

MISC EVENTS

By JOHN D. BOENKE

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John D. Boenke was born in 1926 in Rossford, Ohio and grew up during the Great Depression. He served in the U. S. Army in 1946 - 47 in the Medical Corps. In 1951 he received a degree of Bachelor of Science in Physics from the University of Michigan. After college, Mr. Boenke worked in research and engineering for the General Electric Company. Later he was the Manager of an engineering test laboratory for Lau Blower Company, then Chief Engineer for Halsey Taylor Water Cooler Corp. and Senior Design Engineer for The Werner Ladder Company. Before retiring in 1989, Mr. Boenke also owned and operated a small motel in Ashtabula, Ohio.

Since retiring, Mr. Boenke has been interested in reading and studying in the areas of Cosmology, Theoretical Physics and Philosophy. In addition, he has an interest in the origins of religions. He has privately published several short stories and some poetry.

Lightning Strike May 6th, 1999

As we were standing in the kitchen during a storm, there was a great flash of light, and in glancing out the window I saw bits of what later proved to be tree bark flying across the back yard. One of our trees had been hit by lightning. It was a rather large Tulip (White Poplar) tree about 80 feet tall and 21 inches in diameter located only about thirty feet off the corner of the house. Looking at it later, it appeared to have burst apart half way up and had sagged. After being hit it still stood until the following morning when, lying in bed, I heard it fall in a strong wind. The tree broke roughly in two with the lower half propped up on the upper half.

The tree itself did not damage anything major since there was room for it to fall, but it broke branches on two other trees in toppling over. The lightning also destroyed the underground wire to the yard light following it to the outside electrical outlet box which it destroyed. It then damaged the inside electrical outlet box immediately on the other side of the wall. The electrical surge was cut off by my whole house surge protector but not until it passed through the line to the main box. Because of this it destroyed two individual smaller surge protectors along the way and destroyed a telephone and damaged a word processor.

I repaired the electrical parts of the damage and bought a new phone (old one not worth fixing) and finally found someone to fix the word processor which was sent away and has been returned. In replacing the underground wire, I put it in metal conduit which should insure the same kind of damage will not happen again.

The tree was taken down and hauled away which made an all day job for my tree guy, and after several years the stump rotted out. This was a rather exciting experience which I did not need and would have preferred to do without, but it was also educational. I learned in the process that White Poplar trees are “wet” trees, that is, they have lots of sap. This makes them good conductors, and they are thus vulnerable to being the victims of lightning strikes which draws the lightning away from other potential targets. This makes them good lightning rods to protect other more important structures. There are other such trees notably the Moraine Locust, which unfortunately is also famous for its large vicious thorns. I learned about them the hard way many years ago by picking up a rather substantial thorn in a tractor tire resulting in an expensive fix.

The expenditures from the lightning damage were as follows:

Tree down and clean up debris	\$500.00
Word Processor repair	148.40
Word Processor Shipping	14.50
Cordless telephone	52.21
Two new surge protectors	20.88
Electrical outlets and parts	9.08
Wire and parts	21.39
Total	\$766.46

I was carrying insurance with a \$250 deductible so I was reimbursed for the rest, but I would rather have skipped the whole event.

This incident was recalled some years later after we had moved into Vinton where we had many nearby neighbors. In the country whenever a storm came up, we would turn off computers and televisions since we were wary of being hit by lightning and destroying the equipment. In town, we did not have as great a concern, as so many other houses were around that it seemed lightning strikes were more readily dissipated and we were relatively more safe from damage. It seemed everyone was less concerned with having the television on during rain storms. Whether this is true or not I am not sure, but at least we have not have any trouble.

My Verizon Education

Several weeks ago my computer decided it was time to make my life difficult. The Phone modem suddenly quit. In an arbitrary way, electronic devices periodically and suddenly turn on me. When trying to sign on, the modem would not connect to the phone line and instead of the bee boo bop bee bee boo boo it usually did, it made a disgusting noise at me. I replied in kind but it did no good. I was suddenly bereft of contact with the outside world.

About the same time it was rumored in the neighborhood that a new savior named Mr. Verizon had appeared and was bringing to our area glad tidings and good news to all who struggled to be in contact with their friends and family. This new religion is called DSL. Being of a trusting nature, I contacted Mr. Verizon and was sold on the idea of exchanging our dark ages 40 thousand Hz for a new and improved 768 thousand Hz. This procedure consisted of talking to an automated voice through many options until I finally reached a real person. At least, I think it was a real person, either that or she was a very sophisticated robot.

Huzzah! We were to be part of the real world and fly through the airwaves. But, it seemed we had to wait a week or so to make sure “everything was ok” while they checked the lines. By e-mail we were informed that the 21 st was V-Day. In the interim, I acquired Ethernet cable and outlets and connectors and strung a line upstairs to Mary’s computer so that she could share in this salvation. I rearranged my office to reduce this distance to the minimum. (And threw out junk in the process). In the mail we received instructions, a modem, cable and phone blockers which were duly installed according to the skimpy instructions in two languages.

On the appointed day, I went to work. I struggled mightily facing rejection after rejection and finagled and persisted with only modest success. Only a partial connection was achieved. That evening in a rather black mood, I received an automated message from Mr. Verizon wherein an evidently beautiful young lady (Ms. Verizon) with a sprightly voice happily informed me my sign on date would be the 24 th and I should not try to install anything before then or I would go to hell. She evidently did not hear me replying to her with my assessment of the situation and my opinions on the machinations of Mr. Verizon and herself. She hung up when she was finished talking without answering my remarks. (If you are getting tired of reading this you can skip to the last paragraph if you wish).

With renewed impatience I awaited the fatal day determined to wait until the day after it to avoid all catastrophic consequences. Lo! And even Behold! On the morning of the 24 th Ms. Verizon called again and said in her most musical way that all was in readiness awaiting my pleasure, so my patience resolve went out the window. and I went to work again.

This time the modest success went a bit farther. I was able to sign on and even got to VERIZON CENTRAL with links to AOL (as was promised in the literature).

The problem was that whenever I tried to do anything, a little window opened that said SECURITY ALERT!

It said there was a not yet an approved certificate, although the three conditions listed in the window were OK. I was given the options of whether to proceed anyway to click YES, NO, or CERTIFICATE. I clicked YES, and the window came right back. As many times as I clicked YES it returned, and I could not proceed. I tried clicking NO and it disappeared but only for two or three seconds before popping up happily beaming and re-proclaiming its message. Upon clicking CERTIFICATE I was led through a procedure and accepted the certificate. Proceeding on, I tried to do things again, and to my dismay the little window kept coming back. I repeated the whole procedure several times but could not advance to GO nor collect my reward.

Desperation set in and I determined to call the “Verizon help line.” Again after many automated steps I reached a real person. I think he was in India or some where like that. I know it was far away as his English was distorted by the intervening phone lines, and I had trouble understanding him. He also spoke rapidly and I had to slow him down at times.

After an hour and a half and trying many things including turning off my firewall and virus protection, the situation did not change. I could not use the internet, and the little voice could not advise me as to how to proceed. He suggested to me that they would send a technician the following day (for free). But he said I should also contact HP (I have a HP computer). He transferred me to the Hp line and after going through more automatic sorting I was sent to Out-Of-Warranty-Repairs. I realized we were talking money. Being very weary, I hung up.

The next day Mr. Verizon Technician showed up in a big bucket truck. He was nice enough and said we had an old entrance device from the middle ages which might be the trouble. He replaced the old one which he called a “half ringer” with new twenty first century one. His line checking showed everything was hunky dory. He knew nothing about the procedural problems, and could not help me there, but he knew many times people had trouble with AOL on the Verizon system.

Since then my experience is that I can partially use the system. The little SECURITY ALERT box pops up here and there, stopping my progress. I discovered that in the procedures of the previous day my firewall had been wiped out. I cleaned up some other files on the computer and re-installed the AOL Safety and Security and I feel better about it again. But I am still prevented from going to mail or to weather information with or without the firewall. I did get a little pop up that said a download was ready, but whenever I click “Download” it says it can’t do it and I should try again later. This seems to be the story of my life.

So the upshot is I am discouraged with Mr. Verizon and have canceled him. I will get a new phone modem in my HP, and we will continue using AOL. Spring is coming, and tomorrow the Sun will shine. Although AOL dialup is not the best, it is adequate for all we need. It has some other redeeming fringe benefits also. Mary agrees to this solution, I will soon be back in business, as usual.

ADDENDUM: The first computer repair place I called was a nice lady who asked whether the phone line went through a surge protector. Before rearranging the office it had, so I naturally said “yes”. She suggested I try eliminating that first. I did, It worked. I should have known, as I have had bad surge protectors before. Got a new one. Back in business.

THE END

WHAT I DID ON MY VACATION - 2005

1. Fixed the flower boot and installed flowers.
2. Repaired, painted and remounted the BOENKE sign.
3. Went to a movie and saw MADAGASCAR.
4. Went to church, but not the picnic, many asked about you.
5. Took phone messages.
6. Got a replacement plate for our white corelle ware.
7. Sorted mail, and paid bills.
8. Used your Kroger card to get 10 cents off gas.
9. Had Mark clear a space for the grill which was out of the Sun
10. Cleaned grill, installed blocks, and repositioned it in the shade.
11. Went to Master Gardener talk.
12. Picked beets and cooked them for supper.
13. Kept moving Owl around to scare off little birds.
14. Had Mark move more Forsythia to clear in back and improve the driveway.
15. Used food I found in the refrigerator, ham, yam, salmon, etc.
16. Designed and built a device to turn wood for plates.
17. Installed an outlet by the lamp post.
18. Built a housing for the yard timer outside, (related to 17).
19. Took things to the jumble sale and helped sort for a while.
20. Had a banana split on Father's Day.
21. Filled several orders.
22. Worked on writing instructions for doing taxes.
23. Picked Blueberries.
24. Got my tooth fixed.
25. Washed dishes and cleaned house.
26. Played solitaire.
27. Took out rubbish and recyclables.
28. Did a cross word puzzle without the diagram.
29. Found all my stuff on Father's Day.

MY VACATION 2006

June 6 Tues

Said goodbye to Mary and Fran. Mark Simmons did the grass. I weeded and fertilized the garden. Moved TV to summer location. Beef sandwich and corn for dinner. Went to club meeting. Brian agreed to be Pres. another year, as no one else would do it. You were thanked for raising the auction money. Signed up for a painting day. Afterward Brian dropped off the bag of tablecloths which we evidently left at the club after the auction.

June 7 Wed

Did errands, and got discount gas at Kroger. Cleaned office. Worked on trellis. Bessie called for you to ask about election, I told what I knew about the candidates. Rosalie Sutherland called to invite us to a doings on the 17th. I declined gracefully as you would not be here. Chili for dinner.

June 8 Thurs

Finished putting up supports on the trellis between rains. Shared area with brown box turtle who was trying to nap. Salmon for dinner. Watched TV

June 9 Fri.

Checked car tires, planted ivy, had nap, Paid bills. Pork chop, potatoes and corn for dinner. Discovered sandwiches and finger food in downstairs refrigerator. Watched TV PBS

June 10 Sat.

Hoed Garden, watered plants inside and out. Box turtle still hanging around, so I gave it a piece of meat. Rubbish, P.O., Mower gas, Did laundry, table cloth (got the spot out), napkins and clothes. Watched part of a ball game. Had beef sandwich, broccoli, and veggies for dinner. No good TV so I read.

June 11 Sun.

Raining, not going to church picnic. Put parts of pie pans on the wires and supports of the garden to discourage birds and small animals from eating on the produce. Remounted the owl. Weather turned better, but stayed home anyway. Did the sheets and made the beds. Watched some of the Sunday morning TV. Spied my pet turtle in the garden. Had chili, broccoli, and peas (I opened a can) for dinner. No more to eat till after my doctor's appointment tomorrow

June 12 Mon.

Medical Appointment was fine. Dr. Whitney is a pleasant younger doctor. Not as thorough as Marc, but willing to talk and explain. Will send a report. Had pizza afterwards and went to grocery. Rainy day did not have to water plants. Had a nap and did desk work. Had Pork chop, broccoli, Peas, and frozen yogurt.

June 13 Tues.

Waffles for breakfast hotdog for lunch. Had Pella window here to look at installation and measure. Went out to pay bills (taxes) and other errands. Voted for Miller. Had nap. Chili for dinner with broccoli and peas. Watched TV till the late news, Jim Webb won. Ah well!!

June 14 Wed.

Back to oatmeal for breakfast and lunch. Did some research on web in morning. Dull day due to hurricane clouds. Worked on making the little sofa-side end table higher. Started doing a little writing, but not too enthused. Had a frozen dinner in the evening. Beef and noodles and carrots and beans. Mediocre. Something I evidently got a while ago

June 15 Thurs.

Went to get trailer hitch installed (by appointment). Turns out they didn't have the right hitch there, Will try again next Tuesday. Big disappointments at Lowes and Home Depot for getting windows installed. Will try other avenues. Did other errands and shopping. Mexican Pizza for lunch.. Got you message and will call. Tried more writing. Must call Mark for yard again. Had last pork chop, potatoes and peas. Went to a movie you wouldn't like called "Cars" It was a pixar cartoon and mostly dumb, but it had a good message and many funny parts.

June 16 Fri

You called. Looking forward to Thursday. Called Mark Simmons, and he will do grass Wednesday. Bad e-mail from Mark Boenke, sad. Replanted ivy by water barrels. Pella delivered their preliminary estimate on windows, We will talk with Anderson when you return. Just arranged driveway topping for Monday. Hope it works, although possibility of rain. Dinner was baked fish strips, peas. Spanish rice, and wilted cucumber salad. Dessert was strawberries and the last of the frozen yogurt.

June 17 Sat

Did sheets and other wash and made bed. Watered plants, goofed off, and did a little writing. Got a nice card from A&B. Dinner was sauteed onions, sausage, broccoli, and cherry pie - fresh baked. Watched dumb British programs and laughed a lot.

June 18 Sun

Cherry pie for breakfast (not any worse than a Danish! So there!) Box turtle gone this morning. Must be looking for greener grass. Darn, I was going to get some pet food today also. Not going to church. Staying home to answer telephone! J Went out to Chinese restaurant, and watched TV in the evening found message on phone from Mark.

June 19 Mon

Stayed home all day waiting for drive recoat person. He called at 5:30 PM claiming he had had truck problems again. We rescheduled for Wednesday after grass. Dinner, Spanish rice and broccoli.

June 20 Tues

Went to U-Haul and was successful in having the trailer hitch put on. Did errands and started car wiring for the trailer. Had fish, Spanish rice and broccoli for dinner

June 21 Wed.

Very busy day. Mark came in the morning and did grass and other trimming. Then the driveway coating people finally showed up and did the drive Relieved to get it done but we are not supposed to drive on it for 48 hours. Have cheese sandwich, green beans for supper.

June 22 Thurs

Went out on errands. And bought a new thermostat. Had trouble with computer and security programs.

June 23 Fri

June 24 Sat

June 25 Sun

June 26 Mon

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December 20, 2006 Home Alone

Took Mary to the airport, and I waited to see her get on the plane and leave. All OK. Went out to Dunkin Donut and then home. Spent morning re-hanging pictures and drapes and admiring our new windows. Lunch and supper were refrigerator leftovers to clean it out. Cleaned up some glass left under windows outside and blew away leaves from driveway discovering some more glass and a nail which I disposed of to avoid picking it up in a tire. Afternoon did errands PO, bank and grocery. Evening watched news and Christmas programs

December 21

Leisurely shower and breakfast. Went to Downtown library to pick up books which were in, got more groceries and Arby's for lunch. Home and goofed off. A dreary day so I had a short nap. Went down to get the mail (Lots), and had a long conversation with the gas man who was just arriving to deliver gas. He grew up on the East side of Toledo so we reminisced. Started re-fitting inside window shelves until supper which was stuffed pepper and miscellaneous plus ice cream. No good TV so I read till bed time.

December 22

Got up early and made great progress on the re-fitting of the window shelves. They are now ready for re-paining and mounting. Cleaned up and showered, did desk work and got ready to have lunch with Walt and Dot Boggess for lunch. It is a very rainy day. Lunch was Spaghetti and we looked at Walt's Pictures afterwards. Got a few groceries on the way home. Everywhere is crowded and a good time to stay home. Had rice, gravy and vegetables for supper, watched TV and stayed up late to watch Numb3rs, Not impressed.

December 23

Spent morning on laundry and remaking bed, Did a little with shelves. Now ready for painting. Sunny warm day. Lunch was an open faced soy hamburger with mustard pickle and garlic, Fried potatoes (Frozen, not so great) radishes and beer and watching the birds. Made a big salad for supper, watched British comedies, read and to bed.

December 24

Up early did some more reading. Have been having a lot of heartburn and decided to stop taking the Zocor. Sawed outside kitchen window shelf. Oak, hard to cut. Painted other window shelves. Goofed off. Shopped Kroger at West Lake for bananas and stuff. Nice store should go there more often. Watched TV

December 25

Rainy and cool. No heartburn slept very well. Opened presents and started eating. Spent morning planning and fixing dinner. Mary called and I talked with most everyone. Sunny in Spain. Christmas Dinner consisted of turkey and mashed potatoes and gravy, shredded carrot salad, beets, green beans baked with almond slices and mushroom soup topped with fried onions, A glass of Vidal Blanc and appetizers of fruit cake and eggnog. Eaten while watching Nutcracker ballet followed later by nap and freshly baked mince pie. Discovered a football game on and watched until news time, Then Mormon choir and bed,

December 26

Going on a diet. Still no heartburn and decided to permanently stop Zocor. Feel fine. Did desk stuff and got ready to do errands. Not raining, but dull. Went to post office and Kinko's to copy stuff. Had a taco. Home, nap, writing. Simple supper and watched TV about a fellow who built a submarine with a large view plastic window

December 27

Slept late, Did exercises and had a casual shower. Doing desk work. Simple lunch and Supper. Watched TV news and tributes to Gerald Ford who died last night.

December 28

Finished cereal and made shopping list. Cleaned around the house. After lunch did errands and got gas at Valley View Krogers at 201.9 with my .10 cent discount. Went to see Casino Royale, new James Bond thing. Sorry I did. Too much violence and destruction depicted. Home again and light supper. Diet is working a little.

December 29

Paid bills and returned Haband watch. Called about Mom's prescriptions and will pick up tomorrow. Goofed off, took a nap, Wrapped Mary's Christmas gifts, watched TV.

December 30

Did laundry, picked up prescriptions, did other errands had a taco. Cleaned house and finished making bed. Did some house cleaning. Watched crazy British programs.

December 31

Did some writing. Stayed home from church, and went to Lake, Chopsticks for lunch. Got bananas on the way home. Missed Mary's phone call by 10 minutes. Watched football, Stayed up for New Years. Watched some of Garrison Keiler special and saw ball drop in Times Square. Played Auld Lang Syne on the doorbell several times.

January 1

Slept late. Went for a ride and got groceries starting new month on Kroger card. Home and cleaning files and office work. Watched TV and got to bed early..

January 2, 2007

Cleaned up garage, Went to Post Office to mail stuff. Closed because of Ford funeral, no mail today. Took rubbish and recycled and returned library books. Had a Mexican pizza for lunch and turkey and stuffing for supper. Watched part of Fiesta bowl and did some writing.

January 3

Traveled to Radford to take old gun to Ken Farmer for sale. Did grocery shopping. Had call from Mary and A and B. Watched a little football did desk work and to bed.

January 4

Up early, made Chili, cleaned desk, checked on the flight, on time and planned to be at the airport at 3:00 PM. Did email and goofed off until pick up time.

Thanksgiving 2009 in Roanoke

The day began early as usual, and started with a nice warm shower. Being then fully awake, I retrieved the newspaper from the paper box by the road. It was stuffed with advertising, but the comics and other essential parts were there. Breakfast consisted of a home made pancake with Vermont Maple Syrup (just one to conserve appetite) and pills. Morning was spent between the Macy parade and finalizing the book. After completion, CD copies of *Intelligent: But Not Smart Enough* were made to preserve it for posterity. In the next several weeks I will produce masters and publish a few copies of the book. Keep watching your mail box.

Cheese and crackers and hard Lemonade (I could not find hard cider) were enjoyed around noon as the news of the day came on. This was topped off with a couple of chocolates. I do not remember when I had a box of chocolates all to myself, so I got one the other day and have been nibbling as necessary.

Preparations for THE MEAL were started at 1:00 PM. I had procured a Marie Callender's frozen turkey dinner to prepare. It consisted of Turkey Breast, Stuffing, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, and Green Beans and Cranberries. This was locally augmented with Candied Yams, Pickled Beets and a bit more home made stuffing. Salad was not necessary as I had some yesterday. This all came together gloriously about 2:00 PM and was seriously engaged until the battle was won. Sitting in the kitchen and eating and watching a football game which had just happened to come on at that time made it all a very enjoyable experience. A respectable time later I made a cup of coffee and took my piece of pumpkin pie out of the cooling oven. It was just right although it was without topping. My fault, topping had been on the list but somehow did not get purchased.

During this time various phone calls arrived which vindicated my decision to stay at home to be available for fielding these communications. Thank you all for the pleasant chats. My sister, Gertie, called later in the day, and she filled me in on the doings in San Antonio. All is well. She will be 90 next May. Daisy will be 92.

In the evening the plan had been to have a little chicken noodle soup with which to taper off on the eating for the day, but when the time came The decision was revisited and amended to just skip eating altogether. Certainly a wise decision. I will soon be going to bed happily and I hope the day all of you had was as fun and satisfying as mine, love, John, Dad, Opa, etc.

SEPTEMBER 2010 JOURNAL

OR HOW TO SELL A HOUSE

2 Thursday

We both awoke before the alarm clocks had an opportunity to do their thing. I have not been sleeping well and usually I wake up early anyway so the clocks were more or less superfluous. We had plenty of time to dress, and I checked the status of the flights on the computer. All planes were on time. Evidently the hurricane was not going to interfere with flying to the West coast. We left for the Airport around five thirty, then realized we now live fifteen minutes closer to the place and hitting all green lights we made it in twelve or thirteen minutes. I saw Mary through check -in, and I saw her head for the gate before returning home and to the bundle of work I had outlined for myself to accomplish while she was gone.

I did not go on the trip with Mary as I no longer enjoy traveling, especially flying. The hassles are more than I can deal with, and the overshadowing possibility of canceled flights and delays leave me with a lot of anxiety. We have lost a good deal of freedom with the advent of the terrorist era. Recently I heard a rather sardonic joke. It seems Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates grew weary of having to turn away so many persons. He closed and locked the gate and went off to see god. "God," he asked, "Will the human race ever learn to be moral and ethical and treat each other only on the basis of love?" God looked down sadly at Saint Peter and replied, "No, Pete, not in my lifetime." If you do not like that ending, here is another one. "No, Pete, it will take the evolution of two more subsequent species, and I am not sure the Earth can handle that."

Breakfast was the usual oats, flax seed and raisins, except it was the last of the flax seed meal, so I put that on the shopping list for later. The immediate problem facing me was the leaking condensate drain on the air conditioner which I had just discovered on Tuesday. It was a particularly hot muggy day and I happened to notice a puddle on the floor of the furnace room (or furnace closet depending on your viewpoint). It was snaking out and wetting the carpet so I quickly mopped it up and recovered stability. The water seemed to leak out only in extreme situations of heat and humidity. Normally it worked OK.

I had found the location of the leak and planned the method of fix. It required installing a new adapter, a union in the line and rerouting some pipe. I had acquired the necessary parts the previous day so I was set to go. The repair required all morning and half the afternoon not that it was so complicated, but that I just could not get myself up to full speed. I periodically would stop and check on the internet the status of Mary's flights. Also I was interrupted by Tim Toohig dropping by to give me the Open House signs to use on Sunday. Several computers periodically interrupted me with automated phone calls. They were about Mary's prescription drugs. These were frustrating to answer. The computer's officious disembodied voice did not offer enough options. A one way conversation is not a real conversation. When I paused once to consider a response, one of them actually said, "I am a computer, I need you to say yes or no." Another one offered the options, "Wait for Mary to come to the phone, Take a message, (which I am ill equipped to do when it comes to Mary's prescription drugs), or wrong number." None fit the existing situation so I just hung up. I am sorry if I caused the computer some emotional distress, but I consider turnabout to be fair play.

I finally got the leak fixed. It was due to a fitting having a crack part way up the wall so it leaked only in overflow situations. I reused most of the parts by supplementing with a cast off piece of plastic pipe I had salvaged from the old house plus a few purchased connectors. Feeling I deserved it, I invited myself out to dinner at Long John Silver's. Cheapskate that I am, I used a coupon and got a discount on a meal of fish, hush puppies, fries and coleslaw. I should have skipped the coleslaw, I was gassy later. I did my grocery shopping on the way home. It is so nice to have stores at a convenient distance now. I guess it will take a while to get used to that. There will be less need for planning trips to get the maximum done per trip. Shopping will feel less like an excursion requiring extensive planning.

Entertainment for the evening was a lopsided football game on which I finally gave up. Although, I was rewarded for staying up late by getting a call from Adrian and Bernadette and a call from Mary to let me know she had arrived safely in Santa Rosa.

3 Friday

I managed to sleep until seven, and it was getting light when I got going. It was a day for walking so I dressed appropriately. When I got to the door to leave, the morning paper was stuck in the door waiting for me. Our method of paper delivery is to have it thrown on the driveway by the delivery person. A very early rising neighbor makes a habit of walking his dog and picking up your paper and sticking it in your door jamb for you. Occasionally, I am out before he is, and I can pick up my own paper, but then I must dispose of the rubber band and, in inclement weather, the plastic bag containing the paper. He offers sort of a nice little service, but I do wonder whether he is just using it as an excuse to collect rubber bands, or maybe, plastic bags?

I walked a little farther than usual today to within shouting distance of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Greenway path is only a two or three minute walk from our door. It begins at the edge of Hardy Road with a 0.00 mile marker. In some places it is paved, and in others it consists of various grades of gravel. I do not understand the rationale for the various surfaces. Perhaps they want to appeal to the greatest number of users. The path crosses over several neighborhood roads following a little

creek, Wolf Creek. I have no idea why this benign little waterway is called Wolf Creek. It would be more suitably be called Rabbit Creek or Deer Creek if the intent were to reflect the native animals. The creek goes underneath one major transportation artery where it has its own cement lined crossing underneath the road. The path for people under the roadway is wet sand alongside the waterway in a dank cave-like structure. It provides a little variety to the walk and adds an interesting ominous quality. On the other side of the tunnel is a small “bridge” across Wolf creek if one wishes to go up the other side of the creek. The bridge consists of two twelve foot two by tens fastened together. It is strong enough, but it is tilted from one side to the other. This adds a little excitement to getting across the menacing gucky mud underneath.

One might ask, “Why would anyone use this primitive crossing?” The answer is that Jerry’s restaurant is only a tenth of a mile or so away on that side of the road. There was a method to my madness. I planned my walking time so that when I turned around and came back, I would be at the jerry rigged bridge after having walked an hour at my rate, thereby completing my requirement for the day. I could then, with a clear conscience, go across the bridge to breakfast at Jerry’s which is what I did. I find my rationalizing very comforting. One scrambled egg, toast and coffee, please.

When I returned home, I flung myself into the days work. First I finished renovating the furnace closet with a storage shelf and moved a hook to a new location. It is now a very neat place to store a card table with four chairs and the two sweepers plus a small step ladder. Then I had a general clean up of the mess from yesterday’s efforts. After that I conceived writing this Journal and began exercising the word processor. I spent more time at that than I should have. I indulged myself in exploring the news and articles on AOL also. I shall try to keep the journal up as I live through this three week hiatus, and I will try to have it ready for publication after Mary returns.

Late in the afternoon I began looking at the garage rearrangement which is the main thrust of the next few days work. The project is straightforward but requires moving a lot of “stuff” around. The purpose is to attain more parking room in a garage in which space is at a premium. Our new garage is square in shape and about nineteen feet on a side. The old one was about twenty four feet on a side. The cars and their masters have met this condition with equanimity and fortitude, but using the garage requires much in the way of concessions. The Buick fits better if I remove the trailer hitch. Our humongous rubbish bin scrunches down in a corner and the Prius noses right up to it; I rather think it does so a little disdainfully.

Considering the ins and outs of this garage reorganization job exhausted the rest of the afternoon and consumed the remaining allotment of my daily initiative, so I moved on to the supper hour and the news programs. Friday is a good news night. After Jim Lehrer on public TV there is Business Week, Washington Week, etc. which brings me up to bed time.

4 Saturday

I slept till quarter after seven. After getting dressed I watered the plants remembering to put ice cubes on the orchid for which it was grateful. I also watered the transplanted Hostas outside as they were looking a little poorly with some dried leaves. Then I had my own breakfast. After paying due diligence to the puzzles during breakfast doing the jumble words and the crypto quote, I found myself struggling with the Sudoku which I never try to do. However, today I had quickly seen a few of the correct number placements and the next I knew; I had wasted a goodly amount of time on the thing. In disgust I threw down the pen and loaded the paper, cardboard and recyclables into the car for a trip to the recycling center.

The recycling center is located near Franklin road in Roanoke. We have been taking things there for years. Also in the last few years there have been established some sup-stations for recyclables. Bins for newspapers and cans have appeared at the Franklin County Dump site and behind the Kroger store in Vinton. Flat paper and corrugated cardboard still have to go to Roanoke. They no longer take glass there though, and I had to return with a few things for the trash. Vinton and Roanoke Country provide a toxic disposal facility also, but one must make a time appointment to drop it off on the third Thursday of the month. The facility is not very far away so that is also convenient. On the way back from the recycling center, I stopped for a couple of bare necessities at Kroger, reloaded my Kroger card and stopped for cash at the bank.

Since it was not yet close to noon, I swallowed hard and proceeded to the garage. I was amazed how quickly I was able to execute my plan once I got started. A wall shelf was cut to a shorter length and the old brown wooden shelves which are older than I am were unloaded, wrestled into position into the hole left by the missing shelf and reloaded with their valuable materials, parts, supplies, tools, etc. Phase one was complete. It was not yet noon and I was properly tired already.

Deciding on an early lunch, I proceeded with that and immediately afterward loaded the vacuum into the car and left for the old house. I found it in good shape. I needed to water a couple of bushes which showed the effects of no rain. I collected the mail, swept the back entrance (you have only one chance at a first impression), checked the timer, checked the freezer and broke loose the ice cubes which had frozen together from lack of use, and re-vacuumed some of the carpets so the nap looked pretty and generally made sure I was ready for an open house tomorrow. The ride home was very pleasant. It is sunny and not too warm which is a relief from the recent hot weather. Tomorrow is supposed to be great also. Here is hoping it puts someone in a buying mood.

At home I re-attacked the garage. The other large metal shelves had to be moved sideways three feet. Rather than unloading, moving and re-loading, I decided on a faster system. I slid the hand truck under one edge and used a pry on the opposite edge to raise the shelves and scoot them along. This was not easy, three to four inches per scoot, but it worked. I then started packing away some of the miscellaneous leftover junk, but fatigue closed in on me. It being four o'clock, I decided I had done enough for the day and I could quit, so I did.

Supper was Ham and cabbage and potatoes and beans accompanied by football. I also finished the Sudoku.

5 Sunday

I awoke early at four AM and could not sleep, so I got up and had breakfast, waffles. Then back to bed for another hour or so. When I came awake next, I realized the "Big Day" had arrived. Today I would do the open house at 180 Bailey Blvd. I shaved, showered and dressed pretty with a good sweater and a tie. I wasted the rest of the morning watching TV and disassembling the paper to take the good parts with me for distraction and to occupy the time. Also, I remembered to take along a chair and a snack.

I left early, as is my wont, but I did need to deliver the water bill payment also. The method of payment for water in Lakeshore Terrace is to insert the check in a small locked box outside the house of the person who handles such matters. This has been the location for the last couple of years since Joe Penick, the developer of the sub-division and sole owner of the water company, moved away. At that time we were advised this new box would be taking our payments. I have not met the person

who empties the box, so the transaction is very impersonal. I do say “Hello box” and I imagine it smiles, nods and opens its mouth a little wider as I stuff the check in. The system seems to work very well.

Arriving at the house, I unloaded my “stuff” and decided to sit on the upper porch as the weather was very pleasant. From there I could immediately see anyone who drove in. I waited a few minutes until five minutes before One PM when the activities were supposed to start. My Open House hours were one to five which is twice what most are. I then drove to the sub-division entrance and erected a sign on each side of it. Another sign was placed at the intersection of Penick Place and Bailey Blvd. directing people to the right. A larger “Open House” sign was put out in front of out the house next to the For Sale sign. I retreated to the porch and my chair and the paper, and I waited.

And I waited, and I waited. The first hour I spent reading the paper and starting the puzzles. The second hour I consumed by doing the crossword puzzle. By three o’clock the porch was getting warm and I retreated to the living room by the picture window where I had a very good view of the driveway entrance. During the next hour the most exciting thing to happen was a white truck stopped in front and stayed a minute or so then slowly drifted away. My disappointment exceeded my boredom by a considerable amount.

By four o’clock I had mostly given up hope of having any visitors. I had brought along a package of Pillsbury’s cinnamon rolls. Harboring some visions of having them baking as the potential buyers came in, I imagined pleasant warm vapors of cinnamon would put visitors in a buying mood, and we would be away to the races. The courage to start this however had been lacking all afternoon. At four o’clock, I decided, “What the heck. Why not have the rolls myself. I may as well bake them here and save time when I get home.” I proceeded to execute this plan. Knowing the range had not been used for a considerable period of time, I checked the top burners. As I suspected, it took a quite a few attempts to get them to ignite. Finally they did work, and I knew then there would be no trouble with the oven.

At exactly ten after four o’clock as I started the oven to heat, and it seemed almost as a direct result, the doorbell rang. Quickly turning the oven off again, I hurried down the stairs to meet a couple coming in the back door. Sherry (sp?) and Tony Fullen are a pleasant Afro-American couple who were out “just looking”, but we spent an interesting half hour together all over the house and the outside. They asked good questions and were impressed by a lot of the features. I was able to slip in many good features as we went along. At one point Sherry asked,” Now how many bathrooms is that?” They checked to see that their panel truck was not too high for the garage door. And they liked the potential separate apartment on the lower level for an aged parent. Tony volunteered he has an antique car and a boat. They left with our hand out information and understood they could call Tim at the number on it for more information.

There were only a few minutes left until five o’clock, so I began packing up and at five minutes to the hour I went out to collect my signs. I felt rather elated on the way home, but then I tried to temper my enthusiasm with reality. They actually may have been “just looking.”

When I got home I did bake the rolls. They were ready for dessert after a leftovers meal from the refrigerator. By eight thirty I felt completely bushed and went to bed. It had been a long day.

6 Monday, Labor Day

Sometimes I think Doug Forbes gets up in the middle of the night. It was far from being light when I went out for the paper and found it in the door already, and not out on the driveway. I had cinnamon rolls for breakfast, and set off walking when I considered it light enough. It was cool and comfortable walking, and I got in an hour and ten minutes. I saw several regulars and picked up some rubbish and disposed of the same properly. It is strange that there are plenty of rubbish cans, but rubbish still gets thrown on the ground. I began musing about what this says about us modern humans. We have so much in the way of material things and so little concern for the environment that we befoul it whenever we feel like discarding our latest indulgence. That is not very smart. We probably deserve any fate that awaits us.

A shower felt very good when I got home, and I put on work clothes for the day. The clothes hamper was full enough that I dragged all the dirty laundry upstairs and threw it into the washer. It is not quite as good a washer as we left behind, but it is certainly adequate. Then a little time was spent on phase two of the garage project.

I realized that it would be even more advantageous to turn the steel shelves 90 degrees so that the 18 inch dimension was against the back wall instead of the 36 inch dimension. This adds 18 inches to the available width to play with in making room for the cars and for space to hang the cleaning implements. Also then the side of the shelves would be seen from the street instead of the front of the shelves. The side could be covered to look more presentable. All the junky stuff would be less visible to the neighborhood. It seemed a winner from all aspects. This however, did require unloading the junk to reduce the weight enough so that I could maneuver the shelves into position. This was not a big deal since some of the stuff was coming off anyway to be moved to a new location. A six drawer oak chest which holds some of my better tools was moved downstairs. This puts all the more common tools in one location and will drive me less crazy looking for things when I need them. The unloading, moving and reloading were accomplished without incident, but it did require a good deal of time.

Working on the garage, doing the laundry, writing in this journal, and a trip to the grocery for finger food for a thing tomorrow all seem to have absorbed the day. I remember lunch in there somewhere, but not sure where. I have vague memories of it consisting of a bowl of breakfast food, a cinnamon roll and some radishes. I wonder what dinner will bring.

Watching the news and eating Dinner are inexorably intertwined. They tend to occur at the same time. Today was complicated only a little bit by the Labor Day holiday and sports events. There was a big to do here about the upcoming game tonight between Virginia Tech and Boise State, but it is not being televised here. The leftovers are gradually disappearing as I am making good progress with them. Supper consisted of some macaroni and part of a stash of radishes hiding in the refrigerator. I also had a real salad which consisted of chopped some sort of green stuff and sliced carrots with olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Dessert was Cinnamon rolls! Can you believe that?

After Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy, I turned off the TV and planned a little for tomorrow, a regular real work day again. And so to bed.

7 Tuesday

After the rituals of awaking, getting up, getting dressed, eating and doing the puzzles (I did the Sudoku !), I set two goals for the morning. One was to hang the new kitchen blind on the stationary half of the entrance door to the upper porch, and the other was to re-hinge my medicine cabinet door. Needless to say I failed to reach my goals. The blind presented some little problems which necessitated changing direction a couple of times. Instead of a wooden door it turned out to be a metal door. Then

the self tapping metal screws would not work because the metal was too thick. I had to get out the tap set and find screws and a tap to match, and finally tap the holes. In the process one hole managed to get in the wrong place and I had to revise the bracket. With all the running around to get tools and materials and make revisions I was up and down the steps many times between the tools and the job site. I finished in the late morning and broke off to go pay my Vinton water bill.

Vinton has a fine town hall across the street from the main fire station. I went there in person to pay the bill so I could ask some questions about the way they charged for the water and sewer. The ladies were very helpful and dug through some books and copied pages for me. Now I feel completely qualified to understand the bill when it arrives. Water costs less here than it does in Hardy, but sewer is more expensive. Does that tell us anything? After a hasty lunch, I tackled the medicine chest thing. The door opened only to 90 degrees resulting in it being in the way when using the wash basin. I put on new hinges which would open 180 degrees which makes the situation much more comfortable. Happily, that project went forward in a snag free manner. A later job may be to fill some holes left by switching hinges, but that is low priority.

Next I spent a little less than an hour cutting up carrots, celery, green pepper and other stuff to use as finger food with some French onion dip. This was for a 6:30 PM party for a fellow who is leaving the area to go back home because his job gave out. He is an Aspergers and was befriended by the congregation while he has been here in Roanoke. Betty Bright is throwing the party in her penthouse, and I decided to go. I snuck in a short but useful nap, then I put on a clean shirt, and remembering to allow a lot less time to get there, I arrived precisely at the appointed hour of Six Thirty. Although I was the first one to the door, a couple of dozen representatives of the UU church were right behind me. It was a very good party. The loud talkers did their loud talking and the quiet listeners did the listening. I did a little of both. It was the usual crowd doing their usual thing.

I was pleased to have attended the party. The fellow leaving is a highly motivated fifty -ish computer whiz. He has worked at many jobs in this country and abroad. His favorite activity is “reverse engineering” products which I guess means finding out what makes them tick. At the end of the evening after a few people had left, he gave a twenty minute review of where he had been and what he had done during his lifetime which was fascinating considering his social difficulties. One person summed it up by observing that regardless of what happened in his life he seemed always to be able to land on his feet and go on.

So now I have left over carrots, celery, pepper, etc. which I think will become stir fry. I was grateful for the short trip home and that Kroger’s keeps late hours. I was able to pick up some bananas. Bed was certainly inviting.

8 Wednesday

Walking was an uneventful hour and five minutes this morning. I am considering the possibility of going out the back door and down the hill to avoid walking the stretch along the road. The roadside is not very even, being essentially part of the drainage system. I more or less stumble along for about a little more than one hundred and fifty feet from the end of our road to where the sidewalk along Hardy Road begins. Traffic coming in to the city from the country is quite heavy at that time of day. Perhaps I will try that new route behind the houses on Friday. On my return from the walk, I watered the Hosta again on the way into the house. It feels that in transplanting, there are too many leaves for the amount of roots left on the plants, but I will keep them watered.

After a nice shower and change of clothes, I spent the morning in the office moving stuff, straightening up and writing. Not feeling as enthusiastic today, so I am taking things slower. A good lunch of bean soup and a short nap got me going again. I tackled the door to my office which opens out and would be much more suitable opening in. Getting the door down was no problem, but discovering that reversing it and putting it inside caused interference with the carpet was discouraging. The floor of this lower level leaves a little to be desired in terms of levelness. However the obvious necessity to remove some of the bottom of the door was daunting enough to make me a quit for the day.

Supper was fun. I decided to consume some of my excess raw vegetables in a stir fry. I had them all ready to go and found I had no stir fry sauce. The news would be on in fifteen minutes. Panic! It is so nice to live two minutes away for the grocery store. I got to the store, found the necessary sauce and returned in plenty of time for the news, hurrah!

9 Thursday

I awoke, had breakfast, did the puzzles, and had a little time to work on the door before going off to the house to be there to tell Mark Simmons what needed doing. I am keeping the place looking neat and clean and ready for anyone to move into. I took along a ladder to retrieve some fiberboard from storage in the ceiling of the garage. I had planned on leaving it, but I have just recently realized it will do nicely for covering the end of the metal shelves in the new arrangement in the Deer Ridge garage. This is just another advantage of having some overlap in switching abodes.

I also took along cleaner for a spot on the living room wall which I had previously noticed. Sadly the spot did not respond to my treatment. It may require painting. We will see. Mark was there to do the grass. One more time after this will probably finish out the season. He is always friendly and conscientious even though he knows he will lose a customer when we sell the house.

Then I made a trip to Lowes for hooks. I decided the best way to keep the ladders out of the way is to hang them up on one of the garage walls. After lunch I changed out of work clothes as I had been invited out to have ice cream. The Humana representative had invited me to a party for about a dozen people at Dairy Queen down in Moneta. This was only to soften us up for some up coming information meetings in October about the new arrangements in our health insurance for next year. I am not sure this is standard operating procedure. It worries me what new and oppressive ideas they will come up with that require us to be softened up in advance by ice cream treats. We will see. Perhaps this is the time I should shift back to plain old Medicare.

The ice cream sojourn pretty much shot the afternoon, but I did do some useful work afterward. I got the door up, but I will need to countersink the hinges, and remount the strike. It needs just a tad more removed from the bottom to clear the rug properly, also.

The Vikings and the Saints were on the Thursday Night Edition of Sunday Night Football. It was a good game but I pooped out after the first half.

10 Friday

This is the coolest morning this week. It was 54 F when I went out at seven o'clock. I was warm enough, except my hands were cold by the time I returned. I took a plastic bag with me on the walk this morning. There is not much litter on the Greenway, but there is some. My plastic bag did get well filled though. I found everything from napkins and Styrofoam cups to half eaten hamburgers and doggie dew bags left by the wayside. Starting out I did go out the back door, but I found the hill down to the road is quite steep so I returned from the walk again by the usual way along the road. So much for good ideas.

The walking, jogging, running culture is an interesting one on the public path. Many walk with earphones, and most will say good morning or such, but there is one fellow who runs with ear phones and intense concentration. He does not respond in any way to a nod or "good morning". I can understand his not wanting to interrupt his rhythm. But perhaps, he should also consider what it does to his social skills. There are often two fellows walking together rather slowly. One is old, the other middle aged. They usually stop talking as I pass and are minimally responsive to a greeting. The older one seems to be always doing the talking and the younger one always listening. I have not quite figured them out. There are a whole slew of couples-with-dogs walkers. Most pull their dogs in when passing, but there have been times I have had to vacate the path to get around them. In general I would say the Greenway people are a fairly high class segment of the population. Almost all are friendly and return a cheery greeting in passing.

Work went very well today. I finished fitting in the door to my office so that it now swings in. This is much more satisfactory for me. My habit from the old place is to reach around to the left for the light switch. With the door now in that position it immediately reminds me the switch is on the right. Eventually I will establish that habit. Also it uncovers light switches outside the office which are used quite often and were previously covered by the open door which I will no longer have to go around getting to the switches. This may seem trivial but it had been a point of annoyance for me.

After cleaning up the wood chips and other mess, (I am glad Mary is away), I immediately turned to the storage room door. This poor door has been waiting since the first week of ownership of the house to get its door stops back. The loss of its door stops is an interesting tale in itself. You must read this. It all took place before we actually moved into the house

The Tale of the Loss of the Door Stops:

There had been a refrigerator in the store room when we took possession of the house. Thinking we could make good use of it, we had requested that the refrigerator be part of the offer and that it be left in the house. In organizing the store room, I moved from our Hardy house a rather large sturdy demountable set of shelves which had come with us all the way from Ashtabula. I had built them in our Ashtabula rental place to hold all the junk we moved out of Cedar's Motel when we sold it. These shelves are very useful, and I had determined they would fit into the new storage room although assembling them in the room was an interesting puzzle. They have ended up in the middle this small room. I actually had to have the middle shelf sticking in from the doorway to maneuver it into position in the structure. The room then was fairly crowded. I fussed at what to do with the refrigerator and finally decided to move it out into the family room next to a little sink where we were locating the surplus microwave also.

Being an old refrigerator man I knew the routine. Take the room door down, remove the refrigerator doors, remove all the loose contents of the refrigerator, slide the body of the refrigerator out through the door sideways, and reassemble outside. Fine! I started. The room door was easy enough. It came down and was placed out of the way. The next operation was to pull the refrigerator away from the wall to demount the doors. Let me elaborate a little on the situation. The hot water tank (electric)

is in the corner of this room and the refrigerator was standing next to it. It seems there is a requirement for all hot water systems including simple household hot water tanks to have expansion chambers these days. This system had a relatively large ten inch by ten inch cylinder sticking out from a vertical section of the hot water line. The tank was over the refrigerator and actually touched the top of the refrigerator.

The refrigerator was very reluctant to be removed, but I started to wiggle it out. I noticed the expansion tank was interfering with the moving and realized it was not full of air, but full of water. Although this realization did not come to me until the tank was actually sliding off the back of the refrigerator. At this point the weight of the tank was bending the pipe it was attached to, and in fact, a small leak had opened. Panic! I quickly moved the refrigerator back and propped up the tank again. I maneuvered a pail into position to catch the water, and stepped back to consider the situation.

The expansion chamber was full of water, there was a small water leak, the chamber needed to be supported and recharged with air, and I could not move the refrigerator until all that was accomplished. Although I have done plenty of copper plumbing work over the years, I was not in a position to tackle this job at this time.

Solution: Checking with the wife of the President of the Home Owners Assn, who really runs the place, I got the name of a handyman plumber whom she often used. A call to the same resulted in a promise from the plumber to be there later in the afternoon. When he arrived, he quickly analyzed the job and dashed off to get a new expansion chamber. The diagnosis was that the rubber diaphragm in the chamber had failed and a new chamber was required. Within a couple of hours, I had a new smaller expansion chamber firmly secured to a wall and properly plumbed in and the system was leak free. By this time though it was late and I was ready to give up and go home for the day.

It was with high hopes I arrived the next day to move the refrigerator out of the store room. The room door was already out of the way, so I attacked the doors of the refrigerator. No problems. They came off easily and I carried them out to their new location. The shelves and trays and other such paraphernalia were removed from the inside of the refrigerator. Then came the fun part. I loaded the refrigerator on the hand cart and rolled it slowly to the doorway. But now what?!! It did not fit through the doorway. Retreating, I finally did some measuring. The overall depth of the cabinet from front to back was almost 27 and three quarters of an inch. The side to side dimension between the door stops was 27 and one eighth. There was no way to get the refrigerator through the doorway without seriously damaging part of the refrigeration system.

Undaunted, I surveyed to the situation. The width of the doorway without the stops measures 28 inches. Ergo, the stops had to be removed, then the procedure would work. Okay, Deep breath. This is straight forward. Pry off the door stops and replace them after the job is done. Easy enough, Right? Well, not quite. Upon investigation, these are not the usual door stops. The frame is made by an inside piece and an outside piece. They slide together to make the frame and the stops are milled into and are part of the outside piece. They were not separate pieces of wood! Now what?

Drop back ten yards and punt. I fished out from my disorganized tool boxes a saw, a hammer and a trusty old chisel. Twenty minutes later the stops were off, and there were only ragged gashes remaining where the proud stops had been only moments before. Now I had 28 inches clearance for a 27 and three quarters inch behemoth to negotiate. I reloaded the refrigerator on the hand cart and rolled again to the constricted opening. The load had to be tipped, of course, to roll on the cart wheels. This was not the most stable vehicle and with essentially zero clearance there was much side contact. Finally with a lot of tugging and lubricated with many bad words the doorway finally disgorged its captive out into the free world at last. I stopped to rest!

You may wonder as I do, why there was a refrigerator in a room which it could neither get out of, nor logically, it could have gotten into. This house is about ten years old, and the refrigerator is about the same vintage. My supposition is that the refrigerator was put into the room before the doorway was finish framed. That is, the refrigerator was installed before the house was completely done, and no one considered the problem of clearance when they rolled it in through the rough framed doorway, which would have been several inches wider. I was lucky the dimensions were not a little bit more constraining as I would have had to remove the entire frame. Sometimes I luck out.

After all that had transpired, getting the refrigerator to the other room was a breeze. Before tending to the doorway, I wanted to get the refrigerator reassembled as quickly as possible. I reattached the bottom brackets, and I felt good about having the beast where I wanted it and back on the road to normalcy. Then I began on the middle brackets, the ones between the freezer compartment and the fresh food compartment. Surprise! The brackets would not fit. Upon examination, I determined the hinge brackets also hold the sides of the refrigerator together at the proper spacing. In the process of moving the refrigerator the sides had sprung apart and the brackets could not be attached!

So here I was. The room door was leaning against the wall, the door stops were gone. The door frame was ravaged and half destroyed, there was a bulging useless refrigerator in the middle of the family room surrounded by refrigerator doors, miscellaneous refrigerator parts and pieces. Tools lay strewn about on the floor amidst the general mess. Perhaps you can understand why I prefer to work alone and not have to deal with the consternation of others who like things much neater. Considering the total situation, I did the only rational thing to do at that time. I quit.

The following day I returned to the fray. I came armed with a bar clamp. This is a device for clamping things together in the process of gluing. It consists of a bar with two clamps which slide along the bar and grip it to adjust the span. I had some apprehension about the strength of the bar versus the strength of the refrigerator body. I went ahead boldly, ignoring the possible problem. Applying the clamp to the mid section of the refrigerator brought the sides back to normal spacing and the reassembly was accomplished. My worst fears were behind me and I emerged all conquering. As I have said before on many occasions, "By brute force and awkwardness, Science triumphs again." The door frame of the storage room was repaired and made flat with a plastic wood type of material and thereafter forsaken until new door stops could be acquired and applied.

The End

With this background one may understand why getting the door stops reattached was a glorious mile stone. It did not take long and the only action remaining now is to paint the new pieces of wood at sometime in the future. I quit for the day and cleaned up. After a simple supper, I went to a Sierra Club meeting at the church. Liz Belcher is the staff and the sole employee of The Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission. She talked about the development of all the Greenways in the County, and how they are managed. I found it quite interesting, and I discovered where there is more information on line and where perhaps even maps are available. I did not eat too many of the provided snacks and went home. It was a very useful day.

11 Saturday

It is cloudy and cool, 56 degrees. Remembering to water the house plants and give the orchid its ice cubes, I also watered the Hostas outside again. They seem to be doing better, but they look awful. Considering my attitude and feelings, it may be a lazy and do nothing day. We can always hope for the best, but there are football games this afternoon.

I spent the morning doing odds and ends of clean up, and writing in the Journal. Not much news on TV because available channels are occupied with Tennis, Golf, Baseball, and such. The dreary afternoon affected my work ethic. It gave me an excuse to make an excursion out for supplies. The garage opening transmitters needed batteries. The local CVS drug store did not have them, so I tried the Blue Ridge Wal-Mart. This Wal-Mart is closer to our new location than any of the others, but I have not used it much in the past. Now is the time to branch out, I guess, and explore new experiences. The store is also two miles closer to our new house than any other. It is located out Orange Avenue which is a large easily traveled artery and is conveniently accessed from where we are in Vinton.

I did not get lost, but the store is big enough to be intimidating. It seems to go on and on. It might be a good place to walk in inclement weather. The layout is also different, and things are “just not where they are supposed to be.” I was successful in my quest, however. They had the little A23 batteries in good supply and I picked them up. I got some rice and beans in addition. I was planning a healthy meal in the evening with rice, beans, and some of my voluminous supply of vegetables. The outing invigorated me a little bit. When I got home, I finished packing away some tools and cleaning up the area, then I sat down to plan next week. Tomorrow is a big day again with an Open House. I hope the weather remains decent and the house buyer comes along.

The Michigan - Notre Dame football game turned out satisfactorily. So I went to bed happy.

12 Sunday

Today was laundry day again. There was plenty of hot water for my shower and the washer also. Our new washer has fewer options than our old one had, but I think it has a better agitator action. It bounces up and down more and makes considerable noise, but things come out clean which is all that counts. Of course it is located just off the kitchen. Perhaps it is no noisier than our old one which was downstairs at the other end of the house. The dryer is about the same as the old one but it needs to be set to a drier setting to get the same results. Basically the appliances which came with the house are very good. The refrigerator though feels less spacious, and the cold water faucet is inside the refrigerator rather than through the door. The all electric range is very nice also. The dishwasher though has apparently stopped working. I must attend to that one of these days.

There was a note in the door the other day from Doug Forbes informing everyone he would be away until the 20 th. So I am free to go out and pick up my own paper from the driveway until then. I brought the paper in and while the toast and coffee were preparing themselves, I eviscerated the paper. I laid it on the table and unfolded it while taking out the sections I wanted. The slick ads and uninteresting sections were easily discarded. I set aside the news sections and the puzzles to use for amusement this afternoon at the house while I wait for house seekers. The comics go with breakfast.

During the morning I found the Greenways site on the internet. They are well organized, and I now have printed out a map of the Vinton section for my amusement. It even came out in color although my printer keeps warning me of low ink. When it stated doing this I went out and got new cartridges, but time has past and I am still working on the old ones. I am sure they will quit at some critical moment when I want to print something in a hurry. At least I will have new ones available.

Perusing the map is fun. I can identify the location of most of the twists and turns and rubbish cans and benches, etc. My goal is to walk all the way to the Blue Ridge Parkway, and it looks very much doable.

I fixed a sandwich and a snack to take to the house with me. Also took along tools and equipment to clean and touch up anything that might need it. The sky was partly cloudy so the house alternated between being bright and cheerful and dull and drab.

The hour between four and five is magic. Today I sat for three hours doing puzzles and reading the paper while nothing happened. After four o'clock I was discouraged and looking at the World through bleak eyes. I was beginning to wonder why anyone would ever want to live here again, and I began to believe it was completely undesirable for a home with all its shortcomings and defects. The location is bad, the lawn is impossible and the yard requires full time attention. The clouds did not help my mood at all. Just before four thirty when I was beginning to close up so that I would lose no time at five, I went to the freezer to treat myself to an ice cream bar. I had not taken two bites when, just as last week a car came buzzing up the drive. The ice cream bar got thrown back into the freezer, and I went downstairs to meet the visitors.

The woman I met coming up the drive introduced herself as Ginny. She was something more than middle aged and volunteered the other members of her family in the car were all named Peter. They turned out to be Peter Sr., Peter Jr., and Peter the Third who was three years old. I gave them a complete house tour and turned them loose to explore by themselves. Peter the Third enjoyed running all over the place. The temperature had been moderate, and I had been sitting out on the porch which was very comfortable. I had windows open in the house and the fresh breeze outside kept the inside pleasant. I had a long talk with Peter Sr. They had moved to Vinton a couple of years ago from Florida and now with all their family relocated here they wanted to move closer to the lake as he is a fisher person. They seemed favorably impressed by the house, but they need to sell their house also and are caught in the same market we are. During all this Peter the third needed to use the bathroom, and I assured Ginny all four of the facilities were functioning and she could take him to any one she wished.

They may not be great prospects, but they restored my confidence for the present. I rewarded myself by stopping at the Chinese restaurant to get some carry out to supplement my mixed vegetables waiting at home.

The news was abbreviated due to Tennis and Golf, but it kept me company during supper. The football this evening was The Redskins and the Cowboys. It was a very interesting and the Redskins managed to win.

13 Monday

Well, today was the day. I slept well and a little late, so it was very light exiting the house. Half way to Taco Bell and the tunnel crossing, I decided to go all the way to the Blue Ridge Parkway. It all went fine. I met some of the usual walkers and reached my previous limit in good time. I had been all the way to the Parkway once before, but starting from the Washington Street parking lot makes it a considerably shorter hike. The weather was cool again, but I knew it would warm up. If my hands got too cold, they could retreat to my pockets.

It was fun to see again the new areas which I had seen only once before. Near the other end of the trail, one goes past a very neat looking little farm house and

yard. It is a bit incongruous to have this farm so close to town, but it fits in nicely. Just past the farm the trail ends near the intersection of Mountain View Road and Falling Water Road. A small parking lot is located there for the convenience of walkers, and I crossed under the Parkway through the road tunnel to go all the way to the parking lot before turning around.

The path in some sections is a little hilly, and the end at the Parkway it is higher than the beginning at Hardy Road. Coming back is more downhill than up hill except for the half a block on Deer Ridge Lane which goes rather sharply up to our house. The wild cherry trees along the trail have fruit on them which falls on the path. I suppose the little cherries would be good for jam, but I also suppose there are restrictions on harvesting the fruit. I saw the three deer again this morning. I had not seen them for several weeks and the two young ones were significantly larger than I remember them before. I guess the Hostas in the residential gardens are great for fattening up deer.

I laughed coming back through the tunnel under Washington Street. There is a dusty spot there and I could clearly see the distinctive pattern of my shoes facing the going direction as I returned. There is a sign in the parking lot off Hardy road which says "Blue Ridge Parkway - 2.2 miles". Starting from our house adds at least a tenth of a mile each way, and walking out to the parking lot at the other end adds a bit more. Subtracting a little for the shortcut I take where the trail loops around a meadow and I stay on the road, it still was probably more than 4.5 miles round trip. Since I did it in an hour and half, I think that confirms my 3 mile an hour walking speed.

I was tired when I got back, but not too tired to do the puzzles during breakfast. The rest of the morning was spent cleaning and preparing a little set of metal shelves for painting. I moved a hose to the back of the house and squirted them thoroughly and wiped them off. They were left to dry where the afternoon sun would assist. The shelves are going to be painted white to fit in with the rest of the décor. This brought me to shower time which I finished just in time for the noon news and lunch.

After lunch, miscellany filled my time until I went off to the doctor. I got my flu shot, and I discussed with him the odd appearance of the new pills Humana had me get through a new supplier. They look completely different and I was concerned that they were correct. He looked them up and assured me they were Ok. I also got his suggestions on what to do if a tendonitis I had last week returns. I was slowed down quite a bit by not being able to use my right arm for a couple of days. He gave me some good advice and even wrote it down for me. My present doctor is very easy to get along with and is quite communicative. He is a young middle aged man and has a pleasant manner. He even laughs at my jokes which puts him far ahead of the rest.

After supper, needing a bit of a change, I made a banana nut bread. It was a Martha White mix and a snap to do even for me. I wasted time watching Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy. Now that I am up to date on the writing, I am ready to go upstairs and have a piece of Banana Nut Bread with coffee and then to bed. Sorry I can not share my banana nut bread with you. L Maybe another time.

14 Tuesday

Today was supposed to be a good work day. Unfortunately, it did not turn out that way as far as the home projects were concerned. I had decided to have a scrambled egg with Bacos, so I fussed around doing that while listening to the Today Show. Did you know the best way to fix a scrambled egg is to add just a little milk to

it? The bacos get mixed in and then the mix is dumped into an already hot skillet. The eggs are cooked quickly without burning and are ready to eat with the previously prepared toasted muffin and coffee. It did not quite work that way. At a critical time in the process the telephone rang, and I quickly turned off the range. It was the Humana computer calling to let me know that if my income were low enough, I could qualify for some sort of government help. Did you know that if you do not answer quickly enough the damn computer comes back and says, "I am a computer, I need you to say yes or no?" I hung up on it.

After breakfast I did the puzzles and got hooked on the Sudoku. Spending more time on it than the average bear, I did get it done. But by then I was behind schedule. I quickly went down to the office and did some necessary desk work. I paid some bills coming due (The fifteenth is tax day). There were several others also, including the Association dues. I made a trip out on errands and picked up a small magnetic latch for the medicine chest. Being out and about charged me up a little, and I determined to have some good accomplishments by the end of the day. I dove right in to mounting the magnetic latch and ran smack dab into a mounting problem. It was going to require an extra little piece of wood glued on in a strategic place to make it work. Finding the wood in the scrap pile and making it look nice and gluing and clamping it into position brought me up to a quick lunch.

Lunch was fifteen minutes of news with a turkey-no-fat bologna sandwich, a glass of water and a slice of banana nut bread (yum). Next on the list were the lights in my office. There are two very nice fluorescent fixtures in the ceiling and each has two forty watt lamps. This is usually much more than enough light. I determined that I could mount switches on them individually and have one or the other or both on as necessary and save a little power. This is the same thing I did with the six fixtures in the family room. I have used them in a variety of configurations already, but I generally keep only two of them set to come on with the wall switch. The box of electrical miscellany yielded two suitable switches for the office lights, so I set about the job.

Immediately there was a problem. Those who play with fluorescent fixtures know that usually it is difficult to keep the damn plastic covers in place. Due to the law of the perversity of inanimate objects, just the reverse was true here. The covers would not come off. I fussed and fiddled and determined that they were designed to push to one side, which side was then supposed to lift over a flange and swing down. Unfortunately the flanges were spread too wide and no amount of pulling or pushing released the plastic cover. Evidently when they were assembled they had deformed the flanges enough to get the covers on, but then the covers were locked in place. What to do? Being reduced to practically zero resources in raw materials, I was stymied. The solution lay in the rubbish bin. I resurrected a used vegetable tin can and began cutting on it. I cut and formed a strip of metal which would do the job. Prying on the end of the light fixture, I was able to deform the flange just enough to slip my new tool under the plastic cover just shy of applying enough force to destroy the plastic completely. With the tool in place, I could slide it along the length of the fixture which peeled the cover away very nicely; it popped off and hung down from the other side. Success! Hurrah!

Removing the cover to the wiring, disclosed the next problem. The switches I had would fit into about a quarter inch diameter hole. The end of the fixture was already partially punched for a much larger hole. I considered getting some electrical boxes to attach to which I could mount the switches. I was about to set off on an excursion to find them when the phone rang.

It was the realtor. We had an offer on the house! It was a lousy offer, but we had an offer. It was from the couple who had come to my first open house a week and a half ago. He went over the details, and said he was emailing a copy. After hanging up, I went to the computer and proceeded to get to my email. I went over the offer but I could not read the attachment well enough. Calling the realtor back I asked for a hard copy and that I would be down to get it within the hour. As I was about to leave, the phone rang again. This time it was Mary checking in to see whether I was having a happy day. I explained the situation, and we discussed briefly what was

going on. I promised to call back later with more information.

The realtor's office is on a short little road named Bernard. It is a quiet road just off a main artery, but is in the prestigious company of the County Government offices across the street. Tim met me with hard copy of the offer in hand. Mostly it was standard fine print, and he had summarized the important details for me. He had even suggested a course of action and had analyzed the financial return from the alternatives. He is a thorough person. Thanking him, I assured him Mary and I would consider the offer seriously. While going to and talking with the realtor, I was also mulling over the solution to my light fixture problem. My visit to the hardware store after the Realtor was not very useful, and I returned home to consider the next steps.

The glue on the medicine chest was dry enough that I finished that task. I mounted the magnetic latch, and it works very satisfactorily. Now I have more room at the wash basin. That is a small detail, but it was annoying the way it was. I returned to the office lights and came up with another approach. By then I was hungry, so it was quitting time.

At supper, I worked on my surplus of veggies supplemented with the rice and beans while I watched the news. I again looked over the offer and considered what the Realtor had suggested we do. Reviewing it put it in better perspective and I called Mary back to discuss it. We then decided on a course of action. Bernadette and Adrian arrived home. (That is, in Portland) so I was able to talk with them also. That pretty much shot the day. It was interesting with its own twists and turns. I did not accomplish all that I had set out to do, but overall it had been useful. There was no good TV available. Public TV is in a pledge drive again, and the special programming they were pushing did not appeal to me. Bed was the only remaining option.

15 Wednesday

I woke up early and could not sleep, so I wrote instead until it got light. I had breakfast before going walking, and the walk was not unusual. I have been walking now at least three times a week for an hour each time. I have some variation in the turn around point depending on how fast I start and probably other factors. I feel I am in a comfortable rut and the overall result is that I get sufficient exercise without extreme effort of forcing myself to do it, I find it intriguing if not fun, and it is very satisfying both physically and mentally.

Upon returning I met our neighbors, Allean and Sylvia, going down Deer Ridge as I was coming up. They asked about Mary and said they looked forward to her return next week. I assured them she was still on schedule and would be back then. Arriving home I sat and did some puzzles while I cooled off. But then it was off to work.

In mulling over the switch attachment problem, I had realized the most direct approach was to just reinforce the area of the partially punched out hole. But again lack of material was a stumbling block. Then I remembered the previously sacrificed tin can. Returning to the rubbish, I fished out the two ends of the previously ravaged can. The two of them together gave sufficient thickness to provide the necessary strength to hold the switch. Checking the available space I determined that cutting the round lids exactly in half provided a size and shape which would exactly serve the purpose. I like it when there is no waste. Also they would be inside the housing and would not give a deleterious appearance to the fixture. After giving them a bath, they were easily cut in two and prepared to assume new duties as part of an electrical fixture. They could hardly contain their elation.

Drilling holes in sheet metal is not the easiest thing in the world, especially for larger holes. I clamped the four pieces together against a piece of wood in the vise and got the mounting holes drilled with relative ease OK. Then I clamped them individually in place in the fixture where they belonged and drilled the fixture. After fastening them in place it became much more simple. I drilled the hole for the switch to mount through by first drilling a small hole then enlarging it slightly with a bigger drill. Using several drills I gradually enlarged the hole to the required size and I was home free. The rest of the job was straightforward. The wiring was easy and even squeezing the flanges together went well with my trusty bar clamps. The plastic covers can now be removed as necessary to change bulbs or to clean, etc. which I hope I will not have to do any time soon. So now the lights can be operated individually or together as appropriate.

During a break in the morning I opened a can of white enamel paint and started painting the metal shelves. It will take several sessions as my brush is not the best and the hard non-porous metal surface does not allow the paint to spread evenly. Also it is difficult to reach all parts of the structure in one position. Upside down works for some of it, and changing positions requires allowing drying time. In the afternoon I decided to quit. I rested by reading. While doing nothing, the phone rang.

I debated answering it because we are in the season of political calls and pleas for money. I beg off as we are elderly and our money is not as available at the moment as our assets are significantly non-liquid. However, I find it difficult to ignore a plaintive telephone cry. Reluctantly, I picked up the receiver. It was our realtor. I had been studiously avoiding calling him as I want to delay our reply to the offer we have until next Monday if possible. This will give me one more Sunday open house and one more opportunity at a better deal. He indeed wanted to have some information as the buyer's realtor had been pressuring him for some results. I explained our thinking and discussed how we felt about the offer. He had no trouble waiting until Monday and we agreed the "Wife out of town" excuse would last until then. He basically agreed with my approach. He is a most accommodating person.

Supper was a further assault on the vegetables. I am beginning to make a dent in the supply. Tomorrow will be some sautéed surplus onions and a veggie burger. After supper I fell asleep reading so I gave up and went to bed.

16 Thursday

Thursday is rubbish collection day. Many people put their bins out on Wednesday night, but the results of a windy night a while back convinced me it was better to wait until morning. The collectors never get to our street until mid-morning anyway, so being an early riser; I have plenty of time to get the bin in place. I had a quick breakfast and finished loading my rubbish bin. Then opening the garage door and backing out the car, which is necessary logistically, I rolled the bin out to the curb and put it in place. I had planned to make a trip to the property to water plants and pick up mail. So I returned to the car, closed the garage door and backed out. Driving down the street I passed all these bins which seemed lined up like sentinel guards along the passage way. I felt very royally escorted out to the main road. The old house remains in good shape. Some plants did need watering. We are in a mild drought situation at the moment, so I am glad I went.

Back at home my work day began with another coat of paint on the metal shelves. They are beginning to look quite decent and I think they will serve their purpose very well. The oak drawer tool cabinet which is destined to be mounted on top of them was cleaned up a little also.

I turned my attention back to the garage. The rearrangement of the shelves has been working very well. There is more room to get my car into the space, and a

sufficient area for the mops, brooms and other equipment has been established. Now I needed to provide hanging facilities for those items to keep them from being jumbled against the wall and being unsightly. Using the solid piece of wood removed from the side shelf to make room for the old wooden shelves, it was mounted against the back garage wall to serve as a place to put up hooks to hang the other items. I needed some lag bolts to mount the board to the wall and found some two inch long ones in my cultch pile. The mounting was straightforward enough, but to make a long story less boring the screws were too short. Going through the board and the plaster to the solid wood which was depended on to hold the load gave only two or three threads of the screw engaged. If you do not follow all of this, don't despair, forget it as it is unimportant. The solution was to get some longer lag bolts. I also sorted out some nuts and bolts to be used eventually to attach sides to the metal shelves, again for appearance purposes. I found an ample supply in my cultch pile, but washers were needed also. A trip to Northwest Hardware was in order where the necessary supplies were obtained.

In the hardware store, I ran into Sally, our old mail delivering person. She had been given a bicycle which someone had bought for her at a yard sale for five dollars. She had just purchased a seven dollar pump for the bicycle. She admitted she had spent untold amounts of money for tires and other such things for the bike, also. We both had a laugh over it. She said to say "Hi" to Mary. Sally can ride a bike, but the one she usually rides has a humongous motor on it and lots of chrome. She zoomed out of the parking lot ahead of me.

I also brought in the mail as I returned home and found there was a check for me in it. The check was for forty two dollars and twenty cents. I was, of course, pleased to receive such a magnificent surprise, as usually my mail consists of bills. But let me tell you the story behind this windfall. In moving, we had to dispose of a lot of stuff for which we would no longer have room or need. Some things were sold on Craig's List, some were dumped in yard sales, some were foisted off on relatives, some were thrown out, some were donated to Goodwill; you get the idea. A couple of items were farmed out to the Consignment First store in Roanoke. The deal is, if you can get the items to the store they will appraise them and display them until they are sold, subject to certain conditions and restrictions. When they are sold they take their cut and send you the remainder. This ends up being much simpler than taking on selling some of the more unwieldy things by oneself.

The items concerned were a humongous four foot by five foot oil painting of San Francisco scenes, and our large dining room table and chairs. The cost of moving them anywhere would have made it more profitable just to junk them. But because I had my handy dandy little two wheel trailer, I was able to deliver them to the store inexpensively, which I did. All I invested was some labor, time and the necessary gas. It took two trips for the chairs and the table which had to be disassembled and reassembled there. Over the years, I learned the large picture was no great piece of art. It was by the Lee Reynolds Studio, which used some strange methods including printing out some of the picture and then adding oil paints on top of it to make it look impressive. I bought it at a church auction sale for forty two dollars because I liked it and nobody else wanted it. It required a large wall to display it effectively. Being big and flimsy, it was awkward to move, but lying flat in the trailer and roped down it went fine. I had transported it that way from the church and did the same thing to the consignment store.

So the oversize painting evidently got sold. That is why I got the check. Someone else must have had a trailer or paid a bundle to have it delivered. My cut of the deal amounted to forty two dollars and twenty cents. This then represented a twenty cent gain over a number of years. Pretty good, right? Now, if only someone would buy the table!

To finish off my day's work, I replaced the old lag bolts with the new longer ones, and the board is much more solidly mounted. Feeling quite satisfied, I quit for the day.

Sautéed onions and pepper with a veggie burger and yellow squash served as supper and peach pie for dessert. The local Kroger's store has this thing now that they have expanded. You can get individual pieces of such stuff as pie and cake in addition to sandwiches and other goodies. Once in a while I indulge myself, especially after I have been very good for a while.

It was a tired evening with no good TV. I sat and read unsuccessfully until I went to bed.

17 Friday

I had a nine twenty appointment with the ophthalmologist, so I got up early enough to get in my walking followed by a shower before it was time to go. I skipped breakfast. The Ophthalmologist is a petite lady who is very gentle and very skilled. She did both my cataract surgery on both eyes last year with no complications. She is easy to communicate with and is very clear in explaining what I should and should not do. I came away with an A+ for taking my vitamins and using my eye drops, so I do not have to return for a year now. My "dry" macular degeneration is not advancing rapidly and does not show any signs of converting to the "wet" variety of macular degeneration.

Afterward I wanted to do some shopping but reduced the extent of my travels as my eyes were blurry from the eye dilation drops. I did go to Lowes which is rather nearby the doctor's office, but I did not find what I wanted. So I toddled up the road to Home Depot. They had a more extensive display and I found a hand hold bracket which more or less matched the existing hardware in the bathroom, so I bought it. Seeing the difference in the stores again reinforces my satisfaction with owning Home Depot stock and not Lowes although they are deemed to be equivalent. It is my opinion that the best way to understand a company is to have personal experience with it.

Then I stopped at Sears on the way home to look at vacuum sweepers and rug shampoo machines. My downstairs carpet is white which is not the ideal color for an extensively used area. I do not believe the previous owner used the downstairs much at all. The bathroom and other equipment seem to have seen very little use. The previous owner had difficulty walking, so probably she had very little need to use the lower level. Whatever, I think I am going to have the need of either a better sweeper or a shampoo gadget. Mental reminder, check with Consumer Reports.

Finally, I did something I have been wanting to do for a while. One of my little quirks is to treat myself to some sort of no-no after doctor visits. Today it was the local Taco Bell - Pizza Hut. I hit it at just before their busiest time so stuff was ready and I did not have to wait. I had a Pepperoni Personal Pan Pizza. Say that three times in a hurry! It was delicious.

Work began as soon as I got home. I added a coat of white to the metal shelves I have been resurrecting. Then I moved to the real effort of the day. The shelves in the garage, (Remember the metal ones I first slide sideways and then rotated ninety degrees?) are much better in that position, but they are still visible from the street when the garage door is open. I thought they would look much better if I covered the side facing out with a more benign surface. Hauling out the fiberboard I had brought from the old house, (I did mention that, didn't I?) I began cutting and fitting.

These are pieces of fiberboard we used in years past when we had parties. They went on top of the open sewing machine cabinet to provide a large serving table.

These fiber panels were surplus, as we no longer use that arrangement. I had had difficulty in just throwing them away and they occupied storage space, which of course also justifies having storage space. Now they proved to be valuable. Unfortunately, they had elongated holes in the middle to accommodate the hinges of the sewing machine which stick up above the level of the rest of the open top. But serendipity came to the rescue as it often does. The dimensions I needed to cover the side of the shelves were just short of the holes, so I could cut off the holes and throw them away. Does that make sense? Cutting, fitting, drilling holes, and bolting them on took most of the afternoon. I had found some little bolts in my cultch pile and the necessary nuts to go with them. I did need to buy washers though. I previously mentioned these were easily acquired at the local North West Hardware. I did complete the covering job, but I was tired. I napped a little before supper and faded away early in the evening.

18 Saturday

Saturday; and house clean up day again. I went through the routines, water plants, ice the orchid, clean the bathroom, start the laundry, generally straighten up, etc. Then it was time for breakfast and puzzles.

The main thrust of the morning's work was to finish painting the small set of shelves which I am going to use for the base of my oak tool chest. The painting has been progressing in my cobbled up work shop, also known as the lower back patio. As we were moving, I built a work bench by connecting three two by sixes together on top of an old desk. It is solid enough that I was able to mount my vise on it also. This back area then is where I can do the messier work. The set of metal shelves has been occupying the space now for several days sometimes upright and sometimes upside down depending on the need. They were now ready for the final upright coat of paint.

After that was done, I tackled the other big job for the morning, cleaning the brush. I have fought with paint brushes for many years now, and I mostly have them under control. This particular brush is somewhat coarse. It has been wrapped in aluminum foil between uses the last few days and it has become more and more chubby as it retained paint. Now that the painting was over, it was time to bring it back to normal. The first step, of course, is to squeeze out as much paint as possible which is a messy operation. Then the sloshing around in paint thinner follows. Next is squeezing out as much paint thinner as possible. This is followed by the final step of repeated washing with strong detergent, and rinsing. When you can see suds actually forming during the detergent stage, it means most of the paint residue is gone. You know you are close to being done, but by then your hands are thoroughly icky and paint covered. The final step is to use a good paint removal goop on your hands. After that, the remaining paint wears off the skin in a day or so.

I tried to write later on but found that I took a nap instead. Feeling refreshed, I did a small remaining job. I think I have mentioned that our new garage has limited space. The step ladders have occupied an important part of that space. It was time to put them in their place. Their place is hanging up on the back wall where they will be available but not underfoot. Two sturdy hooks had been acquired in a previous outing, and it was now time to mount the hooks and hang the ladders. Amazingly, this proceeded without any hitches and the ladders are now comfortably hanging as only ladders can hang.

The Cooper Cove Community Club's spaghetti dinner was at five o'clock. I went out to the old house about an hour early to pick up mail, water plants and generally check the place. I noticed there were a lot of acorns on the driveway. As I drove in there was a good deal of popping noise under the car. We have had a dry spell and immature acorns are falling from the oaks and making their usual mess. I guess the oaks know when they cannot support all the acorns they grow and get rid of

some nuts early to conserve resources. Or am I anthropomorphizing the trees too much? I tucked away in my memory bank the item to bring the blower tomorrow for cleaning the driveway.

I got to the supper only a few minutes after it started. Walking in with Arnold and Dot Hurt, we also met Beth Hathaway and I ate with them. The spaghetti was as good as ever and the garlic bread was especially good. I bought chances in the raffle, but I did not win anything which fulfilled my expectations. I talked to a lot of old friends, and many asked about Mary. Even Laura Lyles and Pat were there. I got a lot of questions about our new place and sympathetic commiseration on the housing market at the present.

19 Sunday

Sunday started lazily. I needed a shower to bring me fully awake. I devoted myself to miscellaneous jobs until it was time to go to the property for an open house. During breakfast and after, I kept the contentious news interview shows on TV in the background, just to have some noise in the house.

One job I tackled was to try to remove the spaghetti spots on my shirt. These were souvenirs of the supper at Coopers Cove Community Club last evening. They were on the same good white shirt I wore to a wedding once where it accidentally got doused with wine. (Not mine.) Subsequent normal washings and treatment had brought it back to an acceptable state with the stained portions essentially not normally visible. It still left something to be desired by a fastidious person such as myself. Knowing that plant fiber (cotton) can withstand acids better than many other fibers, I mixed up a potent one to one ratio of liquid Clorox and water. Using a tissue, I gently daubed the spots and almost like magic, (What am I saying?) the spots disappeared. I was so pleased I decided to try the same on the old residual spots. Boldly I soaked them with the potent elixir. The drab brown spots gradually turned a bright yellow. Undaunted, I kept applying the cure and lo and behold, the colors gradually faded. The garment returned to its pristine white self again. I treated it to a rinse cycle in the washer and hung it up to dry. It now hangs proudly again among all its other prestigious cousins. Ah! Sweet success. May I often experience it.

The other task of the morning was to load up the car for the day. The leaf blower and an extra 100 foot extension cord, along with some cleaning supplies, the good parts of the paper and a little sustenance, were arranged haphazardly in the car. I was ready for the trip to Hardy. I killed the rest of the morning watching TV. I arrived early at the property, and first I washed the back door. I had realized earlier in the week that it carried a mud color from previous heavy rains. After two washings and scrubbing, it looked much more presentable.

Next I plugged the blower into an outside outlet and started to blow away the acorns. Except, the damn thing did not go. Now what? Considering the situation for a moment, I realized this outlet was on the same circuit as the outside pole light which I had turned off to conserve power and the sodium vapor bulb in the fixture. Trotting into the garage, I found the offending circuit and turned it back on. It happened the timer switch was in the on position, so I had auxiliary sodium vapor light as I blew away the acorns. This actually was rather fun to see them rolling and fleeing from my potent wind. It was good that I had brought along the extra cord as I needed it to get all the way down to the road and clear the entrance. There! Now no popping noise as you drive up the driveway.

I do not know how strict the rules are about open houses, but I was ready fifteen minutes early. Throwing caution to the winds, I drove out to the entrance and erected my signs and the one in front of the house. I was ready. I did not expect any action until later and there was none. I ate my lunch, read the paper, did the puzzles

and stared out the window. At three thirty a car turned into the drive. Down I went to the back door to greet the prospects. As they were walking in, I realized they were old acquaintances from the neighborhood, Steve Garrett and his wife. They were stopping in just to say hello, review old times and get up to date. Steve is currently out of work, like so many people, but I showed them around. I guess it is good practice for me. A white car also stopped in front to pick up literature from the realtor's display. At about four o'clock again as on the previous Sundays, a car drove in. Two men got out and came in. The older larger gray haired one did all the talking. The younger smaller darker one did all the exclaiming about how nice everything was. The older one said he knew Tim Toohig (our Realtor), and had bought several houses through him in the past. They seemed to like everything about the house. They were living in the city in an apartment at the moment, and wanted to be back in the country. It was close to five o'clock when they left, so I packed up and was ready to leave at five.

At home, I called and left a message for Tim telling him I would be in on Monday at ten AM to complete the counter offer to Mr. and Mrs. Fullen. For supper, I decided it was finally time to try my hand at broiling. I had taken some frozen salmon out of the freezer yesterday, so it was ready for the ordeal and so was I. It went better than I had expected. The electric broiler works quite well. A piece of salmon augmented with the available vegetables was very adequate, and a second piece was left over for another day.

The football game was on channel 13 which we get on cable but only on the kitchen set which is the small one we got for the restricted space in the old house. The larger fancier set is in the Den- TV viewing Room - Mary's Office. I have that one connected to rabbit ears and we pick up the local stations over the air. The reason for this is to get the third channel of the local PBS station which is not on cable. Mary likes to watch some programs which are only on this channel. Unfortunately, channel 13 does not get picked up by the antenna for some reason. So it is the small set for 13 and the large one for PBS 3. Most other channels are on both. This modern world is getting too complicated for me.

20 Monday

The paper was already in the door as I went out to get it. Doug Forbes must be back from his vacation. My walking started out slower than usual and I did not get as far as my customary turn around point which was a little disappointing. I determined myself to do better on Wednesday. My shower prepared me physically and emotionally for this important day. On my way down to the Realtor's office, I stopped along the way to pay the gas bill. It is possible to pay bills in person here for many of the utilities and services, which is an interesting change. I also paid the cable bill which office is only a couple blocks from the realtor's office. It is interesting that if I paid these by mail, I would just send them a check and that would be the end of it. At each of these places though, I had to show my driver's license for identification and I got receipts which I would not if I mailed the payment in. It is a curious World in which we live, and it will never cease to amaze me.

Tim was ready when I got there. It was necessary to go through all the forms we had done when we first listed the property. They were revised to show the current conditions. There were also some new ones with the specifics of the deal. Some of these forms had to be signed and some initialed with both our signatures. So I was busy signing my name then Mary's name, then adding BY and signing my name again followed by P. O. A. for Power Of Attorney. This took a little while as there are quite a few forms. At the end Tim made me a complete new set for our records. Now we wait to see the response. We will still be available to accept other offers, but they will need to be conditional, and we will need to give the Fullens 72 hours to complete their contract, if they are able to. Otherwise, the new offer can go into effect.

I told Tim about my experiences on Sunday including the gentleman who had said he knew Tim. When I mentioned his name, Tim's face lighted up and he almost

laughed. Yes, he knew Mr. X. Yes, he had sold him several houses in the past, even one in Lakeshore Terrace. Then he filled in the background. Mr. X had, among other things once operated a Laundromat with a young relative. The young relative had branched out into some dubious activities which were conducted in the rear of the Laundromat building. The police eventually caught up with the young man who spent some time in jail. I believe Tim said that Mr. X had been incarcerated also, for an allied activity called money laundering. The Laundromat and associated activity had been rumored to be very profitable, but no one knew where the money was. Possibly Mr. X knows, as he seems to be able to buy and sell house on whims and has done so several times with Tim. Mr. X moves and then never likes the house very long. He sounds like a restless person to me. We have not heard further from him --- yet.

On the way home I stopped to get gas in the Prius. The price of gas has been bouncing around a lot lately. It was down to \$2.35 at Kroger in Vinton, and using a ten cent per gallon off because of a hundred dollars spent on groceries it was just \$2.25. I dutifully recorded the mileage for Mary. Since it was lunch time and since I have not had any tacos all the time Mary has been gone, today I corrected that error. Our local little Taco Bell- Pizza Hut was convenient and open for business, so I succumbed to its enticing aura and entered. Taco, Cinnamon Crisps and a lemonade.

After lunch when I arrived home, I felt quite tired, and I decided to lie down on the sofa for a while. The next thing I knew the phone was ringing. Stumbling to the den to answer it, I groggily picked it up. It was Tim. The buyers were mostly satisfied with our counteroffer but needed a little rearrangement of the numbers. I considered it for a few moments, then told him OK. What the hell, it's only money. I expect to go back there in the next couple days to finalize the arrangement. It seems we have a contingent deal to sell the house. Now to work on getting a better one. We are gradually making progress on this thing. I will be glad when it is completed, and we can return to a normal life.

The rest of the day was occupied with writing, except for a few minutes while I got on line to see what the market was doing today. I also went to the Wells Fargo Advisors site to check our portfolios. While we have been losing money on the house, we have been making a little in the recovering stock market. We had invested in some solid firms at the bottom of this recession, and it is paying off. It does not balance out, but it makes me feel better. I suddenly realized Mary's account showed 144 shares of Frontier Communications. Where did that come from? I called our broker and left him a message inquiring, "George, where did these shares come from? Did I miss something or forget something or am I just crazy?" About a half an hour later, the phone rang. It was George. "No," He assured me, "You are not crazy. The shares are there and they were a gift." It seems Verizon wanted to split off some small rural phone lines and put them into this organization. So Mary received a number of Frontier shares relative to the number of Verizon shares she holds. This should do wonderful things to the record keeping at the end of the year. According to George this is almost unprecedented. Like it or not Mary, owns some of Frontier Communications, and it pays a good dividend also. Some people are just lucky. Often that is better than being smart.

After a little news watching and suppering I wandered off to bed earlier than usual. No useful work on all the physical tasks today.

21 Tuesday

I slept well and got up early. This will be a work day. I started by doing some writing. I am nearing the end of this little effort at documenting my mundane existence in the average little town of Vinton, Virginia. If anyone has been interested enough to read this far, thank you for your perseverance. You had a choice to follow this. I did not. To promote the idea that I will be doing constructive work, and to add to the ambiance or aura thereto, I donned work clothes. That was Step One. Step two was to sit

down with the paper and breakfast to build up my strength and courage to face the day.

After building up sufficient initiative, I proceeded with a small job. Getting out of my shower is a little awkward and the bracket I bought the other day was destined to be put in place. I carefully measured and put in the first screw. With the one screw holding the piece in place I marked all the rest of the holes. It is held by six screws. Five went in beautifully. The sixth naturally ran into something immovable. I fussed at it, but none of my good drills seemed to be able to penetrate it. Finally by probing to the side and chewing out a bit of the hole in the fixture. I was able to drill at an angle enough to clear the obstruction. The screw went in with difficulty, but it did go. Again brute force solved the problem.

At long last it was time for the oak tool chest to be placed on top of the metal shelves whose cleaning and painting had been so protracted. Even the empty chest is a little awkward to handle, but it was wrestled into position on top of the shelves. The long separated screws were retrieved, and as the holes were brought into alignment, the screws were once again doing their duty. All was fine. All was not fine. The structure was tippy. Either the floor was uneven or the shelves were wracked slightly or maybe a little of both. The whole thing wobbled. There was no latitude for changing the position on the floor very much and the structure was too firm to try twisting and adjusting it. "Oh well," I thought, "When it is loaded up with the drawers and other stuff, it will settle down." After putting the drawers and everything else in place, another fond hope was shattered. It still tipped. The only solution was shimming it in place. It took a few minutes to find the proper combination of shims, but that was finally done. One good result of all of this effort was that in handling the drawers and re-inserting them, I discovered a long lost tool which had inadvertently been placed into the wrong drawer.

After this physical activity, it was time to sit quietly at the computer to do email and such things. I found an email from Tim that he had the new contract. I called his office and arranged a time later in the day to go there to re-sign papers and finish the deal. A little later sister Gertie called from San Antonio. We had a nice long talk. She has a different phone number for a new cell phone she carries on a lanyard. I dutifully recorded the number, and I brought her up to date on the house negotiations. After changing out of my work clothes and consuming a small bologna sandwich, I was ready to face the World. I had several errands to do on the way to the realtor but arrived at the appointed hour. Signing took only a few minutes, but now we have an agreement which is sixteen thousand dollars better than where we started. I decided I needed to celebrate, so I stopped at Wendy's and had a Frostee, which I sat and savored a long time.

Evening brought a supper of breaded fish cooked in the toaster oven, a trip out for a new mop, watching Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy, some writing time and bed.

22 Wednesday

Today is the day. Mary is coming home. Time to clean the house and straighten up. But first was walking. The weather has been holding on as comfortably warm. I start out with a light sweater on, and I am plenty warm by the time I finish my walk. The weather persons are promising cooler weather this weekend. I wonder how long I will be able to do these walks before they become too uncomfortable weather wise. I noticed there were dry leaves on the ground today. It has been quite a while since we had rain, but fall is right around the corner also. In fact, today is the official first day of autumn. Cooler weather is predicted for this weekend. And perhaps even some rain.

At breakfast, I indulged in two pieces of the Texas Toast which I bought the other day. Thick, buttery, garlic flavored -- yum. After puzzles and comics, I began assembling the rubbish for collection tomorrow. This inevitably led to straightening up around the house followed by a full blown vacuuming attack on the rugs. By mid morning the place was looking fairly decent. Newspapers ready to be disposed, other recyclables in their place, and the desk looking a little neater. This was interrupted by a call from Mary in Portland warning me they were leaving for the airport. Her trip home was beginning. Lunch was soup because it was quick and easy.

A hasty trip to the old house to pick up mail resulted in a large handful of junk mail which had filled the mailbox to overflowing. Checking around the house showed everything in order. I noted that Mark could water some shrubs and cut out dead flower stalks tomorrow. We have had no rain for a significant period now. I made a note to take the blower again on Sunday to rid the drive of acorns.

Back at home I inadvertently took a short nap and was awakened by a fairly strong wind. It seems a string of storms was sweeping across the area. The TV carried warning messages, and shortly we had a rather severe downpour. Finally some rain! The ground sucked it up like a sponge. In a few minutes the Sun was out again.

I got busy and made the chili I had been planning with beans tomatoes and lots of chopped celery and enough diced onion, it turned out quite well, I thought, and I left it to cool in the skillet. Then downstairs to do a little more writing. I came up later to have some of my chili for supper. Just as I was finishing, another storm came along. It introduced itself with a large flash of lightening, accompanied by all the power going off including the phone going dead. That was twenty after Six PM. I waited expecting the power to come on again in a few minutes. At a quarter to Seven, it was still not on, but the rain had stopped. A neighbor returning from town indicated the power was off in a wide area towards Roanoke.

Mary's plane was due eight something. What if the power stayed off for a long time? Could I get the car out of the garage? Would traffic be impossible going into town? The first of these was relatively easy. I went to the garage with one of my trusty little flashlights, and yanked the emergency door release. I lifted the door. Thankfully, the door was well balanced and I could open it. I moved the car out and parked it. One problem solved. I pulled the door back down. Considering the possible traffic problems, I decided it would be better to go while it was still light and just wait at the airport. Getting some candles and all the flashlights together for when we returned, I thought through what I would need. As I was preparing to leave with plenty of time to spare, the power came back on. Hallelujah! It had been off about an hour. I waited a few minutes to be sure the return was permanent then re-evaluated the situation. Checking the phone I was dismayed to discover it was still dead.

I did not have to go to the airport early. I could even watch a little TV. I sat and felt a little relieved for a while. Then I remembered the garage door. I went out and ran the mechanism assuming it would snap back into place. Nope. A few cycles produced no results. Now what? I fussed at it a little then began to run out of time. Time to go get Mary, fix it when I get back.

The trip to the airport was uneventful. There was some sort of debris on the road going through Valley View causing a car to swerve in front of me, but nothing serious. When I arrived at the airport, the plane was listed a few minutes early. By the time it landed it was a few minutes late. Mary was near the last one off the plane, and the crowd at the "Receiving line" of relatives and friends was mostly dispersed. We were both relieved she was back, and we meandered down to the baggage claim. There were two other parties there and three bags, but none of them matched up. We were instructed, (sort of mumbled at and indicated to go that way) to the front desk to make arrangements to retrieve Mary's other bag. When we got there several other younger, more agile de-planers were lined up ahead of us

After duly waiting our turn and doing the paperwork, Mary was informed the bag would be delivered the following day beginning at ten AM preceded by a phone call, which we realized later would be difficult unless the phone decided to get fixed first. Eventually we arrived home to a garage door that still did not respond to the magic hand held opener. Resorting to the manual method, the door was opened and we re-entered the abode. After the usual unburdening of paraphernalia and exchanging of messages, pointing out the chili and macaroni available for hungry travelers, etc., I found a few minutes to go back and look at the garage door. From the perspective of the top of a ladder, it was seen that contrary to my expectations, the release mechanism was not spring loaded and did not automatically go back to doing its business, but had to be manually reset. I manually reset it. Thenceforward the door has performed as it was designed to do. By then I was exhausted and somehow managed to get to bed.

23 Thursday

I slept a little late and Mary was still asleep when I got up. I had Texas Toast for breakfast, another break from tradition, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. I discovered the phone was still kaput. Exiting to find an available phone for reporting purposes, I met the neighbor ladies out walking. No, their phones were not affected. They were working, but they had Cox Cable service and I have Verizon phone service. I knew where one of a dying breed of facilities, an outside pay phone, was still located. It was a few minutes drive away, but it was there and it worked. Availing myself of its use, I called the 800 number for telephone repair. It was a fairly friendly computer, but I sensed that it had been overworked lately. It told me they were aware of outages in my area and they were doing all they could humanly and computerly do to re-instate them. It explained that my phone could be returned to service as soon as the evening of the next day. I told the computer to go to hell, but it did not seem to mind at all. After waiting five minutes to talk to a real person, I hung up. At least I got my deposited coins back.

Back at the house, Mary was still asleep. I left a note for her. I had to be at the property to tell our yard guy what to do today. After getting Mark started, I headed for the mall for some shopping and price checking on new tools. I am not going to buy any, but I wanted a gauge for pricing the old things I plan to sell at a yard sale next week. By the time I got home, Mary was up and finishing lunch, the errant bag had arrived and the phone was working. It evidently started working about a half an hour after I called. Wonder of wonders. So I had lunch also. Things were practically back to normal, we had almost had lunch together.

Addendum: A few days later we received a new offer on the house from a party who really wanted it and offered a nice premium over the contract we had. Since we had an escape clause in the old contract we exercised it, giving the proper notice and then sold the house finally to the new buyer.

Vinton News July 3, 2012

We have had an interesting few days. Friday evening we had a severe wind and lightning storm, many trees down, power outages across the state, etc. Luckily we did not have damage but there were trees down on the street. I cleaned up the twigs and branches on our lawn and there are piles of tree debris along the roadway now.

Saturday we mostly stayed home but did go out to eat. The restaurant we were going to was closed (no power) so we sought an alternative. It was challenging driving with some traffic lights out and some not. Sunday church was cancelled, and we recovered in general at home.

Monday morning walking found a yellow flag across the greenway. Ignoring the flag I continued on to Washington Ave, and all was well until exiting the tunnel on the other side of Washington there was another yellow ribbon and a “keep out “ sign and the roadway was blocked. Following my natural curiosity and seeing nothing to block a walker, I continued on. That is, I continued until I could see the parking lot which had power lines draped over it. They were dead, no sparking, smoking, sizzling, etc. but I turned around and went back. Best not to tempt fate.

I set up one of the traffic cones blocking the entrance which had blown or fallen over. I also warned other approaching walkers of the problem. Monday was spent partly by taking Mary to a PT appointment and learning new ways to twist sick knees. The evening was normal until we realized it was getting very warm. A cursory investigation showed the AC had quit. So today will be a repair day (hopefully) and everything will be normal after this. Mary is now able to do steps so we spent the night down in the guest room as the downstairs is always comfortable. I expect another dull day today.