I thought I had an original idea. A further connection came when I read the following from James Boswell’s The Tour To The Hebrides:

Monday, 13th September 1773

During this dreary ride, we were sometimes relieved by a view of branches of the sea, that universal medium of connection amongst mankind.

Changing my egotistical thought, I realized that the connection was deeper: I was connected to the world, but I was also linked to another human being’s mind who lived more than 200 years earlier. I found comfort in my belief in the collective human spirit. I moved in my thinking to the present and Sara Thomsen’s words, “By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one.” (See Metaphor “Spirit as Breath.”)

The importance of synthesis through making connections causes me to remember a very strange dream I had when I think I was placing too much emphasis on analysis in an attempt at understanding. Fran and I were traveling with our Scottish friends Jim and Ina Dinwoodie in France. We stopped at a Bed and Breakfast in a small village to spend the night. The next morning at breakfast I shared my dream which was rather disturbing for me. I reported that I was holding a rose in my left hand and with my right hand I was removing each petal one at a time and saying to myself, "I am understanding the rose." What followed was a second statement, "In understanding the rose, I am destroying it." End of dream. These friends were the kind who would never take such a "strange dream" lightly. We agreed that both analysis and synthesis were necessary for understanding. It is the function of the mind to maintain the balance through searching for meaningful connections.

Thought becomes the "switch" that makes the connection, and energy is released. In a sense, it becomes a bridge. (See metaphor "Prayer as Bridge.") I share connections that came from a thought.

Early one morning in my solitude, I reached for a book near my chair as I enjoyed my coffee. The book, 101 Famous Poems, was sent to me recently by Fred Thompson, a friend for many years. I read poems aloud at random. I came across one that seemed to leap from the page with particular meaning for me: "Each in his Own Tongue," by William Herbert Carruth (1859-1924). At that time, I was not familiar with Carruth. I sent a copy of the poem to three people: Jim Bradley, Bill Hornbuckle in Texas, and Anne Dinwoodie in Edinburgh, Scotland. Then the results of connections between the poet, these three individuals, and me resulted in what I considered a spiritual link. Jim responded in an e-mail:

So interesting you should send me Carruth's poem. I was first introduced to it last Sunday at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship service here (Wisconsin). It is in the hymnal as a hymn, which we sang after a

program on the formation, life, and death of stars. Several of us commented then on how much we liked the words to the hymn. And now three days later my dear friend sends it to me in its original poem form along with biography information on the author!

How wonderful!

From Bill Hornbuckle:

Thank you for the Carruth poem. Molly and I are familiar with it, having sung it from our UU hymnal a couple of times. Thinking you might want to play and even sing it, I have put a copy of the hymn in the mail to you today. Its partnering with the new England melody some editing, but the gist of it is intact. I first encountered it in a theological study group where one of the members brought it to our attention, with the same questions that arose in you.

Then from Anne Dinwoodie in Edinburgh, I learned that John Steinbeck took a course from Carruth when the latter taught at Stanford. She reported in an online oral history interview with Edward W. Strong, a philosopher and chancellor of the University of California at Berkley in the 1960s. Strong recalled being in Carruth's class with Steinbeck:

I enrolled in Carruth's class in poetry writing. It was springtime, and he had his students meet under an oak tree on the expansive lawn stretching out from the front of the campus. He gave us a reason. After all, what better place was there to discuss the poems that we wrote than under an oak tree in the springtime? Perhaps there was another reason, for he was hardly ever prompt. He lived in Palo Alto. Once we were gathered under the oak tree, it made no difference if he were somewhat late because

we were not going to leave such a pleasant spot. We could spot him coming from the distance, carrying his little satchel and hurrying to join us to discuss our poetry writing. In that poetry class was John Steinbeck. I already knew him from the English Club. We, in a way, competed with each other in our writing of poetry to see who would receive the better grade from Professor Carruth. When we got our grades, John got an A, and I received a B+. I said to John, "Now look, you've read my poetry and I've read your poetry. Do you think your poetry was any better than mine?" He said no. Then I said, "Well, can you explain, then, why you have received an A from Professor Carruth and I've received only a B+?" He said, "Because you didn't dwell in your poetry on the theme that would win an A from Professor Carruth," I said, "Theme?" He said, "Professor Carruth has been strong on one theme. Some call it evolution, and some call it God. I wrote about God. I got the A." (Posted in Bay area, Calif and tagged Palo Alto Unitarian history on October 12, 2013)

The **first verse** of the poem:

*A fire mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jellyfish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.*

Carruth was born the year Darwin published On the Origin of Species.

Perhaps the connections here are only important to me; however, it shows a function of the mind that can indeed result in meaning, although it might be limited to one person.

The importance of the connecting function of the mind initially was important to me when I began to explore the collective human spirit. Words are one means of transmitting thought, thus making it possible for the individual to connect with others through what they have said or written, a source waiting for the connection to be made. The beautiful idea that we read to know we are not alone underscores the possibility for connection to other people who are alive and those no longer living. Searching in libraries allows the person to enter the collective human spirit. When I come across an idea or thought in reading that is the same or similar to one that I have had, I feel a connection and wonder how the same thought can occur to two minds separated by centuries. The combined libraries of the world are filled with books that contain the thoughts of writers through the ages, like the combined power of electricity is waiting for the individual to connect by pressing the power switch.

When I recite a line from John Donne's "For Whom the Bell Tolls": "Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind," I sense a connection. I cannot know his thinking that caused him to write this statement, but his belief that he had a connection with all mankind suggests a linkage with something beyond himself, and it further stirs something within me as I read it.

What Emily Dickinson wrote about books is instructive:

*There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll.*

*How frugal is the chariot
That bears the human soul.*

What about those who do not leave any words or any other kind of expression and are no longer in the memories of people who are living? I do not have an answer, but it seems reasonable that anyone who has been alive and breathed is physically a part of the collective human spirit if we accept the idea of universal spirit based on the air they breathed. Access is made easier if the person has left some form of expression to which another person can connect. However, as the ocean is the “universal medium of connection amongst mankind” so the air containing the breath of all humans who have lived connects the human spirit.

Perhaps the answer resides somewhere in the mystery of the long chain of life. Shakespeare reminds us that “one touch of nature makes the whole world kin.” Einstein informed us that if we look deep into Nature, we can understand everything better. Is not everything connected to everything else? Life is continuous since its beginning although we do not at this time know its origin. Individuals within every species are born and they die. The connection between life and death is not fully understood. The chain of life remains intact, but we haven’t solved the mystery of what happens when one “piece” of life is no longer living and leaves the chain. Is it a matter of simply changing forms of energy? There are requirements for sustaining life in all forms. At various times along this long chain of life different forms evolved, but the relationships between and among the various forms remain. The survival of humans depends on the symbiotic relationships between the species and plants. When I breathe, my breath is welcomed by the beautiful maple tree near me, and I in turn thank this my kin for giving me oxygen. Does this exchange result in the survival or death of either breath?

In the mind of the living, the one who is no longer present can live again. The connection is made through thought. Again, turning to Nature for an example, we see the phenomenon of the resurrection fern. I repeat an attempt to capture this **connection through thought:**

Resurrection Fern

Clinging to the limb

of the live oak tree,

I, too, live.

Nature beckons --

I die.

A drop of rain

(like thought of a distant soul)

Touches my wrinkled frond.

I live again.

Wendell Berry wrote about the “circle of all creatures, passing in and out of life” in “The Larger Circle.”

*We clasp the hands of those that go before us,
And the hands of those who come after us.
We enter the little circle of each other's arms
And the larger circle of lovers,
Whose hands are joined in a dance,
And the larger circle of all creatures,
Passing in and out of life,
Who move also in a dance,
To music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it
Except in fragments.*

In the long evolution of human life, there was a time along the way when consciousness of self was born in the human mind, and questions arose about why things happened. James Michener in his fictional account in The Source shows Ur first seeing his reflection in the water. He writes that “in those infinitely distant ages gods had not yet been called forth by the hunger of men.” When Ur saw his face looming up from the well he was aware of his image, and he began to laugh, disturbing a tiny pebble that dropped into the well. The pebble set up ripples which distorted the image of his face. He was frightened, thinking some unknown power could destroy who he was. Observations called for explanations and this connection only grew in intensity in the time that followed as attempts were made to understand and explain the forces that affected human life. What began so long ago persists today, giving rise to different explanations.

The emphasis throughout this metaphor has been on the mental energy that is available to the individual through the connecting function of the mind just as physical energy is available through the connecting function of a power switch. I remember the excitement I felt when I “connected” with Spinoza through his Theological-Political Treatise (1670) and read

Nothing is sacred, profane, or impure absolutely and independently of the mind but only in relation to the mind.

This places great responsibility on the individual as he or she makes connections within the mind and further connects with what is possible beyond the mind in the process of living and growing. I attempted to capture this in the metaphor “Life – A Walk,” in the line “We were walking to think, to understand, and to love.” My dear daughter presented me with an art piece that captures this so beautifully. I am grateful to her for making the connection and capturing it in such a meaningful way.

Baring the Soul – Opening Flood Gates

The river flows unimpeded, following a path etched in the rich soil at an undetermined time in the past. It creates a peaceful scene that invites life in various forms to thrive. The surrounding area is verdant, also making natural homes for different life forms. It invites humans to sit by its side for relaxation in the midst of the beauty.

One day, the scene begins to change. Below the pastoral scene, men and machines replace the idyllic with cacophony, eventually bringing the free flowing current to an end. ‘A dam brings about a complete change in the landscape; some former life disappears and new forms are established.

The once-meandering river loses its identity and becomes a part of an expanse of water that will then have a new role of producing energy for many people. Rains come and the body of water grows quickly. They continue, and the pressure and possibility of escape increase. The flood gates open and the peaceful river becomes a violent force, a release that can be seen and felt.

Gibran in his writing on Friendship reminds us:

*And let your best be for your friend.
**If he must know the ebb of your tide,
Let him know its flood also.**
For what is your friend that you should
Seek him with hours to kill?
Seek him always with hours to live.*

When I began to develop this metaphor, in addition to thinking of Gibran, my mind immediately led me to one of the best books I have read in recent years: When Nietzsche Wept, by Irvin D. Yalom. The subtitle of the book is A Novel of Obsession. After developing the metaphor “Obsession – Storm,” I connected further to this book where Yalom in a very believable way has

two historical characters who never met in real life come together with great intensity that leads to a deep friendship.

The dialogue between Josef Breuer, one of the founding fathers of psychoanalysis, and Friedrich Nietzsche, one of Europe's greatest philosophers, takes me to the depths of their being, and there is a kind of release as I climb into the mind of each of these two men. When I reached the sentence, "Suddenly, in the chair beside him, Nietzsche took off his spectacles, buried his face in his handkerchief, and burst into sobs," I felt with him. Then when Breuer asked him, "Friedrich, please try an experiment with me. Can you imagine your tears having a voice?" I felt the importance of "baring the soul" before a friend. It was happening: The "ebb" was being followed by the "flood." This resulted in the deepening of friendship.

The unimpeded flow of words – like the original state of the river – is facilitated by the depth of friendship. Gradually, the intensity of the dialogue grows and pressure builds when connections are made and the depth of thought increases. Previous experiences are linked in ways not before assembled. (Yalom uses another metaphor when he has Nietzsche say, "I am the anvil and it is your words that are hammer blows – crumbling the citadel of my love.") Words matter. Listening matters. Understanding matters. Withholding judgment matters. Valuing truth matters.

The flood gates release water, relieving the pressure. The intense flow of words releases pressure. The future of the relationship between two friends can be strengthened by honesty and trust in dealing with the truth rather than seeking comfort in myth.

Yalom had Breuer say to Nietzsche, "You yourself taught me that we are each composed of many parts, each clamoring for expression." Nietzsche's tears spoke to Breuer:

*"The way you said 'my dear friend.' I've often used the word 'friend' before, but not until this moment has the word ever been wholly **mine**. I've always dreamed of a*

friendship in which two people join together to attain some higher ideal. And here, now, it has arrived.

It happened in fiction, but it likewise is possible in real life.

Memory – Bank Account

I write today, August 31, 2020, because of a very unusual coincidence.

This morning slightly before 7:00 A.M., Matt Jordan came around the corner of the house with Ginger on the leash. What was different, Matt had on a mask. Two days prior he did not bring the paper; rather he sent an email telling me that he did not think it safe for him to come since Maggie, his daughter, had been exposed to someone who tested positive for Covid-19. I told him that I missed his usual appearance and our brief conversation that occurred daily. He said he would come today with a mask; however, I sensed that he was not comfortable because he did not want to take the risk of exposing me to the virus. After sensing his hesitation, I sent an email telling him that he should dispense with bringing the paper and our brief and daily conversation.

(While writing this, I received a text from Matt saying that a close coworker was a positive exposure for him. He had to come home and will be tested tomorrow.)

I had to be honest with myself and admit that this very pleasant way of starting my day would be something I would miss so very much. Also, I knew that I would be taking a slight risk in managing the steps on the way to get the paper each morning. My next thought was to cancel the subscription.

I checked my mail and there was a letter from Opelika-Auburn News with a notice that my subscription rate would increase from \$23.83 each month to \$35.96. The decision was easy: cancel immediately.

Then I spent time withdrawing memories from my memory bank, chronicling the development of this friendship and the impact our brief, though substantive, early morning conversations had on the creation of some of the metaphors I have developed while Ginger patiently waited. References appear at various places in the text. One that is significant and perhaps most unusual was the notion of mutation as a way of affecting change in relationships. (See “Change – Mutation”)

Because of the expression of kindness on Matt’s part and the impact our friendship has had on me at this time in my life, I wrote a special tribute to him, expressing my appreciation for his being an exemplary example of humanity. This became a permanent deposit to my memory bank, and I hope it is meaningful for him at this time. I further hope the meaning will be felt with even greater depth in the future.

I recently told Matt I have concluded that the most beautiful thing in the world to me now at this time in my life is the human spirit. I further told him that I would like to spend as much time as possible during the period I have left in my life translating the human spirit into love and kindness. I am convinced that this is one of the greatest needs in our time.

It is clear that our memories help to define us as individuals. We continue deposits as long as we live and have our mental faculties. Likewise we are free to withdraw when we choose. We must remember that it is our experiencing self that makes the deposit and the remembering self that makes the withdrawal. These two selves often do not appear exactly the same. (Effect of context, motivation, inflation, interest) For this reason, recording in some form at the time of the deposit can contribute to accuracy. (See “Frozen Words for Future Meal.”) Meaning is the key and is assigned by the individual.

The account and the memory exist as entities. Deposits and withdrawals occur at a particular time and become a part of the whole. The connecting function of the mind adds depth to meaning as links are made with previous experience and other

memories, gaining new insights. My brother Paul, now 94, often paraphrases James M. Barrie with the idea that we have memory so we might have roses in December. We shall never remove all mystery surrounding the transactions.

What about the time of closing the account? It was a very difficult time for me when my dear Fran said to me one day, “I’m not me any more.” She was not actively making deposits and it was not easy to withdraw from the rich store that was growing more dormant. Fortunately, from this rich account there had been transfers through the extensive journals she kept on each of the grandchildren, Fran’s Recipes from Kith and Kin, and the beautiful Seasons of Fran’s Kith and Kin. Transfers were also made to the accounts of all of us who loved her and were enriched by her life.

The final transfer is made for each of us when the last breath blends with the outside air and becomes a part of everything else in existence, and we join the collective human spirit.

Compartmentalization of the Mind – Files

During my personal and professional life, I have had files where I kept materials and information that were important to me. The separate folders gradually became a repository of material on unrelated subjects; the only unifying thread was my personal and professional thought, sometimes even being contradictory. Copies of correspondence were “frozen words” that reflect thoughts, plans, relationships that I deemed important. Lesson plans that I believed were significant found their way into folders. Outlines and drafts of professional articles, acceptance and rejection letters were kept. Unfinished chapters of a planned book with insertions and deletions, never completed, rested in separate folders.

Then came retirement. Some of the professional folders were transferred to the four-drawer file cabinet. They were joined by folders containing material that reached into the distant past. A

separate folder on each of the children grew with each child. The same with each of my siblings. A file of paid invoices, repairs and insurance on the house and the car joined the others. The destruction of any file is possible at my will. The file cabinet became a permanent part of the work room.

Along came the computer, and I expanded both the kinds and number of files. These files contain materials that when consulted bring memories, stored information, photographs. Correspondence with friends in various parts of this country and international friends as well was facilitated by the computer. Files are labeled and in some cases ordered in particular ways; in other instances, they occupy space without any relationship among the files. The diversity of the files evokes pleasure, sadness, controversy and even contradiction. They are accessible upon the desire to consult any particular one. Deletion of files is possible at my will.

I believe the first time I thought about the idea of compartmentalization of the mind was when I read Joseph Ellis' American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson. I began to wonder how he could write so eloquently about freedom and equality and simultaneously own slaves. Ellis indicated that Jefferson created a particular style of leadership "adapted to the special requirements of American political culture that remains relevant two centuries later. It is a style based on the capacity to rest comfortably with contradictions." (Page 301) He went on to write that Jefferson by temperament and disposition, "possessed the internal agility to generate multiple versions of the truth, the rhetorical skills to propose policies that different audiences could hear favorably, the deep deviousness only possible in a dedicated idealist, the honest aversion to the very power he pursued so effectively." (Page 302) For me, I find his basis for founding the University of Virginia to dominate and comes into play when considering compartmentalization of his mind: It is based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind, not afraid to follow truth where it may lead, not afraid to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it (Letter from Jefferson to William Roscoe, December 27, 1820). If we juxtapose this

“compartment” with the one containing Sally Hemings, would we decide to demolish the Jefferson Memorial?

My thought beyond this was the extent to which I am capable of compartmentalizing my thinking and further whether such thinking is prevalent on the part of all people.

An email from my friend Jim Bradley is helpful:

I know that I compartmentalize. For me it is simultaneously creative and destructive, comforting and disquieting, a blessing and a bane, and several other opposites. It takes energy to prevent leakage between compartments. Maybe some leakage is ok, but how much? I don't know. Is this compartmentalization a universal human activity? I like to think so. But I've no way of knowing.

It is reasonable that thinking in this way is possible to avoid cognitive dissonance, i.e., mental discomfort caused by conflicting values, cognitions, emotions, beliefs within the person. It is related to the desire to have everything in mutually exclusive categories: The creation of mental partitions to house different experiences can give temporary respite from mental stress and free the mind for other experiences. This also allows for mental distancing from something unpleasant.

There can be healthy and unhealthy ways of managing the separate categories. For example, being able to move from a problem at the workplace in order to enjoy time with the family results in mentally distancing from something troubling. It can also be related to the metaphor “Desire – magnet.” Being able to honestly answer the question “What matters?” as the temptation to decide if keeping secretive and non-secretive worlds separate is acceptable. Obligations of life and impact of actions on others also comes into play. Excessive compartmentalization can lead to fracturing of self, and it can even relate to childhood experiences. It is yet to be understood

the role played by conflicting parts of the brain and not unrelated is an earlier quote from Talleyrand:

Man was given speech to conceal his thoughts.

The idea of compartments in the mind has implications for religious, or perhaps more accurately spiritual, life of the individual. In John Shelby Spong's chapter "Finding the Basis for Ethics" in his book Unbelievable, he writes that "Good and evil are not fixed categories; they never have been. No matter what the religious claims of the past have been, it is now impossible to build an ethical system on the basis of an unchanging or eternal standard." (Page 201) He goes on to say that it forces adult decision-making on the person when it is so much easier to remain childlike and to pretend that there is a set of eternal rules which one just has to learn and agree to apply. He proposes that "the existential context of life that more often than not determines what is good and what is evil." It would no doubt be instructive to listen to a conversation between Jefferson and Spong relative to the use of the human mind in the search for truth. Compartmentalization is essential as some scientists and others who juxtapose scientific and religious ideas seek to reconcile conflicts.

Referring back to Jim Bradley's comment whether compartmentalization is a part of everyone's life, we must ask whether deliberately compartmentalizing a part of one's self can facilitate the living of a highly productive life. Where is the control? There is the risk of stronger parts resulting in others atrophying. When there is conflict it is necessary for one to be favored over another when colliding occurs. They are kept separate to avoid unpleasant feelings. There can also be an appearance of harmony even when there is an absence of balance. Use of language can facilitate this appearance.

On the other hand, can compartmentalization in excess interfere with everyday living? Can it lead to unhealthy escapism? Putting up mental walls can block out other compartments, shielding from other matters, particularly in answering the question: What matters? Can this lead to fantasy where the powerless become

powerful and one becomes lonely, doing things that he or she later regrets? Being driven without control can lead to actually violating one's own values. (See the metaphor "Loneliness – echo.")

Understanding what drives the need for favoring one compartment over another is the first step toward wholeness and integrity, assuming the individual desires such a state. It is possible to put things where they belong and not let them get in the way of living a good life. They should not be ignored, but neither should they become an obsession. Jim refers to leakage; others might understand that walls must begin to be torn down. The wisdom of Shakespeare comes into play when we hear Polonius give his son Laertes advice:

"This above all: to thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day. Thou canst not be false to any man."

Understanding brings power; will provides energy. Individual control is the key. The individual must distinguish constructive walls from those that adversely affect his or her functioning in a satisfying way, determine appropriate "leakage" (using Jim's term), and decide which walls will be demolished. Perhaps experience will require new compartments.

Self-awareness – Mirror

I remember learning many years ago a basic law that for some reason has never left my awareness: the angle of reflection is equal to the angle of incidence. Apparently it has served a purpose for me, making me remember learning it.

The first mirror was probably a pool of dark still water. We shall never know what the human character thought when he or she first viewed the image. I have always been fascinated by James Michener's fictional account in The Source. The character Ur

had just splashed water on his face and was about to put the wooden cup aside when “he saw his face looming up from the well.” (Page 88) He began to laugh and then a tiny pebble tumbled into the well and distorted the image of his face. It settled again and he was once more himself. He did worry that some “unknown power could alter the essential *he* and smear it into a distorted form. Then he smiled at himself but he was not so free and happy as before.”

The next development of the mirror was probably polished stone, perhaps obsidian. Remnants dating as early as 6000 BC were found in Turkey (Internet) Then polished copper and bronze followed in various places, including Mesopotamia, China, Central and South America. Metal mirrors extended through the Middle Ages in Europe. An interesting linkage is made between the low reflectivity and the scripture reference in 1st Corinthians 13: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.” (Revised Standard Version)

The discovery of the hidden likeness in this metaphor is supported by Socrates through his use of a mirror to reveal to the young their true selves. If the reflection reveals a handsome face, then be worthy of the beauty. If the image is ugly, it can be offset by learning and accomplishment. For old men, they can be prompted to prepare for death; for the young, there is time for action and great deeds. The mirror could be used by man to know himself, deriving many benefits for this: first, knowledge of himself; next, move toward wisdom. Unfortunately, Narcissus failed to turn the project of self-knowledge into wisdom. His self-absorption militated against his ever attaining the desired wisdom.

The Middle Ages brought the evolution of glass mirrors. This was related to the improvements in glassmaking technology. Lead glass mirrors appeared in Venice. Glass mirrors were produced in Moorish Spain as early as the 11th century. The invention of the silvered-glass mirror is credited to the German chemist Justus von Liebig in 1835.

From pimples to wrinkles, the mirror does not lie; make-up can show temporary changes in appearance but the reflection is constant. Maturation leads eventually to a last look where we all return to Ur's condition when he first saw his reflection and it disappeared.

A question that continually haunts me: At what time – a particular moment – was the human first able to think “I exist”? Is Michener's fictional account more than fiction? What developed in the brain that made this awareness possible? Of course, there can never be a definitive answer to this question, but I think it is worthwhile to ponder just as it is of value to think about the place of humans on the long chain of life and their relationship to other life forms.

Although the notion of ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny is no longer generally acceptable, I find it fascinating to compare what we know about the evolution of the species with the development of the individual within the species. I was interested to read the following in E. Fuller Torrey's Evolving Brains Emerging Gods

A logical place to look for evidence of what might have occurred is in child development. As noted previously, it is generally accepted that the sequence in which children acquire cognitive capacities roughly parallels the sequence in which these capacities developed in human evolution. (Page 40)

When does the child first recognize himself/herself? Torrey indicates that no child younger than eighteen months showed self-recognition, and very few between the ages of eighteen and twenty months did. Two-thirds of the children between twenty and twenty-four months showed self-recognition. (Page 41) He goes on to say that the development is not dependent on a specific chronological age but rather on a critical level of brain development. This gradual process continues adding to the

phenomenon of individual differences that persists throughout the life of the individual.

I tend to seek ways to make connections. I connect here Torrey, Socrates, Montaigne, and Shakespeare. Torrey insists that self-awareness is a prerequisite for most higher thought processes; without “I” there can be no “you.” Socrates’ notion that the unexamined life is not worth living places a premium on deep understanding of self. Likewise, Montaigne proposed that understanding one’s self is an aid to understanding others. Then Shakespeare in Hamlet has Polonius give advice to his son Laertes:

This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

Just as looking in the mirror at different stages reveals varying physical images, reflection on self at different levels of maturity yields insights not previously identified or understood. Additionally, experience causes one to make connections not earlier completed, thus achieving a more complete image of self. For me, the connecting function of the mind proves to be of increasing importance as I learn to link knowledge and experience. Of equal importance is the willingness to ask and follow questions where they lead without any attempt to evade the question or squelch a thought even if it is painful.

In my later years, I have come to wonder whether all individuals can handle the truth, or perhaps as Gibran suggests, “a truth.” An unanswered question for me is whether it is best for such persons to be comfortable with myth. I struggle with this because one question I had as I finished my own memoir was whether it is defensible for a person to believe something because it is comfortable even though it might not be true. I believe this question applies as one looks into the mirror and also turns thoughts inward as well as it does when considering another person. For myself, I believe I can handle the truth as best I can determine it, and I find that such a position is liberating. As

was shown in the metaphor “Baring one’s soul – Opening the Flood Gates,” a relationship between two people is possible where the mirror is removed and replaced by a friend, using special criteria for such a person.

Portrait – Hands

From the Oxford Dictionary:

“1570 Portrait - A figure drawn, painted, or carved upon a surface to represent some object; specifically (now almost always) a likeness of a person, especially of the face, made from life by drawing, painting, photography, engraving, etc. b. a solid image, a statue-1638”

When we think of a portrait of a person, we visualize the face or perhaps the entire body of a person. Once when I was thinking on the subject, I concluded that a better representation of a person would be the hands rather than the face. I included this thought in my memoir when I looked at my hands and began to reflect on what they had touched and what they have done as I make my way to 89 years of age. Following this thought resulted in much reflection and review of diaries. I also remembered my discovery of Jacob Bronowski’s idea of the “hand driving the brain” in the evolutionary process; all parts changing together as evolution resulted in a more complex entity. Torrey in his Evolving Brains Emerging Gods indicates that

Although human figures are relatively rare in cave art, human handprints are very common, especially in the earlier painted caves. Chauvet Cave, with drawings dated to 36,000 years ago, has hundreds of handprints, the largest number being palm prints that are now faded and look like red dots. It also has complete handprints, made by covering the hand with pigment and then placing the hand against the wall. (Page 100).

What is the meaning of these handprints that were made so long ago? Torrey suggests it was the universal way of saying “I was here.” My mind moves forward to the young parent who very early holds the baby’s hand against soft plaster, thus capturing this print that will find a place on the wall of the baby’s home, reminding all who see it “I belong here.”

In my imagination, I see my tiny hand resting on my crippled mother’s breast as she feeds me during the early months of 1932 when she herself perhaps was not sufficiently nurtured during those difficult years. (I do not have the print of my hand captured in hardened plaster.) What that hand was to touch and do in the -future represents my life.

The hand grew as I grew, and it touched and did things in the past that surely helped to shape my life, all of this a mystery to me now when there is no record or no other person who can remind me. The first record is the five-year diary from 1945-49, and although entries are very brief, they reflect the significance of the sense of touch and the use of my hands. Perhaps not many people want to record such, but I refer to the date January 3, 1945 in my diary when at the time I did not know what was happening, but it was the day I later knew that I became a man. Self-examination for anyone who is interested in understanding self becomes a powerful exercise. Then shortly thereafter the experience with an uncle intensified the impact of this knowledge. The mystery linked to such experience and the undetermined impact on life in subsequent years can only be understood with greater knowledge and reflection.

When my hands learned to grip the handles of a plow later that year, my life for a short time was being shaped. It was not something that was necessarily pleasant for me; however, the lessons learned by being expected to complete assigned work made a difference. This can be understood only upon reflection. The hands learned to milk the cows. A quick leap forward reminding me that when I held Fran’s hand, she would often tell me that my grip was sometimes too strong and her explanation was that I had developed such strong hands from milking cows

for such a long time. (Holding her soft hand and sensing the fragrance of the aqua marine lotion brings warm memories as I write this sentence.)

I had my first piano lesson when I was in the ninth grade. This was the beginning of something that played a vital role for the remainder of my life. However, the thought of the hands caused me to write the following in my memoir:

The following was taken from my diary entry October 24, 1989. Delighted with my music lesson today. I do believe that I saw almost a radiance about Roy's face after I completed the first movement of the Haydn Sonata. He jokingly asked, "Was that you playing, Kenneth?" He commented on the sound and especially that he did not see the shaking of my hands as I played. I am convinced that the slow practice made the difference because I was indeed more confident when I played. The Mendelssohn "Consolation" was also good. I have just a few things I want to do with the pieces.

This entry is of great importance in what it reveals. It called to mind music lessons in high school when I would go for a lesson with chapped hands, cracked from working in the dairy. My hands would perspire and leave dark places on the piano keys resulting from dirt in the cracks in my fingers. I remember being embarrassed from this when I was very young. Also, it was the same when I played for Roy. I worked so hard at practice so I could play well at the time of lessons, but I seldom performed well because of the tension. Roy called attention to this several times, but it never became less of a problem, so I did not play my best in lessons or in recitals.

I was very much aware of the problem, but rather than stop the lessons, I persisted because I wanted to improve my performance. So music for me has been a thing of personal enjoyment and accomplishment, and I have never liked playing for an audience. Only twice did I record my playing. One that I value very much is the duet Roy and I played: Mother Goose Suite, by Maurice Ravel. The first attempt at recoding it was a fiasco. I asked if I could record again. The second time was much better; however, the recording malfunctioned! So all I have is the first one that has many errors on my part; however, I still value it because it was pleasing for me to be able to play the duet with Roy. The second example of my recording was the preparation of a tape to give to the children one Christmas. On one side of the tape is my piano music and on the reverse side is piano music recorded by Fran. (Page 358)

The action of my hand as it carved the cross on the bank of the deep ditch below the barn and subsequently making marks each time I visited my secret place for solitude and at times prayer represents so much that is etched deep inside my being. Recorded in my old diary are times when I secretly visited this place when I was sad, happy, puzzled, and no doubt moved by other emotions. This place became a part of me without my even being aware, and now upon reflection, it is linked to my early morning solitude when also varied thoughts and emotions find expression. As I hold the paper weight that frames the photograph of this sacred place from my youth, I realize more fully the significance of my hand that prepared this secret place that helped to define who I am even now.

High school was rather ordinary, although at the time I did not realize how my experience was different from that of any other person. I succeeded and no doubt work habits learned were more important than content of subjects studied. This was transferrable to later periods. My hands did learn reasonable competence in typing, a skill that links to this very moment as I

let the thoughts and memories flow through my fingers and have the satisfaction of seeing the words strung together with meaning. These are the same hands that did all the previous things and now record them safely.

I left home at sixteen to begin a new life at West Georgia College, one that was to set a good course for what was to follow. I succeeded there also. Above my desk as I write is the poem written November 23, 1949. Of course, I did not realize at the time I wrote how this poem would remain an important part of my life, even to the present. In another section of this series of writings, I have included the story of this poem and its significance. At this point, I simply refer to a line in the poem: "But then someone took my hand and said, 'Come with me'." This is a part of the mystery embedded in the poem: Who was this friend who took my hand? At the time it was written, it no doubt had a strong religious connection; light is shown on the mystery near the end of the poem. On a larger scale, the subjects of love and friendship, vital in my life, persist. As the hand print on the cave wall is surrounded by mystery, the symbol of the hand mysteriously holds fast in relationships. The idea extends to the loss of someone very close as if one is letting go of a hand in the darkness. The feeling of loss runs deep. The power of the poem remains in part because what is unknown about the original thinking leaves an openness for meaning that is imposed at any given time. Perhaps that is what makes the poem maintain its importance to me even now.

A great part of the significance of this period at West Georgia College came by my holding Fran's hand and we together carved a life that brought a richness we both cherished. To my left as I write is our first piece of furniture. My hands made the bookcase for our trailer at University of Georgia; now it holds all of my diaries and journals containing "frozen words" that capture so many years of our life together. Our hands together resulted in satisfying professional lives and a loving family, seeing four children develop into successful, caring, and giving adults. Then for five grandchildren our hands were busy putting words

together that they will grow increasingly to appreciate through the years.

From the beginning, music was a thread woven throughout our lives together. It began at West Georgia College where our four hands worked diligently to play “Poet and Peasant Overture.” We laughed at our mistakes and continued to play it until late in our lives when the hands began their failure to cooperate. We then turned to simpler compositions, always keeping music alive in our lives.

From holding active hands to ones bent by arthritis, my dear Fran’s health continued to decline. It became a privilege for my hands to take on the role of caregiver until I felt hers for the last time. Now all our hands did together form volumes of memories.

A commitment I have made to myself since Fran’s death is vital to me. The contrast of holding her warm hand, starting in 1948 and lasting throughout our life together, with the last time I felt her cold hand makes me want to give while my hand is still warm. My experience has confirmed the line in the so-called prayer of St. Francis, “It is in giving that we receive.”

Walt Whitman, in his poem “There was a Child Went Forth,” wrote:

*There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look’d upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain
part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.*

He enumerates all the people and things the child meets. Then he concludes:

*These became part of that child who went forth every day,
and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.*

The same hands that touched and did all of the above continue to write daily in the diary and touch the keyboard that more easily allows expression of thoughts, communication with family as well as friends in faraway places. I conclude that all the things my hands touched and did through my soon-to-be 89 years have become a part of me. If someone wants a portrait, I suggest that my hands best represent me.

Treatment – Music

As can be seen throughout this writing as well as in my book *My Life and Work: a Continual Search*, music has always been a vital part of my life. What I write about now is shrouded in mystery, at least for me. What I have promised myself is an attempt to push back the veil that conceals the explanation of how music affects me. For such a long time, I have known that I can be sitting in my chair listening to music and a particular composition or sustained musical sound can quickly change my mood. My question has been whether the sound waves can enter my ears and cause particular connections or other actions in the brain and have a similar effect as adding chemicals through medication. I realize that the chemical action in the brain affects emotion, and I hope to ascertain if a similar action is brought about through music. I realize that this will require serious study, and I place it on the “things to be done” list, thus keeping my continual search alive.

A Word – A Person

A word is a name for a concept or idea that is born in the mind of a person. (See Metaphor “Words – Fossils.”) What happens to the word becomes its history and the study of its story is instructive. The word becomes a part of the “long chain of language,” and the changes that occur in the word reflect changes in the thinking of the people who use the word. One extreme example of such changes is the word “nice.” A careful study of

the entries in the Oxford Dictionary shows changes in the word from the time it was created. The word itself is arbitrary; what changes is the meaning that resides in the minds of the people who use it.

Heredity can play a role in understanding the meaning of the word. Tracing the word to its root in another language can give a clue to the original meaning although it does not reflect the changes in meaning that are added. On the current scene, we can consider the word “awesome.” The entry in 1784 for “awe” was “terror, dread.” Then “Dread mingled with veneration, as of the Divine Being,” A third entry: “Solemn and reverential wonder, tinged with latent fear, inspired by what is sublime and majestic in nature – 1756.” With such a meaning, it is easy to see how one might use it when looking at the Grand Canyon. As indicated earlier, one could wonder when it is used to refer to a hamburger.

Actually, a word becomes a part of the dictionary which is a depository of words that find themselves in usage. If use of the word is continued and meanings are added, this change is reflected in the dictionary. It is quite a mental excursion to wonder about words that were created, lived and died before the compilation of dictionaries. We can only wonder if a definition of “awesome” will be added to the modern dictionary that can appropriately refer to the sense of taste. It is clear that when we are considering the definition of a word, we must attend to the context in which it is used and the historical period as well.

A word is born as a name for a concept or an idea in the mind and it changes through usage. When we are asked to define a word, careful attention must be given to varying definitions rather than simply giving one that does not reflect the context in which it is used. Perhaps more than anything, communication depends on the individual who is using the word and his or her interest in expressing a thought with as much clarity as possible. We must not forget that thoughts exist as wholes and we break them into parts when we express them in words.

The person is conceived in the body of the woman after a given moment when the sperm and egg unite to form a new life, continuing the beautiful and long chain of life. Gibran expresses it beautifully when he refers to children as “life’s longing for itself.” As heredity can play a part in the original meaning of a word, the genes of the two contributors to the new life link it with the persons who preceded it in past generations. The new life is born and proceeds on its own individual path, becoming a part of all it encounters. It changes in part by what Nature dictates and ultimately according to its own choices. It learns to play different roles during its life time, although remaining the entity gradually achieved through experience and education, both formal and otherwise. Initially, it is shaped by its nearest environment, and then by choice it can push back boundaries imposed on it by electing to free itself through the use of the mind to question and follow where the questions lead, thus liberating itself from ignorance, prejudice and provincialism, one of my favorite ideas about the function of education. Or it may choose to be comfortable living within boundaries imposed by itself or others. The individual chooses.

How is the person defined? This question has loomed before me for a great portion of my life. Below I shall explain how I came to answer the question. At approximately the peak of my attempting to teach myself to read Russian, I decided to combine my interest in defining the individual with trying to express it in Russian. I was struggling as I attempted to write in my Russian diary. One day I decided I would like to write a strong statement of belief in the language. I first wrote it in English and then translated it into Russian myself. This was followed by asking several Russians, including ones with whom I corresponded, to respond, first by correcting my errors and then commenting on the statement. By doing this, I could continue my strong interest in language and also complete a statement of belief. What appears below is the first Russian version, followed by the translation. I then include a version that reflects some suggested corrections.

У каждого человека есть настоящее, прошлое, и будущее, последнее неизвестное. Он ощущает любовь и ненависть. Он переносит печаль и горе. У него есть добрые и злые размышления, успех и неуспех. Словом и делом он добрый и злой. У него есть таланты и слабости. Этого может быть ощущать экстаз. Он смесь размышлений, опытов и выборов. В конечном счёте, он полный человек. Когда мы учитываем особый человек, мы должны глядеть целую личность, нет одной части.

Each person has a present, past and future, the last is unknown. He feels love and hate. He bears grief and sorrow. He has good and malicious thoughts, success and failure. He is good and bad in word and deed. He has talents and weaknesses. He can experience ecstasy. He is a mix of thoughts, experiences and choices. At last, he is a full human being. When we consider a special human, we must look at the full personality, not only its parts.

У каждого человека есть настоящее, прошлое, и будущее, последнее неизвестно. Он ощущает любовь и ненависть. Он переносит печаль и горе. У него есть добрые и злые размышления, успехи и неудачи. Словом и делом он добрый и злой. У него есть таланты и слабости. От этого он может находиться в экстазе. Он, это смесь размышлений, опытов и выборов. В конечном счёте, он полный человек. Когда мы рассматриваем данного человека, мы должны учитывать целую личность а не только ее части.

As I write this, my mind is flooded with memories that bring a mix of emotion. It starts with the adoption of our five beautiful grandchildren and what they have added to my life. It further causes me to remember the two rich trips to Russia, the first

being the cruise on the Volga River when Fran, Paul, Sara and I were together. It was on this trip that I set my goal of knowing the Russian alphabet before the end of the trip. The second was when I accompanied Melanie when she adopted Maria. What followed was many hours of study, friendship with Oleg and Ludmila, my helping Oleg with English and his helping me with Russian. Then the long friendship with the Samoylov family and all this added to my life. Then the friendship with Alexander УСТЬЯНЦЕВ (Sasha) that came as a result of our sponsoring Vanya in the orphanage through his time at the university and in the army. Sasha's visit with us and now our continued correspondence via email is one remnant of the rich store of memories linked to people and the language. The Samoylov's retirement to Upper Peninsula, Michigan and the wonders of technology make communication possible. The language has faded for me, but what it represents is deeply etched in my memory.

It is necessary to decide when an adventure must end. I have decided to conclude this writing adventure with two points along the long chain of life.

Non-existence – Being

THE ORIGIN OF ME

I wrote on page 4 of My Life and Work: A Continual Search the following: "I was born on Thursday at 11:30 P.M. January 14, 1932 at 511 Lee Street in a mill village in LaGrange, Georgia. According to Mother, I was born on the iron bed we have now in our guest bedroom." From those words, the next 418 pages chronicled my life forward to the death of my dear wife. My strong interest in "the origin of things" caused me one day to pursue the **origin of myself**. Interestingly, the origin of the word "origin" - "origo" "stem" and "oriri," "to rise" (further to

an earlier root “er,” “to be,” “to exist.”) I begin with the date January 14, 1932 and move backward toward my origin. This may seem strange to most people. I believe it aids in self-discovery, something that has been important to me most of my life. As I have written earlier, Montaigne (1533-1592) proposed that studying and understanding one’s self is an aid in understanding others. He saw himself not as a nobleman or a mayor or a widely-read thinker, but as a representative human being. We must not only know ourselves, but by knowing ourselves become ourselves. It is in such a spirit that I began this writing adventure on metaphor and meaning in my life. Through the use of extensive information on the Internet concerning the biological development of the human being from the time of conception and exercising my own imagination, I believe that “writing from the womb” is a unique experience.

At the end of April 1931, I did not exist. Two months earlier, Herbert Hoover signed an act making the Star Spangled Banner the national anthem. During the year Albert Schweitzer published his Life and Thoughts and Robert Frost received the Pulitzer Prize for his Collected Poems. Daddy (Roy Erastus Cadenhead) and Mother (Omie Euvelia Bishop Cadenhead), a housewife, lived at 511 Lee Street in the mill village, LaGrange, Georgia. Daddy had a birthday early in May and was 31 years old; Mother would reach her thirtieth birthday later that year in November. Mother and Daddy’s attention was focused on the world close around them. Alton had not quite reached his 7th birthday; Paul would become 5 in October; and Clarence was nearing the end of his second year. **I did not exist.**

At that time, the dogwoods had shed their white coats and spring was moving on as Nature directed it. The rumble of the train on the nearby track and the sound of the whistle at the crossing were almost as predictable as the rising of the sun. The aroma of fat back and biscuits for early morning breakfast found its way throughout the house, and then the added taste of sorghum syrup satisfied the hunger of parents and children alike. A simple life

where necessities, though limited, dominated the lives of this family of five.

One day during the last of April or first part of May, Nature, joined by the action of Daddy and Mother, changed their lives again after eight years of marriage. Daddy had finished his shift at the mill and came home. Alton, Paul, and Clarence were fast asleep. Though weary, Daddy joined Mother as they retired for the evening on the old iron bed. The universal ecstasy as available to them as to the CEO of the mill where Daddy worked or indeed the residents of the White House temporarily put them in the class of equals with all humans. Although this brief pleasure is ineffable, the origin of words helps to explain the result both literally and metaphorically. “Ejaculate” (from Latin *ejaculari*: ex, out and *jaculari*, to throw, shoot) is significant. Also, “semen” (from Latin *semen*, “seed”); “sperm” (from Late Latin *sperma*: seed; sometimes used synonymously with semen were likewise significant. Nature directed and created words help communicate the physical while none can capture the ineffable.

They joined the children in sleep.

The story continues.....

The setting changes; the characters change; and Nature, the director, takes charge of the remainder of the story.

Deep inside my crippled mother’s body where an ill-formed hip from her own birth caused her to walk with a limp was the place. In this setting where three other babies had their origins, Nature was continuing work in preparation for a fourth. The ovaries - (From Latin “*ovum*” – “egg” – were following Nature’s direction in producing eggs. The fallopian tubes (from Gabriello Fallopio (1523-1562) Italian anatomist, who first described them) securely connect the ovaries and the uterus (Latin “*uterus*” and earlier root “*udero*” – “womb.”

The timeline that follows is not exact but approximates the time, the purpose of which is to present my origin and development from the time I did not exist until my birth.

Week of April 26 through May 2, 1931

Many auditioning sperm move about “anticipating” a major role. One meets an egg in the fallopian tube with “messages” from my father and all his preceding ancestors. This sperm and the egg merge into one single cell where my mother’s ancestors also have “messages” to share. At this time the chromosomes, 23 from Mother and 23 from my Daddy, come together to determine my gender and physical traits. **I exist.** My name is Zygote (Greek, “zugotos,” “to join, “to yoke.”) I have joined the great chain of life.

Soon after this happens, I travel down the fallopian tube toward the uterus. At the same time, cells continue dividing, eventually creating every organ in my body.

Week of May 3 through May 9, 1931

I as a rapidly dividing ball of cells with the name blastocyst begin to burrow into the uterine lining where I become implanted. Within this inner group of cells, I begin to move to the next stage when my name will change again. The outer layer will give rise to part of the placenta which will nourish me while I remain here. I am protected by a fluid-filled cushion – amniotic sac - surrounding me. **I am about the size of a grain of rice.**

Week of May 10 through May 16, 1931

At this time, I appear as a tiny collection of tubes. One tube will form the brain and spinal cord. Another will develop into the heart. Tiny buds appear on either side of my “body” that will grow into arms and legs.

Nature, the director, increases the levels of hormone produced by the blastocyst. This signals my mother's ovaries to stop releasing eggs and produces more estrogen and progesterone. This communicates to Mother that her menstrual period will stop, thus giving her first clear message that I am developing within her and that there will be a fourth one to join Alton, Paul, and Clarence. This further fuels the growth of the placenta.

Now my name is Embryo. I am made up of three layers. The top layer – the ectoderm – will give rise to my outermost layer of skin, central and peripheral nervous systems, eyes, and inner ears. The middle layer of cells – mesoderm – is where my heart and primitive circulatory system will form. This layer of cells will also serve as the foundation for my bones, ligaments, kidneys and much of the reproductive system. The inner layer – the endoderm – is where my lungs and intestines will develop.

Week of May 17 through May 23, 1931

I am growing more rapidly just four weeks after Mother and Daddy combined the messages from their respective and long family lines. The neural tube along my back is closing. My brain and spinal cord will develop from this neural tube. My heart and other organs also are starting to form. **I am about ½ inch long from top of my head to my rump and about as wide as a pencil eraser.** I still look like a tadpole. Structures necessary to the development of my eyes and ears develop. The small buds appearing will become my arms. My body begins to take on a C-shaped curvature.

Week of May 24 through 30, 1931

In my second month in my carefully protected environment, I am already forming every organ I shall need, including heart, kidneys, liver, lungs and intestines. My brain and face are growing. Depressions that will later be my nostrils become visible, and the beginnings of the retinas form. The buds that look like paddles will eventually become hands and feet. I am attached to Mother by the umbilical cord by which I am

nourished, and also my waste is filtered away through this connection until I reach the outside world.

Week of May 31 through June 6, 1931

I am beginning to make Mother feel tired and probably causing her to have morning sickness. I am developing at a rapid pace. My name changes again: now it is Fetus (Latin, “fetus,” “pregnancy”) As a bean-sized baby, my two eyes, nose, ears and my upper lip are beginning to appear. My fingers have begun to form. (My large nose and big ears have had a long time to grow!) My body and neck begin to straighten. I am about 1/2 inch long from crown to rump and about half the diameter of a quarter.

Setting: 511 Lee Street

Daddy comes home from work and Mother told him the news. I don't imagine she used the word “pregnant,” but in some form she told him there was going to be a fourth one. I wonder how both reacted. Were they pleased with the news, or was Daddy's question: “Another mouth to feed?” How did Alton, Paul, and Clarence react? Were they even told at this time? There are no answers to these questions, but regardless, the director continued the story in Mother's womb.

Week of June 7 through June 13, 1931

The tadpole-like tail is almost gone. In its place my two little legs begin to form. My head is still large compared to my body. My chin is poorly formed. My reproductive organs are beginning to form, although it is still too early to tell whether I am a boy or girl. I begin to move. My arms grow and elbows appear. My toes are visible and my eyelids begin to form. I am less than 3/4 inch long from crown to rump, the diameter of a penny, and weigh about 1/8 of an ounce.

Week of June 14 through June 20, 1931

My head has become more round. I have a real profile with well-defined eyes, mouth, and eyes. Eyes are open. Soon the eye lids will close. Inside my brain, connections are forming that will eventually allow me to perform various tasks. (Making it possible for the “continual search”) I can now bend my elbows. Toes and fingers have lost their webbing and become longer. (These hands will one day hold the handle of the plow, milk the cows, struggle with a Mozart sonata – touch and do so many things.) My eyelids and external ears continue to develop.

Week of June 21 through June 27, 1931

My head makes up about half of the length of my body, but my body will soon catch up. My face is broad and my eyes widely separated, and my ears set low. Buds for future teeth appear. Red blood cells are beginning to form in my liver. By the end of this week, my external genitalia is starting to develop into a penis. I measure about 2 inches and weigh almost 1/3 ounce.

Week of June 28 through July 4, 1931

My face has taken on a more developed profile. Inside my body more organs are developing. My kidneys are getting ready to produce urine. Intestines are forming in my abdomen. I am beginning to sprout fingernails. I am about 2 1/2 inches long from crown to rump and weigh about 1/2 ounce.

Week of July 5 through July 11, 1931

I am growing quickly, getting more proportional. My head makes up only 1/3 of my body. The placenta continues to provide nutrients and dispose of waste.

Week of July 12 through July 18, 1931

I am about four inches long from top of my head to my rump, and I weigh 4 1/1 ounces, about the size of small peach. My body is covered with soft hairs (lanugo) like a coat providing warmth in the womb; these will be gone by time of my birth. I am becoming an individual – developing fingerprints, including thumb, which might have already found its way into my mouth.

Week of July 19 through July 25, 1931

My skin is thin enough so that what is inside of me can be seen. A network of fine blood vessels is forming. Muscles are getting stronger. I am moving around, making fists and showing different facial expressions. (At this point the doctor can check chromosome problems, e.g., Down Syndrome.)

Week of July 26 through August 1, 1931

I am nearly 5 inches long and weigh close to 4 ounces, about the size of a small apple. (My mother's cheeks might be flushed because of increase in blood volume to supply my growth.)

Week of August 2 through August 8, 1931

My lungs are breathing in amniotic fluid. Blood is pumping around my circulatory system, and my kidneys are filtering urine. My looks are changing. Hair, eye brows and eye lashes are beginning to grow. My mother's breasts are growing in preparation for feeding me.

Week of August 9 through August 15, 1931

I am about 5 1/2 inches long from head to rump and I weigh about 5 ounces, about the size of small cell phone. I move in the womb. My ears have developed enough for me to hear. (I wonder if my mother talked or sang to me.)

Week of August 16 through August 22, 1931

To keep amniotic fluid from irritating my delicate skin, my body is coated with a waxy white substance called vernix caseosa. It will be gone before I see the outside world. Under my skin a layer of fat is forming to provide warmth.

Week of August 23 through August 29, 1931

I am half way through my residence in my mother's womb. I can hear and may respond to sound. Again I ask, did Mother talk or sing to me? Would I begin to become familiar with Mother's voice? I measure about 6 ½ inches from head to rump, and I weigh about 11 ounces – roughly the size of a small banana. Mother is gaining about ½ pound a week until I see the outside world.

Week of August 30 through September 5, 1931

Tiny tooth buds are popping up in my gums. Intestines are starting to produce tarry-looking waste that will also be visible later in the first few dirty diapers. Rapid eye movements are developing. My bone marrow is increasing production of red blood cells which will soon deliver oxygen to my body. At this time I am causing my mother's family and friends to comment on what is ahead for her.

Week of September 6 through September 12, 1931

My sex organs are developing; my testes have started to descend. I weigh almost one pound and measure approximately 8 inches from top of head to my rump. Different systems are forming in my body. Hormones that give organs commands they need to operate are appearing. Nerves for later touching and smelling and other sensations are developing.

Week of September 13 through September 19, 1931

My lungs are getting ready to breathe by inhaling amniotic fluid. My body is producing a substance that will allow the lungs to inflate. My brain is making connections needed for later thinking. I have passed the one-pound mark. I have almost developed enough to survive outside the womb but I shall remain in my present residence for a while longer.

Week of September 20 through September 26, 1931

I am almost a foot long from head to rump, and I could survive outside my mother's womb with the help of a ventilator. My wrinkled skin becomes smoother. Fat continues to build up underneath. Fingernails are present.

Week of September 27 through October 3, 1931

I am getting bigger, and I weigh about a pound and a half. My skin goes from see-through to cloudy – can't see through to inside of my body. My heartbeat becomes clearer. I might even occasionally have a hiccup.

Week of October 4 through October 10, 1931

I weight approximately two pounds. Eye lids open and reveal bluish-colored eyes. (Not necessarily permanent) I might move if light is shown on my mother's abdomen.

Week of October 11 through October 17, 1931

I am starting to look like I will when I make my entry into the outside world. My organs are still developing. My brain continues to make connections necessary to control my body. I alternate between periods of sleep and wakefulness. My kicks might wake Mother at night.

Week of October 18 through October 24, 1931

I am about 10 inches long from the top of my head to my rump, and I weigh more than 2 pounds. I can do several things: blink, cough, hiccup – maybe dream. I am moving more into position for my birth; I must move into a head first position.

Week of October 25 through October 31, 1931

I am growing at a rapid rate. Mother can feel just about every movement, feeling elbow and knee jabs as my bones and muscles get stronger. Every part of my body is maturing – lungs to brain. Brain is more wrinkled as nerve cell connections are established. My senses are more aware of sound, light and touch.

Week of November 1 through November 7, 1931

I am about 11 inches long and weigh about 3 pounds. I am about the size of a small roasting chicken. Mother's joints loosen up in preparation for labor that will help me find my way to the outside world.

Week of November 8 through November 14, 1931

Mother is putting on a pound a week. I am also getting fatter. My lungs are still developing. I would still need a ventilator if I were born now.

Week of November 15 through November 21, 1931

I weigh almost four pounds. There is not much extra room in my mother's womb, but I can still squirm. I am making final preparation for my appearance. The fine covering of my body is coming off. Hair remains only on eye lashes, eye brows, and my head.

Week of November 22 through November 28, 1931

I continue to gain weight. My bones harden. Only soft bone is my skull. It will need to compress when I pass through the birth canal. Soft spots will remain, allowing my brain to develop even after my birth.

Week of November 29 through December 5, 1931

I measure 12 inches and weigh approximately 5 pounds. Most of my major organs – digestive, respiratory, and nervous systems – are almost able to work on their own. My head is in down position already – ready to move to the outside world.

Week of December 6 through December 12, 1931

Although I am already at 5 ½ pounds, during the next weeks I will put on ½ pound or more each week. I have moved lower in Mother's pelvis area. This is good news for Mother's lungs, but not for her bladder.

Week of December 13 through December 19, 1931

In just a few days I will be considered full-term. I weigh almost six pounds and am the size of a honeydew melon. I am just about ready change my residence. The white waxy substance covering much of my body has dissolved. I swallow this and other substances which will form the blackish-green bowel movements found in my first diapers.

Week of December 20 through December 26, 1931

I am just about full-sized, 6 ½ pounds. Mother feels like she is carrying a small bowling ball. My head moves into position. My immune system is arming up and will keep developing even after I move to the outside world. If my Mother breastfeeds me, this will boost my immune system even more.

Week of December 27 through January 2, 1932

I weigh more than 6 ½ pounds; much is a layer of fat to keep me warm in the outside world. My growth has slowed down. All organs are working. My brain has started to control the functions of the entire body, from breathing to regulating heart rate. My reflexes are also active, including grasping and sucking that will allow me to grab a hand and latch on to a breast soon after my birth.

Week of January 3 through January 9, 1932

I am like a little watermelon in Mother's abdomen. I make Mother have frequent bathroom visits. I can be born any day now. Mother begins to feel some contractions.

January 14, 1932

Setting: 511 Lee Street

It is 11:30 Thursday night and the time has come. Mother lies on the old iron bed, and I come into the world to join her, Daddy, Alton, Paul, and Clarence, and my final name is Albert Kenneth Cadenhead. **I am an individual and yet my journey from not existing to being a part of the great chain of life is universal.**

This part of the line segment connects to My Life and Work: A Continual Search and from there I move to the final.

Death – Transition

A strange feeling comes over me as I sit at my computer and think about my own demise. My mind reaches back thousands of years to an undetermined time when humans first were aware they were going to die. Since that time so long ago, various attitudes toward death have evolved in different cultures and in the minds of individuals. I have arrived at a position that is mine.

My thoughts have been influenced by the death of people who were a part of my life, and this experience has helped to shape my thinking, sadness being characterized by the statement made by my late friend Dorothy Gulliver: It is like letting go of a hand in the darkness. The more positive view is one that has come through my seeking to understand what I refer to as the collective human spirit.

Deeply etched in my memory is the moment that my dear Fran's last breath blended with the outside air, and I knew death was real. During the period of over three years following this moment, I have continued my search for greater understanding. At various places in this current writing adventure, I have referred to times when I believe I have gained greater insight, at least thoughts that bring satisfaction for me. This will continue to be a part of that continual search.

Rather late on the night of June 6, 2020, I received a text from my granddaughter Hannah. She asked me if I were familiar with the poem "Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep," by Mary Elizabeth Frye. My answer in the negative resulted in her sending a copy of the poem to me. It follows.

*Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am diamond glints in the snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.*

I was moved by the poem, but equally moved by the fact that Hannah saw meaning and beauty in the poem. Further exchange led me to share with her a copy of a piece I wrote earlier and considered asking that it be read at my graveside funeral. Her response let me know that she saw the link, and it further made me grateful for the relationship I have with my granddaughter. I have spent time learning more about Mary Elizabeth Frye, and all of this together makes **spirit as breath** have even more meaning for me.

One of my favorite paragraphs in this writing adventure is the last one in “Change – Mutation.” It reflects the reality of burial, and it also inherently shows mystery and the beauty of continuity as “the mockingbird keeps on singing.”

What I shared with Hannah reflects my belief in the wholeness of things and my belief that I am a part of this unity of all existence now and at the time my last breath also blends with the outside air, never to be destroyed. I simply make a transition.

Belonging to the universe.....

When the wind wraps itself around your body

you feel his embrace

When soft rain touches your face

you feel his tears of joy, sadness

When lightning etches a path across the dark sky

you follow his thoughts into the unknown

When distant thunder rumbles on a summer evening

you sense his restlessness

When the sun warms you

you remember the life of his body

In the deep of winter.....

*when snow quietly spreads a blanket across
the earth*

(if you listen)

You will hear the whisper of his spirit