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Tales Told from Memory by James H. Leonard Jr.

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"Yes. Of course it was."

Granddad's Stories

Our Dad was a wonderful story teller. We were raised on his adventures growing up in Lostine, a tiny town in Eastern Oregon "that had everything a boy needed." As we were grieving over the loss of our father in 2004, my dear sister presented us with a spiral bound copy of some of Dad's favorite tales, simply entitled "Granddad's Stories". They were a comfort then, and I have reread them many times since. On the 100th anniversary of our father's birth, August 23, 1918, we've revived many of these same stories, just in a glossier book format and with a few photos. He wrote them in the 1980's and 90's as part of a College of Marin class called Tales Told from Memory.

So, come join us on my Dad's wheat ranch, where at five he ran away from home to teach his mom a lesson. You'll meet his father, too, one of the quietest men he ever met, "also one of the most interesting." Jerry and Buddy's story is told, helping to explain our dad's lifelong love affair with dogs. He'll introduce you to his best friend, Vic Crow, who was "always trying to make time" with his sister Hilma, and his Uncle Cole, who quoted Longfellow on his deathbed. Then travel with him to Coquille, Oregon, where he worked summers as a "whistle punk" in a logging camp to pay for college. A memorable moment in World War II and at the newspaper are chronicled, too. Even Ray's Barber Shop in Mill Valley makes an appearance. When you've finished, no doubt you will agree with our Dad that, "Memories are responsible for a lot of good writing…"

Tables of Contents

Teaching My Mother a Lesson

It was the first time I ran away from home, and it was the last.

I don't remember the issue my mother and I were debating. I was only five, and I lost the argument. Mom said I told her I would just have to leave home, if she would fix me a lunch. To my surprise she agreed, theorizing no doubt that I would eat as soon as I was out of sight and return home.

She was on the right track, but things got out of hand; and before the day was over I would be lost; and a number of ranchers in the area and some of their wives would be searching for a lost child.

My family which included a younger sister and an older one lived on a fairly large wheat ranch about seven miles from the small town of Wallowa in northeast Oregon. There was no such thing as next door neighbors.

My idea, since Mom needed to be taught a lesson, was to head for town. To fool pursuers I headed north during mid-morning in the opposite direction. By climbing a hill and doubling back along a rocky road west of our place I would get into Wallowa without being seen.

So I walked and walked — and walked — and I was getting very tired. The huge wheat field along the road was becoming more and more attractive. It was ours. The wheat, still green, was probably a month and half from being ripe enough for harvest. It was higher by far than my head.

I figured my mother had learned her lesson, so I turned into the field.

All I had to do was walk eastward to the crest of the hill, and I would be able to look down and see our house. At the brow to the hill, however, I still couldn't see over the wheat. So I decided to have lunch and then head for home. I would go downhill until the field leveled out and quickly adjoined a pasture where I would have a clear view of the house.

I wandered and wandered, but could not get out of the wheat, and eventually decided something was wrong.

Meanwhile, evening was approaching and Mom had been on the telephone - - the old hand crank type. We did not have telephone numbers at that time. We had "rings" (ours was a "long" and two shorts"). If someone cranked out six longs, that meant trouble, and that was what Mom was ringing. My older sister had already summoned my father from the far side of the ranch. if I could have seen out of the wheat, I probably would have seen a lot of action.

I recall listening for sounds of wild animals. We had nothing in the immediate area except coyotes; but imagination could work wonders.

Finally I heard a someone call my name. Looking up I saw the most wonderful woman in the world. I remember her so well — and the little girl riding on her shoulder. It was Mrs. Gettings and her small daughter.

Soon as I was home, Mrs. Gettings told Mom her search seemed hopeless.

There was little chance of seeing a child's footprints on the surface of the

rocky road. But the she saw where something or someone had walked into the wheat field. And there were the footprints. At the foot of the hill the trail started going in circles, and soon she said she heard a child crying. When she found me I was lying down, on the threshold of sleep.

The story was kept alive by my family, relatives and friends. I still remember some of the details vividly; because after all, it was a traumatic experience. My grandmother, who was away at the time, told the most colorful version and she always ended by scolding her daughter, my mother — unfairly I thought.

My grandmother could never understand, she said, "how a kid could live in the middle of nowhere and still cause so much trouble."

Three years ago while visiting friends and familiar places in Oregon I met a woman named Shannon Tower.

"When I was a child my family lived on a ranch in the Willow Springs area north of Wallowa. We knew a Leonard family."

"My maiden name was Gettings, " she said.

"Then it was your mother —"

"Yes," Shannon replied, completing the story.

"And I was with her."

Jim Leonard

8 Jimmy Leonard (front-far right), James Leonard Sr. (back- 4th from left), sister Helen (back-middle in glasses)

A Place With Everything

Reminiscing about the good times long ago, I often worry for fear that at the time I didn't realize how much fun I was having.

A case in point: the house we lived in when I was a boy in Lostine. This place had everything a boy needed. My sisters have told me it was also pretty good for girls. I know I took full advantage of all the benefits it offered during the late grammar school years and through high school.

It was along the river, the Lostine River, the best fishing stream in the world. In early Spring we went after steelhead salmon with a good stout line and small chunks of trout that were sacrificed to lure angry steelheads. Later in the spring, carrying either a grab hook or gig, you went out to head off the huge Chinooks. They fought their way up the Columbia and its tributaries to spawn in our river. I didn't always get one of those big ones, but when I did I'd look at it with respect and wonder how in the world it made it. The rest of the season it was bait fishing and fly fishing, which was my specialty. Once in a while when I was a little lazy I would fish from the high bank back of the house.

There were 176 people in the little town in the mountains of northeast Oregon so every house was important, particularly to me, because they were all on my daily Oregonian delivery route. But our house was special, and probably the busiest in town.

The house was a large two-story affair that resembled a box with windows.

An architectural beauty it was not; but it was a home with incomparable beauty. It recalls to me a line from an Edgar A. Guest poem — "it takes a heap o' livin' to make a house a home".

The grand old structure fronted on the graveled road that led up the Lostine River canyon to Lake basin in the high mountains. You had to climb the last six or seven miles to get there.

You entered the house through a large living room that entertained most of the young people our ages in town. In the center of the room was a large wood and coal heating stove that was rarely used after summer and early fall because it was so cold. You couldn't feel the heat if you moved two feet from the stove.

The crown jewel of the living room was the upright Schiller piano that my older sister taught how to speak melodiously. Music was big in Lostine, and it was a tradition for us to consider the small town the top of the line in the state for singing groups. Helen, the princess of the piano, had an outstanding selection of sheet music on the piano — Kentucky Babe, Because (and other Carrie Jacobs Bond specials), The Maine Stein Song, Rhapsody in Blue, Goofus, and things with Rudy Vallee and Lanny Ross pictures.

Every evening after dinner our friends started drifting in. There was no advance notice, probably because there were only three or four telephones in the entire town. Sometimes they came before dinner. Sometimes they even

brought food. Everyone came, and they were welcome. My sisters and I had no illusions that it was strictly our sterling popularity. Our friends loved our mother and father, and nearly all of them had gone to school to our father, the teacher.

A new elementary school teacher, June Coolidge, arrived in town, and even though she boarded a half mile away with my aunt and uncle, she spent most of her time at our house, drinking coffee with my mother, singing and playing games. Often she went fishing with me after school. I taught her how to fish, and she taught me a few things about growing up.

A long corridor led from the living room to the kitchen in the back of the house. On the way back you passed the stairway to the upstairs bedrooms where my sisters and I slept. The only time the rooms were used during late autumn and winter was when we crawled into bed. The feather beds were warm and cozy, but there were times when extreme cold made it all right for us to snuggle in together.

It was typical of the Leonard family to do most of its living in the kitchen of any home, and this one was ideal for that. It was large and easy to heat, with a big kitchen range on one side and a heating stove a little off center toward the other side of the room. Nearby was a tall cupboard for dishes and dinnerware. At its bottom was a fabulous drawer that was filled with shotgun and rifle ammunition, as well as some fishing tackle.

Knowing of numerous insidious ways of heckling my older sister, Helen, I would often put a box on top of the cupboard labeled "Private! Do not touch!" Large scary letters. Curious Helen would go into hypnotic trance staring at the box. My younger sister, Hilma, could care less. She knew me like a book.

" Helen! Forget about the stupid box," Hilma would scold. "Don't you know he is just teasing you?"

Noble try, but finally …

"Mom. Make him tell us what's in the box.," Helen begged. We knew she was beginning to win her point.

My father observed this routine quietly with a half-smile, but he left the adjudication to my mother, who sat by with eyes shining in amusement. Her face would become more and more flushed until she approached the point of hilarious explosion. With one glance from her I would arise and hand the empty box to Helen who, after a quick glance, fled from the room in tears, and the inevitable "Oh, brother," from Hilma.

I followed Helen, finding her sobbing on the sofa. Cradling her in my arms, I would apologize. She replied with a hug, and we returned to the meal arm in arm; and that would end the episode. No doubt about it, Helen favored the conclusion. She loved to be on the receiving end of affection. She was a winner. She always won.

That wonderful house was just part of the joy of living, because it was only one of many memorable features of the three acres it occupied. Everything on the place worked, and my father saw to that. That was the type of person he was. We had one of the only gates in town that opened easily and flawlessly. It was the large gate across the entry road for bringing the car into the back yard. I loved that gate, and used to open and close it needlessly — just because it worked so well. Only once did I violate the directive not to climb over the gate.

But once when I was a senior in high school I went beer drinking with the boys. It was sort of a shakedown cruise, and I had not learned my limitations. Returning home late, I made my approach the back way. Failing after several attempts to open that perfectly functioning gate, I decided to climb over. It went fine until I started my descent, and fell to the ground with a thud that would have have knocked the breath out of a sober person.

I made my way to bed beneath the huge maple tree in the back yard. I slept there every summer and into the autumn until the first snowfall.

"When did you get home last night?" my mother asked at breakfast the next morning.

"Oh, I don't know. I didn't check the time." But I noticed the impish smile on Helen's face.

"I saw you come over the big gate," Helen observed slyly.

No more was said; but later on my father asked:

"Had enough?" Somehow I realized my parents knew it all.

"Yeah."

It was always a treat just to approach the house. The lawn was always green, and my mother's flowers were cared for meticulously. You could smell them a block away. There was something about coming to the house that told you great things happened here.

Along the front fence and porch was a garden of the most fragrant and beautiful roses in the world. On the north side of the house was a large garden that was a miracle of landscaping. It reflected my father's quest for perfection. The rows of vegetables were uniformly straight and perfectly separated. There were no weeds in that garden, thanks to my father's talent for making me work.

A small area on the south, most sunny, side of the house was devoted to strawberries — the largest and juiciest in the world. It frustrated me that people refused to believe me when I told them how large those berries were. Some of them were too large to fit through the neck of a quart Mason jar.

No one has ever asked me to prove the conclusions I have reached about the experience of boyhood. Did I really try to crowd huge berries through the neck of a fruit jar? Were they really the tastiest and the juiciest in the world?

Memories tend to be fond, and the more they are nurtured the stronger

they become. That might be the reason I remember the trees being much taller than they were the last time I visited Lostine. And perhaps it explains why the mountain west of town is really some distance away and does not crowd the town limits the way I thought it did. Memories can become quite powerful, but I wouldn't say they color the truth to a fault.

Memories are responsible for a lot of good writing, and they inspire some great songs.

So if you ask me if the Lostine River was really the best fishing stream in the world, I would have to say, after due deliberation:

"Yes. Of course it was."

James Leonard

Jerry and Buddy

Jerry and Buddy would follow me anywhere. No getting around it — they were character builders. From their point of view the sun rose and set with me. They liked me for what I was, convincing me that I really mattered. As I recall, the age of twelve is a time when a boy needs all the help he can get.

They were both terriers of a sort. I don't think anyone in the tiny town of Lostine had a dog worthy of making the American Kennel Society's registry. But my friends and I did not know that. We would proclaim our dogs as "full-blooded" somethings or other.

Jerry was an exception. By any stretch of the imagination he was just barely dog.

He made the scene first while I was driving derrick on Roy Swart's ranch at the head of the Middle Valley during the haying season.

You enter the Wallowa Valley by descending the Minam Grade into the canyon of the Minam River. The canyon then follows the Wallowa River after it and the Minam join, and soon breaks out into a broad, beautiful valley known as Lower Valley by the natives, followed, of course, by the Middle Valley and Upper Valley.

That amounts to about 30 miles of valley, significant because Buddy, Jerry, and I traveled most of it.

Jerry had nothing going for him. A stray off the highway where someone

had probably abandoned him, he settled at the Swart Ranch and became a hanger-on at the milk house. He survived by drinking the milk poured into pans for cats. Occasionally the cats would gang up on him, and more than once he ended up in a pan of milk. He became a dirty, smelly mess. One night Roy Swart asked the question.

"Jim, do you want this dog?"

"What will happen to him if I don't take him?"

I already knew the answer.

"I'll have to take him out to the back pasture," Roy replied.

I studied Jerry carefully and was convinced that he would be a serious candidate for the world's ugliest dog. But looks are not everything.

He had been surgically deprived of his masculinity, which explained his timidity — and why cats would attack him. He lacked the usual lean muscular look of a real country dog. Hair grew from ends of his ears, giving them a strange pointed shaggy look; and hair also extended beyond the end of his bobbed tail, giving it a drooping look.

And he was filthy. He didn't walk. His movement was halfway between slinking and creeping. The ultimate in timidity, he tried hard to be unseen.

Roy waited for an answer.

"This dog doesn't have anything to live for. He is miserable, and a damned

nuisance."

"I'll take him," I said, wondering what my mother and father would say. I soon found out.

"What is that?" My mother asked.

My father just smiled.

"He'll look pretty good when I get him cleaned up," I explained.

I scrubbed him vigorously, trimmed his ears and his tail, and he did look pretty good. And the very next day he walked with his tail up, and he stopped slinking.

My sister said I should call him "Jerry." I don't know where it came from, but the name stuck. Jerry dogged my every step, and he looked at me with total devotion.

Buddy was a tiny pup, just weaned from his mother and lapping milk from the pan when someone gave him to me. He never had a welcome from Jerry to wear out, because Jerry never extended one.

Within days Buddy made Jerry's existence insufferable, playing and teasing him constantly, until Jerry landed on him snarling and chewing. Jerry had lost his will for fighting along with his surgery. But Buddy was still a pup and didn't know this.

But as Buddy grew larger and rougher Jerry's defense became more verbal

than physical, and then it became outright fakery. Finally deception failed completely, and Buddy went so far as to produce yips of pain.

A strange thing happened. Buddy stopped teasing. No more tormenting. He became Jerry's protector.

The town dogs were aware of Jerry's sexless personality and hated him for it. If given their way, they would have killed him.

Before Buddy they had to reckon with a club, rock throwing me. Then they learned they also had to fight Buddy, who was a formidable opponent.

For a dog that had nothing going for him — at one point nothing to live for — Jerry had it made.

James Leonard
April 1987

The Post Office

There were no addresses in my home town. No one in Lostine had an address. The houses had no numbers. Actually they were not needed. There were not even any street signs.

But Lostine was a proud Oregon community, a real incorporated city ever since 1903, I understand, and the population when I lived there was 176. I hear that it has now swelled to 265.

If you arrived in town and asked where the Leonards lived, the reply would most likely have been "on the South Fork road, just before you leave town".

There was no problem getting your mail. You walked to the post office, and when Earl Allen, the postmaster, saw you coming he would probably hand you your mail, even if you had a rented box. You might have to trade a bit of conversation for it, but that was all right. Maybe it would be his wife, Georgia, a brown-haired woman with an engaging smile, who also liked to talk. My mother told me Georgia had crush on my father when she was a young girl, which might explain why she inquired about him so often. One of the quietest men I have ever known, my father was also the most interesting. The more I learned about him the more interesting he became. I always felt I would like to have known more about him.

The post office was made for the town. It was an institution that served the community well. you can't imagine how often you heard:

" You can't guess what I heard at the post office this morning. "

You took one step up from the sidewalk to a door that opened to a lobby measuring only about ten by fifteen feet. It was a small door, and by no stretch of the imagination could it be considered appropriate for a post office. But it had a great door knob — a round knob, worn shiny from regular use.

The rough oiled wood floor was not kind to barefooted children, because it was easy to pick up splinters. There was a wall of postal boxes, each of which had two combination knobs, and Postmaster Earl often got his kicks teasing the children who had forgotten the combination. He wrung all kinds of promises out of the young ones before he handed over the mail.

On the wall to the left as you entered was a long, chest high shelf. Behind the shelf were small boxes containing free postal documents and terrible little pencils, most of which contained broken lead. Earl wasn't very good at keeping the pencils sharpened, mainly because there wasn't enough of them left to sharpen.

On the wall above the shelf was the post office showpiece, a large painting of George Washington; and it seemed that everyone studied it with great respect. A number of us thought it should have been Benjamin Franklin who had a great deal more to do with the postal service than George Washington. We were great history students in Lostine.

The post office could generate excitement. One night two men got drunk in the nearby pool hall, were thrown out, and somehow ended up fighting in the post office. They were good friends when sober, which was generally true. One was a carpenter, a stroke of luck in this case. With a nudge from Bill Forrester, the 315-pound, six-foot six town marshall, the post office was quickly repaired, a paint job was thrown in. Case closed.

Then there was the night Vic Crow's pet burros, town characters, walked in and messed it up. The burros — Kate and Taters — could open gates and doors with their mouths. Vic was busy cleaning up the post office before he went to school. Vic, incidentally, was my age, and he and I were buddies. He was always trying to make time with my younger sister, Hilma, but never got to first base.

During a good share of the day the post office was one of the best places in town for "visiting", especially for grownups.

In late spring the chirping of baby chicks often turned it into bedlam, because it was then that many people ordered their chicks from Montgomery Ward. The postmaster would be hard to handle if someone became slow in picking up their chicks. He was known to deliver them personally.

I learned to use the post office to my personal advantage. Being the town's only newspaper carrier (40 of the 42 families were my subscribers), I made most

of my monthly collections there. My coverage of the town was considered quite commendable. My paper, the Oregonian, was Republican through and through, and most of the people in town were Democrats. When subscribers saw me waiting with my account book they paid. One customer I considered an out-and-out tightwad.

A dairy rancher married to my cousin, he tried every trick in the book to avoid paying. So when I saw him coming I stood near the postmaster's window; and Earl's cagey smile made him pay up quickly to avoid embarrassment.

A couple of years ago I visited my home town, and the post office building was still there. Someone was using it as a tool shed, however. A new post office was built up the street as a small addition to a private home. There was a comfortable wood bench out front for visiting.

J. Leonard — 1990

My Uncle

Few people can endure being disliked. Most of us eventually learn that dislike is a two-way street. Blame must be shared. That point of self discovery quite often tells us that there are ways to straighten things out.

Some of my best friends were products of bad starts that developed into rewarding relationships. But you can wait too long. I can recall one instance like that. As a teenager I found it impossible to deal with my Uncle Cole. He was my father's middle brother, an extremely tall, slender man with heavy iron gray hair — the most handsome man in the family. According to my mother all the women in the countryside were very fond of him.

My first recollections of him were fond ones. He liked me and I liked him. He didn't care very much for my two sisters. At the end he indicated clearly that he despised me, and I responded similarly. His attitude toward my sisters changed. The sun rose and set with them. They could do no wrong.

Strangely it was toward the end that I began to understand that there were interesting things about him and I regretted that it took me so long to know about him. But I was just too young. I knew he was an alcoholic, but I didn't have the slightest idea why. For so long it was a matter of waiting for the next phone call to notify my father that his brother needed help. Maybe he was in a state of alcoholic insensibility in some rancher's barn or snowdrift or ready to freeze to death in the dead of winter.

I was sorry for my father who never gave up on a brother who always insisted that this "was the last time — I am going to get myself straightened out". I was constantly furious because he made life miserable to my father, and my mother worked so hard to help her husband take care of her brother. I must have made life hopeless for a man who had to put up with an upstart nephew scolding him, and I found it totally confusing to be scolded by my parents when I thought I was trying to help.

But the end finally came, and Uncle Cole was a in a coma at the senior uncle's house. Now and then I would accompany my father as we sat at Uncle Cole's bedside. No one talked. I tried and my father tried. But it was generally an agonizingly silent period.

One afternoon, probably the day before he died, Uncle Cole stirred, and he began talking. It was poetry.

"Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.
Life is real! Life is earnest
And the grave is not its goal."

At this point Uncle Cole stopped speaking. I had never seen my father cry before. But then he did.

"Cole always loved Longfellow. We always loved Henry Wadsworth Longfellow."

As a young fellow, Uncle Cole was an avid reader, my father said. He particularly liked poetry. One reading was usually adequate for committing a poem to memory. My father believed that Uncle Cole recalled the "Psalm of Life" from the third or fourth grade. I believe this was the last time he ever spoke.

And I could never understand why my father so rarely spoke of him. All I ever learned about Uncle Cole came from an occasional friend or a relative or two. And most of that came after his death. I wish I could have learned more. I often believed that he should have got married. He liked women and they liked him.

One story that came to me from my younger sister was that Uncle Cole and Leota Holmes, a school teacher in Lostine, had been deeply in love and would probably have married except for a mysterious objection from Leota's family. She had two brothers and one sister. None of them married.

Another report about Uncle Cole came to me from a reliable cousin three years ago. We were discussing a well known Lostine family (everyone in Lostine was well known). There were three sons — two darkly complexioned, and one

with a fair complexion and blond hair. I referred to this discrepancy.

"You know who the father was, don't you?" my cousin asked.

I didn't.

"Your Uncle Cole," my cousin said. I know he was right. The resemblance was unmistakeable.

Two years ago my son and I visited Lostine, and of course a stop at the cemetery was a must and a pause at the Leonard section.

"You notice anything unusual, Dad?" my son asked. "Your Uncle Cole's grave is the only one with fresh flowers."

I pointed this out to the cemetery care taker, and he explained that my Uncle always had fresh flowers.

"From whom?" I asked.

" We never ask questions," he replied.

Jim Leonard 10-31-93

Dreams Come True

Things have a way of working out. That's what we were told, going as far back as distant childhood.

I swear it was generally true. But you had to learn that solutions involved contributing factors — mainly personal effort and the help of friends.

A case in point — when I believed my dreams of going to college appeared to be heading for disaster.

After high school I figured I could earn enough money in the hay fields of Eastern Oregon and "jigging sacks" and tending header on combines during wheat harvest to pay for my freshman year at the University of Oregon in Eugene. I worked hard toward this dream. There was no money for movies and things like that. I loved dancing, and the Friday night dances in the church saved my neck in that respect.

I squeaked through the first year in Eugene, working every job I cold find, just like many others in the same dire straits. We understood the problems because we shared them. After all these were the depression years.

When my family moved to Southwestern Oregon in the late summer my doom was sealed. I knew the second year of college was out of the question. I was a ranch boy and there were no ranches in Coos County down near the coast. But there were logging camps, and that's where I pinned my hopes. The chances were slim.

"We'll keep you in mind," they said.

My family lived in the country, on the North Bank road — on the north side of the Coquille River. Our house was at the foot of a canyon. A creek ran through the front yard, and the deer liked to take their water there. It was one of my jobs to keep them out of the garden. The place was so beautiful that I was inclined at times to forget the misery of being unemployed, with no immediate hope of getting back to college.

Up the canyon about a mile was Morris Ray's logging camp, and I often followed the loggers to work in the morning mainly for the company. Morris was friendly, and I knew he would help me if he could. But he made no promises.

"One of these days they will get tired of looking at you and give you a job," my mother consoled.

Real life at the logging camp started at the "landing" where logs were loaded on trucks. The logs came down a 2-inch cable or "skyline" to a huge spar tree at the landing. The skyline was mounted on another huge spar tree at the top of the steep hill.

The logs made the trip down the skyline on a carriage with a pair of 2-foot sheaves. A signalman, or "whistle punk", signaled the machine at the foot of the hill with loud blasts of an air horn which then in a clever operation lifted the logs and moved them down the skyline to the loading deck. It was an exciting

operation for a spectator like me to watch.

One morning the spectator averted a tragedy, and it changed his (my) life.

A sheave on the carriage high on the cable at the spar tree broke, sending cables and other pieces of equipment to the ground. Workmen, including the whistle punk, scattered. The carriage paused for a second and then headed screaming down the hill on the skyline.

I didn't run, probably because I didn't know where to go.

But I did know that people at the foot of the hill would be killed unless they got out of the way. But they would have to be warned.

I picked up the signal control and started sending a series of sounds wild enough to attract attention. A trail of blue smoke followed the carriage down the skyline. Eventually it crashed in a cloud of smoke and dust.

All I could think of was to go down the hill and home to lunch. At the landing the rigging from the broken tree was lying on the loader operator's seat. A piece of the carriage had gone through the top of the truck's cab, and it would be a while before the truck was used again. Workmen stood in a silent group. One held the mashed coffee pot that always sat on a fire at the foot of the tree.

"We're going to need a new one," he said.

" Anyone hurt?" I asked.

" No, we all got out of the way," someone said.

I went home.

That night my father answered a knock at the door. It was Morris Ray.

"Do you still want to work for me?"

He said I had probably saved several lives that morning. I did not know that I was a bit of a hero, but my mother and father got the picture.

The loggers never mentioned it, but they looked at me in a special way. Logging is dangerous work, and many loggers walked with limps and showed other signed of past injuries. Discussing anything remotely connected with danger was considered bad luck.

The loggers' wives took care of the gossip. Most of the camp lived in a small settlement down by the river. The women, who watched diligently for the postman's pickup (they could see it two miles away) stood together at the mailboxes and talked. That was where my mother learned that her son was actually regarded as a hero.

So, I became a money-making whistle punk for Morris Ray and was known forever more as "punk." I was assigned to the choker-setting crew headed by Don Lakey. Under Don, the oldest, were his three brothers — Mo, Dick, and Peck — who held him in awesome respect. Don was a quiet man. His brothers were clowns and pranksters and delighted in tormenting the whistle punk by throwing chunks of bark, clods, or anything else handy at him.

I told Morris Ray I was afraid they might kill me.

"They like you. Otherwise they would ignore you," he explained.

So I learned to look sharp and duck — and throw back.

Dick was the tallest of the Lakeys, at 6 feet 6. Mo and Dick were 6 feet 4. Peck was tiny and weighed no more than 150 pounds soaking wet.

The crew consisted of a "donkey engine" mounted on a large sled like affair made of huge logs. Mounted in front of a big gasoline engine were three drums that did all the work. One man held the main line, a 1/2 inch cable that hauled the logs in from the woods. Another drum held the "haul back", a 3/4 inch cable that hauled the main line to the choker setters. The third drum contained the "straw line" which the crew pulled by hand to move the big lines.

The whistle punk carried a large coil of electrical cord connected to an air horn on the donkey engine. The other end held the button used to signal the donkey engine operator. Carrying the cord, sometimes a half-mile long, was hard work. For the first two weeks of work I would go home at night, take a shower and go to bed without dinner. I was too tired to eat. I soon learned that I was in a position to keep the men in our crew from being injured, and I was determined that none of the Lakey group was going to get hurt, and the three summers we worked together no one was. No other crew in our camp was that fortunate. I went to work when school was out in May and stopped when the

next school period started in October.

I could always count on another summer in the logging camp when school ended as I prepared for my senior year. The owner of the camp told me they were always happy to help me with my college education.

"But this is the last year. Logging is a hard life, and you must take advantage of what you have trained for."

"But I will have to come back to visit," I replied.

Close association with loggers was a precious experience. They were a rough crowd — hard driving and fair fighting. It was customary for some of them to make the county jail on weekend nights. But they never went to court as long as friends or families came after them no later than Sunday night or bright and early Monday morning.

It did not take long to discover how deeply devoted they were to their wives and children, and the extent of their trust in each other. I became an unusual baby sitter when they began asking me to take sons and daughters to the movies and dances.

Dick Lakey carried this routine to extremes when he asked me to be a "sitter" for his wife, Stella. The tiny Stella loved to dance, which was something the 6 foot 4 inch Dick was physically incapable of. The dances — at 15 cents a dance — were the highlight of the county fair for me. One night Stella and Dick

approached me hand in hand in the dance hall. They knew where to find me.

"Punk, will you take care of Stella?" Stella's bright eyes were shining hopefully.

"Do you have a girl?" she asked. "Not yet.," I answered.

"Would you mind?" she asked. Dick handed me a bunch of tickets and took off for a night of poker playing and drinking with friends.

Stella and I danced until the band went home.

This "family"experience proved that things can work out for the best. I told them I would come back to visit, but I never made it.

Soon after graduation the war came along, I learned that I was well qualified for the U.S. Navy. I spent most of the next four years in the South Pacific. My parents reported that some of the loggers came by to check on me now and then.

When I left the area we had logged over I was grieved by the devastation we left in place of what had been a beautiful fir and cedar forest. But there was a happy ending.

A few years ago I drove up the logging road and found a new beautiful green forest. Morris Ray had sold the land to the Weyerhauser firm, the giant of all lumber companies. Planting new forests has been a matter of course for Weyerhauser for many years.

Naval Photographer

It's All in Your Point of View

We never carried passengers in our plane. No one ever wanted to go with us, probably because we were never welcome where we were going. There was hardly enough room for equipment we worked with. It was a big aircraft, but it wasn't really comfortable for our crew of ten.

Today, however, we had seven dirty, bandaged, bloody Army infantrymen with us as we took off from the airfield at Munda Point on New Georgia, which until the day before had been used by the Japanese.

We were flying a four-engine Liberator that we had named "Short Snorter" because our travels in the South Pacific had taken us across the equator so many times. According to custom you were qualified to be a Short Snorter when you crossed the equator. Ours was one of eight Liberators in the Navy's Fleet Air Photographic Squadron One, and it carried a string of aerial cameras instead of bombs in the bomb bay. I figured the Navy salved our pride by permitting us to carry three depth charges in the forward rack. Otherwise, it seemed to me that most of the space was devoted to fuel tanks because some of our flights were unbelievably long.

For a few weeks we had frequently been detailed to get early morning aerial photos of Munda airfield to see how it was being used by the enemy. Navy dive bombers clobbered it daily, leaving it in a shambles, according to our photos. But at night the Japanese hustled out and repaired it; and by early morning

were launching raids at us down the slot.

Only the day before the Marines and the Army invaded the island at Munda Point and miracle working Navy Seabees moved in and repaired the airfield. It was the beginning of the end for the Japanese when the Seabees showed up. Our dive bombers and fighters were using it the next day. Ours was the first big plane to land there, shortly after we had photographed enemy operations up-country from Munda. We left the film for an Army photo interpretation unit.

We were eager to leave because fighting was still underway at the edge of the airfield. We were afraid to stick around because we knew what a well-placed mortar round could do to Short Snorter and our plans to get home.

But an Army colonel came up in a jeep. "Are you folks going to the Canal?" he asked. (Everyone liked to call Guadalcanal "the Canal).

"We have some people who are in pretty bad shape, and could certainly use the great facilities at Mobile Hospital Eight."

"Put them aboard," our pilot directed.

In seconds two ambulances rolled up. We couldn't believe our eyes when our passengers appeared. They were dirty beyond description, and their uniforms were torn and blood stained. Why, we wondered, did everyone have to have head wounds.

"Mostly shrapnel," the colonel said. "Never saw so many mortars."

With the help of Army corpsmen we threaded them through the tunnel hatch on the bottom of the fuselage and placed them on the narrow corrugated aluminum deck between the tail gun turret and the ball turret in the belly. There was room for one more between the ball turret and the bomb bay.

We were amazed to learn that they were frighted to get on the plane. But three of them were already asleep when we rolled down the runway. They were dead tired in nearly every sense of the word.

So many things about war are best forgotten, but I never want to forget that flight home to Guadalcanal — nor could I.

We used our first aid equipment to change a few dirty bandages and washed their faces with water from our canteens; but there was little else we could do for them. If you offered a comforting touch they would grasp your had so tightly it was difficult to get it back.

I gave water to a weary sergeant and to the young soldier he was cradling in his arms. They had matching bloody bandages around their heads, but the youngster was crying and couldn't seem to stop. The sergeant apologized for him, thinking perhaps the boy would wish him to.

"This happens," he said. "He is really one tough kid — a good soldier. Right now I guess he doesn't know what else to do."

We felt guilty for being so clean, and ashamed for having slept on clean, safe

cots the night before, and for having eaten good Navy food that morning. We even felt sheepish for having worried for our safety while flying earlier in the day. I felt that I would never complain again.

After about two heart wrenching hours we landed at Carney Field on Guadalcanal. Our pilot had radioed ahead for ambulances to meet us. When we landed a gang of worried fellows from the squadron was there to meet us. They thought the ambulances were for us, and that prompted a peculiar set of comments from our wounded passengers who were by this time waiting for the ambulances in the shade of the wing.

"I wouldn't trade places with you guys," one of the soldiers said.

"Why?" we asked.

"You're flying around up there all the time, and anything can happen," he explained.

"It can happen to anyone," I told him.

"But if it happens to you," the soldier said, "you can't take cover. There's no place for you to hide."

Yet they were the ones wearing the bandages. I figured it was all in your point of view.

Jim Leonard — May, 1990

Newspaper Reporter Interviewing Diane Feinstein

The Urge to Say 'Hello'

I have finally figured out what gave me a talent for pursuing a reportorial career, an undertaking I loved and at which I excelled.

An ability to write became casually evident when I was a grammar school student, and it was sharpened somewhat in high school. And the real super training for the newspaper world came in the School of Journalism at the University of Oregon.

Be generous and accept the fact that I became a good reporter. It takes more than an ability to write to be a good one.

The source of my success was a compelling urge we country folk had to say "hello". These were people who had a hunger for company. We never overlooked an opportunity to at least say "hello".

As a child I would run half a mile to wave at the driver of an automobile that could be heard approaching on the country road that bordered our ranch in Eastern Oregon. It was that quiet. If I was lucky the passing car would stop because it might contain someone who knew my parents.

Although things changed when I moved to San Francisco, I could not completely break old habits. I was not a reporter who checked on a story and ran. I visited a while and overlooked scarcely anyone. Granted, I got a reputation for being slow, and perhaps a bit peculiar for this world. Generally whenever the city editor spoke to me it was to ask: "Where have you been?"

But things leveled out and my approach began to pay off.

My first assignment on the old San Francisco Call-Bulletin was "State and Federal", which meant covering state and federal office and federal courts.

A regular stop was the office of the US Marshal, a good place for talking. I regularly saw a puzzling visitor there. He nodded slightly when I spoke, and often avoided responding. A deputy marshal consoled me for the man's coolness. He said he was the Alcatraz warden's clerk, which might explain a lot.

"He's been coming by for years, and we don't even know his name," the deputy said.

One day I spotted him having coffee at a nearby cafe, sat down by him. I introduced myself and left a short time later. The routine was repeated but never pushed. Eventually Loring Mills and I were friends, but contacts away from the cafe were rare.

One day he had to leave early to go to Sixth Army headquarters at the Presidio.

"They called this morning and said they had to discuss the Army laundry," Mills explained.

That comment, I was to learn later, was filed away in my subconscious.

A year or so later Alcatraz became a red hot story that attracted attention around the world when an escape attempt failed and several prisoners tried to

bargain their way to freedom with hostage guards. Two prisoners and one guard died before it was over.

News crews with big names gathered in San Francisco, but they were no better than us locals. Coverage seemed impossible. A single telephone line was always busy, and access to the island was forbidden.

It was on my "beat", and it seemed that all my paper could do was abuse me. My editor repeatedly said: "Let us know, kid."

Every paper in the City (there were four then) had copy kids repeatedly dialing the busy Alcatraz number.

Then I thought of my bashful friend, Loring Mills, the warden's clerk, and the Presidio's laundry.

I dialed the Presidio switchboard.

"Give me your Alcatraz line, please."

"One moment." I held my breath.

"Warden's office" I recognized the voice — Loring.

"Loring?"

"Yes."

"Jim Leonard. I have to talk with you."

"What are you doing on this line? This is not allowed."

"Can anyone hear you talking, Loring?"

"No."

I explained the agony of a frustrated reporter, and he understood, commenting that this could do me a lot of good. I asked a few carefully chosen questions, and said I would call again.

The assistant city editor didn't believe me.

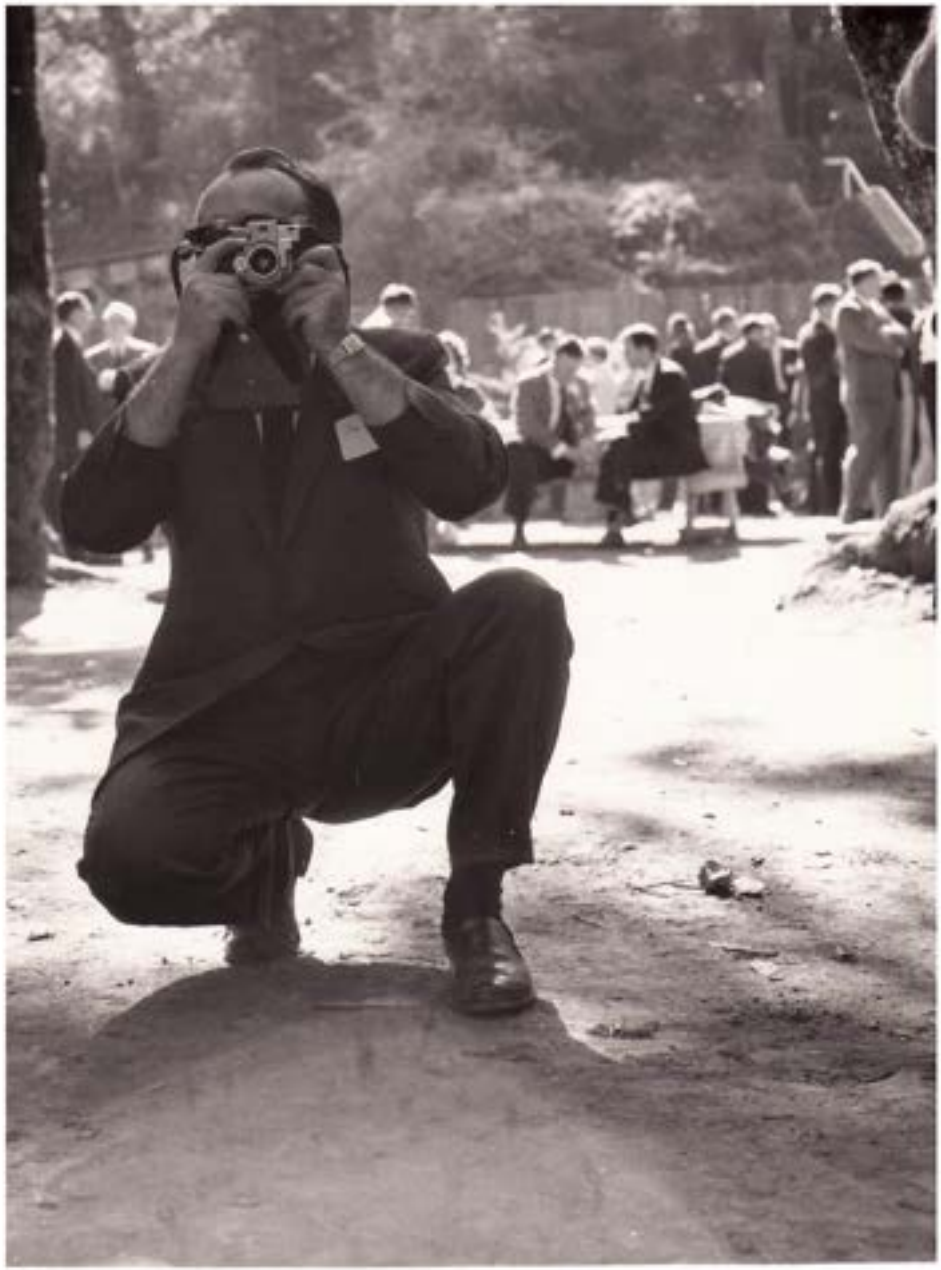
"Where did you get this?" he demanded.

I refused to tell him, and the managing editor came on the line. I knew that if I told my story that Loring would never speak to me, because every hot shot in the office would be on the Army's laundry phone.

So my exclusive coverage lasted for three days. My paper headed the pack, and made it clear that they were proud of me.

It was one of my biggest stories for the paper, and like a few more over the years, it was actually the product of the old country style urge to say "hello".

Jim Leonard
April, 1990



Barbershops I Have Known and Loved

Listen carefully and speak softly and discreetly if you wish to maintain your status in the barbershop. For example, women were always the preferred topic of conversation in my younger barbershop days. But you soon learned that they were to be discussed in a general way. Specifics were dangerous and names were avoided. A father or a brother might be in the next chair.

I am thankful that I have finally understood the importance of the barbershop in my life. I know how fortunate I was being exposed to experts in many fields, just for the cost of the haircut.

At no added cost you could learn how to make roses grow, how to find a plumber you could trust, or how to make s simple repair on your automobile.

It was even possible to use another man's experience to help bring your wife around to your point of view, or — heaven forbid — adjusting your own. It goes without saying, however, that a wise man learns to evaluate the worth of free advice that is passed around generously. One of the beauties of the system is in the fact that you never had to admit to anyone that you had a problem. You never had to admit anything.

To illustrate, no one ever asked you if you were a virgin. The question was always asked in a more unrefined way like: "Have you been getting any lately?" It was a curious thing, but older men insisted on asking it of youngsters, and I could never quite understand this. You responded merely with patience and a

and a knowing silence — and I believe that I followed the routine on my father's advice.

The first barbershop I remember was as a child in Wallowa, Oregon, a small town that served a ranching and logging area in the mountainous northeast part of the state. For ten cents you could get a great haircut with real electric clippers, followed by Fitch's hair tonic from the "big green bottle". My mother, however, always gave me a quick bath and hair wash as soon as I got home. Of course my hair lost the aroma that I was convinced no girl could resist.

This was Otto Bodmer's barbershop, located on unpaved Main Street next to the drugstore. There were hitching posts out front to tie your horse to. The horses dozed and didn't seem to mind when an occasional automobile pulled up and parked. Otto Bodmer was a German immigrant with an accent we all loved. He always wore a black bow tie that was about the same size as his mustache. Years later I always thought of Otto when I saw a picture of Adolf Hitler. His conversation with me was invariably limited to: "Tell your father I send my regards."

Totally different was Charlie Fisher who also worked in the shop. He was a handsome, personable fellow who appeared to be familiar with all the women in town. He often asked about my mother, and generally told me I was fortunate to look like her. Her reply was to "tell Charlie Fisher to mind his own

business". My cousin told me that Charlie always asked about his mother, my Aunt Myrtle, also. Later, thinking back, I concluded that he was a pretty smooth operator, because I believe some of Charlie's subliminal messages brushed off on a few of the women in town.

Mick Nolan's barbershop in Lostine, an even smaller town only eight miles up Middle Valley from Wallowa, was a class operation for me, because it afforded the first opportunity for me to go into business for myself at age twelve, and it game me my first exposure to a pool hall. Mick ran them both, and that pool hall was exciting. I sold Mick on the idea of letting me install a shoe shine stand in the barbershop. It was Lostine's first shoe shine stand, and I built it. I charged 15 cents for an ordinary shoe shine, and black and white wing tips cost 50 cents. We could leave the door separating the barbershop and the pool hall open, and I could watch the excitement on the other side — the two pool tables and the bar where Mick poured beer. Some of the ladies in town scolded my mother for permitting me to work in this den of iniquity, but my mother had her own ideas as to what was right and what was wrong.

My next memorable barbershop experience was Hilo, Hawaii, where I first encountered my first woman barber, and she happened to be the first woman I had encountered in two years.

Our Navy flight crew landed at the Naval Air Station in Hilo on our joyous

way back to the states during World War II after a long tour of duty in the South Pacific. We were held in Hilo because of bad weather between the islands and the Pacific Coast for about a week. And I was grounded by the gentle hands of a lovely Japanese lady barber.

There was no way to justify a haircut every day, so I settled for shaves. She politely declined my invitation to dinner, explaining that she was a widow with two children. But she insisted that I return the next day to meet her sister, and I was glad to oblige. I liberated a jeep at the air station, and the sister showed me the sights of the Hilo area.

Then came Gaspare La Rosa who worked in a barbershop at Polk and California Streets in San Francisco. I will always remember Gaspare who endeavored to transmit to me his love of America for having been so kind to his father, who became a longshoreman after bringing his family over from Italy.

"My father — he never missed voting in an election. He felt it was his duty."

" He was a Democrat, and always voted wisely."

Did he study the ballot?

"Oh, yes. And he always read the Examiner to check its recommendations."

"And he was a Democrat?" I asked in disbelief.

Oh, yes. If the Examiner said 'vote yes', my father voted 'no'. If the Examiner said 'vote no, my father voted 'yes'. When the Examiner said to vote for one

guy, my father voted for the other guy."

"Sorry, Jim," he added, because he knew I was a reporter for the Examiner. But I was delighted. I didn't share my publisher's political views, and neither did most working newspaper people.

"That's OK, Gaspare. But do you vote that way?"

"Some times," he smiled.

Ray's Barbershop in Mill Valley has everything men of good taste and good judgement should hope for. A product of Mill Valley and Tamalpais High School, Ray Guagliano remembers every friend he ever had, and many of them are still customers. There are still some who remember his late father who was a shoemaker across the street on Throckmorton Avenue.

Ray works by appointment only, and he appears to have all the business he needs.

It is tradition for the regulars to come in and visit. Ray provides comfortable chairs along the side wall for them, and on on-haircut days you are welcome to "come in for a beer".

The barber chairs face through a large front window down street toward Lytton Square, and Ray keeps the Dutch doors open. This encourages greetings from the outside in and the inside out. The view of the passing parade of Mill Valley women is unimpeded and inspires much comment.

You keep up on the local gossip at Ray's. Herb Caen is quoted regularly; but I knew Jim Lange was abandoning Los Angeles television to return to San Francisco radio before Herb Caen had it.

"Yeah. He and his wife have bought a house up the street behind Old Mill School," Ray said.

We barbershop folks are dedicated newspaper readers, and love to debate the merits of the papers — an activity I take credit for initiating.

"Hey, Jim — did you know Prescott Sullivan?"

"Yeah."

How about Jack McDonald? Why do so many sportswriters smoke cigars?

Beth Ashley, the Independent Journal columnist, is a total favorite at the barbershop.

"What would the I. J. be without her?" one of Ray's regulars asked.

I have treasured my friendships with the barbershop gang. You are not accepted automatically there, and it is a source of pride when you realize that you are in.

Recently my stock went up considerably when a woman stopped at Ray's and looked through the Dutch door.

"Pardon me. But is the is the barbershop where Jim Leonard gets his hair cut?"

"Yes, Ma'am," Ray replied. "Why do you ask?"

"We have heard him speak of this barbershop. And we think it is wonderful that such a place still exists in Mill Valley."

Ray said she quickly continued on her way, and he was so surprised that he forgot to ask for her name. But as soon as my wife gets together with the right group of her friends … I know I will find out who she was.

J. Leonard
November, 1990

In Loving Memory of

James H. Leonard Jr.

August 23, 1918

to

July 31, 2004