From Across the Pond

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A Love Letter to Cleveland: The Memoirs of a Brit Journalist with the Cleveland Press 1970-82

Peter Almond

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Cleveland Memory Project: https://www.clevelandmemory.org/

Acknowledgements

This has been a three-year project to bring to life the stories that have lain in five large cardboard boxes around the house and crossed the Atlantic three times over the past 40 years. But it could not have been completed without the help of the following:

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Author's Disclaimer

These memoirs are the result of three years research into my own and sundry other associated files and are accurate as far as I know. In such a wide-ranging history of the 70s and early 80s, however, there will be some errors. For these I apologize.

This book is intended to be a long, slow, yet easy read, its narrative broken with Memory Flashes and links to other media – mostly to popular You Tube music and movies which tend to mark the era. Make sure to read the Epilogue. Have fun!

Preface

“Give Light, and the People will find their own way,” was the motto of Scripps Howard newspapers in the 20th Century. “Democracy dies in Darkness,” declared the Washington Post.” “Newspapers: the first rough draft of history” was the motto of Journalism in America in the 20th Century.

But what happens in competitive two-paper cities when one of the two dies?

When the 104 year-old Cleveland Press afternoon daily perished in 1982 it was felled in a storm of economics that also took down other newspapers across the country, its stories now mostly hidden and turning to sepia tones in the vaults of Cleveland State University.

TV, the internet and a new office building quickly swallowed its remains.

But this was no ordinary tree that fell. The Press was a giant oak, founded in 1878 and the major competitor to the morning Plain Dealer (founded 1842). Its library was saved to Cleveland State University, whose vaults today hold more than a MILLION stories and pictures.

But The Press died just before the era of digitization, almost requiring an archaeologist to dig them out. The tragedy is that no click of a computer mouse will bring them instantly to your living room.

You want the full history of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio as seen by newspapers? Today you will find them primarily in the Plain Dealer, victor of that century-old competition. Two generations of researchers and public have now passed effectively in ignorance of The Press’ significance and its legacy.

Who cares?

History cares. Accuracy cares. Attitudes care. For most of the life of the Cleveland area The Press helped shape its development: The Penny Press, the ‘working man’s paper’, there at your door when working men and women came home from the area’s factories and offices. It asked questions, investigated people, places and things, and each day provided unique information to many thousands of people. It published stories the other paper didn’t.

Its reporters and editors loved it. Its characters and freedom to write made it special, as the late Press columnist Dick Feagler so often declared.

What follows is the story of just one of its journalists, Peter Almond, who arrived from England in January, 1970, and was there at the death of the Press in June, 1982.

And then let the reader say that The Press doesn't matter, that the surviving opposition should be allowed a monopoly on Cleveland's newspaper history.

Introduction

Cleveland, Ohio

Tuesday, January 13, 1970.

It's 7.30am and the first glimpse of gloomy daylight is creeping over the snow-covered Central Central Police station at E.21st St and Payne Ave. The night shift is ending. Police officers are gathering their coats, greeting their arriving colleagues and saying their farewells.

I am at a table in a little office used by my new employer, looking over the first of a number of overnight 'reports of interest' from the police logs that might make a story or two for that day's newspaper. A growing hubbub of noise just outside the entrance attracts the attention of both myself and Hilbert (Hil) Black, the paper's chief police beat reporter,

I put on my coat and go to see for myself. Stepping around huge piles of plowed snow I see fingers pointing skywards towards a barely-visible, half- naked body draped over the telephone and electric wires that run down the street. The frozen body of a woman, legs on one side of the wires, her dress hanging over her torso dangling from the other.

My first homicide? So soon? Not quite. It transpires that this is not a vicious crime, a gangster's warning to the police, or anything more than a homeless vagrant who has died during the night in an upstairs floor of the run-down "flop-house" across the street. With no intact windows in this decrepit, five-storey commercial building her fellow vagrants have thrown her body straight out of an upstairs window, because they don't know what else to do with her.

Welcome to Cleveland, Ohio, and my first story for The Cleveland Press; indeed, my first newspaper story in America. Seven months earlier, when I was reporting for the Yorkshire Evening Press in York, England, a story like this would have made the front page, alongside public cries of anguish about who this woman was and how dreadful the condition of the homeless had become.

Instead, I get the wisdom of Bus Bergen, veteran Cleveland Press crime reporter, who sticks his head round the corner of the door, greets Hil Black, then calls out to me: "You're the new kid from England? You got the dame on the wires?"

“Yes. Writing it now.”

“You might make Metro (edition), but I wouldn’t sweat it. Happens all the time. See ya.”

It didn’t happen all the time, says the kindly Mr. Black, but the grizzled, tough-talking Buster B was right. I think my story merits a paragraph inside the paper that evening, though I don’t think the poor woman had yet been identified.

I walked “home” that night from the police station to my ninth floor room at the YMCA hostel on Prospect Ave., dug out some old sandwiches and fell asleep on my bed. It was not a fun night. The rising heat in the old “Y” – was so strong I had to open the window – and directly caught all the sounds of Cleveland night life: an argument on the street below, the constant sound of traffic through slush, one police car siren or fire truck after another blasting me awake time after time.

Over the next few days – and an eye-goggling night-time ride with the police around the East Side, including Cleveland’s Hough area, still devastated from race riots of 1966 – I started to wonder if I had made a Big Mistake coming to Cleveland.

Not that I wasn’t warmly welcomed by the senior staff of The Press. Dick Campbell, the managing editor who had hired me, had invited me to dinner the evening before, the day I first appeared in the office. And Jim Frankel, his assistant who had shepherded my pending immigration visa around the world, had invited me to his home for a ‘birthday tea’ the day before that – on my actual 24th birthday, Sunday, January 18. Within a week I was propelled out of the YMCA to lodge with City Hall reporter Al Horton at his parents’ home in ritzy Shaker Heights. Al would go on to be a very senior editor for the whole of the Scripps Howard newspaper group (though all I can remember of that time was his constant replaying of the Yale Fight Song, his alma mater – Something to do with Bulldogs and bow-wow-wow).

But then I hadn’t been aware of Cleveland’s national reputation as the ‘Mistake on the Lake,’ an industrial city where, six months earlier, oil on the surface of its main river caught fire and burned a railroad bridge. Cleveland would have more than 300 murders in 1970. Resentments between races were still simmering in all-black areas riots of Hough and Glenville, and the Ohio National Guard seemed constantly on standby for a call to return to the city’s streets..

There were gangsters and Mafia men with names like Angelo “Big Ange” Lonardo, and Leo ‘Lips’ Moceri. And I quickly learned this was the town of Eliot Ness, Cleveland safety director in the 1930s but better known internationally as the Treasury Department’s most famous anti-prohibition investigator and Mobster-catcher.

Tough town. I instantly thought of comparing Cleveland to somewhere like Liverpool – or possibly the smaller steel city of Middlesbrough – in north east England, where I had started my journalistic career over five years earlier. But Middlesbrough was just a sad town that most people wanted to leave if they could. There was NOTHING like Cleveland in my background. Nothing for me to compare it to. I knew no-one here, or anywhere else in America. I had left my mother, father, sister and even my wife – whom I had married only two weeks

earlier in a beautiful little 11th Century church in the ancient city of York – to work in a city, state and country I had never visited.

Cleveland wasn't even my first choice among American cities. It was 19th. I had written to 22 US newspapers, starting with the New York Times, Washington Post and LA Times., which produced positive responses from only the Columbus Dispatch, the Akron Beacon Journal and the Cleveland Press – all in Ohio. I had chosen the latter only because it was the biggest city of the three, and paid slightly more.

'$150 a week and you cut the red tape.' was Campbell's exact written offer of a job as a 'rewrite man' – taking reporters' phoned-in copy and turning it into passable English. And he had sent that to me 18 months earlier. That's how long it took me to get my immigration visa, it seems, because the US government changed its immigration rules to make it fairer for nationalities they really wanted to get in, such as the Vietnamese.

The system worked on the basis of the national origins of those citizens already in the US, including the largest group, the British. But in recent years the Brits had rarely used all their allocation, while Vietnam – for which American soldiers were fighting and dying in thousands – had almost no immigration quota.

I knew about the Vietnam War, of course. It was on the news globally every night, along with the anti-Vietnam protests across the US. Only two months before I arrived the largest anti-war protest in U.S. history had been held in Washington. But I hardly thought it had anything to do with me. The British Army was not in Vietnam, and besides, I wasn't American. But by the end of my first week in Cleveland I discovered that six weeks earlier the US government had held the first Vietnam draft call – and my number was on it. Any young male with a number of 195 or lower was to be drafted.

My number was 140.

The strange thing is I was far from downhearted. I was excited. Dramatic change, positive or negative, did not faze me. I was born to a military father, and moved house, schools and friends frequently. I didn't even think it odd that Anna and I would spend Dec 28, 1969 – the day after our wedding – in the US Embassy in London filling out forms and waiting for her to be presented with her visa directly that day to join me in Cleveland.

On January 30 she duly arrived at Hopkins International Airport in Cleveland, and we would start our married life together, in a foreign country, in a rented flat on E.9th St, a hundred yards from my new office. As I look back now, in my 70s, I see clearly that the next 12 years we spent in Cleveland were the best in our lives. Sure, I would win journalism awards, go on to be a Journalism Fellow at Harvard, work in Washington DC and Cold War Europe, be shot at in Beirut, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo, and travel with Margaret Thatcher to Moscow to hear her speak of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev: "This is a man we can do business with."

I would fly in a dozen combat aircraft, write two aviation history books, walk 1,250 miles with my dog from one end of Britain to the other, and freelance news and company reports from one continent to another. I'd even get into the movies as an Extra.

But Cleveland and The Press were different. They had a heart, soul and color that l found nowhere else (unless I wore rose-tinted glasses). The city had no airs and graces in the 1970s. Its people were open, genuine and hard

working, and we made a lot of friends. Even when it was broke and struggling and its politics and sports were knocking the hell out of each other, Cleveland had an air of dynamism, displayed in its labor force, institutions, churches, and ethnic and racial cultures.

During my 12 years there I won a dozen local, regional, and national journalism awards, spent six years covering the schools desegregation case, watched on TV Mayor Ralph Perk setting his own hair afire with a blow torch, and read about his wife declining an invitation to a White House dinner in December 1972 because it was 'her bowling night'. I watched 'boy mayor' Dennis Kucinich leading Cleveland into bankruptcy – the first city in the US to do so since the 1930s.

Anna and I bought a house in the near suburbs, where we raised two adopted American kids – and a dog. She developed her own career as a hospital nurse, mother, homemaker and later as a care manager for chronically sick young people. My career in Cleveland involved wearing a steel helmet for labor riots, investigating the area's chief federal judge for criminal connections, getting state workers compensation laws changed, interviewing the Rolling Stones at Municipal Stadium, investigating creation of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, buying a 1968 Ford Mustang convertible (which I WISH I'd kept), making some life-long friends, playing rugby and running the Washington Marathon – and canoeing the gorgeous Mohican River in central Ohio.

Oh, and teasing Anna that the end of a Browns football game was nigh because there were only two minutes left to play!

As this memoir will hopefully show, I have plenty of stories to tell from the thousands of sepia-colored pages of The Press I still have in cardboard boxes stuffed in a cupboard of my London home. One that I treasure, and may be unique, hangs on the wall of my small, messy office: a rubberized matrix used on a Cleveland Press printing press. It is dated November 2, 1978 and marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of what was originally called 'The Penny Press'. Its type is set in old fashioned seven columns with a lot of flowery headlines, a la original. This copy is a Metro two star, an early edition for that day's news. My by-line graces the second story on the left.

This is a real story, and tells of the travails of John E. Gallagher Jr., president of the Cleveland School Board, who was arrested for 'mooning' his brother from a moving car on the I-271 freeway southeast of Cleveland. John was a major education source for me, but where I come from, sticking your naked bum out of a moving car would get you fired – especially if you were president of a school board. But John was young and popular – and an anti-establishment figure. He admitted making a mistake, was fined $100 and vowed to stay on as president of the school board.

Opinion polls showed the public loved him because he was one of them. So he kept his job.

It was that kind of town. The Press matched its people perfectly, creating a local family newspaper that I have not found anywhere in the world since. The Press died in 1982, killed mostly by TV news, but it lives on in the hearts of very many.

Chapter 1. Cleveland, Ohio, January 1970-71

“Immigrants get the job done” (Hamilton, the Musical)

First impressions of America – or maybe just Cleveland:

There are two which immediately come to mind from my first week:

1/ The huge, remarkable, shopping mall and train station beneath the Terminal Tower, for 34 years the second tallest building outside New York City.

2/ A street scene from, I think, the 2100 block of E18th Street looking towards the I-71 freeway. The sky is dark gray, the street is wet and slushy, incongruous telephone poles march along the roadside, snow is on the ground and piled up on the sidewalks so that the few hardy pedestrians are forced to walk in the road. It looks cold, ugly and miserable.

I can’t find that exact picture, but here’s an old one from Chester Ave that looks a bit like it.

Cedar Ave in the 1930s. Was slush so different in January 1970?
I didn't know about 'overshoes' before arriving in Cleveland.

This isn't the image of America I had carried with me from Germany back to England and now to Cleveland (perhaps the most convoluted month of my life!). The image is of wide open farmland, a huge clear sky, a dead straight road lined by telephone poles and a song in the background: Wichita Lineman, by Glen Campbell

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Not exactly Cleveland, but hey, that was in the emigration dream. (Scores of years later it is still the cellphone

ringtone of my cousin Roger's son Paul, who IS a lineman – for a Devon, England, utility company). Nobody in Britain makes hit songs about Widnes, Ipswich, Manchester or even, really, London. Not as evocative as Campbell's Phoenix or Galveston anyway.

Otherwise, over the first few months, I found Cleveland to be: Big. Wide. Friendly. Direct. Open-minded. Close-minded. Ethnic. Religious. Ignorant. Self-confident. Over-confident (doesn't anybody do self-deprecation in a town like Cleveland?). Patriotic, Arrogant, Creative. Hard-working. Poor. Rich. Communal. International.

… Complicated. (I will have changed this list by 1976, and will at least have watched Rodney Dangerfield, the comedian who gets no respect).

Complicated because the United States of America takes up most of a continent, unlike little old Britain, which is so relatively small that when it is cold and raining it is cold and raining almost everywhere, including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. But I don't believe there is a single street in the US that compares to the medieval Shambles in York, my home town, which is so narrow people in the overhanging second-floor rooms can shake hands with the people on the second floor of the house opposite.

And in that sentence lies the first hazard a Brit journalist discovers on arriving in America: the language. In the UK the ground floor is the US first floor. The UK first floor is the U.S. second floor. Get that wrong and you could be HOURS waiting for your date to show up. Working in an American newspaper the Brit reporter quickly learns that: "You say tomayto and I say Tomaato" isn't the half of it. Pronunciations are awful! What is this "rowt" word, when they mean "route" (root), as in a paper route? A "rowt" (rout) is when a body of people – usually an army- is defeated and runs away in panicked disorder. Does anyone sing: "Get your kicks on Rowt 66?" Grrr!

Years later my lovely, innocent, six-year-old son, newly arrived from England, would shock his teacher at an American kindergarten by asking her: "Have you got a rubber?" In England a rubber is something you use to rub things out on a page – not the other thing. But it made for much merriment in the staff room at coffee break that morning!

Here's a better example of my problem:

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It’s the attitude, you see.

“You wanna get that thing outta my driveway?” is not a crass American invitation to visit a neighbour’s driveway (kids today think it’s Transformers. Actually it’s Bill Cosby in his Noah sketch) in the way an English lady might say: “Would you like to come over for a cup of tea?” It is a no-fooling instruction. “Gimme a slice o’ ham, with a coupla eggs-over-easy on rye and hold the mayo,” is the American idea of a cafe order. On the other side of the pond the customer would be begging: “Please could I have a slice of ham with some scrambled eggs on a piece of bread? Please. And without mayonnaise, if you don’t mind? Thank you so much.” An English waitress getting a “Gimme a…” whatever from any customer might well produce….. a cold shoulder.

How rude!

Should Americans think of planning their first visit to England they could do worse than watch National Lampoon’s “European Vacation” movie (1986), in which the Griswold family fails utterly to escape the clutches of a central London traffic roundabout (sorry, traffic circle) and constantly crashes into an extraordinarily-polite Englishman (Monty Python’s Eric Idle) who can’t help but apologize whenever a Griswold accidentally runs over him. “No, no. It’s my fault!”

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I first sensed there might be a linguistic mismatch between Yank and Brit when I was formally introduced to the staff of the Cleveland Press in the February, 1970, edition of “Who’s new at The Press”. It starts with a mug-shot of me alongside the words: “Peter Almond sounds like an Englishman because he bloody well is.” I don’t know who wrote that (possibly Bill Kjellstrand on the copy desk) but it’s a subtly inaccurate use of the word ‘bloody.’ An American might say that as a form of comradely humor (note I’ve dropped the English ‘u’, which I expect to do throughout the US section of this autobiography) but the average English person uses ‘bloody’ as a more vituperative sentiment, perhaps in a response to an allegation that he isn’t English: “He bloody well IS!”

Well, Clevelanders didn’t see a lot of Englishmen in the flesh, I guess, so the image runs ahead of the real thing. To put it another way, I had been expected to arrive at the Press months earlier, and I don’t think anybody had any idea what I looked like or sounded like and-for some of the women – how ‘available’ I might be. Months later I heard that because I had gone off to the army in Germany and would be getting my US visa there I was some sort of James Bond. Joke, surely. But I’m not sure I ever did tell Dick Campbell I was getting married in England just short of two weeks before my departure for the U.S. In those first two weeks in Cleveland, before Anna arrived, I must have appeared to be an “available batchelor” to some of the female members of staff. At least, I suddenly discovered that what I had heard about ‘forward’ or ‘aggressive’ young American women was true. I did get more interest from some women than I was used to.

Maybe this is the right time to mention Short Vincent and Roxy.

Short Vincent was not a sidekick of gangster Shondor Birns, who hung out at the Theatrical Grill, but a small street between E4th Str and E6th, which was arguably the center of Cleveland’s nightlife. And Roxy wasn’t the name of an old stripper (although I reckon its not a bad name for an old stripper) but the Roxy Theater, a burlesque house which featured semi-naked dancing girls (nothing showing below the waist please, ladies!). There, for a modest

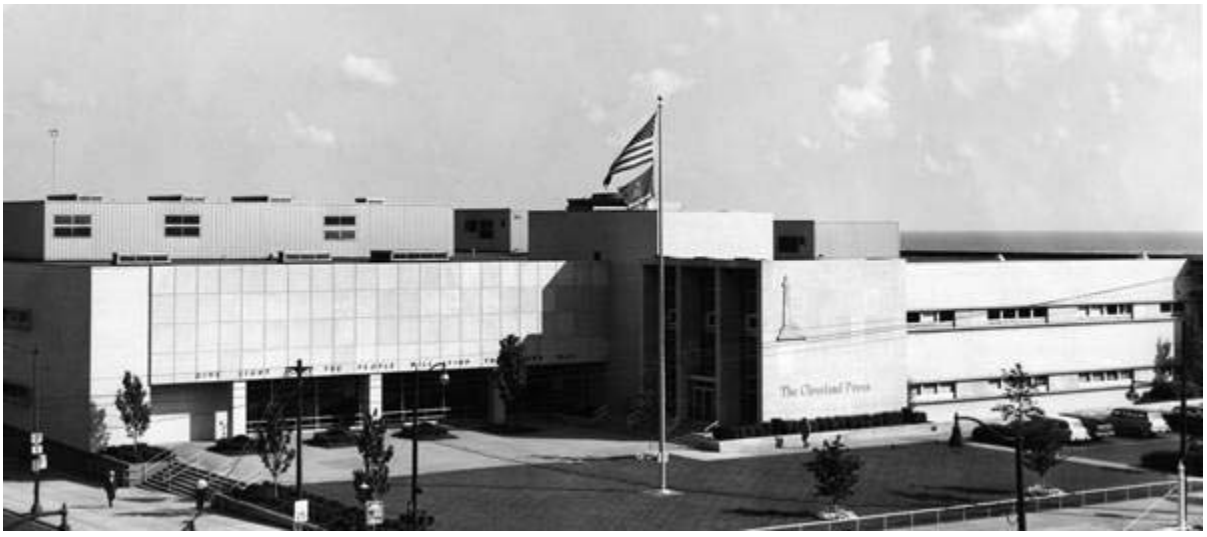
entry fee, you could ogle strippers, listen to music and watch comedians (in its heyday including such people as Abbott and Costello and Phil Silvers) deliver dirty jokes and talk about 'Nessul bars' (Nestle milk chocolate). After which you could indulge a foot-long hot dog next door at the Coney Island restaurant.

I went to the Roxy one lunchtime with half a dozen Press reporters to see Chesty Morgan, the girl with the 'world's biggest boobs.' Her real name was Liliana Wilczkowska and with a name like that could easily have come from Cleveland. But she was born near Warsaw, Poland, raised on an Israeli kibbutz and moved to New York in the 50s. She married a man who was killed in a robbery in Brooklyn, made several movies featuring her apparently-natural '73-inch bust' – including an appearance in Fellini's movie Casanova – and toured the country's burlesque joints. She later married National League baseball umpire Dick Stelio.

I thought at the time it was all wonderfully sleazy, classically American and publicly open and contradictory – unlike the dirty-raincoat, peep-show dives of London's Soho. Across the street at Superior and E9th Str was the St John the Evangelist Cathedral, the focal point of Cleveland's Catholics, barely a two-minute walk from Short Vincent's boozing, gambling and ogling. The cops tolerated it. The politicians tolerated it, and so did the public. It was a meeting ground for all, rubbing shoulders with the likes of notorious 'Mushy' Wexler, and almost certainly the Press' great crime reporter Bus Bergen.

The Roxy closed in 1972, reopened as an X-rated cinema a year later and was torn down along with a number of other buildings in 1977. In its place rose the huge new international National City Bank building (now the PNC Bank Building). Shame.

So, back to the ordinary facts.



The CLEVELAND PRESS Building built in 1959. Beautifully positioned at E9th St and Lakeside Ave, with Lake Erie in the background.

Memory flash*:* ***Cleveland Press newsroom, 8.15 am February 2, 1970***

Bill Tanner, the City Editor, has just read through my first edition copy about a man being killed in a fight the night before. My story lacks color and information about both the victim and the man accused of killing him, who is now in jail. And it says nothing about the legal process. I'm at a loss to quickly identity resources to enhance the story.

"Call the judge," says Tanner. "I'll give you his home number."

Call the…..WHAT? The JUDGE? At his HOME? I have never heard such a thing! The official residence for a high court judge who would sit on a murder case in York, England, is a high-walled, secure 18th century mansion near Lendal Bridge. He leaves this building for court each day in an official limousine wearing his full ermine-fringed cloak and wig, and under police escort he is driven to the court house next to the remains of an 11th Century stone tower, where 150 Jews were trapped by a mob and either committed suicide or were murdered in 1190. He must never be stopped by any member of the public, and never, ever, speaks to the press. And certainly not about current cases.

I am quickly learning that judges in the US are elected by the public, not by the Queen on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor.

"Oh, I'll do it," says Tanner. "He'll be up by now. I'll see if he's got the guy's phone number."

Tanner was the main reporter for the Cleveland Press in the 1954 first trial of Dr Sam Sheppard, an osteopath from suburban Bay Village, for the brutal murder of his wife, Marilyn. It was a sensational case, with all the tabloid elements of money, power, politics and sex that filled the front pages of all the local newspapers at the time. The Press was singled out for strong criticism, following headlines such as "Why isn't Sam Sheppard in jail?" and "Quit Stalling – Bring him in!" (written personally by editor Louis B. Seltzer). Sheppard strongly protested his innocence, but was found guilty and spent ten years in jail. In 1966 the US Supreme Court set aside his conviction, citing "inherently prejudicial publicity" which everyone took to mean "primarily the Cleveland Press". This time Sheppard went to a retrial with the country's most famous lawyer, F. Lee Bailey, by his side. Again he was freed, became a wrestler, and died in 1970, just after I arrived.

So, Tanner was a well-connected reporter-editor, who was to become a significant influence on my career, and he was showing me how crime reporting was done. I took the phone number of the victim from him, dialled and found myself talking to the murdered man's widow. She had not slept and was very tearful.

She heard my accent and asked if I was from England. I said 'yes,' and she burst into tears again. "Oh, my husband so loved England!" she sobbed. "He was there during the war!" She kept talking about England, and all I could think of as deadline approached was Stan Freberg, the American comedian whose FBI Dragnet spoof included the deadpan words: "The facts, ma'am. Just give me the facts." (Much later actor Jack Webb, alias Joe Friday, insisted he never actually said that).

I determined there and then I needed to develop an American accent and adopt "Just gimme the facts, ma'am" as my modus operandi from now on.

The windowless PRESS CITY DESK just before the age of computers. 1977. Center is Chief sub editor Dan Sabol, with deputy Bill Kjellstrand.

It is strange to look at photos of the Cleveland Press newsroom 50 years later: large, open plan, scores of desks, lots of men in white shirts and sombre neckties, the women in smart casuals. And not a single computer screen in sight. The biggest boon to me at the time was electric typewriters (we were still using clunky Imperials in England) and properly prepared letter-size sheets of paper with double carbon copies, not cheapo backs of color advertisements I'd been used to. And superior, easy-glide metal filing cabinets, with properly-arranged clippings library. Luxury!

At the time The Press was the flagship of The Scripps- Howard newspaper chain, and hosted American Newspaper Guild Local No 1, the first of its kind in the country. I was already a "fraternal" member of the National Union of Journalists in England so it was an easy international transition into what was otherwise a "union shop". But because I was later arriving in Cleveland than expected, Dick Campbell's 1969 wage offer to me was out of date, and I walked into a little "debate" over what level my salary should be set. It was nothing personal, but management and the union had already compressed the number of years work a journalist needed to reach the minimum top grade. Lawyers did get involved, but Dick told me directly the settlement wouldn't affect my career there.

Whew! I wasn't ready to have to start looking for another job.

Monday, **Jan 26**, Diary says I heard from Anna, and she's coming on Sunday! Yippee! How will she do? She's never been on a plane before. Maybe she will come in that new Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet that had its first commercial flight from New York to London four days ago, with 335 passengers? Wow. It has to go back to New York, doesn't it? I see I wrote a feature for the Community Page, which covers everything local in Cleveland that isn't covered

by everybody else. Tony Natale, another reporter who had a lovely sensibility, invited me to dinner at his house in Shaker Height. His wife, Gail, continued to help with our tax and legal affairs.

Two days later I moved out of Al Horton's place via dinner with Bill Tanner for the both of us. I can't get over just how friendly everybody is at The Press. I moved into an apartment on the ninth floor of the Regency House on East Ninth Street, barely 100 yards from the office.

Sat, Jan 31, I went to Cleveland Hopkins Airport to meet Anna off her plane from London via New York (no, it wasn't a Boeing 747). She was exhausted and emotional. We stood in our new flat – our new home – and both cried, arms wrapped around each other.

NOW we will start our lives together, the American way – leaving our families 3,750 miles away across an ocean.

The Community Page of the Cleveland Press does not exist as such in Britain. It's a collection of community news in the city of Cleveland and suburban Newburgh Heights, not quite the suburbs page – which covered more than 60 suburbs in Cuyahoga and surrounding counties. The Community Page editor was Marge Banks, who was finding her way around as an editor just as I was as a Cleveland Press reporter. She looked and sounded just like my sister– except she was black, had frizzier hair than my sister and spoke with an American accent. (Actually, she came from New York and had a good education).

She was, indeed, one of the few, one of the very, very few non-white faces in The Cleveland Press newsroom. There were, to my memory, just two or three others amongst a news staff of more than a hundred: Hil Black, chief police reporter; Van Dillard, a photographer; Bob Williams, formerly a veteran editor for the even-more local Call and Post weekly who covered the black East Side; and Elaine Lemon, a lady who filed our stories in the library. It didn't matter a jot to me, but I would soon find out exactly what racial issues did mean in Cleveland, Ohio.

The first directly-racial thing in the office I encountered was about April 1970, when the shout of "Boy!" from the copy desk came to an abrupt end. "Boy" was the traditional newspaper way of summoning a runner – usually a teenager – to take copy and messages from the copy desk to the printers. But in the late 1960s and 70s, when blacks were rioting in the streets demanding respect, any white person calling any black person a 'boy' was not good. Somebody at The Press made a complaint. From 1970 onwards the "Boy!" died, and the cry "Copy!" was born.

Memory Flash:*Cleveland, February 1970*

Anna and I have been invited by Hilbert and Judy Black to join them at a showing of the recent movie Putney Swope, at a cinema near University Circle. Hil doesn't know what the movie is about but has the idea it is entertaining, educational about the modern black experience in the widest sense for white immigrants like us.

We enjoy it. He and Judy clearly do not. For a start we are the only white people in the packed theatre. Not that we are bothered, but we notice that people do keep turning around and looking at us. Some give us sideways glances just to see what our reaction is at various points. Others stare with what I would later accept is an expression of: "This is our theatre. What are you doing here?"

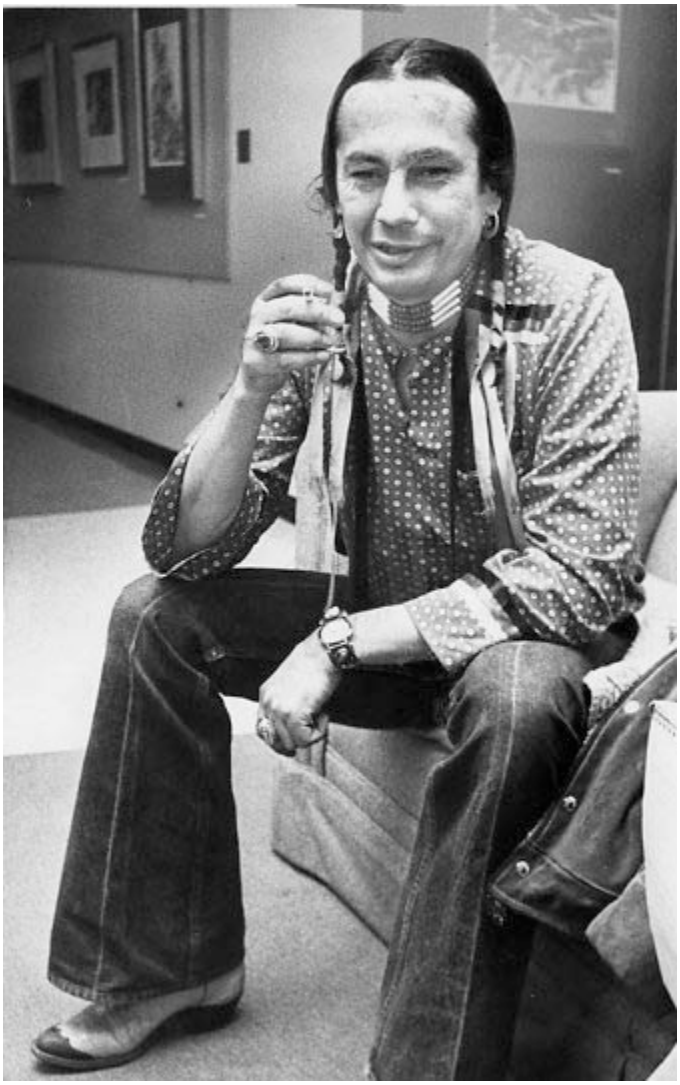
The story, essentially, is about an advertising company whose chairman dies and the board must find someone to replace him. All but one are white except Putney Swope, hired as a token black executive, who gets the job because all the board members hate each other and vote for him thinking no-one else will. Swope makes major changes, such as firing all the white staff except one and refusing to advertise harmful products.

Hil and Judy are mortified by all this, and cannot stop apologizing afterwards. We are not at all offended, and loveable though Hil and Judy are, we realize they are of a gentler time and place. We read years later that Putney Swope would be recognized as the precursor of an era of "blacksploitation movies", and that in some black neighborhoods Hil and Judy might be known as 'Oreos,' ie as in the cookie: black on the outside, white on the inside.

Maybe it is because I am a very new, but original, white descendant from the old colonial masters who brought black slaves to the New World, but I find this reprehensible. I will discover much more about race relations in the months to come.

But one of my first stories for the Community page, I recall, was not about the large black community. It was about the status of American Indians, whose Cleveland centre was in the basement of a church on Lorain Ave, on the near West Side. As good a place to start understanding Cuyahoga County and its 1,721,300 people as any. Indians – or should I say Native Americans – were obviously the original occupants of America. Indeed, the word Cuyahoga is Iroquois for "jawbone", near the mouth of which would be built the city's great steel mills. I had never met a Red Indian before, and my first sight of the head of the Indian center, Russell Means, was a wonderful experience: a handsome, strong, tanned face straight out of the cowboy movies of my childhood!

He and his colleague Dennis Banks were founders of the American Indian Movement from that center, and Means was its increasingly-active director against the backdrop of the American Civil Rights Movement. I can't remember what my anodyne story was about, but Means the Magnificent (my expression) was never likely to be forgotten, not likely because he kept popping up all over the country for the next few decades. I remember him complaining to me about Chief Wahoo, the cartoon mascot of Cleveland's baseball team, the Cleveland Indians, whose toothy face beamed out over the city from the Municipal stadium. He failed to get it removed. (In 2021 the name was changed to Cleveland Guardians, and Chief Wahoo replaced by the letter C).



RUSSELL MEANS, American Indian leader.

Means and fellow Indians took over a replica of the original Mayflower in Boston Harbor to protest government policies towards Indians, followed in 1972 by leading hundreds of Indians into a 71-day siege at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. That made the government take serious notice, not only because three people were seriously wounded, including an FBI agent, in the hundreds of shots that were fired but it was a reminder to the nation that since 350 Lakota men, women and children were massacred there by Union soldiers in 1890 the situation of Native Americans had not kept pace with the rest of society.

Plenty more happened to Means over the years, including being shot several times, appearing in long court battles and in numerous movies, perhaps the most famous of which was *Last of the Mohicans*, the 1992 epic movie in which he and Daniel Day-Lewis starred as Indian and Englishman living together in 1757 during the French and Indian wars. (the North American part of the larger Anglo-French Seven Years War). I could go on about this period of history because the economic and security consequences of this expensive global war were that Britain didn’t have much money when colonial upstarts in America started the War of Independence six years

later. Americans already had more self-governance and freedom over the previous 150 years than England itself, so what was a couple of extra taxes on the colonists to maintain a standing army of redcoats for their own security?

The Yanks won, they tell me (Ha! Sneakily helped by the French fleet!), and the Appalachian Mountains were no longer the western frontier of the 13 colonies. Originally part of French Canada, the land south of Lake Erie was ceded to Britain in 1763 and after the War of Independence it became known as Connecticut's 'Western Reserve' 63 per cent of which was water: ie Lake Erie. The first white man to survey the land at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River was retired General Moses Cleaveland who, guided from Buffalo by a black trapper. kept the Iroquois quiet with $1500 in cash (about $26.000 in 2020), two beef cattle, 100 gallons of whisky and an assurance that the settlers would not go west of the Cuyahoga River. They did, of course. Cleaveland went home right after his survey and never returned. Despite that his statue still stands prominently in Public Square.

But why the name change to Cleveland?

As one whose journalism career started in a part of northern England next to the Cleveland Hills, I've often wondered if Cleaveland's early settlers had any link to the motherland. Water, ports, railroads, coal and iron ore were part of each area's histories. England's Cleveland was always spelt without the first 'a', so is this the reason the American Cleavelanders followed the English spelling when their town started to grow?

There is no evidence of it, and the likely explanation is disappointingly-mundane: in 1831 the new local newspaper, the Cleveland Advertiser, couldn't get those words to fit onto its masthead. They dropped the 'a' and then it fitted.

Makes sense to me. "All the News that fits in print!" to misquote the original cry of the newspaper vendors.

Thus does the local paper set a city's standards for all eternity!

Back to the 1790s (if not the 1970s) ….

Lorenzo Carter, the first permanent settler, built a large log cabin for himself that had a large attic for the storage of fur pelts, which he apparently traded. He got drunk a lot but was, by all accounts, a big man and a better shot with a musket than the Indians. He shot one dead when two Indians he had punished for breaking into his warehouse and stealing his whisky tried to ambush him. The other got away.

Perhaps more significantly, since we are discussing Indians, the city's first – and most famous – public execution was of an Indian: John O'Mic (apparently without the 'k' but what else would a white man call a native whose name probably sounded a bit Irish?) in 1812. According to veteran Cleveland Press columnist Julian Krawcheck – a fine, Southern gentleman who was among the first Press staff to invite Anna and me to dinner – O'Mic was convicted of killing two white trappers and stealing their fur. In the absence of a jail at that time he was held in Lorenzo Carter's attic and then brought out to face his death by hanging.

Krawcheck wrote a piece about O'Mic's execution in a souvenir section of the Press on July 20, 1971, to mark the 175th anniversary of the city (I still have a yellowing copy of the whole multi-page section). O'Mick, he wrote (he used the 'k'), had his face painted in traditional tribal fashion, and wore tribal attire to show how brave an Indian

was in the face of certain death. He rode atop his coffin to the site of the gallows. A black mask was put over his face by Sheriff Samuel Baldwin, and at the sound of a drum roll a prayer was said and then the crowd waited quietly. As Baldwin moved to pull the handle of the trap door O'Mic suddenly lurched sideways and hung onto a side support of the gallows as if his life depended on it. Which it did, of course. Why his hands were not bound, wrote Krawcheck, is unknown, "but it may be assumed that it was a gesture of courtesy to a 'brave Indian'.

Baldwin was unable to pry O'Mic's fingers from the post, so Lorenzo Carter stepped forward to remind O'Mic of his promise to "die bravely." To encourage him, Carter produced a pint bottle of whisky from a nearby distillery. O'Mic downed the sprits, but still hung on. Wrote Krawcheck: "Carter produced a second bottle of whisky and handed it to the Indian. Lorenzo must have winked a signal to the sheriff, for while O'Mic was busy gulping, Baldwin sprang the trap. The resulting jerk broke the Indian's neck, and the rope."

O'Mic's body was quickly buried under the scaffold, but the next morning it could not be found. "Apparently, the area's budding medical community had conspired with Sheriff Baldwin to appropriate the cadaver for co-operative medical reports,' wrote Krawcheck. Another story is that his skeleton was used for years by Cleveland physicians to teach medical students. Or that one Doctor Town, of Hudson, Ohio, kept it in his office for the next 40 years and said it was O'Mic's.

Or perhaps it came back in the form of Russell Means…… ?.

What this story says to me was:

(1) Cleveland should probably have been named after Lorenzo Carter. Carterville, maybe. But not Cleveland.

(2) White settlers took huge advantage of native Americans' genetic intolerance of alcohol and took decades to understand and accommodate them.

(3) Cleveland's reputation as one of the best medical centers in the world could perhaps be traced back to John o'Mic's body.

(4) Cleveland's earliest activities predicted a rough, tough future that would be exaggerated by the arrival of steel a few years later.

(5) Crime would be a central by-product of the city's expansion

(6) It would create an ameliorating need for a high civic culture, as expressed by the medical facilities of Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland Clinic, and by the Cleveland Orchestra, the Cleveland Playhouse and the Cleveland Public Library.

What got Cleveland really growing in the mid 1850's, of course, was steel. Or rather iron, from ore discovered in the Marquette region of Minnesota (later called Cleveland Mountain) by Clevelander Dr. J. Lang Cassels in 1845. Within ten years ships were hauling the ore to the harbours of lake Erie and on to the Mahoning Valley, where Youngstown hosted the region's first blast furnaces.

I'm quoting here directly from a series I wrote about Cleveland Steel industry in The Press in 1981, 11 years

after my arrival in Cleveland. Steel was at the heart of Cleveland's history, and steel was the reason for most of the ethnic communities of the city (after the Indians and the early Anglo settlers). By 1981 the steel industry in northern Ohio was becoming known as "The Rust Belt", and as I was the one directed by The Press to research it I guess I could claim to be "Ohio's Newspaper Expert on the History of the Cleveland Steel Industry" – For 1981 anyway.

Memory Flash:*Shaker Heights, February, 1970*

Anna and I have taken the Rapid from the Terminal Tower to Shaker Heights along its entire length, just to see where it goes. Walking around the square we see a place called The King's Pub and, naturally as subjects of the King (or at least Queen), we go in.

"Two pints of beer, please," I ask the barman.

"ID". He replies.

"What?" say I.

"ID. I can't serve you till you prove your age."

We are puzzled. What is this ID? Are we in Germany circa 1943? "Vehr are your peppers?" I know the minimum age to drink alcohol in America is 21, but I'm 24 and Anna is 22, and I've been drinking alcohol legally for six years (at least).

Passport? Driving licence? Student ID? The barman demands. We didn't think it necessary to have to carry these just to get a beer in America. So we leave in a huff. Maybe we just don't LOOK old enough, and the barman thinks he must have proof. (It must be said, though, that days earlier a 21-year-old mental patient blew up the Shaker Heights Municipal Building, including its police station, killing himself and injuring 14 others. Perhaps the barman was just nervous of strangers)

But we remember it because it was our first of many experience of a bureaucratic, legalistic way of life that reaches deep into the heart of America, compared to what we have known.

"We're not in Kansas any more," as Dorothy might have said.

With iron ore coming down from Lake Superior, coal going up from the Pittsburgh area and Cleveland at the apex of two railroad funnels, the city developed many small iron companies to make railroad equipment. In 1859 John D Rockefeller brought oil from newly-discovered wells at Titusville, Pennsylvania, and in 1868 Englishman Henry Bessemer's new steel-making process was put to work in the Cleveland Rolling Mill in Newburgh, on the southern edge of the city. Andrew Carnegie knocked his competition flat in 1875 with his famous J. Edgar Thomson steel works in Pittsburgh, but the Cleveland docks provided plenty of incentive for engineering. The Globe Iron Works built the first steel ore ships in 1882, and Wellman Engineering pioneered another English invention – C.W. Siemens' open-hearth process – in the city.

The year 1882 was not quite the runaway success the steel bosses had assumed, however. Skilled Scots and Irish

workers, members of the new Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, went on strike for $12 for a 12-hour day, six days a week. Bad timing, and as I wrote in my series: “This was the age of vast European immigrations, and mill owner Henry Chisholm promptly went to the docks of New York City, offered $1.50 a day and brought some 1,500 Polish and Bohemian (Czechs) workers back to Cleveland” to replace the Scots and Irish. Later, Mill owner Amasa Stone dropped anchor in his motor yacht at Gdansk (Danzig) in Poland, advertised for labor to go to America and brought another few hundred Poles to Cleveland via cattle boat.

Three years later, in 1885, the Poles and Czechs had also had enough. Their strike led to the first major confrontation between strikers and the police, many of whom were the same Irishmen the Eastern Europeans had replaced. Groups of Poles and Czechs marched through the city, closing down related industries and sometimes carrying a red flag. The local press branded the strikers as drunkards and cowards. The stigma lasted many years and deepened in 1901 when Leon Czolgosz, a mentally-unbalanced Pole from the Warszawa section of Cleveland, assassinated President William McKinley in Buffalo, New York.

The Poles of Cleveland stood on the defensive, clinging to their communities as the general community regarded them as a hotbed of troublemakers. Their numbers made them stand out, especially from 1900 to 1920, when the Polish population of Cleveland and neighbouring Berea stood at 35,000, most of them straight off the boat, and joined by family members who spoke little English and had little idea where they were. Warszawa was the largest of the Polish communities (the other was the Poznan community of Prussian Poles, around Superior Ave and E 79th St.). They looked inwards and to the Catholic Church, helped immensely by Father Anton Kolaszewski, who personally saw to the construction of St Stanislaus Church. It was completed in 1890, second only in size to St Patrick’s Cathedral in New York.

The Scots, Welsh and Irish built homes close to the Rolling Mill and assimilated into Ohio society across greater Cleveland, with some Irish later moving to the Collinwood area of the far east side.

Maybe it’s because – as a ten-year-old – my first girlfriend was Vanda Gustowski, born in England to émigré Polish parents; maybe it was because the Poles fought for us after their country was overrun by the Germans in World War II, or because their pilots were righteously more aggressive than the RAF in shooting down Nazi planes in the Battle of Britain, or because the Russians took over their country and wouldn’t leave. **Whatever; the fate of bashed- about Poland as a free, independent nation seems to have struck a chord in me that wants to dance the Beer Barrel Polka or munch on a pierogi**.

Economically and culturally held down by the rest of American society, the Poles of Cleveland devoted much emotion and effort to events in their homeland, first in the First World War when Germany attacked it, and later when Russia invaded and held it. But the Cleveland Poles were riven by dissension. Those in the Warszawa and Poznan districts of Cleveland – mostly Prussian Poles – wanted a completely independent Polish state. The Austrian and Russian Poles, who were centered across the Cuyahoga River in the Tremont Kantowa District of the city, wanted a satellite Poland under Austrian or German government.

World War 1 galvanized Poles across the US into direct action. They formed the Sokol Polski, the Polish Falcons, with Nest 141 being the Cleveland section. It was ostensibly a gymnastic organization, but from here they also recruited soldiers for the US Army going to France and, it is said, raised funds for arms to help train potential

Polish soldiers. They joined up as full Polish units, and their key political figure was not President Woodrow Wilson but General Joseph Pilsudski, who first led Polish brigades with the Germans, then was jailed by them, then defeated the Bolshevik Russians at the Vistula River in 1920. For a brief two or three years Poland was a free and independent country. Then Gen. Pulsudski returned to power in 1925, and became Poland's virtual dictator.

The Poles of Cleveland could never agree about him. In 1930, when one of Pilsudski's generals planned a visit to Cleveland to take part in a tenth anniversary celebration of the Vistula battle, the Kantowa faction wanted to hold a field mass for 40,000 people to mark it as a great socialist victory, but the Warszawa faction wanted to mark only the 'the miracle of Vistula,' with no great tribute to Pilsudski. Because of continuous bickering the mass was cancelled. The Great Depression that same year hit Cleveland Poles hard. Unlike much of the rest of the country they didn't move to seek work. Coming from a country which never had private housing they had poured their wages and life savings into property, proper homes of their own, even if they were multi-family dwellings. Great in good times, but in bad they couldn't sell him, except at a loss, and they couldn't get mortgages anyway.

I've gone into this history in some detail because there were echoes of it in all the ethnic communities of the city. And because in one of the largest ethnic groups I found the seeds of some great story lines, both real and fictional.

One of the latter became my first novel in 1996. It was called The Moscow Option and is unpublished because the fiction-writing coach I hired to be brutally honest with my writing did just that. "Great plot, not enough character," she said. One day I'll get round to rewriting it. (The story line is of fictional F-15E pilot David Kopanski, based in the UK, who discovers his father and grandfather were so caught up with the Polish cause during and immediately after WWII that his father joined a plot to drop a nuclear bomb on Moscow. The bombers' crashed plane is discovered in 1996 and then the drama really starts. Fanciful? Perhaps, but not if you read the histories of General George S. Patton and USAF General Curtis le May).

As I discovered in writing for the Cleveland Press not every American immigrant found the American Dream, and Kopanski Senior – the grandfather in my novel – was one of them. I've imagined him arriving from Poland in 1930, taking a job from laid-off Irish workers at the Newburgh rolling mill, and being assaulted and badly injured by them – just as happened 50 years before. He never worked again, but poured the emotional energy he still had into his local community, doing odd jobs, singing Polish songs, reading Polish newspapers – and teaching his son Jacob to be Polish first, American second. At 18 Jacob was just the right age to join the Army Air Corps, where he discovered other Poles who vowed revenge for the 1943 Soviet murder of 5,000 Polish officers in the Katyn Forest, near Smolensk.

One day I'll get the novel published, and you'll find out yourself why World War III could have almost happened. But, for the moment, I'll just leave it as a possibility for the tourist trail in what is now known as Slavic Village, Cleveland, Ohio.

Memory Flash:*E.9th St., Cleveland, April 1970*

"Downtown Living Can Be Rather Nice," says the headline of a personal story I wrote for the Community page. "Our English reporter, three months away from his homeland, gossips about living in the heart of Cleveland."

Here's a flavour:

"Put up your hands all of you who have walked down the Mall, winter or summer, on a Sunday afternoon, not going anywhere mind you, just strolling. And hands up all of you who have never cursed over having to wait for buses to take you to the nearest department store. …..

"Have you ever realized just what an incredible sight it is – looking across Lake Erie from the Mall? Call it a man-made jungle if you like, but there can be few places in America where almost every conceivable form of transportation can be seen: railroads, a freeway, liners, an airport, freighters, passenger boats, a submarine, trucks, cars, buses, cargo planes, old fighter planes, executive planes. You name them – they're all there.

"My wife and I took a walk that way last Sunday afternoon. It was cool. Rain was threatening but the wind was fresh and straight from the lake. We went down to the dock front to see the second ship of the season arrive.

"We weren't the only ones there. Scores of people watched too. But from their cars. Not one as much as put a foot outside their cars….."

I admitted Downtown 'is not the place I would go for an aimless stroll at 10 at night.' And that "The night after our splendid walk down to the dock front we heard the sound of wailing police cars; teenagers leaving the Temptations concert at Public Hall had gone on a rampage."

Not that robberies were any the less likely during the daytime. A few days later I wrote: "Police statistics for the first 14 days of this month indicated you are more likely to be assaulted and robbed walking on the city streets during daylight than at night. And the majority of victims are women." Police Chief Lewis Coffey told me the reason most armed robberies were against men at night was because they were in the 'wrong place at the wrong time', often inviting crime by driving around certain sections looking for women, or getting drunk in bars. The women during the daytime mostly had their purses snatched and stolen whilst shopping. Surprise, surprise.

Fifty years later I turned over the cut-up, yellowing part of the page where my story played and saw that the movies "Bonnie and Clyde" and "Bullitt" were playing at three suburban cinemas; "Anne of the Thousand Days" starring Richard Burton was showing somewhere else, the Central News of Toronto (?) was presenting a concert and dancing "featuring popular stars of folk music from Yugoslavia at the Slovenian National Home at 6417 St Clair Ave," and the "Travelling Burlesque Roxy Theater', at 9th and Chester had Sherry Christie on stage (pic of her in a bikini) for four shows between 1 and 10pm.

Variety, they say, is the spice of Life.

Actually, our time on E.9th St. was coming to an end. Now with a Mustang convertible we couldn't afford the cost of downtown parking, and had to leave it in a low-grade garage some distance away. As we packed up to move to

an apartment on E. 148th St., Anna regretted no longer being able to shop at the outdoor market near the Terminal Tower.

…. And saying goodbye to the "nice, friendly young ladies" she met on the stairs and elevators of Regency House. By then I think she had figured out for herself that they were renting their flats by the week, by the day – perhaps even by the hour!

'67 MUSTANG convertible, the author's first U.S. car, opposite their apartment on E148th Str. Worth up to $60,000 in the UK in 2022 (if he hadn't sold it in '70).

E.148th Street wasn't so great. The house we rented was quite well furnished, but when we found Silverfish bugs creeping out of our kitchen sink we decided it was too damp for us. In the month that we had to close our tenancy we did make one little friend, though: a yellow and green budgerigar, an Australian parakeet. We called it Dickie Bird, or Dickie for short. What else? We started teaching him to talk: simple things, like 'Cup of tea," and let him fly around the room – windows shut, of course -as well as perch on my eyeglasses (refer back to Michael Macintye YouTube clip) and peer at me upside down.

While Anna was getting her life sorted out by taking a driving test in nearby Richmond Heights ("Don't you worry 'bout a thing, ma'am," said the police officer instructor, shifting his revolver around in order to get into the front passenger seat of the Mustang). Then travelling down to Columbus to sort out her education and nursing qualifications while I was learning the ropes of the morning rush hour along I-90, the Lakeshore freeway into

downtown Cleveland. It was easy enough, I guess. The Municipal parking lot was right next to the Press building at 9th and Lakeside (no discount for us. We paid the full 50c a day. In the winter it was bitterly cold, the wind whipping hard off the frozen Lake Erie).

Even here on the eastern edge of suburbia we continued to have ethnic company not far away. Up the road were small Irish and Italian communities near Collinwood High School. The former was mixed with the latter for one Irishman, Danny Greene, a criminal who worked against and with the Cleveland mafia through the early 70s, having his home blown up half a mile from us in 1972, and then killed by a bomb in nearby suburban Lyndhurst in 1977. A movie based on his criminal career, *Kill the Irishman*, was released in 2011. Greene is not to be confused with another mobster Irishman, Frank Sheeran, about whom a bigger Godfather-type movie, *The Irishman,* was released in 2019. It is set mostly in New York City. I'll come back to the mob later.

As an ethnic community the **Irish** were almost completely assimilated into the American mainstream, forming their own personal links through their professions: notably the police, civil service, law and business. I once brought a copy of Leon Uris' book 'Trinity' into the office to show our politics (City Hall) writer Brent Larkin. The book is about The Troubles – Catholic vs Protestant, nationalist vs unionist – whose fictional hero is an Irishman called Larkin. I was taken aback when Brent said he had not realized Larkin was an Irish name, so deep had the assimilation become over generations. There were plenty of Larkins in England too who didn't know the name was Irish. Cleveland's Irish certainly knew how to throw a party and a parade, though, especially around St Patrick's Day when the beer flowed green. Memories linger long in the Irish soul, however, and I think I got, shall we say, a "cool reception" when I was introduced to one deeply-Irish group or another as an Englishman. The year 1969 was the beginning of serious sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, the start of The Troubles, and for the most part Cleveland's old Irish knew which side they were on. It would not have been a good idea to tell our new Irish-American friends that I had been working for the British Army at that time. In the early 70s in America the IRA – and old IRA songs – were never far away.

Memory Flash*: Sunday April 12, 1970,* the penultimate entry in my six-year-old diary. I don't know why it stopped.

"It's a LUVLY DAY," I've written in capitals, and we are going for our first long tour of Ohio. The light green Mustang has been polished, its top is down, and we've got a picnic lunch. Down I-77 to Akron center for a quick look around, then to Canton, noting the location of the National Football League Hall of Fame. New Philadelphia next. We stop for lunch at Lake Tappan, on Rt 250 near Deersville, then on to East Liverpool and Weirton, whose steel mills we later recognize as locations for parts of the Vietnam War movie' The Deerhunter. Then back to Cleveland; 300 miles in all.

"Cor. What a BIG country" I wrote. And we hadn't seen Texas yet!

When we moved again that summer it was just for a few blocks closer to Euclid, a suburb where Anna had her first full-time job as a nurse at Euclid General Hospital. Our ground floor apartment was at 17745 Lakeshore Blvd, in a modern three-storey block of six apartments. We were excited about it, only a block away from Euclid Beach amusement park. We had seen the grand entrance, and a glimpse of what appeared to be a roller coaster. What we didn't know was that Euclid Beach, opened in 1895, had closed permanently only a few months earlier. For daily excitement we would have to depend on the World War II stories of Julius Janulis, custodian of our apartment building, who would often – at least with me – appear near the back door to regale me with tales of when he was a Lithuanian Freedom Fighter, blowing up first German troop trains and then Russian ones. I believe he was secretary of a local group of Lithuanian exiles.

The end of World War II had brought a lot of East Europeans and Germans to America, not only those such as Werner von Braun whose rocket building skills set the US on the route to the moon but at least one who allegedly hid very dark backgrounds, which they would not discuss. One such was John Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian who served in the Soviet Army and was captured by the invading Germans in 1942. They sent him to work as one of their guards at the Treblinka death camp in Poland, where nearly 900,000 Jews were exterminated. He made his way to Seven Hills, a south Cleveland suburb in 1952, settled into the Ukrainian community there, worked at the Ford auto factory in nearby Brook Park, and would have stayed there had US federal officials not received an Israeli warning in 1977 that he had been identified as 'Ivan Grozny' – Ivan the Terrible – who mutilated naked Jews as he pushed them into the gas chamber at Treblinka.

The case became an international horror story of trials: in Cleveland, Israel, and Germany, of identifications and misidentifications, much of it highly emotional, as elderly Holocaust survivors in court relived their terrible memories, sometimes mistakenly.

I was in Cleveland when Federal Judge Frank J. Battisti (much more about him later) ordered Demjanjuk to be stripped of his adopted US nationality in 1981, and extradited him to Israel. But I have at least observed some of the silent rectitude of the estimated 35,000 Ukrainians who lived around St Josaphat Byzantine Church and Demjanuk's church, St Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox at that time. And those of other east European nationalities. Some of the older men were colleagues of Demjanjuk at the Ford plant, sitting quietly at their breaks, working hard without complaint, never getting into any kind of trouble with police, city officials and neighbours, flying the Stars and Stripes proudly outside their neat suburban homes, and putting their innocent children through college – without a word about what they did, or didn't, in the war.

And why should they? The Cleveland these survivors of WWII went to was a paradise, untainted by the nationalisms of Europe where the 20th Century had seen hugely tainted by death, destruction and privation. Demjanjuk insisted he was a victim of misidentification and was a pawn in an international firestorm of retribution for the Holocaust. His trial in Jerusalem was watched there by Jews every day live on television. A national hatred engulfed him, and his Jewish lawyer had acid thrown on him after he pulled apart the faulty memories of elderly holocaust survivors who were so certain of his guilt but struggled with details of their memories of 'Ivan the Terrible.' One survivor, asked twice how he had got from Israel to Florida in the 1950s, insisted he had come by train.

Demjanjuk was finally freed in Germany when files from the Russian KGB, uncovered after the 1990 collapse of the Soviet Union, pointed to another man whose physical and recorded locations added to that of facial recognition experts who testified they did not match him. Demjanjuk died a free man, in a German care home in 2012. His children, and grandchildren, are free to live their lives as honest Americans.

(It has to be said, in mid-2022, that Ukraine's image could not be higher in America, Britain and elsewhere in the world as the people of that country fight desperately against the invasion of many thousands of Russian troops).

Writing this memoir I can verify that there are some memories which are far from perfect. **But at least I have the exact, yellowing copies of most of the stories I ever wrote over the 47 years of my journalism career**.

Chapter 2. Cleveland, 1970 (cont.)

Memory Flash: ***Ardendale Rd, South Euclid June 23, 1970***

I'm at the home of Rosie and Nettie Lippa, two eccentric and retired Cleveland school teachers, 91 and 87, who are in ill health and have had to be moved to a nursing home. The house is in as bad a shape as they are, and they know they will probably never be able to return to it: a fairly routine story for the elderly of Cleveland in 1970.

But what the police have found inside is amazing: A shut-in life of pauperism, isolation and reluctant acceptance of food from neighbours. No gas or central heating. Poor insulation. Poor clothing….

And $150,000 in cash, bank books and securities stuffed into every nook and cranny, most of it in small bills, rotting away in mouldy envelopes in cupboards, walls, ceilings – and yes, under mattresses. A further $350,000 is in various safe deposit boxes.

Nettie says she thought she had got in enough coal for the winter, but found she hadn't. A local nurse found Rosie with 'bad feet' and called the police to get her to hospital. Their neighbours include the Mayor of South Euclid, George Urban, who tells me they got what they needed from white elephant sales (unwanted private home possessions) but did not want for money. "They sold their old Ford for $2000 a year ago," he says. Their lawyer says: "They were just thrifty. They spent virtually nothing and kept everything. We've taken 19 van loads of stuff out of here."

Word has got around, however, and thieves and vandals have broken into the house, ripping up floorboards and wrenching out pipe fittings in their search for money. The house is now boarded up and Mayor Urban says it will probably be torn down.

The sisters were born in Cleveland in the 1880s and educated at Case Western Reserve University, but they learned their thrift from their father, who came from Bohemia (Czchoslovakia) and told them they must always be VERY careful with their money, and spend as little as possible

So they did – or rather, didn't.

Back to the Italians – the ones we came to love. To begin with it was just one individual: Dorothy Martony, who

began her nursing career late in life at Euclid General at about the same time as Anna. She did not see much of her family, and lived alone in a trailer park off Euclid Ave. Dorothy loved everything about the English, especially the Queen, and over the years she became Anna's surrogate Mother and godmother to our first child, Nick. My friend Jim Dudas was of Hungarian heritage, but his wife Marcy's maiden name was Pirello – another bubbly Italian.

I haven't mentioned the **Germans**, whose ethnic stamp across America was almost as strong as the British. Anna's first job in Cleveland was as a carer at The Altenheim (Old People's Home) on Detroit Ave, founded in 1886 by the Westseite Deutscher Frauen Verein (Westside German Ladies Society). But I don't think it's worth detailing their achievements here, except to say I got the impression, from the day of my arrival, that the German language of their forebears had a strong bearing on the way Americans talked and thought: the flat sounds of their speech (compared to the almost sing-song speech of the British), the flat delivery of American jokes etc. I don't mean to say every American with a German surname sounded like Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's Secretary of State, but there's something steely in that accent that I felt at the time produced a characteristic of the American nation that says: "This is the way it's going to be" and a drive to succeed.

Memory Flash:*Border of Virginia and North Carolina. Summer 1971*

We've just driven over the border into rural North Carolina, on our way to the ocean at Cape Hatteras for our first brief American holiday. I'm sure my Mustang is only going at the then-speed limit of 50mph. Suddenly, from behind a huge roadside billboard comes a police car, its siren wailing for us to stop.

"You know how fast you were driving, boy?" the officer asks me in a thrilling (for us) southern drawl.

"Fifty?" I said.

"Fifty two. You've got a ticket boy. Follow me."

Fifty-two miles per hour. At most that would get us a police warning back in England. I try to protest, but the officer is having none of it. I drive behind him back to the small, quiet town and stop outside a hardware store.

"Wait here," he says. "I'll get the judge."

Some minutes later the "Judge" appears. He is a short, balding, older man, and this is his store. He has been taking a lunch break back at his home and appears to have a stain on his shirt. He opens the door, cheerily bids us enter and takes us to another room with chairs and desk, from which he pulls out papers and tells us we were speeding and this will be a $25 fine (actually a $5 fine, $20 "court costs"). The "Judge" hears our accents and asks where we are from.

I don't think he accepts "Cleveland" as much of an answer. Perhaps I should have said: "Little Snodbury, Worcestershire." (I already knew Americans couldn't get their tongues around that). The 'Judge' follows us out, muttering something about finishing his lunch.

Two miles an hour over the speed limit? How does that "fine" work out financially for the judge and the cop? About the same as an average sale in his sleepy store, I'd guess. Easy money.

On the way to our car I look more closely at the speeding ticket. I can't see the Judge's name, but do see the officer's. It isn't 'Schickelgruber' but looks decidedly German.

'Aha!' I think to myself.

One of my early Community Page stories was about what some would call "hillbillies," white immigrants in the Tremont area of the near West Side whose families had moved from Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana and other Southern places looking for work, just as the Blacks had done in the 1920s. They, like the East Siders a year earlier, were afraid that a spate of attacks by "hooligans" would end up with their homes being set alight or someone being killed. They didn't like the press, I noted, but this time they wanted us to spread the word that they were prepared to fight.

"Threats of Violence Stir West Side Area" reads the headline on my story on May 1, 1970. "Residents in the West 19th Street/ Abbey Ave. Area of the near West Side are today nervously keeping their guns close at hand in response to teenage threats of violence and fire bombings for this weekend."

For the first time in my life I called the police myself to come out and reassure citizens who were as afraid as anybody I had seen up to then. And, for the first time, I even asked some of them to pose for pictures – with rifles, shotguns, and handguns – as a police officer talked to them. The resulting published photo, showing a husband leaning out of a window holding a handgun, his wife outside brandishing a rifle, and grandma inside nursing a shotgun, would be impossible in Britain. (1970 total homicides in England and Wales, pop. 42 million, was about 400. Total 1970 homicides for Cleveland alone, pop. 751,000, was 301. Go figure, as I learned Americans like to say).

I'm sorry, but I have no memory or record if the 'hooligans' came back that night – or the next. Hopefully they got the message. But it gave me my first hint of just how available guns were in Cleveland, and how acceptable it was to use them.

And the English in Cleveland? I guess their ethnic centres were the golf clubs that were dotted around the city; the theatres, restaurants and their places of work. They were the businessmen and women, the doctors, editors (our editor was Tom Boardman) , research specialists, accountants and lawyers. I only once saw inside the boardroom of the Press' lawyers, Jones, Day, Cockley and Reavis (in 1974 dropping the Cockley and adding Pogue), and although it was in a modern office building in downtown Cleveland it was wood panelled and could have been taken straight from an 1890's legal office in London.

Many years later I discovered a plaque on a wall in the main dining area of the Cheshire Cheese pub in Fleet Street, London (rebuilt 1667 (!) where Daily Telegraph newsmen (not so many women) used to hang out. The plaque announced its greetings and affection from The Cheshire Cheese Club of Cleveland, 3443 Euclid Ave, to the place made famous by those great men of English letters James Boswell and Dr Samuel Johnson (1737), under

whose painting I have often eaten my beef and Yorkshire pud. The club describes itself as “an invitational club of men, meets weekly to hear guest speakers, review books, and discuss ‘the topics of the day’. The club began in 1917, when a group of businessmen who were meeting informally at Chandler and Rudd (next to May Co. On Public Square) were invited by the manager, Harry Sims, to use a specially-reserved table for their daily book review meetings.”

I may have been English, but I wasn’t a businessman, so was never invited.

Should Anglo Saxon even BE an ethnic group, in America or anywhere else? Technically, the Anglo Saxons are descendants of tribes of Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians from Denmark, NW Germany and northern Holland who settled in eastern England after collapse of the Roman empire in the 4th century, and who then mixed in with the native Celts. Over the next several hundred years – including the invasions of Vikings and Normans – these ‘Anglo Saxons became ‘the English people’ (different from the ‘British people)’ who set out to build the world’s largest empire.

I don’t think they asked the question in 1970 when I arrived (demographics were more racially-based then), but the US census in 1980 identified 50 million Americans saying they were English, or partly English. That was 26 per cent of the total population, making them the largest ethnic group at that time. By 2016, however, this had dropped to 7.4% of the population. But according to demographers this was a serious undercount as, starting in the year 2000, Americans had a new word to use in the national census: the word “American,” – a better identification for those millions whose Anglo Saxon heritage had long been fudged by intermarriage with other cultures.

In the third decade of the 21st Century Anglo Saxon finds itself further under attack as being insufficiently diverse, somehow politically incorrect and associated with right-wing ideologies or ‘White Power’ groups. Who wants to study Anglo Saxons today? I think my ethnic group has thus now probably lost its niche as George Washington’s blood family.

At least there was fish and chips. What would I do without that? Arthur Treacher’s fish and chip shop, founded in Columbus, Ohio in late 1969, started one of its first stores just beyond Lakeshore Blvd and I-271 in Wickliffe, an eastern suburb of Cleveland. By the middle of the 70s there were 800 Treachers around the country. But by 2019 the Anglo Saxon fad had almost gone. Only seven (four in the Cleveland area) remained.

We didn’t know many Brits in Cleveland. But one couple, the Roberts, who arrived when we did, we got to know quite well. He was a ceramics specialist working on catalytic converters for autos, and his wife became director of the Cleveland office of the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU, which played a major role in school desegregation.

There were, of course, very many Americans with English names and characteristics, so it didn’t really matter. Among the first of our dearest friends was Dick Wootten, art editor for the Press, and his wife Judith ‘Jay’, who had Polish heritage but you’d never know it. Both possessed the same Anglo sensibilities and humour as ourselves – except Dick played a mean jazz piano!

And so to Theodore Andrica, (1900 -1990), Nationalities Writer for the Cleveland Press for 46 years.

Immigrating from Romania in 1920 he was hired by Editor Louis B. Seltzer to write about the area's ethnic communities, and in 1927 had literally invented the field of 'ethnic journalism.' For months every summer he would travel to Europe carrying messages and news of Clevelanders to their families and friends across the European continent – and vice versa. Affectionately known by his colleagues as 'the Broken-English Editor' Andrica wrote a regular column, attended some 14,000 banquets over his career and promoted a series of all-nations exhibitions. He once hired an airliner to take tons of clothing from Clevelanders – and his city editor, Louis Clifford – to refugee camps in Austria following the 1956 Hungarian uprising. He also filmed and photographed them. Three of his color films, from 1938, 1947 and later, describe conditions on the continent before and after WWII, narrated by him and alongside music provided by another veteran Press journalist, Milton Widder.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfkDaX1bfuE&list=PLqqqqZrD37h7bhMS8a3hrPu6DCks003NG&index=2

Andrica was also a 1943 Nieman Fellow in Journalism at Harvard University, the first for the Cleveland Press. (I was the second, in 1980/81, more later). I knew him only for a short while, as he didn't come into the office very often, and retired in 1973 to edit a Romanian quarterly magazine.

For me, almost every story I wrote in my early days at The Press was an eye-opener. I wrote about Cleveland's Afro-American Cultural and Historical Society, whose museum was on the verge of collapse because there were TOO MANY new black history groups and black societies seeking funding. The society and museum were run by a man with the wonderful name of Icobod Flewellen, who had worked tirelessly to keep the museum going for 17 years, but whose bank account was now down to just $123. His dream of a magnificent plan for a $300,000 museum dedicated to the Negro never got further than an old schoolroom.

I had asked Ralph Pruitt, director of black studies at Cleveland State University, about Flewellen and his plans

and he said: “It is a sad commentary that this has developed. I think it is primarily due to the lack of understanding of just what Flewellen and people like him have done for the black movement. It stems in large measure from the activist thinking on the part of many blacks in our society who would rather move away from the gradual reforms his work implies. It is all ‘action’ and ‘action now.’

In other words, young blacks in the 1970s won’t wait for ‘Uncle Toms’ to get white respect for blacks. Some would rather protest on the streets first.

Memory Flash:*E86th St. and Hough Ave, Cleveland, Apr 16, 1970*

I’m at the ground-breaking ceremony of the Hough Center, the first million-dollar multiservice center for local residents in Cleveland, funded mostly by the federal government with some from the city. It is controversial, in that plans for this center – providing day care, counselling, health, leisure, employment and group activities – had to be cut back from the $1.25 million prepared for it, losing some expected services.

Mayor Carl Stokes is not happy, and he thinks the white-owned news media is not backing his black community. He tells the crowd it’s the news media that’s to blame for the cuts in the planned services. They shout back their support for him.

“We’ve all come here to see something very important for this community,” he tells the crowd of about 30 people. “But where’s the news media?”

I’m standing at the back of the crowd and wave my arms. I’m the only media person there. Stokes has met me, he knows who I am, but all he can say is: “Well, where’s your equipment (camera?)” Basically, he wants his picture in the paper holding a hammer in one hand, a spike in the other, performing the ground-breaking ceremony.

I shout that the photographer is unable to come until an hour later. There are shouts of derision from the crowd and silence from the mayor.

“If something wrong is going on here in Hough they (photographers) would be here quickly enough,” he says. “It’s a sad commentary that newsmen are just not interested in the things this community does to help itself.”

After the ground-breaking ceremony I write: “Stokes went off to ‘an important meeting’ and didn’t wait for the photographer”.

I forget how much of this was edited, but the next day his anti-media blast shares sidebar space with my main story about the center, over six columns at the top of Community News and with a photo by Van Dillard of Dr E. Frank Ellis, city health and welfare director, addressing the crowd.

“What Mayor Stokes had to say was strong: an outright condemnation of the news media,” I write.

The Cleveland Press actually supported Mayor Stokes for his second term (though not the first). Editor Tom

Boardman knew Stokes was struggling with forces greater than local politics, and had built strong black representation through the 21st District Caucus in the Democratic Party. But the paper would not put up with cheap attacks like this and wanted him to know it.

Demographics, for a start. The white population of the city had been migrating south, west and east to the suburbs for the previous ten years, dropping the population from 878,000 in 1960 to 751,000 in 1970. It had been helped by the building of the Willow Freeway – Interstate 77 – opening an avenue to the southern suburbs that made commuting much easier. Parma alone grew to 100,000 people, many of them ethnic Poles. The other was I-271, which enabled commuters in the eastern and south eastern suburbs to reach the Lakeshore freeway to the city center.

The major result was that the city's white population had dropped from 90 per cent in 1940 to 61 per cent in 1970, with the black population rising from 9.6 per cent to 38 per cent. From relative wealth to relative poverty, and occupied by a black population which needed vastly more civic money than any city administration could provide. Stokes was helped by his brother Louis being a Cleveland Congressman pressing for ever-more federal funds. But the federal government of Presidents Ford and Richard Milhous Nixon had more to worry about than black pressure, even with the murder of Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968, and the national black riots that followed.

And pressure was growing from both black and white youths about Vietnam, not least the four students killed by Ohio National Guard soldiers at nearby Kent State University on May 4, 1970.

'Ohio' by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rrIvd8lq5s

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming

We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming
Four dead in Ohio

Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are cutting us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew her
And found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?

Four Dead in Ohio.

I don't know why, but I well up every time I watch this video.

The tragedy is that the National Guardsmen doing the shooting were about the same age and from the same area as Kent State students protesting Nixon's invasion of Cambodia. Among those who were Kent State students at the time were our friends Jim and Marcy, who witnessed much of the incident. A journalism student, Jim sent some of the first reports to the Cleveland Press, after which the paper hired him. He later interviewed one of the Guardsmen who did the shooting, providing a historic and national first for the Press (and an exclusive report for the Press that was done literally off the cuff: he didn't have a notebook so wrote his notes on his hands, arms, and legs while sitting in his car, then agonized over Journalistic ethics whether to write it at all!)

Memory Flash: ***The US military draft board office, E9th St. Cleveland, summer 1970.***

"You here again?" asked the young woman behind the reception desk of the draft board office. "I thought you said you were British?"

"I still am," I replied.

"So what are you doing here?" she said. "We're not drafting non-Americans."

I showed her my letter, instructing me to report for a medical exam to be fit for service in the US military. It was my third letter from the draft board, apparently because of my immigration status which was not temporary. I knew it RISKED me being drafted, but didn't think they'd actually do it. I had studied the War of 1812, one of whose causes was the Royal Navy's desperate need for sailors to fight Napoleon's ever-expanding domination of Europe by impressing former British sailors who were now in the US Navy. The 'Press Gang' was a long-established feature of British naval life, and would have been in the US Navy (modelled on the RN) if the native Indians were any good at ocean sailing.

And anyway, I thought, wasn't the US War of Independence supposed to be about 'No taxation

without representation”?. I was obviously paying federal, state and local taxes, but was not an American citizen, could not vote, or be represented.

Would this ‘mistake’ not be identified by the feds, and let me get back to my life?

I discussed this with the Reception Lady, and she made it clear she was opposed to the Vietnam War. She said she was horrified by the Kent State killings.

“Look” she said. “You see these letters here? This is the Out tray. Letters to draftees go out every day. Every time I see your name here” – and she pulled out a small writing tablet from under her desk top, where I could see a list of names on a sheet of paper – “I’ll take your letter from the top of the pile – here – and put it at the bottom – there.

“I can’t stop it, but it will buy you some time.”

And it did. A few extra months anyway. My next letter from the draft board came, I think, in November or December of ’70. It gave me until the end of February to launch any appeal, otherwise I was to report for induction in mid May ’71 (no final date stated). I immediately sent off my appeal, but, of course, I should have waited until the last minute, and perhaps extended my time ‘in the world’ longer. That way I might not have heard back so blasted fast from the Appeal Board: “No, Sunny Jim, you’re coming with US. The sooner the better. Get it over and done with. Its only 18 months. We’ll make a MAN out of you!”

Or words to that effect.

In tribute to my fairytale receptionist (well, somehow it makes me think of her) here’s Stairway to Heaven, 1971 by Led Zeppelin; Tribute Kennedy Center 2016, with the band in the seats, President Obama and the late John Bonham’s son on drums.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLrzeWjKqV4

And as we wind on down the road
Our shadows taller than our soul
There walks a lady we all know
Who shines white light and wants to show
How everything still turns to gold

Why I had a full immigration visa anyway is not clear. Dick Campbell, the managing editor, had been asked by a State Department official why he was hiring a foreigner instead of an American when he offered me the job in 1968. “Have you SEEN the quality of applications I get from students in this country?” he asked the official. No comment. Official stamp of approval.

It was becoming increasingly apparent that I would not only need a decent car to enjoy Ohio recreationally but also to do my job – or at least sit in one for hours alongside a photographer. A week earlier photographer Freddie Bottomer(who could talk for America) had driven me down to the village of Chardon for its annual Maple Festival.

“Reporter Finds Sirup Time is a sweet assignment” ran the headline of my story (and yes, they spell syrup as ‘sirup’ on the west side of the pond). My first-person piece, complete with picture of me standing in snow, wearing my London-bought black fake coat and scribbling in my notebook next to “spritely 72-year-old Roy Grant chomping on a stogie” (cigar) – to a 24-year old anybody over 60 was “spritely” – revealed my naiveite in learning that maple sirup does not ONLY come from Canada but is collected in buckets halfway up a tree trunk into which three-inch plugs are struck to collect the rising sap. The stuff is mostly water, which has to be boiled off and sweetened before it can be sold.

By mid August I was a suburbs reporter, where I REALLY needed a car. Of the 60 suburbs around Cleveland I was responsible for 16: Aurora, Beachwood, Chagrin Falls, Chagrin Falls Township, Cleveland Heights, Lyndhurst, Moreland Hills, Hunting Valley, Orange, Shaker heights, Lyndhurst, South Euclid, Streetsboro, University Heights, Warrensville Heights, Woodmere. A few had their own city or town hall, a school board, and a library: a lot of duplication and expense which I later blasted in a commentary piece. But, for the sake of history and local identity that’s the way the public wanted it. And they certainly didn’t want to join with the City of Cleveland and all its problems, which is why people moved to the suburbs in the first place.

I inherited three ‘stringers’ – local people who may or may not have had journalism training – to help with updates and background of news in their areas. Two other reporters – Fred Buchstein and John Randt – covered the suburbs of the other third of the East Side of Cleveland, and an equal number for the West side. (I think it was Randt who I sat next to briefly before he went off to the army and Vietnam, returning 18 months later in such a state he had to leave again. Our families became friends and we met again in North Carolina, where John became a local radio reporter, and then back into the regular army, where he became a senior public affairs officer before dying much too young).

Memory flash: *Pepper Pike police station, Dec 10. 1970*

I've come to this very wealthy exurban Cleveland area of 7.5 square miles 12 miles southeast of downtown (pop.5,000 and this year officially a city), to interview its police chief, Frank McGuire. Frank has been a naughty boy and has just had to resign. I'm one of the main reasons he has had to go.

He has taken a year-old $25 traffic violation check paid by the mother of a young Pepper Pike resident into his own account instead of putting it into a court account. McGuire says he thought it was a gift for the police department's Christmas fund and doesn't know why it is not recorded there. I have a copy of the check, however, and the back of it is endorsed by him.

The copy was handed to me through a couple of Pepper Pike police officers who don't like him siphoning off Christmas fund cash donated by local residents. The check says 'to pay: Pepper Pike Police Department' but the mayor who has fired him, Edgar Parks, says he has warned his policemen for years about the dangers of accepting gifts – cash or otherwise – and McGuire, as police chief, would pay the price if it came out.

Parks and law director Robert Musser told him that if he resigned there would not be any bad publicity because Parks had the check in his briefcase. So, without any legal advice, McGuire resigned. Once I had the check published in the Press, however, he tried to withdraw it, but Parks refused, publicly citing only McGuire's questionable part time activities with a real estate company while he was on police duty.

McGuire has asked me to come and see him in an effort to implicate the mayor. His lawyer, Lewis Zipkin, told a meeting of residents angry about the firing: "We believe this check incident caused embarrassment to the mayor. We believe Frank McGuire is a scapegoat for someone else we don't know."

This is my first 'involved' Cleveland Press investigation, but not my last. We will hear more about Mr Zipkin and his questionable real estate connections 11 years later.

Looking back at my Cleveland Press newspaper clippings for 1970 I see a far wider-ranging set of words and pictures than I had in York, England. Local news was much more accessible here. From plans for a new Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Cleveland Heights (a California-based hospital company that had the lower-cost, prevention and management-based philosophy for all that reminded me of the UK's National Health Service) to a white Chagrin Falls merchant who agreed to employ a black youth only after an angry crowd of blacks had demonstrated outside his store: the first racial demonstration in the history of the small suburban town.

In August the Lyndhurst police department bought a number of special shotgun shells to scare away noisy, bird-dropping starlings from Edenhurst Rd. On their first deployment a police officer fired a shot above a tree. "The result," I wrote, "was one starling fell down dead, presumably from a heart attack, and two neighbours complained about the noise. The birds later returned."

Another heart attack struck Ben Skall, the vice mayor of University Heights, another Cleveland suburb, whose heart specialist encouraged him to get out of his car and ride a bike. This being car-mad America, he persuaded his council to start designing bike routes, with other suburbs joining in by adding hard surfaces to paths through parts of the park system.

One of my own "only in America" experiences came when I received in the mail an introduction to Consumer Guide Inc, "an outfit on the blacklist of the Cleveland Consumer Protection Assn that offered five gifts with a "total retail cost of $1,050. But we can't hold them long." The address to pick them up was on Lorain Ave. Anna and I went to see these gifts, but we weren't sure. The price dropped to $599 "And all you have to do is agree to write a letter saying how much you like them." I took his price list to several reputable Cleveland companies who said we could buy them all for much cheaper. I called the salesman, who put me on to his boss. He used "strong words" when I said I was a Cleveland Press reporter.

In gentler words, he said: "I make a nice lot of money – more than you do sitting at that typewriter, you can bet. I can still sell things at any price I like."

You betcha. A few months later Anna and I would be attracted to a store whose windows shouted "SALE! SALE!" We walked in and didn't see anything that had the word "sale" on them. I told the salesman I couldn't find anything that looked like a sale price. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Sale? We're selling everything. That's what a store does."

Almost last for 1970 was a story about a public exhibition of the largest collection of Salvador Dali paintings in the world that was likely to be stopped because of a local Beachwood legal ruling about zoning laws. The owner, J. Reynolds Morse, was an industrialist and philosopher who had met Dali in 1943 and, with his wife Reece, became a permanent friend and supporter. He had set aside 5000 sq ft of one of his industry-zoned buildings at Commerce Park for the museum, which Dali was scheduled to open in March 1971. When I spoke to Morse he was incandescent with rage. "The Spanish government is building its own Dali museum," Morse told me. "But I have a large collection (400 paintings). How can I repay the hospitality Dali and the government has shown me by telling him some local officials here are bureaucratic?"

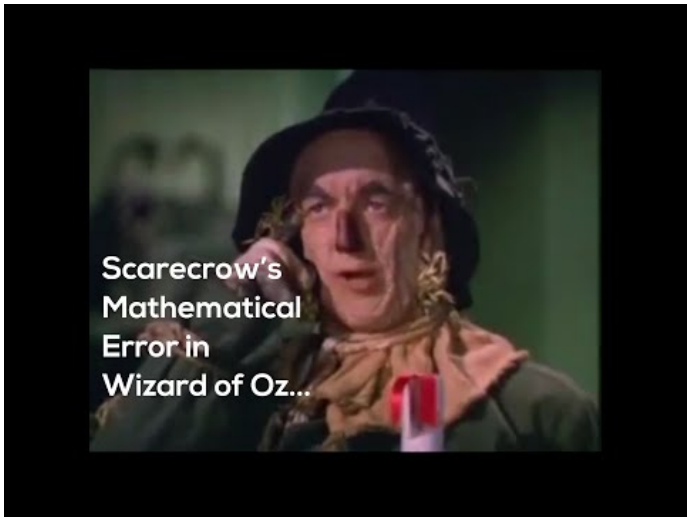
The museum was opened as planned, but moved to St Petersburg, Florida, in 1980 when a better deal was arranged. Dali died in 1989. Morse died in 2000.

The suburbs reporters at the Press all sat at a couple of large desks in easy mumbling distance from the suburbs editor, Fred McGunagle, commonly known as McGoo. He did, in fact, look a lot like the stubborn, extremely short-sighted cartoon retiree with the Jim Backus voice, though his voice was pitched a little higher. Fred was also mostly bald and wore bottletop eyeglasses. But he was also an extremely good sub-editor and editor. I remember him pulling me up one day for using a gerund in a certain way (can't remember what). A gerund? Is that an American word, one they don't use in England? I had never heard of it, and I had passed Advanced Level English at school. I knew about verbs being used as nouns – fly-ing, danc-ing, sing-ing etc – but I guess none of my teachers told me they were called gerunds and exactly where they fit in the structure of English grammar. I just seemed to know how to use a gerund without knowing what it was called.

Over time I learned that English language structure was as important to U.S. immigrants as the words themselves (a German/European thing about formal structure in language?), whereas I had just absorbed it as a child in England. There was a LOT I didn't know. By late summer I realized I was almost certainly the only reporter on the staff who didn't have a four-year college degree. There was no sign it was holding me back, and no suggestion I might be fired for not knowing what a gerund was. But there it was: ALMOND DOESN'T HAVE ANY COLLEGE QUALIFICATIONS. No-one in America had the faintest idea what three A-levels meant, and no appreciation of the National Council for the Training of Journalists certificate (with 100wpm Pitman's shorthand).

What Almond needed was a degree, perhaps like the scarecrow in Wizard of Oz.

"*They have one thing you haven't got: a DIPLOMA,*" says the Wizard."*Therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Universitatus Committiartum E Pluribus Unum, I hereby confer upon you the honorary degree of ThD – Doctor of Thinkology!*"**



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I would have to find out what my education was worth in terms of points towards a degree. Mother! Father! send me all my old school books from my old school!

And they did. Boxfulls of English essays about poets and writers, playwrights and actors and dramatists; handwritten descriptions of global meteorological statistics and climatology and why the northwest of land masses in the northern hemisphere have similar weather systems to Britain; history essays about medieval Britain and Europe, delving deep into the lives and deaths of King Cnut and Harold Hardrada in the late tenth century, of Martin Luther and the Diet of Worms 1521, and of the First and Second Crusades in the 11th and 12th Centuries.

I dumped the whole lot on Tom Campbell, a professor of history at Cleveland State University and Ohio State, who had come from Northern Ireland in 1963 and was educated in the British education system. If anyone was able to explain to Americans the value of Advanced Level General Certificates of Education in the UK it was him.

It took quite a long time, if I remember – well into late 1971 or early 72 – but after being routed to some national education equivalency organisation in North Carolina, I got an answer. My two years of 11th and 12th grade English, Geography and Medieval History in England were worth **three years and six months** of a four-year US college degree. I learned that American students don't usually study medieval history until at least post-graduate level.

So… almost but not quite. I would have to find the time to do math and American history full time to actually get a college degree.

Ummm…….. Maybe next year.

More importantly for fitting into American life, of course, was my lack of an American education, and particularly a college LIFE: the fraternities, the parties, the sports – especially the sports, as big and brassy as professional teams. (College sports do not exist in England the way they do in America, where half of all the 50 states do not have professional football and only one or two don't have NCAA (National College Athletic Association) stadiums which regularly attract 40,000 or so). College sports is BIG, and unlike England gets the very best of young players because they offer valuable sponsorships and scholarships).

So, what was I going to talk about with my colleagues in the office, at Barristers bar for lunch, in the car with photographers, at evening functions, at morning phone calls with sources?

I'd better learn a Ribbi (runs batted in) and a Steerike! (strike!) in baseball; a 'Blitz' and a 'bomb' in football; a 'lay-up' and a 'jump shot' in basketball, a 'bar down' a 'barnburner' and a 'bender' in ice hockey.

Otherwise, I might have to look down at my shoes, talk politics or religion, or even – heavens above – NEWS! Nobody wants to talk about the weather in America.

Anna, meanwhile, was working as a nurse at Euclid General Hospital: a full-time job in the emergency room. I'll let her tell her story about all that, but we were, perhaps, a typical young couple who led different work lives, came together at nights and weekends, and learned to introduce friends to each other. We could not plan annual vacations because neither of us were due any for months. I know I had to work for a year before I could take any vacation, and as that started in January we decided to wait for a further six months to take it in the summer of 1971, when the weather, hopefully, would be better.

Meantime there was this new American holiday (new to us) called Thanksgiving to explore, the last Thursday of November. I really can't remember if we went to anyone's home for it that year, or indeed for Christmas. We must have done – one or the other, but what struck me most about it was the brilliant timing for families: For Thanksgiving one year American couples visit one side of the family, and for Christmas they can visit the other side; and alternate year after year.

Why don’t the British do that? Halloween on Oct 31, and Guy Fawkes Night on Nov 5 are both too early – and who wants to visit families for events that mark scariness and hanging, drawing and quartering a man who tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament anyway.

I do remember we drove around the Cleveland suburbs on Christmas Eve staring amazed at the vast number of Xmas lights and gigantic Santa Clauses almost as high as the tops of houses. We took dozens of photos to send home, and then determined we must get a movie camera.

Just IMAGINE what next Christmas is going to be like, showing all those MOVIES we’re going to take! Maybe we’ll need a HOME CINEMA!

Chapter 3. Cleveland, 1971

American salesmanship:

Memory Flash: ***downtown Cleveland, January 1971***

I'm standing in the Reitman Camera photo shop on E9th Street, past which I have been regularly walking and ogling the cameras all year. I have 'THE LATEST' Canon movie camera in one hand, a Bell and Howell shoulder-carried tape recorder in the other, and a Bell and Howell 469 Super 8 cassette/film projector on the table before me.

The shop assistant is explaining how it all works: first, film my scene for the movie. As soon as I squeeze the camera's trigger a flash of light automatically travels down the wire to turn the tape recorder on for the synchronised sound. At the conclusion of both tapes they are sent off to a processing lab to develop the film and put light marks on the tape. The two come back in the mail to the owner, who threads film from the reel through the Bell and Howell projector, plugs in the cord from one to the other, switches on the projector and away she goes.

The salesman has a prepared demonstration to show me (of course). I get a sense of how it must have felt to witness the arrival of talking movies in the mid 1920s.

"This is the LATEST, yes?" I ask the salesman.

"The LATEST and the BEST!" he says. "There won't be anything as good as this for years!"

I'm skeptical. I'm a newspaper reporter, right? But I've already looked through camera magazines and seen good reports about it. Filmosound just might be here to stay for awhile. So, at the cost of nearly £1,000, I buy it. And yes, it did work.

……. For about six months. Then Bell and Howell came out with a better processing system, because it did not stand up to repeated use. Basically, I fell for American salesmanship and I'm still a just-off-the-boat sucker.

We did try to stick with Filmosound for several more years, but never got the lip-sync together again.

Its hard to start thinking of the major cultural changes (besides racial) in American life without thinking about Ralph Kramden in *The Honeymooners*, the CBS situation comedy that dominated TV in the late 1950s and sixties. Kramden, a bus driver played by Jackie Gleason, fills the series with his pretentious scheming and is ALWAYS brought down by his long-suffering wife Alice, played by Audrey Meadows. "One of these days!" he threatens her emptily, "Pow! Right in the kisser! To the moon, Alice!"

We watched the show in 1970, just in time to understand the public appeal of balancing up the sexes, but realizing that was about to change – dramatically – by a new show on the same network that we had essentially been seeing for years in England. This was *All in the Family*, a straight lift of *Till Death Us Do Part*, which had been running on BBC TV since 1965.

Among the 'duties' of being the only resident Brit in the Cleveland Press newsroom I was to be a resource on all things British, so at the request of the paper's veteran TV and radio critic Bill Barrett, on Jan 22 1971 I wrote a comparison between the two shows.

If I had the space I'd probably just run my published critique here, but it may be best to start with the Wikipedia entry: *"(All in the Family) is often regarded in the United States as one of the greatest television series in history. Following a lackluster first season, the show soon became the most watched show in the United States during summer reruns and afterwards ranked number one in the yearly Nielsen ratings from 1971 to 1976. It became the first television series to reach the milestone of having topped the Nielsen ratings for five consecutive years*"

I told Press readers that, basically, Carroll O'Connor, as Archie Bunker, the foul-mouthed bigot star of the show, was every bit as good as his British original, Alf Garnett, played by Warren Mitchell. And so was the ensemble. Maybe the British original was stronger in its use of language, but the transatlantic concept was culturally identical, if more shocking to Americans who had yet to receive the even more acerbic (and hysterically funny) *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. In the first episode of All in the Family, I noted, there was heard "shouting matches about sex, blacks, Jews, Poles, religion, liberals, conservatives, crime, justice, age, intelligence, and the economy…. How's that for openers?"

The opening sequences were similar, I noted; aerial shots of New York descending to the Bunker home in Queens, and aerial shots of houses of central London descending to Garnett's home in the East End. "I doubt, however, if Alf would have appreciated his American counterpart," I wrote. "Most probably he would have reached out to his 'telly' and turned it off, muttering 'Bleedin' Yanks. Wot do they know about anything?"

Memory Flash: The Chagrin Falls Armoury, mid March, 1971

I'm at the home of Company G of the 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment of the Ohio National Guard. I've come to talk to them about joining up, because it seems to be the only viable alternative to being drafted into the regular Army – and Vietnam.

I've had my call-up papers and told to report for duty by the end of May. My Lady of Light at the draft-board office has done her best to help, I'm sure. But now it's up to me – or rather me and Anna. Do we move to Canada and start again? Do we quit and return to England? Do I sign up for the National Guard and spend seven years of training, two-week annual Guard camps, two-week or monthly meetings – and be ready for call-outs such as that at Kent State University last May?

Or do I just submit to the draft, do my duty as a non-American (yes, I know), resign myself to 'Nam and be back as a Veteran within two years? But what and where would that leave Anna? I wasn't a quitter, so the National Guard looked to be the only real alternative.

I find a recruiting sergeant who gives me some forms to fill out, and he indicates a likely job because they have vacancies: tank turret operator. That's one of the four-man crew inside an M60A1 tank. It didn't seem very pleasant. I hate close confinement.

I ask the sergeant where I should take my forms because the armoury seemed pretty quiet.

"Oh, they're not here," he said. "They're in Vietnam."

In mid April the Cleveland Press subtly reminded me where my work family is: with them, not the army.

"Transplanted Englishman keeps tabs on 16 suburbs" reads the headline on a little info/promo blurb that pops up in the paper every so often about individual reporters and their 'beats.'

"Considering the ground he covers it should surprise nobody that Peter Almond is a strong advocate of metropolitan government. Peter, who came to The Press from England about 16 months ago, covers 16 eastern communities for our suburbs department and even his little old Mustang sometimes rebels at the expense of real estate it must traverse.

"However, Almond's reasons for consolidation transcend any selfish desire for personal comfort and convenience. A practical young man, he frankly admits his thoughts on metro government are far from original. Still, it is refreshing to hear this recent transplant digress on the ramifications and awkwardness of an unwieldy conglomeration of autonomous municipalities.

"Metro government works well in England," says Peter in his pleasant accent (grrr-ed). "It just doesn't make sense to me that intelligent, reasonable people can't get together and work out a system of government that would be so beneficial to so many."

"Getting down to specifics, Almond's foremost priorities would be safety forces and transit. He cannot comprehend why each suburb and township must support individual police and fire departments, nor why the communities could not be linked to the central city by an efficient yet moderately-priced transportation network.

"Peter also is finding his early enchantment with the City of Cleveland becoming tarnished. He deplores its divisiveness and he finds it difficult to understand the reticence of many of the immigrants to learn the English language.

"I can understand why they would want to retain their native customs in food, culture etc," he says, "but I should think that one who adopts America would be eager to converse in its tongue."

Oh, wot wisdom from a 25-year-old immigrant! Almond for president!

Two days later: The draft board has sent me a letter: Oh Gawd, what now?

It says I'm 4F. 4F! NOT REQUIRED!! 4F!!! I'm no longer wanted for the army, navy, air force, marines, street cleaning, sausage making, window-washing, you name it!

They don't give a reason, but I hear on the grapevine that it is probably a hardship call. Hardship for Anna, certainly: spouse left without family support, particularly as she has missed two periods and her gynaecologist has written a letter (not sure to where) saying she appears to be pregnant. (Actually, it was a false pregnancy, and it would not be the last of a series of reproductive problems we would have).

It could be because I was now 25, possibly in the 'too old' bracket. Or that the military was starting to cut back a little on Vietnam deployments.

I never did find out. But when Anna's brother Rob invited us to visit him and girlfriend at his rented house in the Bahamas, we jumped at the chance. Late April in Nassau. Perfect! Snorkelling in beautiful clear waters, Margheritas by the pool. What's not to like for a few days?

As for Cleveland's problems? Well, I see I have a certificate from Cleveland State University, dated March 29, 1971, that says I have completed the City of Cleveland's Institute of Urban Studies and Community Relations Board's **First seminar on urban problems for mass media personnel.** So there. (I don't remember it).

AND I have a copy of a letter dated Mar 1 '71 from one professor to another at Ohio University that accords me 20 hours' college credit for my school work on fiction, poetry, drama and Shakespeare. PLUS, in the words of one Prof Lawrence Bartlett, that I write 'exceptionally well' and that my work 'manifests a sensitive and mature approach to literature.'

So there, again! Like the Scarecrow with his Diploma in the Wizard of Oz, I am now a Doctor of Thinkology. I have a brain!

Memory Flash: *Cleveland Public Library, May 24, 1971*

Sometimes The Press clippings library outdoes itself. Here's one I have absolutely no memory of:

"Press suburbs reporter Peter Almond will give a slide talk on Wales, France, Germany and

Austria to the Live Long and Like It Club tomorrow at 1.30pm in the Main Library. The program is free and open to the public."

It includes a mugshot of me and a date stamp of May 24, 71.

?????? Not a clue. But it sure beats crawling through a Vietnamese jungle!

That summer of '71 seemed to be full of action and passion around the world. India and Pakistan fought battles across their borders; A huge and long postal strike in inflation-hit Britain was the start of ever-worse labor strikes that would cripple the country two years later. And my family's money went decimal: no more pounds, shillings and pence.

At least the Rolling Stones released their next hit, Brown Sugar. John Lennon, fresh from the disbanded Beatles, sang 'Imagine', David Bowie released 'Life on Mars.' Don McLean recorded 'American Pie,' and kept people puzzled for the next 50 years (Was it, or was it not, about the death of Buddy Holly in 1959, marking the end of an 'innocent era of the fifties?') McLean himself says there is much more after that. His original 16-page manuscript of notes about the lyrics were sold to an anonymous bidder for $1.2 million in 2015.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iX_TFkut1PM

"February made me shiver, with every paper I'd deliver. Bad news on the doorstep, I couldn't take one more step."

Even paper boys have a heart.

We got away as much as we could: to Niagara Falls, Toronto, and down to Cincinnati and Wright Air Base and its

US Air Force museum, followed by a domestic air show as the National Air Races returned to Burke Lakefront airport to mark the 175th anniversary of the founding of Cleveland.

And friends Jim and Marcy introduced us to the Mohican River at Walhonding, central Ohio. It became a special place to us: a small campsite on the banks of the secluded Mohican River, a tributary of the Walhonding river which led ultimately to the Mississippi. There we would set up our tents and stake out our campfires, then arise in the morning to the sound of a pickup truck towing a rattling canoe trailer. With packed lunches our hosts would take us 10, 15 or even 20 miles upstream to a quiet spot and a slow, peaceful paddle downstream back to our campsites. We will never forget the silence, broken only by a splash of a jumping fish or the call of a Hawk or Red Cardinal, the state bird of Ohio.

And not far away the rolling, quiet roads of central Ohio, much of it occupied by the devout Amish, with their horses and buggies. The small town of nearby Sugarcreek hosts the 'world's biggest cuckoo clock shop,' a tourist center relatively few Clevelanders appeared to know anything about.

But across America the news was still Vietnam, Vietnam, Vietnam. In April half a million people packed the streets of Washington DC to protest the war. Another 700 Vietnam veterans threw their medals onto the steps of the Capitol. While President Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger were trying to work up 'Peace diplomacy' Daniel Ellsberg was leaking the Pentagon Papers to the New York Times. The secret Papers revealed a history of American involvement in Vietnam that was filled with the lies and misinformation the government told over many years. Wounded veteran John Kerry told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be the first president to lose a war. How do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

Sixty per cent of Americans told opinion pollsters they were against the Vietnam War; Australia and New Zealand announced they were pulling their troops out of Vietnam;

But in September my mother came to visit.

Memory Flash*: Times Square, New York, September, 1971*

We're in our soft-top Mustang. Anna is by my side, Mum is in the back with her suitcase. (There isn't room for it in the trunk). We've driven the Finger Lakes route to Buffalo and Boston. Now we're coming into New York City and deciding we can't just go straight through to our overnight stop at Atlantic City, we'll stop for half an hour and look around Times Square.

Hold on. This isn't Podunk. This is the HEART of the Big Apple. I wouldn't dream of looking for a parking space at Piccadilly Circus in London, would I? But where, for half an hour? Around and around we go, down side streets, up main streets, every parking garage and vacant space full.

And then I spot a car moving out next to a restaurant. No obvious restrictions. I go for it. We

alight, Mum pats her suitcase and I get a nice, assertive smile from the uniformed door guard of the restaurant. Yes, he says, you'll be Ok for half an hour. I'll keep my eye on it. We do our tourist stuff, agog at the sights and sounds of Times Square, cameras flashing, video whirring. Then back to our car 30 minutes later.

But….. Is this our car? A green soft top Mustang yes, but there is a large rip in the canvas top next to the nearside window…. And Mom's suitcase is no longer there. Gone. Stolen. All the clothes for her holiday, much of it hand made. This is her first big foreign holiday, and it has taken so much effort just to get her here: the first jumbo jet may have crossed the Atlantic, but it is much too expensive for the average tourist. My mother had to be a member of the Britons in America Club for almost a year in order to join with other members to charter a plane for them all.

Broad daylight, on a busy street, in the heart of bustling New York City. And nobody sees a thing? Not the shop workers next door, the newspaper seller, and especially not the restaurant concierge, who says he has not moved from his spot, barely ten feet from the car. Not a thing. We call the police. That takes about 45 minutes for a car to arrive. I say we haven't touched anything, officer, and suggest they might find some fingerprints. I tell them my mother has come all the way from England to see their city.

Neither officer steps out of their car. One simply hands me a piece of paper with a case number on it. 'Call your insurance company. Give 'em that," he says, without a smile.

Naïve. Stupid. Careless. What a fool I am. As we drive away from New York it starts to rain and I have to find a store to buy duct tape for the torn roof. We are all silent, miserable. The rain is misting the windshield, or I have something in my eyes. We don't go to Atlantic City. We head home to Cleveland.

But one tune keeps running through my head, over and over: the haunting theme from Midnight Cowboy, last year's Oscar-winning hit movie, starring Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGORPUzLxtU

Directed by the British director John Schlesinger (who made the award winning British 'kitchen sink' films A Kind of Loving and Billy Liar in the early 60s), Midnight Cowboy is now recognized as a major classic of US social commentary. (I'd like to think I was more Joe Buck than Ratso Rizzo).

Sad to say, but on Sept 27, a few days after Ma went home, we traded in the old Mustang for a spanking new Chevy Camaro: silver gray in color, two doors and two sporty seats at the front and a bench seat for short legs at the back. I sent a photo of it together with Anna and me to my Uncle Bill in Devon. "Cor blimey!" he responded on a tape recording a couple of weeks later. "Bit SMALL isn't it? You ought to have got a bigger one!" Where he lives, of course, country roads are only six feet wide.

And sad at losing the Mustang because if we had kept it for the next 50 years and brought it back with us to Blighty it might now be worth $100,000, or £80,000. Ho hum….

At least with the Camaro we lived up to Charlie Miller's challenge: "See the USA in a C. Miller Chevrolet."

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Charlie (already old in 1971) was the owner of a Chevrolet dealership in the township of Willoughby, east of

Cleveland, but next to the I-271 and I-7I freeways where all good car sales are made. It was a hammed-up, low-class schlock commercial, but perfect for low-class, rebellious young Clevelanders, and effective because it played over and over on TV. You couldn't escape it. And being rebellious I decided not to buy my Camaro at Miller's place, but somewhere else.

Back at the suburbs desk in the Cleveland Press I see I was still travelling a lot – in Cuyahoga County: "State rules would limit **Beachwood** school," says one headline about planned changes in the number of minutes taught in classrooms. "Post Office rezoning is rejected' says another about the **South Euclid** Plan Commission rejecting a proposal to rezone land on South Green Rd for a new $400,00 post office. Another about new Community Aid Officers, in police-type uniform, helping police at scenes of traffic accidents and civil affairs that do not require training in criminal matters.

And another with the headline 'A feline felony?' about Ginger the cat, who has prompted a claim for damages of $57.84 after attacking her next door neighbor's car in **Cleveland Heights**. She does that, says Mrs Rose Perla, because neighbors the Littmans allow Ginger to run around freely and then, when she can't get back into the house again Ginger attacks the neighbor's Pontiac. And now it has scratches on it.

The lawyer for the Littmans, Philip Kurtz, says: **"It shows what's wrong with this country today when people sue each other for such stupid little things."**

By November 1971 the 101st Airborne Division had withdrawn from Vietnam, leaving only 6,000 combat troops to offer support to the increasingly-ineffective South Vietnamese Army. Just as well I didn't accept my call-up that previous May: American air power would be running the show from now on, but as a draftee soldier I would probably have been twiddling my thumbs in Nome, Alaska.

That Christmas Eve Anna and I followed Jim and Marcy to Marcy's parents home in Ashtabula. We enjoyed a fabulous seven-course seafood dinner, made the Italian way with seven different fishes, and left them with many thanks as they made their way to their own church midnight Christmas Mass.

Chapter 4. Cleveland, 1972

1972 was a big year for news, not least because on Oct 16 Cleveland Mayor Ralph J. Perk set his hair alight with a blowtorch at a metals convention in the city, and in December his wife turned down an invitation from First Lady Pat Nixon to attend a White House dinner ‘because it was her bowling night.’ Both items made international news.

No, really, the main news was at national and international level: the start of Watergate. Nixon going to China, coining a phrase that came to mean ‘Anything can happen in politics’ (which it did later that year when he was re-elected). The last US ground troops left Vietnam although Hanoi and Haiphong continued to be bombed; and eleven Israeli athletes were killed by Arab gunmen at the Munich Olympics, the first major international act of terrorism against a purely civilian target.

Back home in Britain there was Bloody Sunday and Bloody Friday in the war with the IRA, and national strikes that prompted a national state of emergency. Unemployment reached over a million for the first time since the 1930s. It was not the sort of place we wanted to go back to even though I had told my dear, sainted mother two years earlier: ‘We’ll be back in two years!”

But we’ve sort of settled in. They say the basic reason for three-year assignments in western cultures is that the first year tends to be new and exciting, the second year brings out more cranky “Why do they do it this way?” questions, and the third year you, your family and your boss decide if you’re going to stay or move on.

We are definitely staying.

Anna and I are loving it here. Its early March, 1972, and we’ve just come back from a week’s vacation to Montreal, Toronto, Niagara and upper New York State, where we’ve been snowmobiling and learning to ski cross country.

Memory Flash: ***State College, Pennsylvania, late March, 1972***

"We only came down for the beer! We only came down for the beerrr!"

The old rugby song blasts out as we, the Cleveland Blues Rugby Club, alight from the hired bus at this huge university campus in central Pennsylvania (student pop. 100,000), 233 miles along the Pennsylvania Turnpike from Cleveland.

It's my second game with this club and my first visit to an American college where the students automatically expect me to either be a star English player who can show them some dazzling rugby moves, or be the last word on the game's rules.

The club wanted me to be their referee when I first arrived for practice in Cleveland Heights last year. But I'm so newly-returned to rugby union (last played at school eight years previously) that I'm not up to speed with rules. And not good enough either for the A team; just the B, thank you, along with all the fat, slow and ignorant buggers huffing and puffing up and down the field for 80 minutes. (I've been distance running for a while now, but I'm neither fast nor strong, so I'm not complaining).

These State College guys, however, are very fit and rarin' to go on their home field. Their enthusiasm for the game is quite remarkable, if tempered with the quaint notion that rugby is 'quite like' American football, in which they have failed to make the first, second or third college teams.

"Quite like" to the point of psychologically needing a huddle in which Quarterback codes can be called. But where to call codes in rugby, which is a free-flowing game of passing a slightly-larger oval ball sideways or backwards? Umm… er. Not the scrum, where eight players bend down and push against an opposite eight as the ball comes into the hookers in the middle ("Hookers! Yeah! Told you this is a great game!" say the 'experienced' student players to the inexperienced).

Personally, I prefer lock – No. 8, where I'm last into the scrum and first out, hopefully controlling the ball before releasing it to the backs.

The lineout for codes? Where else? As the forwards line up next to each facing the sideline, the calls can be clearly heard: "THREE! FIFTEEN! ORANGE! NINETY-FOUR!" I wait to hear 'Hut! Hut! Hut!' but in vain.

It's in those wonderful showers and in the bar afterwards where I make my unique contribution to the event: Swing Low. This is an old gospel tune, put to good (if anarchic and ultimately blasphemous) rugby use primarily at England national matches. "Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home." We all sing the first verse, straight, as it should be. Then it is repeated, this time with some very rude hand and arm movements matched to the words. The giggles turn to laughter as the singers try it for a second time.

Then comes the finale: the silent version: moving hands and arms to the tune in silence…… and collapsing to the floor in excruciating laughter.

It helps to be almost four sheets to the wind to survive this. (I'll let this Britishism speak for itself).

Thankfully, we have Peter Stroh, Cleveland son of one of America's great brewers – and a

rugger – for ensuring we have enough beer to get us home: tired, knocked about, but safe. I forget who won the game. (Some character on The Press staff once posted a photo of me in a rugby scrum, inviting cutlines. One of the sub-editors submitted: "Whose nuts? Crushed Almonds)."

The song that always reminds me of Cleveland rugby: Maggie May, by Rod Stewart, (released October 1971)

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbI_awR4CKE

April, 1972: I've had a promotion. I am now the Press' schools writer, replacing Marge Schuster, who has moved into management.

I'm not sure why they picked me, out of all these excellent reporters. I'm a foreigner who hasn't had A MINUTE of education in ANY American school. My work desk is now next to that of Bud Weidenthal, colleges writer, who is a veteran of D-Day (18 months before I was born) and has been higher education writer at The Press since 1958, when he helped promote and create Cuyahoga Community College. A native Clevelander, Bud is considered the 'dean' of the national higher education writers.

So maybe I'm sort-of an opposite, an outsider looking in to what is a massive era of change for one of the biggest school districts in the country, with almost 150,000 students..

It may have helped that I already had experience of suburban schools and school boards. In January I had an exclusive story about the new Cleveland Heights-University Heights school superintendent as the page lead in the Suburbs section. It was the kind of intimate school leadership story the paper liked: a superintendent who applied for a higher-paying schools job in Florida less than two months after starting in Cleveland Heights. (It

was an embarrassing left-over from his job-hunting two years earlier. Superintendent David Moberly withdrew his Florida application and stayed at Cleveland Heights).

Yet it was the city's Catholic schools which gave me my first front page splash, on April 20: "CATHOLIC SCHOOLS HEAD THREATENS FUNDS FIGHT," said the headline, to the right of a story headlined: "Bombers Cloud Sky at An Loc," where a Scripps -Howard writer was flying in a B-52 dropping bombs on North Vietnamese attacking South Vietnam. To the right of that was one about Vietnam protesters being arrested at an airbase near Dayton, Ohio.

Monsignor William Novicky, superintendent of Cleveland Catholic schools, said he would resort to civil disobedience if a federal court ruling banning state funding to non-public schools went ahead. "I will not stand idly by and witness the demise of Catholic schools through the attacks of insensitive courts," he said at a mass at St John's Cathedral, raising the possibility of marches on Washington and Columbus, withholding taxes, sit-ins at the federal court building.

Doom and gloom would go on like this for the next few years. It wasn't the education of children I thought I would be writing about. It seemed I was walking into a world of failing school systems, lack of money, strikes and courtrooms. **And violence.**

The only light relief that April day was a picture of First Lady Pat Nixon looking at Ling Ling and Ting Hung, giant pandas newly-arrived at Washington's national zoo, a gift from China.

The superintendent of Cleveland's public schools was one Paul W. Briggs, or DOCTOR Paul Briggs as it quickly transpired he expected to be called. In that case, I told him in reply, I expect him to call me MISTER Almond. He had been head of the suburban Parma school system before being hired to lead the city's schools in 1964 and had done a lot to steer government, state and local funding to rebuild and expand Cleveland's deteriorating schools. From 1964 to 1978 he oversaw the construction of some 40 new or replacement schools across the city with the help of a $220 million public bond issue, added more than 100 libraries to elementary schools, was the first in the US to provide federally- funded breakfasts for poor children, opened vocational schools to minorities, and opened schools for the handicapped.

But I didn't get along with him very well, despite his English name. He was tight-lipped and not very communicative with the media, or me anyway, even when I smiled nicely at him.

Nevertheless, he was cordial enough at the start. I wasn't Marge Schuster and perhaps did my job a little differently, but there wasn't time to get the measure of Cleveland schools before the long summer vacation started.

I spent a fair bit of that August driving around Cuyahoga County as the Press' sometime 'Bike Reporter' filling almost-full pages about people who biked to work, new bike trails and especially about keeping kids (and adults) safe on the roads. By Aug 1 there had been 110 bike accidents in Cleveland, 39 in July alone, five of them serious. In Euclid bike accidents were up 20%; in Rocky River accidents doubled. It was the same story everywhere.

Photographer Herman Seid and I therefore got a lot of space in the middle of the paper. In one big story headlined: "**Safety is neglected, bike accidents rise**," Herm and I used Robert Bush, ten-year-old son of a member of

Cleveland's Police Acccident investigation Unit, to demonstrate the five most common causes of accidents, each of which Herm photographed. First on the list of common causes was dashing into the road between parked cars without looking for approaching traffic.

Second on the list was: "RIDING TOO CLOSE TO THE CURB, the pedals striking the curb, causing the rider to lose his balance and fall into the path of an approaching vehicle."

Writing this caused me a severe flashback to when I was about the same age as young Robert. I was 11 and walking to school across a busy rail bridge in Cambridge, England when another child cycling on the road next to me hit the curb with his bike pedal and wobbled. He put his other foot down just as a double-decker bus was slowly passing. The driver saw him fractionally in time and jammed on his brakes. But the front wheel of the bus not only went over the boy's foot but stopped ON it.

I can still clearly remember the screaming and shouting to the driver: "Go forward! Go forward!" from the gathering witnesses. But the driver was paralyzed by shock and couldn't move. It seemed like minutes (but probably only seconds) before he did drive forward and released the poor boy's foot as adults rushed to his aid. I did see the boy several months later, walking around on crutches, and heard he should recover well enough.

I'm told some Cleveland area schools saved my Press specials about bike safety, but I'm not sure what impact they had. They ran in the paper in the summer vacation when schools were out, so it was mostly the grown-ups who saw them. And how many parents were bike safety conscious when THEY were growing up – in the 1950s?

Memory Flash: ***Cleveland, September, 1972***

I'm in a VIP mini-bus, along with Superintendent Briggs and the entire Cleveland School Board. We're spending much of the afternoon on this hot day visiting several newly-built schools and other educational facilities before they open for students.

I am being glowered at by several board members. At first I thought it was just because I am a reporter and they were not used to having reporters watch their every move. This bus trip was a post-vacation reunion of sorts for them, a light-hearted start to the new school year.

And then somebody snidely asks if I've "paid for my bus ticket." I laugh, but he does not. Neither do the others. I'm apparently not wanted on this bus trip, even though I was invited by Dr Briggs.

Then I remember: "SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS TRAVEL FIRST CLASS," the headline on my story in the Press two weeks earlier. My lede said: 'Less than a month after approving a 'cut to the bone' budget, four members of the Cleveland School Board were winging their way to San Francisco – first class at public expense.

"Board president Arnold Pinkney not only flew first class but stayed in a $45-a-night studio-

room ($240 in 2022 prices) overlooking the bay at the San Francisco Hilton Hotel. His room was one of the hotel's best.“

Etc etc. I had worked through the board and top officials' travel records, describing the expenses of all, including Supt Briggs. Over the past year he had been reimbursed a total of $2,535 in visits to Washington DC, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland Ore, Atlantic City, Chicago, Fort Worth, Philadelphia, St Louis and Minneapolis.

The Press' lead editorial two days later blasted the board for being profligate with their own expenses at the same time as ordering teachers and school supervisors to pay their own expenses if they wanted to attend professional meetings out of town.

“Cleveland taxpayers should expect their public officials to have smaller appetites. And simpler tastes in hotel rooms and airplane accommodations,” said the editorial.

In the bus that hot afternoon I don't think anybody paid much attention to the new school facilities they had come to see. I certainly didn't. I was too busy defending myself from attack after attack about all the work the School Board puts in, and their need to see and talk to people around the country who are having as hard a time as they are. Briggs sat there quietly, taking it all in with a quiet smirk on his face.

And spoke not a word.

At home on Lakeshore Blvd we at least had a TV escape moment, a weekly situational comedy that would keep us going for the next ten years: **MASH**, perhaps the most popular TV show in US history. Its first episode was released by CBS at 8pm, Sept 17, on a Sunday right after All in the Family.

The Mobile Army Surgical Hospital series was not the same as the movie of the same name two years earlier, but in my opinion, much better. It was bitter-sweet, a parade of quick-fire cynical gags, unmilitary doctors and nurses, a cast of appealing characters and a script that defied time and place. Nobody minded that it was set 20 years earlier in Korea because everyone knew it was really about Vietnam. At key moments in its ten-year run, when much-loved characters died, millions of Americans cried.

It is still regularly seen in reruns around the world.

Memory flash: *A tune: Suicide is Painless*

The theme tune from MASH is a permanent key to the whole of our time in Cleveland. At least as an instrumental number. The lyrics may not be as well-known. The story is that Robert Altman, director of MASH the movie, wrote the song but struggled over the lyrics. He wanted something silly because MASH was black humor. Nothing he wrote seemed right in his 45-year-old brain.

So he asked his 14-year-old son, Michael, to have a go. Mike is much later quoted as saying he wrote it in five minutes while sitting on the toilet. His father, Robert, made $70,000 from it. Mike, the son, made over $1 million as co-writer.

Through early morning fog I see
Visions of the things to be
The pains that are withheld for me
I realize and I can see

That suicide is painless
It brings on many changes
And I can take or leave it if I please.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIGYLBVjYZA

A word here, too, for a movie released at the same time: ***The Godfather***, one of the best films ever made, IMHO, particularly as the first of a not-so-fictional series of an underground Italian-American culture I knew nothing about. But would, later.

Anna, by the way, had REAL gunshot wounds to take care of at Euclid General Hospital. She was one of four or five nurses who attended a Cleveland police officer who had been shot in the abdomen four times. He suffered grievously for a long time – as did his family and the nurses who cared for him. I know it was difficult for Anna. The officer was at Euclid General, including rehab, for almost a year.

1972 was a bad year for crime in Cleveland generally – and that included its schools, to the point that they were following some suburban systems in installing sound detection devices inside school buildings when they

were closed at night, weekends and vacations. I spent some time with Sonitrol of Cleveland, Inc, a company that installed these systems, and learned it was a good news story, if a security system can really be called that.

“Cleveland school officials are particularly happy with it,” said Nov 20’s story. “For, according to a national survey, Cleveland schools in 1971 had one of the worst records in vandalism, larceny and arson of all the nation’s big cities. Of some 60 arrests made for these offences so far this year 50 are due to Sonitrol monitoring.”

Once the Sonitrol system is switched on, it seemed, any sound in the school is picked up by monitors installed in the building’s walls. Sitting at a remote-control panel an on-duty monitor could pick up the sound of breaking glass, the voices of intruders, squeaking of a door, or even its quiet unlocking. I notice I didn’t ask if the system picked up the sound or scurrying rats, but was told it did pick up a burst water main.

“In one instance three men had gone to the fourth floor of a building and removed three business machines which had been chained to the floor,” said Herman Imel of Sonitrol. “The monitor heard the bolts being removed and called police. They caught all three as they were moving to the fire escape.

“We know some thieves are aware of the system. They try to deceive it by taking off their shoes. But it doesn’t work. We’ve found ten pairs of shoes left at schools this last year.”

In hindsight I should have asked tougher questions about the cost effectiveness of this system, because Cleveland’s public schools were in increasing financial trouble.

Hold on! What’s this story in my files? An actual GOOD story about education in Cleveland? Yes, Page One, Sept 4, 1972: **“City’s third-graders among best in US in reading,”** says the headline. “For perhaps the first time third-graders in Cleveland elementary schools can claim they are generally better at reading than their colleagues across the nation.

“Thanks largely to a concentrated drive to improve reading ability started three years ago Cleveland’s third graders have done considerably better than third graders last year.……The results show that once again there are links between poor reading results, poverty and families moving around. But not nearly as much as might be expected.”

REALLY? Do our readers not already know this?

Memory Flash, *Ohio Turnpike, Friday Dec 15, 1972*

It’s nearly 8pm and I am still only just past Toledo on Interstate 90, heading east back to Cleveland. The snow is coming down heavier and it’s getting harder to see through the slowing windshield wipers. I can see cars and a few trucks are off the road in both directions. Past Sandusky fifty, sixty cars and trucks are stopped, some half buried in steep banks of drifting snow.

There are no vehicles moving on the freeway at all. Just me. No cops, No breakdown trucks. It’s

scary. The ramps to the truck stops are blocked with snow. I have no communications and no idea when I'll get home.

This is my second business trip to Michigan for the Press. The first was in balmy September to Pontiac, where busing for racial desegregation had already started – to great opposition – but is where its Oakland schools were an economic model for Cleveland. This time I've driven the 180 miles to Detroit in order to get a sense of how the city school system is handling a much more severe financial crisis. A few days earlier it had filed suit in federal court asking to operate its schools for only 117 days this school year, instead of the usual 180, or to force the state of Michigan to supply the money to keep it going.

The state is demanding a balanced budget, and won't pay. The fear is that as goes Detroit so will Cleveland. The big difference is that Detroit taxpayers have consistently turned down additional tax levies to pay for schools whereas Cleveland voters have stumped up the money. But Cleveland now has a 'cut-to-the-bone' budget, borrowing $8.5 million last year and another $5 million just this month.

I've already had a chat with Briggs about this, and he says the situation is different in Cleveland. "We've come up with programs that prove to the voters the schools are doing a good, efficient job. I don't think they have in Detroit. When we've really needed more money, either levies or bond issues, people have supported them here."

Don't get comfortable, Dr Briggs. If Detroit does get the state to pay up it would set a far-reaching precedent for the funding of all schools across the country. As he will soon find out, big changes are a-coming.

Meantime, I need to get out of this snowy nightmare. I've counted no fewer than 120 abandoned vehicles on the turnpike, and reach home about 11.30pm. It's been a total of 13 hours driving since this morning to discover this was the snowiest day of 1972. Wish I'd checked the forecast before I started out.

Even so, why was I the only vehicle on the road coming back? Because state troopers had closed I-90 at ALL entrances between Toledo and west Cleveland – AFTER I was already on it!

The year ended and I was suddenly an expert on British and American schools. At least one might think that according to what I was quoted in a Press ad as saying in a **"Best Education writers are in this newspaper"** full page promotion page for Bud Weidenthal and me.

"Ever since I first walked into an American school I've been asking why they do this or why they do that?" I am quoted as saying. "I've talked to Americans who just can't contemplate change because they have never known any other way."

"Almond has a lot of good things to say about American schools, from the good sports programs to the many new buildings to the variety of multi-media facilities. He says he is impressed with the ways American students are involved with community affairs and how they are led towards understanding what life is all about.

"It's done in more depth than at British schools (I say). But while American schools are better at producing

citizens I'm not particularly impressed with the quality of education at the academic level." Almond thinks British schools tend to be too disciplined and that what's needed is the right combination of British and American schools. "Maybe they're both headed in that direction."

Maybe it's time for ME to get out of town.

Anna and I do just that. We fly back to England for Christmas and New Year with our families for the first time in three years.

Chapter 5. Cleveland, 1973

Two weeks back from strike-torn Britain and it seems I've never been away. Cleveland's schools are on strike. Surprise! Catholic schools last year, public ones this. Under main headline: "KISSINGER WILL GO TO HANOI" on January 31, 1973, is:

"STRIKE SHUTS MOST SCHOOLS'

By Peter Almond

"A strike by 2500 non-teaching employees has virtually shut down the entire Cleveland school system in defiance of a no-strike order by the court.

"Most, if not all the 140,000 children were barred from entering the 190 school buildings. In many instances when they did enter they sat in cold classrooms or auditoriums for a while and then were sent home.

"Many teachers refused to cross picket lines in the first strike in the Cleveland schools' history". etc

Ah, but was this actually a strike? The five unions involved said they were withholding their labor, and anyway a judge who had issued a restraining order banning a strike had limited pickets outside the schools to just two people. A lot of teachers did sign in to prove they were ready to work – and then went home.

The legalities reached a point that Common Pleas Court Judge David Matia asked WKYC TV to send him news film of three school custodians overheard to say they would strike despite his anti-strike injunction. Press reporter Jim Marino wrote that none of the union representatives in the courtroom could identify the custodians, and since neither the school board nor anyone else had officially told him there actually was a strike there was nothing he could do.

Politics, of course. This is a heavily-unionized town, and judges are elected. So, if five powerful unions that cover schools say they have nothing to do with a strike, well……

There IS no money for higher wages, says Superintendent Briggs. And certainly no money – no local or state money – for what was about to land on Cleveland's schools: desegregation, which would cause massive change by the end of the decade.

The first shot in what would become a sociological, economic and educational war in Cleveland over the next decade was fired by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP**)** on **Feb 8, 1973**. In a letter to the school board it requested the board come up with a voluntary plan to desegregate the city's public schools immediately, or at least over the next few months – or else it would file a case in federal court.

"1973 is going to be the year of the schools," said the Rev James Stallings, Cleveland director of the NAACP, having just heard the federal court in Dayton, Ohio, was ordering the school board there to come up with a desegregation plan within 60 days.

Stallings told me that 85 of Cleveland's 190 schools were 90 -100% black, and 72 schools were 90% white, or at least non-black. "It disturbs us that there seems to be no commitment from the school board to do something about it," he said. "I keep hearing people say "it can't be done," but a negative attitude will solve no problems."

Actually, there had been a mini-plan eight years earlier – in 1964 when Briggs became superintendent. Massive overcrowding of black schools in the Glenville area had led to black students being bused to mostly-white Collinwood schools nearby. But there was so much resentment from the white students and parents that three new schools were quickly built in Glenville, thus re-segregating it. In trying to stop that construction one white protester, the Rev Bruce Klunder, tragically fell under the tracks of a bulldozer at Stephen E. Howe elementary school and was killed.

But the 'can't be done' lobby did have a point. Cleveland's geography alone suggested a significant reason: the city is spread out for some 20 miles along the coast of Lake Erie, mostly black on the east side of the Cuyahoga River and mostly white on the west side. Over the next four or five years I would test out for myself what it would be like to be bused from one side to the other: mostly an hour or more each way, along routes heavy with traffic, and with after-school events curtailed by lack of time and parents unable to become heavily involved.

The fact was that 'white flight' was under way as smaller families, rising incomes, new freeways and new homes made the suburbs more attractive propositions to those who could afford to move. Cleveland school enrolment that fall was down 5,380 from 141,000 a year earlier. Most of those moving were white, leaving inner city schools more black.

The only real way to desegregate would be to involve all of the city's suburban school districts, but that would have to be voluntary, since the NAACP wasn't planning- or could not afford – to file court cases against 26 school districts in just one county in the US. And no school district in Cuyahoga County was volunteering.

Briggs knew this, but he tried to push the concept of at least sharing specialist schools anyway, such as the new Aviation High School at Burke Lakefront airport, which taught aviation industry skills, or the Woodbine ship nearby which involved naval and engineer learning. There were also a number of metropolitan athletic contests, a school for the hearing impaired etc. All of them could accommodate suburban schools. In November that year he addressed 38 school superintendents from around the country, hosted in Cleveland by two suburban school superintendents.

But to no avail. By the end of the year the Cleveland School Board did not have a plan to desegregate its schools. The new year would move all the desegregation action into federal court.

Memory flash: *Cleveland Playhouse, Spring 1973*

Anna and I have come to this theatre to see Pete and Dud, two of our favorite English comedians. It's a bit heavy at work so it's a real treat to escape for a couple of hours with Peter Cook and Dudley Moore making ridiculous fun of themselves and anyone else who might be a bit pompous or have 'attitudes' about 'stuff.' Especially as done with silly English voices.

There's Tarzan, of course: "Mr Spiggot. You are auditioning, are you not, for the part of Tarzan, a role that is traditionally associated with a two-legged man. And yet I couldn't help notice, Mr Spiggot, that you are a one-legged person – a uni-dexter.

"Your right leg, I like. I like your right leg. It's a lovely leg for the role. I've got nothing against your right leg. The trouble is, Mr Spiggot, neither have you."

And more of the same. Until the Shepherds in the Fields sketch.

Dud plunks himself down next to Pete, both wearing biblical clothing. Dud asks Pete if he can interview him about the birth of Jesus, which he has witnessed as a shepherd abiding in the fields. "I have to say I can't abide these fields," complains Pete. He asks Dud for which paper he is working. "The Bethlehem Star' comes the obvious answer. To which Pete says: "Bethlehem Star? My wife and I take that. Don't think much of your racing correspondent. I had three shekels on that camel in the 3.30 at Galilee and its still bloody running!"

It's all done in modern, cor-blimey style, to which there is general merriment from this Cleveland audience…… Until the pair break away to banter about "Jimmy Christ," Jesus' "younger brother" who Pete has just made up, who did all the 'real' carpentry in the family business. There is an exclamation or two of "Jesus!" as an expression of surprise.

Now, Anna and I are used to that. Where we come from 'Jesus' and casual banter about His birth are not taken literally, or seriously. But we noticed people in the audience getting out of their seats and leaving.

Once again I am reminded of the deep-seated religiosity of a majority of Americans, which did not appear to change significantly until 2021, when polls showed that those declaring they have no religion had become the majority. The U.S. of A continues as the most religiously-declared nation in the western world.

Pete and Dud Shepherd's sketch:

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_RSSDnH0oc

IN THE MEANTIME, Almond, what about the actual education of actual kids? How are they doing, without all this talk of school desegregation?

The old East Tech high school (all black) on E55th Str was knocked down and a new building now replaced it; 2500 bricks were saved, cleaned up and individually sold with the school's Scarab symbol painted on them. The money would help buy two new buses for the athletes, of whom their most famous graduate was Jesse Owens, the black athlete who defied Hitler at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. He would be guest speaker at an upcoming major celebration of the school and its community.

Indeed, some in Cleveland appeared to be doing quite well academically. Third graders, for instance, were as good at reading as anybody else in the country, if not better, according to new national statistics.

And "Mark Ridley" was getting help with his perception problems.

Mark, (not his real name) was a nine-year-old at a Cleveland elementary school I met who was getting help with his visual/reading problems because he watched too much TV when he was very young. According to Dr Morton Schomer, a Maple Heights optometrist and consultant specialist in perceptual development, "Mark" is now unable to tell the difference between b's and d's and "saw" and "was."

"He is one of about 15% of all American school children who suffer what doctors and educators describe as

"learning disabilities," I wrote. "This broad category of children is expanding at an alarming rate and is one of the most important problems facing American educators today."

I don't now recall how much attention learning disabilities received from newspapers in those days, but I felt obliged by a sub editor to spell it out – or at least inform parents or teachers how to identify it in a youngster, and how it progresses. I didn't know then that the first U.S. report of childhood reading difficulties was published by a Cleveland ophthalmologist, Dr W. E. Bruner, in 1905. I did know that the federal government had got the message by 1969 and that Congress passed the first Children with Specific Learning Disabilities Act in 1970. By 1972 it came with money.

Memory flash: *Cleveland Public Library, May 1973*

My schools work also covers the Cleveland Public Library, so I'm here at the main library downtown to write a long caption to a photo of a newly-arrived collection of ancient Chinese vases. I won't name the photographer, but he's very experienced.

One vase in particular stands out in its striking colors, but it is not easy to photograph. I suggest moving it closer to the light by a window. The young library assistant is not so sure. She wants to wait for the curator. We wait. Five minutes, ten. No curator. Neither photographer nor I can wait any longer, we have other assignments. I assure her it won't be a problem, that we can help her move it. She and the photographer start to move the vase on a tray towards the light.

You've already guessed the rest. It took quite a bit of negotiating between the library and the Press as to whose insurance company would pay the thousands of dollars in compensation for the smashed vase. I do remember I was not a popular visitor to the Cleveland Public Library for quite a while. I also remember overcoming that, slightly, by agreeing to write every PR puff piece that was sent to us – for the next year anyway.

The schools beat in Cleveland, in fact, was throwing up ever more challenges for youngsters in an increasing era of uncertainty. Sex and drugs and rock and roll, for instance, were bothering more and more kids across the country.

"**Sex is acceptable to teens, study finds'"**said the headline on one of my stories on April 18. "Go to bed with a friend," quoted a bumper sticker from WNCR, a Cleveland rock radio station. "And many American teenagers are doing just that."

According to an in-depth study, the first massive survey to be made of adolescent sexual attitudes in this country, 52% of all 13 to 18-year-olds have had sexual intercourse: 59% of the boys and 45% of the girls," I quoted from the three-year 555-page academic study, whose author Professor Robert Sorensen had come to Cleveland, told me: "Sex, to teenagers, is a natural, acceptable fact generally between two persons who really like each other."

"It finds teenage sex is grounded in a set of good personal values contradictory to the ideas many adults have about teenagers being interested in sex for purely physical reasons." There's a lot more to the story, including the finding that 'there is no evidence that the availability of drugs leads to sex, or vice versa. "Drugs are sometimes used to enhance sex but are not the cause of it."

Which is interesting, because since Woodstock in the late 1960s drugs were a growing phenomenum with almost everyone under the age of 25, and I was hearing about it more and more in relation to schools. "Go to bed with a friend" perfectly fitted a bumper sticker for a rock radio station in the city that coined the phrase 'Rock n' Roll" (Alan Freed, WJW Radio, 1954).

Memory flash: ***Press newsroom. April 10, 1973***

I'm in a bit of shock, or confusion. In the letters page of the paper today are a couple of letters complaining about the publishing of a long story I had written a few days earlier. This was about a 15-year-old girl who had pulled a gun on a teacher at a well-respected, almost all-white high school in suburban Lyndhurst.

At the foot of the two letters is an EDITOR'S NOTE that suggests I have misquoted the girl as saying most students at the school had taken drugs of some kind.

I wasn't expecting this.

My almost full page story – with drawn sketch – was primarily an interview in front of the girl's mother and sister, during which she had conceded she had been taking drugs for more than two years.

"I wasn't on drugs that day. You can't say I was high on drugs," I quoted the girl at the start of the story. "But I think the drugs I'd been taking regularly over the months must have had an effect," (I called her 'Judy' in my piece, which wasn't her actual name).

"I just pulled the gun out and pointed it her (the teacher). It was on safety. I told her I wouldn't hurt her. Then we went out the door and out of school. I don't know why except to say it must have been the drugs. I couldn't think straight. My awareness wasn't good. I lost part of my memory."

I wrote this story at length primarily for the benefit of kids, parents and teachers who otherwise had only anecdotal information about drug taking by reading or seeing police or news reports of incidents involving drugs. When I talked to 'Judy' she was awaiting trial after being confronted by a teacher who saw what appeared to be a gun in her waistband. As she was about to be searched by the female teacher in a girls bathroom she pulled out the gun – a small tear-gas pistol type – marched her out of the building past hundreds of students in the hallways, and ran into nearby woods, where she was found by police.

"Judy" went into considerable detail, starting two years earlier with a friend revealing marijuana in the hallways of her junior high school, and how this got her on to sopers, tuonol,

reds, speed, almost all the soft drugs. But, she insisted, not hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Her parents fought at home, she said, and argued with her about her clothing and her declining school scores. They even argued in front of me. Mother and daughter agreed they had not had a family vacation for years. She had been arrested several times, even after having drug education at school. But it didn't help much, she said.

"The teachers were just reading from books. They should have had someone we could relate to, someone who really started like us and then told us what happened to them. That's real.'

I concluded my story with her telling me that maybe she could be that person, who could help other kids. "I don't want to go through this again. Maybe some of the kids can learn something from me."

"And maybe some parents" was my last line.

This story did not end there. In one line I quoted 'Judy' as saying "You know, all the kids are doing it. It's not just me. I'd say just about everyone in the sophomore class at Brush has at least experimented with drugs, and that includes (my emphasis) the straights (non-drug-takers)."

The girl's mother – and other students who wrote in – complained to the Press that her daughter should have been quoted as saying that most students 'except the straights' had tried a mild drug. By my 'misquoting' her, they alleged, I had damaged the reputation of more than 700 students and that of the school. Some students said they would boycott The Press. A teacher called up to cancel The Press, saying: "I'll never buy that Goddam paper again".

Heavy stuff for my editor. I no longer have my notebook of 50 years ago, so I can't prove what she actually said. Maybe I misheard. Maybe I read my shorthand back wrongly (after all, my shorthand exam result back in England five years previously was only 98% accuracy). But I do concede she may not have MEANT it.

A teenager saying "but EVERYBODY is doing it"? C'mon! I used to pull that stunt when I was a kid!

Too late. The Press ran the two objecting letters along with an Editor's note that said "Judy's" mother, who was present at the interview, should have been quoted as saying most students 'except' the straights have tried a mild drug.

Which dodged the bullet and hopefully mollified the readers. Even if it left me hung out to dry somewhat. But let that be a lesson:

Get a tape recorder!

Oct 6, 1973: Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days in Israel's calendar, when the whole country was shut down, when Syrian and Egyptian-led Arab forces launched a surprise attack, seized swathes of Israeli territory, caused major casualties and severely damaged the economies of the Middle East and the West .

In the eastern Cleveland suburb of Beachwood on that first day of the 4th Arab-Israeli war I watched the area's most prominent Jews gather together to express their outrage and to present a united front with Israel. I think U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger flew from Washington to address them.

I don't remember much of that meeting, except for a lot of crying and shouting – and that by the end of the evening the Jewish community of Cleveland had raised £6 million (about $36 million value in 2021) to pay for emergency supplies of American aid and military equipment. I remember it primarily because of the immense and passionate commitment of everyone there; A few of those raised hands I knew could well afford to give a hundred thousand dollars or more, but many – including two school teachers and a baker I knew personally – certainly could not.

Having twice stood in the Bergen-Belsen Nazi concentration camp in Germany where hundreds of thousands of Jews had been murdered in World War II I could well imagine the torment of the Cleveland area Jews at that time of crisis for Israel.

So I didn't really mind that my series on the upcoming Cleveland School Board elections started and stayed well inside The Press on its Community Page on Oct 15. Where else was it going to go when a major Middle East war was under way that would cost Americans billions in higher fuel prices, jobs lost and unsettled economies for years to come?

So humor me with this. Part 1: "Most Cleveland parents like their schools," says the full eight-column headline. Wow! At least it makes more cheerful reading than "Biggest tank battle of all time in Sinai" with about 1,000 Egyptian tanks losing out to Israeli tanks and planes.

OK, I was a little bit miffed: It had taken me weeks to put together scores of interviews and analysis of data. Couldn't those generals in Cairo and Damascus have given a little more attention to reading in The Press that over 57% of parents interviewed in Cleveland, Ohio, thought their children were getting a good education, that 15% thought their children's education was poor, or that 27% said the education was indifferent?

Would they not have learned that 28% of parents (11 of those questioned) thought that discipline was a major issue, that 25% thought it was math and/or reading programs, that 10% thought there should be better English programs, that 20% thought the teaching was inadequate but that only 10% cited race differences as a concern?

The second part of the series was more fun: **Do parents know who is on the Cleveland School Board?** Or that it is the city's biggest employer, with the largest number of staff, that spends the most of their tax dollars? And who, anyway, is this man Arnold Pinkney (School Board President).

"He's some kind of politician, but I don't know what," said the parents of a child at Charles H. Lake School.

"I don't know what Pinkney does," added a Mount Carmel Rd woman. "Who's the School Board president? I don't know. Used to be Briggs was on the board, but I don't think he's there now."

There were, in fact, four board members up for re-election on Nov 6: Arnold Pinkney, George Dobrea, Gerald Sweeney and William Nagy. Against 11 candidates, one of whom – John E. Gallagher Jr – was only 22, went to Catholic schools and had never been to a school board meeting. There was already a Gallagher on the board: Joseph Gallagher, a 20-year board veteran who wasn't up for re-election that year.

If your name was O'Flaherty, you looked and sounded like a Leprechaun but hardly spoke a word you would probably be elected to the Cleveland School Board.

“It helps explain why some board members feel they don’t need a lot of publicity about School Board affairs to get into power or to stay there,” I wrote. “Another reason why the public generally knows little about its board members is that, unlike City Council meetings, School Board meetings are usually very dull affairs, with no speeches or arguments between members.

“Almost all disagreements are worked out in private caucus meetings. The public is discouraged from addressing the board directly at meetings. The result is that the school system appears to run itself, with complaints and questions from the public absorbed by ‘the administration.’ Even questions raised by members of the public at a hearing on the annual budget recently were not answered directly, but in writing, several weeks later.”

As expected, my series went down like a lead balloon in the administrative offices of the Cleveland School Board. It particularly irked Briggs, who was forever trying to sweep “discomforts” under the carpet and continue the public perception that he was in full control. I didn’t know until years later, however, that he tried to get me fired, but was frustrated by Press management.

“Almond clashed often with Supt Paul Briggs, one of the city’s institutional powers then,” Managing Editor Bill Tanner would write in February, 1980, in support of my application for a journalism fellowship at Stanford University, California. “Briggs, in fact, asked us on more than one occasion to find another education writer. We were happy to pat Almond on the back and send him back out there”.

Fortunately, there was one candidate vying for election on the school board in 1973 who thought like me: that same outsider with no direct experience of Cleveland public schools, John Edward Gallagher Jr. And surprise, surprise, on Nov 6 he won a seat on the board**. Nothing would be quite the same on the Cleveland School Board again.**

On Dec 12, 1973, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People filed its case for desegregation against the State of Ohio and Cleveland School Board.

Chapter 6. Cleveland, 1974

An ominous start to the year: Monday, Jan 7, first day back to school – starting at 8am for high schools: in the dark, an hour before sunrise. Page One splash for me that day: DARKNESS BRINGS MOTHERS' REVOLT**,** as parents not only in Cleveland but across the country protested the introduction of Daylight Savings Time due to a fuel shortage. Some kids were leaving home at 7.30am, fully 90 minutes before sunrise. More often than not mothers dumped them into station wagons and drove them to school instead of them walking or riding their bikes in the dark.

A fuel saving, Mr President?

DST would continue, off and on, until late October 1975, brought on by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupling the price of oil to countries actively supporting Israel in its military victory in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Oil in the US went up from $3 a barrel to nearly $12.

Roughly at the same time the states and U.S. government cut the speed limit to 55mph to save fuel costs. This went on for years and years – and would drive me nuts. Poking along on any interminable, boring interstate for mile after boring mile at 55mph was an accident waiting to happen, in my book. Not even in traffic-congested Britain would anyone think of imposing a national 55mph speed limit in open country. And certainly not in Germany, which well into the 21st century had a maximum speed limit of 80mph – or none at all.

But at least the Cleveland schools desegregation case didn't happen this year. It wasn't ready. It took money and time for the NAACP to put its case together, and it didn't have much of either. Desegregation cases were popping up all over the country, and along with them new Supreme Court rulings that forced changes of direction even as depositions were being taken, witness statements made and legal avenues examined and re-examined.

I strummed my fingers on my desk and got on with dealing with one of the live, serious issues of a declining Cleveland school system – Guns in Schools.

There was last year's experience of 'Judy' the 15-year-old from suburban South Euclid who had pulled a gun on a teacher, but that was nothing compared to the daily occurrences in Cleveland schools. It took several weeks to collect and analyze the police and school reports, teachers' assessments, parents and students' comments and the sheer misery of the fear and threat of violence instead of learning.

The series started at the top of the front page on March 25,'74, with the headline **'Students toting guns with books,'** along with a drawing of a school locker, open to reveal a few books, a jacket – and a handgun. Students' lockers in those days were sometimes used to accommodate something more deadly than school books, although school authorities had no way of knowing just how many weapons there could be in them. Not since the U.S. Supreme Court declared wholesale locker searches illegal.

Why? "Students are arming themselves for protection, to threaten, to steal, and to impress," I wrote, listing a series of incidents that occurred since the start of the school year.

"Whatever we're doing, we're doing it wrong, because we're not gaining on the problem of weapons," said Lt George Trammell, head of the Cleveland police juvenile unit. School Board President Arnold Pinkney said: "Contrary to reports that crime is going down, it's not evident in the community. There has been continuous exposure of youngsters to guns."

The dismal truth was that gun-carrying was most prevalent on the city's black East Side.

There. I've said it. Written it. Is that why nobody, no newspaper, no TV or radio station, seems to have put such words into the public media in increasingly racial-sensitive Cleveland, Ohio? All the known statistics were accessible; all the hand-wringing education, police, politicians, union, parents, and kids were accessible. Blame the outsider for declaring the Emperor Has No Clothes.

I took a lunchtime walk along the hallways of John F. Kennedy High School on the East Side. It was crammed with noisy students, and in the darkened auditorium the smell of marijuana was unmistakable; a hard-to-see movie was being projected onto a makeshift screen on upended tables. The regular screen had been ripped. In the projection booth several older students smoked and played cards. Cigarette smoke hung thick and heavy in restrooms. A security guard waltzed and laughed along a hallway, each arm around a female student.

'School officials give an impression of constantly fighting a battle to keep the lid on the 2,700-member school." I noted.

One teacher at a junior high, who insisted on anonymity, explained a circumstance that could result in a child bringing a gun to school: Essentially, if two kids got into a fight, were surrounded by other kids, and threats were made – such as: "I'm going to kill you!' the pressure would be on that student to prove he (almost always he) had the potential of killing someone, even if he didn't mean it.

"I had something like that happen to me a couple of weeks ago," said Wenners Ballad Jr, a JFK senior. "I wouldn't let this guy into an after-school dance. We argued and he said: "I'm going to get my rod."

"Well, he didn't because he knew he wasn't just dealing with me. I'm with the athletes and we all kinda get together. But if I didn't have the support of my buddies I might have been in trouble."

Arnold Pinkney again: "This is the first generation of black youth to be seeing these Superfly-type movies. They see these cool dudes with the flashy clothes and the guns and they emulate them. The road back is going to be a tough climb."

At Lincoln Junior High School on the East Side I listened to a black security guard explain the difference between the east side and west side to a distraught black mother, waiting for her son to be stitched up from a knife wound.

"Lady, the difference between East and West is the difference between night and day," he told her. "On the West Side its knives and sniffing glue. On the East Side it's guns and heroin. They're seven years behind us on the West Side."

Perhaps the lady should be lucky her son wasn't shot, being an East Sider?

Memory flash: *John F. Kennedy High School auditorium, Cleveland*

The first piece of paper, screwed up into a ball, struck my shoulder a glancing blow as I walked through the massed ranks of more than a thousand students gathered in the auditorium.

The second paper ball bounced neatly off my head. One of the three security guards surrounding me batted off another paper ball. Somebody pulled hard at my jacket. I wasn't afraid, just confused.

I had been invited to the school by its principal, politely and sincerely, to come and visit him, some teachers and a few members of the school's student committee to talk about my Guns in School series. We arranged mid-morning the next day, I believe. I duly arrived, met the principal, teachers and student committee, explained the reasons and methods behind the series and, as I stood up to leave was asked if I could hang on for a minute to talk to some more students.

No problem. I didn't know quite where I was being taken to until – HOLY MOLY! – I found myself on the stage of the school's main auditorium, behind a lectern and addressing at least 1500 students (or so I was told afterwards). I explained, again, why I wrote this series and why The Press ran it. The principal invited questions, even though I was unprepared and had no notes.

Hands shot up and I was asked, in several different ways, where I was born, where I went to school, how long I had been in America and Cleveland. Some questions were very pointed: essentially 'What do you know, white boy?"

At least I had William Wilberforce to fall back on. The early Anglo-American settlers may have owned slaves brought from Africa, but Britain was the first major western country to outlaw slavery. Wilberforce was born 40 miles from my home in York, and spent 20 years as a Christian evangelical politician campaigning for a ban on the British slave trade. That was passed by Parliament in 1807, and a ban across most of the British Empire in 1833. America, of course, did not officially abolish slavery until the end of the Civil War in 1865. I'm pretty sure I forgot to tell them about the arrival of many thousands of American troops in the UK in WWII, and how the blacks were mostly welcomed by the British – at the displeasure of the (U.S.) officially-segregated white soldiers and airmen.

I don't know if I pulled it off, but the students who asked the questions were at least receptive and polite – I think. The majority, however, just looked sullen, or angry. The paper balls were a

sign of that. Should I not have expected resentment? What was in my series for them? They knew it already because they lived it every day.

I can only say that when I first saw the motto of Scripps Howard at the main entrance to The Press on E.9th Street: "Give Light and the People will find their own Way" next to a lighthouse and its beacons of light, I did think "I'm going to like it here."

I didn't have any answers to the questions the JFK students posed about guns in school, but did hope that by shining a light on a major problem, money, political attention and a whole lot of change of attitudes might help.

Hmmmm…Naïve might be a better word.

There is an ad-end to this story. Two days after the above story happened, 16-year-old Andres Floyd, a black youth, heard about it from friends at the athletic track where he was training. He heard about the athletes at JFK providing such close-knit support together that they didn't fear being attacked by other students with knives or guns. Apparently, he wanted to find out more, and to see if he was mentioned.

He went to his local grocery story and started thumbing through the newspapers. A court later heard that the store owner, a white man, told him to stop as these were papers for sale, not to be rummaged through. An argument ensued, and the owner's son, Anthony Konieczka, intervened and threw Floyd out into the street. Konieczka then shot him with a hand gun, telling the court later that he thought Floyd was going for a gun in his pocket. He was unarmed. Koniezka was exonerated.

Floyd was described by one judge as a "star athlete," a track star, who now appeared to be paralyzed for life. He did recover, but never ran again. Reportedly, he was left with a limp, sued Konieczka for $1.2 million in a civil suit, and settled for $36,000.

Fifty years later it bothers me somewhat that a 16-year-old boy – a potential athletic star – had wanted to read something I wrote, but instead ended up having his life severely changed.

My guns in school series also reminded me that Truth cannot always overcome Perception. Eighteen years later I would find out just how strong perception could be when it came to reasons for invading Iraq.

Memory Flash: *Press Newsroom. April, 1974*

Ah, back to normal. I'll write this little story as published in the paper….

"It was 8.30 on a Monday morning. I was quietly staring at my typewriter when my city editor, with a visitor to The Press next to him, called to me.

"Hey, Peter, talk to this dummy, willya?"

"My Monday morning blues vanished as fast as embarrassment arrived. Dummy? I mean, what a way to refer to a guest to the newsroom!

"But I need not have worried. Wayne Roland, the visitor, wasn't.

"For Roland is a dummy….. or rather he projects himself into one when he goes into his act. Roland is a ventriloquist, a professional who was in town to promote Sipity Doo Da, a kid's new soft drink produced by Blue Plate Foods Inc of New Orleans."

Etc. etc about being an old-fashioned ventriloquist in tough times.

"One of our photographers had "Sipity" pose on Roland's knee. Roland looked suitably toothy: Sipity decidedly creepy.

Last line of my story, after Roland packed his bags and left?

"I went back like a dummy to staring at my typewriter."

Actually, there WAS a man – a member of the public – who did regularly come into the newsroom and sat at the edge of the news desk for an hour or two every time. I wouldn't call him a dummy, but he didn't say much, if at all. His name was Bob and he was a patient at a psychiatric hospital, I think. No problem; he just sort of ABSORBED everything that was going on around him: the sub editors, the telephones, the copy boys and girls, the photographers. And he read the paper a lot.

Anything but sit in his room at a psychiatric institute.

Was he a spy for the Plain Dealer? Who knows? Somebody said he came in a few times with his girlfriend.

Not so welcome was the man who came into the newsroom, shouted something and fired a bullet into the ceiling. After that there was no direct public access to the newsroom, not with a lock combination on the door from the downstairs vestibule and an armed guard at the door.

"Yes, it's Johnny Rutherford! Johnny Rutherford wins the 1974 Indianapolis 500!" exclaimed the voice on the car radio.

We are on vacation to the West Coast, and passing through Indianapolis. Not that we actually saw the Indy 500, mind you, but we did hear it loud and clear as we drove through the city on Sunday May 26. And Rutherford did it in a British-made McLaren!

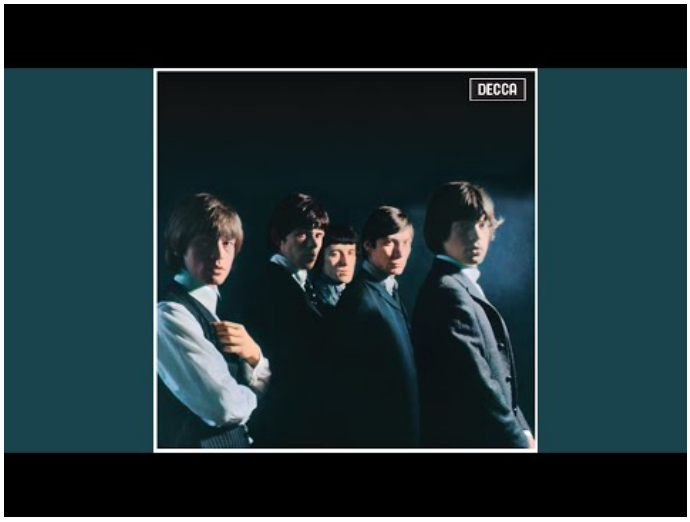
So we were motoringly psyched up by the time we got to St Louis, and ready for Route 66, the ONLY way to get to LA in my book, even if we didn't start in Chicago.

Now you go through Saint Louis

Down through Missouri.
Oklahoma city looks oh so pretty.
You'll see Amarillo,
Gallup, New Mexico,
Flagstaff, Arizona.
Don't forget Winona,
Kingman, Barstow, San Bernadino.

Won't you get hip to this timely tip
When you make that California trip
Get your kicks on Route 66."

Sung by The Rolling Stones, of course.



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(Sound only)

Even as I'm convinced Mick never actually sang the words "Winona, Kingman, and Barstow". Not in the original anyway (I've listened to that record-of-my-youth scores of times – and could never quite fathom what he sang at that point.

Sorry Nat King Cole, Bing Crosby, Chuck Berry, and Bobby Troup, who wrote the song in 1946, but the Stones were my heroes from 1964, when I launched myself onto the world as an 18-year-old kid in England.

I just KNEW that one day I'd make that California trip!

Anna and I took our time in our li'l old Camaro, soaking up everything from the Texas panhandle and the mining 'ghost towns' of Colorado, to Old Tucson and Boothill Cemetery ("Here Lies Lester Moore, Two slugs from a 44. No Les No More"), Nogales, Mexico, then the cacti of the Sonora Desert, and the Grand Canyon, near where we boiled in our tent balanced by long hours in and under the cool(er) waters of Canyon Lake. To the Santa Fe and the Tesuque Pueblo Indian reservation, the Colorado Rockies, Death Valley, Queen Mary at Los Angeles, San Francisco, Utah and Nebraska – where our air conditioning finally broke down.

And not forgetting Las Vegas, quite the most wonderfully OUTRAGEOUS city in the world – in my opinion. Anna and I got the full blast of it on the day we arrived when we picked up "free!" tickets for a show that evening, paid for by the most intensive, most bullying sales pitch for property we have ever encountered – before and since**.** Vegas has since provided me with several *Memory Flash* stories, which will pop up in subsequent memoirs over the next 50 years**.**

But look what we missed in Cleveland while we were away: The Indians Ten Cent Beer Night at Municipal stadium on June 4! What a wonderfully-Cleveland disaster! 25,000 baseball fans working their way through as much 3.2 beer as they possibly can in a game against the Texas Rangers. A limit of six beers per purchase but with no limit on the number of purchases. Fist fights in the stands and on the field, to the point that the game was forfeited in the ninth inning because of rioting everywhere.

Good old Cleveland!

What we learned most about our trip is that America is less of a country than it is a CONTINENT, with significantly different attitudes and climates and distances that create concepts of a nation that depend more on symbols to unite than the geographical closeness of the historic and crowded island we knew in the UK. To stand in Kansas City and look up at airliners crossing the country from Atlantic seaboard to Pacific is to realise that relatively few of their passengers ever see the great bulk of the country in between. Conversely, if they ever did stop in Kansas they would have no sense that there could conceivably be any foreign country or different language spoken naturally for more than 700 miles in every direction (Windsor, Ontario, is the closest foreign city).

I still recall the strange sense of alienation I felt when we crossed the Sierras into California and knew that the Pacific waters we were driving towards were not the ones I knew on the eastern seaboard. San Diego is not Williamsburg.

The historic 'natural' link to Europe I had in Cleveland does not exist in LA, not withstanding Hollywood.

Memory Flash: ***The Cleveland Press cuttings library June 22, 1974***

'HOW'S MY BIRD? – Press schools writer Peter Almond, who is British born, is currently Out West with his wife Anna. While away, Peter has entrusted their pet parakeet named Dickie

Bird to fellow reporter Jim Dudas. Jim got a picture postcard in the mail the other day from Las Vegas addressed to Mr. Richard Bird.

"Ah, those Brits are so formal".

Back in Cleveland that July I checked in with Nathaniel Jones, national general counsel for the NAACP, and asked when I could fix in a date for the start of the Cleveland desegregation case. I had September pencilled in.

"You can't. Haven't you heard the news?" he replied. "The Supreme Court has overturned Detroit. No metro remedy in Detroit, so none in Cleveland."

This was a severe blow to the NAACP. They had persuaded lower courts to rule that suburban schools could be included in Detroit's school desegregation plan so there could be no 'escape hatch' for parents seeking to avoid busing. Ohio Governor John Gilligan and other state officials had been brought into the Cleveland case as co-defendants primarily for that reason. A city-suburban plan, it was thought, could be ordered through state officials as the supreme government in a state.

Defeat of that argument in Detroit meant the NAACP lawyers would have to take several months to regain their confidence in the ultimate success of their Cleveland suit. Supt Briggs insisted Cleveland school officials had done more than any major school district in the nation to overcome effects of segregation. With the Supreme Court's Detroit ruling they sought victory by hiring top lawyer Charles Clarke and two others from the law firm of Squire, Sanders and Dempsey to argue their case. They even added in black former school critic John Bustamente to join their team.

In the meantime, after President Nixon was forced to resign on Aug 8 because of Watergate, national policy was picked up by the unelected Gerald Ford, Detroit stepson of the Ford motor company founder, who was generally in favor of school desegregation but against forced busing of the kind that prompted rioting in Boston that September.

It would be October, 1975 before lawyers from both sides in Cleveland finally met in pre-trial conferences before Federal Judge Frank J. Battisti. The NAACP wasn't entirely giving up with the state, however. With Democrat Gov Gilligan narrowly defeated by Republican Jim Rhodes in the November 74 elections the case would be known as Reed vs Rhodes.

Memory flash: ***Euclid General Hospital, mid summer '74***

I think Anna's been rumbled. It's in the mid-90s F and it's so hot she's been commandeering every electric fan she can find – including one of ours – to try to keep her patients cool. Euclid general, you see, doesn't have air conditioning – except in some management offices.

Who needs air conditioning, says management, when we are right on the edge of lovely cool Lake Erie? We have Natural Air Conditioning!

Well, tell that to the patients and nurses on a hot, hot, hot night in July when there is not the slightest breath of moving air!

Anna's told me about it, and I've written a short piece for the paper. Anonymously, of course. Anonymous, my foot. What effort does it take for hospital director Jay W. Collins to ask his staff "Do you know anyone with a connection to the Cleveland Press?"

I'm told Collins, who was also a Euclid councilman, got ribbed about it. And Collins doesn't like to be ribbed. Anna wasn't confronted about it, but I don't suppose it helped her career prospects. The hospital did, ultimately, get air conditioning.

Writing about school children always reminded me that they were usually far ahead of their parents in their way of expressing themselves. On May 29 I put together a list of 'new' words to enable parents to better understand their teenage children.

"If you're going to book your slave at the end of the day," I wrote, "wearing your Parma's and a vine with flood pants, make sure you keep warm on the way home because the hawk is killing today. And if you don't understand all this you're just jive turkey".

Translation: *If you're going to leave your job at the end of the day wearing your white socks and a suit with pants that are too short, make sure you keep warm on the way home because the wind is cold today. And if you don't understand this then you don't have it all together."*

There then follows a list of expressions that would be instantly recognizable 50 years later, such as: I'm going to party" – Have a good time. "Get off my case" – Leave me alone. "Get down". "What's happening, blood?" – A greeting to someone you're close to. "Cold blooded" – Everything bad. "He's scuzzy" – creepy, strange. "A bummer" – rotten time. "Bad." – Good. "Zoomin'" – High on drugs. Etc.

I got my list from seniors at Brooklyn and Collinwood High Schools, and fourth graders at John Raper elementary school, E65th Str. But of course I needed some intellectualism, which came from Dr Howard Mims, an associate professor of speech and drama at Cleveland State University. He said 'jive turkey' was now really 'in' because it was heard frequently in a popular record by Kool and the Gang. And the Ohio Players.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNZ5zVW76uo&list=RDdNZ5zVW76uo&start_radio=1&t=0

“If a lot of these slang expressions are from blacks it’s because they have a history of talking this way,” said Dr Mims. “It goes back to slavery days when they used slang as a kind of secret code word. The expressions outlive their usefulness when they become too widely known, so they think up something else.”

“The use of slang may be on the increase, he says, largely because of a greater permissiveness in today’s society.”

In the 21st century I think we might call all this rather patronising.

On Aug 2 Press photographer Tony Tomsic took a picture of Paul W. Briggs standing at the door of his house on Edgewater Drive getting a posed, somewhat embarrassed good luck kiss on his cheek from his wife, Arvilla. He was on his way to work on the first day of his 11th year as superintendent of Cleveland’s public schools. (I always admired Tomsic, by the way, because of his classic American go-get-em, sports-mad attitude, with which he had carved out a dual life on The Press and as a freelance photographer for Sports Illustrated and Time magazine. He earned enough to take his family to the Galapagos Islands on a private yacht for a month).

Very, very few superintendents of big city school districts survive ten years in the post, so I wrote a front page piece about Briggs from the perspective of three people who knew him and his work and reputation: School Board president Arnold Pinkney, long time schools critic Nancy Oakley and Sidney Marland, former US Commissioner of education. They all gave him high marks – and some criticism.

So why hasn’t he moved on up to bigger, perhaps national things? Briggs himself told me he has rejected all offers. “I’m not a bureaucrat,” he said. “I like to have the closest line between decision and action. I could never be a broker. I’ve stayed here because I like Cleveland. The people are tremendous.”

I’d write my own critique four years later. But I know what he means about the people.

Take, for instance, Mrs Laura Hoyer, 64, whose release from police custody the same day Tomsic took the picture of Briggs, was marked on P4, on the back of my story, by one from Jim Dudas about the haziness of the death of her husband 18 years earlier. His mummified remains had been found by a couple of kids in an empty apartment on Superior Ave a few days earlier. It appears that on a day in 1956 Mr Hoyer came home drunk, she threw a pan of water at him, he fell down the stairs, and died. The body was dismembered by a saw and possibly a meat cleaver. Mrs Hoyer moved the remains with her every time she moved house, in 1961 rewrapping it a copy of the Press and a blanket.

Police said they didn't have enough evidence to charge Mrs Hoyer, now an old, sick woman in a wheelchair.

Memory Flash: ***Cleveland Heights rugby field, October '74***

"Almond! Why do you keep falling over? That's the third time I've seen you do it this game."

"Keep" falling over? I fell over. No reason. It just happens some times.

The man drawing my attention to my right ankle was the referee in this rugby match, Dr John Bergfeld. And you listened to him. He was not only the founder of the Cleveland Blues rugby club in 1964 but also the orthopaedic specialist for the Cleveland Browns NFL team, Cleveland Cavaliers basketball, and head of sports medicine at Cleveland Clinic hospital, one of the best in the world.

He had a look at my right ankle, manipulated it a little and said: "Come and see me. You've got a loose ligament."

So I did, and after a six-hour operation that removed one longtitudinal tendon in my lower leg ("you only need one," he said) and made it into a new ligament from my right ankle across the top of my foot. The next day I was home with lower leg in plaster. But bored. I went back to work prematurely and, apparently, looked so pale and scary that managing editor Dick Campbell came over a suggested I go home again.

Almost 50 years later I can report that Bergfeld did a solid job. I continued to run, play rugby and football (badly), ski cross-country, and complete several marathons and half marathons.

Cheers, Doctor John! (who appeared to be still working in 2022).

As a further thought on rugby and injuries I think it is worth noting that I did get published criticism after my 1973 story extolling the virtues of the game. Someone at a local college wrote that it was a dangerous game and should be banned at college level, citing a young player who was knocked out in a rugby collision, never regained consciousness, and died. The sport, he said, involved none of the safety features of American football (helmets, shoulder pads etc), had no physical assessments, and was not regulated or insured by the colleges. "Is rugby really necessary?" he asked.

I dismissed his criticism at the time because, as I said, rugby did not involve running AT an opposing players, but

to take down the opposing players with a waist or leg tackle, to pass the ball to avoid being tackled oneself, or to kick it ahead. Sure, I said, players could sometimes get a bang on the head, get knocked out, but they'd be fine the next day.

I was wrong. We didn't know it at the time, but 50 years later, as the NFL and professional soccer has also found in both the US and UK, those head bangings do catch you up with you. By 2020 increasing numbers of former players had been found with dementia, to the point today that players have to be taken off the field to be checked if they have a concussion, and specific 'concussion replacements' introduced.

Sometimes I'll come across a yellowing newspaper clip with my byline that I have no memory of at all. One such, on Sept 3 and 4 '74, was top of the front page in a two-part series about the reading and TV viewing habits of Cleveland area 16 year olds: 410 girls and boys in 10 sophomore classes at ten high schools. I seem to have invented a questionnaire form and sent it around to those high schools. Unscientific but interesting, if I do say so myself. The point, I guess, was that it was almost the start of the new school year and this might encourage teachers, parents and students to think BOOKS, and EDUCATION.

(And hopefully help to fill up some news space in the paper).

"Students turn off books, turn on TV" was the challenging Page 1 headline. The next day it was **"Books of tragedy, violence popular with teens."**

"He or she watches TV for almost three hours a day, but reads for only 30 minutes," says my opening paragraph. "His favorite books are about gangs and drugs, and he prefers comics and light reading material. When he reads it's almost always with music playing in the background.

"He pays less attention to the news in a newspaper than he does to the news on TV. But his family gets at least one newspaper every day and he reads it too. About a quarter of his friends have difficulty reading at home. "

Well, talk about shooting yourself in the foot! **"He pays less attention to the news in a newspaper than he does to the news on TV?"** sounds a bit like admitting defeat for print news. No wonder the Cleveland Press died eight years later. Or maybe I thought I would be sending out a rallying cry for parents: Come on, folks! Get your kids reading real news from a real newspaper!

And I told them, from our survey, what the most popular books were for Cleveland area teenagers in 1974: the top five: "**Go ask Alice**," a 1971 diary about a teenage girl who develops a drug addiction at age 15 and runs away from home on a journey of self-destructive escapism. **"The Outsiders**," a book written by a 17-year-old about street gangs in the 1950s (sort of West Side Story then?; "**Run, Baby, Run'"** a novel about New York gangsters who are converted to religion; "**The Exorcist"**, a 1971 horror novel by Peter Blatty that details the demonic possession of an 12-year-old girl (the movie had been released only months earlier and 16-year-olds shouldn't have seen it. It WAS very scary.

And the **Bible**, which isn't any of those things.

Oh boy.

Kids eh?

Memory Flash: ***E.185th St., 9.45pm Sept. 28 '74***

I've been working late and am now stopped at a convenience store to pick up a bottle of wine. I get back into the car and find it won't start. Dead battery. I need a jump start. A car draws up next to me.

"Good sir!" I cry to the driver (well that's the way I wrote this story for the paper). "Could I borrow your car for a moment to get mine started?"

He readily agrees and I stretch out my jumper cables to the terminals of his battery. Except I've got the wires crossed.

Flash, bang! His battery is now dead. But the owner is good about it, says it was an old car and an old battery.

Another young man says he works at a nearby gas station and he will get his car. He returns shortly in an old rear-engine Corvair, which promptly stops in a cloud of smoke because his fan belt has come off. He can't get his car started again either.

A third Good Samaritan then arrives and offers to help with his jumper cables. He sets up a multi-car battery link of jumper cables, and all but one of our cars start. One by one we depart, leaving the Corvair and the gas station guy to sort himself out.

I get home at 10.30 and, of course, Anna does not believe me. She just thinks I am concocting a weird story to cover my absence from the dinner she has cooked for us.

As I conclude in my story for the paper (with cartoon) "To those guys out there who stopped to help me – thanks.

And sorry."

Same area. Collinwood. I looked through my clips for the rest of the year and saw a lot of misery in Cleveland schools, which started their new school year in September with thousands of students refusing to attend. Headline: "**Police sirens wail, 500 bolt Collinwood."** This was about an incident on Oct 14 when about 500 youngsters rushed out of the racially-mixed high school because of police attracted to a fight at E 152nd Street and St Clair Ave, just as the school bell rang for a change of classes.

Over the police radio came the cry of a police officer at the scene: "Get those cars out of here. The sirens are only making things worse. The kids are coming out of school!"

The incident was not entirely unexpected, however. The Principal said he had received a serious threat of revenge for the death of 16-year-old old David Britton nine days earlier.

Tensions were indeed so high at Collinwood that I now wonder at how much Freedom of Speech we published in

those days. The head of the Collinwood Improvement Council's defence of white residents of the area was that they were "trying to preserve a good neighbourhood… We in Collinwood refuse to accept a social life lower than ours," he told me. "We will reject blacks until they prove they are responsible people."

(As an aside, Collinwood's Lake View elementary school was the site of one of the worst school disasters in U.S. history when, in 1908, 172 children, two teachers and a rescuer died in a fire that consumed the building. The school had only two external doors, access to one of which was blocked by panicking children. Numerous new laws across the nation followed).

Tensions? It wasn't just lawyers, politicians, teachers, parents in trouble, it was **US** – the reporters and others who wrote about them**. From Nov 9 to Dec 21, 1974 the union staffs at both The Press and the Plain Dealer went on strike. No papers, no news, nothing** (OK there was TV and radio but their tiny news staffs were stuck up a gumtree without The Press and PD to lead). It did not happen all of a sudden, and I don't know any details, but for three days from Nov 6 -8, if I remember rightly, both papers came out under a joint masthead – the first time this had ever happened.

Then it was an ever-deepening lockout. Union strike funds did not last long and I remember the last two or three weeks we had only whatever income we could scrape together. Someone connected to Cleveland's schools found some money for Supt Briggs to hire reporters and editors he liked – including my predecessor and my opposition at the PD – but of course, not me (and I wouldn't have taken Briggs' money anyway). But I did know people on parent-teacher associations in the area and they scraped up some cash for me to go around to schools and deliver lectures to children on my home town of ancient York. I had slides and photos and a lot of exciting history stories, which seemed to go down well for a couple of weeks until we returned to proper work.

I might as well finish up the year with yet a few more school downers, just as it had started: A bomb was found at John Marshall High School, on the West Side; Four students were wounded by a sawn-off shotgun at East Tech High. Arson was suspected at West Tech High. A major LSD drug supplier to school youngster was freed on probation.

"I could throw up," said the police sergeant who led the exhaustive investigation. "No one ever had a better case – and we lose it."

Chapter 7. Cleveland, 1975

Memory Flash: ***Ninth District Federal Court, Cleveland, Nov 24, 1975***

*Opening day of Reed vs Rhodes, the Cleveland schools desegregation case. (*An end of the year start). *And I am shocked. Truly shocked.*

Nathaniel Jones, lead prosecutor for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), has just begun to recount how we got here, via the first desegregation trial of national significance: Brown vs Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas, 1954.

He tells us of a young black girl, perhaps five or six, in the witness box in that case, who was handed two dolls, one white and one brown, and was asked: "Which is the good doll, and which is the bad one?"

The girl pointed to the white doll as 'good' and the brown one as 'bad." Jones presented testing evidence that this was a common response from young black children.

As a white boy growing up in England with no exposure to the emotional depths of racial segregation I had never considered this aspect of the vestiges of slavery: the sense of inferiority from the color of a person's skin. And that it could have had such an effect on a child so young.

There was more, but I was not aware of it until much later. The NAACP lawyers in Brown were using ground-breaking studies done in the early 1950 by black husband and wife New York psychologists Mamie and Kenneth Clark into the long-term pernicious effects on society of racial segregation in the US. (They had to paint one of the white dolls brown because manufacturers did not make any brown or black dolls then).

Shocking as the 'good' and 'bad' dolls were they also asked the kids which dolls looked most like them. Some of the children cried and ran out of the room because they did not want to identify with the brown dolls. They looked at TV and wanted blue eyes and blonde hair – and white skin.

The Clarks were so upset they delayed publishing their conclusions.

In 2010 the US TV news channel CNN commissioned a reproduction of the studies with 133 children, from a mix of racially segregated schools, this time including a substantial number of

white kids. The results, reportedly, were strikingly similar. The white children maintained an intense bias towards whiteness. The black children, fortunately, had a more positive view of the dolls of their color.

Was that my highlight of 1975, starting at the end? Hardly, because the city was being prepared for school desegregation from March onwards by outsiders from cities who were already doing it. **"Desegregation will come to Cleveland, city leaders are told**" was one headline on a story I wrote. In order to make it work peacefully, the outsiders said, Cleveland's leaders should start to plan for it now.

The message was given to business, church, education, news media and labor leaders by the police commissioner of Boston, the deputy superintendent of Detroit schools, an official of Memphis schools and an Ohio State University professor, invited to Cleveland State University by a Cleveland churches council. They heard from Ohio State University representative Prof Charles Glatt that Cleveland was one of the most segregated cities in the country and that blacks were trapped economically within the city, requiring an income of at least $10,000 a year to move to the suburbs.

I got a further taste of desegregation planning – or lack of it – from Miami Beach the next month, at a convention of some 20,000 school board members, including about 100 board attorneys. (And no, I didn't actually get on to the beach in warm Miami. The meetings were all inside a convention center).

What I learned from Cleveland schools lawyer William Lahman and a couple of other board members was that they were not preparing any detailed busing plan and hoping instead to expand the "magnet school' concept of city-wide students already attending the Aviation High School, Martin Luther King Vocational High Schools, Max Hayes and Jane Addams schools. Or even working up alternative schools in which youngsters spend part, if not all, the school week in a racially-mixed city-wide school in specific programs.

What I wondered about was the instability that was growing year after year on Cleveland schools and nationwide that were chicken and egg. Which came first, instability from vandalism, violence and lower standards in schools, or planning for racial desegregation that was encouraging richer white parents and their kids to move out of city schools by the thousands? The school board members at the conference wanted to deal with vandalism, which was rife and worsening by the day, more than busing. An educator from Chicago said she had told her superintendent she had not yet seen one of the system's new schools. The superintendent told her: "You had better hurry because the place will be torn to the ground by the kids before you get there."

In the big world outside Cleveland…. Inflation in the UK hit 24%; Bill Gates and Paul Allen started Microsoft; Patty Hearst, the kidnapped daughter of newspaper magnate Randolph Hearst, was caught in San Francisco; Muhammed Ali beat Joe Fraser in the 'Thrilla in Manila'; Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa disappeared; Spanish dictator General Franco died; **and the Vietnam War ended with that humiliating spectacle of the last Americans being helicoptered off the roof of the US Embassy in Saigon, with the victorious N. Vietnamese at the gates**.

Oh yes, and at the movies we had the brilliant ***Godfather, Part 2***; Peter Sellers' hilarious ***Return of the Pink Panther***; and ***Jaws***, the shark movie in which just two musical notes would forever denote something sinister.[1]

Two notes that changed the film world: John Williams' theme for "Jaws"

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=52

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lV8i-pSVMaQ

John Edward Gallagher was a 22-year-old in a hurry when he was voted onto the Cleveland School Board in November, 1973, the youngest board member ever, I believe. He was an outsider, a graduate of Catholic schools and, as the vice president of a west side premiums and promotions firm (his father was president) he said he was "not tied to a desk and certain hours."

1. "Two Notes That Changed the Film World: John Williams' Theme for 'Jaws.' " CSO Sounds and Stories. June 8, 2017. https://csosoundsandstories.org/two-notes-that-changed-the-film-world-john-williams-theme-for-jaws/

JOHN EDWARD GALLAGHER Jr,
businessman and upstart young Cleveland School Board member – and the author's best source.

I got on well with him from the start. We were on the same page in bringing news to the public and light to the darker corners of Dr Brigg's fiefdom, and he wasn't afraid to question and stand up for the 'little guy,' who was more inclined to be a Press reader than a Plain Dealer one. He was one of my main sources on the board. "Peter the Leader!" he would embarrassingly answer when I called him at 7.30am on Monday board meeting days, and then lay out for me all the main issues and decisions due to be taken that day. I had the best stories in the paper by noon, which the PD could rarely match.

Except once (that I know of). My PD oppo once wrote about the time he thumbed through the voluminous agenda of a meeting and saw the board was hiring a laborer who had the same name as a board member, ie the board was

hiring the son of a board member when it was cutting teaching positions. I, apparently, was staring at the ceiling. “The Press reporter told me that I got him in big trouble because he had missed it,” later wrote the PD man of his own experiences.

Well, bully for you, Dick. If I got into trouble it was because it was such a rarity. The main schools stories were almost always in the Press before the PD. The editor kept me on the schools beat for six years.

I bet my story about Breaux Palmer beat your laborer, though. Septuagenarian Palmer was head of security for Cleveland public schools; utility man, “Best-dressed Negro man in the world” (a title he cherished), and Supt Briggs’ bodyguard. And with almost $30,000 a year the fifth highest-paid employee in the school system. I wrote about him on Page One of The Press on Feb 26 ’75 as part of a series about the cash-strapped school system’s top earners; custodians, principals, teachers and tradesmen.

“He walks into a school in sartorial perfection. Polished shoes, neatly tailored slacks and jacket, silk shirt, natty bow tie and his ever-present black wig of Chinese hair,” was my lede.

Palmer claimed 2000 hours of overtime – about 38 hours a week – and received $5,328 for 35,500 miles he travelled annually on his mobile-phone equipped car, most of those miles within Cleveland. With 115 security people under his control he was often seen late at night at the scenes of break-ins, school fires, and disturbances. “I will start my day at about 8.30am and many mornings I have to be in court giving evidence to the Grand Jury about various people,“ he told me. “We get eight or ten arrests a week for things like robberies, arsons and rapes.” In the afternoon he might go to a school to check out a security guard, and at 4.30pm go home for an hour to rest.

Then he’s out again, **“a sort of cruising batman, waiting for trouble to hit one of the system’s 179 schools,”** I wrote**.**

Palmer carried a weapon: a silver, two-shot Beretta pistol which he pulled from his back pocket when I interviewed him. At nights he carried a 38-calibre police special revolver. He’s a ‘special sheriff’s deputy’, badge No 2006, with powers of arrest. He was on call 24 hours a day and, when I talked to him, had spent six weeks night and day at racially-fractious

Collingwood High. “I remember one Sunday morning at 7 o’clock I had to go out and get sandblasters to remove a sign on a school wall that said “Kill all Niggers.”

Yes Breaux, but still… Those overtime records? Do you not spend a lot of time at night at an East Side bar, claiming this as overtime?

“That’s Lancer’s Steak House, 7707 Carnegie Ave,” he replied. “I’m in there every night. I go in about 10.30 and leave about 11.30. You see, one of my jobs is snooping. Most people there think because of the way I’m dressed I’m some kind of racketeer. I get all kinds of information. For instance, once we had a piano stolen from a school. I got it back from information obtained there.”

That, according to Palmer, was genuine overtime.

So, how old was he really? Either 62, 64 or 73 according to three job application records over the last 30 years that I dug out. “Well, the truth is, I really don’t know how old I am,” he said. “I think I’m 62 but let me check”. He didn’t have a birth certificate.

He went to the telephone, dialled a number to the school system’s personnel office and to the amusement of office girls, said**: “This is Breaux Palmer. Would you check my application and tell me how old I am.”**

A little bit of digging around and I came up with 73 as most likely.

Second in my series was about individual, named school employees who also made a lot of money, but below the $44,540 Briggs made in 1974. “Highest paid teacher was Edward Katz, who covered several elementary schools teaching music, paid a total of $22,502 on a $16,871 salary, the balance being work as a musical instrument repairman for the schools.

Third in the series was ‘**How a custodian makes $27,000 a year’** -partly because of the square footage of the school, partly because vandalising students make him work overtime, and partly because they are solid union guys who know how to work the angles..

Memory Flash: ***Newsroom, March ‘75***

Sometimes you just have to run a story EXACTLY as it was published. This one Is a celebration of the bizarre and ironic, that might be called a ‘drooper’ in the sex business

Headline:

“British Queen’s subject is sex”

By Peter Almond

One of the facts of life being an Englishman working for an American newspaper is I get stuck with every Limey who walks into the office.

There were the two fellows who had just rowed across the Atlantic; the chaps promoting Transcendental Meditation; the engineer who built an exact replica of the first railway engine.

The other day I got the prize fellow countryperson to date – a porno star.

It was the day gunman Eddie Watkins was threatening to blow up himself and six hostages in a West Side bank.

Half the staff seemed to be out on the story, leaving me, the education writer, to write up all the other traffic fatalities, armed robberies and suchlike.

Then the city editor walked over with a tall, slim girl wearing the most violent shade or orange hair I’d ever seen, a see-through dress and black fingernails.

"Peter, I'd like you to meet a fellow country-woman," he said. "Tuppy Owens is her name and she's a porno star."

I was caught by surprise. Sex was not on my mind that crime-ridden morning and I'm afraid I said: "Oh yes, that's nice." He arranged to have her photo taken and left me to interview her, I assumed.

It was not an easy interview.

I mean, how much can one ask a porno star for publication in a family newspaper?

So I asked where she came from in England.

"Cambridge," she said.

"Oh, really?" said I. "I went to school there for a while. I used to catch the 105 bus out of Drummer Street to Queen Edith's Way."

Her demeanor visibly changed.

"I used to catch the 103 bus out of Drummer Street," she said, unenthused.

It turns out she is the daughter of a wedding photographer in Cambridge who sent her to the Perse School, the best grammar school in town. As I was the same age as her (29) I was therefore her contemporary, a fact she did not relish.

It took a little time, after she had said her elder brother was a vicar, to figure out she was a raving exhibitionist.

She won a Bachelor of Science degree at Exeter University in Zoology, went to Africa and Trinidad for a while, and in 1971 turned to pornography with a photo book on love positions.

Finding that she could make money out of her favorite hobby she wrote a couple more books – both soft-core because hard-core pornography is outlawed in England. Then she wrote her most successful book, "The Sex Maniac's Diary, a Glossary of things sexual." The diary includes information on the sexiest clubs in the world. There's even a selection on Cleveland, stuck between Casablanca and Copenhagen.

Strangely, she rates Cleveland sexier than any of those other cities, naming a place the Vice Squad would love to hear about. Her information, she added, comes from journalists.

Her main interest in Cleveland, though, was to promote a porno movie in which she 'performs'. It is a $25,000 production made in Holland called 'Sensations'.

And that's about all I can write for publication.

Except that she was actually embarrassed for me to interview her.

"A porno queen embarrassed?" I asked her.

"Well, yes," she replied. "I can't help thinking if we had met in Cambridge 15 years ago what a strange interview we would think this is."

I couldn't help thinking what a perfect subject she would be for a group of psychiatry students."

I am genuinely sorry about that last sentence. It was a throwaway, an unintended insult, and one I regret. It says more about me than it does about her.

Because sex remained Rosalind (Tuppy) Mary Owens' main occupation for the rest of her working life, in a vitally humane direction. In 1979 she started the Outsiders Club for socially and physically disabled people to find partners; she trained as a sex therapist in the U.S. gaining a diploma in Human Sexuality in 1986; chaired the Sexual Freedom Coalition in the UK and won several international awards for research and response to the poorly-recognized sexual needs of the disabled, disadvantaged, and lonely.

Almost 50 years later I wish I could find her to say sorry. (I keep doing that now I'm in my dotage).

Back to schools: Lack of money, in practice, remained THE big issue for almost all Cleveland area schools in '75. Voters had turned down more than half of the tax levy issues in the county the year before. The federal government was struggling with inflation. The only possible source was the state of Ohio. "If school superintendents in the Cleveland area start replacing their office photos of President Ford with that of Ohio Gov. James Rhodes the reason will soon become clear to the voters," I wrote on Jan 14.

"Gov Rhodes, they believe, is either going to save their schools from economic disaster or education in 1975 is likely to suffer."

Ohio was already known throughout the country as one of the worst in terms of state funding for schools. But would they budge for Cleveland, the state's biggest and most troubled school district, with more students per teacher than any of the nation's 20 largest cities – especially with Rhodes now named as the main defendant in the pending Cleveland schools desegregation case?

At the practical level at least enrollments were up at the area's Catholic schools, mostly as some 5,000 children were taken out of the city's public schools last year – providing additional tuition.

The only bright spot seemed to be a dramatic drive to improve the reading capabilities of Cleveland school children, following recommendations of a three-man panel of experts who recently examined the problem.

Memory flash: *South Euclid, May '75*

We've bought our first house, a 'Country French' design up the hill from Collinwood on South Belvoir Blvd, South Euclid. It has three bedrooms, a warm living room with a big picture window overlooking a steep, tree-filled 50-foot deep ravine where a tiny stream starts. To the side is a patio where I can build a tree-seat. To the front a long driveway and an expansive lawn on which there are 15 fully-grown trees. The garage has room for two cars. Anna can drive to work at her hospital.

After five years in a semi-basement flat we're excited. We've bought an English Springer pup, named him Douglas (officially Sir Douglas Merriweather), and we've got a mortgage!

Or do we? We need to have a new thing called Flood Insurance, mandated to bank lenders by the government under a 1973 act which was still being rolled out across the country after some disastrous floods in Pennslyvania. Our new house was on the inside of a line drawn on a new map. The house next door was on the other side of the line.

This was going to cost us $100 for absolutely nothing, because we were up a hill where a flood couldn't reach us.

"There's no way this house is going to flood," says a bank official who sent out two assessors to check the property. "The whole city of South Euclid would have to be under water before it reached the doorstep. But we have to follow the dimensions prescribed on this flood hazard map before we can give you a loan. And that house is within the flood hazard boundary."

He produced Federal Insurance Agency Map No. H39 035 7670 01, a map of half the city of South Euclid, pinpointing our house exactly on the inside of the designated flood hazard area.

Perhaps its just as well I'm a reporter. I have a nose for pettifogging officialdom.

"I didn't put those measurements in there," says Stephen Hovancsek, South Euclid's City Engineer. "This isn't my map. The map I sent the Federal Insurance Agency had many more areas shaded in where there have been large numbers of flooded basements. This was supposed to be just a preliminary map, before a more detailed study could be made. It was supposed to allow people to buy flood insurance if they wanted it. I had no idea this map would cost people money."

Who overrode the recommendations of the city engineer? I tracked the culprits to engineers for Gannett-Fleming-Corddory Inc, of Harrisburg, Pa, one of two companies in the U.S. assigned to the Federal Insurance Administration to prepare flood hazard maps. An engineer there admitted that the flood maps were drawn sight unseen, and based on topographical maps, using straight lines that run parallel to roads.

"It does look in this case it would take a lot of water to reach the top of the ravine," he admits.

You're not kidding! Another engineer, to whom I paid $25 for a letter to go to the bank says: "To reach your house the water would have to be half way up the Terminal Tower downtown." ie the entire city of Cleveland under water. I wrote about this in the third person, revealing in the last paragraph that we were the couple in my story. "And we're pretty mad about it!"

We got the mortgage, sans flood insurance.

School desegregation was a close second to Money, although everyone knew busing would cost a lot. I wrote hundreds of thousands of words about Reed vs Rhodes, the federal court case, between March 19 and Dec 26: forty three stories, most of them between Nov 13 and Dec 26.

I have them all before me, neatly photocopied and set out in a thick folder by someone on the Press staff for to be sent off to several national journalism awards contests under 'breaking news.'

"This subject, which could have the most significant effect on Cleveland in its history, was given

concentrated attention by Almond," says the introductory blurb, which I didn't write. "It is continuing with greater intensity into 1976."

My words won a Special Citation from the Education Writers Association in 1976, with the addition of a long interview I did with the man who ordered busing, Federal Judge Frank J. Battistsi (more on that later).

Frankly, it gives me a headache to read through it all. I spent too many hours in court, talking to lawyers and writing it up – often updating it edition by edition as the case progressed each day. If it wasn't for this folder I would have forgotten most of it, in detail anyway. I can't even remember when the name of the case changed from Reed vs Gilligan (the former governor of Ohio) and Reed vs Rhodes, the name of his successor under whose name the case would forever be known.

I do remember the plaintiff, however, Robert Anthony Reed III. He was 17, had a large Afro, and was the first of 14 names on a list of plaintiffs put together by the NAACP. I interviewed him and brother Darryl – similarly tall and slim and also a plaintiff – at his home in Garfield Heights, a suburb but part of the Cleveland school district. With them was their mother Wyona Reed Willis and NAACP lawyer James Hardiman, who ensured they didn't stray into any legally-tricky comments before the case had even started.

"Neither of them, "I wrote, "gave any appearance of being militants, or anything else that might give satisfaction to ultra right-wing separatists. Indeed, Robert answered a question on former Black Panther leaders Eldridge Cleaver and Bobby Seale by asking "who?" He said he did not agree with the aggressive philosophy of Malcolm X.

I kept my opinions to myself, though, when Robert said his current hero was General George S. Patton, the World War II hero, who was white and came from a privileged background, especially after Reed and his family had made it clear he was himself the product of an all-black society and an all-black school. "I used to think all white people were middle class or rich," he said. "I could see them on TV. It was like they were in another world."

But more recently, he said, he had been working in a pancake house, with white kids his age "and they're not so different to us."

All very nicely presented as just normal black people who are no different to white people.

But the appearance was not the reality. Cleveland's black leaders were far from satisfied they wanted the NAACP to take the desegregation case to court at all. As late as November, '75, just one week before the start of the case in federal court, the city's black leaders, led by City Council President George Forbes, were worried about the possibility of blacks being pitted against blacks in a long court battle. They knew their constituents liked neighborhood schools and feared busing.

So 30 of them came together in the top-floor Summit Room of William O. Walker's Call and Post newspaper building to thrash it out with NAACP attorneys Nathaniel Jones, James Hardiman and Thomas Atkins, led by the Rev Austin Cooper, president of the Cleveland branch of the NAACP. It was a no-holds-barred meeting that dragged up the very basics of racial segregation. A meeting, I wrote, the likes of which has seldom been seen in Cleveland. It ended four hours later with an almost complete transformation of attitudes.

“When the history of Cleveland’s school desegregation efforts is finally written a significant section might well be entitled “The day the NAACP won over the Black leaders,” I wrote.

The meeting nearly collapsed before it started. Everyone there was black except for one, NAACP researcher Terry Demchak. There were whisperings, a few glances, and publisher Walker said: “This is a meeting for black folks. What we got to talk about is just between us.”

“Well, that’s too bad,” said NAACP leader Jones. “She’s part of our team, If she goes, we all go.”

As they prepared to leave George Forbes said: “You’re nothing but a bunch of phonies. Leaving? We figured you weren’t serious anyway. If you go, everyone in town’s gonna know the NAACP refused to sit down with Cleveland’s black leaders.”

All the NAACP team left the room, leaving a cabal of leaders huddled in conversation around Walker and Forbes, deciding this was not the time to get hung up on black ideology over the presence at a ‘blacks only’ meeting of one white woman. Jones and Cooper came back to present the NAACP’s case. School Board President Arnold Pinkney asked why the NAACP was using ‘outsiders’ to try to turn Cleveland into another Boston, where busing was wrecking the city’s school desegregation.

“Outsider? There’s no way you can call me or the NAACP outsiders in Cleveland!” said an outraged Jones who, until he became national general counsel for the civil rights organization was a United States attorney in Cleveland. “The NAACP has worked for blacks here for more than 50 years.”

Political posturing, replied Pinkney, implying that some in the NAACP had grudges against him. Going to trial to justify national policies and recoup its legal costs, said someone else. But when asked if the case could still be settled out of court Jones said it had already gone too far, there were constitutional violations that need to be corrected, he said. But when someone said: “Forget the courts and all this trial business,” the NAACP’s Rev Cooper exploded in fury.

“Forget the law? Forget the law?” he cried. “That makes me sick. Don’t you ever say that in my presence again. I come from a part of the country where black folks had their butts kicked all over the countryside and we had no recourse. But here we’ve got the law, and the court, to protect us, to assert ourselves”.

Jones talked about the history of desegregation and the kind of evidence used elsewhere, or manipulation of boundaries, transfer of teachers, construction of school buildings. “Cleveland is no different from elsewhere,” he said to a now-quieter audience. But still the images of busing remained. Jones kept hammering the point: “You’re talking about the remedy. Always the remedy. You can’t even reach that stage without having a declaration that what the School Board has been doing is in violation of the rights of every black child in this city. If you give up your rights and responsibilities to go to court on this subject, if you cop out in this area, you trade off your rights in other areas. You seal your doom in other areas. This thing is much bigger than a school bus.”

One by one people began to leave. The meeting ended on a somber note. The black leaders realized there was no turning back from the trial. George Forbes, the man who had expressed greatest hostility at the start, thanked Nate Jones for staying through the meeting.

“I was looking at some of the expressions on the faces of people here,” said Forbes. “Not only has my mind been changed, but I think a lot of minds have been changed.”

For some reason I now forget, this story did not run until the day after Judge Battisti ruled against the School Board ten months later, Sept 1, 1976. And then it was the paper’s main story.

Memory Flash: *Cleveland Municipal Stadium, June 14, ‘75*

So I said to Charlie as loud as I could: “How are you enjoying Cleveland so far?”

“Great,” said Charlie, twisting his drumsticks around his fingers as he lounged on a sofa. “A great city.”

“Did you know this is the town that came up with Rock ’n’ Roll – the NAME ‘rock ‘n’roll’?” I shouted, unable in all the bedlam to think of something witty, sharp, amusing or truly engaging. Not even “Did you know your car is on a double yellow?” would do it.

Charlie looked a bit surprised and said ‘Oh.’

Then a Roadie stepped in to say something to him, and together they turned to examine a drum, and that was Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones lost to me.

I only had five minutes with the Greatest Rock Band in the World, about to perform a massive gig in the raucous, packed-out 82,000-seat stadium, one of only two press reporters given access to the Stones in their dressing room beneath the building (the other, probably, being the legendary Jane Scott of the Plain Dealer – the’ oldest rock critic in the world.’ I had The Press slot because I had already declared in print my affection for the band from its earliest days, and because I was English the newsdesk thought I might wheedle a little more out of them than Jane, or own Bruno Bornino.

But it was bedlam both outside and inside the stadium, including the dressing room. Mick Jagger was in intense conversation with a woman about microphones. Bill Wyman was curled up in an armchair, his eyes closed and plugs in his ears; Ronnie Wood, newest Stone, wasn’t interested in anything but tuning his guitar; and Keith Richards wasn’t anywhere to be seen. When my five minutes was up Ms PR escorted me out of the stadium.

T’was ever thus. I had interviewed the Stones eight years earlier, in 1967, backstage at the Odeon Theatre in Leeds, England, and it wasn’t much different then. That time I found Keith Richards to be boring, Brian Jones (who drowned, accidentally, in a swimming pool) missing, Charlie Watts downright insulting and Mick Jagger drunk and truculent and sporting a forehead cut inflicted the night before by a ’fan’ who threw a beer can. “The only one still retaining a shred of civility,” I wrote for the Yorkshire Evening Press at the time, “was Bill Wyman, who seemed the least affected by the international fame.’

This time, and again without satisfaction, I faded away back to the paper on nearby E.9th St.

The next morning only my description of the Stones’ preparations made it into the paper (the

latter part was put on a page filled with three large schools stories by me, as if the Rolling Stones somehow had a direct connection to Cleveland schools). Anna and I did get to see the show, however, and it was as good as we expected (although she's not really into Heavy Metal).

After the Ten Cent Beer night at the stadium a year earlier, police were massed in considerable numbers for days before the event, 40 police officers alone dealing with ticket scalpers, 110 off-duty police assisting the stadium security, 79 dealing with illegal parking. Even so, I remember two young lads died when they fell of the stadium's external structure.

A lot of the youngsters at that Stones concert had finished school for the year barely a week earlier, ending a school year marked for its unparalleled lawlessness across Greater Cleveland. A five-part series on it started on June 9 and declared that thousands of teachers and administrators were '**counting the cost of one of the worst years of violence and vandalism in the nation's history.**' In Cleveland 40 students had been expelled for carrying -and sometime using – guns, knives and other weapons, 'more than the schools expelled over the last 30 years combined.'

Herman Imel, properties control supervisor of Cleveland's public schools, said that already by spring vandalism was up 25% over last year. "I am discouraged,' he told me. "If this is any indication, we're in for a very bad summer. As the days get longer, vandalism gets worse".

Our photographer Herman Seid took a heartbreaking picture of students at Adlai Stevenson elementary school hunting through a pile of damaged pictures ripped from walls, trying to see if their own artwork was damaged. Seven boys, aged 10 to 16, were arrested after they smashed windows, ransacked five classrooms and destroyed artwork.

Across Cuyahoga County increasing numbers of children were simply leaving their desks and walking out – or not going to school at all. A teacher at Cleveland Heights High said she was a substitute who came to teach a class and several students just walked out. "They saw I was a substitute so they decided to walk out," she reported. "I told them I would report them to the principal. They just laughed. They could care less."

On one recent Monday at Glenville High School in Cleveland 667 of the school's 2300 students – almost 30% of the total – were marked absent. Almost any spring weekday could find hundreds of youths who should be in school picknicking in Greater Cleveland's Metroparks.

"I'm sorry to say that today the kids are looking jaded even in kindergarten," Mrs Muriel banks, a learning disabilities teacher at Gilbert Elementary school, told me. "I don't know what's wrong. It's rough. Even in kindergarten kids are rude, their language is terrible. All grades have kids who miss school or walk out of a classroom without being dismissed."

What's the answer? Big, controversial question. I spent a lot of time asking experts from across the country for their recommendations. Some said they should do as Catholic schools and return to dress codes, even if only a couple of days a week when they are required to wear school uniforms. Some said the school leaving age should

be lowered from 18 to 16, or even 14. Corporal punishment wasn't an alternative, although some Ohio schools still used it.

Ohio was one of only five states in America that had compulsory school attendance until 18. The others were Hawaii, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah and Washington state; none with big city problems comparable to Cleveland. David Moberly, former superintendent of Cleveland Heights schools, who moved to head Evanston school district in suburban Chicago, said: "I feel that if the kids here were forced to stay in school until they were 18, like we had in Cleveland heights, we would really have to fight a battle." But with few jobs to go to at 14 or 16 would these dropout kids be targets for troublemakers and criminals?

Personally, I thought that the sheer size of most high schools – 2,500 to 3000 students, while providing wide-ranging and cost-effective facilities – made American high schools too impersonal, and too formulaic. But what sort of an expert was I, from a foreign country?

Memory flash: ***Walhonding, Ohio. July 1975***

We're back at one of our favorite camp sites, next to the Mohican River. The six of us – Anna, me, Jim, Marcy, Al and Nancy, have had a delightful day slowly paddling downstream for 15 miles, looking out for the Sparrow Hawks, finches, Egrets and, of course, the state bird of Ohio, the Red Cardinal. We've grounded a couple of times, trailed our fingers in the water, eaten our sandwiches and listened to the quiet.

Now we're sitting around a campfire eating marshmallows, drinking wine and someone is reading a creepy story aloud. If Daniel Day-Lewis doesn't leap out of the darkness with a blood-curdling scream I wouldn't be surprised.

But what IS that noise? A slight hissing from the darkened river.

"Can you hear that noise?" say I.

Someone points a flashlight towards the river. There are MILLIONS of white-looking flying bugs streaming down the river.

"Fireflies!" says Jim, our expert for all things outdoors (since he is, indeed, The Press' Outdoors Writer).

"I'll turn a headlight on them," say I, thinking we could see this annual migration better.

"NO! Don't!" says Jim. "They'll turn this….!"

He didn't get to say "way"! because they were already doing it. Attracted by my car headlights the mllions of fireflies automatically turned left towards the brightest light, which happened to be adjacent to our campfire. Argghhh! I quickly turned off the headlights and the fireflies- after some flappy confusion that seemed to involve marshmallows – rediscovered their original march upriver.

Another narrow escape for Yours Truly. Phew!

WALHONDING SIX. Yes, you're laughing now, but you weren't last night when the fireflies came! Press reporters Almond, Dudas and Thompson – and their wives – canoe-camping on the Mohican River, central Ohio, in 1975.

One thing about being an education writer in the 70s was that it suggested my education included a significant understanding of science and mathematics. It doesn't, and it certainly didn't in March, 1975, when I was asked to write a piece about the new phenomenum of calculators in schools.

Hand-held calculators had only become available in 1972, when they quickly became popular with businessmen on airplanes, housewives in supermarkets, taxpayers at home. But for sixth graders (11-year-olds) at schools?

Driven partly by a report by the quasi-government National Advisory Committee on Mathematical Education (NACOME) eighth graders and above across the country were recommended to have access to calculators for all classwork and exams. This caused ructions in American schools and with parents. Kids being told they can use a MACHINE for the four basics: add, subtract, multiply and divide? How is THAT going to help children whose brains can barely add 10 and 5 together?

But slowly, school district by school district, Cleveland area children had started to get them, on the principle that they help you get over the basics and on into more advanced math much quicker and with fewer mistakes – 30

seconds for basic calculations against several minutes working it out on paper, with a chance of getting it wrong. I remember at school in the 60s that I failed an exam involving quadratic equations because I had mentally added or subtracted one basic figure that produced a wrong answer.

Ten years later, it was the Litronix 2230 which could instantly do the basics, with a square root function, a memory function and an error function. Some of the cheaper hand-helds with basic functions cost only $20 each ($100 in 2020), within the budget of some of the wealthier schools in the area. Shaker Heights' Dad's Club bought $500 worth of six-digit calculators for the school system's 6th graders which spent two weeks at each of the city's nine elementary schools. Candy sales at Mooney Junior High in Cleveland bought 24 calculators at $28 apiece.

The arguments were building for and against. "Generally, they should not be used by youngsters who still do not understand why the calculator does what it does", the head of the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics, told me. "In Junior high I think they should be used as soon as they are fair to all kids. By the ninth grade all students should be required to use them".

In October my mother came to visit our new house in South Euclid. "MUCH better than that flat," she said. We went off traveling: via York, Pennsylvania where, of course, I took a picture of Mom standing next to the York sign so she could show it to her friends and family back in York, England. Not exactly a suitable response to her gift to us of a large, limited-edition encased ceramic plate marking the 1700th year of York's founding by the Romans. And then to Gettysburg, to Washington DC, and Jamestown, Virginia where, besides copies of the original ships that crossed from England in 1607, we discovered the still-new concept of 'factory outlets,' retail stores which were just a shade below top-quality, and thus attractively cheap.

Then on to North Carolina's Outer Banks, where we discovered The Wind which helped the Wright Brothers get their Flyer into the air at nearby Kill Devil Hills.

We camped at Pea Island, my mother lying between Anna and me in our sleeping bags as the wind shook our tent all night and where, in the morning, Mum was filmed briskly trying to catch the wind-caught cornflakes as they were poured from box to bowl -a futile endeavour. We were grateful that the wind had dropped considerably when I put her into our Sea Eagle inflatable canoe and I pushed her out to sea for her first-ever paddle. Fortunately, only Anna ever knew of my mounting panic as she started drifting away.

The next month came a reminder that wind and sea disasters are not exclusive to oceans like the Atlantic, but can reach deep inland to the Great Lakes.

On Nov 10, a month after Pea Island, the 26,000-ton iron ore carrier Edmund Fitzgerald sank in a ferocious storm on Lake Superior. All 29 of its crew died. It was not the worst disaster of the Great Lakes (that was undoubtedly the sinking of the SS Eastland in 1915, which rolled on its side while docked on the Chicago River, killing 848 passengers and crew). But the Edmund Fitzgerald is much more remembered because the wreck lay undetected at the bottom of Lake Superior for many years, because none of its crew were recovered, and mostly because of a haunting song**: The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald, by Gordon Lightfoot.**

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6DUFPNILvM

It's a long, toughly-emotional folksong that echoes a saying of Lake Superior's Chippewa tribe:

"The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down
Of the big lake they called Gitche Gumee
Superior, they said, never gives up her dead
When the gales of November come early."

And its connection to Cleveland? The Edmund Fitzgerald called on Cleveland and most of the Great lakes' steel-making ports (despite what Lightfoot sings, however, it was NOT headed for Cleveland on Nov 10,'75 but to Detroit). It was owned by the Cleveland-based firm Oglebay Norton and about a third of the crew came from the Cleveland area, including its senior officers.

And for one newly-naturalized English Clevelander five years later it would be known as the tune to rewritten lyrics by Bobby Sands, a leader of the Provisional IRA who died on hunger strike in the Maze prison, Belfast, in May, 1981, a major moment of the barely-settled multi-generational Troubles between Catholic Irish and Protestant Ulsterman and women. Sands' song: 'Back Home in Derry,' described the voyage of Irish convicts to Australia after the rebellion of 1803.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iheirlzWZuY

Almost nothing was said at his death about what he was convicted for.

But I knew what Sands had done, because I was there three hours after he and his gang blew up the storeroom of the Balmoral Furniture Co in Dunmurry, Northern Ireland in October, 1976, almost a year after the Edmund Fitzgerald. My story that Nov 8 was the lead on Page 1 of the Cleveland Press, the first of a six-part series I wrote for the paper at what was to become known at the peak of The Troubles.

It was also a memorable moment for Anna, who was in a bedroom of a Dunmurry hotel – trying to catch an escaped parakeet and awaiting my return from a flak-jacketed patrol with the British Army – when the explosions shook her window and soldiers ran across the neighboring golf course in pursuit of what turned out to be Sands and his IRA gang.

At his death in May, 1981 The Press re-ran that story of 1976, describing for all suburban housewives how Mrs Agnes Nicholls, ‘a homey, middle-class woman living in a semi-detached house in a suburb, has just discovered that she lives in a war zone.” She had been upstairs making beds when she heard sharp cracks outside, watched police and soldiers running and shouting and shooting “bang, bang, bang, very fast’. A man lay wounded by her front gate, she found the gun he threw away, then the bombs went off. The four others, including Sands, were caught in a car shortly afterwards.

That’s the thing about terrorists: you never know where and when they will strike.

More about The Troubles in the next chapter.

Memory Flash: *S. Belvoir Blvd, South Euclid, Xmas 1975*

We're having a house-warming party, proudly showing off the stressed late-medieval heavy dark oak hutch and extendable solid oak dining table with Windsor chairs that we bought new from Higbees store downtown. And the new carpeting and neat low circular table in the living room. And all our little knick-knacks brought over from England, including the set of lovable little Golliwogs.

Little WHAT?

Golliwogs. To quote from Wikipedia[2]: "The golliwog, golliwogg or golly is a doll-like character – created by cartoonist and author Florence Kate Upton – that appeared in children's books in the late 19th century, usually depicted as a type of rag doll. It was reproduced, both by commercial and hobby toy-makers, as a children's toy called the "golliwog",
a portmanteau of golly and polliwog and had great popularity in the UK and Australia into the 1970s. The doll is characterised by jet black skin, eyes rimmed in white, exaggerated red lips and frizzy hair, a blackface minstrel tradition'.

Anna's mother had made them for her when she was a child. She played with them and slept with them, along with her teddy bears and other dolls. They were well-established in British culture, written in the Noddy children's books of Enid Blyton and appearing on every jar of Robertson's jam. The firm would even send you a Golliwog brooch. I had one once.

We never thought anything of it – until that day in our own house when we saw a few of our black friends standing close together and looking with serious expressions at our Gollies. They said nothing to us, but smiled politely. It was only later that we learned these little dolls were offensive to people of color in America.

To quote Wiki again: "The doll is widely recognized as racist. While some people see the doll as an innocuous toy associated with childhood, it is considered by others as a racist caricature of black Africans alongside pickaninnies, minstrels, and mammy figures. The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia described the golliwog as "the least known of the major anti-Black caricatures in the United States"

Oh dear. We're not in Kansas any more, Honey Bun, I thought as I prepared for the New Year and more months of school desegregation court battles.

2. "Golliwog." Wikipedia. April 4, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golliwog

Chapter 8. Cleveland, 1976

Its America's Bicentennial. Two hundred years, and still going! Hooray! Down with King George III and the British! Up with Freedom, Justice, and the American Way!

What a year. For me it started with the return to federal court of the NAACP and the Cleveland School Board fighting it out over school desegregation, to Columbus to judge Ohio schools' best Bicentennial essay, to England for a family vacation, to Northern Ireland where Anna was nearly blown up by the IRA, and back to hear The Eagles' latest and probably most famous record, Hotel California:

With its beginning:

On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair
Warm smell of colitas, rising up through the air
Up ahead in the distance, I saw a shimmering light
My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim
I had to stop for the night
There she stood in the doorway;
I heard the mission bell
And I was thinking to myself,
"This could be Heaven or this could be Hell"

And its ending:

You can check-out any time you like,
But you can never leave! "

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVsbvFkhzY4 *(6:40 mins)*

Singer/songwriter/drummer Don Henley once described the Hotel California as carrying with it the same connotations of powerful imagery, mystique, etc "that fires the imaginations of people in all corners of the globe… created by the film and music industry….. It's not set in the Old West, the cowboy thing, you know. It's more urban this time.

"It's our bicentennial year, you know, the country is 200 years old, so we figured since we are the Eagles and the Eagle is our national symbol we were obliged to make some kind of little bicentennial statement using California as a microcosm of the whole United States, or the whole world, if you will, and try to wake people up and say "We've been okay so far, for 200 years, but we're gonna have to change if we're gonna continue to be around."

Fifty years later it was arguable that nothing, really, had changed, at least as far as American society was concerned. The poor were still poor, the rich got richer, crime was often as bad as ever, the climate was approaching crisis, And racial conflict was still making headlines.

Indeed. **BLACK LIVES MATTER**, the protest call of the early 2020s, could have been the motto for the Cleveland schools desegregation case, which continued to occupy my full attention when it restarted in federal court in early January, 1976.

At its heart was a 16ft by 12ft aerial map of the city of Cleveland that the NAACP had positioned in the vacant jury box of the court. It showed every school in the system, with each school's boundary lines for enrollment purposes. Transparent overlays were used by the prosecution lawyers to make their case that boundaries were made to keep this part of the city racially segregated from that part.

Mayor Perk and the City of Cleveland wanted to join the school board in the case, but were fiercely denied by Judge Frank J. Battisti. He was even fiercer with a group of black parents who wanted to be heard separately in

the trial. Instead we got the same lawyers questioning and cross-questioning out-of-town experts about their own competence, experience and conclusions. At one point, though, Cleveland's most famous politician, former mayor Carl Stokes, was on the stand to testify for the NAACP.

I, and sometimes my colleague Bud Weidenthal, spent days and days listening to complex arguments about statistics ("that's completely out of date" "Oh no it's not"); geography ("There's a wide gully between this school and that school, you can't just walk across it"); legal history ("the Supreme Court ruled in Milliken vs Bradley (Detroit), "Swann vs Charlotte-Mecklenburgh (N. Carolina)" or "Keyes vs school district No 1 (Denver"); and staff employment ("this black community demanded black food, black teachers, black principals" "No, we worked hard to mix white teachers in black schools, and black ones in white schools").

And so on. In detail. Vast amounts of ink.

Memory flash: *Cleveland 1973?)*

I'm watching an episode (repeat) of the sci-fi TV series Star Trek, It's called "Let That be your Last Battlefield' and is about the spaceship Enterprise being caught in a battle between the last two survivors of a centuries-old war between two human-looking aliens with great destructive powers. The only way to tell them apart is that they are half black and half white: that is, one side of their faces is black and the other side white, the difference being that one is black on the left side, and the other is black on the right side.

No matter that Captain Kirk steps in and tries to calm them down, they are utterly committed to destroying each other. I seem to remember that as the Enterprise flies away they activate a self-destruct system, and then 'poof' there are no more black and white aliens at all in their galaxy.

I'm not saying this case is motivated by hate, far from it, but there are powerful emotions about segregation that can, and have, generated anger.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev10K4hgRtQ

Indeed.

For that emotion in court, we had the experience of Yvonne Flonnoy.

Miss Flonnoy was a 21-year-old black product of Cleveland's public schools. And for the first time in the trial we heard the details of what it was like to be racially discriminated against. She told of black children being required to put their heads on their desks when white children left the classroom; of being unable to go to the toilet at the same time as a white child, of her teacher giving gold stars to white children on a chart but sticking her gold star on her forehead.

She told of white children being punished by having to stand for five or ten minutes but black children being punished by being struck across the hand with a ruler. And for a whole year at an elementary school she was never allowed to visit other parts of the school, such as the swimming pool, gymnasium or library.

By Jan 23 '76 the NAACP had finished presenting its case: 300 examples that it said proved that schools were built in black areas rather than mixed ones, by changing district lines in ways that intensified segregation, and by allowing white pupils to transfer out of predominantly black schools.

The Press opined that this was the halfway point in the trial and that "it would not be surprising if many believed the NAACP has just about taken the ball into the end zone." But that would be a mistake, the School Board now had its turn.

"This newspaper has given the trial intensive coverage, aware as we are of the enormously important social implications," said The Press' lead editorial. "We hope readers have been following the trial closely and will continue to do so as it enters its second and final phase.

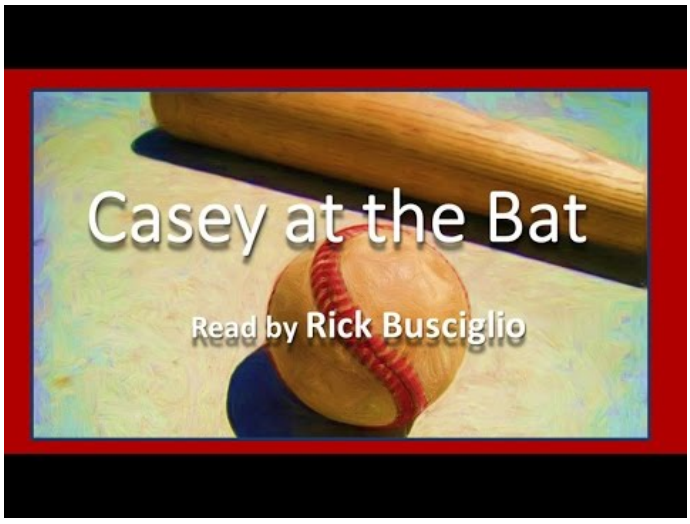
"Certainly, the proceedings in the trial are not glamorous, and they are often tedious. But a person who has kept abreast of what has been going on in the courtroom will at least understand the reasons behind whatever decision the judge finally makes."

I've highlighted this because 50 years later, as I was preparing to do jury service in England one last time, I was aware and appalled that the public in America, Britain and elsewhere around the globe could no longer receive such detailed court reporting as a routine matter. Of course TV and radio carried bulletins of high-profile cases, and social media could provide the latest short updates, but nothing could replace a willing, experienced, independent organization committed to public service than a properly-funded local newspaper.

The case went on with the School Board presenting its arguments, with its chief witness, of course, being Supt Briggs (his preferred title of 'Doctor' was an honorary one, admitted his lead attorney), as the man who had run the schools for the previous 12 years. **"Casey is at bat,"** was the comment of one NAACP lawyer to their most vigorous grilling of any witness yet in the case.

For the uninitiated, which included me, 'Casey at bat' is perhaps the most famous poem in American sports history, written by Ernest Thayer and first published in the San Francisco Examiner in 1888. It is a tale of public hope and confidence in a renowned baseball player who comes to bat at a vital point to save a game in the fictional town of Mudville. But, despite the huge encouragement of the home crowd, Casey's arrogance and overconfidence are his own undoing:

"Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
the band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
and somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;
but there is no joy in Mudville — mighty Casey has struck out."



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Did Casey (Briggs) strike out in his testimony to federal court?

I don't think he did, not by the prevailing standards of the time, anyway. Neighborhood schools were the first priority of almost every school district in America. The public wanted them – black and white. Parents wanted their children close at hand, where they could easily walk home, where their friends and neighbours lived, where they formed a community of like-minded interests.

Battisti himself insisted that his grilling of Briggs did not indicate he had already made up his mind about the case. "My goodness," he told the court, "I would have to be devoid of any sensibilities at all to sit here for all this time and not realize this. It is painfully clear that segregation doesn't equal liability."

He did not want his comments about white flight and the public's fears of desegregation to imply "a callousness on the part of the court as to the convictions of the public".

Briggs told the court that when he became superintendent in 1964 the physical state of Cleveland's public schools was among the worst in the nation, and his priority was to rebuild them. With strong public support and finance he ensured at least one new school every year.

One new **SEGREGATED** school, the NAACP retorted. And indeed, even I was aware at my school in England in 1963 that America was changing, as that year Alabama Governor George Wallace "stood at the schoolhouse door" and tried to block the admission of two black children. Against the might of the federal government he lost.

Briggs and others tried every which way to integrate schools by such means as new 'Magnet Schools' to attract black and white students to specialist education, events with suburban schools, introducing white teachers into black schools and vice versa. Many black schools were overcrowded. How could he NOT build new schools there?

What was the alternative?

Apart from involving all the suburbs, the only one mentioned in the case was busing, forcibly moving children from one side of the city to the other in the morning and back in the afternoon in order to put black and white together in the classroom. Briggs knew there was very little public appetite for that. He could read the school enrolment figures better than anyone: thousands of white parents – and some black parents – were leaving the city for better housing in the suburbs, meaning city schools were increasingly black or white. And private schools were alternatives for those who could afford them.

But I'm not so sure there wasn't another way: the reordering of housing, public and private. It had already been shown that the Home Owners Loan Corporation, a product of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal of the

1930s, used maps of cities across the country that color-coded urban areas high risk (unprofitable) and low risk (profitable): in racial terms black and white. Insurance companies used them after World War II to show where urban areas were risky business, or not.

Yet federal agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which had considerable control over where the taxpayers' money was spent, were not nearly as prominent as defendants as I had expected. Neither were federal courts themselves held responsible for failing to ensure government largesse from the 1930s to the 60s did not result in segregation. And while the Cleveland School Board and the state of Ohio said they couldn't be blamed for housing patterns – and were not obliged to follow HUD's policies anyway – they did not do enough on their own to encourage desegregation.

The legal key to the case, both sides agreed, was 'intent': ie did the Cleveland schools **intend** to encourage segregation when they made certain decisions, such as building new schools in segregated areas when they knew it was against federal law? If they did then they were clearly guilty as charged. If they didn't then they were still guilty if they knew, or should have known, it would result in an increase or perpetuation of racial segregation.

If Judge Battisti did conclude the schools were guilty of intentional segregation, claimed School Board attorney Charles Clarke, it would be the first time in the history of the United States that the neighborhood school concept had been ruled a violation of the US Constitution. The case would then go to appeal, and probably to the US Supreme Court.

Looking beyond a favorable decision, NAACP attorney Nathaniel Jones made one last pitch for the remedy to include full involvement of all the Cleveland suburbs.

By the middle of March the case was concluded and left to Judge Battisti to decide.

I had been watching him and talking to him and to others for months and was fairly sure he would rule against the school board. He was a very intelligent man, who because of his personal background, his legal experience and his interest in humanities and political development would not accept the status quo.

FEDERAL JUDGE Frank J. Battisti.

He was tough, bold, liberal, decisive, strict, opinionated – and powerful, because as a federal judge he could not be removed except by congressional impeachment.

A lot of people said he was obviously biased in the way he conducted his interrogations of witnesses. But that did not necessarily reveal the way he would rule on a case. One example was his pressing questioning of an air-traffic controller during a plane-crash case a year earlier. Government lawyers felt sure they had lost the case, yet Battisti ultimately ruled in their favor. He also upset very many people across the nation when he dismissed civil charges against eight National Guardsmen who shot and killed four student Vietnam-war protesters at Kent State University in 1974.

“To paraphrase Winston Churchill,” I once wrote, “Frank J. Battisti is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. If there is anything consistent about him it is contradiction.”

He was born in nearby Youngstown in 1922, the son of an immigrant from a village in northern Italy who became a steel worker in Youngstown. He went to Ohio University in 1941, wanted to be a lawyer but – without telling his mother – joined the army, ending up as a combat engineer who saw action in Normandy and Belgium. He returned to Ohio U, got a degree in political science in two years and graduated from Harvard University after three years.

He started out in private practice in Youngstown in 1956, but found himself unsatisfied with it. **He had done some legal work for the local Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and felt he had a calling as a priest. He told one of the Provincials of his desire and asked if he would be expected to continue to do the Order's legal work. "Yes," his boss replied. Said Battisti: "He turned to me and said very stiffly, 'Frank, I think we should end this right here,' and walked out. I was stunned. But I knew that it was final and I decided to go into public service."**

He ran for Common Pleas Court in Youngstown, lost, and was elected two years later. Through that city's Congressman, Robert Kirwan, he was appointed to the federal bench by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Two years later he met and married Gloria Karpinski, who became a national expert on penal reform, served on the Ohio Pardon and Parole Commission, the Cleveland Library Board, and headed the sociology department of Notre Dame College.

Quite a powerful political couple.

It was also no secret to the Cleveland schools case that Battisti was a long-time friend of the NAACP's chief prosecutor, Nathaniel Jones, who also grew up in Youngstown. They met in the 1950s when both earned a few extra dollars teaching law at Youngstown College. Jones also went on to be a federal judge, together with Battisti becoming known as Youngstown's most prominent lawyers. A new building completed in the center of the city in 2002 was named as the Frank J. Battisti and Nathaniel R. Jones Federal Building and United States Courthouse. (perhaps it needed to be a big building to get all that into a nameplate!).

I wrote about the Battisti and Jones link deep in the last of a four-column profile of Battisti on March 11. The Sunday Plain Dealer, however, picked it up and made it a feature story three days later, the unspoken suggestion being that 'the fix was in,' in favor of the NAACP.

Maybe it was. It had long crossed my mind. But having gone through a few painful racial experiences since I arrived in Cleveland my mind was sensitive to the public damage it could cause if I highlighted it. My editors kept it where it was.

Indeed, the PD's story was identified in court as the single exception to the media's 'excellent' coverage of the case. NAACP attorney Thomas Atkins referred to it in court as "efforts to intimidate the court itself," which in turn brought the quick addition from Battisti that this 'did not serve the public good,' adding to colleague Bud Weidenthal that "such occurrences outside the courtroom would in no way effect the conduct inside"'.

Otherwise, we, the local newspapers, were awarded high praise by Battisti and Jones. Battisti said: "My feelings about a free press are extremely strong…. And frankly what I have read of the day to day coverage of the trial

has been quite fair and well done." Jones said**: "I do feel that the media coverage has been extremely valuable overall. Some of the best I've seen.** "

"One of the problems we had in Detroit was that the violation phase of the case was not reported." He told Weidenthal that the extremely strong negative reaction to the busing order in Detroit was at least in part because they (the public) were unaware of the extent of the evidence. "That is not true here," he said. The School Board's lawyers saved their comments on the press until after their final arguments.

In hindsight, 50 years later, perhaps I should have made more of the Battisti – Jones connection, because the whole busing thing fell apart anyway after the Millennium. But that was then…

Memory flash: *Boston, Mass. April 11 76*

I'm on a school bus winding around the streets of this old colonial city. There's tension in the air.

It is a week after the city made national and international headlines over the 'flag incident:' a photograph showing a young white man viciously thrusting a sharpened pole carrying a Stars and Stripes flag at a black lawyer who happened to be passing.

The picture by photographer Stanley Forman, which went on to win a Pulitzer Prize under the caption: 'The soiling of Old Glory," featured the fury of a student called Joseph Rakes, who later said he thought busing would take away half his friends.

The Boston newspapers are carrying stories that tell of millions of dollars wasted by inefficient school bus operators at city hall, and that Mayor Kevin White has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court asking that the increasingly-difficult schools desegregation order be modified to an 'acceptable' level. Cleveland's Mayor Ralph Perk is the first mayor in the country to join him in his argument.

What I'm finding is ominous for Cleveland if Judge Battisti rules there must be busing.

In Boston, which started busing in 1970, 17,000 children have left the school system in the last two years. My bus ride is taking me from a school in mostly-white Charlestown to mostly black Nathan Hale elementary in Roxbury, a mere four miles via a long tunnel. For the principal at Hale busing is a failure because only four of the 49 white children scheduled to be bused actually arrived that day. The yellow school bus has been cancelled: the four now come by taxi paid by the school board.

There is hope, though, at English High School, one of the oldest in America, which is less volatile and more affluent. Desegregation has gone from 95% black to 45% black, 41% white and 14% Spanish-speaking in the last 20 months. It is a city-wide school that puts on extra buses after school to enable many new activities.

School administrator James Buckley tells me that in the first year of desegregation blacks and

whites sat at separate tables in the dining room. "Next year there were more friendships and now you see lots of racial mixing at lunch."

Student Mark Higginbottom, a black senior, disagrees. He sees little racial mixing, little to keep blacks and whites from fighting.

"Man, the best thing about this school is Friday nights," he tells me, anticipating weekends at home.

And so on to the Bicentennial summer. I don't remember much about the Ohio schools essay competition I spent a weekend judging in Columbus, but I do have a copy of the looong piece I was asked to write on my view of America for the Press on Bicentennial eve, July 3, 1976. It started at the top of one page and skipped to the bottom of another. **Headline: An Englishman's view – America is still divided**.

I started with the body over the telephone wires I saw outside Cleveland's central police station on that bitterly cold dawn in January, 1970, and went on through a lot of contradictory adverbs to say, within a couple of hundred words, "**This is one of the most difficult journalistic tasks I have ever undertaken. For the answer is, I'm not yet sure I really know."**

The next thousand or more words amplified my uncertainty with examples: what I thought six years ago had changed, and as America had changed so had I. "There have been times when I thought I could say: "Aha! That's it. That's what America is all about!" But something else would come along and completely confound it" I wrote.

"Britain is a far more homogenous country. Its national history is long, its culture deeper, its class divisions more rigid. There is such a tremendous gap between a Mexican-American construction worker in Arizona and a Polish-American construction worker in Chicago, both in cultural background and geographic location, that the bond between them is much harder to forge.

"To me that gap helps to explain why national personalities, products, companies and organizations are given so much attention in the media – from movies to TV and radio. Comedians joke about Right Guard, Alka Seltzer, Richard Nixon and Jimmy Cagney, recognized across America whoever you are and wherever you are." … All this is to say that the fabric of American society is still being woven, and that consequently the IDEA of national unity is much less a reality than it is in England. (This is written nearly 50 years before the United Kingdom sometimes gives an impression of dissolution!)

"It forces into greater prominence the magnificent United States Constitution, and from it a deep respect – even blind adherence – to the written law. That's not always been easy for me to accept as an Englishman, because there seems to be stronger national consensus in Britain, whereas in America there is wider divergence of attitudes and values."

There is more in the piece specifically about Cleveland, and three cartoon illustrations (cop giving me a speeding ticket; scribbling into a notebook as buildings burn from rioters; watching Archie Bunker on TV saying 'Stifle').'

July 4 itself is a complete blank. I guess Anna and I met friends, ate hot dogs and watched fireworks or marching bands – or both. Or perhaps we had a Big Mac Attack: "Twoallbeefpattiesspecialsaucelettucecheesepicklesonionsonasesame-seed bun."

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dK2qBbDn5W0

Memory flash: ***Lakewood Park, west Cleveland, summer 1976***

Walt, Pete, Jerry, Wally and the other guys from the newsroom who make up the Press softball team have kindly let me have a shot or two at America's summer game, softball.

"Let's have a little bingo here!" shouts Walt in encouragement as the pitcher lets fly with the fastest underarm pitch I've ever seen. It's a big ball, larger than a baseball, and designed to be hit – for more fun.

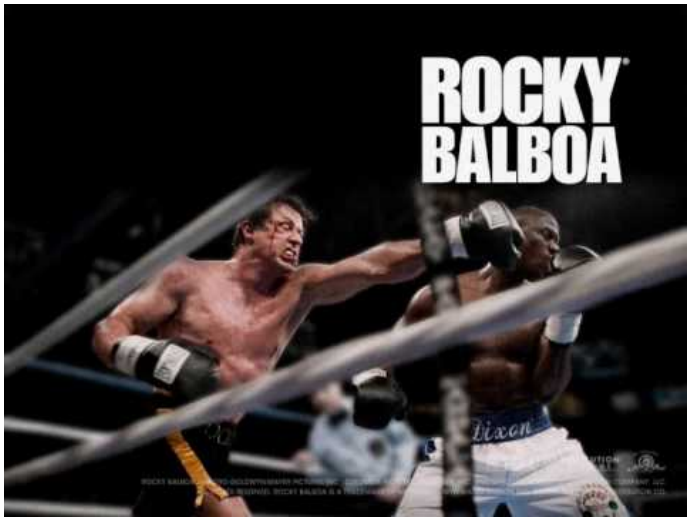
"Swing – and a miss," as every commentator says every time a player strikes out.

Once in a while I did connect with the ball, and off I'd run to first base, even second. Did I ever get all the way round for a score? I can't remember. But it was fun, I was able to take all the joshing – "Hey, Almond, hold the bat like you do for cricket!" – and I now look at the wooden bat behind my chair with the word 'Press' on the handle with considerable nostalgia. (a compound word from the ancient Greek 'nosta' meaning 'Homecoming' and 'algos' meaning 'pain' or ache').

And so to running, at which I was a bit better.

PRESS RUNNERS. Six of the Cleveland Press' finest runners (cough, choke) put themselves through some training in Cleveland Heights for next year's Cleveland-Revco 10K race, partly sponsored by The Press. From left to right: Jim Braham, Peter Phipps, Peter Bloomfield, Reed Hinman, Peter Almond, and Jim Dudas (They would win First Place Media Team Newspapers).

And at the movies I know we had the arrival of Rocky: Sylvester Stallone as the rags-to-riches wannabe boxing champ, with its stirring music and on TV 'Jiggle TV' from Charlie's Angels, starring gorgeous crime fighters Farah Fawcett-Majors, Kate Jackson and Jaclyn Smith.



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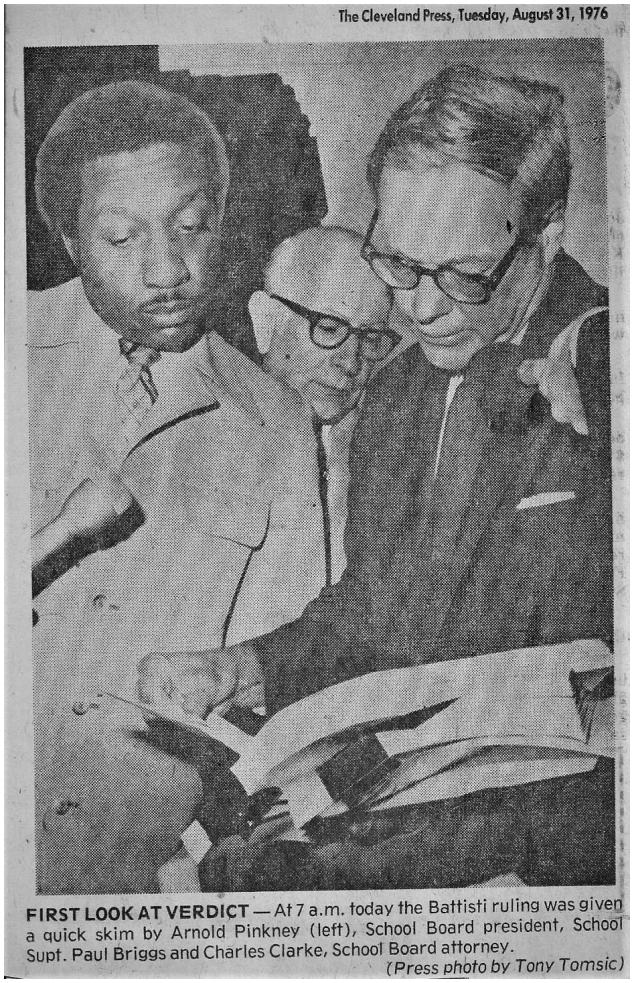
Judge Battisti ruled on the desegregation case on Aug 31. Guilty, as expected.



THE VERDICT. Judge Battisti's verdict on the school's desegregation case came in shopping carts at the federal courthouse, and cost $50 each. The Press recorded the moment the first one was delivered at 7am at the courthouse, and was opened by School Board President Arnold Pinkney (left), Schools Supt Paul W. Briggs and board chief attorney Charles Clarke.

His 203-page ruling – which came in shopping carts and cost $50 each – made no mention of the kind of remedy to go into effect, but ordered the state and Cleveland school boards to come up with a plan in 90 days, assisted by a court-appointed expert and advisory committee. Battisti found that the majority of segregation examples cited by the NAACP were proven, but was charitable towards the school officials involved, saying they were, in all probability, responding to the social and political pressures of the day.

"Clearly since the 1940s there has been an enormous rethinking as to how public officials should treat racial issues," he said. "Indeed, this process continues this very moment."

Well, not strictly the **very moment** the ruling came off the printing presses. Battisti was already halfway to his ranch in Montana, where he took a long vacation and went fishing.

And so did Anna and I take off – for England and Ireland, – a few days later. We knew it would take time for a

full remedy to be worked out, including the inevitable appeal to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals (it took two years) and we needed a break. So we took ourselves back to Blighty for six weeks, the latter two being in Ireland, both South and North….

…….Where we would swap Black vs White American societal conflicts for Catholic vs Protestant in Northern Ireland ones. At the end I gave The Cleveland Press a six-part series at the peak of 'The Troubles.'

BELFAST, N IRELAND, October 1976.

It was her eyes that have stayed with me: dull, lifeless eyes, sunk into a grim, tired face. The face of a revolutionary, with a flat voice delivering the same lines time after time.

This was Mrs Marie Moore, one of eight members of the council of the Sinn Fein, political wing of the IRA. She was middle-aged, pudgy, simply dressed, with nicotine-stained fingers, and was a life-long Republican and community activist. She had lived in a house in the Clonard area of Belfast where, in 1942, IRA member Tom Williams was arrested for the murder of a police officer because he was one of the minority of Catholics in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The officer left behind a wife and nine children. Williams was executed.

Mrs Moore was not a killer, but she made no secret of her support for the Irish Republican Army. "I don't know how the freedom fighters select their targets," she told me at the IRA's 'headquarters' at the Celtic Bar on the Falls Rd (yes, there was an IRA headquarters – if only an administrative one), "but you must remember we are living in an occupied country.

"The British made heroes out of the French Resistance fighters when they attacked troops and Germans and their French collaborators in World War II. We're fighting for the same goals as the French Resistance."

"Every generation has proved that with the British here, there will always be some sort of trouble. If the British went, I don't think there would be civil war. I think the Protestant people will look at a federal style of government for the whole of Ireland. They would still be in charge of a regional government in the north."

Mrs Moore was seeing me not because she knew I was British – and certainly not because she knew I had been with the British Army in Germany in 1969 when troops came to Belfast as 'saviours' to the Catholics – but because I had travelled here from Cleveland, Ohio, where there were a lot of Irish men and women who support her cause. Indeed, she said she had just returned from a fund-raising trip in the United States.

It was clear to me, though, that she was not quite on the same page as Cleveland's IRA supporters. There, in my view, they simply wanted a united Ireland, whatever it took. Mrs Moore though, would not accept what the 'Irish Free State (Eire)' had to offer at that time: "completely controlled by the Catholic Church, controlled economically by England. We want a socialism that suits Ireland."

(It is important to note there were/are two IRA's: the original, older Irish Republican Army was Marxist-Leninist who thought reunification with the South could only come about with peace between Catholics and Protestants, and the newer Provisional IRA (PIRA) which thought unification could only be achieved by attacking British commercial and military interests)

(Marie Moore went on to become secretary to Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams when he won the West Belfast MP seat, served four terms on Belfast City Council, and was heavily involved in support of the Dirty protest of Bobby Sands, the IRA bomber whose handiwork Anna and I would see within hours. She died in 2009, aged 72).

As mentioned previously, it was Anna's opening of a window at her hotel in suburban Dunmurry – to try to catch an escaped parakeet – that probably saved her from injury when Bobby Sands and five of his PIRA gang blew up a furniture storehouse nearby. Other hotel windows were blown in; hers were intact because she had them open. That incident was the one involving housewife Mrs Agnes Nichols, who was featured in the opening part of my Northern Ireland series on the front page of the Press on November 8, 1976. Headline: '**It's not much of a life here anymore.'**

They say in Northern Ireland that if you stand still long enough trouble will surely find you. Most people kept moving in those days. To a visitor making their first visit Northern Ireland in 1976 it was an affront to the senses: a profound shock that a part of Europe can officially be at peace and yet be in a permanent state of siege. Every hotel, public house, bank, government building and meeting hall was surrounded by barbed wire and steel drums filled with concrete – to minimize the effects of car bombs.

Fortunately for us, by the time we arrived in early October the record-setting hot weather that had turned Ireland and the UK into mini-Californias for the previous three months had changed to cool and wet, just the kind of weather for appropriately gloomy photos.

We had been amazed at the sight of light brown fields instead of the green hills of home as we made our final descent into Heathrow, and surprised even more when, after visiting families and friends, we arrived by sea into Cork, Irish Republic, and saw the landscape as badly hit by drought as in England.

We started out as tourists, kissing the Blarney Stone, driving around the Ring of Kerry in the south west, to Galway Bay, to the fabulous Ballylickey country house where we fell in love with the owner's two Labradors, and back to Cork. A history lesson of the 800 years of England and Ireland's fractious relationship. You can take it back further, to St Patrick, who came to Ireland from England in 461 AD as a Romano-British missionary to convert Irish heathens to Christianity at about the same time as heathen Angles, Saxons and Jutes were converting most of the Christian English to heathens.

This helps, perhaps, to explain the ancient strength of Catholicism in Ireland while England' s Henry VIII rejected the Pope in 1530 and sent Protestants from Scotland and England to take land away from the Irish in the north. The scene was set for a series of rebellions that was hardly settled by the Irish Republic becoming an independent free state in 1921.

But the further south you were from Ulster the less concerned about The Troubles the Irish appeared to be. In

Cork, for instance and perhaps surprisingly, I found many southern Irish sympathetic with the Protestant rejection of union with them.

“Why should they (Ulsterman and women) join with us? They have a better deal as part of Britain”, one trade unionist told me. A shopkeeper even thought the 1916 Easter Uprising ‘might have been a mistake. I mean, how much better off are we after 50 years? The British government has on the whole been pretty decent to the working man, compared to our government.”

Oh dear, how’s this going to go down in Cleveland’s Irishtown bend on St Paddy’s day?

We headed north along slow bumpy country roads through towns and villages looking much as they did in Victorian England. Crossing the border into Northern Ireland, however, showed the gap between the countries – literally, as the roads into Crossmaglen were much better paved. We had chosen this route because this area of Armagh was renowned for its Republican statue, its 97% Catholic population and for the big, heavily fortified British Army garrison. At least 58 police officers and 128 British soldiers were killed by the Provisional IRA in South Armagh during the Troubles. Not surprisingly, it was known as ‘Bandit Country.”

Two days later, in Belfast, I joined the 2nd Battalion of the King’s Own Scottish Borderers on patrol in the western section of the city. I wore a helmet and flak jacket and found out the young soldiers have to be well trained to put up with a lot of abuse. No Catholic, it seems, is ever going to forget ‘Bloody Sunday’ the January day in 1972 when men from the Parachute Regiment shot and killed 26 civilians during a protest march in Derry.

I went out with two four-man patrols who walked out of ugly Fort Monagh and patrolled the streets of Andersonstown. They cradled semi-automatic rifles in their arms but were required to act like policemen, talking to residents and even trying a joke or two. They stopped taxis and vans, asking for names, addresses and the contents of their vehicles before sending them on their way. A “surly and suspicious youth”, I wrote, was frisked and mouthed obscenities at the soldiers who said nothing and walked away.

The soldiers knew their enemy was the hidden booby trap, squads of boys who could accurately put a stone between their eyes from 200 feet, and over the same distance could burst a bottle against a lamppost over their heads. The KOSB soldiers were given five weeks training in a ‘tin city’ in Germany that looked like a Belfast street, where they learned to take insults from young female soldiers posing as Catholic girls.

BELFAST SOLDIERS. British soldiers of the King's Own Scottish Borderers take up defensive/observational positions at a traffic circle in Andersonstown, Belfast, as they patrol the streets. Their rifles are loaded, but they rarely wear helmets.

You never knew where and when there was danger – as I found out when I phoned Anna that lunchtime to say I was OK, nothing was happening. Her response: "What? What's going on? There's soldiers running around. A huge bang. We've had to get out of the hotel!"

Flak jacket, helmet and personal armed guard or not, it was not me who was in danger, it was her in her hotel room.

We had already stayed overnight in Ballymena, County Antrim, where the newspaper headlines were screaming; **"Ballymena in bombing blitz**" as 14 bombs had exploded in its shops, killing one and injuring four. Up to then the town that was home to Protestant leader and firebrand the Rev Ian Paisley, had been relatively peaceful. Anna took notes of her own, showing that the woman who died was a 26-year-old Protestant mother of three who was trapped by flames at the rear of a shop. The four men seriously injured – and being a nurse she noted their serious injuries – were some of the bombers, whose own bomb exploded prematurely as they primed it in a car.

"Later that night," she wrote, a gang of drunks murdered a 40-year-old Catholic wino who was beaten and set afire in retaliation for the woman's murder."

Put Mrs A on the payroll, Cleveland Press! Who needs me when you could have someone who can do a lot more than patch up a paper cut?

I did ask the colonel in charge of the KOSB's if this was Britain's Vietnam. Will the troops become demoralized and refuse to fight, as some American troops did in Vietnam?

"No," was the colonel's answer. "I'm convinced it couldn't happen to us. The British Army is all-volunteer, unlike the U.S. Army in Vietnam. Every army unit knows it will be in Northern Ireland sooner or later. And every soldier knows that from the start. He's heard enough stories to know what it's like here.

“Second: if a soldier wants out, he can buy himself out. He can come to me on a Saturday, plunk eighty pounds on my desk, sign a couple of forms, and that’s it. He’s out of the army. It’s a terrific safety valve. In the 16 months we have been in Northern Ireland a total of 36 soldiers have bought themselves out.”

Was there any light at the end of this dark tunnel?

Maybe one: the Women’s Peace Movement, which had already encouraged many thousands of people – mostly women – to march for peace in Belfast, Londonderry, Cork, London, Stockholm, Glasgow, Toronto and Paris, brought together by one single ‘enough is enough’ moment.

That was the day in August that IRA fugitive Danny Lennon, just released from three years in prison, was chased in a speeding car by British troops who had seen him and accomplice John Chillingworth transporting an Armalite rifle through the main shopping area of Andersonstown. Resident Betty Williams swears she saw the rifle being fired at the soldiers. The troops fired at the car, killing Lennon instantly and seriously wounding Chillingworth.

The car went out of control, mounted the sidewalk, and killed three of the children of their mother, Anne Maguire, who was seriously injured.

Mrs Williams immediately started a petition of mothers, both Catholic and Protestant, 200 of whom marched through Belfast demanding an end to the violence. Ten thousand people attended the emotion-filled funeral of the three children, where Mrs Williams first met Mairead Corrigan, sister of Anne Maguire. From this the ‘Peace People’ movement was born, with spontaneous marches held throughout the island. They attracted media attention from across the world, helped by Irish journalist Ciaran McKeown, an avowed pacifist, who had his own agenda of creating a new type of community, neither Catholic or Protestant, or British or Irish.

“I’m Catholic,” Miss Corrigan told me as we travelled together that evening to a peace rally at Carrickfergus Town Hall, “but I don’t think of myself as Southern Irish, and I’m certainly not British. I’m Northern Irish.”

But it was clear their conventional, middle-class, middle-aged audience were not sure where the Movement was going. One man sought reassurance that there wasn’t a split in the movement. “I would prefer that you not be reassured,” responded McKeown. “You should be frightened. You should be frightened that this whole movement will fall apart. Because there is nothing else,”

I concurred, at the time. **“The Peace Movement is the only organization widely accepted by both Protestants and Catholics,” I wrote in the penultimate article of the series. “So far the politicians have kept out of it. There is an outside chance the movement may succeed.”**

Williams and Corrigan were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the next year. But that prize money, in itself, split the two women: Corrigan wanting to spend her half on local campaigns, Williams for keeping hers and spending it on more global peace problems. The split soured even more in 1978, and by 1980 the Peace People movement was essentially dead.

1980 was the year that year Anne Maguire, unable to get over the loss of her children, committed suicide. Her widowed husband, Jackie, himself a significant peace campaigner, married Anne’s sister, who became known

as Mairead Maguire. Betty Corrigan engaged in many overseas peace projects, moved to the U.S, married an American businessman, moved back to Galway in 2004 and died in March 2020.

It was not until 1998 that the Good Friday Agreement ended most of the violence in N. Ireland

My series ran in The Press in November, 1976, over six days, and I'm glad I did it when I did it: at the peak of The Troubles (apart from nearly getting my wife blown up, of course!). I'm even more satisfied that my editors thought so too. At the conclusion of the series the paper's lead editorial was headlined **Northern Ireland's lesson** over three columns above the masthead**.** It reflected exactly my thoughts as Cleveland prepared for perhaps the biggest sociological change in its history – that of court-ordered school desegregation.

Is Black vs white in Cleveland going to be as bad Catholic vs Protestant in Northern Ireland?

"The divisions between the races here may be just as deep as the divisions in Northern Ireland," said the editorial. "Poised as Greater Cleveland is on the edge of one of America's greatest social problems – school desegregation – we should all clearly note what happens when two groups living in the same society refuse to live together peacefully, and what happens when the majority refuses to share power and grant civil rights to the minority…… The fact that they have been fighting each other for seven years with scarcely a light at the end of the tunnel of violence, should warn us that we, too, could go that way if we allow hate and fear to rule our lives…

"Individuals with equal rights in society" sounded the same on both sides of the pond, "But we have greater advantages," said the editorial. The 'Irish problem' is 800 years old, far older than this country. Northern Ireland's Catholics have a historical claim to be part of another country to the south, whereas blacks here could in reality only lay claim to unification within a land of their dreams…….

"In this Bicentennial year we have looked back to our roots to remind us who we are and where we came from. It has been a good object lesson. Northern Ireland is also a good object lesson, and it's live and it's happening now."

The series was offered for general U.S. newspaper use by United Feature Syndicate for the week of Jan 30, 1977, but I have no idea how many papers picked it up. Nice plug for it, though: "The conflict is described by the people themselves and is interpreted by a journalist whose background and insight make this an unusually penetrating series."

Give that man a pay raise!

Back in Cleveland I saw that colleague Sue Kincaid reported on a parent-teacher association survey that Cleveland parents were overwhelmingly opposed to busing, but that the survey was flawed because 'many non-white schools could not afford to make copies of the survey form for each member.'

In late November Judge Battisti deferred an NAACP request for a citizen advisory panel, worried that it might create a 'circus atmosphere' and detract from the main purpose of getting the state and Cleveland school boards to come up with a workable desegregation plan. The School Board came up with its own 46-member citizens advisory panel, but as I wrote on Dec 8 it was 'like a whale stranded on a beach… and beginning to realize it is

almost impotent in offering anything meaningful toward the creation of a school desegregation plan.' Especially with a Jan 17 deadline.

In December Battisti named a local law professor, Edward A Mearns Jr. to be his Master for creating the plan, and then gave me another front page splash by saying that it had to be city-wide, involve all grades in all schools – and to start no later than next September.

Good luck to that, then.

"**Murky days ahead for school desegregation**," said the Press' lead editorial the next day. Too much ambiguity in his new guidelines. I could only agree with the editor that "**In the past year the question of the racial composition of the Cleveland schools has taken many twists and turns. What this week's events tell us is that the end of the tunnel is not yet in sight and some unexpected turns may yet lie ahead."**

As for me and the missus we have our own new distractions: Our new house, new puppy, and new set of Langlauf cross-country skis. It's snowing heavily outside, the Chagrin Valley golf courses are open to skiers.

"Blue klister wax?" I ask friend Bob, "or green?" He looks at the weather forecast. "Green, I think."
"I'll take blue as well," I reply, knowing he usually gets it wrong.

Chapter 9. Cleveland, 1977

The winter of 1976/77 was one of the worst on record for the Great Lakes. Deep snow, strong winds and temperatures down to -20deg F (-28 C). Worse in Buffalo and northern New York state, where 'Lake Effect' – freezing 70mph winds from Lake Erie blowing heavy snow onto the land – dumped 37 inches of snow into huge snowdrifts that blocked roads, closed schools and business, and killed people trapped in their cars.

When Lake Erie froze over in December the year before that didn't seem so bad. I remember on one clear, windless day just after that, when the lake looked so beautiful, so brilliantly white, and so solid that I thought I could walk the 50 miles or so across it to Canada.

Somebody did do that in 1978, when the cold was even colder.

I just bundled up, put on my hiking boots, carried a ski pole and set off across the ice from Euclid, looking carefully with every step to see the slightest sign of ice weakness and leads of water. I got about half a mile before I lost my nerve, started thinking adult thoughts such as 'Does my new State Farm Life Insurance cover me if I disappear?' turned around, took a photo of the shore, and walked back across the ice the way I came.

Better stick to cross-country skiing, in which I have someone else to be responsible for – not least for my wife, and now for our six-month-old English Cocker spaniel pup, Douglas.

Did you know that dogs sweat from their paws, besides from their tongues? Anna and I didn't at first, but found out when he kept stopping behind our X-country skis to bite at frozen snow balls in his paws. Other things we quickly learned included the mailman. Did you know that if you leave a dog at home all day, with the mailman being the only one who comes to attack your mail box – and not even TRYING to come in – your dog will decide he is worse than a burglar, and bark till he is blue in the face? (well, he WAS a Blue Roan spaniel).

One day, later that summer, Douglas did accidentally meet our mailman on open ground outside our house. We first realized this when we heard a strange, whining, crying noise and found our dog clearly confused by this sworn enemy who was squatting and offering him a cookie. Oh, what does a dog DO? We hadn't trained him for mailmen being nice!

Memory flash: ***Willoughby, Ohio, New Year's Eve '77***

It's been a great Press party and we're almost ready to leave. I'm at the cloakroom of this hotel with our ticket stubs. I have my coat but where is hers? The staff can't find it.

It is not a coat like the others. It stands out. It is a fox fur demi-jacket that I bought her for Christmas. It has gone, almost certainly stolen. Oh dear. Expensive, but actually no great loss because Anna was starting to change her attitude about fur coats anyway: an anti-seal hunting movement had been growing in Canada and, linked to the feminist movement, it was starting to have a wider impact on furs.

I still have a photo of her wearing that jacket, just before the event. But it is the long, red dress under it that many years later still evokes a pang of loss because she was pregnant at that time, and subsequently miscarried. This was not the first, nor was it the last. But it marked the beginning of an intensive, two-year series of medical investigations for both of us which concluded in 1979 with adoption of our first wonderful son, Nick, followed nearly three years later by adoption of our second wonderful son, Jeff.

Fortunately, the weather in early January was not nearly as bad as it would be at the end of the month. At work on Jan 2, I spent the day with Cleveland school bus driver Joseph Liniman negotiating Cleveland's streets to see what busing might be like if, as expected, Judge Battisti ordered it later in the year. Official school board plans were due by Jan 17.

Joseph and I hadn't a clue what the plan might be, but we could at least suggest some routes and timings from white schools to black schools across the city, and vice versa. Some trips we did that day took as little as 12 minutes, and others as long at 40 minutes, each way.

I guided a map for the paper showing each of six routes we tested, along with a picture of Joe and his yellow 66-seat school bus, and me – in my fake fur black coat and a (real) bit of trendy fur moustache under my nose.

On Jan 11 The Press published the Ohio state School Board's first desegregation plan: to shut 12 city schools and transfer the kids – mostly elementary – to other schools. The next day I learned that the Cleveland school board plan would reject cross town busing in favor of children being bused downtown for one or two days a week to take part in a variety of 'integrated educational experiences'. A few days later, when the board's plan was published, it detailed exactly which schools would be involved in what program.

The NAACP preferred the state plan to the city's, but neither was exactly right for them. In late February it became clear that mass busing would not happen that September, as Judge Battisti originally demanded but the following year, 1978, and would involve some 40,000 students. The year after that another 40,000 students would become involved in busing.

Still pretty vague. **So in February I went back to Detroit**, which had started busing the year before, and talked to parents, students, teachers and senior school officials to see how desegregation was getting on. "**The jury is still out"** was the headline on one of the two stories I wrote. Half the schools were still 90% black, white families were fleeing the city, and improvements in education were very patchy. Part of the problem was lack of money. Detroit was twice the size of Cleveland, and most of the inner city had to be left untouched.

Nevertheless, once the black vs white fights on school buses and in the hallways of some high schools had been sorted out school officials said it was beginning to settle down. Arthur Jefferson, Detroit's black superintendent of schools, told me: "The real bottom line is whether it is going to pay off in terms of better education for all students. And at the moment it's too early to tell.

"I can't say there has been an increase in improvements in relationships between blacks and whites, and I see no decline or increase in test scores." There were 11 educational components of the judge's court order, and only five were functioning.

Time for a quick journalistic break: The Queen! Britannia! Or rather a headline that said: "**Britannia used to rule the waves, now must waive the rules**."

"Press reporter Peter Almond has been back to his homeland to look at the spirit of Britain in these economically troubled times."

At the editor's request I filled a page in the Press Magazine to mark the pending 25th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. "A lot has changed since 1952, when Britain was the hub of a far-flung empire," said the blurb to my piece.

I'd like to reprint the whole piece here, but it is much too long. I'll just include a few paragraphs to try to answer the question I got most from people in the US in 1976/77 given the negative news they had been receiving from Blighty: "Has the old country disappeared beneath the waves yet with all these strikes that have led to rubbish not being collected, electricity rationed, even funerals cancelled? Is the Queen going to sell Buckingham Palace to the Arabs? NOW are you going to become an American citizen?"

My six weeks in the British Isles last fall gave me reasons to fear for the economy of Britain, for jobs and funds for national health and old ways of working life that were disappearing – such as the proud, tough coal miners whose strikes were so damaging.

But also a sense of optimism that, fundamentally, Britain was still the country of humor and civility, character and national consensus "The British have an esprit de corps, a self-confidence that is raring to put the old place back on the map. But they don't know how." I wrote. "For the same basic attitudes that provide the British with the finest attitudes are the same that have them stuck on the road to economic recovery .

"Ask an American about his country and he may point with pride to its high standard of living, to his free and easy lifestyle, to his open classlessness. He will be less eager to talk about the other side of life here, of violence and corruption and bureaucracy of government officials, of selfishness and distrust between races and peoples.

‘Ask a Briton and he may talk about what his country has given to the world, of the talents of its scientists and musicians, its humor and its civilized society. He will be less eager to talk about its low productivity, its divisively militant unionism, its class-consciousness.

“And yet, for all its problems, Britain is still a highly satisfying place to live. One just needs to have a value system that doesn’t give monetary rewards a particularly high priority.”

An international survey that gained publicity while I was in England concluded that more Britons – one out of every five – would like to emigrate than those living in any other Western nation. Conversely, of all Western nations, the British scored the highest marks for being happy with their lot.’

Well, what’s the point of being miserable? This was the year another British Queen, Freddie Mercury and his rock band Queen, released ‘We are the Champions,’ a number that would go on to be a global anthem for almost every sport, charity and political event well into the next century.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXw8CRapg7k

It was also the year the first British Airways Concorde supersonic airliner flew from London to New York. And in the cheap seats Freddie Laker launched the Skytrain airline, offering tickets from Gatwick to New York at a third of the price of regular flights. Not to be outdone, NASA in Florida launched Voyager 1, whose mission was to fly past Jupiter and Saturn and head out into interstellar space.

As of June, 2021, it had been sending information back to earth for 43 years and nine months and travelled 14.1 billion miles. It carried a copy of the Golden Record, a message from humanity that includes greetings in 55 languages, pictures of people and places on earth and music ranging from Beethoven to Chuck Berry’s ‘Johnny B. Goode.’

Back on earth the first **Star Wars** movie set afire the imaginations of millions with images of human/alien cultures that some took as a metaphor for the Cold War with the Soviet Union that continued apace (America being the democratic rebels, of course). On TV the first episode of Alex Haley's **Roots**, dramatically unveiling the lives of the first black slaves in America, was a phenomenal success, demonstrating that black Americans were not aliens but humans just like everyone else.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kL5HC48jG8E

Another movie, **All the President's Men**, told the story of President Nixon and Watergate, confirming to many Americans that their government was corrupt. Another movie, **Network**, added to a sense of national frustration about corporations with its theme of a veteran TV news anchor being made redundant. The anchor, played by actor Peter Finch, threatens to shoot himself live on TV, then changes his mind and urges his viewers to open their windows and shout: **"I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it any more!"**

In New York city that July a 25-hour electricity blackout in a brutal heatwave resulted in city-wide looting, and arson of 1,616 stores. Rioting resulting in 3,776 arrests, lots of deaths – and a spike in the births of babies.

And Elvis Presley died. The bloated 'King of Rock 'n' Roll' died of a heart attack that August.

Believe it or not, there were still a lot of people – mostly older – who did not mourn the passing of Elvis. A white, southern man appropriating the 'jungle music' of blacks? Tsk. The cultural gap between whites and blacks was always there. Some would call the majority 'Euro-centric' or 'Christian-centric,' a white culture that expected respectful Christians to remove their hats when they entered a Christian church, and for teachers to demand the same for students arriving at school.

Was that the 'institutional racism' that was decried by the NAACP? Miss Bonnie Bassis, representing an organization which offered help to students suspended from school, suggested it was and that, for a start, the

Cleveland school system should scrap its dress code that says 'no wearing of hats in school.' "The only ones who really want to wear hats in school are blacks," she told a desegregation hearing in court. "They shouldn't be suspended for that."

Cleveland wasn't that bad, she told Judge Battisti in a court hearing. Only 7% more blacks were suspended the previous year than whites; it was twice as high in other desegregation cities such as Boston, Denver, Dallas and Louisville. But that didn't make it right. She demanded that a new discipline code be made by the School Board as part of the desegregation plan rather than the court work it out for themselves.

Added Cleveland Teachers Union leader James O'Meara: "I heard yesterday where a lady said we should not suspend kids for wearing hats in school. We don't do that. We suspend kids when we tell the kids to take their hats off. That's when we get the modern (earthy) language and teachers become upset."

Fifty years later the 'Euro-centric' world and the black, Islamic and plain rebellious ones were still arguing about dress codes involving hijabs, hoodies and other head coverings, even caps to cover the bald heads of recovering white cancer patients.

On March 4 The Press launched an editorial that significantly rowed back on its earlier support for major desegregation, declaring that the current school board was not responsible for many of the charges detailed in Battisti's ruling, that 'most of the segregative actions cited by the judge go back to a time when there was far less sensitivity to the need for integrated education than exists now,' and that integration should be 'accomplished in an orderly way – not in an atmosphere of bitterness and hostility' The School Board, said the editors, should be given the chance to explore and explain integration plans that run short of massive busing.

Memory Flash: ***Federal Court House, Cleveland, March '77***

Judge Battisti has invited me back to his court room chambers for a chat. OFF the record, you understand. I'm getting to know quite a lot about this man who holds the future of thousands of Cleveland children and their parents in his hands. He explains more of his thinking about the direction of the case, and some of the political problems he has to confront. He's looking for media support, especially from the Cleveland Press, which he thought was firmly on his side when it came to busing.

We exchange some personal details, mostly about his immigrant parents, and then he asks about my parents and if they had ever been to America. I tell him my mother had been twice, and would soon be returning again later this year, this time with my father, who had never visited.

"Are you staying in Cleveland with them? Travelling around"? he asks.

"The Carolinas, I think," I reply. "We'd like to go in an RV (motor home), but I don't know if we can afford it this year."

"Oh, you must!" he says. "When are you planning to go?"

I wasn't sure, but I thought September. I see his hand reach for the telephone, and hear him talk to his secretary, Faye Kaufman, saying something about Youngstown, about recreational vehicles and a man I could talk to.

I sit bolt upright.

"No, please," I say. "I can't do that!"

Federal Judge Frank J. Battisti turns to me, phone in his hand, and says "It won't cost you anything."

"No, really," I say. "I can't accept that."

I REALLY could not accept somebody else paying for the hire of a recreational vehicle. I had already been hit two years earlier by Roldo Bartimole, the self-appointed Cleveland morals media inquisitor whose bi-weekly newsletter, Point of View, wagged a finger at me for persuading a south-of-Cleveland RV hire firm to waive its fees in exchange for me writing a travel piece about RV holidays.

I thought I was clear to do so because I was not a travel writer whose objectivity could be compromised by a business favor, had the approval and encouragement of our travel editors Bill and Betty Hughes, insisted I would cover the positives and negatives in my report, and told the dealer I could not include his company's name or address. He was satisfied that the vehicle would probably be identifiable by sharp eyes in the photo accompanying my story.

I grew up with such questionable reportage in England. Even in the 70s local newspapers had little cash to send reporters and photographers anywhere that wasn't direct, obvious news, unlike the wealthier rags.

But no, St Roldo of Bartimole nailed me for one obvious point: Why would an RV dealer loan a vehicle to a reporter for free when he wouldn't to, say, a steel worker he doesn't know? Because he expects to get free publicity. Neither a reporter nor anyone in the news business, said St Roldo, should accept freebies, kickbacks, or favors from anyone if he wants his readers to believe his news is not tainted – even if it does leave his paper at a competitive disadvantage.

And certainly not a federal judge with a reporter who follows him closely. Would he not be waiting for a favor from him in return?

I left the federal courthouse with a clearer understanding that this is instinctively how Battisti draws in those around him.

Like a Godfather.

In May a new desegregation plan was put forward by the school board. Its 148 pages included all the city's "magnet schools" to soften the blow but boosts the number of students to be bused from its earlier plan of 5500 to 13,500. Phase 1, to start in September, would have all schools in the West Tech High area linked with the schools in the John Hay and East High areas.

Phase 2, between all schools in the South High area linked with the East Tech area, involving 8,281 students on a maximum of 87 buses. It would start in September '78.

Phase 3, to start in 1979, would link all schools in the John Marshall area with those of John Adams, involving 11,057 students and a maximum of 127 buses. Another 11,170 students and 111 buses would be bused that year between Glenville High in the east and Lincoln-West High area in the west. In all 52,100 students would be transported, with many students using RTA buses and trains.

The plan was thought mostly likely to be accepted by Judge Battisti because it was his special experts who mostly prepared it. But the school board was divided for the first time, voting 5 to 2 in favor. John Gallagher Jr and William White rejected it, saying it was just too much.

It certainly was. Three months to find, order and prepare 87 new school buses by September? No way. Cleveland, state and federal experts were holding heated discussions behind the scenes on just who was going to pay for them. I did a little digging of my own, talking to officials in Boston and Cincinnati, and to bus manufacturers around the country. School buses are made in two parts, the chassis made by one company, the body by another. How many students per bus? The state said 119 per day, Cleveland experts said 126. One company after another said they were already going flat out producing school buses for other cities.

It would be weeks or months before anyone could know how many kids could actually be transported and when the buses could be delivered.

I wrote all this prominently in the paper on May 26. Battisti read it. The next day he issued a statement from the bench: **No major busing in the fall**. was the splash headline in the final edition on May 27.

“Some desegregation of the school system will take place in the fall of this year,” he said. “However, **this court will not jeopardize the just, stable solution called for by putting in place remedies based on hastily drawn, ill-conceived provisions of a desegregation plan.**

“In saying this the court stresses its view that the capability to plan for the transportation of numbers of pupils does not now exist. The court will not order substantial reassignment of pupils until it assured they can be adequately and efficiently transported.”

In June I spent three days in Cincinnati, covering the School Board’s appeal before the US. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. It was pretty clear the three judges were going to find in favor of the NAACP. But a month later it was front-page headlines again as the appeals court sent the whole case back to Battisti for further review in light of of a new US Supreme Court ruling in the Dayton desegregation case.

This ruling said the constitutional violations Battisti found must be shown to have had a system-wide effect before he could order system-wide desegregation. The School Board’s lawyers claimed victory: the NAACP said it changed nothing.

It was all very confusing for the public, especially for the teachers. While this new order was coming down 1,144 city school teachers were waiting for orders that, starting Sept 7, they would have to start work at another school.

Another page later in The Press had a chart showing the racial percentages of each school and how many teachers

were to be transferred. I even listed the names of all the school principals to be transferred, and whether they were black or white.

Help! Data protection! Not in 1977.

Even I was getting confused. (even?) The next day, July 16, me, two Cleveland School Board members, both newspapers, all radio and TV reporters, even Supt Briggs and the head of the teachers union thought more than 1100 teachers were being transferred. Not so. These were assignments – or transfers – not teachers, said James Tanner, the deputy superintendent who drew up the list. A teacher could have more than one assignment. Only 570 teachers were going to be reassigned,.

And if that wasn't bad enough we ran a correction under the headline of my story **'School officials flunked math'** saying that Elmer C. Craven, a principal being transferred from one elementary school to another, was white, not black.

Mea Culpa.

Memory Flash: ***Cleveland's near West Side, July '77***

I'm outside the magnificent St Theodosius Russian Orthodox Cathedral in the Tremont district, watching filming of the wedding scene for the movie The Deerhunter, perhaps one of the best and most controversially-powerful anti-war films of a generation. It's the height of summer but the script says it's fall, so some people are wearing coats, and individual leaves from deciduous trees have been removed. Fake brown leaves are scattered on the ground between the cathedral and nearby Lemko Hall, where the reception takes place.

It looks bizarre, but the locals are excited. Robert de Niro! Meryl Streep! Christopher Walken! John Savage! John Cazale! George Dzunda! (George WHO?) All coming HERE, to Cleveland's Russian-America heartland to feature a Russian wedding! Oh my! Not that all of them were famous. Indeed, probably only Robert de Niro was. Not Meryl Streep: this was her first major film role.

I can't remember quite why I was there. I don't think I wrote a story about it. Perhaps I heard from someone on the Community Page that the scenes looked distinctly bizarre – and it was my old stomping ground anyway.

Directed by Michael Cimino (who bombed with his next film, Heaven's Gate), the story centers around three second or third generation Pennsylvania Russian-American steel-worker friends who join the US Army in Vietnam in early 1969. Some of the sets are supposed to be Clairton, on the Ohio river. and at the US Steel plant in Cleveland. Two thirds of the film is taken up with the group's stressed final day together with girlfriends and families at the wedding of one of them, concluding with one final, half-drunk deer hunt in the (improbable for Pa.) mountains before shipping out to Vietnam.

Fully 51 of the 184-minute movie (too much) is taken up with the wedding scene, in which the bride is encouraged to drink up her red wine without losing a drop. Significantly, a drop does fall onto her pristine white wedding dress – a sign of future disaster.

I was blown away by the complex detail and reality of this film – with the exception of the gratuitous Russian roulette sequences. This was as far away as an English immigrant, who not long ago had escaped being drafted to Vietnam himself, could be. I didn't know any Russian-American yahoo steel workers who drank too much, screwed around and carried rifles – except maybe one or two of my rugby-playing friends. But the young men and women these actors were portraying were my generation, under the direction of a remote federal government; patriots but caught up in a war they didn't understand.

Their individual returns to America were just as harrowing – some of it at an underfunded Veterans Administration hospital in central Ohio. The theme music alone, Cavatina, brings tears to my eyes. Not to forget 'Can't take my eyes off you" by Frankie Valli, the song that became almost required for wedding receptions.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7q1SjVdsNk

The Deerhunter won nine Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Director, and supporting actor for Walken, when it was released the next year. It was placed in the US Congress' National Film Registry in 1996 as 'culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.

I would see more of the emotion of Vietnam vets in Washington DC a few years later.

In November Dennis Kucinich would be elected mayor: The 'boy mayor of Cleveland,' the national press called him, who led the almost-broke city into a steeper decline which made it the first city in America to go into default – if not quite bankruptcy – since the Depression of the 1930s**.**

I won't go into all that because others, such as The Press politics writer Brent Larkin, were much closer and better informed, but it clearly had a major effect on the schools and their funding.

But back in April Judge Battisti had already decided to ask the new federal administration of President Jimmy Carter to intervene in the case, specifically the Justice department and the U.S. Attorney General. Cleveland's desegregation case, he said, was of national importance because of historic residential patterns that were replicated elsewhere in the United States. It was a surprise move that did not go down well with the NAACP, however, because Carter's new Attorney general was Griffin Bell, who had been heavily involved in desegregation cases in the south and had said busing of students should be the last step in school desegregation.

Absolutely, said the school board. Look at the cost! Specifically: $77,967,035.44 ($362 million in 2022) for buying 99 buses for Phase 1 in September (I like that 44 cents), 230 buses for phase 2 in '78, 209 buses for the year after that. Total. 538 buses for precisely $56,304,672.50. The bulk of the money would have to come from Cleveland taxpayers….. Under Dennis Kucinich? whose fight against sale of the Municipal Light Plant would cost the city millions as the banks called in their loans?

The Justice Department quickly did get itself involved in the case, piling pressure on the school board to come up with a workable plan.

Memory flash: *Hico, West Virginia, June '77*

It was time for a break. Anna, me, Jim, Marcy, Al, Nancy, Jim and Joanne have travelled to the New River to try out white water rafting. It comes with a weekend camping package with a commercial company led by a bunch of fit-looking, self-confident young guys who show us their safety certificates and how we're going to paddle our rafts down the river through the boiling waters of a couple of gorges. It will take most of the day, and we've brought sandwiches.

Our leader sits at the back and steers. Helmets and life-jackets on, eight of us take our seats, grab our paddles and set off with six other full rafts. Our guy is keen to tell us what happens when we hit 'SUCK holes." I emphasize the word 'suck' because that's the way he says it and it has stuck with me. That night around the camp fire, and for years afterwards we would ask each other "Did you find any SUCK holes today?"

I fell off my seat at the very first suck hole, sprawling backwards on the floor of the raft between our leader's legs. Anna hung on grimly, and so did (most) of the others. Then came the penultimate SUCK hole – and our leader was gone. Tossed out!

We found him swimming alongside our now-quiescent raft which, along with the others, was in a calm section at the end of the gorge. We were all invited to dive in and let ourselves drift over the next smooth section of rapids. I had a waterproof video camera with me, but those images are long gone.

A long ride home to Cleveland, but at least I was ready for the next set of desegregation suck holes.

Sept 7, first day of the new school year. And…….It went smoothly. Surprise!. Confusion at a minimum, even with 400 teachers transferred directly to other schools for the purposes of racial integration. Phew! But another 7,000 fewer students, as more parents upped sticks and moved to the suburbs.

Me, Bud and reporter meg Algren spent the day visiting one school after another, phoning in a continuing update of reports that changed the front page every couple of hours.

Memory Flash: ***Mohican River, Walhonding, Ohio, September, '77***

It's something, in my book, when you can make your parents genuinely, truly happy. We're in our rented RV – fully paid up by Anna and me – at our favorite little camp site after spending much of the day paddling our rented canoes down the river. They came over from England a week ago; the third visit for Mom, the first for Dad. And they hadn't counted on a week's camping.

Camping was a no-no for my father. Growing up in England and Germany we never did it because, he said, after spending years in Iraq, India and elsewhere with the RAF he would never go under canvas again.

Well, this mini-motor home was not a tent. Day One, with the wind whispering in the pines, the river gurgling, the stars amazingly bright and the cool air drifting through the open windows, Dad slept in a proper bed under a metal roof (rather than on it, as in Basra 1933) and slept like a log.

"He says it's the best sleep he's ever had!" says a grinning Mom.

It was, indeed, among the best vacations both of them ever had. Anna and I had met them at the airport in Toronto, that being the closest to Cleveland their Britons-in-America club charter flight could bring them in a single flight the UK (Dad, 65, wasn't so fit for long flights). So we did Niagara Falls, motelled it overnight, visited Buffalo and then the long, boring drive down I-90, with Pa in the back complaining about the 'sedate' max speed of 55mph.

It took a little while, but by the end of touring around Ohio – including a visit to the USAF museum at Dayton – I could see my relationship with my father had changed. He was a guest on my turf, happily being led by Anna and me, and we were on level terms.

I guess it happens with every father and son. This one just took 31 years, and it was very satisfying for both of us.

Back on the schools beat, I remember October 20/21 was a very strange day. My story in the early editions was

about a blistering new attack by Judge Battisti on the Cleveland school board and Ohio Senate over money; namely, that if the senate rejected a bill to allow the school board to borrow money to repay a $35 million loan being called in to pay two Cleveland banks, the schools would have to close.

Close? When the judge was fighting to get the schools desegregated?

“The Cleveland schools will not close now, and will not be closed at any time in the future while public schools are open and operating anywhere in the state of Ohio,” Battisti pronounced in court. He had ordered Supt. Briggs, all board members and their lawyers to be in court for this tongue-lashing, but only two showed up: John E. Gallagher and Berthina Palmer. Board president Arnold Pinkney and other members were in Columbus meeting with the Ohio legislature.

Battisti was furious, using words such as ‘ignorance,’ ‘discreditable’, ‘foolish’, ‘squandered,’ ‘victimised,’ ‘scandalous.’

“**Court, State War Over Schools”** screamed the front page headline on my story that day. “In the wake of a devastating attack on the Cleveland School Board yesterday which ordered the schools to stay open indefinitely, federal Judge Frank Battisti has apparently created more uncertainty and confusion,’ I wrote.

But there was another story brewing that day, a lot brighter story: Prince Charles, son of Queen Elizabeth II and heir to the British throne, was within hours of arriving in Cleveland.

Memory flash: ***E9th St. Cleveland, Oct 20 ‘77***

I’m on the roof of The Press building with the editor, Tom Boardman. Its early in the morning and we are having our picture taken by Press photographer Paul Toppelstein, raising the British Union flag under the U.S. one to mark the arrival of Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, son of the Queen of England and heir to the throne of the world’s greatest monarchy. Hopefully, he will see our two flags together as his motorcade drives up E.9th St. from Burke Lakefront airport, and maybe wave to some of the people already waiting for him.

For this is no ordinary regal visit. Cleveland doesn’t do royal visits. You can’t count the occasional visit of the King of Saudi Arabia or his immediate family because they fly in on private jets to get private medical attention at the Cleveland Clinic. They don’t do what Prince Charles is about to do: actually VISIT Cleveland and the people of north eastern Ohio. From a Republic Steel works in the Flats to a crowded tree planting in Public Square to a swanky dinner with the cream of the midwest’s industrialists, and to meet and greet as many ordinary Clevelanders as he can.

My role is to follow him around and get the flavor for an opinion piece I’ll write on the Insight page the next day, Headline: It Was A Day To Be A WASP (for the uninitiated: a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), my designated ethnic grouping.

DOUBLE FLAG RAISING. In preparation for Cleveland's first British royal visit, Press editor Tom Boardman raises the Stars and Stripes on The Press roof, whilst the author raises the British Union Flag under it. Hopefully Prince Charles will see both when he drives into the city from Burke Lakefront airport in a couple of hours.

We put 14 reporters on the Charlie-boy story that day, of whom one, Norman Mlachak, even went to Chicago ahead of his visit to catch the sense of tens of thousands of Chicagoans giving the Prince a Beatles-style reception, screaming and cheering. It was a second royal visit there, the Queen having spent 14 hours in Chicago after opening the St Lawrence Seaway with President Eisenhower in 1959.

But a first for Cleveland, for whom kielbasa sausage and black-eyed peas spelt 'ethnic royalty' far more than a young Brit being presented with a white steel helmet bedecked with the British flag, the letters HRH – His Royal Highness – and the words Prince Charles.

I had never met him, but as I wrote in my piece, he made me proud to be British. That's not an easy thing to write, because Britain in the mid-70s wasn't very popular. Its industrial strife presented images of a deteriorating nation, of lingering resentment from older Americans with its refusal to send troops to help them in Vietnam yet sending thousands of troops to Northern Ireland and killing or imprisoning Irish rebels.

But underneath all that there was a genuine soft spot for the British royal family – especially from those who originally came from Europe. I may have mentioned Dorothy Martony, Anna's work friend who would become

godmother to our eldest son Nicholas. She was a bubbly, determined Italian divorcee who lived in a trailer park in Euclid, where she would almost freeze in winter. But she loved Britain, the Queen and all the royal family. They offered her and thousands of others a sense of stability and glamour in political life they couldn't get from their own political leaders, especially at a time when President Nixon was forced out of office over Watergate. Those families from eastern Europe who still remember the crushing of their own royal families by Nazism and Communism saw in the British royal family much that they had missed.

"The Prince gets a Kingly welcome," said the front page headline of The Press later that day (Battisti and school battles having been consigned to inside pages by tea time), a Larry Nighswander photograph of Charles smiling and shaking hands with a press of women screaming for him at the Public Square tree planting.

Not everyone was pleased at the witty, handsome, charming prince, of course. There was a crowd of about 200 IRA supporters outside the Cleveland State University campus for a building dedication who chanted 'England out of Ireland'. But he wasn't fazed and replied to someone shouting at him about the Irish: "Which Irish?" hinting at the majority of Northern Irelanders who were Protestant and wanted to remain part of Britain.

But for the great majority of Clevelanders this was a real PRINCE, heir to the throne of the country that founded America and gave it a degree of freedom for almost as many years than it had declared its own independence. And this, according to the staff of the Cleveland Press was MY DAY. Or, as one wag said to me after I'd written a detailed schedule of where Charles would be and what he would be doing when he arrived in Cleveland: "Are you the only one here who is actually ENJOYING all this?"

It was a day I could stand up and cheer my British heritage, say 'fie!' on 'Melody of Love' sung in Polish, and nationality festivals on the Mall that excluded anything British: no fish n'chips, no pork pies, no bangers and mash, no Haggis, no Leek pie nor Yorkshire pud, not to mention no Spotted Dick. A day when a truce was officially declared on The Establishment, and when a young future king could deprecate his own country by telling 150 Ohio industrialists: "I understand there is $32 billion in this very room. That's twice as much as our gold and currency reserves. If I had known this earlier I might have asked for the hat to be passed around!"

The headline on Charles' departure the next day for San Francisco was: **'Bon voyage, Charles – thank you for coming'.**

"Was it all worth it? Who really cares?' I asked in my piece. "I can't write about the real past of Cleveland. I've only been here since 1970. But in that time I don't think I know of any moment apart from yesterday when someone of real style and almost magical royalty touched Cleveland in quite the way Prince Charles did. Cleveland put on its best front and I think we impressed him. Somehow I think we all look a bit better today.

'We've all had a lot of fun putting on airs and pretending to be princes. But that's what you get when you let us WASPs out of the closet for a while'.

In my opinion, however, I think the best lines in the paper that day were by our brilliant, pithy columnist, the late Dick Feagler, partially reproduced here courtesy of his widow, Julie. His words ran right beneath

a piece by Marjorie Alge, our Society Editor, about the ‘very elegant party’ for Charles after a Severance Hall concert involving Lorin Maazel and the Cleveland Orchestra and scores of the most important people in the area.

“If you are going to have anything to do with a prince, “wrote Feagler, “you ought to have a fairy godmother. Newspaper people don’t have fairy godmothers. Around princes, newspaper people are like Cinderella with size 12 feet. They don’t get much.

“Mrs Nancy Stendel, of Jordan Drive in Willoughby has, I believe, a fairy godmother. Her real mother had come over from England and so it was natural that Nancy Stendel should be lined up at Burke Lakefront Airport yesterday morning waiting for a glimpse of Prince Charles.

“She got more than a glimpse. When the prince reached out and shook her hand, Nancy Stendel held on. She looked at the prince with shining eyes.

“Will you kiss me?” she asked him.

“His highness responded gallantly. “He looked at me,” Mrs Stendel said, “and he said why not? And then he kissed me.”

“And Nancy Stendel, quite overcome, burst into tears. Her fairy godmother was working for her. A prince had spied her and kissed her just like in Cinderella. Though probably nothing will come of it because she had to go back to Willoughby.

“Contrast this with the case of Ronnie Kuntz, a newspaper photographer for UPI. Kuntz has no fairy godmother. Newspapermen with fairy godmothers go into public relations. But Kuntz has had plenty of experience covering massacres, disasters, stickups and ballgames. This, he figured, would be sufficient background to cope with a prince.

“Kuntz arrived on Public Square a little past noon to take a picture of the prince planting a tree. The square was packed with people and reporters. All the reporters were being herded around by royal lownesses who were with the prince’s party. Kuntz, who is not so tall himself, dodged these shepherds and scurried in the opposite direction where he thought the shooting might be better.

“Suddenly he was shoved from behind and knocked to the ground. Sprawling there, half dazed, Kuntz looked up. In front of him was the Prince of Wales. His highness raised a shovel full of dirt and tossed it towards Kunz’s face. Kunz grabbed his camera and snapped a picture of this. He snapped it while leaving because as he was shooting it a policeman picked him up, stood him on his feet and yelled:

“Do you have a fairy godmother?” (or words to that effect.)

“No”, said Kuntz.

“Then get outta here,” said the cop. And Kunz got.

“That’s the kind of day it was for the newsmen yesterday. Early in the morning on the press bus it was learned that

nobody had ever covered a prince before. Nobody knew how to cover one. All everybody knew were the rules for not covering one. …… ‘A prince does not make a good subject. He does not exist for newsmen. He exists for people like Mrs Stendel from Willoughby who want a little magic in their world.

“Over at the (Cleveland) Clinic yesterday afternoon the prince turned a corner and again confronted Ronnie Kuntz. A look of mild recognition flickered in the royal eyes. The prince knew he had seen Kuntz somewhere. But he did not recall that it had been on the other side of a shovel full of dirt. The prince noticed Kuntz beret.

“Was Kuntz with the French press corps, the prince wondered.

“No,” said Kuntz.

“The prince thought for a moment. “Was Kuntz then perhaps an onion salesman”, the prince inquired. Kuntz replied he was not.

“Then the prince passed on to wave to some people who were holding a sign that said “God save Charles of England.”

“Yesterday was a day for Cinderellas and onion salesmen. The reporters knew which they were. If the shoe fits, wear it.”

A few days after Prince Charles arrived back in England he met a 16-year-old girl at a palace function who delighted him with her impishness. Three years later he married Lady Diana Spencer in a ceremony watched by millions around the world.

It would be nice to think that a little bit of Cleveland’s non-stuffiness had rubbed off on him to go for a sweet, innocent ordinary girl (by royal standards) like Diana,.

But, of course, it ended in divorce and tragedy.

And the London plane tree Charles planted in Public Square didn’t last either. It was found that Cleveland’s winters were too cold for it, and so the tree was divorced to another city, where it died.

Memory flash: *Salt Fork State Park, Ohio, November, ‘77*

I’m deer hunting, deep in the scrub overlooking a small ravine, and I can hear something running about 100 yards away in the trees on the other side. I raise my trusty musket and prepare to fire.

Deer Hunting? Me? A Bambi killer? What the hell am I doing here?

This had nothing to do with the Deer Hunter movie, which would not be released for at least

another year. But I'm deep into self-doubt. Not least when I stand in the office of the state wildlife officer and ask him a stupid question: "What could I do if I shot a deer and didn't, you know, didn't want to DO anything with it?" I asked. "Could I give it away to another hunter?"

The wildlife officer looked over to a good ol' boy hunter seated in his office, who looked back at him and then they both looked back at me.

"Well now," said the wildlife officer. "Why would you want to kill a deer and not take it with you? This is not quite the same as target shooting."

Why indeed. They don't call it 'hunting' in deer hunting country. They call it 'harvesting,' as in scooping up all the unwanted deer and enabling the rest to have enough food to survive for another year. There are about 100,000 deer in Ohio, reproducing steadily. In 1976 22,000 were killed, 2,000 of them with primitive weapons like mine – a Kentucky long rifle otherwise known as a Bedford County musket.

I only had it because of its beautiful design and skilled craftsmanship. Anna and I had seen it in a Pennsylvania gun shop specializing in replicas of colonial-era firearms. The stock was of polished maple, and on the silver external metal by the double trigger was the shape of a beaver, carved by a nearly-blind 90-year-old in Cincinnati. The barrel was rifled and accurate to 150 yards. I'd already proved that in target shooting at state and county fairs the previous year.

Anna has never been a fan of guns. But this one was different. She thought it was beautiful, a work of art, and anyway knew it would take me so long to load she'd be on the plane and halfway back to England if ever I got mad and tried to chase her with it. It hangs above a door in our living room even today, its firing pin removed and gathering dust, but still generating fond memories

You had to get the right amount of gunpowder poured down the barrel, then placed a square of muslin cloth over the end of it, put a lead ball on top of that, and rammed it all down to the bottom of the barrel. The next step was to prime the firing pin with a small explosive cap, and then pulled back one of the two triggers to lock it into place. Only then were you ready to shoot.

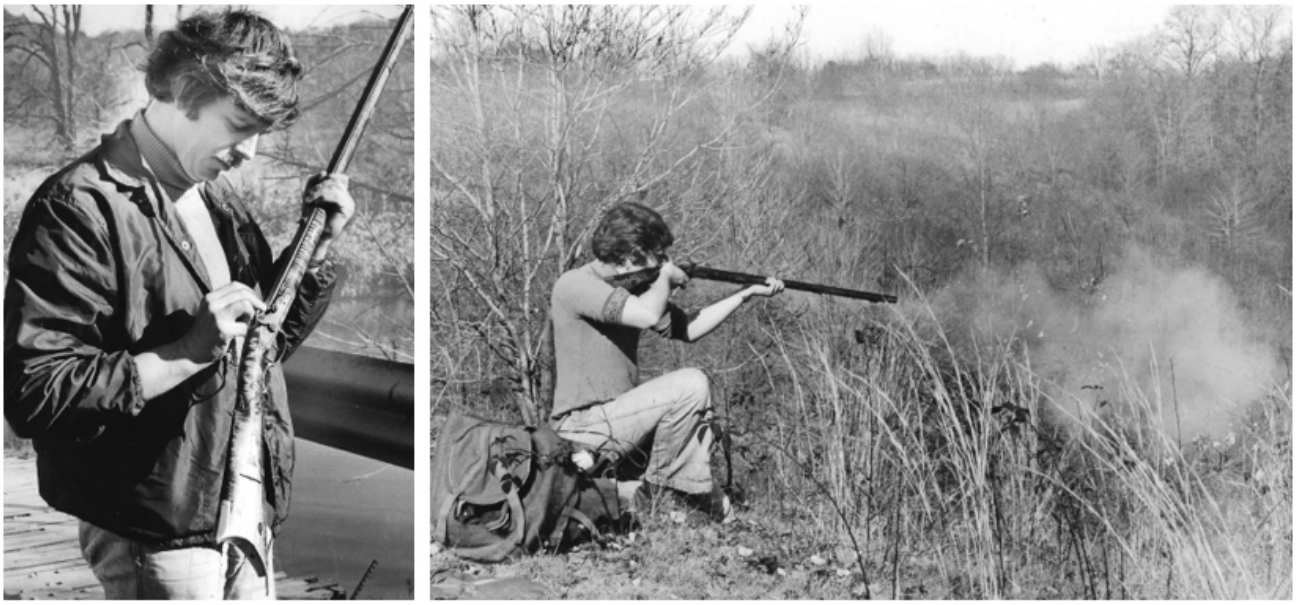
In Ohio 'musketeers' like me had a one-week window in the year designated to 'primitive weapons', which included bows and arrows, and you had to pay a licence and book a day and time to do it.

Worst of all was the instruction booklet on what to do when you've killed your deer that I only read when I arrived in the wildlife officer's office. You had to give your deer a 'field dressing.' This sounds like an emergency bandage you'd put on your arm, but that's not what they meant.

Field dressing was slicing up the deer to prevent the meat from spoiling. You had to remove the animal's guts, split the pelvic bone with a knife or saw, dig a deep hole to hide the guts and then haul the remains out of the park to your vehicle. I'd seen pick-up trucks and Chevys around Ohio and Pennsylvania adorned with dead deer draped over their hoods. But was I going to do that all the way back to Cleveland? Hell, no.

So, out there at Salt Fork State Park, I didn't aim at the rustling thing in the trees on the other side of the ravine. I pulled my aim slightly up and to the right, so that Anna could take my picture as I fired, smoke billowing out of the musket.

Headline for my story (with pictures): 'Hunting Bambi — and hoping the little critter hides.'



ALMOST AMERICAN. The author sets a percussion cap onto the firing pin of his Bedford County muzzle-loading musket (left) before preparing to fire at a … um…. clump of trees that clearly do not contain any wildlife.(right). In a nation with more guns than people, getting to know guns – even if only muzzle-loaders – seemed good preparation to become an American citizen the following year.

"Deer Hunting" (not) at Salt Fork State Park, Ohio, November 1977. Left: the author puts a percussion cap above the installed gunpowder of his beautiful musket. Right: he chickens out on his 'target'. But at least he's gone through (some) of the motions. Ever closer to becoming American?

I'll leave 1977 with the story of the renaming of West Junior High School, on the city's near west side; a story about local politics.

West Junior High was an old school which, along with West High School, had been part of the neighborhood for 122 years, and no longer deemed fit for modern education. So it was torn down, and a new one built in its place for $4.5 million.

In keeping with the modern era of naming new things after politicians or someone famous the School Board decided to rename the school Joseph M. Gallagher Junior High, in honor of the retiring board member, a local resident, and his 29 years on the board.

But nobody bothered to ask the students, the parents, teachers or those in the community about it. And they were furious. The president of the school's PTA, Mrs Gail Lehmann, quickly had 400 names on a petition demanding the school board change the name back to West. "The name West has always had a great meaning here," she told

me. I've got nothing against the man, but why don't we change the names of East High or South High. Maybe they could name a library after him, or even call it West Gallagher Junior High. But keep West there"

Others reacted strongly too, including local councilwoman Mary Zone. But she admitted that she hoped the new school would be named after her husband Michael, a long-serving local councillor who died in 1974. Both she and School Board President Arnold Pinkney accepted that he, Pinkney, had suggested the name Zone when he accepted that a school could be named after him.

But Pinkney said: "I've made no promises to Mary Zone."

It was, in fact, a bit of political finagling by board member George Dobrea and my trusty school board source John Edward Gallagher Jr (no relation to Joe), who had long and cheerly admitted he got elected largely because of old Joe Gallagher's name.

John 'couldn't be reached for comment' (a reporter suffers a price for keeping in with his best sources), but Pinkney said: "I don't know the area as well as other board members. I don't know how deep seated is the concern.(politics speech meaning 'you do what you want in your area, but keep out of mine.' "I think to change it now would be embarrassing to Joe (Gallagher)"

Joe himself said he doesn't know about the opposition. "I was very pleased about the change," he said. "I think it's one of the finest gestures the board could have made. The name of West has gone into the Lincoln-West High School. I don't think the petition drive is fair."

But that's the way politics worked in Cleveland in the 70's; probably that's the way it works everywhere still. In 2021 it was still called the Joseph M. Gallagher Junior High School.

It changed from a school of about 700 students in 1977, 70% white and 30% black and Asian, to a school of about 700 students, 47% Hispanic, 29% black, 10% Asian and 13% white in 2018. According to PublicSchoolReview.com it was in 2,987th place out of 3,255 schools in Ohio in 2018, and scraping the bottom in academic scores, with only 24% proficiency in math, 22% in reading, compared to the state average of 62**%. Its academic rating was just 1/10.**

I hope poor old Joe Gallagher has departed this world. I'm not sure I would want to have a failing school as my legacy. It's very American to personalize structures but it's risky. Google 'Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, Florida, 2018' and see what you get: 17 killed, 17 wounded by gunfire at the school. Secondary is her fame as an Everglades writer and campaigner.

Personally, I would have kept the name 'West Junior High.'

Chapter 10. Cleveland, 1978

Michael Swihart was never going to make the annals of 'worst killer in Ohio history,' even though he killed his father, his mother, and both brothers in violence that residents of a town in Medina County still talk about. But he's up there with the lesser worst of Ohio killers, and jailed for life.

What makes this case stand out is the sheer ordinariness of it.

A middle class, respectable home, involving respectable people, in the respectable town of Brunswick (pop. 34,000, 95% white) a few miles south of Cleveland, suddenly destroyed by the apparently respectable 18-year-old college son of a respectable former US Air Force man.

And all kicked off by a father-son exchange as they both watched a ball game on TV about whether Michael was ever going to be any good with a baseball bat.

Michael's family was raised in the U.S. Air Force, where his father Donald was an engineer and was often away from home for long periods; nine schools for Michael, the eldest child, ranging from New Mexico and Arizona to Alaska, Turkey, Spain and Georgia, and finally to Brunswick, Ohio, in 1976.

And a year later another change: to Miami University, Central Ohio, where Michael was in the first months as a freshman – with a girlfiend, to whom he swore his undying love. "He is one of the most considerate people I have ever met, always thinking of other people." Cynthia (Cindy) Kirkey, Michael's girlfriend, told the Medina County Court. "He's sensitive to other people's needs – one of the types you want to bring home to meet your parents."

A nice boy. Apparently. Michael's uncle described him to the three judge panel as 'very polite, also ambitious and strived to please…….I felt that Mike respected his father a great deal. I felt there was a lot of love." Apparently. And of Donald, his father, Michael's uncle on his mother's side said Donald was 'very energetic, athletic, ambitious and always wanted to achieve.' And a perfectionist.

On the night of Oct 22, 1977, everything seemed fine at home. Swihart told detectives in a tape recording when he was arrested that he, his father and his 16-year-old brother Brian had stayed up late and watched television. He got up at 10am the next morning and went out into the woods while his mother Susan cooked his favorite meal – chicken and dumplings.

When he returned to the house he and his father again watched TV. "My father was swinging a baseball bat,"

Swihart said on a tape played in the courtroom. “He was in a good mood that day. I really felt close to him. He was talking about Reggie Jackson and baseball.”

But at one point, the baseball bat in his hands, Donald Swihart asked Michael “Do you think you will ever be able to use one of these?”

The tone of his voice, in that sentence from a police report, was not made clear to the court, but it was clear to me watching from the press box that the word ‘ever’ must have been spoken sarcastically, an annoying niggle that got under Michael’s skin, especially as he later made a point of getting on so well with his father. Michael said his father put down the bat and sat on the coffee table, watching the TV.

Michael then picked up the bat and started swinging it – hard. Exactly at that point, the prosecution said, the father stood up.

“I hit him in the head with the bat,” Michael said on the tape. “He was hurt. My mother came out screaming. I kept swinging the bat. Brian (his 16-year old brother) tried to take the bat from me. I kept swinging. I ran outside. I was scared. I didn’t want Russell to know.” Russell was his nine-year-old brother, who was playing football with a friend in the yard.

Michael took Russell to a store, bought him some candy and put gasoline in the car. On the way home he told Russell not to go into the house because “Mom and Dad were sleeping.”

At the house Michael asked Russell to get an empty gasoline can from the garage. They then drove to nearby Strongsville to fill it. On their return Russell ran into the house to show his parents the candy Michael had bought him. Michael quickly followed him inside.

“I didn’t want him to know,” he said again on the tape. “He wouldn’t believe I did it. I don’t do things like that.” Michael said he ‘tapped’ Russell with the bat, apparently killing the little brother he loved, hugging his limp body closely. In doing so he got Russell’s blood on his own clothing. So he changed his clothes, threw the bloodied garments in the fireplace, sprayed gasoline around the living room, and lit it.

As the house blazed around the four bodies (tragically, a coroner told the court, Russell was still alive when the fire engulfed him) Michael cadged a ride from an unsuspecting friend back to Miami University in search of Cindy, the girl he said he loved and wanted to stay with forever.

Michael Swihart pleaded Not Guilty to all the charges by reason of temporary insanity. This was supported in court by one psychiatrist for the defence, but not by another for the prosecution. The judges decided he was guilty of the aggravated murder of his mother Susan, brother Brian and brother Russell, and of aggravated arson, because of the way he tried to cover up his crimes.

But, to the visible shock of all the spectators in court, he was found NOT guilty of the murder of his father, the first person he hit with the bat. There was no evidence, the judges ruled, of anything more than accident.

Had he stopped at that point Michael could have continued with his life. At worst he could have been charged with

manslaughter. But he didn't. He went on swinging the bat and killing, perhaps believing his mother and brother would never accept he didn't deliberately kill his father. And then later, though Michael loved Russell dearly, considered what would become of him without that family?

Michael Swihart was still at the Madison Correctional Institution in Ohio when I checked on his whereabouts in 2022, forty-four years later, having appealed unsuccessfully five times to the Ohio Parole Board for release. The premeditated murder of little Russell was given as the primary reason.

But what was it that draws me back to this case so many years later, in some doubt that the right sentence has been reached? Perhaps just its ordinariness, that almost anyone with the same sort of personality and unstable background could have done what he did. Michael was said by his uncles to be a lovely boy who had a strong loving relationship with his father. But I wonder. Given the different places and countries he had lived, just how much did those uncles actually see of the boy growing up to gain a real insight of his mental state?

There are millions of boys around the world who have had insecure backgrounds who suffer the price in their personality development. As an 'Air Force brat' myself I share some experience of his sort of background. But the court heard no testimony about this to my knowledge. And there was no evidence he had a violent nature or that he INTENDED to kill his family – except for little Russell, after the realization of what he had done.

Did his brain in fact 'freeze' after he struck his father? A friend of mine who has spent much time with Formula One race cars tells me he had seen 'brain freeze' in drivers who were unable to take immediate corrective action when in danger at very high speed. They continued doing what they had been doing, apparently without understanding the consequences. Again, no evidence was presented in court.

By 2021 both the American and British departments of defense were studying what further efforts their militaries could make to ensure more stable service families – and to encourage personnel retention.

And about time.

Why is the schools writer of the Cleveland Press writing about horrific murders anyway? because, as of February, '78 I was no longer an education writer. There was a significant shake-up of staff and beats, and I took on another tough beat – Labor – from Norman Mlachak, who took on another role. I was assigned to the Swihart case in the interim.

I can't say I was sad about moving from education. Sorry, perhaps, not to have reached the point where the school buses started moving thousands of children to achieve school desegregation. But when would that be? And anyway, this would be the new year of a fresh start for managing Cleveland schools, as Supt Briggs was retiring. So why not a move for me?

The year had started with the same old stories: mostly about money, or lack of it. In February I wrote an analysis of a School Board plan for a local tax raise.

"Amidst rock-bottom morale, fears of a take-over by the federal court and charges of mismanagement against them, Cleveland school officials are working up a campaign to sell a 9.9-mill tax levy to the voters on April 6," I

wrote. “Most casual observers think the chances of passage are slim: that the School Board is just throwing away the $200,000 or so it costs to put a levy to a special election. But others are not so sure…… ‘ etc.

Here’s a farewell message to my beat via Pink Floyd: ***Another Brick in The Wall***, a dark but compelling plea to leave kids alone, not to regiment them. I’m not aiming it so much at teachers but at powerful authorities. You know who you are. The album came out in 1979, was featured in Cleveland’s Rock n’Roll Hall of Fame (opened 1996), sold 12 million records and became an international phenomenum.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=59

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR5ApYxkU-U

It’s NOT an example of how I was educated in England, although there IS an element in there that encouraged a certain anti-establishment rebelliousness in me. (I noticed that millions around the world have watched it: 544,199,423 views by 2010, as far as I can see).

You might prefer this version by Pink Floyd

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=59

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krYK1jWz0Lo (6,285,060 views by 2022)

"We don't need no educashun, we don't need no thought control."

Make of it what you will.

Memory Flash: ***South Euclid, Ohio Jan 26, 1978***

The Great Blizzard of 1978. Worse than last year's blizzard, this was an historic winter storm that so hit the state with high winds and snow the wind chill factor was minus 61Deg F (-51C). A 'white hurricane' dumped 7.1 inches of snow on the area. It doesn't sound that much, but whipped by 60mph winds it blocked hundreds of roads. 110,000 Greater Clevelanders lost power. All freeways were closed, except for I-71 The entire Ohio turnpike south of Cleveland was shut down and there are 51 deaths across the state.

For three or four days my Plymouth Volare struggled to get me to work and to reach home again. South Belvoir Blvd, south of Collinwood and up the hill to South Euclid was littered with abandoned Chevys, Oldsmobiles and Cadillacs. Only one vehicle, it seemed to me, was able to get through without too much trouble – Anna's little old VW, with its engine over the driving wheels at the back, and a few bricks under the hood at the front. Every morning and every night she got to and from Euclid General Hospital in her nurses' uniform, one hand on the steering wheel, the other scraping ice from the inside of the windscreen, weaving around each abandoned car without difficulty.

Once, though, she turned to enter our driveway, slid sideways towards the ditch, jammed her

foot on the accelerator and launched the car up and over it and onto our snow-covered lawn. SUPERNURSE!! With a little help from a neighbor we got the old girl – er, car – snugly to the front door.

Where does one start with the Cleveland Labor beat? Where else but with the unions? This was a tough old union town, and had been since 1836, when the carpenters and Joiners Benevolent Society held the first state convention and adopted the 10-hour day as its main achievement. I've already mentioned the first steel strike in 1882, which turned violent against imported Polish workers, but didn't mention the 1899 city streetcar workers strike, when troops were called in and ten passengers were injured when a car was blown up by nitro-glycerine. The auto workers in the 30's, the clothing manufacturers in the 50's. the truck drivers (Teamsters) in the 70's. All struck to improve the lot of their members – and their own leaders.

This was a closed-shop town. You didn't get a job unless you joined a union. Which I did when I arrived at The Press in 1970; Newspaper Guild Local No 1, where America's newspaper journalists started their own union in 1933 – and where it effectively died at the Plain Dealer in 2020.

So I started in April with a 'hello' interview of Teamster Union leader Jackie Presser, a political powerhouse in local and national union business.

TEAMSTERS LEADER. Jackie Presser Teamsters Union boss in Cleveland who became President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and an adviser to President Reagan, while still with connections to organized crime.

"Teamster Union leader Jackie Presser greeted this reporter warmly," I wrote. "He appeared outwardly calm, even expansive, about all the publicity surrounding the arrest of John J. (Skip) Felice, arrested by the FBI recently on charges of labor racketeering, misuse of union funds and conspiracy to murder a rival union member. Felice controls Teamster Locals 293, 73 and 796 and holds seven other key union offices.

"We were stunned," said Presser about the arrest of Felice, a long-time associate who heads three local

Teamster unions. "We know nothing about this. I personally have been friends with Skip a better part of my life. We pray this thing works out for him," said Presser in a two-hour interview with a Press reporter.

'Course you were, Jackie, who was – effectively – Felice's boss. Shocking. "We felt they (the FBI) were on a fishing expedition," he said. "I can't figure out why he (Felice) would want to do what they say he did."

What Presser says and does is of more than just local news. As one of two reported rivals for the top job controlling the Teamsters Union nationally when Frank Fitzsimmons retires in 1981 he would be as powerful as Jimmy Hoffa, national chairman who suddenly disappeared (believed murdered) in 1975.

But Presser wouldn't have any comparison to Hoffa and the way he ran his unions, or to his father, Bill Presser, who founded the Cleveland Teamsters. Embezzling the Teamsters Pension Fund? No. Contracts to a man who went to prison for defrauding the fund in 1973 (Allen Dorfman)? 'Quite normal bidding procedures.' Funds invested in Las Vegas casinos? "Only 7.2% of the Vegas operation is funded by the Teamsters," he said.

Comparison with the salaries of top Teamster officials and top corporation officials? Now you're talking. This was one of Presser's favorite subjects. He produced a chart that showed the salaries of top corporation officials to his own, reported to be $250,00,000 to $300,000 a year. In fact, at least officially, he made $162,000 that year as secretary-treasurer of Local 507 of the Teamsters Union, according to union financial reports filed a couple of months later with the U.S. Labor Department.

I wrote it up as a front page story (Press union readers like to know these things, I was told) on June 2, headlined **'$38,000 Raise. Teamsters local hikes Jackie Presser's pay.**' Plus extra for all the other Teamster jobs he held, bringing the total to at least $223,000. That was still less than his friend Harold Friedman 'reputedly the nation's highest paid union leader ($330,547 – 1.4 million in 2022)".

Back to my interview……

Perhaps, I suggested to Presser, it was the public's perception that organized crime was involved in the teamster operation that leads the media to inquire so mercilessly? Perhaps a movie like F.I.S.T. isn't so far from the truth? F.I.S.T. (the fictional Federation of Inter-state Truckers') was a just-released movie, written by former Plain Dealer writer Joe Esterhas, that featured Sylvester Stallone in his first post-Rocky movie as a Cleveland warehouse worker who becomes involved in the Teamsters leadership – a la Jimmy Hoffa).

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAndBxYrTBE

“That doesn’t even resemble Jimmy Hoffa or my father,” said Presser. ”Sheer fiction,” even though he grudgingly admitted it could have been possible for mob figures to have infiltrated the union back in the 1930s or 40s.

“But that was a long time ago. That’s not true today.”

Perhaps it’s a shame he wasn’t able to wait around until 2019 to watch the Martin Scorsese film *The Irishman*, a 3.5 -hour epic that deals with much more cultural darkness about Hoffa and the Teamsters than any F.I.S.T film of 41 years earlier.

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Presser did become national head of the Teamsters Union in 1983, until his death from brain cancer in 1988, at the age of 61. He is believed to have had the active support of the Cleveland Mafia, but also to have been an FBI informant on that same Mafia.[1]

Perhaps Cleveland's workers didn't need to cling to unions to get ahead in the second half of the 20th Century, I wondered. Perhaps they could work for the government. At a time when taxpayers nationwide were increasingly rebelling against the gigantic – and still growing – federal bureaucracy – it was time to look more closely at what it was like financially to work for Uncle Sam.

Under a front page headline **"Uncle Sam, a nice guy to work for**" I revealed a Press study on federal pay scales that showed what many taxpayers and job applicants believed for some time – that federal employees often have it made over their private industry counterparts:

THOUSANDS of federal employees overpaid, making more money than their official job descriptions and possibly more than they could make in comparable private industry positions. GOOD FRINGE BENEFITS, from BROAD MEDICAL COVERAGE to vacations of four weeks after three years' service, and a RETIREMENT PLAN much better than those in private industry. PAY RAISES every year to cover the cost of living, including retirees.

"According to a new government study, 110% of white-collar federal employees, or 136,000 people, are paid more than they should be and 3% are paid less," I wrote.

The story led the paper and continued inside with graphics and a separate piece that said competition between college graduates for federal jobs are intense. The best federal opportunities appeared to be those in engineering fields – if applicants didn't mind moving to other parts of the country.

Memory Flash: *I-271, Cuyahoga County, March 1978*

I'm stuck in a traffic jam. All four lanes of the main northbound freeway around the southeast suburbs of Cleveland are blocked solid with traffic, at most crawling along at 2mph. There must have been an accident. I keep looking at my watch. I don't remember where I was going or who I was supposed to be meeting, but I do remember I'm going to be late. Very late. There is no way I'm going to make my appointment.

And NOBODY is going to know where I am, why I am late or what to do about it.

It is hard to imagine, in the 21st Century, how this could be. No cell phones or communication

1. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackie_Presser

of any kind to and from a private car. They have yet to be invented – or at least marketed. Life in the 70s was like this for everyone. Just a driver and his metal box.

Then, suddenly, it hits me: THERE IS NOT A DAMNED THING I CAN DO ABOUT IT! An epiphany! I don't think the clouds parted and a ray of sunshine hit my car, but I do know people who swear they found God this way. Or Love, or an invention, or an idea.

Of course I could have thought to myself: "Serve you right for not starting earlier, or at least checked the traffic"' But I didn't. "There is not a damned thing I can do about it," is the first time I've thought this applies to me. And wow! Does it do great things for my blood pressure, for my equanimity!

I can almost take this warm, comforting feeling as my life's controlling motto! "Sorry, boss, I can't come to work today. I think I might have the flu. There's nothing I can do." Wonderful! "Sorry, honey, I forgot to put the garbage out. It's too late now." I'm relaxed.

May 2, 1978. I'm not quite done with Cleveland's schools. Supt Briggs has announced his retirement, and I've been asked to write a personal assessment of his 14-year tenure as head official for the Insight page, opposite the editorials. I'm pulling no punches. Here's the first few paragraphs:

"Popular wisdom is that Paul Briggs quit as superintendent of the Cleveland school system because Federal Judge Frank Battisti stripped him of his power.

"Well, I'm sorry if I can't join in with the community's anguish at his departure, or the gnashing of teeth at Judge Battisti. Because Briggs' time was up anyway.

"It's a shame that the emotions of desegregation are caught up in Briggs' resignation because even if there was no Judge Battisti, or any desegregation case at all, Briggs probably would have been in deep trouble over the school system's finances and general administrative capabilities.

"**Paul Briggs knows that after six years of covering the Cleveland schools for The Press I have no great fond regard for him, and I'm sure the feeling is mutual. I have to say that I found him vengeful, tyrannical, paternalistic, oversensitive and a superb politician (that's different from a statesman and not always a nice word in my book.)**

"However, to set the record straight, let me say that in my view Briggs is also the most dedicated public official I know, keeps his telephone publicly listed, almost never takes vacations, is personally thrifty, humorous, and a great image-maker for the Cleveland schools.

"He is a tireless worker for the benefit of children, he's a 'doer' (one of his favorite words), and he's a man with a lot of guts.," I wrote. "I hope to have as much when I'm 65.

"What Briggs had going for him over most of his 14 years as superintendent was his own strength and a docile School Board. As one top federal official put it in 1974: "Cleveland has the strongest superintendent and the worst school board of the 20 largest cities in the United States".

“For years Briggs was the king. If a reporter wanted to know about a particular contract, he went to Briggs. If he wanted an explanation of reading scores, he went to Briggs. Other large city school districts have public relations staffs. Cleveland had Briggs. He was PR man, a skilled manipulator of state and federal legislators, master schoolteacher, businessman, labor leader.

“He was the champion architect, building new schools everywhere, often in areas of the city which had not seen a new building in 30 years or more. As the largest public employer in the state, and one of the most prolific suppliers of contracts, he was the darling of the city’s business, labor and civic leaders. Hardly a voice was heard to criticize him publicly. Certainly not the School Board in the early 1970s’ ……

……And on to my closing paragraph:

“He came close to creating “The Briggs Memorial School System.” He might have succeeded. But he never would recognize that there is a limit to what one man can do. If only he could have swallowed his self-centered pride just once in a while.”

And so to the lighter things of Cleveland Press journalism:

April 1. Headline: “**Hey Pete, there really IS some paint on your pants**’ ‘Believe me, it was hard to come to work this morning,” I wrote. “What jocular gent, I wondered, would be calling to get half our photographers out to a fire – in a duck pond? What titillated tipster would try to persuade me that (City Hall personnel director) Bob Weissman will fire Dennis Kucinich, Cleveland’s ‘boy mayor’? Which perennial prankster would tell me I have paint on the back of my pants?

“They all come out of the woodwork today – April Fool’s Day”.

And on to describe who does what around the world on April Fool’s Day. We had one special last line from Anna, who insisted the day ends not at noon but starts again with the East Yorkshire Legging Down Day – tripping people up!

May 3 Farrah Fawcett-Major is in town and I’m there to meet her at Burke lakefront airport. Wow! (not). Why am I assigned to meet the wife of the Six Million Dollar Man, Lee Majors? Because she’s also the star of the hit new TV show **Charlie’s Angels**, or because there’s nobody else available in the newsroom? Perhaps it’s the Charlie bit, since I seem to have done quite well chasing Prince Charles around town last year.

Anyway, I (and dozens of other reporters) told the world that Ms Fawcett-Majors brought her famous hairstyle to Cleveland because she was peddling a line of Faberge cosmetics and was collecting a check for $1 million on behalf of Faberge from the Cleveland-based Revco drug store chain. She got a smooch from Mayor Kucinich and a (cardboard) key to the city. I couldn’t get near her. Instead, I got to interview David Sizemore, 16, a student at South High School, who skipped class but had made a ‘Good Luck Farrah!’ poster which he desperately wanted her to sign.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJTBs24szWo

Farrah appeared in several TV shows, won a number of Emmy Awards, was partnered by actor Ryan O'Neill, and died of rectal cancer in 2009, aged 62.

July 18 A Column One front page piece demanding an end to the 55mph speed limit and returning it to 70. The lower limit was brought in as a crisis measure to save fuel after the Saudi oil embargo in 1973, and was stuck there because the government said U.S. public opinion wanted to keep it. Which public was that? I asked. Certainly not the driving public, which is slowly pushing the limit up every day on freeways. I reported the return of the 70mph limit on British roads, on Canadian roads and certainly on German roads – with speed limits up to 140mph.

Aug 22. Featuring Backpacking, with a half page in the adventure/travel section of hiking the virgin wilderness of the Otter Creek in the mountains of West Virginia. "One of the things about backpacking is that full bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon wine and Aunt Jemima's Maple Syrup don't really belong in your pack. Even if they are in plastic bottles,' was my lede. 'Neither do books, camera, air mattress, rubber mallet or tape recorder'.

You get the picture. Anna did nearly stand on a big snake, though. She said.

Jun 13. Back on the Adventure/travel page. '**Climbing on the rocks**. Reporter Almond learns the ropes of how to fall off a cliff'. That took up another half page, with photographer Larry Nighswander getting bored and making funny noises.

And then back to Cleveland politics at the school board. Board President Arnold Pinkney announced his resignation in mid-August, with a view to mixing it in politics if Mayor Kucinich got thrown out of office because of the city's financial troubles. He had run for mayor twice, unsuccessfully, but knew an awful lot of people and where most of the skeletons were buried.

Where the school board would go post- Briggs and Pinkney was not immediately obvious. Those two were like two scheming peas in a pod when it came to directing the multi-billion dollar school operations, and it was likely to become quite a different institution, I wrote in an analysis on **Aug 18**.

"Under acting Supt Peter Carlin, administration attitudes have already begun to change from the days when Paul Briggs ran the schools with an iron fist. And now – with John E. Gallagher Jr expected to take over as school board president following Pinkney's resignation – board policies, too, will probably change considerably.

'Expect a more public discussion of issues; a more businesslike approach to finances and education, and a less emotional (some might say humanitarian) concern for education programs.' And on for a lot more detail, except that I didn't have the name of the person Pinkney expects to replace him.

Memory Flash: ***Chicago, Jun, '78***

I'm with the Cleveland Old Gray Rugby Club on our hired bus just leaving the Windy City for our 350-mile ride back to Cleveland. It is nearly noon and there is total silence. We are all utterly exhausted. We drank far too much of Peter Stroh's donated beer on the way here, didn't take enough precautions against the extreme heat, lost 60-0 against Windsor, Ontario – and then over-partied all evening.

I'm nursing a sore knee from tackling people on ground that was baked hard by the sun, my head hurts and I've had very little sleep. Not least because it was a noisy night in my hotel bedroom, which I shared with a fellow Old Gray who didn't play because he was still on crutches from a game weeks ago, but was still fit enough to entertain a local rugby groupie in the bed next to me all night.

We'd recovered a bit by the time we reached Lorain, and told each other we had a great time and would be back for the next Midwest rugby tournament next year.

But not me. I've decided that at 32 I'm now too old. I'll give rugby a few more months, but I'll switch to more heavy duty running. There's a marathon in Washington DC next year.

It took time to learn about the depth of influence of unions in Cleveland, and who runs what. One name I picked up from the Teamsters was the Cimino family, who ran a couple of big local food distribution and other worker unions in the area and could soon have had a lock on food supplies in the city. But not much seemed to be known about them publicly at the time. They were not newsmakers (at least I did not find out much about them in the library or our news files), were not courted by politicians, were not troublemakers.

There was Charles Cimino Sr (who wouldn't talk to me), who inherited the little produce shop his Sicilian father had built up from a fruit and vegetable cart on Orange Avenue in the 1920s. Charles worked with other food vendors and became head of the 2,200-member Local 400 of the Commission House Drivers Union, a Teamster

organization that represents food warehousemen and food drivers. He had six children- his sons Anthony and Charles Jr and daughter Ann all working for the union. Charles Jr took over Local 400 from his father.

Then there was Frank Cimino, another son of Charles Sr, who was head of the 6,500-member Local 427 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, representing butchers and delicatessen workers. It was Frank's union which appeared to be the more powerful, because it was planning to merge with the much bigger Local 880 of the Retail Clerks Union. Frank had already persuaded its president, David McDonald, to accept night hours for supermarkets.

Merging the two unions would create a combined union of 1.2 million members, the biggest in the AFL-CIO (the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), the 14 million member heart of the US Labor movement. It would be a dramatic political shift from the historic industrial and craft union roots of the nation, into the ranks of government and service workers.

Only a year earlier the largest union was the United Steel Workers of America. That was then overtaken by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) after a government employees union merged in New York state.

So, within a year or two, the little-known Cimino family could be in position to shut almost every supermarket, food preparation plant and delivery system in the country, especially locally when Charles Cimino Sr retired and if, as expected, Jackie Presser and Harold Friedman moved to take over Cimino's Local 400.

It was certainly one to watch.

Retirement was big with the unions as the economy slowed, jobs were being lost and a new federal law raised the mandatory retirement age from 65 to 70. Retirement? It had never occurred to me as a 32-year old, particularly as I had spent the last six years with kids who had not even entered the work force. So I did some local research, asking people if they would be happy to retire at 70.

No, not really, they said for a front page feature. Most wanted a good pension and to leave earlier, not later.

"Most of our hourly people leave between age 62 and 65," said Joe Kmiec, an employment benefits official at General Motors Cleveland Fisher Body plant. "We have a 68 age limit now, and only two or three are going to stay after that."

But there's a big catch: inflation. It was then roaring ahead at 8.7% a year across the country, and most company pension plans didn't have cost-of-living provisions. So increasing numbers of 65-year-olds were having second thoughts about retirement. "If there isn't some compensation more people are going to stay on until 70, if they can," one Case Western Reserve University professor told me. "Based on current inflation a $600 -a-month company pension plan is going to be worth $306 ten years from now."

Tell me about it! My Cleveland Press pension, after 12 years work there, was $115 a month when I retired in 2011. It is still $115 a month.

Rumblings of union discontent continued through the fall. Employers were worried, especially in the steel and automotive sectors. How to keep the workers happy? Out at the Chrysler stamping plant in Twinsburg I found out that the company was working up a plan with the United Auto Workers Union for a unique fringe benefit: free lawyers for each of the 4,100 employees.

Divorces, speeding tickets, wills, real estate transactions, problems with warranties on car repairs, all would all be taken care of under a nationwide pre-paid legal package to start nationwide for all Chrysler auto workers in the new year. If it was a boon for workers it was a gift for lawyers too. An American Bar Association survey the previous spring had shown that many people with legal problems simply don't go to lawyers, mostly because they think they can't afford them.

"The average working man doesn't have time or knowledge to deal with lawyers," William 'Red' Harden, president of local 122 at the Twinsburg Chrysler plant, told me. "He feels he gets ripped off when he goes to one. He either feels cheated or he doesn't go to one at all," he said, adding that the two lawyers to be hired full time in Twinsburg would probably have plenty of work.to handle.

But nothing like that was being offered to steel haulers – or at least one faction in the Teamsters Union: the Fraternal Association of Steel Haulers (FASH), based in Pittsburgh. They were ready for a national strike. There were about 35,000 members of FASH, all independent owners of flatbed steel trucks which they kept mostly at their homes in the countryside. They vowed to strike on Nov 10 because they felt the Teamsters Union were not representing their concerns about pay and costs.

If it came to a strike it could be Teamster vs Teamster in America's steel belt, particularly in the Midwest. And it could be nasty indeed.

Memory Flash: ***My desk, Press newsroom, Nov 3, 1978***

I had just sat down at my desk when the City Editor looked over at me with a questioning expression, stuck his thumb up and mouthed 'Yes?'

I nodded my head.

A half-minute later the building-wide tannoy system, rarely used except for emergencies, crackled and a voice I didn't recognize intoned loudly: "AN ANNOUNCEMENT…… PETER ALMOND HAS BECOME AN AMERICAN CITIZEN."

Upon which the newsroom erupted (well, a little bit anyway) in applause. I'm pretty sure I closed my eyes and my face felt red. I just sank in my chair, to disappear, anything. I had asked the newsdesk not to tell anybody why I had to go over to the Federal Building for an hour that morning, and would not be available for work.

I really didn't want to make a fuss of my naturalization. In standing there with my wife and 30

or so other people of all nationalities and repeating an oath that I was renouncing all other fealties for the United States of America, I know I had my fingers crossed behind my back.

Not that I was lying about my oath to America. Both Anna and I felt that after eight years here, being immersed in almost every aspect of the nation's life and color – and, I'd like to think, providing a service to its citizens with my news reporting and analysis and Anna's hard hospital work nursing Americans back to health – that we had earned the right to full membership of the nation. Not least to vote and to be represented. AND we were well advanced to receive our first adopted child, Cleveland born. Did Anna and I want to have children with American citizenship while we didn't?

It was just…..that I didn't want to give up my British citizenship. An Englishman – a Brit – doesn't do that lightly. For one thing he/she has to formally RENOUNCE British citizenship before a representative of Her Majesty the Queen. Why could I not be both? An Anglo-American, a representative of the 'Special Relationship?'

Actually, I could, based on a Supreme Court ruling of 1952. But nobody at the US immigration office was going to tell me this. Dual nationality only seemed to become much more acceptable years later when international travel became vastly more accessible.

Years later, stuck in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war, I called the relocated U.S. Embassy in Rome to ask for advice in getting the hell outta there. "Have you got another passport?" an official responded. I told him yes, British. "Then use it," he said. "We're not sending a gunboat for you."

We're still dual nationals, by the way – as are our kids.

But heck, let's not get defensive about this. **November 2 was the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Cleveland Press.** Hooray! The Penny Press, Nov 2, 1878. The paper put out a special edition, a sepia-colored copy of which I have before me as I write. It is a Metro edition, its front page presented in the same way as a century earlier: seven columns wide, each column led by narrow headlines and several sub headlines. All the stories are fresh.

There are only a couple of local staff by-lines on this special front page, whose ink-stained rubber printers' mat graces a wall in my little office. One is about the city of Cleveland facing bankruptcy and payless paydays, by Peter Phipps, our City Hall reporter.

The other is by me, about the President of the Cleveland School Board, my old source John E. Gallagher Jr, sticking his bum out of a car window to 'moon' his brother in another car as they travelled along I-271; being arrested, fined $100 – and refusing to resign.

"It was just a silly, stupid mistake, one I obviously regret," he told me, admitting to several sleepless nights since his arrest two weeks earlier. "But I think I can make a significant contribution to the school system. I intend to work even harder. I have talked to most members of the board. They have expressed sympathy. They have reminded me that a political official lives in a fishbowl. They have not demanded my resignation."

As I've already noted, Gallagher was a breath of fresh air before and after he became president of the school board, and surveys showed the public liked him. So, in spite of the president of the parent-teachers association saying his act demanded his removal, John E. Gallagher Jr kept his job.

"He is a brilliant boy," said the elderly Joseph Gallagher, no relation, but the former school board member on whose name John Edward got himself elected a couple of years earlier.

Ah, but assistant editor Herb Kamm couldn't resist being among the first to launch *bottom* jibes at the *bottom* of that special front page. In the small gossip spot he had regularly at the *bottom* of the regular front page – Herb Hears – the space was headlined 'Hear ye, hear ye' and the words: "The services of pollster Louis Harris have been retained to find out (a) how we see ourselves and (b) how others see us.

"Meanwhile, local patriots are aggrieved over the moonlighting activities of a certain School Board official. They resent Cleveland being made the *butt* of new jokes. As one gentleman was heard to say 'It's easy to find fault when you have the benefit of *hind-sight*. Let's hope things have hit *bottom*."

Memory Flash. ***I-90, Ohio Turnpike, December '78***

I'm in the cab of a Peterbilt flatbed truck on I-90 south of Cleveland. The truck is carrying a load of specialized steel from Pittsburgh to Gary, Indiana. I'm here because there's been a lot of violence involving steel haulers and striking members of FASH around the country, including along this vital interstate. The Teamsters want Press readers to think they're the good guys.

There have been snipers shooting out truckers' windshields, individual beatings at truck stops, air brake hoses cut, fuel tampered with. In all since the start of the strike on Nov 11 more than 400 incidents of vandalism and violence. The Ohio National Guard has joined with the police and state troopers to keep watch.

Unlike in Northern Ireland or at a couple of United Auto Worker picket lines I'm not wearing a helmet or flak jacket. The driver seems to be spending all his time talking on his Citizens Band (CB) radio to fellow truckers rather than talking to me.

But then I see why. Two cars and a pickup truck are following us, flashing their headlights. Eventually, one of the cars pulls alongside us. The front seat passenger winds down his window and shows us a revolver in his hand. The rear passenger is clearly carrying a shotgun.

It is a warning, a message that my driver, me, and his vehicle are not safe. Now that I have shared the driver's personal experience of driving this route he finally talks to me and gives me his personal story of the last five weeks. It makes a decent spread.

Co-incidentally, a movie, Convoy, came out in 1978. Anybody remember "Rubber Duck?"

Let's hear that truck blast. C'mon!

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Chapter 11. Cleveland, 1979

There's a point to working nights on an evening newspaper. You get to hear instant reactions from readers who have something to say about what they've just read in your paper. I think we had three reporters to answer the phones: one on sports, another doing police stuff and, for the time being – me.

Mostly it was just to hear we've got this wrong or that wrong, or that Cleveland Indians' pitcher Rick Waits was having a better ERA (earned runs average) than pitcher Rick Wise, who was above him in the top spot on the team. Or was the caller getting the two mixed up? Waits? Wise? C'mon, Rick whoever!

But once in a while something quite surprising – and powerful – might show up.

I was half way through 18-months of this when the phone rang at 9pm and a slow, tired, elderly male voice told me he didn't have long to go but thought somebody ought to do something about "all dese soup ponds" in Painesville Township. "Dey stink when its dry."

'Soup ponds,' was colloquial for the waste lakes at the Diamond Shamrock Corporation's chemical plant in Painesville Twp, Lake County, 28 miles east of Cleveland next to Lake Erie. I didn't know anything about it, had never been there, and only vaguely knew it had closed abruptly two years earlier, leaving 1,200 employees – the largest work force in the area – to look elsewhere for work.

"Dey owe us," he said. "But dobody's been by."

I struggled to understand him, and said so. "Oh, it's de dose…. nose," he said with an effort. I heard a slight whistling sound as he spoke. "Got a hole in it …..from de chromate."

Thus began a six-week investigation of the medical, environmental, community and business legacy of just one old, collapsed industrial plant in America that seemed to epitomize them all. At 1,100 acres the Diamond Shamrock industrial complex was one of the largest 'brownfields' in the United States: an abandoned, apparently dead, unproductive place. It would cost a fortune to restore and heal, with money that nobody had.

By agreeing to go out to Painesville to meet my caller I had opened a Pandora's box. From individual cancers to polluted water leaking into rivers and Lake Erie, from local school tax funding to state and federal official shortcomings, from the way business capital moves but labor doesn't.

But I never got to meet my caller. He gave me his name and said he would meet me at a bar in Fairport Harbor the next night. I drove out there, but he did not show up. He had declined to give me his phone number but others at the bar knew him, said he wasn't well, and they could speak for him. They even produced one of their number who had a perforated septum.

"I'll show you!" he said, clearly after several Rolling Rocks.

Turning his back he produced a handkerchief from his pocket, pushed it up his right nostril, fiddled with his left nostril for a minute out of my sight and then quickly turned to me with a "ta-da!" and arms held aloft. He had the handkerchief through his perforated septum alright.

He was a younger man than my caller, perhaps in his late 30s and, I would soon find out, was one of hundreds of former chromate workers with the cancer. Chromate is a chemical used to coat metal to prevent corrosion and to enable paint to adhere to it. It's most popularly known on car fenders but often caused lung cancer when inhaled.

It took me six weeks to research this story, pulling together the plant's history, its workforce, and the environmental, medical and local legacy. It came together as a 10-part series – 16 stories in all – which began with a front page splash on Tuesday, Sept 4, 1979.

"Shut-down plant leaves death, sickness behind" was the headline, copyrighted by The Cleveland Press.

Here's the lede:

"Most of the plant is dead now. The wind whistles through cracked and broken windows… pigeons flap in the eaves of empty buildings… huge rusting chemical vats stand like tombstones in a churchyard.

"It is nearly three years since the old Diamond Shamrock Corp. chemical plant in Painesville Township closed, leaving 1,200 employees to look elsewhere for work. It is almost 10 years since parts of the plant began to wind down. Diamond is moving its headquarters in Cleveland, too – to Dallas, Texas, where the corporation now sees a better future for its far-flung empire.

"But what Diamond has left behind in Lake County is not a dead, soon-to-be-forgotten plant but a mass of medical, environmental and community problems that have not died. They are problems which may not allow the corporation's presence to die peacefully.

"Scores, maybe hundreds, of former workers in Diamond's now-demolished chromate plant have died, are dying or may die years from now from the effects of chromate poisoning. Chrome is a chemical which, if inhaled, often causes lung cancer and death as long as 40 years after exposure.

"**Hundreds** of former chromate workers are even now living with a hole through the inside of their noses caused by inhalation of chrome chemicals. Most suffer nasal blockages and are more susceptible to airborne illnesses.

"Many of these workers or their surviving families are unable to claim compensation because of inadequate state workers compensation laws.

"**Vast areas** of Painesville Township remain a chemical wasteland, still leaching chemicals into the Grand River, often at levels far exceeding state and federal EPA violation limits.

"**A dump** of chemicals, including highly toxic chromate, has eaten through two feet of supposedly-protective blue clay and a top layer of soil and killed the grass on the site of one abandoned operation.

"**Nearly eight years** after the chrome plant was destroyed, the chemical appears to have entered the Grand River. The latest river data collected by the state Environmental Protection Agency has disturbed officials enough to consider further investigation.

"**The Fairport school district** lost 60% of its funds when the Diamond plant shut down. Despite an emergency tax levy, it is still struggling to make ends meet.

"Many former employees, whose average age when the plant closed was about 52 – too old to feel like starting anew, too young to retire – are bitter about the plant closing and Diamond's decision to move its headquarters out of Cleveland. They feel abused and abandoned, although nearly all who were looking have found new jobs.

"The Diamond Shamrock case raises serious questions about corporate and state responsibility and worries increasing numbers of state and national leaders about the effects of mergers and plant closings on local communities.

The Diamond story began in 1910 when a small group of Pittsburgh businessmen saw a shortage of soda ash for the glass-making industry as an opportunity to build a soda-making plant. They incorporated the Diamond Alkali Co, and located a seemingly-inexhaustible supply of salt 2,000 feet underground in Painesville Township, with close access to Lake Erie, road and rail transportation of limestone and coal, and an abundant labor supply.

As with Cleveland, the people of the area's local town, Fairport Harbor, were mostly first and second-generation immigrant – Finns, Slovaks, Slovenes and a few Hungarians. The laboring work at Diamond Alkali was hard and accident-prone, but that was the nature of much of America's raw industry at the time.

One of the most memorable accidents, former union president Steve Adams told me, occurred in 1938 when a worker called Charles Knaph fell into a vat of caustic acid. Only the man's shirt buttons and belt buckle were recovered. World War II saw a huge boom in chemicals for ammunition. The workers were exempt from the draft – almost unfireable – and, like management, sloppy about procedures.

The US Navy took a direct interest in the plant, but kept a physical distance. "The workers got a raise in wages if they could prove an increase in productivity," Adams told me. "The figures looked good and they got their pay raises. But the navy paid for tonnage they never got. When they came to the plant to check you know what they found? There's a three-way cock in the center of the main pipe. The men had turned that cock so the chromate went straight into the river instead of into production!"

In fact, the Diamond Shamrock management (Diamond Alkali had merged with Texas-based Shamrock Oil and Gas years before) appeared to have a case when they told me some of the medical and environmenal problems

were the fault of the workers themselves – for failing to wear masks or taking other safety requirements. Many smoked like chimneys.

“Prove it” management said when workers claimed their injuries were the company’s fault. They had a point.

But old federal Environmental Protection Agency files contained the name of one Dr Thomas Mancuso, chief of the industrial hygiene division of the Ohio Department of Health, who had made an independent study of lung cancer deaths in Lake County in 1949, which he updated in 1975.

The study found people who worked at the Diamond Shamrock chromate plant in Painesville Township were 15 to 29 times more likely to die of lung cancer than the county’s general population; that 63% of all chromate workers he examined suffered a perforated septum; 87% suffered chronic rhinitis (severe inflammation of the center wall of the nose). And that they were contracting and dying of lung cancer many years after the cut-off date for Ohio state workers compensation.

Dr Mancuso’s reports had never been published in the media. Previously, Ohio state officials had recorded only 41 workers compensation cases for chromate lung cancer from the Diamond plant from 1948 to 1977. Dr Mancuso, one of America’s foremost experts on chromate poisoning, said this was almost certainly a conservative estimate because most workers did not die in their home town. Most died in places like the Cleveland Clinic or in other places around the country where they had retired.

“Despite recent improvement, Ohio’s workers compensation laws are still out of step with the rest of the nation,” said Robert Sweeney, Cuyahoga County Commissioner and a prominent workers compensation lawyer. James Kendis, another lawyer who had been involved in cases against Diamond Shamrock, added: “The laws need to be completely revamped. They are still a long way behind advances in medical science”.

I did what I did in school desegregation, and looked outside of Ohio to see what other states were doing – and found that New Jersey paid its chromate workers at its South Kerney Diamond Shamrock plant an average of $1,500 for every perforated septum. The company had no choice but to pay it under state laws established in the 1950s Union leaders in Ohio tried, but failed, to get the same kind of compensation.

Almost no publicity, no pressure get the laws changed. State Representative J. Leonard Camera, Democrat from Lorain who was chairman of the House Commerce and Labor Committee and was supposed to oversee workers compensation, said he was almost totally unaware of the problem. “I don’t know everything,” he said. “These things are hitting me now. A lot of people just didn’t know. I’m a pipe worker, and I’ve watched pipe-workers die and not connected it until now with asbestos….. Unless someone brings it to your attention things aren’t always done.”

I did turn the whole of the fourth part of the series over to Diamond’s defence, with officials saying the workers themselves shared the blame. Dr Richard McBurney, director of health and environmental affairs for Diamond Shamrock, who was also a Lake County coroner, was fully aware of the damage the chemical does. He had treated workers, operated on them – and disagreed with very little of Mancuso’s 1949 and 1975 studies.

“It is apparent, however, that he and Mancuso are long-time antagonists and strongly disagree about the company’s responsibilities.” I wrote.

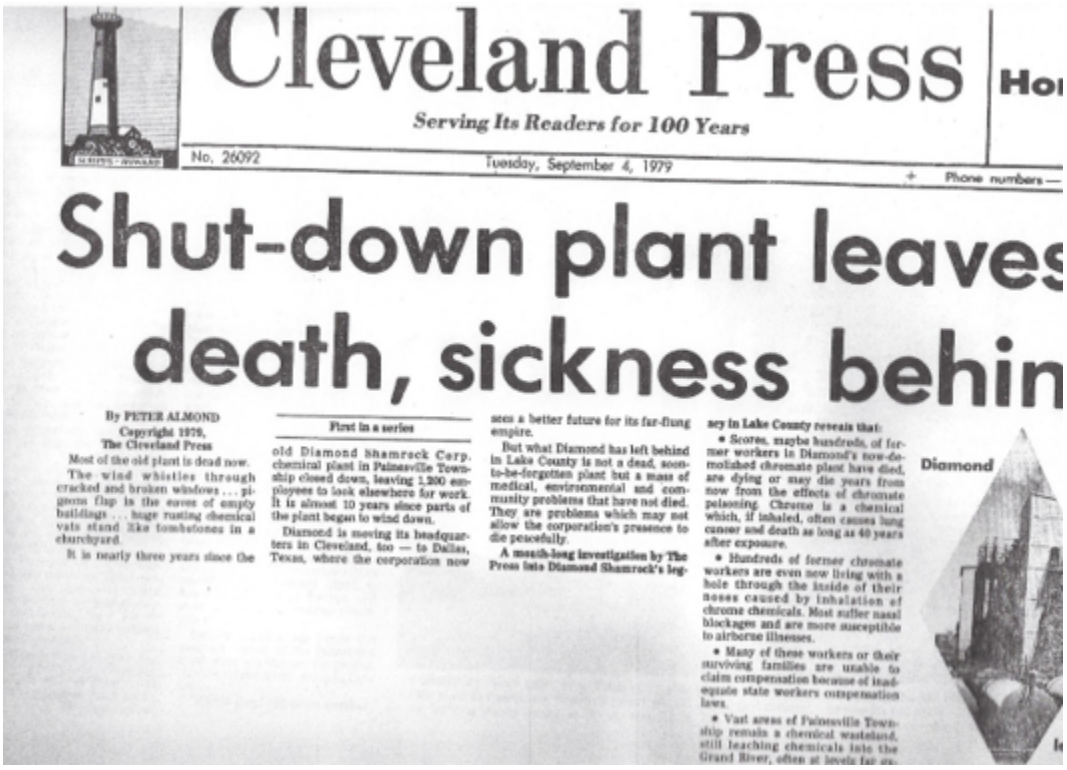
When it came to how much the company’s vast ‘soup ponds’ – chemical settling basins – were contributing to pollution in Painesville’s Grand River my investigation got into a whole barrel of conflicting data. Ohio EPA were worried about increasing nontoxic chlorides leaching into the river. A John Carroll University biologist hired by Diamond Shamrock who examined the river in 1977 said a ‘great diversity’ of fish had returned to the river and shown little evidence of being chemically contaminated. Then that was challenged…. etc

The EPA’s figures for average 1979 levels of dissolved solids were 3,840 milligrams per liter per day at a time when the violation level was 1500 mg. I reported ‘slugs’ of chemicals with all kinds of figures coming down the river; sent off my own soil samples from the ponds for analysis at an independent firm that Press reporter Norman Mlachek had arranged in 1962. Not much change since then: 50% calcium, 10% iron; 5% silicon and less than 1% each of sodium, aluminum and magnesium. The rest was dirt.

And air pollution? That too. C. Lee Mantle, who had one of the largest fruit orchards in the area, lost over 100 acres of apple and peach when the magnesium plant defoliated the trees during WWII. If it wasn’t the boilers, it was the coke plant. If it wasn’t the coke plant it was the cement plant. Etc etc. The Press ran it all.

Yet Diamond Shamrock got away with it because it was the area’s largest employer. “Diamond always was a sacred cow in Lake County,” Fred Skok, former lake County prosecutor and at the time a judge, told me. “They were like a father figure to a lot of people here.” He admitted that a pollution prosecution he had convened 20 years earlier to look at another company declined to look at Diamond because “The Republicans said I would be tilting at windmills. The Democrats said I would upset the company and make them move away.”

Well, Diamond did move away; first to Texas where it had already merged with Shamrock Oil, creating a different sort of corporation with international aspirations, replacing its Painesville operations for Venezuela, where labor costs were much lower. In 1978 there were about 2,000 business mergers across the nation, 80 of which accounted for two-thirds of the total value of $34 billion, the highest value in ten years.



Cleveland Press

Serving Its Readers for 100 Years

No. 26092 Tuesday, September 4, 1979

Shut-down plant leaves death, sickness behin

By PETER ALMOND
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The Cleveland Press

First in a series

Most of the old plant is dead now.

The wind whistles through cracked and broken windows . . . pigeons flap in the eaves of empty buildings . . . huge rusting chemical vats stand like tombstones in a churchyard.

It is nearly three years since the old Diamond Shamrock Corp. chemical plant in Painesville Township closed down, leaving 1,200 employees to look elsewhere for work. It is almost 10 years since parts of the plant began to wind down.

Diamond is moving its headquarters in Cleveland, too — to Dallas, Texas, where the corporation now sees a better future for its far-flung empire.

But what Diamond has left behind in Lake County is not a dead, soon-to-be-forgotten plant but a mass of medical, environmental and community problems that have not died. They are problems which may not allow the corporation's presence to die peacefully.

A month-long investigation by The Press into Diamond Shamrock's legacy in Lake County reveals that:

- Scores, maybe hundreds, of former workers in Diamond's now-demolished chromate plant have died, are dying or may die years from now from the effects of chromate poisoning. Chrome is a chemical which, if inhaled, often causes lung cancer and death as long as 40 years after exposure.
- Hundreds of former chromate workers are even now living with a hole through the inside of their noses caused by inhalation of chrome chemicals. Most suffer nasal blockages and are more susceptible to airborne illnesses.
- Many of these workers or their surviving families are unable to claim compensation because of inadequate state workers compensation laws.
- Vast areas of Painesville Township remain a chemical wasteland, still leaching chemicals into the Grand River, often at levels far ex-

Diamond

DIAMOND SHAMROCK'S LEGACY. The company left a mess of pollution and ill people when it departed for warmer climates. The author's investigation hit the front page hard.

My last big spread that year was all about plant-closing legislation, particularly with the recent closing of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Campbell Works creating a furore. Hearings on a proposed Community Readjustment Act were due to start in the Ohio Senate in a few days time. As you might expect, industry was opposed. "It's a restraint of trade," said Bill Costello, director of government affairs for the Ohio Manufacturers Association. "Our people have stockholders they have to answer to…. It's the most damaging piece of legislation ever concocted to keep industry out of the state."

And so, as America – and the world – started to slip into the most severe economic recession since the end of World War II, political battle was joined.

"Today, the accelerating growth of very large conglomerate enterprises through merger represents a radical acceleration of our economic and political landscape," I quoted Michael Pertschuk, chairman of the federal Trade Commission, addressing a meeting of investigative reporters in Boston. "Yet the implications remain largely unreported."

Well, I and the Cleveland Press are trying, Michael. I can't think of any major subject given this all-consuming, huge amount of space in any daily newspaper. Starting with an old man with a hole in his nose and dying of cancer calling up with the complaint "Nobody's been by.'

I doubt more than a handful of people read every word of the 'Diamond legacy' or even a third of it. But it did have an impact. A week later State Senator Tim McCormack, Painesville's state representative, co-sponsored a new bill to make companies who leave waste dumps around pay for clean-up themselves, or then for the state

to do it. We ran two letters from readers (only two?), both from Cleveland Heights, saying well done and 'why wasn't this done years ago.'

A year later the U.S Environmental Protection Agency started action on the site, beginning with a clay cap over 120 acres of the worst part of the 'Soup Ponds.' But it took another ten years before the Ohio EPA began enforcement of its laws – held up all that time in litigation between several parties. And not until November, 2005, did the Ohio EPA declare that 41 acres of the Diamond site was a 'substantial threat to public health and safety,' opening up state funds for remediation.

Then a company called Hemisphere, based in Bedford – a Cleveland suburb – pulled the Ohio EPA, Lake Metroparks and others to a new strategic plan which it called Lakeview Bluffs, a sports-oriented resort community planned to have an 18-hole championship golf course, boutique hotel and spa, first-class athletic fields and facilities, a fly-fishing club, vineyard and winery, extensive walking and biking trails, a marina, amphitheater, private beach, etc. We'll see.

Actually, the story of chromate poisoning was not just historical. It was current, as a phone call I received from a current worker at another, active, plant confirmed. The company was Metals Applied, at 2800 E.33rd St. in Cleveland, one of at least 30 chrome-plating facilities in the area. My caller said he could prove the ventilating system had not been working properly for many months, and that several employees including himself had perforated septums.

Calls to the plant drew a blank. I would not be allowed to inspect the facilities myself. But my caller said he could get me in. Midnight, by the back door. He had arranged it with the night security guard that he would take a 15-minute break while we sneaked in. He handed me a mask and we went up some stairs to look down at a chrome-plating bath where a section of aircraft landing gear was being treated. A large ventilation tube was positioned above it but it was not functioning. My caller showed me the switch and said it had worked only sporadically for many months.

He had started getting nose bleeds three weeks after starting to work at the plant, and was one of three men he knew with the problem there.

The company showed me records saying that OSHA, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, had inspected the plant the previous year at the request of a worker who complained of the fumes, but no citations were issued. The chief officer at Metals Applied, Pablo Prieto, told me he did not know of any of the 100 staff who had a perforated septum, and none had complained to him.

Cue a second copyrighted series, blasting out on the morning after Christmas Day, 1979. "**Acid fumes imperil workers, U.S. 0K's E. Side plant here"** screamed our front page headline.

The next day it was OSHA's turn to be accused of failing to adopt recommended changes on violation standards of chromic acid fumes – changes that would have resulted in Metals Applied being ordered to improve ventilation systems the year before. OSHA knew the company had problems. It visited the company in 1974, 77 and 78, citing the company for failing to keep records of occupational injuries and illnesses. It was fined $350 for not properly

separating a chromic acid tank from a cyanide tank, which could have been fatal, but the company appealed and the fines were reduced to $50.

Part of the problem was that when OSHA was created in 1970 it legalized the threshold violation standards for almost all of the 28,000 toxic chemicals in use across the country, using out of date standards. They were only ever a guide, but OSHA made them a law. OSHA's spokesman in Washington said their hands were tied because it was very difficult to change standards. When they tried they were often taken to court by companies. One of the rare times it was done was with the much-publicized problems of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a killer chemical used in rubber and plastics.

"Much publicized." There. Those two words again. Why does it take newspapers to dredge up health and safety stuff that should be bread and butter for government regulators?

Cleveland, I found out, had 41% of all the industries listed in the 1980 Ohio Industrial Directory, but only 23% of Ohio's OSHA staff. Why? Because workers in Cleveland complained less about health and safety than workers in other Ohio cities. Cincinnati had more OSHA staff but almost half the number of manufacturing industries. Toledo had more staff but only a third of the industries of the Cleveland area.

"Congress decided we should concentrate on responding to complaints," said Ken Yotz, acting director of the Cleveland OSHA office. "After we've looked at them we try to move on. Like other offices we have a backlog of complaints. Still, we just don't get that many complaints here compared to the number of industries. We're staffed accordingly."

So, it's the workers' own fault 10,000 Ohioans died of occupational illnesses every year?

The Ohio AFL-CIO was stung by that and, a few days later, and for the first time in its history, started seriously to educate workers about occupational illnesses. It secured a $250,000 federal grant, with the help of Ohio State University, to train 175 trade unionists to take a much closer examination of health and safety issues in industrial plants just after I started to write the Diamond Shamrock story.

Coincidence? We did have an impact, I'm sure. On January 2 '80 The Press' lead editorial brought both series – Diamond Shamrock and Metals Applied – together to demand that legislators apply lessons both old and new to bring occupational health and safety into the modern world.

OSHA did quickly appoint a new full-time director to its Cleveland office and set about hiring more compliance officers. Two Ohio workers compensation laws were changed as a result of the series. A number of journalism awards from those investigations, both local and national, today help to fill up a wall in my office.

So, that was it for the whole of 1979?

Hardly, though disaster, pain, death and disruption seemed to mark the year in various ways across the world. In March a movie, ***The China Syndrome***, starring Jack Lemmon, Michael Douglas and Jane Fonda, came out in cinemas across the US, scaring a lot of people about the dangers of nuclear power generation.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=61

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Twelve days later, the Three-Mile Island nuclear reactor No 2, near Harrisburg Pennsylvania, made those fears real when it had a partial meltdown. It was a wake-up call for power generation, and galvanized anti-nuclear activists.

US inflation was running at 11.2%. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December; 11 fans were killed at a WHO rock concert in Cincinnati when 7,000 young people were caught in a crush for unassigned seating. The movie ***Alien***, starring Sigourney Weaver and John Hurt, came out in May, scaring people even more. It was – and still is – regarded as perhaps the scariest movie of all time.

Another movie, ***Kramer Vs Kramer***, starring Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep, featured a couple's divorce and the effect on their child, depressing people even more. Saddam Hussein took over in Iraq, resulting in war 11 years later; Ayatollah Khomeini took over in Iran, creating the Islamic Republic of Iran and holding 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. . In August, the IRA killed Queen Elizabeth's cousin Lord Mountbatten and several others with a bomb on a boat in Ireland. The same day 18 British soldiers were killed in an ambush at Warrenpoint, near the Irish border, cementing The Troubles for the next decade under Britain's new prime minister, Margaret Thatcher.

Was there no relief?

Well, you could buy the new Sony Walkman for $200 ($700 in 2022 money); Black and Decker's hand-held Dustbuster, a spinoff from NASA's moon project, was introduced in January. ***Monty Python's movie The Life of Brian*** came out: the made-up story of a young, Not Jesus next door neighbour of the actual Jesus – in my book one of the funniest films ever, but banned in lots of places, including parts of America.

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Superman, the movie, starring Christopher Reeve, was going great at the cinema; and Voyager 1 had just passed Jupiter**,** carrying its little golden record of the wonders of Earth and its humans.

Ah, dreams…….

Memory flash: *South Euclid. January 1979*

I'm at home watching TV reports of a shooting at a school in San Diego. A 16-year-old girl, Brenda Spencer, has shot and killed the principal and a custodian with a .22 rifle from her bedroom window opposite the school, the Grover Cleveland Elementary School. She has also injured eight children and a police officer. Her father gave her the gun, with a telescopic sight and 500 rounds of ammunition, as a Christmas present.

Asked by a reporter who managed to call her at home why she did it, she said: "I don't like Mondays. This livens up the day."

Some time later Irish singer Bob Geldorf, of the Boomtown Rats group, picked up the phrase and co-wrote and performed the song "I don't like Mondays' which became an even bigger hit when he sang it at the Live-Aid concert in 1986. Spencer was still in jail in 2021.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=61

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There's no reason, of course, to connect a school shooting in San Diego with Cleveland just because the school's name has the name Cleveland in its title. Except that, to me, it was the sort of thing that could happen in Cleveland, Ohio. Who would have thought, for instance, that Cleveland would host a World Series of Rock concert at the 90,000-seat Municipal stadium every year from 1974 to 1980, knowing that there is always trouble.

The penultimate show, featuring the band Aerosmith, on July 28, 1979, was about the worst, with five shootings (one fatal), rioting in the streets around the stadium, and massive use of drugs and alcohol.

For much of the year, 1979 was about economics and the gathering storms of depression. Union-management bargaining became increasingly bitter.

"Labor will be seeking to protect its members from the ravages of 9% a year national inflation – 11.2% in the Cleveland area – and demand more fringe benefits, such as better pensions and hospitalization coverage, more time off, even auto insurance." I wrote.

"Management, however, can be expected to insist that wage boosts, cost of living increases or fringe benefits must be tied to increases in productivity. Businessmen, backed by the federal government, will point to the Carter Administration's guidelines of a maximum 7% a year wage increases and strongly resist Labor's demands for more."

A long analysis of piles of statistics concluded with a quote from 'Nels' Nelson, an associate professor of labor economics at Cleveland State University: **"All the signs are there for an absolutely horrible year."**

In Cleveland it came down to what the Teamsters and the United Auto Workers would do. First up were the big Teamsters contracts, already in negotiations via the federal government and due for conclusion at the end of March. The United Auto Workers Union would be later and take their cue from the Teamsters. I'd spent time with Jackie Presser and the Teamsters last year, so I focussed more this year this on the 75,000 auto workers and, in mid-April went up to Detroit for their annual bargaining conference.

That produced a nice little expose of Cleveland politics under Mayor Dennis Kucinich, namely Kucinich's right-hand man Bob Weissman. Bespectacled, withdrawn, conservatively-dressed – including a neck-tie that none of the back-slapping union delegates wore – he looked quite out of place. But Sherwood 'Bob' Weissman, personnel director for the City of Cleveland and Mayor's Kucinich's closest political adviser, had been a UAW member for 20 years, was a four term past president of the union, and was now a delegate to Local 122 at the Twinsburg Chrysler plant.

It was Weissman who had been key to linking the UAW with Kucinich. Or, WAS the key, for it was clear that UAW President Douglas Fraser and Region 2 (northeast Ohio) director Bill Casstevens no longer needed him. "I talk directly with Kucinich, not through Weissman," Casstevens told me. "It's his (Kucinich's) political viewpoint, not his personality, that encourages us to support him," added Fraser, who added that Weissman is "not the most well-liked person;" Weissman being brash, antagonistic – and once angrily called a Communist by Walter Reuther, legendary former president of the UAW.

The UAW, a strong supporter of Senator Edward Kennedy and his national health proposals, remained out front of other unions in supporting Kucinich's battles with businessmen and his pending bid for a seat in the US Congress.

With high inflation the public was feeling ripped off. I offered my own personal example in the front page Column One slot, being ripped off by a locksmith who had attended my front door and handed Anna a bill for $55 – for half an hour's work, just for labor.

FIFTY-FIVE DOLLARS!

"Now, I don't know about you, but the only people I know who make $110 an hour are a couple of lawyers and maybe a dentist or doctor or two," I wrote. Certainly not a 19 or 20-year-old lad probably trained by his locksmith father.

"But that's the way it seems to go these days." And so on and on.

I made my point at the end, saying that there are consumer laws to protect us from shoddy workmanship and rip-off artists, but only the laws of raw competition to protect us from a repairman's exorbitant charges. "The $55-for-half-an-hour locksmith knows he can get away with it because few of us know what he really should be charging" I wrote. Unless we all decide to call a halt and start hollering and complaining.

"Because if we don't it will get worse. In this increasingly technical world, believe me, it will get worse."

Declining enrollments dragged me back for another blast about schools on the same page. "It's 1958 again for Cuyahoga County schools. That's the level to which enrollment in the county's public schools has fallen after a

decade of decline, according to a report by the Governmental Research Institute. The report shows the enrolment of 248,503 students last fall was just below the 253,000 pupils recorded in the fall of 1958. Enrollment reached its peak in 1969 with 333,000 students."

In April United Airlines pleaded for passengers to let them know that they are not going to use their reserved seats because of a strike by 18,000 members of the ground crews that was causing cancellation of 60% of United flights from Cleveland. One flight to San Francisco departed the day before with 44 of its 140 seats empty. On the other hand 24 local trucking firms settled their strike- a lockout with Teamsters Local 407 – but only tentatively.

In June a feature on the money page told about a shortage of officers to crew cargo ships on the Great Lakes. "Allure of lakes not so great" is the headline.

"The good money is still there, but life-styles apparently have changed so much that few young men want to be ships officers, particularly on the Great Lakes. Things have actually become so bad that a recent study by the US Commerce Department's Maritime Administration reveals that if a trend in shortage of deck and engineering officers continues, entire segments of the Great lakes fleet may not be able to sail."

"If this occurs, there will be major disruptions in the movements of iron ore, coal, limestone and grain," concludes the Maritime Administration's study. "This would cause mines, steel companies, automobile plants, power companies and other industries to curtail production and substantially increase unemployment."

Nothing like a good scare story to focus attention, eh?

Much of the problem, it seemed, was the ships' image and land-based competition. "I think any one of us prefers the idea of going foreign," said retired Admiral Paul Trimble, president of the Lake Carriers Assn. "Today it doesn't sound so good to sail from Gary (Indiana) to Cleveland, when you could be saying you've just come back from Bora-Bora."

Long hours, little vacation and confined to a ship are main reasons. And because a lot of young people just don't know about the opportunities, what with new and better ships, and continual improvements to pay and conditions.

Memory Flash: *South Euclid, July 1979*

Anna and I are lying in bed – at attention. It is 6am and our eyes and ears are fully awake and alive to new noises. As is our dog, Douglas, who is sniffing at the bottom of the door of a neighboring bedroom. There, indeed, is a faint gurgling noise coming from inside.

What do we do? When I first heard it I thought it could be a burglar, and was about to call the police.

But then I looked towards my wife. She turned her head towards me on the pillow – and we both grinned: big, happy grins.

WE ARE PARENTS! That noise can only be our new son, just six months old and brought home yesterday from Children's Services in downtown Cleveland! Thank you, Mrs Marjorie Bodenhamer, our brilliant social worker.

Finally, after four or five years of miscarriages and medical interventions, we have adopted a beautiful, handsome little boy we have named Nicholas. Or to be precise Nicholas John (after my father's middle name) George (after Anna's father's middle name) Almond.

We are instant parents to a boy born six months earlier at St Alexis Hospital, Cleveland. An entirely new world has opened for us. Already six months old? Where's the manual? What to feed him? What does that cry mean? Can I go to the park and throw a ball for him?

As the clock ticked on and we soaked up the gurgles another noise broke the morning silence: the sound of banging. What?! A budding builder – already? We dashed into his room. Arghh! Where is he? His cot was not where we left it. It was on the other side of the bedroom!

We quickly discovered Nicholas was a rocker. Not in the head banging, heavy-metal sense, but a strong lad who liked to rock himself forwards and backwards in his cot. And sometimes that cot could travel a fair distance. When we entered the bedroom first thing every morning we were never quite sure where we would find him!

Blonde haired, hazel eyed, with the most beautiful smile and gentle nature, Nick was, and still is more than 40 years later, a lovely son.

I don't remember exactly the date Nick came to us, but I doubt it was before July 10, when I see from my yellowing clips that I filled most of the lead page of the adventure/travel section with a story about backpacking. With a new baby in the house I wouldn't exactly have had my mind fully in gear to be thinking deeply about whether you "should take a poncho (price $1.90 to $28.45) with you on your long distance hike, or Adler's combination windjacket and rainjacket made of Gortex, 'a breathable material that is new on the market, for about $70.'"

At least it gave me a chance to remind myself – and the readers – of my first backpacking experience: 1963, when I was 17 and desperately searching for a place to camp overnight outside Berne, Switzerland, and found I was in a rubbish dump when I woke (ah yes, the smell lingers!) My kit was heavy – canvas rucksack, canvas Boy Scout tent, steel frames, wooden poles, huge sleeping bag, plus clothes and cans of food.

"Don't pack up trouble in your old back pack," said the headline. "Travel light and smile, smile, smile."

"The modern backpack," I quoted 18-year-old Doug Webb, who sold camping equipment at Adler's downtown store, "is made of lightweight 'skins' of nylon with an aluminum frame. The sleeping bag is made of synthetic fill or lightweight down. Hiking boots are one-piece and waterproof. They put 60% of the pack's weight on your hips and thighs – your strongest muscles – not on your back and shoulders like the rucksacks."

There would be plenty of time for all that with Nick as he grew up, but for 1979 to ’82 my main interest would be lightweight baby strollers – and a backpack to put a gurgling kid in.

No paternity breaks in the 70s. Back on the Labor beat in the heat of an August day I wore a helmet and flak jacket for reporting on a strike at Bailey Control Co, Wickliffe, where brick-throwing members of United Auto Workers 1741 were charged down by the police. “25 arrested in Labor Riot,’ was the headline.

Then, a few days later, a completely different subject: The violent IRA death of Lord Mountbatten, along with an old lady and two children, followed by the deaths of 18 British soldiers. They provoked widespread revulsion across the world, including the Cleveland Press, where I made my own feelings known two days later in a Column One piece.

The column started by referring to a recent visit to Cleveland of a 21-year-old IRA supporter called Ciaran Nugent, who came to the city to tell people about ‘being tortured by the British in what he called ‘concentration camps’. He wanted Americans to sympathize with him, condemn the British and know that his resistance in jail was because the British insisted he admit he was a ‘criminal’ instead of being a ‘prisoner of war, a political prisoner.”

“Now I could sympathize with Ciaran Nugent, even though I am British,” I wrote. “I know the British Army and British police methods. I don’t believe all he says, but I do believe he could have been tortured. A Press interview with him last Saturday may well have fomented some pro-IRA thoughts among Clevelanders. But overnight I have lost virtually all the sympathy I had for Ciaran Nugent and his fellow IRA prisoners.’

I told readers about what I found in Northern Ireland in 1976, and about the young Clevelanders at Ryan’s pub in Cleveland Heights, innocently applauding romantic ‘brotherhood’ ballads of the 1920s and laughing at anti-British songs. And no-one saying a word about the one million Ulster Protestants who wanted to remain British, or the crimes Nugent didn’t want to talk about. He was the first to refuse to wear a prison uniform and to wear a blanket instead: The Dirty Protest

“If he did (the crimes) in the name of the ‘Republican Movement’ – the IRA – then Ciaran Nugent is a criminal, the worst kind of criminal, and Americans should think again about support for his kind,” I concluded.

Memory Flash: ***Washington D.C. Sunday, Nov 11 ’79***

As written:

“Tour 37B – The Nation’s Capital.

“This tour takes in many Washington famous national landmarks: The Capitol, Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, Smithsonian Institution, Jefferson Memorial, Kennedy Center,

The White House, Pentagon, Iwo Jima Marine Corps Memorial, and Georgetown. (Not necessarily in that order.)

"Time: Two and a half to five hours. Annual event. Price $7.50. Refreshments provided. Large, escorted groups only. Participants must be slightly unusual and provide own transportation.'

We are, of course, talking about the Marine Corps Marathon that I said I'd run a year ago. I've written a story about it for the Adventure/Travel section as if it was a travel piece: my first marathon – 26 miles and 385 yards that I aimed to complete in three and a half hours. The piece spreads across the front of the adventure/travel section two days later, surrounding a large map showing my route.

A triumph? Let's say "First half wonderful. Second third tough. Third tenth painfully difficult, right knee almost non-functioning". As I wrote of the final part in the piece: "Twenty Six miles. WHO PUT THIS HILL HERE? The last 385 yards are up a hill around the Iwo Jima Monument. I swear that's a runner they're planting, not a flag. Leg or no leg I'm not going to walk the last half mile. I manage to run to the finish. …. All I want to do is lie down and die."

Actually, almost all of it WAS a terrific experience, and an amazing way to see the nation's capital. With roads cleared of traffic, the 6,500 runners started at 9am along Arlington Ridge Rd alongside Arlington Cemetery and are a sea of joyous emotion under a crystal clear sky and perfect 60 deg F. I can pick out Anna, Nick in his stroller, and friends Al and Nancy cheering us on in the crowds, not once but three times at different locations.

Around the Pentagon, past a high school band playing for us, over the Key bridge into Georgetown: Another band, then past the Watergate complex, made famous by that break-in of Democratic Party headquarters in 1972. 'Hotel guests used to steal anything they could lay their hands on if it had the words 'Watergate' on it,' I wrote. 'Wonder if they still do?'

"On our right is the Washington Monument, and on our left the White House. Wonder if Jimmy (Carter) is watching. No. Probably not. After all that fuss about him collapsing in a six-mile run he probably dare not show his face before a lot of hot-shot marathoners."

I conclude that the Capitol really IS on a hill, and the Marines, in their camouflage uniforms, really are good at handing out water. At 17 miles, though, my feet and knees are really beginning to hurt. It is the furthest I have ever run. Now, the East Potomac Park and Tidal Basin are becoming serious threats, even when I try to cheer myself up with memories of Congressman Wilbur Mills famously being stopped by police there with stripper Fanne Fox, who jumped into the pond in an effort to escape.

At 22 miles I'm poleaxed, and stop running. Runners are giving up, and numbers of them are in the Marines field hospital tent. I jog and walk, jog and walk. Everything hurts. I hear a shout: "Hey Cleveland!" Another runner, from Painesville no less, has spotted my Cleveland Revco half marathon T-shirt, but I can't keep up with him. Over the 14th Street bridge at 24 miles, and the sightseeing part of The Tour has gone. It's a fight for survival now.

I see Anna, Nick and our friends on the uphill run-in and wave exhaustedly as the Iwo Jima Memorial appears tantalizingly ahead. At four hours and two minutes I reach the finish line and I get my medal. But then disaster. I cannot find my little reception committee anywhere. I search for them here and there in the huge crowd…. for 90 minutes, while they are searching for me. Anna

and friends finally find me sitting on the base of the Iwo Jima Memorial, my shoulders wrapped in an emergency silver blanket.

Oh for the invention of the cellphone! Hurry up!

(PS. As you might suspect, this was not my last marathon; the challenge was just too great. The last was London, 19 years later.)

The end of 1979 did not look very good for the Cleveland Press. There were staff cutbacks and people were starting to leave. The editor, Tom Boardman, retired, his place taken on Jan 2 ’80 by associate editor Herb Kamm.

I was getting itchy feet, too. Lunch at Barrister’s with the guys and gals from the newsroom wasn’t a lot of fun any more. I’d like to have gone to our Washington bureau, but not to replace my friend Al. Perhaps its time to take a career break, a journalism fellowship at some university perhaps. It will be 16 years since I started work at the Northern Echo, Darlington, County Durham, England.

I’ll look at that in the New Year, when I’ll be 34.

Chapter 12. Cleveland/Boston, 1980

TWO Cuyahoga Rivers? Essentially yes: the Upper and the Lower. In the 1970s Clevelanders only really knew the Lower, the one many Clevelanders crossed on bridges every day; the stinking, dead, polluting Cuyahoga that flowed sluggishly past the steel plants and into Lake Erie. The one that spontaneously caught fire in 1952 and again, more famously in July 1969, when a spark from a passing train ignited the oil in the river, set fire to the bridge supports and prompted Time magazine to make it the unacceptable face of polluted modern America.

On the other hand the Upper Cuyahoga, 40 miles closer to Akron, was a place of clear water flowing through gorges, old canals, a mill, an old railroad station; where Red Tailed Hawks screeched, Steelhead Trout swam, and the echoes of the original inhabitants lingered.

THE LOWER CUYAHOGA RIVER. The industrial Flats leading into Lake Erie (left) compares to the bucolic UPPER CUYAHOGA RIVER (right) as it meanders after a gorge of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park towards Akron.

And where I got caught up in an increasingly-bitter battle between local residents and the federal government over land acquisition policies creating a new national park. It seems I lit a fuse that went all the way back to the US Congress and resulted in the death of the superintendent in charge of the park's creation..

It wasn't actually a national park, not like Yosemite or Zion or Yellowstone: people were still living in it. So when it was started in 1974 it was called a 'national recreation area' – the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (CVNRA) – only the third such designated park in America after the Gateway National Recreation Area in New York harbor and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco. And that was the problem. The

National Park Service kept pouring money into a land acquisition program to remove the shops, houses and farms because that, park superintendent William C. Birdsell insisted, was what Congress demanded.

“Almond,” said City Editor Tony Tucci to me one day in early January, “Can you give this guy a call and find out what’s going on? We keep getting these letters to the editor. This paper supports the park. Are they just NIMBYs?”

He gave me the name of Leonard Stein-Sapir, a lawyer who lived in the park area and headed the Cuyahoga Valley Homeowners Association, vigorously opposed to the government’s land acquisition plans. I not only gave him a call but listened to what he said, and had a gut feeling something wasn’t right.

I drove out to see him, toured the area, saw the boarded-up homes and talked to the residents. By the time I got back home I knew I had to do a LOT more research into why and how this was happening.

Here I must admit a certain personal bias from growing up in England. There were national parks in England too, but built AROUND the people whose families had lived there for centuries. Some areas of the country became national parks BECAUSE of the people living there. People such as poet William Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter, author of the Peter Rabbit children’s books, whose home at Hill Top Farm in Cumbria ended up as a national treasure and a tribute to her conservation efforts that played a big part of the creation of the Lake District National Park.

None of Britain’s 15 national parks are truly wild. More than 90 per cent of the Peak District National Park, for instance, is farmland, drystone walls, fields and hedgerows, making a landscape that is picturesque but far from natural. “If you want to see natural landscape in the raw,” people might say in England, “then go to Scotland or parts of Wales.”

Indeed, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) puts Britain’s national parks in the second lowest out of six categories, with Yellowstone in the U.S. being the international model.

But tearing down an old florist shop on a quiet country road just because it wasn’t a natural part of a new national park? Or a house on a ridge that might be visible from the road below “because it wasn’t natural”? It didn’t seem right, not for this part of the country anyway.

But that’s what was happening in the Cuyahoga Valley.

After a month of investigation I started to write. This wasn’t easy for The Press, its staff or editor Herb Kamm. Like most of us Herb was a city person, a former newspaper editor in New York. He liked parks. So did the City editor. So did I. So did most Clevelanders. We had all been strong supporters of the park since it was proposed in 1970. A place for steel and auto workers to relax and unwind. A place to stop the inexorable land grabs of people and businesses moving south from Cleveland and north from Akron.

What I was writing, therefore, ran against the grain for the Press, historically supporting workers against the landed bosses, politically because we were featuring an area in the 14th Congressional District of Ohio based in Akron, whose Democrat Congressman was John F. Seiberling Jr., who became known as the ‘Founding Father’ of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. He believed that the Yellowstone approach was the right one, and while it

was claimed that he got special treatment to stay at his own home in the park while other homeowners were paid to leave, it was going the right way.

My seven-part, copyrighted series started on April 14 with the front-page headline: **“The valley – beautiful battlefield. Must homes be razed to preserve it?”** and I presented my findings. As written:

“The National Park Service has followed an ill-defined, poorly planned, confusing and often contradictory program in buying up land in the Cuyahoga Valley.

“More than $42 million of taxpayers’ money has been spent on land, often of questionable need for the park, some apparently just because property owners were anxious to sell. The land acquisition program in the park is about 60% complete.

“**A detailed land acquisition plan** with a list of priority acquisitions was never prepared, although one was ordered by Congress within 18 months of the passage of the Cuyahoga Valley Act. Many property owners have had difficulty finding out what the government plans to do with their land. A preliminary plan has just been prepared.

“Some property owners have sued in Federal Court here, charging the National Park Service with ignoring congressional directives to obtain land only when directly necessary, and to work around private homes whenever possible.

“Complaints from residents and others are forcing the Park Service to rethink its whole national concept of ‘urban parks’, particularly its definition of ‘open space’, ‘cultural identity,’ and ‘historic.’

“**The General Accounting Office**, the government’s financial watchdog which has already issued a report critical of federal land acquisition policies in 19 national parks, is conducting a separate investigation of the Cuyahoga park. The federal government now owns more than one third of the land in the United States.

“**Land acquisitions** have so far outpaced development that it may be many more years, if ever, with massive budget cuts now expected, before boarded-up homes can be rehabilitated or razed, or land developed for hiking trails or picnic sites.

“A park advisory commission appears to have made no impact on major park questions, enhancing the considerable decision-making authority of Park Superintendent William Birdsell. Several of the commission’s 13 members are political or government appointees from the Cleveland-Akron area. Some rarely or never attend meetings, Others are ardent environmentalists.

I added another major finding: “That despite its considerable management and conceptual problems the National Park Service has nevertheless zealously -and successfully – sought to preserve the natural and scenic beauty of the park along 22 miles of the Cuyahoga River. It has kept developers out of the park and been sorely pressed by some homeowners to buy their properties and enable them to move.

“The Press could find no one who disagreed with halting commercial development in the park,” I wrote. “It is the issue of government takeover of existing properties that is causing so much fuss.”

Part Two of the series was about what happened to the community of Everett: 17 houses, a gas station, a small store and a church in Boston Township, inside the new park. Most of the houses were still boarded up and awaiting a park development that I said may never come, due to cutbacks.

RESIDENTS NOT WELCOME. Houses in the village of Everett lie boarded up as the National Park Service acquires properties it deems are illegal in the new national park.

Nadine Morris, 63, sold her home in Everett to the Park Service and moved with her husband to Cuyahoga Falls, where she told me she only sold up ‘because everyone else was’ and she didn’t want to live there alone. “We liked it there, a close little community.,” she told me. “We used to live in the grocery store. The old men used to come in and sit round the pot-bellied stove and play cards. No, we didn’t fight them. You can’t fight the government and win.’

There wouldn’t even be a grocery store under park service plans. And no gas station either. Instead, any habitable properties in Everett would be occupied by Park Service employees, brought in to man the new tourist attractions. Park Superintendent Birdsell said that what happened in Everett was not the Park Service’s fault, that several homes were in bad condition and their owners were only too willing to sell. He pointed to one family I talked to, the Osbornes, and said they had rights to stay in their house for another ten years. Nobody was being evicted.

“But that’s not the point,” responded Leonard Stein-Sapir. “They no longer own their own homes. They are renters of the government. The fact is this was a real community, and Congress never intended the Park Service to destroy a community. It was instructed to preserve the valley, its culture and history, It has never developed a need for those houses.”

Mark Messing, an aide to Senator Howard Metzenbaum who had studied land acquisition in the Cuyahoga Valley, agreed.

“The intention is to preserve for future generations scenic and historic aspects of the valley,” he said. “That includes the ‘alternative lifestyles’ part of cultural identity Congress wanted to preserve. Everett is the most obvious community affected by park acquisitions, but not the only one…. I think there is a place for homes in recreation areas. People live in them. Sometimes you have to bend your plans around them.”

Surprisingly, perhaps, even Rep Seiberling, scion of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Coompany, believed the park service made a mistake on Everett. “I don’t think I’d have bought those homes,” he told me. “I think it is important to have people living there. It was a charming little village. I think they (the Park Service) goofed. But as long as they have a rational basis for their decisions I am not going to challenge them. Everett is an exception, not an example, of Park Service actions.”

Next, I went to visit Bill and Carole Erdos, who came to live at 2464 Wheatley Rd in Boston Township in 1967. They built the home up and in 1977 saw it named by Architectural Record magazine as one of the 20 homes across the US to be given an “Excellence for design” award. The Press featured it across two pages of its weekend Home Magazine.

The Park Service wanted to acquire it through eminent domain. Erdos was fighting his case through the court, but Supt Birdsell answered: “If it is incompatible with public use it will probably have to go…. “We have to develop something for the good of all. It’s like the development of the highways. Nobody really wants to force people to move, but it has to be done for the benefit of everyone.”

“FOR THE GOOD OF ALL,” – a phrase that would brand this story for years to come.

The Park Service said it was building the park for ‘future generations.’ But a hundred years from now, critics charged, would Erdos’ 1970s home be considered a brilliant Century Home? So why tear it down now?

I asked Duncan Morrow, spokesman for the National Park Service in Washington. “I think it is difficult for anyone to look at something modern and see it as potentially historic,” he said. “We have difficulty right now trying to decide what is a typical tract home from post World War II. Part of the problem is there appears to be no sentiment in Congress to appropriate funds for restoration or maintenance of such relatively modern homes. I think, though, the problems in the Cuyahoga National Recreation Area are making us think more about these things.”

Then there was **Brandywine Falls**, the highest waterfall in northeast Ohio and one of the top natural attractions in the park.

“But visitors to the park cannot take photos of the falls, cannot stand on the rim of the gorge to see it, cannot, in fact, get anywhere near the falls because it is private property,” I wrote. “And owner Ben Richards will not let the public near it. “

Though the park was five years old the National Park Service had made no move to seize the falls for public use. Its officials said they were ‘in negotiations’ with Richards.

And yet three miles away the Phillips family were living as government tenants in an A-frame house the park service acquired several months earlier, primarily because it could possibly be seen from the Cuyahoga River valley and would spoil the "open space" concept.

"Brandywine Falls and the Phillips house point up the apparent conceptual contradictions in the Park Service's land acquisition programs: one expensive house is forcibly purchased because it sits on the rim of the valley and might be visible below, while one of the park's major attractions remains off-limits to the public," I wrote.

When Congress passed the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area Act in December, 1974, it ordered the secretary of the Interior to submit to Congress a detailed plan of land acquisitions within 18 months of passage of the act.

"They never did come up with one," Rep Seiberling, prime sponsor of the bill and chairman of the House Public Lands subcommittee, told me. "We raked them over for it. They said the Office of Management and Budget would not give them the money to do it. If we'd had the plan we could have critiqued it."

One after another I kept finding other ludicrous problems with management practice, including buying one house twice.

One of the most attractive locations was the Wilson Feed mill, with its Ohio and Erie Canal lock and towpath on Canal Rd, a picturesque 19th Century setting that would fit well in an English canal side location. But Thomas Wilson, owner of the mill, was still waiting to hear from the Park Service what plans they had for it. He wasn't going to spend his own money.

And that was the theme for the final part of the series: little to see. **"Park visitors must hunt for historic sights"** was the front page headline. **'Tourist map misleading. Funding outlook bleak."** I went through a list of 11 supposed tourist sites that couldn't be found, were boarded up with 'U.S. Property Keep Out' signs, were misdirected or just not there.

"**No 2. Site of Moses Cleaveland Tre**e, a white swamp oak, which was growing here when Cleveland arrived in 1796. The property owner, in a spat with the city of valley View, reportedly took away the sign, so you'll need to know what a white swamp oak looks like. **No 6. Ponty's Camp, where Indian Chief Pontiac had headquarters**. You'll never find it. There are no signs. **No 10. Moneyshop, lair of early counterfeiters, on Oak Hill Rd**, I wrote from what the map said. "Don't strain your eyes. There's nothing to see and no signs."

Rep Seiberling was not encouraging, warning that 40% of the next year's $60 million national land acquisition budget was being cut, along with the same proportions for the park's development funds. "I'm going to try to hang on to those development funds," he said.

At the heart of the problem was Superintendent Bill Birdsell himself. Unmarried, with no children, he was a one-man show, rarely seen out of his National Park uniform and wearing his Ranger hat. He stood over six feet tall and 250 pounds. He worked day and night, and expected his staff to do so too. Softly spoken and totally convinced of his cause he reminded me of another superintendent – Cleveland Schools' Paul Briggs. But by the time I got to the story Birdsell was already being eyed for replacement by his National Park bosses.

Few challenge park chief

William Birdsell

Beautiful Battlefield — Fifth in a series

By PETER ALMOND
© 1980, The Cleveland Press

When it comes to power, William Birdsell, superintendent of the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, has a lot of it.

Whether it is marking a house for purchase or for an easement or deciding where to mark park boundary lines, Birdsell's decision is rarely challenged.

He is supervised by a regional director in Omaha, Neb., and by Park Service headquarters in Washington, D.C., but park officials admit he is a major influence over the lives of valley residents.

"Our park superintendents do have a great deal of autonomy," says Duncan Morrow, Park Service spokesman in Washington.

The Press investigation of the Cuyahoga Valley park found business people and residents fearful of speaking openly "in case Birdsell finds out." The Press heard confidential stories that spoke of his compassion, and others that claim deceit.

And inevitably there are charges of favoritism.

One of those charges involves the home of Akron congressman John Seiberling, "father" of the national park, whose residence on Martin Rd., Bath Township, is within the park's boundaries.

Seiberling's home was one of the first in the park to be marked for a scenic easement, while others were trying to fight condemnation notices.

"We are concerned that he got preferential treatment," said Rich Davitch, director of the National Inholders Association, an organization to represent persons living within government-owned lands.

Association officials have backed away from charges they made late last year that Seiberling benefited financially from donating some of his land to the government. Davitch still maintains, however, that Seiberling took advantage of his position and knowledge of the park to succeed in getting an easement.

Please turn to Page A 4

SUPT WILLIAM BIRDSELL . "Our Superintendents do have a lot of autonomy," said a spokesman for the Park Service in Washington D.C. The Press reported Supt. Birdsell was feared by many of the area's residents.

"With his fate sealed and a new assignment on the horizon, Bill Birdsell nonetheless became enraged by a five-part Cleveland Press series on CVNRA, particularly reporter Peter Almond's scathing analysis of NPS land acquisition practices" wrote Ron Cockrell, senior research historian for the National Park Service in his 566-page book 'A Green Shrouded Miracle, An Administrative history of Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, Ohio', published in 1992.[1]

"The editorial which followed the Almond series called for a managerial change at Cuyahoga. When Birdsell responded by sending letters of his own denouncing the Press and discrediting the articles, Press editor Herbert Kamm called it "intemperate" and "scurrilous" and demanded NPS apologize."

Birdsell had, in fact, written a strong letter to Rep Charles Vanik, a park supporter, condemning The Press and Herb in general terms. Vanik protested to Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus that the letter was a disservice to the Park Service. Later, Birdsell personally apologised to Kamm. Park Service director Russell Dickenson, to whom

1. Cockrell, Ron, "A Green Shrouded Miracle, The Administrative History of Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, Ohio," National Park Service, 1992. http://npshistory.com/publications/cuva/adhi.pdf

Birdsell was to be directly assigned as “chief of the service’s management policy,” said he regretted the letter was written and that one of the two major criteria in a search for Birdsell’s replacement was that the successor must be ‘astute in community relationships.’

“When asked if he thought Birdsell was unable to adjust from traditional ‘open space’ park philosophy, such as that at Yellowstone National Park, to the newer ‘urban parks’ such as Cuyahoga Dickenson answered: “That may well be. Our job will be to make sure we don’t make that mistake again. ‘

This was in the last story I wrote about the park, on August 2, 1980. I was unable to get a response from Birdsell because he was on vacation in Wisconsin. I should have realised he never intended to leave his beloved Cuyahoga Valley. A few days after his return, on Aug 18, he had a heart attack while cleaning out his office – and died. He was 51, and it was suggested he had stopped taking his medications.

One last thing: two years later, as Anna and I were packing up our house in South Euclid just prior to moving to Washington DC, we were visited by a camera crew from PBS, the national Public Broadcast Service, to interview me about the Cuyahoga Valley series. It was for an hour-long Frontline investigative piece by Jessica Savitch, called **‘For the Good of All’** about the park, which heavily featured the series. It went out nationally on June 6, 1983.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=63

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsjzktKipVg

Savitch herself died tragically four months later when she drowned as a passenger in a car which went off a road in Pennsylvania.

I hesitate to offer this link because I look like a teenager and sound worse. But it is the only bit of film of me being interviewed in these memoirs, and I include it as a tribute to Savitch, who goes beyond what I wrote and provides an easy visual take on an important part of Cleveland’s history.

I don't know what happened specifically to any of the people or their properties I wrote about, but I do know that Congress changed its land acquisition laws, that a new superintendent worked WITH homeowners, not against them, and that the park went on to be a major success. It was made a full national park by order of Congress in 2000, its 33,000 acres making it the seventh most popular national park in the country by 2020, with long hiking trails, a 5.3-mile rail ride for tourists, a walkway to Brandywine Falls, and many other features. It remains the only national park that originated as a national recreation area. I don't know if you can buy flowers commercially there, though.[2]

Memory Flash: *Blossom Music Center, Cuyahoga Falls, August 1980*

Anna, friends and I have come to Blossom, surrounded by the Cuyahoga Valley Park, on a warm and still evening to listen to the Cleveland Orchestra play a variety of works by Ralph Vaughan Williams, the British composer. We are seated amongst the audience on a rug, on the grass of a hillside which gently slopes towards the covered but open stage below.

The orchestra plays Lark Ascending, one of his most popular works. I believe Loren Maazel was the conductor. As I look around and see a bird or two ducking and diving after flies and watch the clouds as the setting sun starts sinking behind them my mind's eye can see English Larks ascending on the bow of the lead violinist.

I don't remember if it was there or much later that I decided I'd like to have Lark Ascending at my funeral. Scenes and sounds from home.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=63

2. Cuyahoga Valley National Park Service, 2022. https://www.nps.gov/cuva/index.htm

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJjwtXf9Q6U

Oh, do cheer up, Almond! Conscience bothering you?

Well, yes, I did have some pangs about Birdsell, just as I did when that black teenager was shot by the son of a white newsagent in Cleveland after the lad wanted to read something I had written. And it's not enough for the Cuyahoga Valley Homeowners Association to write: "Our organization owes a deep dept of gratitude to The Press for its in-depth investigation of the practices of the Park Service in the valley. That investigation is one of the main reasons there is going to be a change in the management in this park.'

I don't think the death of its lead proponent is any kind of worthy result.

It was time for me to move on.

I'd thought, late last year, that I'd like to have SOME experience of university before I got too settled in my ways – and before The Press ran completely out of steam. So, in **February**, I applied to Stanford University, California, for a National Fellowship in the Humanities for Journalists, 35 miles to the south of San Francisco and at the heart of Silicon Valley Research. A place I and hundreds of other journos would love to go for ten months. And they paid well!

Not expecting I'd get it I also applied for another journalism fellowship at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. And another to the Nieman Foundation for Journalists at Harvard. This was the biggie, the original journalism fellowship founded in 1929, and always the most in demand. I definitely did not expect to get it, not only because I learned there were 400 American applicants for just 12 places that year, plus scores of others from foreign countries, but because I was a Brit with no college experience at all, on a dying newspaper in Ohio.

But then I did have a wonderful letter of support from Bill Tanner, Press managing editor, who praised my reporting on schools and my "Excellent job on school desegregation (*Bill Tanner, the City Editor who was Peter Almond's effective mentor at *The Press*, died in Ft Myers, Florida. on June 29, 2022, aged 97). He was, I believe, the only reporter in town who was able to get the latest inside information from the NAACP, the school board and federal court," Tanner wrote to Harvard. But then he conceded I was a bit of a puzzle. "Frankly, we don't know whether it was because of his own character and abilities or his British background that made him so acceptable to these three antagonists."

And, perhaps surprisingly, I had a nice supporting letter from Roldo Bartimole, the self-appointed watchdog of Cleveland journalism who had tripped me up more than once. Another from Walt Bogdanich, a fellow Press investigative reporter at The Press who had moved to the Plain Dealer. And another from William White, a member of the Cleveland School Board who had been impressed by my school desegregation work and, as a lawyer, was involved in worker's compensation work (my Diamond Shamrock series).

I sat and waited – anxiously.

In the meantime I did a three part investigation on the Tenna Corporation, a Cleveland company that made car radio aerials and was sliding towards bankruptcy with a lot of highly-questionable financial deals. And In July a big, long, six-part series on SOHIO, the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, which had just been taken over by British Petroleum. It was Ohio's richest and most successful company and mine was the first public examination of its profits and losses, the benefits and concerns of being taken over by a foreign company. I tried to put it all in the simplest of terms.

"SOHIO,' I wrote for a huge headline on the front page. **"Love it or hate it, we can't seem to do without it. Of the thousands of businesses that directly affect Greater Clevelanders and Ohioans, perhaps none has touched our lives as much as the last year or so as Standard Oil of Ohio.** We have praised SOHIO for offering gas prices way below anyone else. We have cursed it for opening its gas stations only a few hours a day and making us wait in long lines. We have screamed 'rip-off!'every time it raises its prices. We have railed at its enormous profits – although those who own stock in it have smiled happily."

There followed an examination of the company's history from John D. Rockefeller on, talking to frustrated gas station operators and drivers, questioning of BP's senior officers about how discovering and developing oilfields in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, was going to be a major opportunity for Ohioans but also a serious problem in keeping warm oil moving through frozen pipes held above the snow. The series examined technological futures and international politics.

How much went straight over the heads of Cleveland Press readers I don't know.

But I do know that most of the questions I received from the 'average Joe' or 'Mrs Joe' was about the Sohio Babies.

Nobody seemed to know about the Sohio Babies. These were babies born in Ohio on Jan 10, 1955, the 85th anniversary of the founding of Standard Oil. The company gave every Ohio child born that day one share of Sohio stock or its cash equivalent – then worth $45. It was a publicity stunt and 600 babies qualified for it.

I found one of the Babies, Michele Barlock, in North Royalton still with her stock certificate, and told her that the 16 shares grown from the original one share she was given as a baby had grown into $800. She had another $118.51 in dividends. Had she taken $100 of that into two stock options – which she did not – that $100 would have grown to $5,154.

Sohio was the most successful company in Cleveland's history.

It was taken over increasingly by BP, and was defunct in 1987, continuing as a gas station brand until 1991. I don't suppose we added one pence to the fortunes of the Cleveland Press with that series – which ran in July – but it filled up space. I was told "Think higher. Think Civic responsibility!" Or words to that effect.

I should go off and be a college professor.

Indeed, by then I'd had the results of my Fellowship applications. First came the invitations to interview for the shortlist. I don't think I actually went to Stanford University: I must have talked to them on the phone. I know I

went to Ann Arbour because the university wanted me to spend two days with them so that I could really see what they were about. And I went to Boston for an interview at Harvard University.

Harvard was the first place where I was asked directly: “Do you think you can make a difference?” I had never heard or thought about journalism in this way. A difference? I was just a reporter. I stumbled. I mumbled, and then I remember the faculty member holding up copies of my Diamond Shamrock series. “You’ve already made a difference,” she said, pointing to the Ohio and federal state responses proposing legal and other changes.

Amazingly, I was awarded all three fellowships! What? I picked Harvard. I was to be a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, the “pinnacle” of global journalism!

“Peter. Congratulations on being sought by everyone,” said a letter from Harry Press, convenor of the Stanford Fellowships, in a brief letter to me. “You deserve it all, and I know you’ll have a great year at Harvard. Enjoy!”

It seems I was the right person, in the right place, at the right time. An oddball Brit/American, from the Midwest, with a solid daily newspaper background. I had the summer to work out how I was going to do it. It was going to cost Anna and me a lot of money, a fact that Jim Thomson, curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard, quickly recognised. He wrote to Edward Estlow, President of Press owners Scripps-Howard, to say that the foundation could only pay $10,500 to me for September through late May (almost half of what Stanford was offering) and was asking if The Press or Scripps Howard could make up the difference to my Press salary.

“I do not know if you had considered an arrangement to assist Peter Almond,” Thomson wrote to Estlow, “But if you could manage to do so, I am convinced that the payoff in morale and productivity during and after Peter’s Nieman year would be of substantial benefit to you, to us, and to him.”

Well, nice try, Jim. Did you get a reply from Estlow? I didn’t see a penny of it. Harvard cost us $12,000 – almost all of our savings, plus hiring a van to take our belongings the 600 miles to Boston and back. Unlike the other journos we couldn’t afford to rent a place in Cambridge, but I did find a nice little home-away-from home in Somerville, the cheaper neighbor of Cambridge. We arranged to rent our house in South Euclid to a visiting German professor at Case Western Reserve University.

The one thing The Press did do – as required by the Nieman Board – was to keep my job open. Truth be told, nobody expected me to come back, and I didn’t either. One by one afternoon daily newspapers were closing, first by the declining economy and second by the ever-rising influence of TV news. Internationally prestigious it may be, but the Nieman prize did not pay my bills.

Prestigious? It should have been. There had only ever been one Nieman Fellow on the Press: Theodore Andrica, nationalities writer, in 1943, of which more in Chapter 1. There was William J. Miller, who was a senior business writer, but he was not a Fellow, although there are claims he was in 1941. He appears to have been on the board of the Society of Nieman Fellows when he wrote the first and most of the second pages of Nieman Reports, Volume 1, No 1, in February 1947.

Miller had joined the Press as a copy boy in 1929, aged 17, and was a “crack reporter, rewrite man and finally a

war correspondent for the Press" the blurb on his piece said. He appears to have been played by an actor called Russell Hardie in a movie called The Big Story in 1949.

"What's wrong with the newspaper reader" the challenging headline of Miller's piece demanded in his rough, gruff, simply written way, is that "the public prefers not to think. It prefers to be entertained. So let the perfect newspaper be short, simple, sexy and full of pictures. Let it devote one fourth of its space to a lavish coverage of sports, including who is bribing whom, and another fourth to comics. I predict it will sell like hell. If, on top of that, it is also honest, unprejudiced and unslanted, the public won't mind.

"'The press the American people get today is pretty bad, and it is just what they deserve."

Which doesn't seem to say much about what I had been writing about, or the high standards the Nieman Foundation wanted to convey. But engaging with the public is just what newspapers were about. A United Press column accompanying Miller's piece on page 2 of Nieman Reports quoted a polling story that was printed on the first page of the Boston Evening Globe a few days earlier. The poll of 200 'feminine high school graduates (stenographers) showed 'the modern gal wants sex, disaster and Li'l Abner (comics) in her newspaper. (This WAS 1947!)

Forty percent selected "Man attacks School Girl" was top of interest among a sample of headlines. Second was "Twenty Killed in Plane Crash." But a blood-tingling scare-head about the atom bomb aroused only polite interest. More than 97 per cent of the student stenos said they liked the comics best of all; 33% read the funnies first and worked their way through the paper from the sports section to the front page.

"World War II rated as the most important news event during the past two decades with one third of the group. The atom bomb was second. The rest of the girls said they could think of no single outstanding news event within their lifetimes." The students were almost unanimous in saying they "questioned the accuracy" of news published in papers, but more than half of them admitted their opinions were 'influenced by material in newspaper columns."

I had a lot to study.

NIEMAN FELLOWS. The class of ’81 of Nieman Fellows in Journalism at Harvard University pose in front of Lippmann House, the center of activities and study for the 12 U.S. and eight foreign journalists selected for 80/81. (author is second row right). We are missing one. The foundation’s curator, Jim Thompson, stands slightly apart, left rear.

Memory Flash: ***Interstate 90, Sept 1980***

Anna, little Nick, Douglas the dog, Dickie the bird, a few pot plants, furnishings, clothes and food are piled into our car and a U-Haul van for the 650 mile, nine-hour journey to Boston,

Massachusetts. I-90 through Buffalo and Rochester can be very boring. For hour after hour Anna stares at the back of the van with its 'ADVENTURES IN MOVING' logo, while I glance back at her in the rear-view with a fern dangling in front of her eyes and an occasional glimpse of a dog's head and squealing kid.

But that's it for the next ten months. I could tell you about taking a course on Power and Influence at the Harvard Business School; a fiction-writing course; lots of research in the Widener Library; seminars with famous editors, writers, historians and statesmen; dinners and picnics; a course on animal ethology that Anna took; Economics 101 with things that can't be measured (like politics); lobster-eating in Maine; writing a long paper on the emerging prospects of a new third 'Middle Way' party in British politics (which failed); and winter travels from Newfoundland to Vancouver courtesy the Canadian government, hosting 'afternoon tea' in the poshest hotel in British Columbia. But I won't. You'd only be jealous.

We did have visitors to Boston, including Press friend Dick Wootten, my mother.and Anna's parents. But her father was ill with cancer and died at home not long afterwards, just as she and Nick were boarding a flight from Cleveland to see him.

On a cheerier note, and this being a big year for Women's Lib, I'll leave you with excepts from one great female-dominated movie of 1980:

"Nine to Five", starring Dolly Parton, Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda, which brings back memories of our Nieman group in a movie theater in Vancouver- and laughing away.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/from-across-the-pond-palmond/?p=63

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbxUSsFXYo4

Chapter 13. Cleveland, 1981-82

I may have been in the right place at the right time to have won my Nieman journalism fellowship, but I was in the wrong place at the wrong time to get a new job. Nobody was hiring, not in the news business anyway. The Washington Star, DC's main afternoon daily, closed in July 1981, just after Anna, Nick and I had returned to Cleveland. The Philadelphia Bulletin died in January, '82. The Buffalo Courier-Express went in September '82. Many others merged with morning papers. Even more were cutting jobs, not hiring.

"Can you wait a year?" came the response to my application to the Los Angeles Times, just one of several papers which had been encouraging me a few months earlier. The recession and ever-advancing TV news had hit circulations and advertising hard across the country.

So in late June, 1981, I was back in Cleveland, back in the office, back in our South Euclid house, leaving Anna to sort out our domestic arrangements – minus Dickie Bird, who unfortunately caught a bug and died whilst being bird-sat while we were galavanting around New England. At least I started to get paid properly again – but at the same level as before.

In our little Boston bubble we had been quite unaware that The Press had been sold on Oct 31, 1980 to Joseph E. Cole, a local businessman whose main interest in the paper was the location of its building, overlooking Lake Erie. He'd had a proposal for the North Point complex – a 41-storey office tower with a glass-encased atrium to replace the Press building – drawn up the year before.

But, after getting concessions from the print unions, he had vowed to keep The Press going with "great improvements." I think he got a thrill about the excitement of news and public attention – and civic contribution. Cole's wealth came from his joining, and then owning, the National Key Company in Cleveland, which became the largest key company in America, earning him the nickname 'Key King Cole.' That became Cole National Corp, through which he diversified into autos and into the Things Remembered gift stores and corrective spectacle lenses for the elderly. He was active in the Democratic Party (once as Ohio chairman of John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign) and poured a lot of his profits into the Cleveland Indians baseball team, in which he held a minority stake.

I don't doubt Cole thought it was worth an effort to get the Press back into a challenge with the Plain Dealer. He put $3 million into equipment to produce the paper's first Sunday edition – strong on color and graphics. It first came off the presses on Aug 3, 1981; "A bold gamble," wrote the New York Times. "in the tradition of the high-

rolling industrialists who built this city, appeared on street corners and front porches this morning. The Cleveland Press published its first Sunday edition, a critical move in its effort to challenge the dominance of the morning newspaper, the Plain Dealer, and to arrest the slide into oblivion that has been the fate of other big-city afternoon newspapers."

I don't know what that first Sunday front page was about or looked like, but I do know that I filled much of it on Aug 16 with a six-part series on Steel. The masthead in vivid blue, underneath it with a huge blue-bordered blurry painting of a steel works and a pipe in the foreground exuding yellow steel. It had taken a month to do the research and interviews (why did all my big investigations seem to take a month?)

And thar she blew! Like a big bright whale greeting readers on their doorsteps every Sunday. Except that it was 'only' 96 pages, while the Sunday Plain Dealer was several hundred pages and carried more ads. Editor Herb Kamm told the New York Times that the objective was to give readers a paper they could finish quickly: "One that's in tune with today's lifestyles." To which the NYT quoted a Plain Dealer executive snorting; "It looks like a comic book sometimes."

I, of course, was way below all that strategizing. My objective was to find out what ails the steel industry of northeast Ohio, and what to do to fix it. "The basic industry that forms the backbone of the area's economy has appeared to be in permanent decline," I wrote. "It has given the rest of the nation a view of Northeastern Ohio as an area without much future.

"But a month-long Press investigation reveals that although the region's steel industry will never be the same as the "good old days" of the early 70s, there is reason for optimism. Fewer steelworkers will be employed, but a leaner, technology-dominated industry will emerge from a shake-up that may be ending its worst phase."

Etc etc For days and days. In detail, with figures and graphics, and details about how the Japanese make steel to outperform the U.S. And a whole piece about anti-pollution costs that some have blamed for plant closings. ("A paper they could finish quickly?") I even dragged up Mrs Figment, columnist Dick Feagler's fictional character who "lives in the old neighborhood behind Republic Steel where the fallout from the steel industry turns the laundry orange on the clothes line." Which, of course, hasn't turned laundry orange for many years.

Although I did get photographer Van Dillard to snap Ralph Miller, of 3518 Kimmel Road, standing outside his house in his vest and pants scraping some red dirt off the siding of his house near Republic Steel.

Next up to be investigated was the Ohio National Guard's training resort at Camp Perry, near Port Clinton, some distance west of Cleveland. It had long hosted a national rifle range, one of the largest in the country. I had a helper for this investigation; Frank Douglas, a new hire who shared the by-line. Again, another colorful sketch splashing over the Sunday front page, this time with a soldier standing to attention with his rifle, the Star Spangled banner and eagle behind him, but surrounded by resort cabins, people fishing from the lake and couples picnicking on the shore. Headline: "**Playground for Ohio's Guard"**.

"The facility is run like a private motel, with air-conditioned units, tennis courts, a sandy beach with state-paid lifeguards and a long fishing pier-boat dock. It is perhaps the best National Guard vacation retreat in the nation" I

wrote. “The cabins, fishing pier, tennis courts and grounds have been built, renovated or maintained over the last four or five years by National Guard engineer units, often during their annual two-week training program.

“A Press examination of the Camp Perry clubhouse has uncovered a number of questionable activities by the Ohio Adjutant General’s Office, which runs the Guard with a mixture of state and federal – mostly federal – money.”

Other states had broadly similar training locations, but not as luxurious as Camp Perry, mostly because the Ohio National Guard still had a recruitment problem, born of the introduction of the all-volunteer army, the wound-down Vietnam War, and a still-tarnished image from the 1970 shootings at Kent State University.

The series started on Sept 27 and concluded with an editorial saying the frills were embarrassing. The man in charge, Adjutant General James C. Clem, whom we said used the plush Cabin 505 for himself and his family, held a press conference saying that all the building work was good training for welders, carpenters and electricians essential for deployments, and by allowing the public to use the clubhouse area it helped Guard personnel make civilian friends.

“Clem said he does not fear a probe of the camp ordered by Gov. James Rhodes,” wrote Press reporter Barbara Chudzik at the press conference. “He said he was not pleased by The Press inferences that “I’m a bum.”

Frankly, this was one investigation I didn’t have my heart in. I didn’t have full control of it and I didn’t see too much that was a waste of taxpayer’s money. Gen. Clem had already given me five pages of detailed accounting to explain what fund went where that I’d need my own accountant to unpick. I’d already seen Nato reservists building recreation facilities (including burger bars) that they’d use across Europe.

I don’t believe Governor Rhodes’ investigation went very far. And I wasn’t crowned in glory. The next investigation, I vowed to myself, would be much more precise, and I’d run it myself.

It was Federal Judge Frank J. Battisti.

I don’t know what prompted Herb to ask for a profile of him. I had certainly written enough about him over the years for readers to get a pretty good idea about what he thought and how his background influenced his court decisions. It could have been his decision on Sept 1 to send my old pal John E. Gallagher Jr, President of the Cleveland School Board, and board treasurer Paul Yacobian to jail in handcuffs for failure to comply with orders from the court-appointed schools desegregation administrator, Donald Waldrip.

The issue was about pay raises, promotions and extended contracts to the 35 members of Waldrip’s desegregation staff, which the school board refused to sign off because no-one else in the system was getting raises. The jailings lasted only a couple of hours, during which Battisti ensured that the $61,000 check Gallagher and Yaobin refused to sign were legally given to Waldrip to pass on to the employees.

Pretty drastic. But Battisti had done things like this before, with a lot of people not understanding how this apparently-charming, bright and dedicated man could throw his weight around in such a manner – and get away with it. The public did not like it one bit.

So I worked for probably yet another month preparing a deeper background check on him. The headline was, of course, lead of the Sunday edition on December 13. **BATTISTI** was the single headline, in huge letters, under which was a huge photo of him, somberly looking out with the Stars and Stripes behind him. '**A PROFILE IN POWER'** was the sub-head, in much smaller type.

I started out describing a private dinner in Cleveland where some 70 people, including family and friends, had come from all over the country – at their own expense – to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the judge's appointment to the federal bench. It was right after the Gallagher jailing, but this crowd utterly ignored it. Battisti was in an island of peace and appreciation. And he wept. "Tears streamed down his face as law clerks and secretaries going back 20 years saluted him and told reminiscing tales," I wrote from a source who was there.

"It is a measure of Frank J. Battisti that while this man, one of the most powerful in North Eastern Ohio, needs round-the-clock armed protection from the public, he is so well regarded by his many friends and by many in the legal profession.'

One of the main reasons was that he had been heavily involved in some of the most significant social, business and political questions of the last decade, and others that had been highly publicized. The research went through the list, went through his family and early life, who he met and when, including his links to real estate people in his home area of Youngstown. And mentioned his favorite vacation spot: the ranch he owned in Montana, where he loved fly fishing. I went through as many public records as I could find, detailed the finances involved, and started to list his appointments, especially those to bankruptcy court.

Bankruptcy Court was rarely visited by the media. Mostly it was a dry, often tragic series of dismal failures that were buried in reams of financial data and legalese "party of the first part" etc. And at this time of recession it was bulging with cases. I did get in some key names and connections into the story, such as Les Brown, a close friend of Battisti who owned a furniture store at 8511 Euclid Ave, whose back room became a regular meeting place for Battisti and his friends: **a Godfather, if you please**. And lawyer Mark Schlachet, who married Brown's daughter Barbara and was appointed a Bankruptcy Judge by Battisti. Plus real estate developer Lewis Zipkin, a friend of Schlachet's and also a friend of Daniel McCarthy, Cleveland schools desegregation master hired by Battisti. None, however, were developed in my piece.

The profile concluded in the paper the next day, with a reference to Battisti's deeply-held Catholic religion, which he held to be private yet could still used to his political advantage in imposing school desegregation. This is the story of Battisti and the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe**.**

"The Basilica of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe near Mexico City is a shrine to which the judge attaches a special significance and has visited several times," I wrote. "Battisti once spent 45 minutes telling The Press the 400-year-old story of the appearance of the Virgin Mary before the poverty-stricken Indian farmer. In the early 1960s, Battisti persuaded organizers of a state visit to Mexico by President John F. Kennedy to include the basilica in his tour as a way of appealing to the heart of the Mexican people.

"Some years later, shortly after issuing an order requiring low income housing to be built on Cleveland's

West Side, Battisti accepted a long-standing invitation to speak to West Siders at a Catholic church. He was advised not to go because of the hostility of West Siders (to the school desegregation he had ordered).

He went anyway. The subject of his speech? The dark-skinned Virgin Mary of Guadelupe. The West Siders (almost all white) sat quietly.

"You cut their hearts out, judge," one law clerk said later.

And that was it. Two parts to the series. All over. We can all have a nice Christmas.

Except it wasn't all over. Those who knew what I had were disappointed. So was I. Left out were pages of detailed investigations I had into Bankruptcy Court that put flesh onto the bones of rumors of collapsed businesses, highly-questionable land deals, of threats and unexplained fires.

Herb Kamm went off on vacation, leaving newly-appointed Executive Editor Bill DiMascio, a former chief of the Associated Press Columbus bureau, in charge of the paper. I told him of my investigations and he said to continue.

To quote Cleveland Magazine, whose investigative reporter Greg Stricharchuk was following my story – and building his own investigation, **"It was immediately evident to serious students of the courthouse that the key elements of the judge's relationships with certain persons were strangely ignored. To those who had awaited publication of the series they had the appearance of being cautiously edited.'**

I kept plugging away. Fortunately, I had support from sources within the federal court, administrative and criminal systems. These included Judge John Ray Jr, one of the three bankruptcy judges besides Judge Schlachet, who had been assigned the White Motors bankruptcy, one of the largest in the United States. Ray suddenly found it was switched to Judge Schlachet, enabling the awarding of almost $30,000 in fees to Gino Battisti, Judge Battisti's nephew.

Cleveland School Board member Kenneth Seminatore, another lawyer in the politically-powerful firm of Climaco, Seminatore, Leftkowitz and Kaplan, received at least $200,000 in fees as an examiner in the White Motors case. Another recipient of £25,000 from the White Motors case was also a lawyer in the Battisti orbit, former Common Pleas judge Sam Zingale, who failed to provide sufficiently detailed reports to the government. Linda Battisti, Judge Battisti's niece, was hired as law clerk by Schlachet.

This despite Section 458 of Title 28 of the U.S. Code stating**: "No person shall be appointed to or employed by in any office or duty in any court who is related… within the degree of first cousin to any justice or judge of such court.'**

While Schlachet refused to talk me, I was talking to the U.S. federal courts administration in Washington D.C., to the FBI, and even to a state fire marshal about the curious arson that destroyed the bankrupt Nelson Machine and Manufacturing Company in Ashtabula Township.

A public auction had been held for the property in June 1980, but Schlachet ruled the best bid was unacceptably low. He appointed Lewis Zipkin to oversee the sale. Zipkin contacted one John Vitullo, businessman and

politically-active figure in Youngstown – a friend of Battisti's – and suggested he make a bid. Vitullo told me he was interested in the 63 acres because it was good property and adjoined parcels of land owned by his friends William Cafaro, another old friend of Battisti's, and Donald Cook, who owned 70 acres adjacent to it, on which he planned to construct a shopping mall. At the second auction a higher bid came in, but Schlachet rejected it and sold it to Vitullo.

The case then left bankruptcy court and the Nelson Machine building was leased by Vitullo and his partner Fred Beshara to the owner of one of their interlocking businesses, Robert Moosally, who then moved a number of artificial fireplace logs into the Nelson property. Moosally then tacked the property onto his existing Aetna insurance policy for $500,000 coverage, and a further $500,000 for its contents. On April 1, 1981 the Nelson Machine property burned down, as did the logs and several vehicles stored inside, including an oil tanker reportedly full of fuel oil. It was the biggest fire of the year in Ashtabula Township, involving five fire departments. State fire investigators ruled the blaze arson and were amassing information on the property.

"They even hypnotized a resident of a nearby trailer park to get the license plate of a motorcycle seen leaving the unguarded plant just before the blaze," I wrote.

"Aetna Insurance Company officials, after a lengthy investigation, settled the claim earlier this year, reportedly for just over $500,000. Moosally could not be contacted for comment by The Press."

There was plenty more like this, but the series sat in the editor's office for four months, well into 1982. For security, some of my phone calls to my sources were done from home. But even here were odd moments when it felt I was being watched. Both Anna and I heard occasional clicks on the phone; I once saw a black car parked just up the road from our house, its two male occupants facing our house and making no move to get out. They were still there three hours later. No, I didn't go tap on the window.

"According to some who read all or part of the unpublished articles they were significant and certainly worthy of print," wrote Stricharchuk in Cleveland Magazine. "But the stories remained in limbo as editors passed the troublesome series around and ultimately sent it off to lawyers for additional scrutiny. Some reporters even suspected the articles were read by Battisti."

I'm almost certain they were read by him. How else, when I finally received responses from Schlachet, were they in exactly the order I laid out my copy? My strong guess was Herb, whose tax lawyer was the same Daniel McCarthy who was Battisti's desegregation master.

Memory Flash: ***Yokohama, Japan, late January, 1982***

I'm in one of the latest Japanese steel mills, watching steel being poured in an operation far more efficient – and clean – than any steel mill in Cleveland. Robots glide about the floor. It is

almost quiet. I want to write about it, my memories of Jones and Laughlin steel mill in the Flats strong.

I even call The Press – at some highly unsocial hour for me- to ask if they would like an update to my steel series; a Sunday piece datelined 'Yokohama, Japan', which might be quite impressive. I'd need an extra couple of days here to set it up.

As I fear, the answer is no.

Actually, the editors might be relieved that I am here – anywhere – than in the office. There is, a colleague tells me, a sinking feeling abroad in the newsroom. I should enjoy where I am.

I was here only because I and a few other Nieman Fellows of my year had been invited to tour Japan by the Japanese government a year earlier, but for some reason could not proceed as the Canada tour had done. So the Japanese, ever the ones to feel shameful about not living up to promises, had marshalled a handful of us to come on this to see their country.

How could I say no? I knew I would get no help from The Press, so I took a leave of absence (unpaid) and joined my fellow Niemans for ten days of an amazing – and utterly exhausting – free tour of this great country, which included a visit to my Nieman friend Masayuki Ikeda at NHK TV, and went to visit his father and their two Newfoundland dogs, shipped over from Canada when we were there.

(It was young Masayuki who bemused all of us Niemans on the Canada tour when, in St. Johns, Newfoundland, he disappeared for a weekend and returned to the group declaring that he had been to a dog breeder on the island and bought two Newfie pups. He said he would arrange for their arrival in Japan as soon as he returned home. "But Masayuki, you are single and live in a flat. In Tokyo," we said. "Ah, but they are for my children," he replied. "What children? You are not even married yet," we responded. "Ah yes, but I will be by arrangement, and the dogs will be for the children at my father's house outside of Tokyo," he said.

Now that's what I call long-term planning which, in 1980s Ohio, in a deep recession, we had clearly not thought enough about.

Kamm was now Editor Emeritus, and Bill DiMascio was passed over to succeed him as editor in favor of Associate Editor Jerry Merlino, an aide to Cole and more attuned to business than journalism.

By February, '82, I had enough updated information on Bankruptcy Court for half a book. But Anna and I had a whole new focus in our lives – a new baby! Jeffrey James Almond, aged six weeks, would be coming to our house as our second adoptee from Children's Services in Cleveland. A brother for Nick, and another godchild for 'Aunt' Dorothy.

By April I was well aware that Cleveland Magazine was preparing its own version of the Battisti saga. I don't mind saying I talked to Greg Stricharchuk, even offering him some information and contacts, in exchange for the expected publication dates of his investigation.

I told Merlino, and anybody else who would listen, that it would be more embarrassing to Cole if my series was NOT run, because Cleveland Magazine would make the most of it. Did Cole fear Battisti that much?

Finally, Merlino said Yes to publish.

Memory Flash: ***Editors office, Cleveland Press, mid April 1982***

I'm on my hands and knees on the carpeted floor of Merlino's office, surrounded by piles of paper, along with the company lawyer, whose name escapes me. We were here yesterday, and will be here tomorrow and the day after that, going through my copy line by line, scratching out stuff here, adding explanation there. Sometimes I take a chunk away and sit at my typewriter and rewrite.

There's no sign of Cole's interest. I think he had other fish to fry, as we would find out in a couple of months.

Cleveland Magazine had already contacted Kamm at his new job at WJW TV Channel 8, and told them he knew nothing about my series on bankruptcy court, but acknowledged he had heard Cleveland Magazine was working on such a story.

"It's a matter I'm no longer involved in," he told the magazine. When asked if he was specifically referring to the Almond series, Kamm replied: "I'm not aware of anything. I'm not informed on this matter. I'm not involved in this matter or any other matter. ……"

"Meanwhile," Stricharchuk wrote later, "some Press reporters, angry and disillusioned, became increasingly convinced that Judge Battisti's power even extended into their own newsroom.

"So much for the First Amendment"'

Amen to that!

The new Battisti series launched above the masthead of the Sunday edition of The Press on April 18, 1982, backing into the story by citing federal investigations. "**Feds investigate judge's deals,"** was the headline. "**Question actions in Cleveland bankruptcy court."**

It wasn't bold and accusative, but the details were still there. I could live with it. When Cleveland Magazine ran its story at the beginning of May it was with cigar-chomping Battisti on the front cover with the headline "**A Betrayal of Trust. The back-room Brotherhood of Judge Battisti."**

Meanwhile, I had something else to deal with: the Falklands War, when Argentine forces invaded the tiny British colony in the South Atlantic and Britain sent 127 ships to take it back. I wrote my first piece as a huge spread in the Sunday edition on April 11 with the headline "**Britain Outraged, Off to war in the nuclear age."**

Written in Cleveland, and as the paper's resident Brit, I filled an entire page (cover of three marching sailors in front of a huge Union Flag) explaining why the British, and especially Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, could not accept the Argentine invasion of what President Reagan called "that little ice cold bunch of rocks down there." It was indeed a small, cold, barren couple of islands (population 1,846) off southern Argentina that Britain had mostly ignored for years.

The outrage was about Sovereignty. If Britain did nothing, and let a foreign government occupy a legal, UN-recognized British territory, effectively making its residents prisoners of war, it would, said the government, be a signal to the Spanish to take over Gibraltar, for China to grab Hong Kong, for anywhere in the world that was still a British territory, or anyone else's. The world in the nuclear age still had rules.

But it was a gigantic gamble. The Falklands were 8,000 miles away and Britain was already starting to cut its naval and air forces assigned to Nato, where the Soviets were still rattling its cage. Reagan was worried, and offered one of America's own aircraft carriers to help. It took a full page to try to explain to Americans why and how Britain was risking the sinking of almost all its major warships – and several cruise liners including the Queen Elizabeth – to rapidly transport thousands of troops to retake an island nobody but the British cared about.

Actually, I wrote two long stories about the Falklands that day. The second was a long interview with Robert Cox, a Nieman colleague at Harvard, who was also a former editor of the Buenos Aires Herald, an English-language newspaper published in the Argentine capital. He had been forced to leave Argentina by the Galtieri government in 1980 for publishing stories about tortured and missing persons.

The Falklands War went on, Royal Marines stormed the main island, ships were sunk on both sides, and I went back to London to write the story from there. My first piece was on May 28 – at the bottom of Page 1. Headline "**Britons calm on surface, worried underneath**" as Royal Marines and Paras seized Goose Green, Darwin and were closing in on the capital, Stanley.

There were two other stories for me to cover at that time: visits to Britain of The Pope, and President Reagan. Pope John Paul II was a joy to cover, not so much because he was the first reigning Pope to visit Britain since King Henry VIII famously broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in 1536, but because he came to York racecourse, next to my parents' house. From my old bedroom window I could see 200,000 people assembling, and then got close up to him in his British-built 'Popemobile', effectively a Landrover with bullet proof glass where he could be clearly seen by the public. I still have the press pass showing my youthful-looking face, my nationality (American) and name of newspaper: The Cleveland Press, the last time anyone would see one used on an international stage.

I stayed in England long enough to report on President Reagan's address to Parliament on June 8, his first opportunity to talk to Mrs Thatcher in person about the Falklands and Nato, and to send a special report to The Press from Southampton and Plymouth, where I watched emotional reunions of soldiers and sailors with their families.

Memory Flash: ***Southampton docks, England, June 10 1982***

I have a particular memory of one reunited family on that dock: that of Captain David Hart Dyke, commander of HMS Coventry, a Type 42 destroyer which was hit by Argentine Sky Hawks on May 25, Argentina's National Day. Their air force threw almost everything they had at the Royal Navy. Coventry, on fleet guard, shot down three Argentina aircraft that day, but 19 of its own crew were killed, more injured, when two bombs ripped through the ship. One of the injured was Capt Hart Dyke, whose face was burned as he escaped the sinking Coventry.

I remember him standing separately from the crowd, with his wife and two daughters, stoically but consciously trying to keep the injured side of his face away from people who approached him. He gave me a few comments, but not really enough to write about.

What I do clearly remember though was the tall young girl standing close to him: Miranda, his eldest daughter; his younger daughter on his other side. Even at the age of ten Miranda was tall – and quiet and shy. But she grew up to be a comedy actress who made a feast of being an attractive but big, loopy woman – a British TV star adored by her fans, male and female. Her show, simply called Miranda, became one of the UK's funniest and most loved shows.

I can never forget her standing on that dock next to her injured father, self-conscious and uncertain, but all the family now safe from war.

June 17, 1982. Death of the Cleveland Press.

I was back in Cleveland and preparing for a Monday return to work when I heard local TV news saying The Press was preparing a "statement" the next day. The word "closure" was mentioned. I didn't believe it until I saw scores of people milling around the entrance of the building the next morning. I think it was 9am when Bill Dimascio stood on a table in the newsroom and read a statement from Joe Cole to the assembled staff that today's edition would be the last.

"The daily paper which we have all known for so many years and in which I have been so deeply involved for the last year and one-half will no longer be published," said Cole in the statement. "I bought this newspaper full of hope that I could make it viable and successful for our community and for the 900 employees who have given the major part of their lives to its operation.

"It is with great sorrow and disappointment that I must announce that as a result of continuing and significant losses, we are ceasing publication with today's final edition."

At first there was silence. Then the sound of sobs, and then a shout of pure anger. The only thing I thought to do was to call Jim Dudas, who I knew was in southern Ohio on vacation with Marcy and would not know he needed to come back. Immediately.

Outside, TV and radio stations had cameras and microphones stuffed in reporters faces, mine included. “How does it feel?” “What are you going to do now?” I didn’t know what to say.

Only slowly did we start to hear the reasons for the sudden closure: the paper was awash in debt – $6 million in 1980, $800,000 in the last month alone, even after the layoffs of 40 people and a new morning edition to compete with the Plain Dealer. There was a belief that creditors were pushing for repayment. Editor Merlino was quoted by the New York Times the next day as saying that Cole had decided to close the paper “rather than a form of bankruptcy.”

Cole was scared of bankruptcy? Oh God! Have I pushed him into killing my own beloved newspaper?

I doubt what I wrote about Bankruptcy Court would have been the reason, but as time goes on and as I get softer in the brain, it does give me the thought that Cole could have become disheartened that his own paper was embarrassing him with his friends and business contacts.

For the record, what Cole is reported to have said to the New York Times was: “The need to make this announcement is one of the most difficult and painful tasks that has ever confronted me. I had my heart set on keeping Cleveland a two-newspaper town, for I believe in the need for two vibrant and independent voices.”

I didn’t have anything to write that day, just wander around, pick up my clips from the newspaper morgue (library), talk to people (“maybe the Guild will have a court case?” “Maybe the print unions will?” “Will the PD take on our staff?” Maybe a joint operation with the PD, as other newspapers are doing in struggling cities?) There were 140 Press editorial staff but it turned out the Plain Dealer would not be taking any of us.

We were on our own, but as I found the next morning when I went to commandeer two old filing cabinets, the news editors were working flat out to help find us news jobs. There was some severance pay for us – two weeks for every year of service up to a maximum of 52 weeks – in my case six month’s pay, but not much else.

I drove up to Detroit to audition for a news anchor on Channel 7. But they decided my still slight British accent would not be acceptable for some viewers. (I still have a copy of that tape, unseen because it was a 1980s commercial tape that nobody in Britain seems to be able to play).

There was an offer from WKYC-TV (NBC TV3) in Cleveland, but I turned it down. It was a solid contract for 75 weeks, in two consecutive cycles, with unspecified on-air journalistic responsibilities, and the pay looked OK; a trial contract.

But I agonized over it. “When it came to putting my name on that piece of paper (offer) I felt like the proverbial bridegroom about to say ‘I do’,” I wrote back to Kristin Ostrowski, news director at the station. “The analogy is emotionally apt, in fact, because of my intense relationship with The Press over the last 12 years. With that relationship now over, television has appeared like the alluring new lover. But, as with human relationships, at this time I’d rather we “lived in sin” than get involved in legal contracts.”

Over the top, Almond. I’m my own worst enemy.

I went to Washington and was offered a job as a feature/investigations reporter on the brand new USA Today. I turned it down because the 'Macpaper' as it was nicknamed for its quickly-digested stories, seemed to be well beneath the longer investigations I wanted. I was looking for a big paper with international writing.

Big mistake, as I look at USA Today 40 years later, still going strong and with plenty of foreign news.

Then Dick Campbell, who had hired me from England 12 years previously with a simple "$150 a week and you cut the red tape" offer, told me about a post going as press aide to a Republican Congressman in northern Columbus, Ohio. He understood I was next in line to go to the Scripps Howard bureau in D.C. and had assured the congressman that I was the person for the job. The Congressman agreed to take me even though his wife would not be interviewing Anna, as she would usually. The social side, you see. (Just as well. Anna would have rebelled at that).

And I could start the job immediately.

Memory flash: ***Washington DC, August 1982***

I've flown down to Washington, taken a cab to Congress and found the Congressman's office. It is 9am on a Monday and I'm one of the first to arrive. I introduce myself to the staff and am shown the desk of the previous press aide where I will work. The congressman will not be into the office until nearly noon, but my predecessor has left me a long, handwritten note of my expected duties, stuck in an electric typewriter.

As I start to read, an uncomfortable feeling starts to creep down my body. Then horror. I am expected, every Sunday, to have a half hour agricultural report for the congressman ready to read on a local radio station in his district. This will be mainly for farmers, and include soybean and wheat prices, which I will have to look up. Every Sunday, at 9am.

Campbell didn't tell me any of this. But why would he know? I had not met or talked to the congressman either.

I look at my watch. It is 9.30 am. I fight back my panic and look around at the high ceilings, the quiet and orderly staff, and I think. REALLY THINK. Can I do this? Do I WANT to do this? From abandoning newspapers and being an American congressional official?

I called Anna, who told me I must do what I feel I want and need to do. We would survive as a family no matter what. Something will turn up.

I told the staff I could not do this: It was better that I quit before I started. I left a note apologizing to the congressman, vowing that I would apologize to Dick Campbell as soon as I returned, and was in the air back to Cleveland before 11am.

How many times did I take Douglas for a run that summer and into fall? The world seemed silent. The phones

didn't ring, and my calls to old friends, Nieman fellows and others usually ended with the words, 'Try again next year.' Some of my friends went off into public relations.

I don't know if this was a dream, or reality, but my memory tells me Anna, Nick Jeff and Douglas the dog were all lined up in front of me at one point, looking at me patiently but with expressions saying; 'What are we going to do? '

I think it was Larry Nighswander, one of The Press photographers, who called me and asked if I could contact James Whelan, editor of the paper where he now worked, the Washington Times. It turned out Whelan had been a former Latin America correspondent for United Press International, managing editor of the Miami News, editor of the Sacramento Union – and a former Nieman Fellow.

It was a bold startup newspaper, conservative and defiantly anti-communist, a morning daily read most especially by President Reagan. I wasn't interested in that, but they wanted to take on the Washington Post at their own game, and that needed professional journalists. Many of the editorial staff came straight from the defunct Washington Star. How could the capital of the most powerful country in the world have only ONE major daily newspaper – the left-of-center Washington Post – in a now right-of-center country?

It sounded like a Challenge.

Whelan offered me the post of State Department writer, which I took – sharing my desk in the department with the Russians (a State Department joke which fell flat when the Russians hardly ever appeared). Perhaps the other reporters thought I would be a right wing character, a ringer brought in to ask Secretary of State George P. Schultz only right wing questions at press conferences. But Whelan and the Home Desk assured me they wanted the news straight down the middle. Better straight than biased. I'd leave that to the columnists and editorial writers.

I rented a room at the Motel 50, across the Potomac in Roslyn, and tried to come back to Cleveland every other weekend. The 400-mile, six-hour drive was tough over the increasingly-icy Appalachian mountains in Pennsylvania, but there was no choice. Our house was on the market, but without buyers.

It was unfair on Anna, Nick, Jeff and Douglas for me to be so far away. So, after three months I found an unfurnished house to rent on Williamsburg Blvd in Arlington, Virginia, not far from the Beltway and a direct route to my new office. It was a financial squeeze, and I swear I could hear the heat kicking on in our old, vacant house in South Euclid several times a day or night in the freezing winter 400 miles away – as well as heating our Virginia rental. But the house did sell in the spring.

And so, Cleveland, farewell. You have my heart, and I will return as a visitor. But nothing will replace you.

Epilogue

The Cleveland Press was dead, but it its ghosts would not lie down. For months into 1983 the ghosts – 89 printers of the Typographical Union – sued Cleveland Press Publishing for breaching a 1972 job security agreement with both The Press and the Plain Dealer that gave them job security for the rest of their working lives, or until each of them died, retired or resigned.

They also charged conspiracy between The Press and Plain Dealer in the sale of The Press subscription list and a bulk mailing company for $22.5 million, and for 'conspiracy in restraint of trade for the purpose of creating a monopoly in daily and Sunday newspapers in Greater Cleveland.'

The case was heard in federal court before Judge Ann Aldrich (against whom, in true Cleveland soap-opera style, it had been publicly alleged she had taken revenge against lawyer Shimon Kaplan of the Climaco law firm because he had rejected her proposal of marriage) who rejected all charges. Judge Aldrich ruled that in the printers' case they were not the target of the collapsing Press, so case dismissed.

Destruction of the Cleveland Press building started soon after, to be replaced in 1985 by the North Point Office building and tower, home of the now-international law firm Jones Day (Messrs Reavis and Pogue long gone).

Yet rumblings of conspiracy did not end there. In 1984 the Akron Beacon Journal reported that the value of Press assets was much less than the $22.5 million that was said to be the price Samuel Newhouse, owner of the Plain Dealer, was willing to pay on condition The Press was closed and the building dismantled. It had already been noted that the printing presses and other equipment had quickly been sold on closure, preventing any chance that another buyer could have kept The Press going.

The US Justice Department decided to launch a grand jury investigation into whether antitrust law was broken. The investigation lasted three years and concluded in 1987 with no charges. A major factor appeared to be that Newhouse offered the $22.5 million AFTER Cole had already decided to close The Press and tear down the building.

That STILL wasn't the end. According to the New York Times, in August 1986 Russell Twist, a Justice Department lawyer (with whom I had talked in my Battisti investigation, and had taken part in the Cole-Newhouse investigation) left the department and filed a civil suit saying he was forced to leave after "criticizing his superiors for not aggressively pursuing the investigation."

In November that year, the federal Sixth Circuit court of appeals heard an appeal of a district court order that documents prepared by lawyers which involved Newhouse and Cole should be made available to the grand jury as part of its investigation.

“Viewed alone, it does present a reasonable basis for suspecting that a crime was committed,” the Sixth Circuit is quoted as saying. The documents were later provided to the grand jury voluntarily by Newhouse, the NYT reported. The court rejected the appeal.

So that, finally, was that. SI Newhouse went on to be a multi billionaire owner of an empire of publications, including Conde Nast magazine, and died in New York on October 1, 2017, aged 89. Cole died, as previously noted, on Jan 4, 1995, aged 80.

The Plain Dealer continues to publish, but by 2019 its circulation had dropped from the 500,000 of 1983 to 95,000. It dropped home deliveries to four days a week, and its last four newsroom journalists were moved to its online Cleveland.com. And as the four had to leave their union, Newspaper guild Local No 1, the first newspaper journalists union in the country, died with it – even as unionism was picking up at reorganized digital news organizations across the rest of the country. The Press’ Local 1, the first journalist’s union in America, became the North East Ohio Guild, incorporating other local papers.

As for other legal fallouts of my Battisti series, Judge **Mark Schlachet** resigned from the federal bankruptcy bench under FBI and US federal court pressure in October ’82, days after the US 6th Circuit Court of Appeals judicial council completed a secret report on him, recommending his suspension and public censure. The council found 13 substantial bankruptcy cases Schlachet had funnelled to former law partner **Lewis Zipkin**; had illegally assigned Gino Battisti, nephew of Judge Frank J. Battisti, and niece Linda to work on bankruptcy cases, and had later hired Linda as clerk of his court.

Schlachet continued working in Cleveland – as an independent lawyer.

Zipkin was found guilty of embezzling $6,000 from Greenwood Village in a bankruptcy case and placed on three years’ probation. He replaced the money and is listed as founder and President of Zipkin Whiting co. law firm.

Gino Battisti resigned and moved out of the area.

And Judge Battisti himself? The FBI, the US Justice Department’s public integrity section and the judicial council of the US Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals presented evidence to a grand jury in Toledo about his power, influence and assignments to bankruptcy court, but whether other specific cases were cited at that time is not known.

In September, 1985, however, nine members of the 11-member US Northern District of Ohio appeals court determined that, according to the Washington Post, Battisti “had indeed assumed too much power and ordered him to share it with his peers.”

Battisti was still in legal charge of school busing then, but slowly it began to unwind at the speed of the steady decline in students available to be bused: from 115,000 students in 1979 (51% black) to 92,000 students in 1980,

to 69,000 in 1994 (71%black), 50,000 in 2007, and 38,700 in 2015. In 2020, according to school district reports, there were 37,158 students enrolled in Cleveland – 65.1% black, 16.7% Hispanic, and 15% white.

A loss of 115,000 students to 37,000 over 40 years! The city of Cleveland was emptying. But how much was due to school busing is highly debatable. The nature of employment had a lot to do with it. Heavy steel works requiring unskilled workers changed with advanced technology. Demand rose for better-educated, office-based workers. Those middle-class parents – both black and white – who could afford to move to the suburbs did so, leaving a sinking, struggling remainder who could never find enough money to pay for all the education that was needed. **Fifty per cent of students failed even to graduate.**

After Superintendent Briggs retired in 1978 a series of replacements failed to make progress. His successor, Peter Carlin, left in 1982, suing the school board for failing to evaluate him before his non-reappointment. His replacement, Frederick Douglass (cq) Holliday, became the first African-American super to head a large school district. A "stern disciplinarian, but also ebullient" according to one report, he was an aircraft enthusiast, kept a single-engined plane at Burke Lakefront airport and, reportedly, did manage to get reading scores up.

But he too ran into trouble with the School Board, mostly for not accepting the costs of his improvement plans, and failed to get his contract extended**. On January 26, 1985, he went into an office, pulled out a gun and shot himself. In his suicide note he blamed the board's 'party politics and greed'.**

The impact was felt far and wide. The mayor and city council insisted on a much stronger role on the school board. Donald Waldrip, who as head of the desegregation department in 1980, had already left (in 1984), unable to obtain funding for an expansion of the Magnet Schools so loved by Briggs. And Alfred Tutela, who had come from Boston to join the desegregation team in 1978, was appointed Superintendent in 1986. But he too faced a $50 million deficit for school repairs and had to contend with a new Ohio state proficiency test for 9th graders that a majority of Cleveland students were unable to pass. Ohio Governor George Voinovich called for the state to take over the schools.

By 1987 Judge Battisti could clearly see his court-ordered busing program was not going well. He ordered changes in pupil assignments if they were agreeable to the school district, the state, and the child/parents' legal counsel – without prior court approval. The demands for desegregation were clearly slipping.

In 1993 another schools superintendent, Sammie Campbell Parrish, proposed "Vision 21", making cross-town busing voluntary so that parents could choose magnet or community-based schools. The NAACP praised the idea, but feared the $90 million it would cost could affect desegregation. An attempt to raise the money from the community via a levy failed, yet again, the next year.

But then, in October 1994, Judge Battisti died.

He had been fly-fishing at his ranch in Montana when he was bitten by an insect that caused typhus and/or Rocky Mountain spotted fever. He was taken to Cleveland Clinic for treatment but died after a couple of weeks there. He was 72.

Judge Robert Krupansky took over from Battisti and ordered the state of Ohio to take charge of Cleveland's

schools, which it did by approving House Bill 239, giving control of the schools to the city's mayor, a move opposed by the NAACP and the Teachers' Union. The next year a voucher program was introduced allowing students to attend schools of their choice.

In 1998 the Cleveland schools desegregation case was over. Effectively declaring Victory before leaving the field of battle Federal Judge George White announced the school system was now "unitary," meaning it had achieved the desegregated status the courts required. It was no longer a racist system. **The school board, he said, had done all it could. The persistent gap in student performance between black and white was the result of socio-economic factors and status, not race.**

Two years later, at the turn of the century, Judge White declared an end to US federal court oversight of Cleveland's public schools.

By 2008 even the Cleveland School Board had a new name: The Cleveland METROPOLITAN School Board, intending to attract suburban students back into the city's magnet schools, such as engineering at the aviation and sea training facilities at Burke Lakefront Airport.

(**Metropolitan, as Columbus had done with its schools, involved a number of suburbs. It was a much less industrial city and did not have the 60 or so suburbs as Cuyahoga County, but by 2015 Columbus would replace Cleveland as the largest school district in Ohio. To me, coming from England, metropolitan was a logical way to go – as the NAACP and School Board recognized a decade earlier when it was denied by the courts. It would have spared the city from taking on school desegregation all on its own, slowed down the inexorable movement of thousands of people from city to suburb, and done a better job of integrating children in socio-economic terms rather than just their racial characteristics).**

By 2013 a national assessment put Cleveland second to last in reading and math across the nation. In 2018 a survey for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of 19 large school districts ranked Cleveland worst, with 40% of students either attempting or considering suicide. In 2021 a national report by WalletHub, a personal finance website, cited Cleveland as the third neediest city in the country, out of 182 examined. First was Detroit, second Brownsville, Texas.

But I can at least say that by 2020 things were looking up. Yes, Cleveland's schools were still 64.1% black, 16.7% Hispanic and only 15% white, but its graduation rate had gone up to 78.2%, a 26% improvement since 2010, and it was the fourth fastest improving school district among all Ohio schools.

As for two of my other big investigations:

The **Cuyahoga Valley National Park** is, by all accounts, doing extremely well. It was 7th out of the top 62 most visited national parks in the country in 2020, with 2,755,000 visitors, according to CBS-TV. The Coronavirus pandemic hit it badly after that, as with all national parks forced to close. But the CVNP at least came up with "Pop-Up Weddings," with a number of dates available for couples, and ten socially-distanced visitors (including decorations, cake and champagne) for $1800. But I haven't seen the park for 40 years, so can't really comment. Maybe next year.

The **Diamond Shamrock chemical site** in Painesville also appears to have been affected by the pandemic, last reports showing little major progress on clean-up and investment in recent years.

Which only really leaves me to say 'Good luck' to the people of Northeast Ohio in finding all the best and latest local news, investigations, features, comments, opinions and other useful information that affect your daily lives. You will find much of it on TV and social media, in many different forms and geared to your own personal preferences. There are even some local print newspapers, such as the two I still get every week in my part of ex-urban London just because I keep hoping somebody will pay for skilled reporters to do what I did those many years ago, and "Make a Difference" as my Nieman interlocutors at Harvard asked..

I am told that there is plenty of journalism going on in the third decade of the 21st century, but it seems mostly at the national level; not so much at local. I can't comment on the situation in Northeast Ohio – except to say that the Cleveland Plain Dealer, with a 90,000 circulation four days a week, no longer has a Cleveland-based newsroom.

But I can tell you this:

There is a real dividing line between pre-digital news and post digital that endangers the concept of the press being "the first slice of history." The Cleveland Press folded just before the digital age began, so that a search online for what happened when and where pre-1982 is likely to skip right over my old paper and into the arms of our competition, the Plain Dealer. TV rarely gets a mention because they never had the staffs, or the time, that the print media could provide.

You won't find the most extensive school desegregation coverage, or the Northern Ireland series which posited a warning of internecine violence to Cleveland if it could not be settled amicably; no "Guns in School" series; or Sohio and Steel series; nor a 'Diamond Shamrock pollution' series, which changed laws.

Certainly not a "Cuyahoga Valley National Park" investigative series or a "Judge Battisti profile and Bankruptcy Court" investigation anywhere in detail online – because The Press was the only media organization that researched and published them.

My own boxes of old sepia-tinted stories have been the only sources I've had to tell my story of Cleveland in the 70s and early 80s.

There remains a glint of hope, however.

At Cleveland State University's Michael Schwartz Library is the Cleveland Memory Project, which contains the original Press library of photos and news clippings: the 'Morgue', donated by Joseph Cole on the closure of The Press[1].

It says this about digitization:

"Presently only a **very small percentage** of the approximately half million 8×10 black and white photographs and one million news clippings **have been digitized** and are available for you to search or browse. We are continuing

1. The Cleveland State University Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland Memory Project, The Cleveland Press Collection. https://www.clevelandmemory.org/press/

to increase this number as time and volunteer help permits." Donations and significant funding would certainly help. [2]

One million news clippings! So far, by diligent searching in 2022, I can find just 36 digitized copies of news stories under my name, almost all about school desegregation. The last of them is a seed catalogue.

It appears likely to be a very long time before a researcher's click of a computer key will instantly present the balance of news stories missed, ignored or inaccurately presented by the Plain Dealer and other media. What REALLY happened in the Cleveland area before 1982 cannot be told without the open pages of the Cleveland Press. The two papers had significantly-different ethos, politics and readers. The PD won because it was a morning paper and had the bigger circulation as newspaper readers turned into TV viewers, not because it was necessarily a better newspaper.

Those of us who gave our working lives to The Press, especially those young reporters like me who joined it in the late 60s and early 70s, remember it as the decade we married, had children, put down roots – and passionately loved what we did and where. We had a remarkable freedom to just WRITE. To now slowly realize that young people today have almost no idea of what we did and gave to the community seems tragic.

The entrapment of our legacy in the slowly-disappearing pages of a library at Cleveland State University is surely a major loss to the civic history of north east Ohio.

My life and the stories I've presented here are from just one journalist on The Press. One or two others gave a taste of our stories in books decades ago, but two generations have now passed who know almost nothing of the paper and what we did to help shape the lives of the people of northeast Ohio. It is now two generations after The Press closed, and those stories – many of superior quality and impact to those of our competition – are invisible to any and all of the historians, researchers and the public who search for us online.

The history of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio without The Press? Criminal.

2. The Cleveland State University Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland Memory Project, Donors Page. https://www.clevelandmemory.org/donors/index.html

About the Author

The author, Peter Almond

Peter John Almond was born in Northampton, England, in January, 1946, and raised in a Royal Air Force family which moved frequently. Formal schooling ended at Woolverstone Hall School, Ipswich, in 1964 when he began four years journalist training at the Northern Echo and Yorkshire Evening Press, York. In December 1969 he married Anna Collinson, a nurse, in York before they emigrated to Cleveland the next month. At the **Cleveland Press** Peter was a general, Education, Labor and Investigative reporter. His journalism awards included a Nieman Fellowship in Journalism to Harvard in 1980/81. Peter and Anna adopted two Cleveland-born boys, Nicholas and Jeffrey, and in 1982 moved to Washington D.C. where Peter became State Dept. writer for the **Washington Times**.

For four years he was Europe/Middle East writer based in London, covering the Cold War, the Thatcher years and Beirut. Peter, with family, returned to D.C. in 1987 to be Pentagon writer for the paper. In 1990 he returned to London as Defence Correspondent for the **Daily Telegraph**, leaving in 1995 to freelance for UK and U.S. publications, and retired in 2010. He has flown in a dozen combat aircraft and written two books: *Aviation: The Early Years* (Konemann), *and Century of Flight* (WH Smith/Barnes and Noble (US), both for the Hulton Getty Picture Archive. For fun he walks, cycles, plays golf, has run three marathons, was an Extra in five movies and, for charity, walked the length of mainland Britain (1,250 miles), led by the family Springer, Henry. Peter and Anna are nuts on dogs. As of 2022 they were still married.

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