

ONE-PAGE STORIES

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IFF – Identification, Friend or Foe

By JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

IDENTIFICATION, FRIEND OR FOE (IFF), was developed during World War II for the obvious reason that a radar operator had to tell which blip was an enemy or a friendly.

The aircraft equipment (transponders) that enabled this, originally only had three modes. The first and third ones appeared the same on the radar screen but the second one showed up as a double blip and was a larger target. If I recall correctly, mode 3 was a little bolder blip.

The first facility where I worked with radar was at Washington National Airport. At that time there was an ident feature, (not sure if it was available during the war). This was an extremely handy feature when you were working a lot of aircraft all showing double blips. If a controller wasn't sure which target was which, all he had to do was to ask one of the planes to "Ident," and the space between the two blips would fill in. Another way was to have the aircraft change to a different mode. I think most controllers used mode 2 so they could call on the ident feature when needed.

At times, a controller could get overwhelmed and he would start asking the pilots to ident. This resulted in a lot of filled in blips, defeating the controller's purpose. When a controller gets to this stage the best thing he/she could do was to start holding any additional airplanes. I believe this rarely happens anymore because the FAA instituted procedures to keep this from happening. One of them is "ground stops," which you might have experienced when your flight is held at the gate.

While I was at Washington National, transponders were upgraded to 2-digit codes. An example is VFR aircraft, those flying visually, were all assigned a code of 12. Later transponders were upgraded to a 4-digit code enabling each aircraft to have a unique code for his flight. This upgrade instituted alphanumeric. This was a great boon for controllers as each blip was now tagged with a block that shows the flight number, his altitude, airspeed and aircraft type. This description is what I worked with in the terminal environment; the enroute environment showed some different features. As I've been out of the business for more than thirty years, there's no telling what is now being used.

Flying Fears

BY JACK OLIVER — LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

I ALWAYS FELT VERY COMFORTABLE when I was flying except when transitioning from the ground to the air. When taking off, the small, light, aircraft that I was flying were very susceptible to any wind and any action by me to correct for it. Of course, when taking off, the aircraft is at a speed just above stalling, which makes this maneuver somewhat tricky. However, my fear was always short-lived except the time that I took my son, about the age of five, for his first ride with me.

It was windy when we arrived at the small airport so I checked with the chief instructor whether I should postpone the occasion but he said that I should be all right. I don't know if he was playing a trick on me or just didn't realize how strong the wind was.

After lifting off from the ground, I had all I could do to fly the plane and ensure that my son wasn't concerned. (He wasn't.) I fought the small plane around in the pattern and was very grateful when I was able to get back on the ground in one piece. My son said it had been fun whereas I was pretty terrified.

Other than that, my only concern was that a control link would break or that I would overstress the aircraft and cause it to break up. That never happened, as I never placed any extreme loads on the plane other than with my instructor.

One of the major causes of small planes crashing is flying into the weather and not being able to handle the instrument conditions. There was just one time that this kind of became a factor for me.

I was flying my family for a day to Hershey Park in Pennsylvania for a tour of the factory and some hoped-for free chocolate. When I departed the sky was mostly clear but the closer I got to my destination, the more clouds appeared below me. I realized I would have to descend through the clouds to land. I found a hole that I thought I could descend through and still remain legal, (clear of clouds), but I didn't have any way of knowing if there was another plane in the clouds, (very unlikely), or below the clouds, out of my sight. As I had never done this before, not even with an instructor, I was apprehensive but it worked out fine and we had a great day at Hershey.

A Day on the USS *John F. Kennedy*

BY ANDREW JANTZ — ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

I SERVED AS A JOURNALIST in the Office of Public Affairs when I was in the Naval Reserve. In 2000, the aircraft carrier USS *John F. Kennedy* pulled into the port of Boston for a few days. On the second day there was to be a ceremony held by the French Consulate to honor dozens of New England Army veterans who charged the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. My orders were to attend the event and write about it for both civilian and Navy publications.

A few hours before the ceremony I was standing on the pier beside the ship, when my commanding officer walked over to me and said, “Petty Officer Jantz, I have an assignment for you before the start of the ceremony. We’ve got a half dozen Army Public Affairs officers who would like a tour of the ship. I don’t have the time to do it, so I want you to do it.”



USS *John F. Kennedy* (CVA-67).
Naval History and Heritage Command photograph, NH 106553-KN.

“But sir,” I said, “I’ve never set foot on a carrier.”

“But you’ve been on other ships, so just fake it, they won’t know the difference. Just take ’em to the bridge, the CIC [Combat Information Center], the flight deck so they can look at some jets, the chain locker, the engine rooms, even the mess. You’ll do fine, and they’ll be happy.”

So he introduced me to the Army officers, and off we went.

The tour went very well, and they asked only simple questions, which I was able to answer. They were deeply awed, and thoroughly enjoyed the tour, as did I. I was quite proud of myself.

As for the D-Day ceremony, that was very moving. There were dozens of veterans, and I watched as the French officials presented each one with a scroll and hung a medal around their necks. After the ceremony, I had the deep honor of meeting some of the veterans, and talk to them about their experiences at Normandy that day. For me it was unforgettable. Quite the day.

A Babble-onian Dinner

BY DON LUCK — COLUMBUS, OHIO

THE SUMMER OF 1957, after graduating from seminary, I was fortunate to get a job as a timekeeper for the Foundation Company [yes, that was its name] as it was creating the foundation for the present Chase Bank skyscraper in lower Manhattan. Each morning and afternoon I would clamber around the project that was being blasted and scooped all the way to bedrock three stories below street level. Roaming the city-block-size site, I would visually spot and manually check off each worker on the company roster.

My supervisor was a Dutchman named Arnold Wynia, an active member of the WWII Dutch resistance, who joined up with the American army when he was liberated from a Nazi concentration camp. As a result he was granted American citizenship and had only recently immigrated here. His wife, also a prisoner of the Nazis, had died shortly after the birth of their son Peter. Arnold had then moved to Paris and met and married none other than Marina Tolstoy, the daughter of Leo's younger brother.

On learning of my upcoming plans to spend a year studying in Europe, he invited me to dinner so I could be given some orientation about Europe, particularly Paris.

I was warmly greeted by Marina but she spoke no English. Neither did Peter who was about six or seven. The doorbell rang and in came a cousin of Marina whom Arnold had invited to amplify my orientation. The meal was delicious but the conversation was exotic. Arnold, the cousin and I spoke English. Marina and her cousin spoke Russian. Peter and Arnold spoke Dutch. And all four utilized French for shared conversation. I needed a translator from the UN.

Arnold told me that one time Peter was out walking their cocker spaniel when some neighborhood boys began harassing Peter and threatened to hurt the dog. Upset and frightened, Peter fled the scene and, spotting a policeman, ran up to him and reported what happened — in French of course. And the cop responded in French. *Mon dieu; un gendarme americain!*

Apparently there was a concentration of French-speaking residents in that particular Manhattan neighborhood. So the NYPD responded accordingly. That's New York for you.

Toto's Second Act

BY DON LUCK — COLUMBUS, OHIO

FOR THE LIFE OF ME I CAN'T FIGURE OUT why the Japanese are so fascinated by bowel movements and toilets, but they are. I remember a video in which kindergarten children, wearing plastic replicas of stools [the non-carpentry kind] on their heads, were being taught anal anatomy and function by swooping down a slide which served as the equivalent of the large intestine.

My first experience of Japan was an evening arrival in Kyoto which I spent in a ryokan, that is, a traditional inn. Protocol decreed that I surrender my size 13 shoes for slippers that covered three quarters of my feet. But it went further. I had to leave these for a common-use pair inside the water closet. The toilet itself was a hole in the floor, surrounded by blue and white tiles, two of which featured imprints of Japanese-sized feet at the appropriate spot for squatting.

Japan has moved well beyond those arrangements to even surpass other societies. I had read about it and even was even able to experience it first hand on my next stay there. It occurred while I was staying in a hospital having heart symptoms monitored. While sitting in a cubicle I noticed a panel with various buttons whose identities were written in kanji or hiragana, the two native Japanese writing systems.

But then I noticed one button had its identity written in katakana, a third system used for words borrowed from other languages, a system I had memorized. I sounded it out: bee day. Bidet! Listen; I've been to France! I knew what that meant. I pushed the button and sure enough I stream of warm water greeted me up front. So, despite being unable to decipher its hiragana identification, I pushed the button next to it and this time the stream came from behind.

And who is to be credited with these advances? None other than Toto whose name appears on the greater majority of bathroom fixtures throughout Japan. I had always wondered what happened to the little guy. His co-star Judy went on to fame, fortune and personal tragedy. But after Oz, it seems he had shipped himself to Japan and opened what must be the most advanced bathroom fixture business in the world. Canny Scottie.

“You Don’t Need to Ever Do That Again”

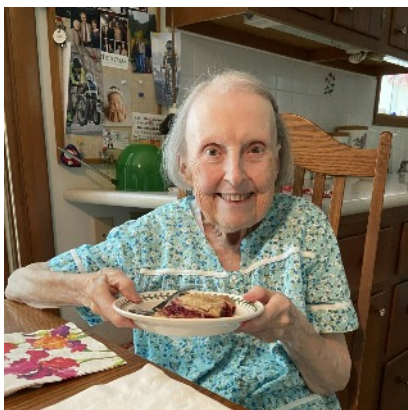
BY NANCY A. HEBER — COLUMBUS, OHIO

THOSE ARE THE WORDS MY HUSBAND SAID TO ME after eating the first piece of pie that I had ever made as a new bride back in 1956. Bob was right! The pie tasted awful!

I was absolutely delighted to hear him say that. Most new brides would have been crestfallen at such a remark, especially after trying so hard to please a new husband. Not me! I was quite relieved that I wouldn’t have to undergo that ordeal ever again.

Before Bob and I got married he knew I was not a cook. Academics were always my strong suit. At home, my grandmother provided the perfect model when it came to making a pie. My sister learned from her, but it did not compute with me. Bob loved to cook, thankfully. When we returned from our honeymoon and were about to make dinner, Bob stated that he would do most of the meal preparation. All I had to do was cook the peas and not burn them. Well, I thought, that’s simple enough. Oh, dear! Guess who burned the peas? I got so distracted watching Bob cook that I forgot all about the peas. From that time on, Bob did the cooking. I am sure he thought to himself, “If I am going to survive, I’d better do the cooking.” As time went on, I must confess that I did learn some basic skills, but if one wanted a delicious meal, you could count on Bob!

Beef stroganoff, barbecued baby back ribs, spaghetti sauce to die for, potato salad that made you ask for another helping it was so mouth-watering. You’re getting the right idea. Bob wasn’t the type who only grilled a burger or steak. Of course, he could do that. But he developed his own recipes from the more time consuming types of dishes named above. Now you understand why I appreciated his talent and yes, we both survived a marriage that lasted 52 years. Sad to say, Bob passed away 15 years ago. Do I miss him? Of course! But I sure miss his cooking!



A dear, long time friend, who knows me quite well, recently brought the pie to me. We laughed about it before she took my picture, and then we proceeded to enjoy the pie knowing it was safe to eat since I had not baked it.

The Life & Times of a Modern Musician

By JOE CAMERLENGO — COLUMBUS, OHIO

IN A DENTIST'S CHAIR AT 9 A.M., I received an email with a unique job opportunity: replacing the sound of a party bus's musical horn in a viral video. With a new baby at home, I was thrilled to accept this odd job as extra income. With a freshly sore jaw, I drove home before noon with high hopes of completing this task while my wife was at work, since the job was due by midnight.

For the next five hours, my baby opted to skip every conceivable nap and keep me tied up with my most important gig: being a dad. Once my wife returned from work, she took the little one while I rushed to the studio with only seven hours remaining in the day.

In terms of authenticity and fidelity, this job required a lot of thoughtful consideration. After two hours of tinkering, I'd recorded an alternative horn sound using the digital trumpet sound from a Casio keyboard which I played through a small Vox amplifier to mirror the blown-out horn sound. I detuned the sound to capture the off-key obnoxiousness of an actual bus horn. Still, my sound was missing two crucial elements: the ambient reverb of the horn blaring into the atmosphere and the fidelity of an iPhone video. Without the natural reverb and low-fi sound, my work was bound to fall short and be rejected. My solution: using an iPhone as a recording device, I recorded the sound of my faux horn blaring through a Bluetooth speaker from a far distance, which produced a natural reverb like the original video.

Armed with two iPhones and a sizable speaker, I wandered around Merion Village at 8 p.m. to find an outdoor space that was not cursed with the overwhelming sound of cicadas. I eventually decided to wait until the cicadas had calmed down after dusk. Around 10:30 p.m., the sound of cicadas switched places with crickets. Was my hard work going to be foiled by Midwestern bug sounds, I asked myself? At 11 p.m., I conducted my experiment in the cement loading dock behind a Kroger, where I was able to capture a natural reverb that wasn't drowning in cricket chirps. Soon after, I sent the audio before the midnight deadline.

Success! The next morning, I received confirmation that the sound had been approved, along with the encouraging message: "It's fantastic!" All in a day's work.

What Truly Amazes Me

BY BILL BOYS – COLUMBUS, OHIO

“**T**HAT’S *AMAZING!*” WELL, MAYBE NOT. I grant you we all overuse the word. Yet, many things *do* astonish the mind! (And apparently for a *very* long time: scholars trace the roots of our word “amaze” back to Middle English, to Old English, to Proto-Germanic. (But I don’t know about any Proto-Indo-European link.) Our ancestors were being amazed for a long time! As our species acquired perception, speech, thought, and self-consciousness in our evolutionary development, that’s only to be expected.

Two things in particular really do amaze me, and both relate to human progress in understanding our natural world. One is the immensity of our universe, and the other is the exact opposite, the complexity in the sub-atomic particle world.

But then I must note a third amazement: the power of the human brain/mind to conceive, and verify by various observations and experimental devices, the laws and theories of the first two stunners. It’s been only about a century since people thought the Milky Way was the entire universe. And of course even *that* was a disconcerting notion to earlier generations who thought earth was stationary, with the sun going around it. Or that earth, air, fire and water made up everything. Or that the atom was the smallest possible thing.

No wonder that in ancient times, people of all cultures would come up with gods and myths to explain how and why we exist. Yet, those two questions – *how* did everything come to exist, and *is there a reason why* we here – still don’t have universal, observable, agreed-upon answers; just partial, incomplete, and sometimes *ad hoc* and contradictory ones, all over the world.

Yet there is still so much that is unknown. And here’s one more even greater colossal amazement: the effects of gravity from known matter in the universe is unable to explain how strong the force of gravity really is in the cosmos, so the thinking today is that 80% to 90% of the universe must be made up of “dark matter,” that is, *we don’t know what it is!* (Let alone “dark energy.”)

What other amazements await us? Will wonders never cease? I don’t think so. We’re still on a truly amazing journey.

This essay developed from a writing prompt suggested in my journaling group.

Hoo Dunit?

By JIM HEDGES — NEEDMORE, PENNSYLVANIA

HALF OF THE MARINE BAND goes on a national tour each fall. I made only three of those – I don't enjoy traveling, and I arranged to stay behind most years ago take care of D.C.-area gigs.

One of those on-tour years, we had two jolly drivers (smokers bus and non-smokers bus), and the colonel egged them on to go faster and faster, so he could sleep later and later before leaving for the next town.

The drivers were happy to oblige. At one point, they raced each other up a hill, on a two-lane road, forcing oncoming traffic into the ditch. Another time, they made 70 miles in 60 minutes, from downtown hotel to downtown hotel. One day, after the matinee at Wayne, Nebraska, they took a gravel-road shortcut out of town, back toward our Sioux City hotel. A railroad paralleled the shortcut, and the drivers began racing a freight train. And then ... the road turned sharply and crossed the tracks. The first bus made it across. The second bus skidded through a shower of loose stones and managed to stop – and the train went between them.

The guys were not happy, but nobody wanted to go to the colonel and complain. So, when we got back to Sioux City, I went to the regional ICC¹ office and talked to the agent. He'd been out chasing trucks all day, and he thought a couple of bus drivers would be the frosting on his cake.

When the buses left the hotel that night, going back to Wayne for the evening concert, a gray GSA¹ car followed us. When we arrived at the hall, the agent blocked the exit with his car and pulled out his ticket book. He got one driver for 13 violations and the other for 15: speeding, running stop signs, failure to stop at railway crossings, not having log books up-to-date.

The colonel's reaction? "If we're going to have to obey speed limits, we'll just have to leave earlier each morning."

The train engineer got blamed, and it was years before anyone found out that I had done it.

¹ Abbreviations: Interstate Commerce Commission and General Services Administration.

Squirrely

By JIM HEDGES — NEEDMORE, PENNSYLVANIA

WINTER, WHEN DECIDUOUS TREES ARE BARE of leaves, permits observation of many things at other times hidden: squirrels, for example.

We think squirrels are everywhere. There are many walnut trees on our property, and hickories and oaks. Squirrels play in our yard and frolic in the woods. Their flattened corpses litter the road which passes by.

But few other places are as blessed as ours. Winter's bare branches elsewhere contain very few squirrel nests, those amalgamations of twigs and leaves at the upper limit of squirrel endurance. We can drive for miles and glimpse nary a one.

Pennsylvania is filled with trees. Its name means "Penn's Woods." Every fence row and stream channel is traced by trees, and there are copses in the rocky fields. And yet, without nut trees, no squirrels. The ecological determinism is unmistakable: No nut trees to feed squirrels means no squirrels, and absent squirrels to transport and bury their seed there can be no expansion of nut trees' range. Life is a web, and as we break the strands, the web weakens.

I spent three hours yesterday hulling walnuts. Didn't get done, but that was all the standing up I could take. A couple of hours still to go. Some people dump ripe walnuts on the ground right away and drive over them, to loosen the hulls. That inevitably crushes some of the nuts. I heap mine up and cover the heap with chicken wire, to keep the squirrels from stealing them. After a few weeks, the walnut worms have hatched, the hulls have rotted, and the nuts can be squeezed out easily.

You want a cracker which allows the nuts to be positioned so that they break top-to-bottom. This makes the sides pop off, without crushing the meats. A lot of the meats then come out in quarters, which can be made into candied nuts, sort of like the sugared almonds which are found in stores around Christmas. Fifteen 5-gallon pails of green nuts shrink to 3 pails of hulled nuts, which will yield about 6 quarts of nut meats for the freezer. Shelled nuts will remain fresh for years, if frozen to prevent the oil from oxidizing. And then you can make your recipes at leisure.



Contributors Welcome

You needn't be a NAPA member, but members are definitely invited. NAPA member Ken Faig said “*something worthwhile can be written in a short format like this.*” I hope the stories in this issue bear that out.

WHAT KIND OF CONTENT? Original prose – fiction or non-fiction. Personal narratives, anecdotes and memoirs especially welcome. Other genres considered except poetry. Must be your own original pieces, unpublished elsewhere.

HOW MANY WORDS? About 350 to 400 words. (Less if you have an image to go with your story, and I encourage images.)

CAN I GET SOME EXTRA COPIES FOR MYSELF? Certainly. Just let me know how many you would like. (Free.)

WILL I GET FEEDBACK? I'll share with you any feedback I might get from others about your story. **[NOTE TO READERS](#)** — Please send me comments on any of the stories so I can pass them on to the writers. We all like that.

WHERE DO I SEND MY STORY? To Bill Boys, email at williamboys@att.net (preferred, to save retyping) or by postal mail to 184 Reinhard Ave., Columbus OH 43206-2635.

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What to Write About?

Looking for ideas about writing a one-page story? Search on YouTube for “writing prompts” as one source. Books from your library are another resource; ask your reference librarian. Not all suggestions will vibe with you, but there will be plenty that will.