

## ODD JOBS - PART IV

**RESTAURANT OWNER – THE SUNSET CENTER SANDWICH SHOP** – Daisy had a big falling out with Dr. Siegal and quit her job. This was very emotional for us all - she'd been there for eighteen years.

The restaurant was Daisy's initiative. She'd noticed how popular sub shops were. I encouraged her to get a job at a sub shop first to learn the business and see if she liked it. She became a sandwich maker at Boston Subs.

She learned about bread and bagel suppliers. She became an expert sandwich maker. Soon enough she felt ready and we leased six hundred square feet of space from the owner of Sunset center. This was a medium sized office complex with four two-story buildings and no food service within walking distance. This was the same building complex where SMG's headquarters, my office, was located.

Rent was expensive - it started at \$750.00 per month and went up every year. I built out the space personally during a two week vacation under the somewhat hostile eyes of Dr. Siegal and his wife. Daisy opened to do a good business from day one. She hired a small staff, including her mom and dad, to offer breakfast and lunch. Eat-in, take-out, catering and deliveries. Five days a week. Easy? No!

Daisy put out good food and great service. Her people abilities are superb. The shop never

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made much money but required enormous labor to operate. We probably didn't charge enough and attempted too big a menu for our capabilities.

Sometimes she needed my help with deliveries during the noon rush and I'd take a little time off during my lunch hour at SMG to help. On weekends we'd go to Cantor's Wholesale Cash and Carry with her dad Alfredo and load his station wagon to the brim with the week's supplies. We'd spend half the day Saturday shopping, stocking and cleaning. Sundays we'd prep for the week working at least a half day.

Daisy was in tears after a few years. We owed the IRS, the shop owned us, and she wanted out. We were able to sell it for enough to retire all debts but original capital was gone. She went to work for our friend Edgar Bravo as an administrative assistant.

**UNEMPLOYMENT RECIPIENT** - A man named Fred Huttaug showed up at my nice corner office at the Sunset Center Office Complex one fine day. He was in commercial real estate and wanted to know if we had any interest in leasing an office in the Paragon Building; a large building at the corner of Commercial Boulevard and U.S. 1 in Fort Lauderdale. I assured him that we were not interested but he was persistent and told me that the owners were offering incentives such as free rent and no cost build-out of the space to the lessee's specifications.

That got my attention. I agreed to go to the building and look it over. I saw immediately that it wasn't right for an Overweight Medical Center, but I thought it would be a dandy place to open another sandwich shop like Daisy's and run it myself. I cooked up a plan, quit my job and then found that it would be six months before we could actually open and not the eight weeks that I had envisioned. OOPS!

I must say that I was sad to leave Dr. Siegal after almost eighteen years of unemployment. But it was time to move on. Since Daisy had left in a big cloud of smoke, my position seemed untenable.

When I told my son Jeff about my using unemployment, he gave me a big grin and said, "Great Dad! It's the American Dream."

Unemployment was great. I had time to do some extra active duty with the Coast Guard, time to plan, time to work for Daisy, and not much money. I got a few hundred dollars a week while I looked for non-existent temporary executive work.

**RESTAURANT OWNER - TERRACE CAFÉ** – I formed a limited partnership to finance the start-up. I raised \$55,000.00 from investors, friends,, and the building owner paid for the build-out. I furnished plans and restaurant equipment.

Starting a new business is one of life's adventures. We managed to open a beautiful little

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sandwich shop and it gradually got busy as the twelve-story building filled up. I rented an apartment nearby so that I wouldn't have a killer commute twice a day. I just went home on weekends.

After a year of this work week separation, after so many years of working and living together day and night, it became plain that the commute would be less painful than the killer living arrangements for both Daisy and me.

My Coast Guard career was winding down. When I was relieved of my command of the Seventh District Headquarters Coast Guard Unit, I no longer had a part-time paying job in the Coast Guard. I'd held the command for three years and my time was up. They gave me a wonderful Change of Command Ceremony in the tradition of the Coast Guard. It was the only occasion in my career that I had the thrill of wearing a sword. I borrowed it from Captain Normal Patterson who had been my boss for a time.

The stress of life was such that, lacking the incentive of a paycheck, I became inactive in the USCGR and I retired as a full commander.

Terrace Café ultimately failed because I was dumb. Despite a clause in the lease that required the landlord to not allow any other restaurant in the building, they permitted a large tenant, California Federal Savings and Loan to open a cafeteria. My business plummeted just as the \$2,400.00 per month rent payments kicked in. We closed the business just two-and-a-half years after opening it. There was a lawsuit that we lost because I didn't use the words "Food Service Operation" rather than "Restaurant" in describing what the landlord must not permit.

Also, my lawyer did a crappy job. I was out two years work and the partners (including myself) were out \$55,000. Oops!

**UNEMPLOYMENT RECIPIENT AGAIN** – Well. We had a little money coming in and few bucks in the bank but we'd soon need work. I was unemployed. Our nest was empty and I had no Coast Guard obligations. Both businesses were sold or closed. Kim was married to Randy and Kris was living with her boyfriend in Hollywood, Florida. We were foot loose if not fancy free.

We had vacationed in the North Carolina mountains with our friends Gail and Myron Willrich a year before and had a wonderful white water experience rafting on the Nantahala River with a Company Called the Nantahala Outdoor Center.

I was leafing through a Restaurateur Trade Magazine, looking at the help-wanted classified section when an ad caught my attention – Shift Managers needed for new restaurant at the famous Nantahala Outdoor Center. (NOC) I remembered Sue, our raft guide. Strong and capable with a great personality, Sue had told us a little about the company. It was over twenty years old,

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employee owned, and the largest employer in Swain County, including the schools and municipalities.

The company was located in the woods, on the Appalachian Trail near Bryson City, North Carolina. The scenery and people were beautiful.

I worked the phones hard and finally got an appointment with a founder of NOC, the food service operations manager, Relia Kennedy. We ventured to NOC again to interview on

a beautiful October day in 1987. Relia interviewed us and gave us jobs as shift managers in the brand new Relia's Garden Restaurant which was scheduled to open in the spring of 1988. We agreed to move to Bryson City and be available for work by February 1, 1988.

We had a massive yard sale and got rid of our furniture, piano, excess electronics and reduced down to one truck-load of possessions. We sold our two cars and bought a likely looking used Chevrolet Blazer with four-wheel drive. We moved into a friend's unoccupied condo and camped out there for about six weeks while making arrangements and selling off the balance of our stuff. I was excited. Daisy was sad.

**RESTAURANT SHIFT SUPERVISOR NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER – RELIA'S GARDEN RESTAURANT** – We rented a log cabin at nearby Nantahala Village for \$225.00 a month until the season started in June. This gave us time to find a place to live for a longer term. We rented a place closer to town with six bedrooms and one bath for \$300.00 a month. It was a beautiful side-of-the-road house with lots of charm. (See photo on page 123.) We lived there for



8/18/87 - This photo has been hanging on a wall of our home since 1987. It was taken by the NOC photographer as we went over Wesser Falls at the end of our first rafting trip with NOC. Fellow paddlers are friends Gail Mangione and her, then, future husband Myron Willrich. Myron has passed away but Gail is still kicking. Our guide is Sue Magnus who spoke highly about NOC. We had this kind of day in mind when we applied for jobs there. I sometimes think of her of the mother of the idea to go to N.C. Note our facial expressions.

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over seven years.

We didn't need air conditioning in the mountains so utilities were low, there was no cable and we got along fine for twenty years, gradually improving our circumstances and finances. It was not always smooth sailing.

Overall Daisy was more successful at NOC than me. She was promoted to general manager of the restaurant and given a raise. I didn't last as shift manager, but they let me stay as a cook at my same salary and eventually I became a waiter and increased my earnings.

The benefits were great as far as I was concerned. We were right on the Appalachian Trail and close to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. When my brothers and sisters, friends and children came to visit we could go on walks, fish, raft, canoe and enjoy the woods. I didn't miss the malls and shopping opportunities. I learned to do white water canoeing. There were good roads but no traffic. Life was sweet.

Despite what I said above there was always a little drama. For example we didn't start work in February as we expected that first year. It proved to be a long, cold, white winter. It looked like Vermont the day we arrived and we had a heck of a time getting the rental truck up the mountain to our cabin. The snow was two feet deep.

Launching a brand new restaurant with a new menu and staff was a ball. Fun if you like lots of work and confusion



Our log cabin was just a few miles from NOC. In season it would be expensive but off-season it was just right. It gave us time to find a more permanent place.



Guests at Relia's Garden Restaurant loved eating on the porch overlooking the garden and mountain vistas. Here brother Larry Grinnell, Daisy and I are seated at the best table in the house.

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that is. Relia's Garden was an immediate success and we were all proud of the results.

**COOK - RELIA'S GARDEN RESTAURANT** – Having been in the restaurant business for three years already was a key to survival because the work was very hard. There were line cooks who prepped the menu items for the restaurant, there was the baker to make rolls, bread and desserts and there was the prep cook who did everything else. I was the prep cook.

My Duties would vary according to whether I worked mornings, 6:00 AM until 2:00 PM or dinner 3:00 PM until after closing after 10:00 PM. At night I prepared all vegetables and the desserts for the dinner menu. My favorite was the crème brûlée. I prepped salad ingredients.

Oh yes, I also cooked the staff meals; up to one hundred meals, and serviced their cafeteria line too. I prepped up to one hundred and fifty meals for clinic guests who took three meals a day from our kitchen; family-style breakfast and dinner in and lunch to go.

The staff and clinic meals were excellent.

Cooking was great fun. Cooks have to be smart as well as strong. I loved to cook and felt that I did a good job although Daisy, my boss, might disagree with me. I took great pleasure when I got compliments from diners. I got to watch what the staff ate and how they reacted to various recipes. In fact I ate with them. They were always right!

**WAITER RELIA'S GARDEN RESTAURANT** – I kept this job until 1995. Toward the end of our first season Daisy encouraged me to try-out as a waiter. Better money and better hours we thought. More fun I thought. We were right.

It turned out that I loved waiting on tables although at fifty-one years old I was over the hill for the job. Guests seemed to like me and I always got good tips, and enjoyed serving people. I felt like I'd learned a trade for the first time in my life and could get a job anywhere.

It came as a big surprise when we were laid off that first winter. No work was available from November through February. There were two other restaurants at NOC and we were told that we could have few shifts at NOC's Rivers's End Restaurant but not until February.

Our finances were such that we needed more money but the entire western North Carolina economy comes to a stop in the winter months. Daisy got a job clerking at the local pharmacy



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and I went looking too.

**WAITER - POINT AFTER RESTAURANT** - We had enjoyed some great meals at the Point After Restaurant in the nearby town of Sylva. I asked the owner Dale Phillips if he'd take me on as a waiter. To my joy he agreed and I went to work there on the 14th of December 1988. Winter business was light but there were occasional busy nights. We earned enough to see us through until spring.

My serving skills increased as I learned how another, experienced, restaurant did things. Our cook, Jeff Faust, was a C.I.A. (look it up) graduate with excellent skills and I learned a lot from being around him. I stayed on this job full time until 1992 when I went into Advertising sales. I was there a total of three years. I worked mornings and weekends at NOC and five nights a week at the Point After.

**CATERER – THE GOLDEN SPIKE THEATRE – BILL'S CREATIVE CATERING COMPANY** - Even though we were getting along OK, I was ambitious and entrepreneurial and wanted to do better.

So I hooked up with a guy named Chad Reed who wanted to establish a theatre in Bryson City to cater to the many tourists that were pouring into the town on an excursion train that ran East and West from Bryson City every day; The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad. The west bound train went from Bryson City to NOC on the Nantahala River – a scenic ride. The East Bound ran from Sylva ran along the banks of the Tuskaseegee River to Bryson City and back. Thousands of visitors came every week to visit the few shops and restaurants little Bryson City had to offer.

Chad was a talented pianist, and a playwright with theatrical experience. He wrote a cute musical thirty-minute production to lure the tourists into the Golden Spike Theatre. We built the theatre near the railroad tracks in the back of an existing structure. My relationship



This is the Bryson City, N.C. house we rented when we left the log cabin. We had six bedrooms here and stayed for about eight years. Our landlords lived right next door and that was mostly a blessing. Our cat peanuts was good company. A little stream passed in front of the house - just outside the camera's view. We seemed to always have lots of company although we couldn't get cable TV. We enjoyed just one channel.

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with Chad was that he would allow me to run a food service operation in the theatre in return for my help in physically constructing the theatre.

I borrowed \$3,000.00 from the self help Credit Union in Asheville and used it to buy equipment to make sandwiches and salads. I rented nearby space for a kitchen and put it together while working as a waiter and building the theatre. Boy was I busy.

I spent most of the borrowed money but the theatre ran into trouble and failed. Chad may have gotten some of his investment back when he sued the Railroad but he experienced personal difficulties and his marriage broke up in the process. I think that he and his wife didn't agree on the project. He was a heck of an entertainer but alienated everyone around him in the end.

I formed a Corporation, Bill's Creative Catering Company, to conduct the operation and, after the theatre flopped, I began a little catering company, cooking in the kitchen at home. This was against the health code but I got away with it. I got occasional jobs and made some money working out of our house.

I closed the rented kitchen and sold the equipment. I had five jobs and businesses going at the same time and kept this up for years.

The main thing was working for NOC.

**Here's a little business advice learned the hard way - start your business plans with the end in mind. Most new ventures don't make the long haul. Have an exit strategy that doesn't involve losing your house and credit rating.**

**TIME OUT** – Don't let me forget that while I've been blathering on about my jobs, that the even more important life events charge along unabated.

Since I finished my initial six months active duty with the Coast Guard in 1958, I've been married, acquired four of the best children ever, sons and daughters, twelve grandchildren, cats, dogs, degrees and certificates, houses, scars, bruises and memories. This is just a list of jobs.

**WOODSMAN** - Working for NOC was fun but it was a seasonal job for most employees. I responded to a bulletin board notice offering work on a forestry project that the company had arranged with the US Forestry Service to provide some winter work for NOC employees. I was working at the Point After Restaurant five nights a week as a waiter but I thought that a little more money would be a good thing so I signed up to help with a "White Pine Release" project. The project leader, Payson Kennedy, agreed that I could participate even though I'd have to leave the job a little early on days that I had to report to the restaurant at 4:30 PM.

Even though this project was only a short winter in execution, I learned something about myself, white pines, mountains, and my fellow human beings while doing it

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The workers were a motley group of about twenty NOC employees. Payson Kennedy, founder of NOC, a man of about my age, was the guiding spirit. There were other leaders in the group who made decisions and gave us directions. There were a few women including Pam, a fellow cook at Relia's Garden Restaurant. She was a tiny woman in her mid forties who may have weighed about 90 pounds. Most of the group were twenty-something river guides - young and athletic. We were all in need of money however, and the \$5.00 per hour seemed fair.

We all attended a classroom lecture by a uniformed forester official who explained the nature of white pine releases. Here's a bit of information they bestowed on us.

White pines grow to be giant trees. They grow fast and straight. When they are about ninety years old they can be profitably harvested. So they are planted in remote sections of mountain forest land and left to mature. A single large tree can yield over one-thousand cubic feet of wood.

When the pines are small, during their first five years, native hardwoods grow faster and will shade them out of existence if man does not intervene. Our job was to go into the areas planted in white pine and systematically cut back competing hardwood trees to "release" the white pines at an age when they will grow so fast that nothing in the forest will catch them.

Our crew used Swedish bush axes. These were light and could be swung with one hand. We had files to keep our blades sharp, maps of the areas we were to cut, and a description of white pine trees; the ones we were not to cut.

White pines can grow to be over two-hundred feet tall. The historical lore is that during the age of "iron men and wooden ships," the tall trees were valued for masts, and many trees were marked with a broad arrow to reserve them for the British Navy.

A 100' mast was about 3'X3' at the butt and 2'X2' at the top, while a 120' mast was about 4'X4' at the bottom and 30" at the top. The original masts on the US Constitution (Old Ironsides) were single trees but later they were laminated to better withstand cannon balls. During the American Revolution it became a great sport for the patriots to see how many of the King's trees they could cut down and haul off.

Old growth pine in the Americas was a highly desired wood since huge, knot free, boards were the rule rather than the exception. Pine was common and easy to cut, thus many colonial homes used pine for paneling, floors and furniture. Pine was also a favorite tree of loggers since pine logs can still be processed in a lumber mill a year or more after being cut down. In contrast, most hardwood trees such as cherry, maple, oak,

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and ash must be cut into 1" thick boards immediately after felling or large cracks will develop in the trunk which can render the wood worthless.

The branches grow in layers which can be counted to determine the age of a tree as only one layer is produced each year. The needles come in bundles of five and each long, flexible, smooth needle has a white stripe on its underside which gives the white pine a distinctive color.

What impresses me was the toughness and work ethic of the crew working on the Release and the fact that we were in fact weeding a crop that would be harvested four score and ten years later. How's that for planning ahead?

We gathered at 7:00AM on frosty winter mornings, climbed into a fifteen-passenger van with our sharpened axes and other tools, and drove miles through deserted mountain roads to the work site. We hiked through woods without trails to get to the site. Then we'd go to work!

The brush axes were long handled but light enough to swing with one hand. The ideal axe stroke would sever its target oak or maple tree with a single stroke. The boles would be around two inches in diameter so it would often take extra strokes.

It was important to use one hand because the ground was usually steep and you needed the other hand to hold on and not fall down the mountain. The underbrush often contained tangles of laurel and rhododendron that would block passage.

The white pine seedlings would only be a few feet tall and were planted in long widely-spaced rows and lines running up and down the mountain sides. We cleared competing hardwoods from a circle of about ten feet in diameter all the way around each pine.

We'd begin each morning bundled up with earmuffs, scarves and gloves since the high morning air was usually about ten degrees Fahrenheit. But soon we'd shed these garments and even coats to cool off. It was a good workout!

By noon we'd be glad for a half hour off to lay around and eat our sandwiches. Then we'd go back to work until 3:30PM. We wanted to be off the mountain before the sun sank and the sky turned dark. Spending the night on the side of a mountain would be no fun at all - even dangerous.

Since I was also working at the Point After Restaurant I'd have to take my own vehicle some days and take off an hour earlier to get to work. I was in pretty good shape then to withstand the long physical days.

Some workers were more productive than Pam, Payson and myself. (The older and smaller workers) We'd work in a line over the terrain and if one person fell behind or got stuck, others would wander over to help. Payson, our wise leader said he was impressed by the restaurant staffs' ability to work. (Pam and myself)

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Was it worth it? I don't recall what I did with the money but the memory is priceless!

**RESTAURANT EQUIPMENT DEALER** - When the Golden Spike Theater closed and I vacated my rented kitchen, I needed to sell the stainless steel tables, refrigerators, slicer, sinks and other items I'd bought. It turned out that I'd bought them really well and sold them for a good profit. There was enough money in it that I bought some chairs, another slicer and other bits and pieces of restaurant equipment to rehab and sell for a profit. I made some money but I was busy with my other jobs.

I was a server at Relia's Garden Restaurant in the morning and at the Point After at night. I was getting a few parties to cater - mostly outdoor barbecues but dinner meetings for organizations as well. I was about to get into the Christmas Tree business and I took a job selling advertising for the area's daily newspaper, The Asheville Citizen Times.

**CHRISTMAS TREE RETAILER** - This five year career sideline was fun and interesting. I learned that a number of NOC staff worked as managers of Christmas tree sales lots between Thanksgiving and Christmas. They earned \$500.00 a week and would finish before Christmas so they could be with their families.

I traveled to Boone, North Carolina one fine day with my friend Charlie Allen to apply for jobs with a family-owned tree farm that grew the trees in the mountains and sold them in San Antonio, Texas. They had built up their business to the point where they had some fifteen outlets. We got the jobs and made the pilgrimage to Texas a few days before Thanksgiving. I took another friend, Chris Payne, to San Antonio. He had gotten a job working for the same company, on his own, when I told him what to do. We shared road expenses.

The way these growers of Christmas trees did business was to rent a promising lot for the season in San Antonio. They erected a tent, installed lights, and placed wooden stands to lean the trees on. An RV to house the manager and dropped off as was a tractor-trailer load of trees.

They hired a staff of managers who had to, in turn, hire part-time helpers, stock the racks and ring up the sales. Simple, huh? Fun? Hard work, long hours and difficult weather complicated the amusement factor. But I got hooked anyway.

I decided, while I was still in Texas, that I could do it myself, in another city the next year and make the big bucks instead of just the \$500.00 manager's salary. I lived in a little fifteen-foot recreational vehicle, pooped in a porta-john and spent days and nights in the elements.

Sometimes the sun shone and sometimes it rained and froze in San Antonio that year. When the twentieth of December rolled around, I was pretty much out of trees and up to my ankles in water which flooded the entire city due to a great rainstorm which pounded the city.

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The water wasn't too bad. It was the fire ants that drove me crazy. They climbed our remaining trees to get out of the water and stung like crazy! I was covered with bites and very happy when they shut my location down and shook my hand goodbye.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TREES** was the name I chose for my company. I borrowed \$5,000. From the Self Help Credit Union and opened a bank account. My business plan executed well with a major adjustment - my son-in-law, Dan Keck, wasn't busy and wanted to be a partner in the concern. That was fine with me.

Dan was energetic, smart and brought resources to the business including \$7,000 in cash and a knowledge of the cities Birmingham and Huntsville, Alabama. I didn't want to compete with my former employer. Dan, who lived in New Jersey, and I went to look at a couple of shopping centers he thought would have good traffic in Alabama.

We decided on a busy highway in Huntsville. We arranged to rent an area in front of a shopping center for a month, an RV to be parked on site, a sixteen-wheeler type trailer as a storage shed, and \$800.00 to rent a thirty-foot by sixty-foot tent. Dan knew the shopping center management and I think that helped us both locate the property and be accepted as a tenant for \$1,000.00 for the one-month season. A tractor-trailer load of trees cost us about \$12,000 plus \$600.00 to transport them. We arranged credit with the grower - we'd pay him as we sold the trees.

See the chapter I called *Marty - The Drunk We Treated Like A Dog* for more details. We worked like demons and sold lots of trees. We each made some money and learned a lot. At the end of the season we decided to do it again the next year but to have two lots - one for Dan and one for me. It turned out to be three because Sue Magnus (See rafting photo) and her boyfriend Phil, asked to join us and we set them up for a fee which gave us a percentage of their sales. Sue, by the way, was the raft guide who, when we first encountered NOC in 1988, told us all about NOC. The lot we found for them was in front of the Sears on the busiest street in the Huntsville.

Dan's business did not allow him to get the time off for trees the following year. So Daisy spent the third season with me in our cozy little RV parked in the middle of our little enclave on a busy street in the large parking lot shared by a bar, a tattoo parlor and a number of other marginal businesses. We did fine that year.

Thus passed the seasons in the Christmas tree sales business. We had acquired quite a bit of equipment including a large tent and a four-foot by eight-foot trailer. Storage space was rented to store the stands, chain saws, watering equipment, lights and many other tools of the business in Huntsville in the off-season.

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**A FAVORITE MEMORY** involves selling tree stands to go with the trees. We had a dandy little stand that would hold an eight foot tree and which could be put on quickly. The price of this stand was \$15.00.

It looked different from the stands people were used to - those with little thumbscrews that had to be turned. They were, and still are, a pain to put on. Our stands had a little spike which was tapped on to the bottom of the tree and then the tree was nailed to an upright brace on the stand with a nail. A pot of water could be used to keep the tree fresh. My spiel to customers was, "I will put the stand on for you and balance the tree in less than a minute or the stand is free." We sold a lot of these stands because folks were intrigued and wanted to see me screw up!

I would start the clock then waste thirty seconds looking for a nail and dropping the hammer. Then, just when it seemed that I would fail I'd hold the stand against the tree, tap the spike into the bottom and drive the nail home into the side of the tree. The tree would be plopped down on the ground and the alignment would be done by stepping on the bottom of the stand and bending the tree stand in the right direction. It could be done easily in fifteen seconds. I never lost the bet. It was fun.

In Alabama we'd get a lot of comments if we opened a tree with snow still on the boughs or a bird's nests sitting on a branch. We interacted with customers a lot. Kids were fun too.

Once I fell in love. I had a young couple in graduate school buying their first tree together. They were studying music. I told the young woman that I'd give her a \$3.00 discount if she'd sing me a song. She did a few bars of a classical song in Italian. I don't remember what it was, but she had the most beautiful voice and face I'd ever seen.

**CHRISTMAS TREE WHOLESALER** - I hurt my back at the end of our final retail season and Daisy took over the physical work - boy was I proud of her. She came through when I wasn't able to get out of bed due to the pain.

I devised a plan to have a twenty-six foot rental truck loaded with fraser firs the next year, and sell them wholesale to contacts in the business we'd made during our three years in Huntsville. I would then use the truck to empty our storage space of the big tent, Christmas tree tools, wooden stands, chain saws, leftover inventory of retail stands and assorted junk. I'd sell some of it to other tree lots I'd pass along the way and put the balance in the local landfill back in Bryson City - then we'd be out of the business and on to new and more exciting things which wouldn't hurt my back.

The plan worked perfectly. We made enough on the wholesale to pay for the truck with money left over. I sold our junk (Chain saws, and such) for even more cash and the only thing we kept was a four-foot by eight-foot utility trailer and the thirty by sixty foot tent.

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**NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING SALES** - In 1992 I took a job selling advertising for the *Asheville Citizen Times*. My territory was Swain, Jackson and Macon counties. It was rural with long distances between towns and not much enterprise.

The ACT publication that was my main product was a weekly supplement called *Neighbors* that came out every Thursday. It covered the counties west of Waynesville in theory but in fact was mostly a Waynesville supplement. My other main product was a slick tourist guide called the *Blue Ridge Getaway* that appeared five times a year, monthly, from June through October

The ACT had stopped distributing *Neighbors* in Swain County where I lived. I'd always enjoyed reading it and felt like this would be a problem for my sales.

I tried very hard to get some advertising by going door to door on Main streets in Sylva, Bryson City and Franklin. I wound up with zero for my efforts so that after a couple of weeks I was feeling shot down. I got reimbursed for mileage and telephone but had no income for the hours of effort as a salesman. Every merchant and business owner turned me down - some were rude saying that they despised the ACT and would never, ever do business with them (me).

I tried to get the ACT to resume *Neighbors*' distribution in Swain County and they said, "No. Not enough business there..."

My determination and need however exceeded my dejection and I learned a little as I went along. The big lesson was that I had to do something other than asking folks to advertise.

**AN EPIPHANY** - I called on the Chevrolet dealer who had their showroom on Main Street, Franklin, N.C. and happened to meet the owner in the doorway. I introduced myself and he cordially informed me that I'd need to speak to a woman named Betty who was not in that day. He said to call back so a few days later I walked up to the doorway to the dealership but it did not open for me. The door was locked.

I stepped back to look for a sign stating the hours of business and realized that the business was closed - forever. They'd gone out of business! The cars were gone. I was shocked. How the heck could I sell ads when business was so bad in this area.

It was raining and I was getting wet so I walked across the street to shelter in a doorway while I figured out my next move. I realized that I was standing outside another closed business and that, in fact, Main Street, Franklin was dying. It had 'Walmartitus,' a condition that was hurting many small towns in America and in my district in particular. I muttered to myself that "...these businesses in town had better get together and do something to bring people downtown to shop or they'd all be out of business."

Suddenly I realized that I had at least a part of the solution in my head! I could help them get together and do something collectively that they couldn't do separately, i.e. mount an advertising campaign to fight for business.

## Bill's Journey ~ Odd Jobs IV

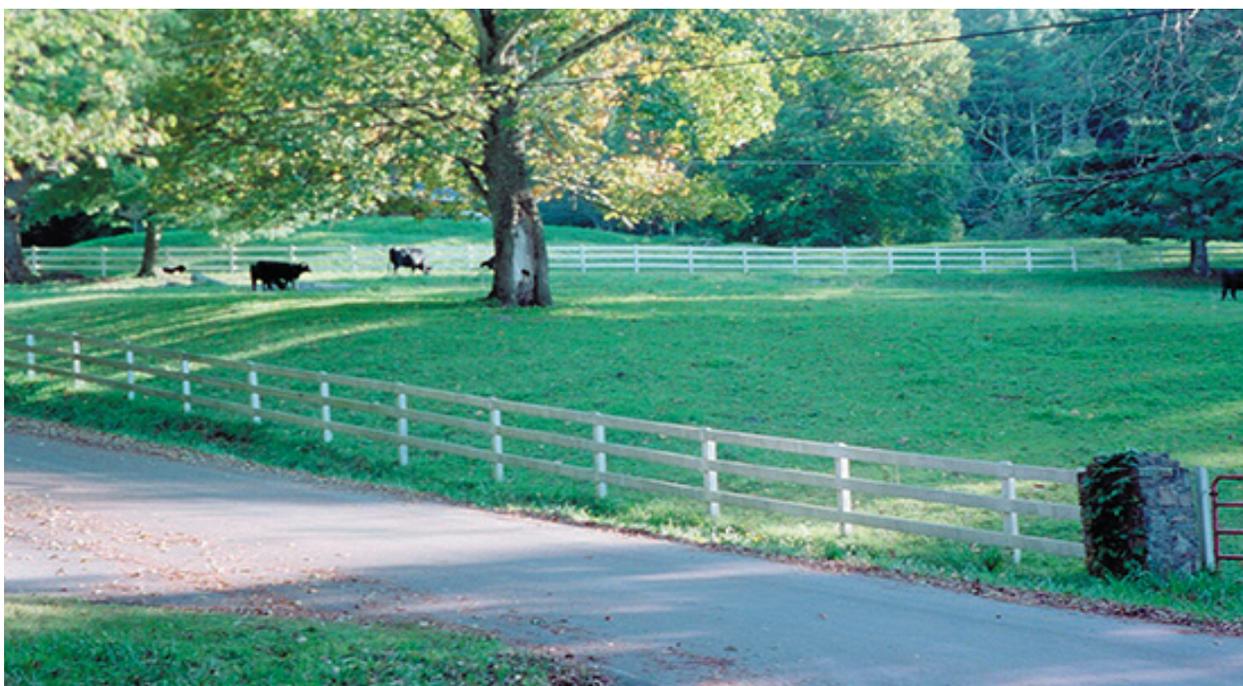
I acted by deciding to create a full page ad in *Neighbors* that featured a nice line drawing of Franklin's Main Street and selling little boxes on the page for modest sums that in fact generated more revenue than the paper would get for a full page ad. I sold contracts for the box ads on a full year basis. I don't remember the exact figure but it was about a \$25,000 sale and yielded me a nice commission for my efforts.

My friend Burt Ellison did the drawing and I convinced the ACT to pay him for the art!

In the town of Sylva, where they particularly hated the ACT, I created two other ad programs that worked out pretty well. I established a fictional entity called the Sylva New Car Dealership Association and created an ad for the four dealerships that elected to participate. The ad extolled Sylva as a good place to buy a car. I also created a date-night ad featuring the local movie house weekend schedule surrounded by restaurant ads. I called it 'Dinner and a movie' I managed a few ads in Bryson City, Cherokee and elsewhere. So eventually had another income stream going.

I was not a roaring success in the advertising business but I felt proud to have overcome great resistance to a product and earn a few dollars in the process. I had reversed a long-standing self-image that labeled me "Non-Salesman." But I still felt non successful . So I kept all my jobs waiting on tables, selling Christmas trees, selling advertising, selling restaurant equipment and catering.

Whilst doing all these jobs and sort of getting by financially our daughter Kim got a job



Our Camp Branch Road driveway is named Rose Path Lane. It's a 500 foot walk to the mailbox and this is the view from the mail box. There were nice places to walk in our neighborhood!

## Bill's Journey ~ Odd Jobs IV

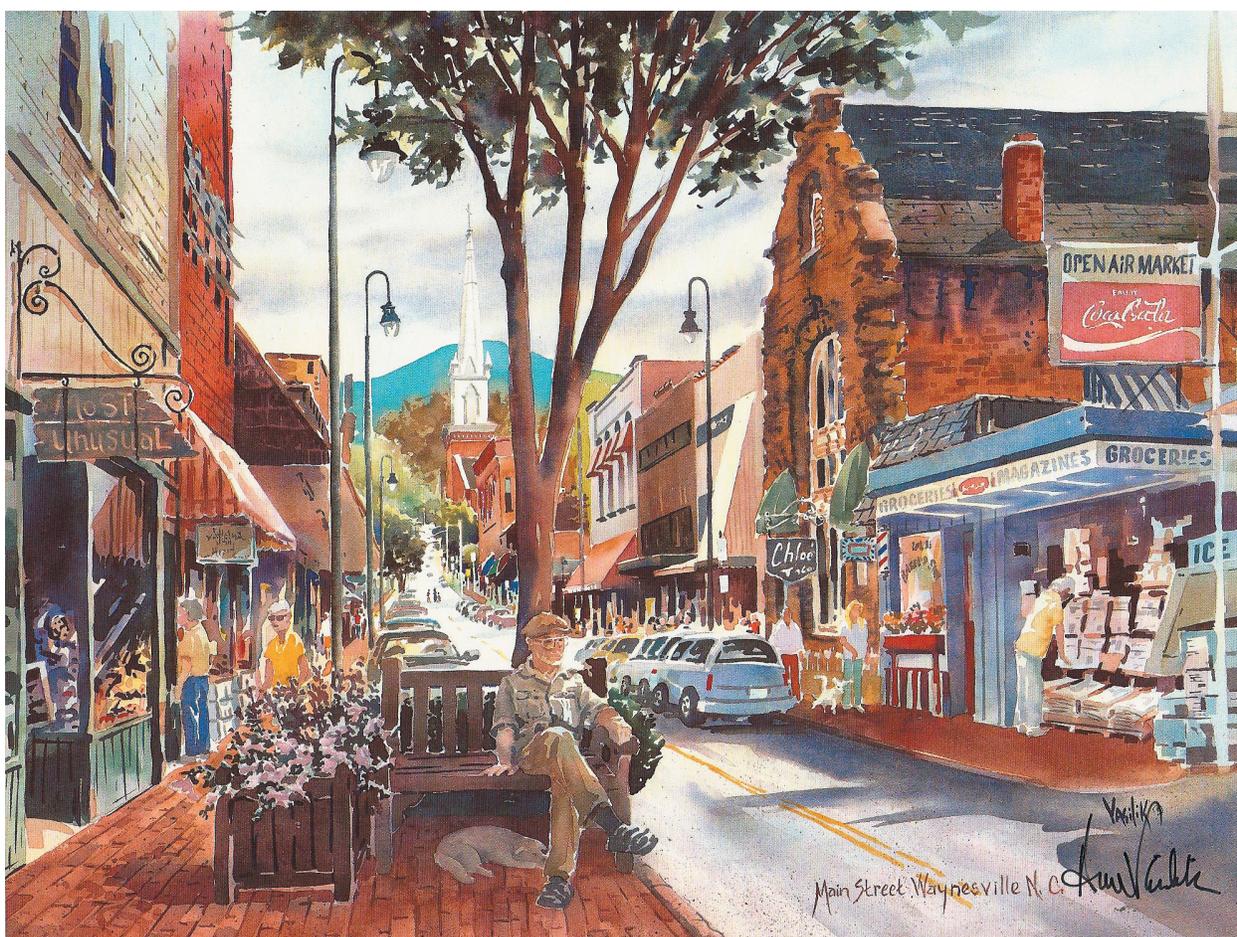
with United Airlines that allowed for a parents trip once a year as a benefit. Daisy and I made some wonderful, if low budget, trips as a result. In 1991 we visited Spain for a month passing a happy week in Barcelona with our friends Edgar and Nina Bravo and their daughters. Then followed three weeks in Madrid with my brother Sandy Grinnell and sister-in-law Marisa.

We spent a month traveling with our friends Norma and Peter Joyce in Thailand in 1992.

In January 1993 we took an even longer trip that started in Knoxville, Tennessee, a convenient airport, and included a month in Italy and ten days in Puerto Escondito, Mexico.

And, by the way - even though we were not earning great sums of money, our expenses were very low and we were actually saving money in our 401K and buying mutual funds every month for our IRA retirement account.

When I remember the fun I had living here, I think we did well.



Here's a watercolor of Main Street, Waynesville, North Carolina. The artist Anne Vaslick did a really fine job of catching the spirit and feel of the area as well as the look of this beautiful downtown area.

We loved our twelve year sojourn in Waynesville.