



**Chapter 3**  
**March 1, 2007**

**Stormy met David and I at Carmines. Beau and Shaun arrived a few minutes later. We're there for lunch, entertainment, discussion, debate, etc. The food was great – the conversation and company were better. I met Stormy about 18 years ago through Doug a survivor of Cancer, the father of the Louisiana High Risk Health Plan, and the owner of Lucky Dogs.**

**Stormy is unique. Dressed in a bow tie, manners, a message, humor, and skills of articulation, Stormy is a character you won't forget. When we first met he explained the bow tie was a tool of his trade. In his various roles with organized medicine he must attend many socials – mostly cocktail parties. The bow tie is a safety device. If he starts spilling drinks on it – it's time to go home.**

**In about 1994 we shared the dais at a Health Care Conference. The L-shaped room was filled with 150 – 200 business executives. Stormy's carousel projector starts dropping slides. No need to panic – he calmly retrieved them using his comb and continued his presentation. A few seconds later the bulb on the projector burnt out. The event planner scrambled to find a replacement bulb.**

**Stormy simply pulled up a stool, pushed the projector unit out of the way and explained – I'm merely a "jake leg radiologist from Metairie Louisiana, let's dispense with the formal show and visit one on one as if we were in my office." It was an amazing presentation. He held the audience – individually - in his hands.**

**In about 1996, Stormy facilitated a panel discussion of 18 of the leaders in Health Care in Louisiana. These were significant egos that filled the room. He was great – his style much like Garrison Keillor. Stormy is more of a politician who practices medicine than a doctor who understands politics. He's always on message and a very formidable advocate for his cause – Health Care Reform by patient choice.**

**David and I are as scarred as Stormy and are not invested in any one message but are certain that a solution must be found. Health Care must be reformed. We engage in debate and dialogue. We are challenged, informed, entertained, etc.**

**Beau and Shaun are the young “bucks” in the room. I suspect they have the same swagger that Stormy possessed when he was jumping the first hurdle of age from the innocence and enthusiasm of his twenties to the infancy of wisdom we begin in our 30s. They question, engage, suggest, challenge and I hope learn.**

**Louisiana’s Health Care system was dysfunctional before Katrina and that status quo was destroyed. The good news is that we had a once in a lifetime chance to reform our system and provide the country with a new and better way. The bad news is that we will probably “rebuild” a new status quo of dysfunction. As Stormy rails in frustration about the lost opportunity – I watch as Beau and Shaun show the enthusiasm, intelligence, and potential to be the next “Stormies.” There’s still hope.  
March 2, 2007**

**Sheila suggested the other morning that one observational should discuss the “sounds” that are New Iberia. In her words “write about the train whistles, the sirens, and all the other noises we hear.” Since she’s one of the few folks I let influence my writing and she’s the only editor I sleep with I guess I should honor her request. Today I’ll try to translate her suggestion into the “multi-sensory” – taste, smell, sight, hearing, and touch - experience that is New Iberia and Acadiana.**

**The taste of Acadiana is simple and obvious. A donut from Meche’s, gumbo at Lagniappes, oysters on the half shell, boiled crawfish, etc. etc. etc. – trust me – it don’t taste no better anywhere but everybody already knows that.**

**In terms of smell – I again return to Meche’s. Those donuts aren’t fried I a vacuum – when they are being prepared the aroma is magnetic. Steaks on the grill, onions sautéing in the pan, coffee brewing in the morning are merely the flavors described in the above paragraph entering into your nose.**

**On the less embraced “odor” side of the coin – I love (but very few do) the smell of cane burning in the fields. I’ll never forget the first morning in 2004 when the local mill began processing cane I saw Sheila at her car – lifting one foot and looking and then lifting the other foot and looking and then walking around her car to find the problem. When I questioned her activities she explained that she must have stepped in “dog crap” but now couldn’t find it. Cane burning is pleasant to a few – cane processing is pleasant to no one.**

**Sight is a gift we often don’t appreciate until it’s gone. Miss Peggy, momma’s blind friend and Sheila and my personal inspiration, once told me “I have nothing to complain about but I do wish I could see.” This is courage and understatement personified. If we slow down for a second – we can enjoy nature and her beauty. A**

**fog lifting on the bayou, a sunrise or sunset, a cypress swamp, beautiful ladies, a flock of birds overhead, a smiling face, or a deer poised to run.**

**The hearing sense brings me back to Sheila's first suggestion during our first weeks in New Iberia. We were overwhelmed by the scream of the train's whistles as they sped or crawled through town at all hours of the day and night. Every morning the fire station 3 building up the block tests the sirens on their trucks at 7:30. Dogs bark, cats in heat mimic babies crying, birds tap on the glass above my desk and depending upon our neighbors du jour I may hear the latest rap crap blaring though the speakers of a car. In my memory I often hear the song – "can you hear the lonesome whippoorwill..." playing as the trains move through.**

**Describing first 4 senses made me wonder how I could metaphor the "touch" of Acadiana. How can you "feel" a place? Then I realized that this is the predominant sense of this place. The "humidity" covers you and the friendliness and uniqueness of the people is what embraces us. We are everyday touched by this place. I love it. March 3, 2007**

**In the name of truth in advertising I'm going to admit that the dates posted are designed more as an attempt to organize and to keep me from falling too far behind than they are any accurate depiction of the actual evolving history of life here on the Bayou. Since my memory is real bad everything described has to be recorded within a few days of the occurrence or else it is loss forever or pure fabrication.**

**It's Sunday night and I'm struggling for a topic for yesterday, today, and tomorrow (I like to start each week a little bit ahead. Consider this anticipation of history.) The ideas that are coming to me right now, my procrastination, and the activities in the community require that I capture this weekend and all its events in Saturday's update, Sunday will discuss Saturday evening, and Monday will catch us up on Sunday. Confused? If you aren't – you should be – I sure am.**

**Ordinary is defined as familiar; unexceptional; common; average... Extraordinary is defined as going far beyond the ordinary degree, measure, limit, etc.; very unusual; exceptional; remarkable. This weekend was both.**

**Friday night we cancelled the Porch because of our plans to attend a birthday party for John. He is a character yet to be described. By fate and the naming patterns popular when I was born there are more "johns" in my life than in an average size hotel. Sheila worked most of Friday in the yard and was too tired to venture to Lafayette for the party so she and I snuck off for a quick sandwich.**

**If we would have driven north instead of south we would have discovered the Art Walk in downtown and would have spent hours meandering Main Street New Iberia in search of culture, free appetizers, friends, and an occasional drink.**

**Saturday was an anniversary of sorts – this is the weekend of the annual Gator Race**

on Bayou Teche. It was this weekend in March of 2004 that we attended the Gator Race and Sheila decided that New Iberia is where we wanted to live and ultimately die. The Gator Race is a fund raiser for the Southern Mutual Help Association that parallels the “running of the Ducks” that many communities celebrate.

Sheila and Lela ventured downtown for the event – my schedule changed at the last minute and I couldn’t join them. Following the race they wandered to the Shadows on the Teche Plantation Home for an arts and craft show and then returned to the comfort of the Warehouse – our residence.

Sherry was in for Saturday evening and she, Sheila, and Claire (my sister) ventured to the annual Cajun Comic Relief fundraiser in Lafayette. After the program they went to Gator Cove in Lafayette to “suck heads” (for the uninitiated this is eating crawfish). On Sunday morning we made our monthly pilgrimage to the First United Methodist Church so Lela could practice her religion and then we enjoyed lunch at Charlie’s. If this sounds boring, tell me what you did Mr. Excitement!  
March 4, 2007

After spending yesterday’s Observational explaining the challenge of searching for a story or apologizing for not being able to deliver WOW in every update, I started this morning reading a Bits and Pieces monthly. This is a “mini-magazine” with quotes / stories that in its own words “motivates the world.”

The first three quotes provided me the wisdom I needed to continue this daily exercise recognizing that life is. My task is merely to extract a few words of wisdom, joy, sorrow, or feeling out of what happens - where I am or whom I’m with.

“Seize from every moment its unique novelty, and do not prepare your joys.”  
(Andre Gide – *Norritures Terrestres*)

“You will be happier if you will give people a bit of your heart rather than a piece of your mind.” (Author unknown)

“There are not great people in this world, only great challenges which ordinary people rise to meet.” (William Frederick Halsey, Jr.) – Military Officer (1882-1959)

From the above I discerned the challenge is to seize the moment. Present what life presents. So I move on... For the last eight to 10 years I’ve been involved with the Hugh O’Brien Youth Leadership Program or HOBY. My contemporaries will recognize Hugh O’Brien as the actor that played Wyatt Earp on a television series of that name in the 1950s.

For a select few alumni, Hugh O’Brien is the founder of HOBY and since its inception it’s driving force. For all of us Hugh should be recognized as a man who’s Vision has resulted in thousands of youngsters being recognized and given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. The HOBY program is great.

**Hugh was in New Orleans for a convention. He asked several of the HOBY leadership in Louisiana to visit with him on Saturday p.m. I rode with Beau to New Orleans. Beau is the president of the Louisiana group. We spent about two hours with Hugh the legend and the man. I was the only one in the room that knew Hugh as Wyatt – the TV star. I watched his show weekly as a young boy. I remember him as a good guy in a black hat and saw now in him the graying of my youth.**

**Cindy, Jay, Sara, Beau, Mike, Neil, Joy, and others sat in awe of Hugh the person. Most of these young folks had been HOBY Ambassadors as sophomores in High School. All had been and continue to be impacted by the HOBY program. Energy, awe, passion, creativity, etc. and our future were present. It gave me hope.**

**Hugh cited his visit with Dr. Albert Schweitzer as the genesis of and inspiration for the HOBY program. Dr. Schweitzer asked Hugh after a visit in Africa, “What are you going to do with this experience?” What should we all do with our experiences?  
March 5, 2007**

**Sheila and I are Catholic – me since birth Sheila since her adolescence. Lela is a Methodist. Every few weeks we take Lela to the First United Methodist Church in New Iberia. I enjoy the service there often more than I do the Mass at “my” church.**

**Yesterday as I reflected (daydreamed) during the service, I remembered a story I heard years ago. Jesus was visiting friends on earth and they invited him to attend a football game between the Catholic Crusaders and the Protestant Preachers.**

**Early in the game the Crusaders completed a long pass and the receiver raced into the end zone. Jesus and some of the fans stood, cheered, clapped, and celebrated the successful play. On the subsequent kickoff, a Preacher picked up the ball in the end zone and ran it back for a touchdown. Again Jesus stood with some of the fans, cheered, clapped, and celebrated the successful play.**

**A man sitting directly behind Jesus tapped him on the shoulder and asked, “Sir I don’t want to be nosy but you cheered both teams. Who are you pulling for?”**

**Jesus smiled at the man and responded, “I’m not for either team, I just enjoy the competition, the good sportsmanship, and the camaraderie.” The man still bewildered nudged his friend next to him and whispered – “He must be an atheist.”**

**I was born a Catholic, was raised a Catholic, and will in all likelihood die a Catholic. In my secular world I abhor Bureaucracies but the pomp, circumstance, and structure (Bureaucracy) that is the Catholic Church for some unknown (to me) reason gives me comfort.**

**I’m also an “old school” Catholic. Growing up we were taught that Protestants, Jewish folks, and atheists (there was no mention of Buddhists, Muslims, etc. when**

we were growing up in New Iberia) were to be respected and maybe even prayed for but we needed to know that they were in the vernacular – “gone pecans.”

Only Catholics could be saved. Some even suggested that talking to these other folks could lead us to ruin. As a young boy it bothered me that some good folks were destined to spend eternity in hell or in somewhere other than heaven merely because they went to church on Jefferson Street (Methodists and Episcopalians) or Weeks (Synagogue) versus on St. Peter Street (Catholics). Life’s not fair.

As I’ve aged, matured, and dug deeper into faith and issues of the spirit – not religion – I find these teaching humorous. Rev. Scott is a good man, the Methodist Church is a good place, his congregation are good people. I’m comfortable those sincere in their faith will be saved. Most amazing to me is the good works and strong commitment of this small congregation. At the Methodist service there may be 60 people filling their small church. At a Catholic Mass there may be 300. Yet the Methodists do much with so few. The Methodists are also more open to visitors.  
March 6, 2007

Today Floyd and I drove 1 ½ miles in about 3 minutes but ended up 50 – 55 years back to my youth. Floyd’s the first husband of New Iberia. I think he’s been mentioned before and I’m sure will be the focus of an Observational in the future.

Driving down Iberia Street to Emma you enjoy a glimpse of New Iberia in the 1940s and 1950s. There are dozens of frame houses that I’m sure were built by and for veterans returning from the big war. In those simpler times that were the BACK phase of the movie Back to the Future – you see New Iberia as an I Love Lucy or Ozzie and Harriet world. These were the Eisenhower years. To me this was my youth. Elton grew up in one of the bigger houses on the street. Mark lived further up the block, Charlie and his brothers were down Emma Street on French. As a young man I delivered groceries to corner stores that marked each neighborhood.

This was always the “wrong side of the bayou” but this was a nicer part of “that” wrong side of town. Today the house are older and worse for wear but they are still homes – some to the original residents, some to their children, and often now to the next generations of families in their “starter” home. The neighborhood is now more diverse – red, black, yellow, and brown than it was in the old days.

If I close my eyes I can still see “us” racing bikes happily along the street (maybe even with playing cards “clothes pinned” to the spokes to simulate a motorcycle sound – didn’t I say these were more innocent times), playing football in someone’s front yard, or shooting hoops in a driveway.

As we pulled into the little white frame house on Emma Street, you see the fenced yard not much bigger than an old Air Mail Stamp, a bird house designed like a church, and colorful shutters. Floyd explains the folks here moved from down the street on St. Mary because it became too bad a neighborhood. The lady of the house

well into her 80s irons shirts for Floyd because she needs the money and he needs a reason to give her some money. Floyd has a heart of gold.

We knock and an old man leans across his walker to nudge open the screen door. As always I'll use only first names – they are Mr. and Mrs. C \_\_\_\_\_. Out of respect for their age we never ask their given name. The house is hot. A space heater goes full blast to keep the “Mrs.” Warm on this cold day.

Pictures cover the wall – family, friends, and political leaders - the Mayor's push card is framed as well. A crucifix is over the door. The coffee table is covered with figurines I'm guessing for their children and grand children but now collectibles for the old folks that can't afford antiques even though the house is filled with them.

The “Mrs.” Speaks only French. The “Mr.” translates. I hear them and see Naman and Grand Maw and Grand Paw B – my great grandmother and the grandparents of my cousins – they too spoke only French. I've gone Back to the Future. Wow!  
March 7, 2007

I was with Markham yesterday on business when we were interrupted by Scott, Markham's son and his friend Jay. Jay is running for the legislature and was soliciting support. This is the same Jay mentioned in HOBY update. We talked politics briefly. Markham Russell Long's (I only use the full names of celebrities / public figures) cousin-in-law quoted Senator Long's political philosophy.

“Those that support me earliest in the campaign get the jobs and access, everyone else gets good government.” Senator Long also said, “Don't tax you, don't tax me, tax the man behind the tree.” Senator Long was the son of Huey Long – Mr. and Mrs. C \_\_\_\_\_ probably had his picture on their wall next to a crucifix. Many folks here believe FDR had Huey Long killed because he was a political threat. Politics is our passion, Achilles heal, and blood sport. In Louisiana it's part of life.

On the way home I listened to the news about the conviction of Scooter Libby. Saturday at Mary's for coffee we talked about Will the Parish President and the pending audit of his alleged corruption. We discussed his appointment of Bobby (my neighbor growing up) as his deputy and Bobby's troubles with scandal and corruption. We talked about Kathleen our Governor and some of our more unique local politicians – David and Raymond as a election poster for Puggy Moity - probably New Iberia's most famous politician (and tomorrow's topic) hangs on the wall.

T. Harry Williams in his award winning biography of Huey P. Long stated, “Louisiana is most like a banana republic because the citizens have such a high tolerance for corruption. Billy Tauzin our most beloved retired Congressman said, “Half of Louisiana is underwater and the other half is under indictment.”

We've had at least two governor's go to prison, three insurance commissioners have served time (it was often joked that the term for Insurance Commissioners in

Louisiana was 7 years 3 months), numerous other legislators, congressmen, sheriffs, judges, etc. have or should have been sent away for very long terms.

I just deleted a couple of paragraphs about Edwin Edwards because that's all the space I had left and you can't discuss politics in Louisiana without mentioning Edwin Edwards – the Godfather of modern politics in Louisiana and even Shakespeare couldn't do justice to Edwin Edwards in a paragraph or two.

When I got home I provided an update on the Katrina Recovery to my friends in Portland. One sent back a cynical note about the politics down here and I was again blessed with a topic. Ed is right – our system is corrupt and stifled by politics. Our systems failed in Katrina and politics is a major part of the problem – we staff with politicians not technicians, managers, or leaders. The FBI for years before Katrina ran the New Orleans School System. We re-elect Congressmen who are under indictment (see Tauzin quote above) and who keep \$90,000 cash in their freezer. Welcome to Louisiana – this is the state we're in!

March 8, 2007

I must delay the Observational planned for today about politics and Puggy Moity because I just realized that it is my anniversary (32<sup>nd</sup> – thanks for asking) and so I must devote this update to my “commander in chief” and President – Sheila.

Those who are named in this journal know how shy I was as a child and young man. For the rest of you trust me when I say I was different – real different. Once I was drafted and spent a year fighting the Vietnam War in the barrooms of Germany I started, to quote Austin Powers, get some Mo Jo. I never was a Bill Clinton but I did start to notice the opposite sex.

About my third week on the job as an Insurance Adjuster my boss, Big John walked in my office threw a file on my desk and said “this gal is about your age, she's single, she lives near you, she's had a wreck – go adjust her claim and see if you can do some good.” Ever the professional I called for an appointment and then headed to Park Plaza apartments to inspect the damaged car.

As I walk up I'm approached by a cute young gal who introduces herself as Sheila. I take her statement and then engage in small talk. I mention that Brian, Johnny, and I are boiling Crawfish that evening. She expresses her love for Crawfish and ever the gentlemen I promise to bring her some later that evening.

I didn't realize it at the time – the trap is set and crawfish is the bait. Don't get confused – Sheila, a redneck from Monroe doesn't even know what crawfish are but she is setting the trap I am not. I deliver the mudbugs and the trap is triggered. I didn't realize it at the moment but I'm done. I was as innocent as a lamb going to slaughter or as Clarice in the grasp of Hannibal Lecter.

**Fast forward to December 1974 and you'll find me the ultimate procrastinator greeted by an agitated Sheila who announces that "if this relationship isn't going anywhere (a.k.a. the altar)," she's going back to Monroe. Christmas Eve we're at Allain's Jewelry Store ring shopping and on March 8<sup>th</sup> I'm walking down the aisle.**

**Today as I look back on these 32 years I have perspective and have had a good run. Sheila is smarter, much more patient, more driven, more intimidating, a better parent, more practical, and more conscientious than I would / could ever be. She not only tolerated my dreaming, procrastination, and flightiness – she's often encouraged it. When I've had troubles she's been at my side. When I've had joy – she's more often than not been a contributor or the provider.**

**When we were interviewed by the Catholic Adoption Agency prior to getting Slade, Edith asked what I admired most in Sheila, I answered honestly – very honestly – her passion for and commitment to me. When Sheila wishes for wealth, I must remind her that she married for physical thrills and not money. I believe she got what she wanted. Is Sheila perfect? For me the answer is YES! I love you, Sheila!  
March 9, 2007**

**As a little boy I can remember talk of "voting the Rooster," stump speeches in front of the old City Hall on Main Street, political push cards, and posters of politicians tied to telephone poles. Politics has been the passion of Louisiana folks in general and the Cajuns in particular forever. It is part of everyday life – our culture.**

**In those days Louisiana had one political party – the Democrats and "voting the rooster" let the voter pull one lever to vote the entire ticket versus being burdened with making multiple decisions (even though there were very few choices).**

**I can remember hearing Earl Long speak and listening in amazement as locals and the news media railed about his "craziness" and Blaise Starr! (Go see the movie and remember Paul Newman and Earl Long don't look alike.) My fondest memories of Louisiana politics however are of New Iberia's own – Warren J. "Puggy" Moity.**

**As a young boy occasionally on Sunday morning radio I'd hear some man screaming about folks not understanding the substance of his message. As I grew older and technology improved I heard and saw this man on TV again. Puggy was a private investigator, publisher, alleged scam artist, professional candidate and media darling. Most of these professions were linked by his multiple candidacies in unsuccessful yet profitable runs for public office. He made losing a business.**

**If my memory and legend are accurate, in one election cycle Puggy ran for Governor, Insurance Commissioner, State Representative and a few local offices. His "business model" was to solicit funds from other candidates to assure "control" of his political attacks. Puggy would use his weekly statewide Television program and other media sources to talk about issues, his campaign, and his opponents.**

**He was entertaining. He created names for his enemies and opponents. He called a legislator who had benefited financially from a hurricane clean up – Hurricane Sam. Governor Edwards was “Tweety Bird” and the sheriff was Cochise. There were many others. He was the master of the outrageous. On statewide TV in the early 1970s (remember husbands and wives on TV still slept in separate beds) he accused Edwin Edwards of being a “pill head homosexual” and Edwards’ brother Marion of “running naked at the festival of life celebration.”**

**He’d wave the local newspapers frantically to let us see the “facts are here.” He produced his own paper – The True Scope of Louisiana - that made the National Enquirer seem like the Church bulletin. He was at his best however when on screen / scream. My most vivid memory included Puggy standing between a giant jar of Vaseline and a jar of Alum – accusing everyone else of “screwing us” and offering to “tighten them up” on our behalf. He’d put on a hard hat when talking of his work for the “Poor People” and a top hat when mimicking Governor Edwards “drinking tea with the queen” while visiting England. As a candidate you want Puggy to talk about you but not too much. Where’s Puggy now that we need him? March 10, 2007**

**When Louisiana moved to electronic voting machines it was often joked that state government sold the old mechanical machines to Mexico and in their first election Edwin Edwards was elected President by 4,000 votes. Louisiana is home to some famous / infamous politicians and political experts – the Longs (Huey, Earl, Gillis, Russell), John Breaux, James Carville, David Duke, etc. but he # 1 guy is and may always be –Governor Edwin Edwards or in Oakdale Louisiana – Prisoner # \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Louisiana’s only 4 term Governor is schedule to be in Federal Prison until July 6, 2011. I believe this will also be his 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Edwin was finally convicted after four different attempts by the Federal Government “to put him away.” Many believe the Feds persistence had more to do with Edwards’ arrogance and mocking of them in each failed attempt than any real desire to “clean up the state.”**

**The Fed would indict Edwards - he’d sit through a trial by a jury of his peers (“murders, rapists, robbers, etc.” as he once described them), be acquitted and then stand on the courthouse steps and ridicule the failed attempt by the prosecutors. They finally got him by moving his trial out of New Orleans. Most feel folks in New Orleans would never have convicted Edwin.**

**Edwin was a short handsome man with natural people and political skills only rivaled by Bill Clinton. He could remember people – their names and their circumstances after one brief visit. He was charming, witty, and unforgettable. He would read folks to determine what they wanted and then promise them that to assure their allegiance. He’s a recognized crook but he was a man of his word. If Edwards told you he would do something – you could believe him.**

**His one-liners are now political legend. He once said “the only way I can lose this election is to be caught in bed with a live boy or a dead girl.” When running against David Duke (the KKK leader) for his final campaign he advised a critic frustrated because of no viable options to “hold your nose and vote for me.” In this same campaign good government folks sported bumper stickers saying “Vote for the Crook – It’s Important.”**

**Edwin relished in his “bad boy” and “untouchable image.” Once when asked about an alleged bribe - \$10,000 in cash – from a Korean businessman he said simply, “yea, I took it.” His freely offered advice to Bill Clinton when asked about handling the emerging Monica Lewinsky scandal – he said simply, “tell them you did it.” (If only Clinton had listened – he and U. S. would have been saved a lot of trouble.)**

**He further explained that he would never have been caught in such a trap (remember the blue dress) because “when we do it down here we take our clothes off.” Like him or hate him 543 words can’t begin to explain or capture the spirit of Edwin. Most believe he could have handled the Katrina recovery by working on commission. Suffice it to say that if he ran for governor this year – he’d be elected. March 11, 2007**

**It’s the new day light savings time – winter forward, fall back. The clocks didn’t automatically reset so my first challenge was to figure out how to change the time on an electronic clock – bring back the old wind up version. I’m old school – I’m still impressed by carbon paper. This change also resulted in me waking up before the arrival of the newspapers, so now I must occupy myself quietly until they get here. If I wake up Sheila, I’ll be in deep do-do. I live my life in fear of trouble.**

**One summer during college several of us worked at the salt mill at Weeks Island. We’d carpool early each morning. A guy named Percy also rode with us each morning. This was the first year of daylight savings time. I can remember vividly one morning Percy expressed his exhaustion “because of daylight savings time.”**

**When we asked what he meant he explained that “he was losing an hour of sleep each night. Although the clock said 5:30 a.m. it was really 4:30.” For the entire drive we attempted to enlighten Percy to the fact that he wasn’t losing the sleep he thought since he was going to bed an hour earlier. He assured us that he went to bed the same time he always did. I did the math back then and I believe Percy lost 17 days each year because of his “new math.”**

**Most mornings I walk for exercise. I need to keep my engine going. To the untrained eye I may look like the picture of health but in reality there are many parts that don’t work as well as they should. My doctors advise me to eat right, exercise, and “don’t buy green bananas.”**

**I enjoy mornings in New Iberia. There are other joggers, walkers, and homeless on the street. Traffic is light on Main Street at this time. (As a matter of fact traffic is**

light on Main Street even at rush hour. This is a different place.) Saturday you might see a few folks carrying vegetables from the Farmers' Market or donuts from Meche's, walking there dogs, exercising, or just enjoying the day – life as it is.

As I passed Karen's Frame Shoppe I was mesmerized by an original painting of Einstein that was proudly displayed in the window. I figured it was out of my price range but I asked anyway. It was sold – the price \$2,000.00. I would have paid \$200.00 on the spot – it was really neat. I wouldn't pay \$2,000 for the Mona Lisa.

This reminded me of the day Boudreaux in his innocence was approached by a lady of the evening who offered to do anything he could describe in 3 words for \$200.00. Boudreaux thought for a moment then counted out 10 twenty dollar bills and said "Paint my house."

At Boulogny Plaza's gazebo I saw a grandmother watching intently as her grandchildren played Ninja on the small stage. She was applauding as if it was a performance of Phantom of the Opera. My stare was interrupted by the Mayor and the first husband as they invited me into Victors for coffee. Life is good.  
March 12, 2007

On Friday morning David (the Yankee) stopped by the house to pick me up as he ran some errands that would have qualified in the old Baltimore Catechism # 2 as Corporal Works of Mercy. He had been talking to me for some time about becoming involved in the Homeless Shelter program. Today he wanted to run me by the office of the Chairman of the Board to discuss my involvement.

For a foreigner David brings more passion, experience, and good intentions to this town than do the Chamber, most Civic Clubs, and many politicians. Unfortunately CHANGE is not embraced in New Iberia. His ideas have great potential but as my friend Tommy often reminds me – "potential is a terrible burden." I left New Iberia over 40 years ago – it was a sleepy little town with great potential. I returned in 2004 to find the same sleepy little town with great potential.

New Iberia is one of those small towns where the population remains stable – when a baby is born a man leaves town. Folks that have been gone from this area for forty years are amazed at the CHANGE in Lafayette, Broussard, and Youngsville and more amazed at the SAMENESS of New Iberia. I still love it here and in all likelihood New Iberia will now grow because the aforementioned communities are in "gridlock" not because of any internal initiatives.

Our destination was Teche Lumber to meet the Chairman. If you want to step back to the 1950s and enjoy commerce as it was – this is it. This is more than a lumber yard / hardware store this is a social club. The nearest analogy I can draw is Cheers. I can't remember the set but I do remember the characters and I can assure you that at Teche you'll meet folks equally interesting and entertaining to any of those that walked through the bar and into our living rooms for those many years.

**Pierre – the elder is some combination of Sam and Coach. He’s more subdued than either of those folks but does have a presence to him and wisdom to share if you’ll shut up long enough to let him talk. He’s slow and easy moving and thoughtful. He is from a big family – one of 10 I think. T-Pierre is the son and junior partner.**

**What Pierre is to calm, quiet, and collected – T-Pierre is to chaos, confusion, hyperactivity, and B. S. T-Pierre is some combination of Woody, Cliff, Coach, and Norm combined and packaged in a cuddly little ball of charm of charm similar to Carla. The staff is about as diverse as the cast on Cheers and the customers / visitors round out the group to make even shopping for nails interesting – an experience.**

**Watching T-Pierre stand at the counter, talking on the phone, calculating discounts, and writing orders simultaneously is intriguing. Seeing his desk and the chaos that covers it is alarming. After a few minutes and you’ll have the urge to order a beer.**

**“Making your way in the world today takes everything you’ve got...Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name and they’re always glad you came...”**

**March 13, 2007**

**Martin is my first cousin and I guess the number is more representative of our lifelong family relationship than it is of his chronological positioning among his four brothers. Martin is the oldest son of Boozoo and Mazie. He’s about 2 years younger than me and growing up we were very close. We grew up more like brothers than cousins. The other brothers are Pat, Jimmy, Paul, and Joe and I’m sure at some point in this process they’ll each demand their 543 words of fame / celebrity.**

**Yesterday morning I received an e-mail from Dana, Martin’s daughter. It was a brief note announcing Martin’s retirement. She wanted to have this published in the Daily Iberian so Martin’s “old” friends will learn of his existence, history, and plans. Martin’s been gone from New Iberia since 1967 and over the years his visits home were much less frequent than mine were. He showed up tonight for a weeks visit.**

**Martin started out in life skinny, he eats like a horse, and he exercises very little (as far as I can tell) and to my dismay he remains skinny. When I started to have to fight the battle of the bulge, I’d laugh when I’d think about him getting a pot belly. I was reminded of a snake that swallowed an egg. Fortunately for Martin and unfortunately for me – it didn’t happen. He can be a pacifist in the battle of obesity.**

**Martin is our family’s liberal. Patrick may have leanings on the “dark side” but he’s not over the edge. Martin is a dangerous liberal because he can discuss, dialogue and debate his off the wall beliefs in a reasoned manner. He almost always makes sense. Thank God my friends and me don’t listen to him and his kind.**

**One of my favorite memories was Christmas about 26 years ago I was holding Slade my infant son. Martin was on a tear and scoring some points about some issue of world importance. He to some observers may have even been winning the debate. Slade threw up – I think it was a bodily function and not political commentary but it caused Martin to gag and end his tirade. He’s lucky because I was coming back with a great rebuttal to the garbage he was spewing. (Remember Stormy’s comment about “I’m often wrong but never in doubt.”) Thanks Slade.**

**Martin is to reason what I am to emotion. He is thoughtful, cautious, and slow paced as compared to my impulsive, emotional, and more scattered approach to life. I’m convinced he has the first dollar he earned and has invested it wisely. On the other hand I am still trying to spend every dollar I’ve yet to earn. Someday I’ll learn.**

**Martin is the picture of “slow and easy” and “steady as he goes.” As we walked Martin slowed me and explained that “I walk for therapy not exercise.” Martin has worked his entire life for the Federal Government. I’m sure he’s part of the great silent minority of bureaucrats who do great work in the darkness of the Federal Bureaucracy. If he had worked faster maybe government would work better. Martin – enjoy your retirement. You’ve earned it and deserve it. Thank you.  
March 14, 2007**

**Yesterday I was near Parks (between St. Martinville and Breaux Bridge) on my daily pilgrimage to Baton Rouge when I switched from 98.1 WRKF (NPR) to 89.3 (The Eagle). I went from some politically correct commentary about something of world significance, public good, well intentioned theory, or scientifically correct facts. I live to the right of Barry Goldwater but I do enjoy Public Radio.**

**I listen sporadically to The Eagle (probably appropriately named because if you don’t have a sick sense of humor you think this show is for the birds – if you are sick - very sick you think the show I’m about to describe soars above all others) between 6:00 – 10:00 a.m. on Mondays – Fridays. This is the Walton and Johnson Program ([www.waltonandjohnson.com](http://www.waltonandjohnson.com)). John Walton and Steve Johnson have been a quartet on the radio for many, many years. I didn’t forget a comma between these names – these two guys are a quartet. They are a trip – a family – an experience.**

**John Walton provides the voice for himself and his ego. It is a powerful voice and an even bigger ego. Steve Johnson is Mr. Eaux, Mr. Kenneth, and Billy Ed. These characters are... they are the show. Walton is very bright, rude, arrogant, full of himself, thoughtful and funny. Steve Johnson provides the sounding board of personalities that make the show work. Walton thinks he’s a genius, Johnson is.**

**Since part of these updates involves describing characters in my life – I can justify this ode to the Walton and Johnson Show players since they certainly are characters. Many serious folks will confess to listening to this trash if confronted.**

**Mr. Eaux is a black guy. He's proud of his twins (Orangejello and Lemonjello), his ethnicity, his sexual powers and ability as a babe magnet, and any black celebrity. He's from the "hood" and knows the street. I'm certain that many white folks and some black folks are greatly offended by this character and yet others are amazed and amused by the stereotype and the dialogue. He represents his constituency well and if you listen carefully and through the trash talk, he shares some wisdom.**

**Mr. Kenneth is a hairstylist and proud Homosexual. He is young (in his own mind), dynamic, sophisticated, sensitive, but in your face in defense of his lifestyle and sexual preference. He tries to "fix" Walton, Mr. Eaux and has given up on Billy Ed.**

**Billy Ed is the token redneck. He and his wife Praline have two children and a double wide. He's everything a redneck should be – smart and dumb, wise and narrow minded, quick witted in his common sense but dumb as a box of rocks when it comes to "learnin," sophistication, and political correctness.**

**Seth and I met Walton and Johnson years ago at a remote at a Paintball Tournament. They're real and smart and brilliant in their delivery. Listen you'll laugh, be offended, but will also learn something about today's reality. Enjoy or as they say "set the dial to 98.1 and rip the knob off – this is all the radio you need."  
March 15, 2007**

**One of the challenges I face as I complete nearly 75 of these updates is to "not repeat myself." I know I've done this once and I had to delete an entire Observational. I think I duplicated a comment in the last day or two but candidly I was too lazy to go back and read all of the documents in an attempt to find my error. This is a long explanation (which reduces my need for words or creativity) to justify a certain repeat or two in today's comments. See if you can find these.**

**Remember the Virginia Slims cigarette advertisement that said – "You've come a long way Baby!" This flashed back in my mind as I tried to wrap my arms around yesterday evening's experience. I was taking my daily walk down Main Street when I discovered a crowd in Boulogny Plaza. At first I thought it was an LSU event since purple and gold shirts were everywhere. Then I realized this was a send off Pep Rally for the Westgate High School Boy's Basketball Team as they left for the state championship tournament.**

**We take our sports seriously down here. Catholic High won a state championship in football in 1962 and the sign celebrating this event greeted visitors as they entered the city until very recently. I'm guessing this landmark was lost to Hurricane Andrew or Lilly. A few years ago we celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this team's success and on any given night with a few beers as stimulation you'll hear folks reminisce about the greatness of the team, the Coaches, and the athletes.**

**Schools in New Iberia have been integrated since the mid-sixties. Prior to that we had New Iberia High (white), Henderson High (black), and Catholic High / Mt.**

**Carmel (white – private). Now we have Catholic High (private / mostly white), NISH (majority white), and Westgate (majority black). Don't think that racism lives here or old habits die hard. The reality is that if you talk to people in the know – most feel that the black community likes to have the “Gate” – as their school and if they could make it so – it would be all black.**

**Last night's pep rally had a large and mostly black crowd surrounding the gazebo that held the players and the local celebrities – politicians, elected officials, school officials and coaches that were celebrating the success and the players. Mixed in with the crowd were a few white faces (like marshmallows in hot chocolate). Everyone was having fun and at ease with this new reality of “mixing.”**

**I had to laugh because some of my friends standing in the mix and on the periphery were “white folks” who 40 years ago would not have considered attending such an event or venturing into this crowd. Tonight they were there as citizens of New Iberia – supporting success and proud of the young folks doing their best. As an old white guy kissed a young black momma – I thought “we've come a long way Baby!” Then I thought about Zenobia statement “In the south they hate the race and love the individual.” She was and is right – “We've come a long way Baby” and the more things change the more they stay the same! Good luck to the Gate!  
March 16. 2007**

**As I sat through lunch, I realized I had an easy update in this two hour experience. I listened, laughed, and searched for words to capture the people and the process. As I walked out two words kept ringing in my ears...GENUINE and BULLSHIT. Now I must sit at my verbal spinning wheel and try to create today's tapestry of life as lived during lunch with Rene and Floyd.**

**Genuine as defined by Mr. Webster is really being what it is said to be or coming from the alleged source or origin: not counterfeit or artificial; real; true; authentic.**

**Surprise – Mr. Webster also defines BULLSHIT (I had promised to keep this Observational clean so I struggled to find a euphemism for BS.) On a whim I searched in Webster's Dictionary only to find that BS is main stream. By definition the word means foolish, insincere, exaggerated, or boastful talk; nonsense.**

**To even a “C” student in English these words appear to be in conflict – hopefully with the remaining words I can explain. Rene and Floyd are both New Iberia – home boys. They grew up poor and streetwise. Poor is intended to suggest that they and their families were financial survivors of the process not financially safe in the process. I've known both for over 40 years – Rene's dad was gone from the scene all of this time and Floyd's father was disabled. They made it in spite of circumstances.**

**Here's my disclaimer – whenever I introduce Rene (whether he is present or not) I use the following words and the folks I'm talking to sometimes feel uncomfortable because they think I'm being mean. The reality is that Rene blushes in pride when I**

so accurately define him. Rene is loud, obnoxious, hard headed, and can be an “ass \_\_\_\_\_” (there is a limit to the words I will use in this family journal) and he is also very good at what he does – Risk Management and Insurance.

Floyd is hyper. He’s a salesman – one of the best I’ve ever met. It appears that he doesn’t listen but it’s really that he can’t focus (he’s a poster boy for ADHD) but he does observe very, very well. He reads people, determines their wants and needs, and will do all possible to get them to their desired destination. He doesn’t think about an A – B – C process but rather he jumps from A – Z and back to K and then to R and maybe L and from there it may get crazy and disorganized.

I haven’t gotten to the substance of our lunch or discussions or these two characters. Here’s the reality – if you don’t like them or if they move too fast or if you had only observed these two guys racing through conversations you’d say BULLSHIT.

If you know them well – you’d see two guys that love “life,” are devoted to their families, will give you the shirts of their backs, can and will do what they say and don’t care what you think about them, what they do or how they do it. They are GENUINE. So I was able to relish GENUINE BULLSHIT. Wish you were there – you might have enjoyed it or really hated it. It’s more about you than us.  
March 17, 2007

Last year Sheila and I went to New Orleans for our first St. Patrick’s Day parade. Shaun had recently purchased a house on Magazine Street and it was an ideal location to enjoy such an event. All amenities were provided – food, drink, and the most important resource at a parade – a place to pee. In spite of Sheila’s behavior last year we were invited back.

The most obvious feature of last year’s parade was the emotion of the participants and the attendees in a Post Katrina Recovery. There was joy and heartbreak – cheers, smiles, laughter, and tears. This event in 2006 was to parades what the blues is to music – memorable - even enjoyable and meaningful but born in hurt.

Today we were back. The company, food, drink, and facilities were consistent with the standards established last year but there was a difference in the mood. Katrina and her hurtful ways were gone – maybe not forgotten but not dominating the process, people, or parade – today alcohol, throws and celebration reigned.

The parade’s in the Garden District – St. Charles Avenue, to Louisiana Avenue, and finally ending on Magazine Street. The homes that line the route are unique and beautiful – the best the city has to offer. The neighborhood is a combination of rich and poor, black and white, young and old, yuppie and bohemian. It is New Orleans.

The parade started with hundreds of Irishmen divided into marching clubs neatly dressed (at least when they started) in tuxedos with “tails.” At the end of the parade most had transformed into drunks that were no longer neat and were

**showing their ass not than their tails. Some wore kilts – many appeared to suffer from furniture disease their chests had dropped into their drawers. Most carried flowers or beads to exchange for a kiss from the lasses along the parade route.**

**Following marching of the drunks was the riding of the drunks in the many floats that followed. The floats were diverse and Spartan – not elegant like the Rose Parade but merely a distribution point for beads, doubloons, anything green (panties, garters, Frisbees, etc.) anything Irish (Irish Spring, Lucky Charms, etc.) and the makings of an Irish stew (cabbages, potatoes, carrots, and onions). Don't look for logic in the process this was thousands of drunks entertaining the masses.**

**My favorite float included a statute of Reggie Bush (# 25 with the Saints) not Saint Patrick. In Louisiana Reggie is more important than St. Patrick since we've been hurt more by other NFL teams than by snakes – Thanks Reggie. Go Saints.**

**As Sheila and I walked the 12 or more blocks to get the car we went through streets covered with empty bottles, beer cans, trash, cabbage leaves, and crushed potatoes. Some were celebrating “the wearing of the green” while “sucking of the red” – eating crawfish on the parade route. There were enough discarded beads to buy Manhattan a second time - still not a good buy. It was fun. Thanks Shaun.  
March 18, 2007**

**Saturday evening Aunt Mazie left a voice mail inviting us to join her and others at the Farm on Sunday evening for hamburgers. Sheila, Lela, Momma, and “Miss” Peggy were at home for intoxication – Momma, Lela, and “Miss Peggy” chose wine – Sheila's drug of choice was working in her flowers. The Warehouse is starting to look better – the uniqueness of the renovations have gotten us some attention in the past. Sheila's creativity and work in the yard will get us the same in the future.**

**The Farm is the 90+ acres of land right inside of town that we has been a safe haven, a family experience, investment, and escape for the Landry and Manes families for my entire lifetime. As young children most Saturday afternoons (daddies worked on Saturday mornings in those days) and many Sundays were spent at the farm.**

**During most of my years the Farm was “out in the country.” About 5 or 6 years ago by action of the City Council of New Iberia the Farm became part of the town. The land once housed the family home. It backed up to Spanish Lake. It's divided into 3 sections – the Lake side, the area between Highway 182 and the tracks and the land across the tracks. About 2/3 of the land is leased to a Cane farmer and to NCF for storage of industrial equipment.**

**The balance of the land houses our “camp,” a trailer for rent, a barn, about 10 horses, chickens, wildlife (coyotes, raccoons, a few deer, many snakes, and the fondest of memories and hopeful dreams of its eight owners, their children and grandchildren. Many of our friend also share experiences of note at the Farm.**

The lake was drained many years ago and the landowners adjoining the lake bottoms believe the land is theirs. Others contend that this land belongs to the state. Time and the courts will ultimately decide. In the early 1980s Momma and Uncle Booz – the modern owners of the property formed a corporation to own the land and then gifted the stock to us – their children: Claire, Johnny, Martin, Patrick, Jimmy, Paul, Joseph, and yours truly.

In about 1962 – an oil company drilled a well on the site and we were told a “big one” was coming in. At about 5:00 one morning we drove out to the well looking like the Beverly Hillbillies with hopes of returning like the Ewings of Southfork. Unfortunately – Jethro and the rest of us came back like we left – as Uncle Booz would always say – “a day late and a dollar short.”

The reality is that we are very, very rich and this land has given us that wealth. Knowing me and all the other owners and their progeny – if we had received untold wealth from an oil find we’d have been ruined by the excess / success. Today some have money – some don’t but we all work, have good families, and have a treasure trove of experiences and memories – from cookouts, picnics, parties, etc. on the Farm. I believe this – when the others read it they’ll call me and say – “Are you crazy? We could have money!” I don’t know why they ask they know I am crazy.  
March 19, 2007

At a class reunion many years ago one of my former classmates and friends introduced himself as Mike a “poor dirt farmer.” We all laughed because the year before sugar was selling for \$5.00 a pound and “poor dirt farmers” made tons of money. I hadn’t thought about “poor dirt farmers” until earlier today – when I discovered if I’m lucky – real lucky – I might be one myself some day.

Many years ago Momma told us about her grandmother (Naman – Leonide Gragnon) giving her and Uncle Booz 5 shares of stock in a company called Borgnemouth Realty and saying simply “never sell this.” The name I found interesting – I’m assuming it consolidates references to the mouth of the Mississippi and Lake Borgne. The location of the assets of the corporation.

Through the years Momma would mention receiving a small check from someone somewhere and then she’d retell the story about Naman and her “never sell this” wisdom. In 2004 Momma received a notice of the annual stockholders meeting – the 100<sup>th</sup>. On a whim I decided to attend the meeting and learn the reality of this asset.

The meeting was held at the home of the Chairman of the Corporation near the Metairie Country Club. The meeting was uneventful except for the opportunity for me to learn about this investment, its history, and the potential.

Over sandwiches, cold drinks, and friendly conversation (most folks were kin or had known each other for a long time) I learned that 100 years ago a group of investors had established a corporation to buy property in St. Bernard Parish (near the toe of

**the boot that is Louisiana). My great great grandfather was an original investor. I learned that our 5 shares represented 1% of the stock and the stock originally represented 12,000 acres of land in St. Bernard Parish.**

**As a side bar – I left the meeting feeling like J. R. Ewing in Dallas and I was tempted to head east after the meeting and speed through St. Bernard Parish merely to be stopped by a sheriff's deputy and tell him "Boy do you know who I am – I own this parish!" Wisdom prevailed and I drove back home instead.**

**I missed the 2005 meeting but did attend the 2006 session. Many in attendance were survivors of Katrina. They had lost homes, camps, and much of their worldly possessions. You could see and feel the hurt. The good news is that most still had resources. The Judge (Chair) spoke briefly about the "bad news" – the loss of future rental income since all properties on our land were destroyed. Then with an ever so slight smile he mentioned the good news – a gas well had come in and 2 more were being drilled. (J. R. Manes does have a certain ring to it.)**

**Martin and I went to the 2007 meeting. The bad news is that the gas well that had come in is fast going out. The good news is the "Fed" wants to buy hundreds of thousands of acres of our clay soil to build levees. At last I'm a "poor dirt farmer."  
March 20, 2007**

**My morning started at Pellerin's Funeral Home with visitation for Miss Lily. At 92 she went to her reward. I visited briefly with her children Sylvia, Burt, and Bud. A good friend Al was also with us. This was more of a celebration of life than the mourning of death. At 92 she had a good run – all agreed we'd take no cut contracts to 92. In her many years she had touched many lives.**

**As I left Plaquemine to return to New Iberia this p.m. I called Becky. She's the widow of a very good friend name Steve who died recently. I mentioned Steve in my earlier update when I discussed folks handling adversity with dignity and courage. Steve died at 55 after having enjoyed more success than most ever dream of.**

**His gifts were significant - he had physical presence, a great mind, a wonderful education, skills of articulation that are rarely matched, creativity, and a thirst for knowledge and experience. He had a wife that adored him and he reciprocated. He was proud of his children and his love was unconditional.**

**He lived large for 54 years and 11 months and was diagnosed and died in less than 60 days. His life was short and full. He too touched many of us. He was one of – if not the most unique person I ever met. It's hard to believe he's gone – or is he?**

**Becky invited me to stop for coffee, conversation and tears. When I arrived a CD was playing - Steve singing – his voice and emotion filled the room in his absence. The final songs were Steve singing to the background music of his own tears at the**

**funeral of a friend – Tom. The tape ended with Steve eulogizing Tom. It was powerful – seasoned with emotion and delivered with love, passion, and eloquence.**

**Steve promised to do my eulogy – it's the only promise he never kept. I regret not hearing it. He would have made me and my life seem bigger than what we were and more exciting than we are. I may have sat up to take notes. He was that good.**

**I didn't know Tom but having heard Steve celebrate him – I wish I had. Tom died closer in age to Lily. Obviously he had a full and fun life. He loved people, stood tall in adversity, and only bent when necessary to lift up or help another. On average he had a good life – not dull or same but balanced in terms of offsetting problems and opportunities, good times and bad, and joy and sadness.**

**I saw Steve about 5 or 6 times during his decline and slide into the hereafter. All of these visits were with the Steve that I knew – young, vibrant, energetic, charismatic, and “on his game” as he faced death smiling, lovingly, and patient. The last visit was Steve the old man – at the end bent but not broken. His body gone, his mind diminished and his spirit packing for its final journey.**

**Miss Lily and Tom had long and full lives. Steve's was short but his impact and experiences were great. I miss him. I love him. Rest in peace my friend.**

**March 21, 2007**

**Walking this morning I tried to decide on a topic for yesterday. Customer service, change, progress, etc. were on my mind because that's part of my business. I shaped the ideas as I walked and now I sit at the keyboard for the daily update.**

**I'm a slob. Sheila's a neat freak. She just walked in and said, “Look how dusty these chairs are. Do you ever dust this furniture?” “No” I responded. Then my alligator mouth overloaded my tadpole tail. I regrettably said, “This close to Ash Wednesday you shouldn't ask that. You know when the priest put the ashes on your forehead and said ‘remember man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shall return.’ If man returns to dust – I'm sure his furniture does as well. This dust is merely an early stage of the process. I will not interfere with God's work.”**

**When I returned to consciousness I realized that I must have hit a nerve. Now I'll try to finish this update with one eye blackened and a bruised arm. The reality is people are different. What I consider horrible service the people delivering it think of as an award winning performance. Such is life – now I'll finish the update.**

**I'm rehabilitating a business that got in deep trouble mostly because of failed management and folks that didn't know what to do or couldn't do it well. My answer is a team of “gray heads” – folks with age, wrinkles, scar tissue – experience. They know what to do and how to do it. We've nearly completed the process – life is good – service is getting better and will be great. Thanks Pat, Rhonda and Brenda.**

I'm reminded of the story of the old bull and the young bull. The young bull says "let's run down the hill and take care of a cow." The old bull answers, "Let's walk down there and take care of all of them." I don't care about political correctness – there is wisdom in this story. Thank God for old bulls.

As I walked passed the Chamber office this morning I had to challenge my own theory about age, scar tissue, experience, etc. I shook my head in frustration – so much potential – so little development – why? This group has been dominated by generations of old guys and their progeny – younger versions of themselves in terms of appearance and physical condition but not that different in terms of diversity, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity or tolerance for change.

My mind flashed back to the "young bulls (and bullettes)." When I first moved to town the new Mayor asked me to head a committee for Economic Development. I engaged in the process with vigor, naiveté, and enthusiasm. I received lukewarm response and no action. I dealt with the status quo – the entrenched old bulls.

Out of desperation and with perpetual hope – I invited in a group of 7 young folks – Beau, Burt, Kelly, Mike, Mark, David, and Nick. They get it – they can and will run. They formed Bourgeois 2030 – to facilitate positive change - their efforts begin. They're waking this sleepy little town. Thank God for young bulls and "bullettes."  
March 22, 2007

John called today. He and his wife Deidre were our closest friends in Baton Rouge and remain a most important part of our past and future. We talked about "old friends," business, children, and life. Just enough information and inspiration to allow me to complete today's update.

I met John in Voorhies Dorm at USL in the fall of 1965. In this grand new adventure we called college – I was lost. I was a shy, conservative, cautious and scared boy venturing for the first time into the world of men. I had several close friends there with me but I knew my universe needed to be and would be expanded. John may have been the first friend I met – he proved to be the best.

Relative to me he was exciting but not too exciting to cause me to be intimidated. He was wild enough to allow me some vicarious experiences until I found my own comfort zone. Because of academic rigor he only lasted two semesters at USL and then transferred to LSU where even "algebra impaired" students could graduate.

We stayed in touch. In 1970 when Johnny and David were moving to LSU, I looked John up and he helped them find an apartment, get acclimated, drunk, out of jail, etc. I went off to war – John, Johnny, David, and others went to Chuck's, the Bengal, and the clubs across the river depending upon the beer, bands, and broads.

I get back from War to find John and his new wife Deidre, Johnny, David, and the aforementioned others living the good life in Baton Rouge. One visit with Deidre

assured me that John had married up – Deidre is beautiful, nice, and full of spirit. John is ... lucky. I meet Sheila and she fits right into the circle of friends.

On the phone today we reminisced about friends – events – experiences – life. During the early years of our married life we lived across the street or around the corner from John and Deidre. They were the Godparents to Seth and a safe haven for Slade when Sheila and I needed relief. They were there in our joy and sorrow.

Many of our early vacations and road trips were with these folks – a crawfish hunt with Chester – a VW van ride from Brownsville, many Florida trips, and a venture through Pierre Part to Morgan City. They were the foosball champs of BR. I can remember tapping on the bathroom glass to get their attention early on the morning of Seth's birth and walking over to announce "the call" from the adoption agency.

Sheila tolerated my fantasies about Deidre. A friend I met later in life told me that Deidre was the best looking teacher he ever had. I can believe that. As mentioned earlier I'm a slob. John is as anal as I am flakey. I guess if I had known this dark secret of his we may not have become friends. To this day Deidre will occasionally invite me into his closet to provide a little disorder in his life. Everyone needs that.

John and Deidre were and always will be a most important part of our lives.  
March 23, 2007

Yesterday's Advocate had a brief article about Celebrity Chef Wolfgang Puck participating in a new initiative to fight animal cruelty. He's going to no longer serve foie gras (fatty liver produced by overfeeding ducks and geese), he'll only use lobster removed quickly from their ocean traps, eggs from hens that have lived cage free, veal from free roaming calves, etc.

I'm reminded of Boudreaux when he was served a delicacy of cow's tongue. In disgust he sent the dish back to the kitchen declaring I'll never eat anything that comes out of the mouth of a cow – bring me some eggs instead.

Today's paper surveys locals for their feeling on cockfighting. Louisiana is the last state in the nation that allows the "sport." As a young man we fought chickens behind Mr. Louie's house. It was great fun and as best as I can remember it wasn't that much of a blood sport. Maybe the chickens weren't any better fighters than we were. I'm not a fan of this sport any longer but I will eat Popeye's chicken often.

Recently I read an article about a group in San Francisco seeking to equalize the status of all animals with the human animal. They talked in terms of a pet guardian in lieu of pet owner. Every so often you'll learn of some PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) demonstrating or running naked or caging themselves on Main Street to make a statement. (Last night I ate a black bean burger and steamed vegetables at Chili's. Do we need to form a new group called PETV – people for the ethical treatment of vegetables?)

**Here's my bottom line – I think a lot of people have too much time on their hands. I believe political correctness has run amuck. I think a certain segment of the population of this world wants to run other folks' lives and wants government to legislate what our parents called manners, respect, and common sense.**

**When I taught Risk and Insurance in 1988 I remember telling the students that lawyers and legislators would ultimately sue / tax the cigarette industry out of business and then they would go after the food folks. Once they've rung every dollar out of these guys and gals they'll find someone else with funds and sue that. The students didn't believe me. One day I'm going to create a bumper sticker - "When bread pudding is outlawed, only outlaws will have bread pudding."**

**What about the important issues facing us as the human race? What about Cajuns who die from fatty livers, hearts, and arteries from eating too many ducks and geese? What about husbands that aren't allowed to roam free? What about the evil people that open oysters with a dirty blade with out anesthetizing them first?**

**Boudreaux is more practical. He became a veterinarian and taxidermist. This way "no matter what happened – you got your dog back." I love my dog Pepper but I love my freedom more. Mind your own business and keep your nose out of mine. March 24, 2007**

**36 years ago right today – I was standing on trembling legs – with my right hand raised as I pledged my allegiance to this country and swore myself into the Army.**

**The Vietnam War was still being fought even though the peace negotiators were in serious discussions about the shape of the table needed for the talks to end the war. I was scared to death. I walked from the Customs House to the pay phones at the A & G cafeteria on Canal Street in downtown New Orleans. I called momma, the Keg, and Beth and Bob. I told all I had passed the physical and I was in the Army now.**

**Bob offered me free passage to Canada – "I can have you there before the bus leaves for Ft. Polk" he said. I mentally flipped a coin and decided to do my duty. We boarded the bus at 5 p.m. and later that night I arrived at the base for what would prove to be a life changing experience – for me and my life - a positive change.**

**I'm reliving those moment this a.m. as I walked down Weeks Street. I looked in the distance to see Luke – a childhood friend, a veteran, and an inspiration. For me the military life was a gift – I spent a year at Ft. Polk doing easy work (savings bond and awards and decorations clerk) and going home on weekends and about 10 months in Heidelberg Germany as a Classified Documents Clerk. This was the Pentagon of Europe a tourist center. For me war wasn't hell – it was fun.**

**Luke on the other hand stepped on a land mine and lost both legs at his hips. Today he's a counselor. Between now and his army experience he's taught, done flooring,**

**and other things. He made a sacrifice – a huge sacrifice – I was given a gift. Life's not fair. From outward appearance Luke appears to have grown and prospered from his experience as well – this is why I find him inspiring.**

**I reflect briefly on other soldiers and other Wars. Geronimo and Kilroy in WW II, Uncle Booz in the Pacific, Kenneth and Tommy in Vietnam in combat, Johnny and Charlie in Vietnam in the jungles but not in as much danger. I think about Thomas and his experience in Iraq or the locals at the National Guard and Army Reserve.**

**I think about the movie and TV Show M.A.S.H. It was more true than false – an accurate depiction. I remember August – a Cajun Gomer Pyle character that was happy – maybe even blissful in his life and his response to Captain Walter when during an inspection the Captain yelled, “Private your shit is flaky!” August always innocent responded – “I think it's the hot weather we've been having, Sir!” I'll always remember the day I went in and the day I came out.**

**I remember Geronimo telling me a week before I left that “Boy, I wouldn't trade my experiences in the War for one million dollars, but I also wouldn't go back in for a million dollars. When you get out you'll feel the same way.” He was right. Next time you see soldiers, marines, sailors, or airmen or veterans of the military – thank them. When you close your eyes to pray – remember them. God Bless America. March 25, 2007**

**It's Saturday morning and very shortly I'll go walking. Often I'd call my friend Brenda to walk with me. Fortunately for her and unfortunately for me she's in Saudi Arabia until May. It's a long story but I'll try to explain this in a few words.**

**In about 1951 I started school. I went to first grade at Mt. Carmel, second through 4<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Peter's College (SPC), and 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades at Catholic High (CHS). SPC and CHS were boys' schools and Mt. Carmel was for girls. In my class were Bobby, Jimmy, and Tim – we were good friends for our entire lives.**

**Fast forward to our post high school world – Tim marries Brenda, begins a family and settles in New Iberia. Bobby in some order goes to college, marries Renee', joins the Air Force, begins his family and ultimately enjoys a career with Aramco in Saudi Arabia. As an aside – Brenda is one of 10 children, Bobby is one of 10, and Tim is one of 10. Renee' came from a small family of less than 10.**

**Tim and Brenda are as good a folks as you can find and they with their 5 children are living the American Dream here in Cajun Country until ... one night in January 1987 – Tim drops dead playing basketball. Brenda and her five children, their families and friends are devastated. This was an idyllic couple – life's short.**

**Brenda struggles but with incredible support of family and friends, unshakable faith, discipline and a commitment to family she and her children prosper – she becomes a school counselor, a great mother, and a role model to her friends. A role**

**model in terms of mothering, values, and “playing the cards life deals you” – she places her children first and never deviates from that focus. She makes sacrifices.**

**Bobby and Renee raise their 3 children and enjoy the good life in Saudi and finally retire for a final time to return to Cajun Country to enjoy the benefits of a lifetime of hard work and tax preferred income. Life is good. They’ve done well. In May of 2005 Renee’ drops dead suddenly – Life is short. Bobby is devastated. His children are grown and I’m guessing like so many husbands – he’s lost without his wife.**

**On July 1 of 2005 – George and Carol have a party to celebrate Jimmy and Peggy visiting New Iberia. Jimmy was in our class and he and Peggy were close with Bobby and Renee’ (from Lake Charles days) and Brenda and Tim forever. This will be a mini-class reunion. Bobby’s invited and joins us as he feels his way around a post-Renee’ world. This is a safe haven – as a group we are family.**

**Sheila nudges me and smiles as Bobby and Brenda visit briefly “reacquainted” after decades. Weeks later Bobby joins Sheila, Brenda, and me for dinner out. Sheila nudges me and smiles. Two good people – hurt so bad – loved so much – families so important - heal together – love blossoms – life is good – life is short.**

**October 20, 2007 Bobby and Brenda exchange vows – Sheila nudges me and cries.  
March 26, 2007**

**In yesterdays observational I attempted to explain the story of Brenda and Bobby – their history, their shared tragic experiences, and the joyous future that evolved from these. Not only was this the meeting and ultimate marriage of two good people, it was a community engaging in and monitoring a blossoming relationship. It was a town’s love affair and fantasy. All their friends wanted this to happen.**

**Everyone that knew Brenda hoped that one day she’d have rewards as great as the sacrifices she had made in her post-Tim world. As stated yesterday Brenda’s faith was rewarded. For Bobby – his hurt and loneliness were “salved.”**

**The notes below are the “toast” I offered at the reception. With just siblings, Godchildren, and grandchildren and a handful of friends about 150 people attended. The friends had to adopt family names just to get in – it was great.**

**On January 5, 2004 Sheila and I joined over 70,000 others in crowding into the Super Dome to watch LSU win the National Championship. To get tickets for that night you needed money, luck, and maybe even political help. Tonight to get into this special event it takes even more than money, luck or politics. It requires DNA. You must be family.**

**For those who haven’t been to a reunion lately I want to introduce the families at my table – I’m Mike and my wife is Sheila LeBlanc. Sitting with us are George and**

**Carol Trappey, Richard and Mary Scott, Pat and Donna Trappey, and Peggy and Jim Price.**

**If tonight were an ordinary night and if this was an ordinary wedding, with an ordinary bride and groom, I'd merely ask each of you to stand and join me in a toast – I'd congratulate the groom and offer best wishes to the bride.**

**As we all know however tonight is far from ordinary. We are here in this fantasy land, this Camelot we call New Iberia for an event that is very special. It is extraordinary – special people, in a special place, for a special reason.**

**Tonight we're not merely toasting a bride and groom. We are here to recognize family and friends and the essence of life that these represent. We are here to honor the resilience of the human spirit and to recognize that even in the darkest of moments a positive future exists. Tonight we acknowledge that life follows death, the fact that sunlight follows darkness and that you must survive a storm in order to have the rainbow.**

**We are here to pay tribute to Brenda and Bobby and to celebrate the faith, hope, and love that they share and that have brought them together. Now I'll ask our Princess Charming to stand with his Cinderella so we as a group can raise our glasses in a toast – a simple prayer - that they live happily ever after!**

**March 27, 2007**

**Saturday night Sheila and I attended a “South of the Border Fiesta” honoring Nano and Kevin. At first I thought this was going to celebrate Delcambre (South of New Iberia's border but then I saw the word Fiesta and realized it must be about Mexico). This was at CeCe and Dan's house or mansion or as Yogi Berra said “this isn't a mansion it just a big house with lots of room.”**

**Their home is at Squirrel Run subdivision or as us old timers remember – city dump but that's a story for another day. Dan and CeCe did well in the oil field service business and they have a home worthy of “doing well.” It was designed by Paul a local architect (probably a classmate of Dan's) and built by a local craftsman. It's beautiful. It could easily pass for an A. Hays Town home. If you're not into architecture suffice it to say that if Michelangelo was reincarnated in modern times he'd study A. Hays Town's work before restarting his design business.**

**Nano is a doctor in Thibodeaux and Kevin is an architect in BR. Kevin is the youngest son of George and Carol. Their other child is Tommy – he and his wife Shannon were there with the first grandbaby “in the oven.” With George's fight with cancer going well, Kevin's wedding, and a first grandbaby on the way – it will be a great year for their clan.**

**When we entered the home and saw the food – we realized this was more the Acapulco or Cancun part of Mexico than the Nuevo Laredo neighborhood that**

houses “Boys Town.” I had never seen any of these dishes on the menu of Taco Bell. The food was great. At the bar there were margaritas, beer, and wine. Again being the upscale party this was all the wine bottles used corks instead of screw tops. I saw no Boones Farm or Thunderbird labels even though these were the favorite brands of some of the folks there. Remember – “What’s the word – Thunderbird.”

Two groups were represented – the contemporaries of George and Carol and those of Kevin and Nano. When you looked at George’s male contemporaries you better understood the meaning of “ugly American” – most of these guys looked rough. Most of Kevin’s male peers still qualified for the term “hard bellies” even though some were starting to show signs of the “dickey do” disease. (This is when your belly sticks out farther than your dickey do.) When you looked at their daddies this obviously is a genetic problem. The ladies in attendance all looked great – in fact it was hard to tell who the mommas were and who were the daughters.

The home sits on a golf course and among those in attendance were several folks kin to or friendly with Louisiana’s governor. Earlier in the week Governor Kathleen announces she was not running for reelection. This explained why the majority of the conversations involved golf or politics. Knowing most of the folks there I can safely say that when playing golf – they hit to the left but in politics almost all are way to the right. The reality is they exaggerate (a.k.a. – lie) about both. Here’s hoping Kevin and Nano play their round in the fairway! Good luck!

March 28, 2007

Tonight I attended a meeting for a newly formed committee here in New Iberia. It is designed to be a citizens’ group to over see the consolidation of the City Police into the Sheriff’s office. Several years ago the Chamber and others pushed a political agenda to consolidate these offices. This proved to be a very contentious issue. Ultimately Mayor Ruth made the decision to consolidate and did so without the vote of the people. Today Ruth may be a lot of things but Mayor ain’t one of them.

As a sidebar – I’m reminded of Boudreaux at the unemployment office applying for benefits when the counselor asks for his prior work history. Since Boudreaux’s memory is not as good as it used to be, he say’s “I can’t remember but I think it had something to do with horses.” The counselor asks – “Were you a jockey that rode horses? Were you a groom that kept the horses neat? Were you a horse breeder that took the male horse and the female horse, mated them and then sold the colts?”

Boudreaux thought for a moment and asked – “What’s dat female horse called?” The counselor replied – “the mare.” Boudreaux responded – “Mais dat’s it – I was de mayor of Breaux Bridge!” I’m so easily distracted.

Hopefully this Journal captures the happy face of New Iberia – sort of a Mayberry USA or Fantasyland or as Billy describes it, “Camelot on the Bayou.” As a practical matter however all is not well in Camelot. There is dissension and division. I will

**not dwell on the negative in the future – but I do want to inject today’s update with this one shot of reality.**

**Any of you that grew up or live in “small town America” will recognize this condition – “where everyone knows your name...” but also everyone knows your business and all too often wants to put their nose in it.”**

**If friendship were a political party I’d be an independent. I don’t take sides. I have friends that don’t like each other and yet I like both of them. I was reminded of this on Saturday at the party when I was visiting with one good friend that doesn’t like another friend. That’s their problem not mine.**

**Today I received an e-mail about changes at the local Catholic High School – my alma mater. A new principal was hired to make changes that everybody agreed were needed. He came in and has started the process – the result – World War III.**

**E-mails, chain letters, screaming parents and contributors – I don’t know if the changes are right or not but I can tell you it is ugly. I don’t have a dog in this fight - I suspect I may have made some of the changes that the “new guy” has made but I’m sure my style would have been different. I also know that the result would have been the same – some folks would have loved me and others would have hated me – sweet lovable me! I guess I’m Pollyanna – no more correctly I am Pollyanna but I do wish we could learn from Rodney King – “Why can’t we all just get along?”**

**March 29, 2007**

**Momma had three children – a smart one, a nice one, and an incredibly good looking one. Claire is the smart one, Johnny my brother is the nice one and by the process of elimination or with the most feeble powers of observation – I’m the incredibly good looking one. I know I’m right about this description of myself because I just looked in the thesaurus and incredibly also means unbelievably and when I’ve commented to friends about my good looks they often say – “that’s unbelievable.”**

**Claire’s two years older than me (If I’m 38 – she’s 40) and Johnny is 7 years younger (If I’m 38 – he’s 31). Claire has Momma’s height, Daddy’s emotional edge, and coloring and a brain of some substance. When she finished high school she announced she was going to be a nun. One day Momma mentioned to our family dentist that Claire was leaving for the convent soon. Dr. Francis reacted in shock by commenting “With her brain?” Momma responded calmly – “Yes, she’s taking that with her.” Momma has always been unflappable.**

**Claire left the convent after about 15 years and has been living large since then. She’s more independent than me – I have Sheila to keep me on a short leash. Claire and her friend David seem to enjoy life and go as they want. Claire’s working on her Ph.D at ULL and teaches at Remington Business School. She square dances, did**

pottery (I've often gotten "potted" but never have done pottery), and care takes her mother as her time allows.

Johnny is taller than Claire but shorter than me. He's closer in style to Momma than Daddy. Nice is like pornography – it's hard to define but most people know it when they see it. The best explanation I've ever heard came from Mr. Eddie who told me one day that Johnny was letting his dog "poop" in Mr. Eddie's yard and as he said – "I watched the dog doing that in my yard and I couldn't get upset – Johnny's that nice."

Johnny has 3 "kids" – Chris, Gretchen, and Sarah. Chris is working on his Ph.D, and Sarah and Gretchen have finished their schooling and are finding their way around the work world. Johnny and his wife Patricia have a beautiful home on Main Street. Patricia is very creative and through the years has been challenged with numerous health issues.

The one word that defines Johnny best is "faith." In an earlier life or in the next life I suspect he was a priest. We all have crosses to bear – he does it with a flair.

I'm proud of my brother and sister and mother but I can tell you I have been a little hurt by them. Since I moved back to New Iberia I've met dozens of people who recognize my last name. When asked if I'm kin to Johnny or Claire, I always respond that I'm their good looking brother. They then say I thought Teenie only had two children – they've denied me. One day the "cock will crow three times."  
March 30, 2007

I got an e-mail from Nanette. She told me that Big John is not doing well and that he had nearly met his maker earlier in the week. Big John is Nanette's husband, a good friend, my first boss, and the person responsible for connecting me with Sheila.

He was mentioned earlier in an update – as my first boss he assigned me Sheila's claim and told me to go see if I could do some good. Since then I've done some good, some bad, and some in-between. On days when I've taken a beating from Sheila I've fantasized about inflicting pain on Big John equal to that which he introduced into my life but then I look at the reality of my world – "life is good!"

Big John is obviously "big" at least in the standards of his day – the other adjective most would agree fits him best is genuine or authentic. With Big John what you see is what you get. He's a father, husband, retired insurance adjuster and field man and the friend to many. Beyond his family his passions are hunting, fishing, camping, training dogs, and exercise. It's hard for me to visualize this "big" man down. John has lived life fully – outside of himself – where the world is.

Yesterday I was discussing a business that is being destroyed by a "home boy" who is a control freak and without respect or understanding of the human animal. His internal focus has blinded him to the world "out there." He's hurting lots of people.

Lily was the wife of Will. Will was described earlier when we talked about folks who handled adversity with courage. Will died with a brain tumor after a 16 month battle. Lily stood in the front lines with him. During this time she was diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. She's faced death from all sides and survived. Recently she's returned to the work place and you can see her peeking out from the veil of darkness. She blossoming again – it's good to see Lily's bloom at Easter.

Sherry was the sugar cube that motivated this old horse's \_\_\_ get moving on this Observational. Sherry, like Lily, lost a husband in the recent past. Her mate wandered off and left Sherry to suffer loneliness and hurt – to question her world – herself – her future. Sherry recently has looked out on the horizon and found a “friend” she has bounce again in her step and laughter in her voice. Life is good.

Life is to be lived – outside of ourselves – where the world is. We need to help each other and when we fall down we need to stand up. Don't try to control life – live it.

“It is not the critic who counts, or how the strong man stumbled and fell, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotion, and spends himself in a worthy cause; and if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that he'll never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.” Theodore Roosevelt

March 31, 2007

Friday I had breakfast at Victor's. This is a cafeteria on Main Street that has enjoyed its 15 minutes of fame in each of James Lee Burke's novels about the adventures of David Robichaux. A David Robichaux eats here sign hangs proudly on the outside and the inside of the place.

The food is great, the décor is 1960 or 1970 or 1980 – it is what it is. The atmosphere is not as good as the food – the crowd it attracts is however what makes the place. It is New Iberia. I'm sure some of the folks in there or their mommas, daddies, and friends were the genesis of the characters that James Lee has created and David Robichaux has arrested, roughed up, conspired with or against, etc.

On Mondays – Saturdays a large table is reserved in the back left corner of the seating area. This is for the “brain trust” of New Iberia. This is their perception of themselves – the casual observer might “trust” that one or two have brains. It is merely a gathering of “old farts” that on Friday and Saturday mornings may be supplemented by the “junior farts and fartettes” that are the progeny of the old farts. Fridays and Saturdays seem to bring out more families than the rest of the week. This isn't a membership group (with low standards) but it easily could be.

**On Friday I sat with Tommy, Vicki, Helen, and Noah. Tommy is a high school classmate and college roommate. Vicki is his beautiful wife and business partner. Helen is their daughter and Noah the first grandchild. All my male friends married up – all of these guys acknowledge that Tommy married “more up.” Their other child is Thomas a battle tested Marine from the Iraq War era. He’s out now but “once a Marine always a marine.” Semper Fi! You should see him in dress blues.**

**Tommy’s daddy (Geronimo) was a certified War hero (Korea and WWII) marine. Thomas had a large pair of shoes to fill. Tommy’s mother was Miss Eleanor – together they created a good stereotype for the families of our generation. A stern father (Geronimo – was best of class in the world of stern) who managed his kids through “threat of death” and a mother who managed the father and kept the kids alive in spite of their behavior. Miss Eleanor earned her keep and their gratitude.**

**Tommy is the oldest. Johnny was next – both Johnny and Tommy were infamous in their youth. Their antics were legend. Johnny and Johnny (another friend) were named by “Miss Eleanor” nitro and glycerin. They were OK alone but when you mixed them. Mary as in Mary’s for Coffee is the middle child and in Johnny’s words (in Miss Eleanor’s eulogy) “the only straight ball that God threw their way – all the others were curves.” Eleanor Anne and James followed. I suspect legends in their own minds and own times but I’m don’t know if could run with the “big dogs.”**

**These were and are some of my closest friends. Years from now when I’m more disconnected from reality and rocking away the rest of my days on the porch and I smile – I might be at the Reservation or running the streets with these “Indians.”**

