

READERSHIP GROWS

Who would have guessed when we launched this publication in January 1991 that it would continue to increase in readership well into the second year! Three more households have joined the Muse family: Viki Blakley and family, Arthur Murdock and Lorraine Skamarcz, and John and Cathy Howlett.

Lorraine and Cathy have already contributed recipes to our Muse Cookbook, which you will all receive as Christmas presents. Viki, also an excellent cook, will be sending some as soon as she is settled in from moving.

CALENDAR CALL

The Frosts have entered all the information they could glean about birthdays and anniversaries for Muse readers, but it's by no means a complete calendar. We have more material to mail them, but we're still short on some categories.

Charlie writes, "Dear Editors - We exploited the long genealogy for the calendar but noticed that there were several wives' birthdays missing. You might want to add family reunion days." HELP! We need your input!

And we will definitely add Steve and Teri's family reunion on July 4. This has now become Big Time, with several committees to do the work. Incidentally, we all need to volunteer to help, so Steve's kids won't give it up.

HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

IN THIS ISSUE

Once again our sterling staff has submitted some splendid stuff. Ken Murdock wrote an excellent first article, sharing his fascinating birthday celebrations with the Muse family. Cathy Howlett sent a little jewel of a description of early autumn in Concord, New Hampshire. Sean gave us some more jokes.

Orrel and Charlie Frost created another professional, thoughtful movie review. Gene Murdock's article on names should be particularly interesting to anyone who has ever struggled to name a baby or to remember someone's name.

We thank all who are willing to share their talents to make this a publication worth reading. If you haven't been published lately, why not make October the month when you grab a pen and start writing (or drawing).

MUSE COOKBOOK

Do the Muse editors have your best recipes? If not, this is your last chance to get them into the cookbook. You wouldn't want the book to go to press without your wonderful entries, would you? NOT! We see this as more than just a collection of recipes. We're including background material on the origin or family enjoyment of these dishes. We're especially excited about some "historical" recipes from several readers' files.

HAPPY STANDARD TIME!

HAPPY TIME: AUGUST 27, 1992

-- Kenneth A. Murdock
(Uncle Ken)

It all started with the receipt of several birthday cards, including a very nice one from Bob and Nancy. Thanks for remembering me!

On the 27th, youngest son Keith and granddaughter Jeanne took me to nearby Woodbury CT to a performance of the Roberts Brothers Circus. Oldest son Brian was performing as "Bingo," a guest clown. This he has done for two summers whenever possible - which is about every time they are within reach in the summer.

On the lot, Jeanne, Keith, and I got together to look for Brian. Suddenly, my name was called and another clown, "Jo-Jo" (Ed Ellis) shook my hand and welcomed me to the show. (He saw me several weeks ago in another town.)

We met Brian (Bingo) and he took us to meet some of the circus people, including the ringmaster, Bill Schreiber. I had a nice chat with Bill and was warmly welcomed by him as I was by all. Bill's wife Chris brought me a folding chair to use instead of the hard bleachers. She put me in a good location in the front row. Now we were in the tent with no fees collected, thanks to Brian's connections. One of the workers got us Cokes to drink. When I thanked him, he said "Nothing is too good for Bingo's family!"

We watched the various acts - aerial stunts, animal acts, CLOWNS (Brian is very good, and gets better all the time). Having watched the show once before, I could give more attention to my camera and took two rolls of film. The pics came out as usual: some good, some mediocre and some very marginal.

The clowns stage a "boxing" act (pretty good). The ringmaster announced by saying "This match is sponsored by Ken Murdock!" Some Surprise!! Later he told me there was no pay for sponsoring.

Later in the show he started another announcement with, "We have an important guest here today. Ken Murdock is with us and is celebrating his seventy-eighth birthday. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Ken!" How many people have had such a greeting from a circus ringmaster?

Brian and Keith got together and presented me with a nice jacket with "Roberts Bros. Circus" on the back.

A few days later the boys went to another show and came back with a poster dated August 27. It had a couple of elephants on it and was signed "Ray Dirgo." He is best known as the creator of the Flintstones and Yogi Bear. The poster had some new writing on it: "Happy Birthday, Ken Murdock, with very best wishes" and was signed "Ray Dirgo!"

This whole business made this birthday certainly one of the top ten of my life and very memorable. Best time I've had in a long, long time!

REMEMBER SEPTEMBER?

The editors forgot the birthdays! Our humble apologies to Dotty Salminen (Sept. 3) and Arthur Murdock (Sept. 15). We hope they had a great time and got lots of cards and greetings. Our own 42nd wedding anniversary was on the 16th.

DRAWINGS NEEDED

ATTENTION, all kids and other creative people! We need lots of drawings of food for the cookbook. We're not looking for museum quality pictures, just basic stuff.

Please make a page of small drawings of foods on white paper, with the labels printed or typed underneath each one. We may or may not use the label, depending on the space available. Example: a picture of a carrot with the word CARROT under it. We'll be using these drawings on the recipe pages, so about 2 inches will be good. We can also use maybe one or two larger ones for chapter headings.

TRAVELS WITH DANIELLE

--Nancy Murdock

No, Danielle is not a cat. She was an unpredictable tropical storm that dictated the way we celebrated our 42nd anniversary.

We had big plans to go camping in or near the scene of our great camping trip last year. You may remember that we took that trip in deference to our budget, but this time we were going because Bob had such good vibes from the Hubbardston experience. We set the week-end of the 25th as the best time for the adventure, but Danielle had other ideas.

All week long, we heard about the storm, but she just kind of hung around and went nowhere until the 24th, when the weather map on cable TV showed her heading straight for our campgrounds. And there was still the possibility that she could become a hurricane.

We toyed with the possibility of a city getaway somewhere, but a hotel and restaurant didn't come close to our image of the way we wanted to spend the weekend. I was really looking forward to slopping around in my sweats with no makeup, and I didn't want to gain three pounds with those big meals. So we chose to stay at the Murdock Hotel and do day trips.

From there on, it was one of those events in which the participants go from Plan C (we had already eliminated A and B) to Plan K before the whole thing is over. We scrapped C on Friday morning after spotting a big wet area over the Skyline Drive in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. Instead, we went north to a state park in Pennsylvania (in sweats with no makeup). After a leisurely lunch of fried egg sandwiches, we returned the coffee to the car and started on our walk. Danielle said, "Oh, there you are!" and started dripping on us. Before we finished, we were definitely getting real rain, not the little prelude stuff. It was a lot of fun, and we laughed as we took pictures that will probably be gray and grainy but will remind us that happy spirits triumph.

We finished the day with a visit to a fabric store (which made me feel fulfilled) and a large meal in an Italian restaurant (which made Bob feel filled). A prominent sign at the door said, "Welcome, Harley riders." We were surrounded by Harley Davidson T-shirts and black leather.

We planned to go underground, or at least indoors, on Saturday, but by then Danielle had tripped merrily on to rain on someone else's parade, so Bob suggested we try the Skyline Drive. This turned out to be a great idea, since most people were waiting for a drier day.

We traveled 120 miles to get on the Drive, but then we lollygagged along, stopping at every overlook, so we traversed only 20 miles before turning back. It was very pleasant, too early for the leaves to be displaying their flamboyant colors but nice and cool for touring. We would find ourselves in a cloud for a couple of miles and then out again in the sunshine.

I think we got some dramatic pictures of a bank of thick clouds sitting like a glacier on top of a nearby ridge. Danielle's tail splashed us every so often, but we had much more trouble with the gnats.

The high point was Bob's sighting of two deer about 20 feet from our path on the one walk we took through the woods. As I carefully edged my camera into position, one said, "Oh no, you're not taking my picture," and turned his back. But the other one posed very prettily for two snaps. Then she turned away as soon as the photography session was over. I guess they know the routine.

Sunday we felt a little more cultural, so we spent five hours at the National Gallery of Art. We enjoyed a superb exhibit called "The American Indian Frontier" with wonderful examples of work by artists from different tribes.

We saw beautifully crafted bowls, peace pipes, beaded clothing, baby carriers, and feathered bonnets. We bought two tapes, one of Indian songs and one of tribal stories. I was reminded of a field trip with Meri's class to the Walker Gallery of Art in Minneapolis.

In between our forays into the world of art and showers, we managed to fit in two games of Scrabble. Could life get much better? I decided I would definitely marry Bob again, if I had a chance to make the choice. How many other men would think this was a fantastic way to celebrate a wedding anniversary?

HALLOWEEN SALE

Dotty Salminen sold nearly all of her hand-crafted Halloween items at a holiday craft fair. She had a nice variety, everything from ghosts with Tootsie Pops in the center to large orange nylon ripstop door banners with bats, cats, ghosts, and witches. She gave a quick phone course in the assembly of some of her best sellers, so we can make them for our upcoming church fair. Dotty is a talented and generous crafts person.

DRYWALL STUFF

Darrel reported that he's been helping a friend finish an attic. "A little carpentry and drywall stuff, you know," he said casually.

AUTUMN IN CONCORD

--Cathy Howlett

Autumn has arrived on West Parish Road - the grey squirrels are back from their summer retreat into the deep woods, antagonizing the territorial dispute between the chipmunks and the red squirrels.

We haven't seen any finches or grosbeaks for a couple weeks now, but it looks like the young cardinals born this past spring in our neighborhood plan to make Concord home. Do the males learn so young to "strut their stuff"? They certainly try to intimidate the girls at the feeder.

Thanks again for joining us at our celebration. It was a special treat to see Val again after so many years and to meet her special fellows. Looking forward to our next visit.

NEW ENGLAND TRIP

Gene, Chris, and Dotty enjoyed a fine trip through New England. They stopped at Plum Island, Hampton Beach, Long Sands, Short Sands, Nubble Lighthouse (a favorite subject for artists), and Ogunquit. They walked the Marginal Trail, which follows two miles of rocky coastline. It sounds like a beautiful trip.

INDIAN SUMMER

Val and Jerod are reveling in their Indian summer. "It's just beautiful," Val says. "If we could get some rain, it would be perfect. The temperature is in the upper 70s, and there's a little color in the trees, but - pathetic."

Jerod says school is going well. He likes having 7 periods instead of only 1 or 2 teachers. "They can't hold you to 1 subject longer, because they're on a time limit!"

REVIEWERS AT WORK

--Orrel Frost

As usual we had a blast doing the review. It took longer this time because we have been taking care of Pam while she is recovering from a severe pneumonia. Charlie and I are going great guns on looking for interesting movies to review. Let us know of any ones you'd like us to do, please.

I have a student from Libya and one from Bulgaria this year. Girls, much more restrained than the dear little boys I had last year! We look forward to your monthly Muse.

JOKE CORNER

From Sean Murdock:

Q.: What did Frankenstein say when a bolt of lightning hit him?

A.: Thanks, I needed that!

Q.: When do you have acute pain?

A.: When you own a pretty window.

Q.: What happened to the dog that swallowed the watch?

A.: He got a lot of ticks.

From Gene Murdock:

Q.: If buttercups are yellow, what color are hiccups?

A.: Burple.

OCTOBER GREETINGS

Happy birthday to Gene and Chris Murdock's twin grandchildren, Timothy and Lindsey, on the 3rd, and son Eric on the 7th. Jason Murdock, staff journalist who sent an excellent article last month, will be 15 on the 20th. And Eldora Christel Charlton Murdock will be 86 years old on the 29th. If you want to send her a card, her address is

**Mrs. Christel Murdock
Wachusett Manor
Hospital Hill Rd.
Gardner MA 01440**

WHAT'S IN STOCK?

Meri has new job duties at Toyota. She's in charge of deposits, inventory of new and used cars, and ordering supplies. The day before we talked, she had to stock in 30 cars from "the usual car auction" and 30 new cars. She likes this job even better than cashiering.

Ian and Becky are doing well. Timmy is now in kindergarten, and Natalie is in second grade. And they're pleased with their school.

KUDOS

--Lorraine Skamarcz

We were very pleased to receive the September issue of Murdock Muse. My compliments to you both for a job well done. What a wonderful way to get to know the family. I have a lot to learn in that department. Thanks!

OMISSION

Gene reminds Bob that he omitted Fort Walton Beach, Florida, from the list of places where he lived. How could we forget? Gene and Chris visited us and had a terrible meal at the best restaurant.

FANTASY WRESTLING

Ben and Khendra belong to a fantasy wrestling league. Out of 82 participants, Ben is ranked 2nd and Khendra 9th. There are 20 or 30 holds like karate kick and foot drop. The kids pick the holds they want plus 5 finishing holds. Points are assigned, and those who pick the right holds win the match.

Ben is "Viking" and Khendra is "Super Scorpion." Khendra recently beat the number one wrestler, "Xamat Supreme," but he has more wins. The kids enter once a month. Khendra also sends in short articles and illustrations.

RICH FOR 3 DAYS

Lorenza Soto is looking forward to taking Sean and another grandson to a dude ranch near Solvang, CA. They'll ride horses, fish, and snap pictures of deer playing near the golfers on the golf course.

Lorenza and the boys will stay in a bungalow with no TV, phone, or radio - the perfect spot for a lady who has to commute one hour to manage a busy car dealership. After a leisurely breakfast, the kids will go off with the activity director until lunchtime. For lunch they'll go to Solvang, a pretty little Old World village. Their own personal waiter will take care of all their needs, including building a fire in the fireplace and turning down the beds at night. Lorenza says, "For 3 days you pretend you're rich."

Sean is now 5'5" and "very handsome, of course," his grandma reports.

WEDDING: Christopher Howlett (Doug's 2nd son) was married 9/6/92. His wife Angelica's family cooked lots of delicious food for the reception. We danced rock n' roll and the Electric Slide.

MUSING - By Grandpa Slim

WHO'S WHO IN MUSELAND - Here are the additions to the Muse mailing list (Aug.1992) noted by Nancy on page 1 of this issue:

Arthur Murdock and family (508) 928-4050
78 Mt. Jefferson Rd., Hubbardston, MA 01452

John and Cathy Howlett and family (603) 226-4549
38 W. Parish Rd., Penacook, NH 03303

Viki Blakley and family (508) 928-3308
31 Twin Hill Rd., Hubbardston, MA 01452



WELCOME, ART AND LORRAINE - To the Muse regular mailing list. Art is my youngest brother. He and Lorraine Skamarcz have been together for a number of years. I'm not sure how many, but I think we met Lorraine at the Murdock Reunion in 1985. I do know that Art gave her a diamond during a 1988 Hawaii vacation! While there, they made a connection with Lorraine's son, a career Coast Guardsman stationed at Guam. Art's daughter, Kimberly, lives in Gardner, Mass. with her mother. Art works for a company named White Turf, which does large irrigation projects, mostly golf courses. He has worked in Cape Cod and Maine, among other places; the company has also bid on contracts in Maryland and points south. Art has a hobby of making home-made dry wine, which is excellent, according to Marge and Jack. Oh, I forgot to ask my brother how come it's White Turf - not green!

In a future issue we will profile our other two new Muse family members. A complete, up-to date address list will be published before Christmas.

MORE FROM SNAKE POND - Jack Aukstikalnis reported some good news about the pond recently. (No, not that the snakes have all disappeared.) He said that a study group from Harvard University collected sediment samples from the bottom of the pond at various points. One of the points was 38 feet deep! Preliminary test results indicate that Snake Pond is over 1000 years old, and will be around for a long time. This pond had the same name at least 70 years ago, when there were no houses and it was a place famous for "skinny-dipping."

CONVERSATION IN AN ELEVATOR - Nancy and I are members of the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs. This permits us free admission to lectures by foreign and U.S. dignitaries who are invited by the Council to speak on international relations. We are able to attend about ten a year. The most recent speaker, the foreign minister of Tunisia, was in the U.S. as his country's ambassador to the Middle East Peace Conference. He talked about his country's role as a mediator, and the problems of dealing with terrorists. He also mentioned that tourism is a major industry in Tunisia, with over a million visitors in the past year. After his talk and the usual Q and A session, everyone gradually made their way to the elevators; the meeting was held on the 19th floor of the World Trade Center. We were among the last to leave, because we had been admiring a spectacular view of the sunset over Baltimore Harbor. Quite by chance, we found ourselves in the elevator with the Council host and the Tunisian ambassador! Nancy, never one to miss an opportunity, said "We enjoyed your talk! I'd like to become one of those visitors you mentioned!" The Ambassador smiled. "Not with a gun, I hope!" he said. He was joking, of course; but his remark made our chance meeting eternal.

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The editors also thank all who call each month with news.

To become a member of the Murdock Muse staff, submit three offerings: letters, articles, cartoons, pages of jokes, etc. You may get on the mailing list by submitting articles, etc., by sending a donation, or by telling us how wonderful the publication is and how much you would like to receive it each month.