

ODD JOBS - PART V

Meanwhile I needed to find a job that paid better and carried more prestige than waiting on tables at Relia's Garden Restaurant - even though I loved the work.

Remember that Daisy and I had a lot of leisure in the wintertime. So we were driving to McLean, Virginia to visit my sister and brother-in-law, Jan and Art Newburg, just before Christmas in 1992. Daisy was reading and napping as I drove along thinking about my life and times. Wondering how to get into a better line of work in poor and rural Bryson City, North Carolina.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, an idea popped into my head. "I'm going to start my own newspaper!" I declared.

"Huh," said Daisy. What are you talking about?"

"I'm going to start a newspaper like the *Blue Ridge Getaway*." I was excited.

"Bill. Stop dreaming. You don't know anything about newspapers, you don't have any money and you don't even own a printing press." She hardly looked up from her book. I drove a few miles further mentally exploring the idea further.

"Look," I said. "The Asheville Citizen Times doesn't do a very good job with the *Blue Ridge Getaway*. Most of the press run is distributed inside the Sunday paper once a month in the summer so it does not get read by tourists. They do put twenty thousand in hotels each month but they publish only June through October. All I'd have to do to be better than they do with visitors is to put thirty thousand copies a month into hotels and other tourist visitor points six months a year."

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“Right.” Daisy continued reading her book.

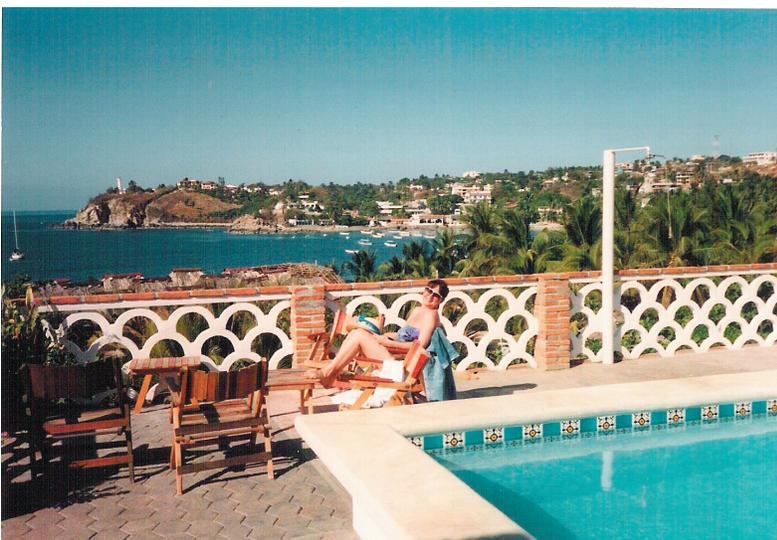
My love was not paying attention. I drove in silence and then spouted again, “*I’ll call it Fun Things To Do In The Mountains!*”

“What,” she said, “are you talking about?”

“My newspaper. I’ll call it fun things *To Do In The Mountains!*!” I was excited! What a terrific name I thought.



In Puerto Escondido for a tropical vacation, I spent time sketching and working on my *Fun Things To Do In The Mountains* business plan. Mostly in a hammock on the roof of the Hotel Flor de Marie. There was a thatched “chickee,” rooftop swimming pool and bar. The bar announced its five o’clock opening each day with the whirring of the blender making Margaritas. Heavenly!



“Bill. Forget it. There is no newspaper.”

So I shut up but did not quit thinking. In Italy I told my brother Sandy about the idea and he didn’t warn me off. Daisy rolled her eyes a little each time I mentioned it. I began making notes that would form the outline of a business plan.

Indeed, Daisy was right. I knew very little about the newspaper business. Except how to sell ads.

But I also knew that one didn’t need a printing press to publish a newspaper. Newspaper are printed giant web presses and use their excess capacity, between their own press runs, to do contract printing for others. I guessed that paper was cheap and that I could do the distribution myself while I was out selling ads. I just needed to learn how to make a newspaper. Easy Peasy.

The final stage of our trip in 1993 was ten days on the beach in beautiful, inexpensive Puerto Escondido in Mexico. I spend

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a great deal of my time scribbling out a business plan while lounging on the rooftop cabana. Daisy and I both had a great time. Back in the U.S. after a wonderful six week vacation, I felt a powerful motivation to get going and create my *Fun Things To Do In The Mountains!*

PUBLISHER - FUN THINGS TO DO IN THE MOUNTAINS

Once back home in Bryson City, I went to work immediately to figure out how to make a tabloid newspaper. The tabloid was a familiar format as there were competitors using that format.

I went to Ben Anderson, the marketing Director of Nantahala Outdoor Center. I knew him a little and believed him an expert in newspapers and publishing. I was right.

Ben encouraged me and suggested that I try to hire Ron Roman on a part-time basis to get started. Ron was a young guy who had a background in graphics and photography. He agreed to work with me for a fee; fifteen hundred dollars to come up with a design for the paper and a dummy front page that I could use as a selling tool.

Ron developed a nice design including an expensive font for headlines that he assured me would give us an exclusive look as no one else would be likely to have it. The paragraph headings were set in a font called Paleface Black. Ron was right - we had a special look. He designed a number of elements which gave us a magazine look and, after he came up with his design, he agreed to work on a part-time basis to get the paper set up and printed each month, May through October.

I borrowed five thousand dollars from the Self-Help Credit Union in Asheville. This money paid Ron and the printer for the first issue. The advertising revenue from the first issue, two thousand five hundred dollars, was enough to let me produce a second issue.

What a race I got into. Waiting on tables five nights a week. Selling ads six or seven days a week. Ron was exhausted too. Ron came to my house one day and said, "Bill. The ads you gave me are designed and ready for the customer's approval. What are we going to have for stories?"

I was floored! I'd been so busy with selling, bookkeeping, working for the restaurant, etc. that I had forgotten that newspapers had to have stories. I went to another good friend of mine, George Ellison who lived in Bryson City, and talked him into writing a fifteen hundred word story that we could use on the front page with a jump into the inside. I had no money to pay George so we agreed to exchange his stories for free advertising for his wife Elizabeth's art gallery. I took some photos on the Blue Ridge Parkway which was the subject of his first story.



Puerto Escondito

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Ron wanted to do a twelve page issue. He said “OK Bill. Good job on the cover story. Now what about the other eleven pages? We don’t have nearly enough ads and other material to fill them. We agreed that I would write a Publisher’s column each month and run it with my photo. We still had a lot of room so I paid Ron to design an artistic map of western North Carolina that would cover a half page and we would hire Gene Thompson, another graphics and writing pro who worked for NOC, to come up with a full-page Rand McNally style guide for hotels and another for Restaurants.

Ron told me that the space problems would be short lived. “Soon,” he said, people will be showering press releases on us to advertise events and organizations. He was right. We garnered some press releases from potential advertisers to fill the gaps. Another friend, Frank Lee, was a talented artist and I engaged him to generate little line drawing to decorate the pages. The end result, in 1993 was a distinctive look that still echoes in the publication in 2011.

Ron hired Gene Thompson to assist him with the editorial side of things. We each had a unique vision of how things should work. I was focused on sales and revenue. Ron did the artistic stuff and Gene concentrated on editorial matters.

Once Ron said something to me that I think has application for lots of people.

“Bill,” he said. You need to know something. Gene doesn’t care what the paper looks like - he just wants the stories to make sense and not have embarrassing typos and grammatical errors.

“I, on the other hand, don’t even read the stories. I don’t care what they say. I just want the paper to look good.” I didn’t say it but I was thinking, “I don’t care about either of those things except to the extent that they help us sell ads.”

Thus I learned from Ron that it was up to me to care about the whole package.

It was hand to mouth for most of the years I owned *Fun Things*. I made a little money but not enough to call it a financial success. I kept my job as a waiter at NOC for a while.

Things settled down into a pattern. I sold ads and managed the creation of a sales team. Ron produced the paper. Gene became our editor. Daisy and I continued to work at NOC - she



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as a manager and I as a waiter. Sales reps were hired on a commission basis.

We did Christmas trees, I catered, sold restaurant equipment and delivered papers all over western North Carolina. Each issue became a little stronger with advertising, editorial and graphics.

Then Ron announced that the stress was killing him and he had to resign. He stuck around

You've spent the day running the rapids on the Nantahala River. Or exploring the mountains by foot or by car. Where to go to satisfy a mountainous appetite?

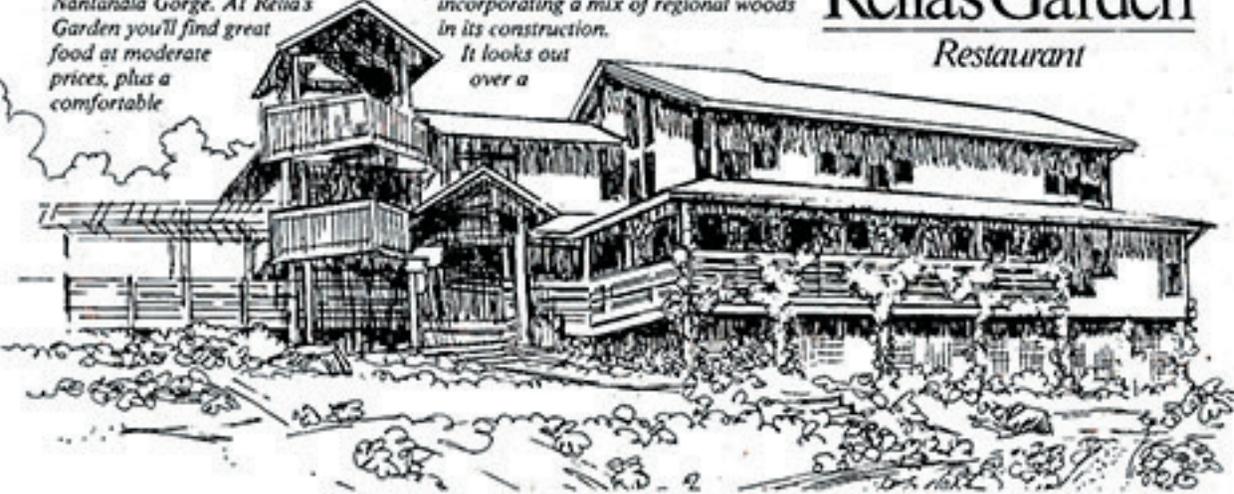
Our Garden Is The Spot For Hungry Folks.

Nantahala Outdoor Center has the answer: Relia's Garden, located on U.S. 19/74 about 13 miles southwest of Bryson City in the scenic Nantahala Gorge. At Relia's Garden you'll find great food at moderate prices, plus a comfortable

atmosphere that suits all sorts of hungry folks. Our menu features a variety of tempting meats and vegetables, served up family-style. So there's plenty of food for everyone—even ravenous paddlers and hikers.

The handsome building housing Relia's Garden also has its own flavor, incorporating a mix of regional woods in its construction. It looks out over a

terraced garden, where you can view the delights to be served in a variety of dishes inside or on our covered deck. Call us at (704) 488-2175, ext. 268, to make reservations for groups of 10' or more. Otherwise, we'll save a table for you at our garden spot.



**Relia's Garden**
Restaurant

Career intersection - One of the first customers for *Fun Things To Do In The Mountains* was Relia's Garden Restaurant. Good decision Daisy! Thank you!!

I hired Frank Lee, who was already doing design work for the paper to draw an image of Relia's Garden for the Ad. I thought that his rendering was brilliant for this half-page ad.

long enough to teach me what he was doing. I bought a computer and hired an NOC IT gentleman to teach me the PageMaker and PhotoShop computer programs. I hired Gene's wife Ann Thompson to work part time and produced the paper with a lot of help from Ann and others.

We would make a layout with the stories and ads glued to a cardboard layout grid and protected by a tissue overlay paper. This board was the full-sized image of each page of the newspaper. We had to take the "mechanical" to the printer who used it to photographically create a printing plate.

Over time we evolved, purchased better computers and learned to output the paper as a PDF document on a portable disk that the printer could use to make his offset printing plates.

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The current publisher doesn't even have to do this - he emails the document that creates the entire paper to the printer.

I had a front row seat to view the improvements to efficiency and productivity that computers added to our lives.

Publishing *Fun Things* became my obsession. I worked as hard as I could. I was lucky to have hired several independent sales reps who took great interest in sales as their livelihoods depended on success. More than a dozen reps were hired over the years. They were all wonderful but not all equally successful. Some sold nothing and others created hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue.

I paid the sales reps a 33% commission and a typical contract was over \$1,000.00, say four insertions for a quarter page ad at \$275.00 each. This may seem like a lot but they bore their own travel and telephone expenses and were responsible for the paper's distribution as a part of their commitment to me and to their clients.

Often a single sale would result in repeat business that persisted for years. For example in July 1993, when I was working several jobs at the same time, I got an appointment with the Mast General Store Marketing Manager, Dwayne Woolbright, in Valle Crusis, near Boone, North Carolina. This meant a seven hour round trip from my home. It was more than a day's work and seemed even longer before the arrival of cell phones and satellite radio.

Dwyane was very nice but said his budget was committed for the year. "Come back next spring," he said in a kind manner. I told him that since I was already there I'd like to do a story about Mast General Stores. He said, "Sure."

Mast General Store at that time had three stores: Valle Crusis, Boone and Waynesville. It was an interesting story and was a store that my family loved to shop whenever they visited us. It was an easy story to write. Dwayne called me in August, when the story appeared, to say thanks and told me that they

OPTIMIST RULE AND FREE SMILES

There was a time when I was young, that I thought the world was a playground and that I'd be happy, rich and famous. What an optimist!

Then I started school, and on the first day in kindergarten, reality set in. Life was going to be a little harder than I thought!

Nevertheless, like most folks I stuck it out—not having many options—and carried on with the thought that I'd get over my difficulties and soon everything would be all right. Of course, it wasn't and life never seemed to match my fantasies. School. Work. More school, more work, and the years passed. My ship never came in and my bank accounts never swelled. Did I despair?

No way. I still think that life in our time and place is great and that it is only going to get better. And I can prove it!

Here's how: I made a list today of all the things I'd do if I were retired, financially sound and able to do whatever in the world I chose. Here's the list:

- take out the garbage
- weed and mow
- clean out the carport
- paint the guest room
- paint the deck
- have a garage sale
- call Mom
- have dinner with friends

Really! That's what I'd do. Sorta follow my honey-do list. Putter around the house. Polish the car. Rest in the shade with a glass of lemonade when I get too hot. Do some errands.

Oh yes, maybe I'd write a little philosophy. Hang out with my friends and family, and, when I need to stretch, I'd go for a drive in the mountains. Occasional golf. Hikes. Exercise and eat right. Get more active in community affairs. Not worry about the bills. Plan a little trip somewhere down the line to stretch the mental horizons.

Yes, I know that this is a fantasy, but it's also the literal truth about my list and my state of mind these days. I feel very rich with just one exception: I worry about the bills now and then. But somehow, we get through even if the money and the bills don't come out even, it's usually close.

My point is that I'm happier and feel richer when I count my blessings.

People think that I'm an optimist and I think so, too. The best things in life *are* free. There's never a charge for wondering about the moon and stars. Enjoying walks in the country and the patter of rain are free. Kind words and smiles are easy and often rewarded. Pax.



Published in Fun Things To Do In The Mountains Sept 1997

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wanted to run a quarter page ad for \$250.00 but it was to only to run one time. They were, I thought, throwing me a bone which I appreciated very much.

Daisy and I took a week off in August, 1993. I was happy to get a message from Dwayne on my answering machine. He said, "Bill you have a hot little paper there. We're getting big response to the ad coupon. Is it too late to get the ad into the October issue? We're getting the coupons here in Boone and Valle Crusis as well as Waynesville." My wide circulation was paying off.

It was not too late and Mast has been in *Fun Things* ever since. Now the paper is publishing eleven months a year and the ad has grown to a half page. I guess that one sales call has resulted in over \$40,000.00 in revenue. After the visit we stayed in touch by telephone. They never missed an issue. Since it was a "house ad" I didn't have to pay commissions!

(By the way it was an ugly ad Dwayne, but it worked for both of us. Good job!) Over the years we featured Mast General Store in stories on a regular basis. The relationship is still going.

The reps wrote stories featuring customers and the enterprise was stable and happy for most of the time I published the paper! The enterprise had a lot of momentum so that it would keep on trucking along even if I was inattentive due to traveling around the world with my bride or working at my other jobs.

Amy Ammons Garza, her sister Doreyl Ammons Cain and a Hendersonville woman named Mickey Mell became my good friends and the were most successful reps by far. Especially Amy. Visit catchthespiritofappalacia.org to learn more about Amy and Doreyl and the wonderful impact they have on their communities.

Daisy and I bought a cute stone house in Waynesville, North Carolina. It was in a wooded area, high on the side of a mountain. It put me much closer to my main market which was Asheville. The house turned out to be a great investment.

SOUS CHEF / HARRAH'S CHEROKEE CASINO - In 1997 Harrah's Cherokee Casino opened in neighboring Cherokee, North Carolina. Our friends Ted and Norma Moss told us at dinner one night that she was going to work at the casino and said that it was a great financial op-

REMINDER THAT MOST OF MY LIFE WAS SPENT AWAY FROM WORK



I spent many happy hours restoring my sailing canoe and using it in protected waters around Miami. Billy is about 3 years old, so the photo might be circa 1966. This was shot along the MacArthur Causeway in Miami.

The boat was made from a tough fabric stretched over an elaborate wood frame. You can see the seat back, lee boards and lateen rig. It sat two adults.

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portunity for everyone in the area. Daisy was managing the Hungry Bear Restaurant at that time.

Daisy applied to the casino and was hired as a restaurant supervisor with a good salary and benefits.

For the last few years we'd been used to being unemployed in winter. As soon as the Christmas tree sales season was over we'd go off on a vacation adventure. So it was not a big surprise when Daisy braced me with this question, **"So Bill. What are you going to do this winter? Lay around the house while I go to work every Day?"**

I tried a few evasive answer but found none that convinced even myself that I shouldn't try to get a job at the casino during the months that the paper was dormant.

We originally published six months a year, May through October. In 1997 we were printing 9 issues a year but I still had plenty of time off and went to the employment office.

I was hired as a Sous Chef. The word 'sous is French for "under" and implies supervisory duties as well as expert cooking abilities. By that time I'd had many good commercial cooking experiences at Terrace Café, Sunset Center Sandwich Shop, Relia's Garden, River's End and the Point after restaurants.

It worked out that I kept the job for three and one-half years. It was really hard during the summer months when I was publishing *Fun Things* but I had a lot of good help from Gene Smith, Ann Thompson, Amy Garza and other sales staff.

I had wonderful fun, working first in the Casino's late night snack restaurant. We had table service and a tasty menu. Then I got transferred to the big kitchen that ran the Fresh Market guest buffet and employee dining room.

I celebrated my 60th birthday working in the big kitchen. The gang at work baked me a little cake with candles and sang me a song. I remembered my dad at sixty. Life was good.

Oftentimes, when people

ANOTHER REMINDER OF LIFE'S BIGGEST DAYS - TOO MUCH WORK...



This was one of many days spent cruising Biscayne Bay in Miami, Florida aboard rental Pearson Ensign sloops. The boat, designed by Carl Alberg, was the largest class of full keel boats in North America. It is 22.5 feet long, weighs 3,000 pounds, has a 3 feet draft. It is a comfortable day sailer with a large cockpit that easily holds four adults. The photo was probably taken by my friend Viktor Hackl. Son Billy III is at the helm.

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work in restaurants, they find that they really like the challenge, hard work, and opportunities to interact with people. Many like the creativity and fun of cooking. So it was with me. I stayed on until Ann Thompson's mother became ill and dependent on her, so that she had to quit *Fun Things*.

I took Ann's place which meant that I would be doing the layout for the paper and wouldn't have time for a job. So once again I became full-time publisher of *Fun Things To Do In The Mountains*. I probably would have been way off better financially had I stayed with the casino and had either sold or folded the publication.

When Daisy retired in 2006 I had just sold *Fun Things To Do In The Mountains* to a couple recently moved from California. Mike and Mary Walker agreed to pay \$100,000 for the publication plus three percent of gross revenue over \$150,000 per year. They made a down payment of \$55,000 and paid interest and principal on a note for a number of years plus some commissions for ongoing work sales.

Then they defaulted, claiming I had misled them about the affairs of the paper. This wasn't so but the dynamics of suing and collecting the relatively modest amount they owed were difficult. We would have had to risk \$40,000 in attorneys's fees to recapture the \$60,000 they owed. All that on top of having already spent over \$10,000.00 in legal fees, I saw the light and surrendered. Giving up the case was a sad moment but the bigger picture was that we were happily living in New Jersey and the risk and pain of pursuing the case was too much.

At this writing, January 2009, you can take a look at funthingstodointhemountains.net. The Walkers seem to be doing a good job. Four of the people on the masthead were in place when I sold the paper and I'm happy that the concept is still working. I'm also glad to see that many of the advertising customers I'd cultivated over the years are still advertising. Rock on Fun Things. F.U. Mike Walker!

WRITER - As I mentioned in the introduction to Bill's Journey, I am a reader. A word person. In the years I worked for the First National Bank, The Coast Guard, Siegal Medical Group and other employers I wrote reports, instructions, and letters. I often got praise for the ease with which I could prepare readable reports, letters and instructions.

When our daughter Kris was kidnapped by her biological father and recovered by Daisy and me, I wrote a book about the adventure but it was not publishable. Daisy and I took the manuscript to an agent in New York who said we had a good story but it would be too much work for them to fix it. It was too much for us too so it went into a box for thirty years.

In publishing *Fun Things To Do In The Mountains* I wrote a column for the paper every month and got a lot of praise for my efforts. Over the years I wrote hundreds of articles, some under the pen name Liam Elres.

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We undertook the project of rewriting the book when we retired and moved to New Jersey. This time Daisy and I worked on it together. We presented it to literary friends including skilled writer and book editor Amy Garza. The result was that we decided to rewrite the story as a novel. Now the second rewrite is done. You can get a taste online at stealingali.com.

OUR BOOK - *Stealing Ali*, is no longer my book. Daisy has contributed so much, and such good stuff, that it is truly a joint effort. We argue a bit over content but in the end I hope that it will be a hell of a read. In addition to being a story about a woman it is my story too. To understand how things were with me, you need to read that book too. Sorry.

You can sample *Stealing Ali* at stealingali.com. It went to editor Amy Garza in September 2009 for another read.

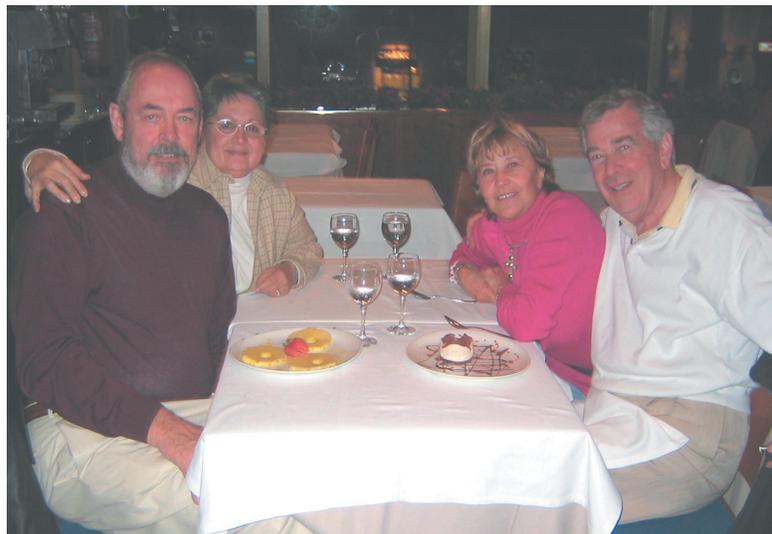
This is the chapter about my life's work. It is ironic that I was a newspaper delivery boy in Brooklyn - my first real job. My last real job as publisher of *Fun Things* involved newspaper delivery too! Life sometimes seems circular.

NEWSPAPER LAYOUT - Publishing *Fun Things To Do In The Mountains* involved learning some new skills.

Initially I had Ron Roman to do all the layout work for me. When He left I turned the upstairs hallway in our Bryson City home into a newspaper office. At thirty-five feet long and eighteen feet wide it provided lots of room for layout desks mounted waist height at an angle along the walls.

Stories came from various sources and Ann Thompson would keypunch them on her home computer and format everything in the ClearFace type font with headlines and sub-heads in PaleFace Black.

Photographs would be taken to the printer or a printer to be processed into half tones. The copy that Ann would layout on her computer would be taken to Gene Thompson, her ex, to be edited and output on his high-quality laser printer. Ads would be created on



We spent a month in Spain in 2005 with our wonderful friends Norma and Peter Joyce. They did a house trade giving their house in St. Augustine, Florida for a villa on the Costa Blanca in the town of Torre Vieja near Alicante. This was Daisy's birthday party on February 16th in a restaurant in Barcelona where we spent our first few days.

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our computers or submitted as “slicks” by the customers. I had several graphic artists who would create ads for a modest fee if they were too complicated or if I was short of time.

By experience, based on previous months, and through good guessing I would get the correct number of layout boards ready. These were made of card stock approximately twenty-six inches wide and eighteen inches tall with faint blue (non-printing) layout lines to help us with alignment. Each board would hold two full pages, laid out just as they would run on the press. The end result would look exactly like our newspaper.

The stories, photos and ads would be trimmed with an Exacto knife and held on the board with repositionable spray glue or hot wax.

When Ann arrived at the home office a few days before our printing deadline she would find that I had stripped last month's boards, which the printer saved for me, and reglued everything that would carry over to the next issue. This would include our front page banners, the masthead, many ads and some artistic features that we ran every month such as maps and special proprietary art. All we had to do was to place the new ads and stories and struggle with either too much or not enough empty space.

Sometimes we'd need to add or remove a couple of pages to make the paper come out right. When we were finished I'd have Frank Lee come over and draw little cartoons and designs to decorate left-over spaces and make the paper a fun read. For the most part we succeeded. But it was a lot of effort. The reps would show up on the final day to look things over and make sure that we didn't leave out any of their ads or stories. We had some fun times.

All the while I was building computer skills. After Ann reduced her hours I got more serious, bought my own laser printer and output the stories myself. This made it much easier than waiting for Ann to bring Gene's computer output. Finally in the last few years we abandoned the cardboard mechanicals and brought the finished publication to the printer on computer disks. It was all done on the computer. If I still had the paper today I would send PDF files to the printer as an email attachment.

It was never easy. It was almost always fun. And it was a very creative process. I believe that it was creative elements like graphic art and writing that were so appealing about the business. Retirement is somewhat more fun and less worrisome.



Grandson Garrison Keck came to help one day and did a good job applying epoxy to the rudder parts and doing general tasks.

Meanwhile Grandpa's shaping the mast. It is sixteen feet tall and I am tapering the ends.



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The other thing about the business was the relationships with employees, colleagues and clients. We had many enduring relationships. I miss it sometimes.

Ann Thompson, Amy Garza Mickey Mell and Doreyl Ammons Cain stayed with me to the end. Amy and Doreyl are still working for *Fun Things* as I write this in 2011 along with others who have been associated with the effort for years. WTG!

BOAT BUILDER - I have always had a thing about boats and the sea. I read adventure stories. I admired my dad who was Chief Engineer on a merchant ship. I was so proud. Once in a while I actually got out on the water. "Cousin" Carl Wilhelm, who I admired had rebuilt a nice little outboard-runabout which I thought was the single greatest thing I'd ever seen.

I joined the Coast Guard because I wanted to be a mariner. I was mostly a "desk" sailor.

While married to Carolyn I acquired and rebuilt a seventeen foot sailing canoe with a lateen rig. It was great fun. I was sad when I had to convert our carport to a bedroom for Billy and Jeff. The carport conversion meant that there was no sheltered storage spot for the



This is from CLC's catalogue with co. owner John Harris, rowing.



Above. Still in the warehouse the final finish has been applied to the hull. The mast and spar are on the workbench.



The boat was done by September and launched here at my friend Dan Hatcher's home on nearby Tranquility Lake. The event was toasted by (l-r) Jean Dougherty, myself, Daisy, Mackenzie Keck, Madelyn Keck, Lana Dougherty, Garrison Keck, Kris Keck, Dan Keck, Dan Hatcher and his son. Photo by Pete Dougherty.

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boat and I had to sell it before the weather destroyed it.

So, in 2007/2008 I built a little flat-bottomed skiff from a kit. It was meant for either rowing or sailing. It took me while, but the project gave me an outlet for my creative side as well as being a good teaching event. I bought the kit from Chesapeake Light Craft Company. For now it is possible to read about it on billserle.com but this web site won't last forever- so I'm including a few photos here.

We moved to Allamuchy, New Jersey in the spring of 2007. We live in a condo owned by Kris and Dan Keck. It is small but adequate for us and size does matter - less to clean. I can ride my bike in the neighborhood. There are wonderful country lanes and roads and a few little hills to challenge me. But no room for a workshop.

It was lucky for me that that Dan came to own a large warehouse and kindly let me build my boat there. The kit came, in several large boxes, at the end of 2007 and it took me nine months to build the 13'2" flat bottomed skiff.

It took me a long time to finish because we were away in Florida a lot caring for our daughter-in-law Gail Serle who had fallen ill. She passed away in June 2008.

My boat kit cost about \$1,000.00 and I paid an additional \$950.00 for the sailing kit which included the sail. I also needed to buy numerous odds and ends including paint and a trailer.

I haven't used the boat as much as I would have liked this year of the Lord 2009 for a variety of health



We stopped at the Azores on our 2008 TransAtlantic cruise. The islands were beautiful. I'd like to stay longer some fine day.



La Rambla in Barcelona is everyone's favorite walking street. Locals and tourists stroll the area to gawk at the living statues and each other. They shop for birds, food, flowers and art of all descriptions. Day or night. Photo by Bill Serle 2007

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reasons. Daisy had a knee replacement in April and I had a set of problems that I won't go into here.

Never the less, the times I have taken it out have been fun, instructive and physically challenging for a septuagenarian like me.

People like the look of the boat which is named "Day's Ease." During its construction there were lots of contractors working in the warehouse as Dan remodeled it and the attached office building. My building process went on for over nine months and the guys working around me often stopped to check my progress and "pet" my emerging beauty.

I get many comments and visitors when I have the boat on the road on its trailer or at the lakes where I use launch ramps. It's fun to row and sail.

My favorite places have been sailing and rowing on Lake Hopatcong, Greenwood Lake and Spruce Run Lake. Garrison had a good row the other week - he's a strong boy and pulled us along with oars for over two miles.

Alas the boat is built and I have no place available to build another project. I've been laid-off again.

GETTING A JOB- Daisy sometimes tells me to, "Get a job." I believe she thinks we need money. But having a job is a nasty affair. They who expect you at the same time every day, may not be understanding when you need to take off in the afternoon to play golf, or give you the six or seven vacations one needs in your first year? It seems that I need to see at least one of my doctors every week.



We've made four trans-Atlantic crossings with Royal Caribbean in the past several years. We were on Brilliance of the Seas twice and Navigator of the Seas twice. I'd like to go again! We're thinking spring 2012 if our energy and health permit.



March 2009 we spent time at the Bristol Mountain Ski Resort in upstate New York with Jeff and Bill and families after a big weekend in Rochester to see Billy play basketball. Cold weather. Warm hearts.

The Date is not yet set for 2010 but Daisy and I hope to go as Ski-bunnies, of course.

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The boss would think I'd be a lousy employee and I'd agree. Phooey on that! I'd rather be poor.

Maybe I could forgo some of my vacations. Hmm...Here's the list of the things we may want to do in the next twelve months:

- We leave for the Outer Banks of North Carolina day-after-tomorrow, **September 16th** for our annual beach/house party. We rent a ten bedroom house, under the leadership of Jan and Art Newburg, and it fills with friends. It's a week-long house

party in the old manner. We share expenses and chores. Especially Jan. This will be our fourth year! We'll spend time in Virginia before and after the main event. Say two weeks total.

- Florida - Family reunion between **Christmas and New Years**. Two weeks.
- Gotta be in NYC the weekend of **Jan 24th** for a few days. Our grandson Billy the IV will be playing basketball for the University of Rochester against NYU that weekend. We had a wonderful time doing that in 2009 when he was a freshman.

- Transatlantic cruise - Miami to Italy with port stops in Nassau, Madeira, Portugal, France, Spain. **The ship leaves in March 2010**. (This would be our 4th trans-Atlantic cruise in the last three years. We're old hands now.

- Barcelona. One of our favorite cities. We may stop there after the cruise. This will be our 7th visit. We always feel good there.

- Turkey - I want to spend a week here after the rest in Barcelona.

April 2010.

- Paris - Fly from Turkey, the plane stops here on the way back to Miami. We could spend a week in Brittany and Cote de Azure much as we have done before. **Ten days is about right**. Then home.

- Florida - Golfing with my son Jeff's church group. One week in Tampa about **May 28th**. Next year will be the third time I've joined the group.

- Mexico City and San Miguel De Allende, Mexico. Our good friends Norma and Peter Joyce live there most of the year. We love them and their group of friends.

Wonderful place with spring-like warmth all year. **June 2010** would be great.



2008 - "Day's Ease" fully rigged and ready to be launched on Greenwood Lake.

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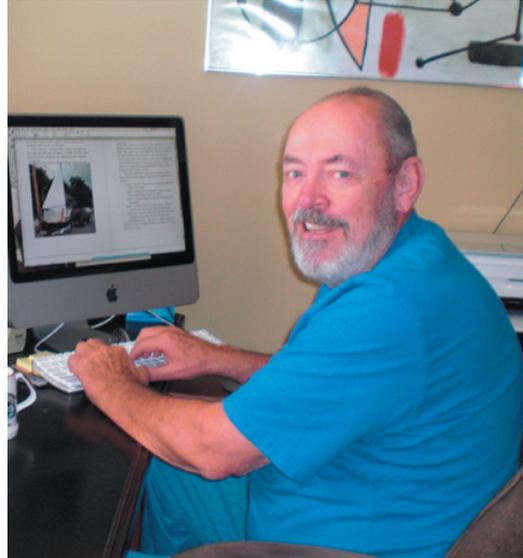
- Family reunion in McLean, Virginia **July 2010.**

I'm not sure just when we can go, but our good friends Ed and Spring Knapp live in China. They've invited us many times. Maybe in the **fall of 2010.**

- **September 2010** - oops! Time for the beach again.

And so it goes...

Now you may think that the above schedule is overly ambitious for people of modest means. But Daisy does amazing things with a dollar. Frequent flier miles and diligent bargain seeking does work. We didn't make all of the trips noted above exactly as planned - but we did most of them and a few extras as well. We have traveled more than the average couple and love it. As I write this our bodies are just recovering from a week in Italy followed by a sixteen day cruise from Civitavecchia, Italy to Galveston, Texas.



2009 Photo by Daisy Serle

DAISY. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR A JOB!

WRITER AGAIN - So back to being a writer... I can take my tools along when we travel and work on my stories, family histories and novels.

Next biggie for me, when I finish this, is a story about Edna Conover Serle, my Mom, who died too young at the age of fifty two. There will be a lot to say.

My career is not languishing for lack of material.

As you may imagine this memoir has been written over a period of years. I started it when we settled in Allamuchy, New Jersey in 2007. The condo we lived in required virtually no exterior maintenance and I seized the opportunity to re-live the years gone by.

Suddenly it's 2011 and I'm still formatting and still finishing this up. We've bought a little house that always needs maintenance. Where does the time...

(Note - this memoir has been written over a number of years - about four and a half I think. My mental outline does not always corollate with the chapter outlines. Deal with it!

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Well, for one thing we moved back to Florida. We took a thirteen-night Caribbean cruise in December 2009 and decided that we needed more room and light than we were getting in a New Jersey condo. We drove home studying the little towns between Kris and Dan Keck's winter home in Wellington, Florida and sons Bill III and Jeff's homes in the Daytona area and decided on a cute (inexpensive) home in Rockledge, Florida.

So here we've been for the last year. It is November 2011 and the time has flown by. **We worked hard on remodeling the interior of our house a lot and finished our novel *Stealing Ali*. It is available digitally on Kindle and through Amazon Books.**

Our motivation for the big effort and expense of publishing the novel is to make it a part of the family's history and not to make money. We can always hope for the money but the business of publishing books is complicated and doesn't earn money for most writers.

Ask us if we made money in a year or so.

HUNTER II - A new novel by William Serle. Yep. I'm writing again. Just finished this book and it is being edited for a January 2012 release as an ebook. I can't say yet whether or not we'll make a real paper book or not. I'm also working on both a prequel and a sequel.

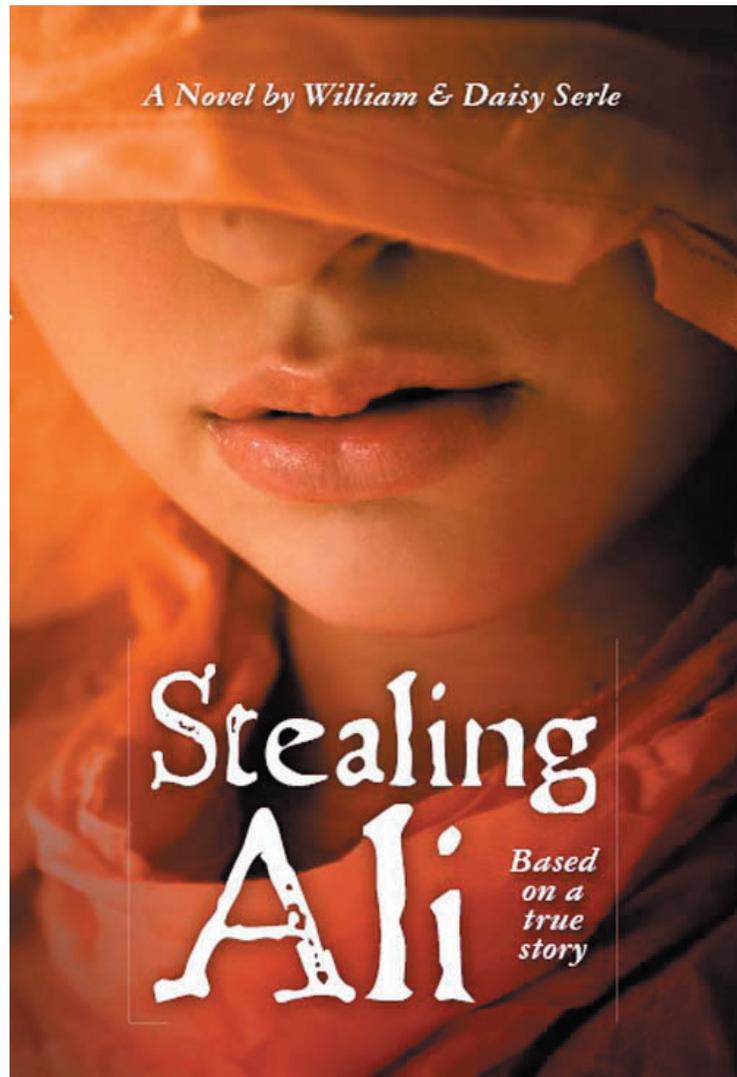
Busy, busy...

Stay tuned.

Stealing Ali is available through Amazon, and Kindle. 380 pages.

Cover design by CreateSpace.

Photo is of the proof's cover.





I like to think that I get my best ideas while soaking in our back yard hot tub. It is placed between two wonderful palm trees and mostly screened by neighbors' six-foot tall board fences. Think moonlight filtering through the fronds and the fragrance of jasmine. It is accessed through the master bedroom sliding doors and it's less than a step from there to the master bath. We had a very nice hot tub in Waynesville, North Carolina too and missed it while living in our New Jersey condo for three years.

We poured a cement patio with electric service built in (to code). The dirt and some of beautiful curved concrete pieces were excavated and used to create a berm around the hot tub. Wild daisies, dianthus, Hawaii plumrosa and basil are having a party under the trees. Our orange tree is visible on the right and our screened porch on the left.