

## **One Afternoon in Saint Paul –The Missing Material**

The Missing Material comes in two parts. The first is an epilogue that will bring readers up to date on important items and persons mentioned in the published book along with a few from the earlier parts of the epilogue itself. The Second is a fairly complete listing of the crazy ways Kent saved hundreds if not thousands of dollars over the years.

### **A Running Epilogue**

Going out on a limb, I was thinking that if any readers had made it this far in the book, they might also want to know what happened to a few of the characters, objects, or institutions mentioned in the story. So, what follows is a second-to-the-last listing.

#### **Jeanne Marie Peters**

Jeanne Marie raised her 4 children and lived her later golden years with Kent's younger sister, Ann Marie Fairbanks, her husband, Art Fairbanks, and their sons, Adam and Andrew, in Farmington, Minnesota. Jeanne received wonderful and attentive care from the Fairbanks family, that was, until she started putting plastic Tupperware containers on the stovetop which ignited them and nearly started house fires. Her final eight years were spent a few miles away from the Fairbanks family in Farmington's Trinity Care Center, a great senior care facility. When she first entered Trinity, she was almost like a volunteer, stuffing envelopes and such, but living with Parkinson's disease eventually took its toll. At the age of 84, she died on November 28, 2011. God rest her soul. I had a chance to give my grandmother a birthday present, the book, "Good Dog Karl," when she was still lucid. I have fond memories of her reading that book to us when we were children. I still miss her. "Good Grandma Jeanne"

Kent and Fran will always be grateful to his sister, Ann, and her family for doing the lion's share of the care, if not all of the care that Jeanne Marie needed toward the end of her life.

## Billy Kneip

Surprise doesn't describe Billy getting a call from a friend he hadn't heard from in 62 years. He clearly remembers the old witch lady in the neighborhood and her haunted house but doesn't remember the incident that brought the police to my dad's front yard.

Billy currently lives in the White Bear area of Minnesota with his wife of 36 years, Melisa. They have three girls and one boy and now have one grandchild and another on the way.

He received his teaching credentials from the University of Minnesota but then worked as a U.S. Postal Delivery Person until he retired 2009. He loved his work and enjoyed cordial and rewarding relationships with all his delivery route customers.

Billy owns two Harleys, and it should be no surprise, loves riding. Melisa is not so much into bikes, so he mostly rides solo. He told my dad a funny story that happened to him just a couple of days before they talked.

Billy entered a Harley shop and two "young fellas" were staffing the parts desk. These two young guys chuckled to each other as they informed Billy that he was wearing his shirt backwards, with the tag sticking up from his shirt under his chin. He had a strange, sinking feeling at the Harley shop like that of my dad when trying to secure some rolled-rubber roofing glue at All Weather. Billy and Kent laughed together.

At that point the tone of the call changed. My dad asked Billy about how he might contact Margo, Billy's mother. Even though Billy and Kent can't remember ever being with each other after my dad moved from Wordsworth Avenue, Margo had remained one of Jeanne Marie's closest friends up to the very end. In fact, Kent and Fran still own and use the cookware that Margo gave them as a wedding present in 1976 and think of her often. By the looks of it, that cookware was so well constructed that it will easily last through another marriage or two. My dad wanted to thank Margo, once again, for the cookware and pick her memory about the two four-year-old boys, Billy and Kent.

Billy shared that Margo died of cancer in March of 2019. Kent was truly saddened to hear of her death and disappointed that the only open door to learning more about the two mischievous boys had closed forever. After 62 years, he had missed Margo by only seven months.

Kent and Fran must have been in Switzerland at the time, but Billy remembers wallpapering Jeanne Marie's living and dining rooms on her house on 1995 Bayard Avenue in 1979 or 1980. Had my mom and dad been in the US, they surely would have run into him.

### **Sr. Marie Saint John, my dad's first grade teacher at Nativity School**

At the conclusion of every school day throughout my dad's first grade, Sr. Marie Saint John would ask the class to pray for her "special intention." Wisely, she kept that intention a secret all year long. The class would say an Our Father or a Hail Mary, and everyone would enter the fantasy world of the imagination trying to guess what this beautiful young nun wanted so much for herself or for someone close to her. It must have been a truly important intention to have it fixated upon every school day for nine whole months.

On the very last day of school, beaming with joy, yet still sad to have her very first class move on to second grade, Sister Marie Saint John shared the positive news that her prayers, or should I say the class' prayers, had been answered.

A little over a mile from Nativity School, on the corner of Summit and Cleveland Avenues, across the street from the University of Saint Thomas, was a unique institution started in 1948 called Christ Child School for Exceptional Children. Sister Marie Saint John would be assigned to Christ Child as a teacher starting the next school year. My dad was proud to have participated in bringing about such a wonderful outcome for a woman he so admired. Maybe it was a miracle, who knows. But nobody in the class knew what exceptional children really were. What would make teaching there better than teaching at Nativity? If she would only stay, my dad would have a chance of having her again as a teacher. But alas...

There was a real difference in the two schools. Christ Child School specialized in educating children with cognitive disabilities. Nativity “specialized” in teaching normal kids. Now, at six years of age, my dad had only encountered one person with a cognitive disability, a boy about his age who lived down Juliet Avenue about 20 houses, just where the steep mile-long incline to the Mississippi River begins. My dad never learned the boy’s name, had only talked to him on two or three occasions, and the conversations were anything but typical. The boy had no ability to communicate verbally. They showed each other what was in their pockets, they traded a few of those things, but they mostly sat and smiled at each other. The boy was a mystery to my dad. Over the next several years, Sister Marie Saint John would be teaching that very boy and hundreds of other boys and girls like him. That difference in the two schools was huge.

And so, off went Sister Marie Saint John to Christ Child School for Exceptional Children.

About fifteen years later, when My dad was 21, he entered Saint John Vianney Seminary, a junior-level seminary based at the University of Saint Thomas. His stay at this seminary would only last one semester, but he had a sincere belief that he needed to explore whether he had a vocation, a call, to the priesthood in the Catholic Church. This would mean also exploring the possibility of living celibacy for the rest of his life, a daunting consideration.

My dad’s seminary experience that semester, living in a dorm with 100 or so other junior seminarians and taking courses in philosophy and theology, was enriching to say the least. However, during the ten-day Christmas break, at a Seminary-led retreat at the Villa Maria Retreat Center in Frontenac, Minnesota, he was overcome with the conviction that God wanted him to be a father, not a priest “father,” one that has metaphorical meaning, but a real father. He fully recognized that his personal gifts and all his inclinations would lead him to be happiest living as a husband and father. God was calling him to the vocation of marriage. If he had not attended that retreat and heard God’s call, celibacy might have been a giant brick wall nullifying my existence. Next time I’m in southern Minnesota, I think I’ll visit that retreat center and say a prayer of thanksgiving.

But while still in the seminary that semester...

Part of the formation program in the seminary included being involved in some sort of faith-based charitable outreach to the marginalized that was based not on campus, but in the larger community. This extra-curricular service was required of every seminarian for each semester while attending the seminary. To facilitate the choosing of a ministry, one that was right for the individual seminarian, the seminary provided an evening ministry immersion program each semester. Attendees who participated had the opportunity to visit five possible ministries in succession and then choose one ministry from the five. There were usually 10 to 12 organizations represented at each of those evening sessions.

At his first and only immersion experience, in his second ministry session that evening, a magnificent God-thing happened. He entered a classroom along with about a dozen other seminarians and took a seat in one of the 20 chairs set in a circle in the room's center. In one of the chairs sat a nun who represented a ministry that offered a weekly prayer service at Greenbrier Home, a residence that housed about 170 men with cognitive disabilities in East Saint Paul. The nun, Sister Carol Podlasek, introduced herself, said just a few words about the ministry, and then asked the seminarians to introduce themselves. My dad was the sixth or seventh seminarian to give his name and say a few words about himself. As he said, "Hello Sister Carol, I'm Kent Peters," she somehow sprang out of her chair as if ejected from a fighter jet about to crash and said, "Kent Peters... I'm Sister Marie Saint John, your first-grade teacher."

In the late 1960's, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet dropped the saint-based religious names they were given by the Order when they took permanent vows and went back to the names on their birth certificates. I've always wondered if the orders went back their members' original names to increase the block of saint names available for future use.

My dad must have made quite an impression on Sister in 1959, for her to have remember his name after all those years. She must have really loved him.

I'm not sure what rocket scientists say while speaking to peers, when implying that

some topic should be easy to understand. Perhaps they say, “It’s not like asking out a girl.” Anyway, what non-rocket-scientist wouldn’t be able to guess what service ministry my dad chose at the end of that immersion evening? It was the Greenbrier Home prayer ministry with Sister Carol. My dad was so excited about Greenbrier and working with Sister Carol that he even convinced a new friend, Fran Hynan, to come along on several of those ministry trips. She was to become his bride.

Kent, a slender and very excitable 25-year-old resident of Greenbrier who wore a wrinkled blue baseball cap, would wait by the entry door on those evenings, and upon the group’s arrival, would glue himself to Fran for the evening asking repeatedly, “yu gada bibo?” Translated, “Do you have a bible?” Fran had given Kent one of those New Testament mini bibles the first time she and my dad had visited Greenbrier, and the visiting group almost always remembered to bring along a few extra mini Good Books each time they visited. My dad would play his classical Gibson guitar, and everybody would sing the Christian standard hymns. Joyful is the only word that would describe those friendship-filled evenings.

Having taught at Christ Child School for Exceptional Children for most of the years between Kent’s first grade and the Greenbrier ministry, Sister Carol was moving on and had made a new request of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. A unique and groundbreaking opportunity was on the horizon.

The large and what were called, “mental institutions,” throughout the United States that had housed persons with severe cognitive disabilities for decades had been exposed as “offering services” that were infinitely below what would already be considered substandard. Geri Joseph, a former reporter for the Minneapolis Morning Tribune, wrote articles on Minnesota’s state mental institutions between 1948 and 1950. She shared the following comments during a video interview, “It was the kind of scene that really haunts you for long after, after you have been through them. We very methodically went through all of the institutions at that time. I don't remember, there were seven or eight.

“Those hospitals were in very, very bad shape. You would not have called them hospitals. People who have described them as warehouses. That's really what they were. You just sort of stockpile people in there. There was very little treatment of

any kind. If you got a physical exam once a year, that was a miracle.

“What you would see in these hospitals by and large would be men and women either just standing around doing nothing or you would see those who were catatonic sitting in corners, on the floor, sitting like this, all bunched over, not moving, not speaking. In one of the hospitals there were just an incredible number of people who were literally tied up. They'd have leather cuffs.

“Or they have almost like a baseball catcher with the leather things in the front and the hands hooked to it, or some of them would be tied to beds, spread-eagle tied to beds. They had no sheets or pillowcases on these beds. And the ticking, you know, the mattress ticking, in many places was very dirty. Well, it is very hard to describe it adequately.”

Geri Joseph paints an absolutely grim picture, and to think, after tinkering with budgeting and modifying the operations of these giant institutions, it took an additional 25 years for state administrators to finally decide that community-based residential settings (they're called homes) should replace the mega-warehouses filled with the most marginalized people in the country, the truly forgotten.

In the mid-1970s, the actual year depended upon the state, the great emptying-out and closing of the large institutions began, and Sister Marie Saint John, oops, Sister Carol, wanted to be part of the welcoming some of these residents into real homes.

Sister Carol presented a request to the leaders of the Sisters of Saint Joseph Order that she be allowed to establish a residential group home in Saint Paul. She wanted to name the residence, Our House of Minnesota. The home would be based upon the model created by a saintly Catholic theologian and philosopher, Jean Vanier, who developed, in 1964, in the small town of Trosly, France, a new form of communal living that he called L'Arche, in English, The Arc. At L'Arche, “No longer were people with disabilities seen as something shameful that needed to be quarantined, but as full human beings inherently deserving of respect.” L'Arche homes (there are now more than 153 L'Arche homes in over 38 countries) have within them various people living everyday lives, including: persons with cognitive disabilities, a very limited professional staff, and members of the surrounding

community as long-term residents who simply share their daily, day and night, experiences with the residents. How could the Sisters of Saint Joseph say no to a request like that?

From the “Our Story” section of the Our House of Minnesota website, one reads, “The heart and soul of Our House of Minnesota lies in the family and friends who started these group homes in July of 1975: Archbishop John Roach, Sister Carol Podlasek, Leonora Sherman, Jane Thames, Virginia Leach, and many others, and who themselves or family members continue to be a part of its success today.” Sister Carol should be listed first, as she did the lion share of the work to bring this dream, her dream, into reality, but it should be noted that both Archbishop Roach and the Sisters of Saint Joseph gave their full support to Sister Carol in this endeavor.

The first “Our House of Minnesota” home was established in July of 1975. It was beautiful home, rather large, with seven bedrooms – perfect for six residents, three live-in staff, and occasional long-term visitors. The first residents were: Michael, Gale, Grandma (Lorraine), Beverly, Larry, and a woman who’s name no one can remember. Gale, Michael, and Beverly, had come straight from the large warehouse residences of Minnesota. It was obvious that living in a true home meant much to them and their families, and festive is the only way of describing the home as it got underway.

The second “Our House of Minnesota” home, just six blocks down from the first house, was established in mid-1977, and you’ll never guess who were two of the first three live-in staff at the Portland residence. Yep, Kent and Fran, married only a year by then. Pat Bullard was the third staff member.

The first residents to move into Our House 2 with Fran, Pat and Kent were: Daryl, Isabel, Linda, Dennis, Theresa , and Michael.

Some of their favorite sayings included: Michael, “You’re going to the Dogs,” Daryl, “My dad runs a hamburger factory,” Isabel, “Don’t touch my things or I’ll kill you,” Theresa, to all the guys while bowing, “Yes, mam,” Linda, “Everyone is so happy here,” and Denis... well, he had no words, but could burst into tears or start laughing uncontrollably for no apparent reason at the most unusual times. When he started

laughing, the whole house laughed along, sometimes for two or three minutes straight. Then silence from Dennis, and everyone stopped. It was magical.

Kent and Fran lasted a year at the Portland house. Their schedule, five days a week, included getting up at 5:00 a.m., helping everyone get ready for school or work, preparing, setting, and cleaning up from breakfast, going to their own jobs (Kent painting houses and Fran as a teller at the Summit State Bank next to the old Metropolitan Stadium), getting back to Portland by 3:00 p.m., welcoming home the group, preparing and serving dinner, cleaning up from dinner (always with the help of everyone who ate), socializing throughout the evening, getting everyone ready for bed, getting themselves ready for bed, and flopping, dead tired, into bed. On weekends things slowed down a bit and all the tasks that didn't fit into the weekday routine were performed: shopping, house cleaning, yard work... Life at Portland was arduous, but every moment was filled with meaning and loads of fun. A large family, they were.

On a vacation with Kent's family about 12 months into their time at Portland, at the end of the seven wonderful days at Brookside Resort near Bemidji, Minnesota, Fran realized that she couldn't go back to the beautiful grind that was life at Our House at Portland. She shared these feelings with Kent who understood perfectly, well not at first, but he did so within an hour of beginning their conversation. It was time to move on.

They had given a full year in this service alongside Sister Carol and had saved every penny over that year: working their outside jobs, working for moderate pay at Our House, and living with no-cost housing at Portland. This arrangement allowed them to create a huge nest egg that would eventually fund their move to Switzerland for Kent's graduate studies one year later.

Sister Carol was eventually removed from the director's position at Our House of Minnesota by its board of directors and replaced with three people. Yes, three. She had sort of lost it, working so hard for so many years. That's what sometimes happens to people who love, perhaps, a little too deeply. She was always so proud of the fact that Our House of Minnesota had the lowest per-diem rate for each person receiving care when compared to every other group home that had been

established in Minnesota during those “emptying-out” years. She had her own form of Kent’s frugality syndrome. In this case with Kent and Sister Carol, like attracted like.

My dad sent me a link to a very recent interview with Sister Carol in Together, the CSJ June/July, 2019 newsletter, and I thought you might like to see a few of the questions and answers. They are so Sister Carol.

**What’s your biggest life accomplishment?**

I started two group homes for mentally handicapped people, where the staff lives with the patients. The homes, called Our House of Minnesota, are based on the L’Arche model. In these homes, the staff lives with the patients. They’re still going. One is at 1846 Dayton and the other is at 1846 Portland in St. Paul.

**What’s your most important life lesson?**

I have so many things in the fire and I just keep going and going instead of stopping. Take time to stop!

**If you could do one thing over in this life, what would it be?**

That’s hard. I’ve mostly done what I wanted to do. I’m very lucky. I don’t think I’d do anything over.

**What’s the best thing about yourself?**

I like people. That’s the best thing about me. I like to make people happy.

**What is your biggest hope for the future?**

I want to see God!

Could it be any clearer why six-year-old Kent was so attracted to Sister Marie Saint John and 20-something Kent couldn’t wait to minister with Sister Carol at Greenbrier and Our House of Minnesota?

My dad says that he never used a squirt gun on Sister Carol, not even ounce. In fact, he can only remember one disagreement that occurred during the year that Fran and Kent lived in Our House 2 and Sister Carol in Our House 1. Remember, Sister

Carol was the boss. The scuffle was over how meal dishes should be dried after washing. Kent preferred to leave them clean but wet in the dish rack and let them air dry. Sister preferred that the dishes be hand dried with a towel after washing and immediately put away. She said, "That's the way it was always done at the Podlasek house!" Guess who won that one? The disagreement was settled by the Ramsey County health department. On a routine inspection of the two Our Houses, the county discovered that the hot water heater that served the kitchen at Portland was not putting out water hot enough to kill bacteria and mandated that it be turned to the highest setting. They also recommended that dishes be allowed to air dry. Using a towel had the potential of spreading germs.

Kent won that skirmish, and Sister took it well. Having to live with dishes six blocks away that were wet for an hour or so might have felt like being squirted with a toy water pistol. I'll ask my dad to check that thought out with Sister Carol.

In early 2019, Sister Carol celebrated her 65<sup>th</sup> year as a Sister of Saint Joseph of Carondelet. That's a pretty significant jubilee, and on December 2, 2019, in the afternoon, my dad finally contacted Sister Carol by phone and had a 26-minute delightful conversation. It happened this way.

Impatiently waiting for a call back from Ann Thompson, a communication consultant who works for the Sisters of Saint Joseph who had agreed to get back to my dad with Sister Carol's contact information, my dad decided to do an end-around Ann and call the main phone number into the SCJ's Saint Paul Mother House. He did so, and an elderly lady answered the phone. My dad greeted her and asked if he could have contact information for Sister Carol. The lady said, "For whom?" My dad repeated, "For Sister Carol Podlasek, and I think she lives there." She politely said, "Well, I'm Sister Carol. What can I do for you?" Jackpot!

Sister Carol is now 83 years old and retired but still answers the main phone at the CSJ office every other Monday afternoon and some Thursdays. What are the chances of my dad getting her on the first call? If she is 83 now, that means that she was 23 when my dad had her in first grade, 60 years ago.

He said that it was like old times talking with her about the Our House residents

from both houses, about teaching first graders and how much she loved that, and about her attractive and magnetic personality. She believes herself to be one of the most blessed persons on earth and will be eternally grateful for the life she has lived. That pretty much describes what we Catholics like to see in someone who might someday be canonized a saint. Some say that gratitude leads to happiness. Maybe its simpler than that. Maybe gratitude is happiness.

Kent promised Sister Carol that he and Fran would take her out to lunch the very next time they visit family in the Twin Cities. She was so pleased and excited for a visit, and, as she is still an avid reader, she can't wait to get her hands on One Afternoon in Saint Paul. Kent promised her a copy, published or not.

<https://csjcarondelet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Together-June-2019.pdf>

## **Miss Beer**

My dad spent several hours trying to find information on Miss Beer, his third-grade teacher. First, he contacted Nativity School but got nowhere. Schools in Minnesota are required to keep records on teachers for only ten years, and it had been 58 years. Internet searching were a bust. Try looking for someone on the Web named Beer with no available first name. Yep, brewing related businesses and pdf newsletters from Catholic schools with beer gardens at their fall festivals squeezed out all other information. Finally, he sent requests for information on Miss Beer via Facebook to a few of his former classmates from the early years at Nativity. Mary Clare Pihaley, Patty Thornton, Margie Kaggle and Janine Huspect (all maiden names) got back to him with regrets that they had no information on Miss Beer, but they remembered her well with great fondness, and he is still waiting for future replies.

## **Agent Harold Schwab**

This is sad. I'm not sure what happened to Agent Harry Schwab, but Tommy Schwab, one of his younger sons and a classmate of my dad at Saint Thomas, was killed in a drug-related automobile accident on the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Hamline Avenue a few years after high school. It might be hard to believe, but

Tommy's personal problems were much more serious than my dad's. Significant drug use began during Tommy's high school years and escalated soon after. Totally out of control would have best described Tommy. He was one of my dad's "customers" who never "paid up" on Monday, but all is forgiven. May Tommy rest in peace.

## **All-Weather Roofing Company**

Google Maps no longer shows a warehouse building where my dad expected to see the All-Weather Roofing Company headquarters, so to double check his recollection that All Weather Roofing was actually on the north side of Interstate 94 and could be seen from the south side of the freeway, he called, in September of 2019, an All-Weather Roofing Company that he found with a Google search. It took about a week, but he eventually did get a call back from Ken Sorensen, the current CEO of All-Weather Roofing. Ken confirmed that a warehouse location did exist on the north side of the 94 freeway, and that he was a salesperson for the company and worked out of that location at the time Kent went looking for roofing glue in 1986. But he doesn't remember a well-dressed man with pigtails looking for glue back in the 80s. He also reported that the company, now headquartered in Golden Valley, Minnesota, is going strong. Kudos, Ken, for keeping a company and all the jobs it provides in operation for so long!

## **Tom Trudeau**

Tom and Trudeau Construction are also still going strong. In the summer of 2019, Tom celebrated 51 years of owning the company. After starting and operating the company in Forrest Lake and Saint Paul, Minnesota, for 19 years, Tom then spent more than 30 years in Bayfield, Wisconsin, developing condominium units and single-family homes. During this time, Trudeau Construction built or created over 80 housing units. His most recent project, in Ashland, Wisconsin, involved the conversion of the old Chicago-Northwestern Railroad Depot, built in the 1880's, into 3 residential units, along with 3 new residential units on the site adjacent to the Depot. He continues his involvement with the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic men's organization, the Elks, and the music ministry at the local Catholic church. Go, Tom!

## **The Roblyn house**

Every time my dad passes through Saint Paul, about once a year, he drives by the Roblyn house. He parks, and simply sits, observing the house trying to remember what it was like so share it with Fran and, at the time, four beautiful children. In August of 2019, he reported back to the rest of us that the house looks well-kept and stands strong – 136 years since its construction. That's old. Most importantly, there have been zero rat sightings during these yearly visits.

## **Saint Thomas Academy**

The Academy website states, "In 1885, Archbishop John Ireland pursued his vision for providing boys theological and university studies to prepare for a devout life by gathering 66 students in a renovated building on the old Finn Farm on the shores of Lake Mennith in St. Paul. That vision of the Archbishop was the beginning of what would become Saint Thomas Academy.

"Today, in its 134<sup>th</sup> year, Saint Thomas Academy has 605 students in grades 6 through 12. Each year, about 99% of its graduates go on to a college or university; the remaining 1% chose a two-year college, junior hockey, or other unique educational opportunities." Saint Thomas Academy is truly a great school.

## **Villa Maria Retreat Center in Frontenac**

The site where my dad decided to not become a priest but rather seek out a wife with whom he could share his life and raise a family, the Villa Maria Retreat Center, is as beautiful as it ever was.

It's no longer a retreat center, as the Ursuline sisters closed its doors in 2016 and sold it in 2018 to John Rupp and his firm, Commonwealth Properties. The Post Bulletin website reports that John bought the building and the 63-acre property for \$2.25 million and plans to turn it into a boutique hotel, a natural for weddings and special events.

That price is truly hard to imagine. My mom and dad's 1,200 square foot

condominium in the Scripps Ranch neighborhood of San Diego is valued at \$510,000. That means, John bought the giant Villa Maria Center building, which will become a hotel, along with 63 acres of some of the most beautiful land in the United States, for four and a half San Diego condominiums, which together would take up about 1/32 of an acre and house only 12 people. He got himself a great deal. Minnesota is part of what is called, “fly over” territory. Maybe that description isn’t so bad after all.

## **The Mailbox on the corner of Fairview Avenue and Jefferson Avenue**

It is nowhere to be found.

## **Frugality to the Max**

### **As promised, the absolute final listing...**

This listing is not for the faint of heart. It is presented here only for true believers in frugality.

All through the writing of this story, I kept asking myself, “Would readers want access to a more complete listing of my dad’s overly frugal behaviors?” Then it occurred to me, if the listing was left out, no one would get the full truth. But if it were to be included, those who did not want the list could skip it and shouldn’t feel bad for doing so, but for those who did want to read it... By all means. (In the end, these frugal behaviors didn’t make it into One Afternoon in Saint Paul.)

I’ve decided to put the list of behaviors into categories for the readers’ ease of use, especially those who want to memorize the list for their future use or need to come back to the list as a refresher.

### **In the Kitchen**

1. Wasting or discarding edible food is one of my dad’s most maddening pet peeves. So how does he deal with the fact most food safety manuals and courses say that cooked food should be stored in the fridge for no longer than three or four days?

Simple, he's a food safety denier. For my dad, throwing out useable leftovers is like donating a kidney to someone who would die in a day or two from an unrelated illness. To prove his point, my dad has gone 14 to 16 days eating the same leftovers and never once contracted food poisoning. He has done this hundreds of times, maybe thousands of times. I can still hear him inside my head saying to my mom, "Hey Fran, yesterday I finished off the leftover chicken soup from two weeks ago, and I feel great."

Here are his rules for quadrupling the recommended fridge shelf-life of leftovers: a. fully cook that first meal to a point where no bacteria is present at the end of preparation, b. have a great meal with what was cooked, c. get the leftovers back into the fridge as soon as possible, d. keep the fridge as close to 33 degrees as possible, e. keep the leftovers well sealed, f. use clean utensils when dishing out portions of the leftovers during the two-week period when using them, g. before using older leftovers, especially toward the end of the two weeks, check for any unusual odors, colors or clumping and discard only if any are present (this has never happened for my dad), h. heat the leftovers to a bacterial-killing temperature, keeping them at that temp for at least five minutes, i. let the leftovers stand until they reach a safe consumption temperature, and then, j. uncover and proudly serve.

Follow the above rules, and all will go well gastronomically – my dad promises.

Just think about it. We are all familiar with the refrigerated-entrees section at Costco, the one by the roasted chickens, where there are dozens of dishes (remember, they have never been frozen and have no preservatives) that have ingredients like meat, fish, cheese, sauces, and pasta. If you look carefully, you'll see that these dishes also have expiration dates weeks down the line. What's the difference between those refrigerated meals and my dad's? I guess they might be the same after all. Isn't it bizarre how millions of Costco shoppers willingly set aside the four-day safety rule just because of a date stamped on a package? My dad is wise to their game. It's likely that Kent's-rule users will never again need to toss leftovers. Join the resistance!

Recently my mom was in Minnesota visiting her sister, Linda, to help while her husband, Rich, was in the hospital having a heart transplant. While she was away my

dad made a typically large batch of chicken noodle soup, enough to feed about 25 people. As is customary, he consumed the soup for breakfast and dinner for about two weeks – lunch doesn't count as it's normally only a cracker or two. This drove my brother, who is currently living with my mom and dad, crazy. He's "all about" diversity in meals. My dad has no problem with repetitious ingestion, especially when the batch of soup could have been the best he's ever made. Think of what he saved in food costs during that two-week period.

2. The "cutting-green-peppers" rule falls into a subsection of rule one, never waste. This rule is close to my dad's heart, as he has argued its validity with Fran on numerous occasions. She, however, refuses to adopt the rule and flaunts it purposefully every time she cooks a dish that contains bell peppers.

In fact, it's almost weekly that my dad is forced to witness the following horror. Fran holds a pepper by the stem, cuts straight down on the inside of each of the four bulbous pepper sides, saving them, and then tosses much of the useable pepper around the stem and a sizeable portion of the bottom right into the trash. My dad says that at least 15 to 20% of the usable pepper parts are sent to the bin needlessly. This is painful to watch.

Here's how my dad does it, obviously following the rule.

Turn the pepper on its side, cut straight down about one half inch below where the stem connects with the fleshy part of the pepper. Now you will have two pieces: the body and the top with stem attached. Grab the body, hold it over the trash receptacle, reach into the interior of the body with the thumb and the three fingers nearest the thumb, grab the innards with those digits, twist, pull the guts out, drop them into the trash, and shake the empty body to dislodge any seeds lingering inside. The ready pepper body can then be cut in numerous ways which I'm sure you can figure out. My dad's favorite is returning the body to its side and slicing off thin rings of various sizes, right down to the bottom which ends up looking like a little button. In our house, it's customary to eat the button right away, remembering that Fran would have tossed it anyway.

Return to the cutting board, grab the top, and yank on the stem. It's more than

likely to pop right off, leaving the entire upper portion of the pepper top ready for further cutting. In the trash will be found ONLY the stem and the pulp with seeds, nothing more. This rule has probably never saved money, but it does eliminate wasting food, a good in and of itself. If only my mom could envision how happy it would make my dad if she were to adopt the method. Silly, isn't it? But true.

3. The following is another simple kitchen rule, but one not easily followed.

When preparing any dinner, use sufficient ingredients so that the same exact meal can be had again two days later. Skipping one day in between meals makes it easier for those who just can't stomach eating the same dinner two days in a row. It also works with those who refuse to abandon the 2-to-4-day leftover food storage limit. My dad is not sure why this saves so much money, but his guess is that the practice, if used for every single meal during a year, which cuts total meal prep almost in half, somehow reduces the annual food cost about 15%. The USDA Thrifty Food Plan indicates that a typical family of four (two parents and two older children) should spend about \$700 per month. That's a total of \$8,400 per year. The method would save that family \$1,260. Not bad, plus, the prep time for the second meal is reduced to a fraction of that expended preparing the original meal. And as we all know, time is money.

Obviously, this rule can be dispensed with by my dad when cooking with Fran out of town, as he'll make enough for 14 consecutive days or more.

## **On the Tennis Court**

I can say with confidence that the savings my dad has obtained over the years in this category have provided him with the greatest satisfaction. First, tennis is one of his true loves, close to that of his wife, children and grandchildren. He plays singles for two hours, six to seven days a week. He has often played for 14 to 16 days in a row, conservatively averaging more than 550 hours of play per year. There are six items in this section: shoes (2 behaviors), strings, overwraps, balls, and hot water.

1. If only you could see my mom and dad's clothes closet. Hidden behind some of my mom's dresses and blouses is a stack of shoe boxes that is more than four feet

tall, ten boxes in all, filled with Fila tennis shoes. All ten boxes were procured over a two-year period for only \$200. That's \$20 a pair. Normally the stack would have cost more than \$600. Here's how this system worked.

Hans, one of his regular "worthy" opponents, a German native, saved and gave to my dad almost all of the ten-dollars-off-a-purchase-of-thirty-dollars' coupons he received from Big Five Sporting Goods in the monthly mailer packet that everyone receives on a regular basis. Plus, almost every weekend, the good quality Fila Novella or Ravello tennis shoes were reduced in price from \$59 to \$29. When this would occur, my dad would call the store to make sure they had at least one pair of the on-sale shoes in stock that was his size, 11.5 inches, and had that pair set aside. The next day would visit the store, pull out the \$10-off coupon, and pay only 20 dollars for that pair of shoes.

He swears that these Fila tennis shoes are of similar quality to the Nike or Adidas \$100 tennis shoes. In his mind, then, the closet has shoes for the foreseeable future that could be valued at \$1,000. But it gets even better.

2. Normally a good pair of genuine tennis shoes played on with force for 12 to 14 hours per week will last about two to three months if that. The soles, even though they are made of extra hard rubber and are of good quality, generally wear early in two locations, around the toe (this is from serving and dragging the toe when moving forward) and at the back of the heel (this is from slamming down the heel when running for side shots). The rest of the shoe might be quite unworn and very usable, but with the hard parts of the sole worn away and the soft springy part exposed and beginning to wear, the shoes should be discarded within a couple of weeks.

Like the Plymouth station wagon with rusted doors, my dad invented a solution to the tennis shoe sole-wearing problem. As soon as the hard part of the sole was worn through and the soft part above the sole began to show, my dad would start reinforcing the worn areas with Gorilla Tape. It's important to know that only Gorilla Tape has enough thickness, strength, and adhesiveness to stay put and protect the two parts of the sole needing coverage. Two layers of tape strips would be placed on the affected areas. Those strips needed to be replaced, or rather recovered,

about every two weeks due to additional wear that, again, exposed the soft part of the sole. It's amazing how well this method works. So instead of a pair of tennis shoes lasting three months, Gorilla-repair allows each pair to be worn for up to a year. That's four times the normal wear period. According to my dad, the ten pairs of shoes tucked away in their closet will last ten years, until he is 76 or 77 years old. What excites him most is that because of the quadrupled extended wear period, the Fila tennis shoes can now be valued at \$4,000. From a \$200 expense to a \$4,000 value... Truly amazing, in his mind.

3. My dad uses 16-gauge strings on his tennis racquets, which last about twice as long as 17-gauge strings. This practice cuts restringing visits in half and the costs along with it.

4. Overwraps or, what my dad calls overgrips, are similar to an original grip found on any tennis racquet, but they are designed to be wrapped over the original grip, thus the use of the term "over" in the name. Overgrips protect the original grip from wear and deterioration and only cost about a dollar each. The original grips are comparatively much more expensive. It's a natural that my dad would use overgrips, but what makes him unusual is that he discovered that the back side of the grip, at least the blue kind, is identical to the side that is first exposed to pressure and sweat after it is placed on the handle. So, when the overgrip is visibly worn out on the outside, instead of tossing it, he flips it over and wraps the used side of the overgrip on the inside and the non-used side on the outside. The flipped side of the overgrip looks like new but doesn't last quite as long as the original side, because invisible microscopic damage has occurred throughout the overgrip. But given the unused side of the overgrip provides at least half the time the first side of the overgrip did, there is an overall savings of 25 cents per grip, and since these overgrips last for about about two weeks, and with there being 26 weeks in a year, he saves \$6.50 per year. That means, by the time he has used the last pair of shoes from the closet, he will have saved \$65 on overgrips.

5. Most tennis players will play with new balls for a couple of outings. That's four hours of play in total, which is about four or five sets. Good Pro-Pen tennis balls cost about \$3.65 per can of three balls and are purchased in cases of 24 cans. There are purists out there who require new balls every time they play, but my dad is not

impressed, and when he does play them, he normally asks that they provide the balls.

These purists think my dad is a hack when they hear about how he handles tennis balls. In 2018, he discovered a great product developed and manufactured in New Zealand called Pressure Ball. It's a tube made of pliable two-layer plastic with a wide opening on one end and a tire valve on the other. Up to eight balls (he uses six at a time) are inserted through the open end which is then sealed by bending the plastic over a small five-inch aluminum shaft and then sliding another five-inch shaft over the plastic on the smaller shaft. The tube is then inflated with a bicycle-tire pump through the tire valve on the other side. The tube can withstand pressure up to 20 PSI. The great thing about 20 PSI is that unopened new cans of tennis balls are kept at 14 PSI, so the extra pressure, six PSI, can actually re-inflate used balls. Using the Pressure Ball device, he routinely plays on a set of six balls for 20 sets. That's ten whole matches, and the balls are as hard and bouncy at the end of the 20 sets as they were fresh out of the can. His use-your-tennis-balls-to-the-maximum rule states, "Use the perfectly pressurized Pressure-Ball balls until the lettering on the surface of the balls is about to disappear." For my dad, that case of 24 Pro-Penn tennis ball cans can hold up for 120 matches. The purists only get 24 matches out of the same case. That's four months of use for Kent versus about one month of use for the purist. At \$3.65 per can, the Purists is spending \$87 per month and my dad is spending \$21 per month, saving him \$792 per year. Those ounces have returned, once again.

He even went so far as to ask Collin, one of the pros at my dad's club, to assess six balls at the end of a 20-set pounding. Collin rated them as comparable to new balls out of the can that have been used for two to three sets, but even with a pro's positive assessment, the purists will have nothing to do with my dad's balls.

6. The vast majority of those who use the tennis/swim/exercise amenities of the club never use the shower facilities after they have finished. My dad doesn't understand why? Perhaps these people are more comfortable showering in their own homes. My dad is one of the few who stays behind to shower, every time he plays tennis. I would bet that he showers at home maybe twice a month, if that. He figures that since he is already paying for the hot water used at the club through his

membership dues, why would he or anyone pay for the same thing twice? I'm sure this makes sense to "the frugal."

## **Birthdays and Holidays...**

There are only two on the list in this category, wrapping paper and greeting cards.

1. Like the rule on food storage bags described early in the story, this one states, never pay for wrapping paper. Look around and you'll find that free wrapping paper for birthdays and Christmas is everywhere. My dad has used: cut up paper and plastic grocery bags, colored sections of the newspaper (use black and white only when there are no colored sections), expensive wrapping paper discarded by others at birthday and Christmas gatherings (scoop it up before it's tainted in the garbage) and cloth cut from discarded clothing, which can be really impressive, especially if there are no holes in what's used. The only exception for purchasing wrapping paper is from children in the neighborhood selling the paper as part of a fundraiser, especially for band and athletic activities.

2. Now, greeting cards might be the most overpriced items ever sold in the history of human existence. I mean that. Just the other day in the CVS greeting-card section, I saw a simple paper and ink card that had a price on the back of 4 Dollars and 89 Cents. My God... The material cost for that card was likely a tiny fraction of a penny, and a third grader could have come up with the well wishes it contained. It baffles me as to who would allow him or herself to be gouged like that for a piece of bent card stock? Perhaps those folks buying the cards are in a hypnotic trance brought on by the store's music, its signage throughout, and the long isles. No rational person could act in such a manner. After that experience, he was in line at a cash register at CVS, and the woman in front of him paid more than \$9.00 for a greeting card. Has the world gone crazy?

The solution is homemade cards. My dad finds that using photos from the prior year for both birthday and Christmas cards will bring tears to the eyes of parents and laughter from children. What store-bought greeting card ever elicited that kind of response? The photos are transferred from phone to computer, added to the

developing card in Microsoft Word, surrounded by funny or touching comments and printed. Voila! Kids can also be corralled into making all sorts of hand-made cards for the elderly, and they will love them. Child labor is acceptable here if the cards are not sold but given.

A nod to Trader Joes is warranted here, as their greeting cards are only 99 Cents. Still overpriced, yes, but a dollar these days doesn't even buy a cup of coffee at Starbucks down the block from TJ's. Almost acceptable.

### **Pants Pocket Protectors...**

The keys on my dad's unusually large key ring would regularly and prematurely rip through the material of his pants pockets, which is unnecessarily thin in most pants. In many instances, it's like pushing a finger through cookie dough. And we all know that once the pockets in a pair of men's pants are non-functional, the pants are worthless. Isn't that why men wear clothes in the first place, to carry things without having to use purses, which they would lose on a regular basis? His solution here was very similar to that of the Plymouth rusted doors and the sole-worn tennis shoes - internal pocket protectors made from materials that just happened to be on his dresser. He took one sheet of 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper, folded it together twice, bringing the final folded paper to a quarter of its size, placed Gorilla tape all around the four-layer paper (always around the sides as well). He then folded that flat device in half and placed it in the bottom half of the pocket that would hold the keys. These newly protected key pockets with their thin fabric would now outlast the pants themselves. Since the invention, 20 years ago, he has never tossed pants due to holes in the pockets. He's an on-the-spot problem solver.

### **On the Road**

This area is quite simple with two main areas.

1. He would say, do your own oil changes and break jobs. With YouTube's help, these are a piece of cake. Use fully synthetic oil and super duty oil filters. They might cost a bit more but allow for much longer oil-change intervals. You'll save hundreds.

2. Drive smoothly to save on fuel and brake pads. It's so easy. On city streets, the rule is never go above 2,000 RPMs when accelerating. On a freeway entry ramp, 3,000 RPMs are sometimes permitted. On the flip side, having reached cruising speed, keep your eyes focused down the road and let off the accelerator early to slow down instead of zooming up to a stop and slamming on the breaks. What my poor dad experiences when Fran is at the wheel is as painful as seeing good green pepper tossed into the garbage. WASTE! He is forced to witness the tachometer reach 4,000 RPMs when she takes off from a stop, and that's on city streets. To him it feels like being on an Apollo lift off, and he visualizes the gasoline being sucked through the fuel pump at supersonic speed. And then, when he knows there is a stop ahead, he holds on to something inside the SUV interior to brace for the abrupt and immediate stop ahead. When Fran drives, he swears he can smell the odor of smoking brake pads, just like being behind a 16-wheeler on the way down from a steep mountain top.

Would he ever say anything to Fran about how wastefully she drives? Of course not. He values his life. As in the kitchen, so it is on the road. My mom does not take kindly to any sort of advice which she sees it as a correction or involving the need to change.

### **In the Condo**

1. About eight years ago, their condominium furnace stopped functioning, and they, or should I say he, has no plans to have it repaired. In San Diego, not having central heat isn't that big a deal. The coldest it gets in the dead of winter is maybe 35 or 36 degrees at night, and it always climbs back into the very high 50s, the 60s, or even the 70s by day. Most mornings the condo thermostat will show a temperature of between 62 degrees and 65 degrees. My mom simply turns on the oven which is set to 350 degrees, and this warms up the condo a couple of degrees. But remember, they were from northern Minnesota. My dad has never calculated the savings on this practice.

2. LED lights are everywhere in the condo.

3. My dad would admit that he hates being overly warm more than loves saving money, so air conditioning, until his recent retirement, was one area where he would splurge, i.e., waste money. For 21 years, when air conditioning was used during summer hot spells in San Diego, he kept the thermostat at 70 degrees and sometimes 69 at night. The California Energy Department recommends that the thermostat be set at 78 degrees when using air conditioning and repeats that message through radio and television ads all summer long. Monotonous. I can't tell you how many times I heard my dad say, after the airing of one of those commercials, "Why use the A/C at all if you're going to set the thermostat at a this-must-be-hell setting?" Miraculously, this splurging behavior changed when he retired (you should know that the family income was reduced by 25%). Somehow, he has gotten used to indoor temperatures of 76 to 78 degrees. He must have learned that it wouldn't kill him. During all those splurging summers, the A/C was run for weeks and weeks at a time. In the summer of 2019, the first full summer in retirement, he says that they only used A/C on six days, a total flip-flop on his part. He'll proudly be saving about \$800 every summer from here on in. To be transparent, he will run a box fan on the high setting that is pointed directly at him when it's above 75 degrees indoors, but to his credit (literally), it costs about a penny an hour to run that fan. He did some research and discovered that the box fan's three settings are: the high is 77 Watts, the medium is 65 Watts, and the low is 56 Watts.

## **The Finale -**

### **The Whitey Tightys...**

The whitey tightys are no more. Without first checking with my dad, my mom tossed the last handful of gray undies a few months ago. Only my dad could get upset, although mildly so, about something so trivial and grieve over missing underwear, but he never got to say a proper goodbye. I think those 30-year-old undergarments in a strange way represented his life of frugality.

In the end, however, justice prevailed for my dad. A week or so after the undies had been tossed, while he was looking for three or four sticks of Old Spice Fresh-

Fragrance Deodorant that he had hidden from my brother, Joe, so that he wouldn't "borrow" any additional sticks, my dad found a bulging grocery carry bag in an IKEA shelf pullout bin. In the bag were ten pairs of almost-like-new white underwear. Kent had forgotten that his brother, John, had shipped the underwear to him four or five years ago – a donation John made after losing more than 120 pounds. Kent firmly believes that John has made up for not giving Kent a family discount on the phony draft card numerous times over the past few years.

Only Kent would gladly accept someone else's used white underwear, but he would, in his defense, tell us all that the underwear had been washed in hot water and dried on high heat. My dad...