

The Murdock Muse

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WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

Art Murdock

At one p.m. on 10/17/99, Lorraine and I were married on the bandstand on the Barre town common. We were escorted there by ALL of our children and grandchildren in a huge stretch limo. The ceremony was done by Justice of the Peace Marion Lyon, tastefully done, short and sweet as we had requested.

After the ceremony we all piled back into the limo and headed for the Old Mill restaurant in Westminster. The Old Mill was selected partly to give son Larry and grandson Justin a head start near route 2 as Justin needed to catch an early flight back to Florida.

We were greeted at the Old Mill with the news that the chef had had a serious accident in the kitchen and been rushed to the local hospital and would we mind settling for the buffet for dinner. Not what we had in mind but under the circumstances we agreed.

Check out the 3 stories of the Howlett siblings' wedding anniversaries!

After the meal we were greeted with a beautiful wedding cake

complete with a wedding version of "Happy Birthday to you". It was a nice visit with the kids and a very special day for Lorraine and myself. All the kids were dropped off at nearby Sterling (where daughter Tina lives) and we newlyweds had the limo to ourselves all the way back to our home in Barre.

As we welcome the new families as one, we also take this opportunity to share our happiness with all of you and yours. Love to all, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Murdock.

PRESIDENTIAL ENCOUNTER

Barbara DiStefano

We were in the Dairy building eating ice cream at the NYS Fair 8/30, and Bill and Hillary came in, along with an entourage of SS people, to see the butter sculpture and work the crowd, as she is going to run for Senate. Then as we were leaving the Fair, his parade of cars went right by us, 8 feet away, and he waved! Cool, I was never that close to a president before. So how has it changed my life? Not much, I guess, but it still was cool.

Dan was called from his job at Hyperion to help with a project at his Air National Guard base. His CO wanted him to come in that night, but Dan said he was coaching soccer, so he went in at 0600, did some map stuff, and went to his regular job. Mid-morning he was asked to come over on his noon-hour and make some changes. When he did, he was introduced to an SS guy and found out he had been helping plan the route for the President. The SS guy told him he did a great job, and "The president thanks you and your country thanks you." To which Dan replied, "Yeah, right." The SS guy chuckled. Anyway, Dan was honored, and received a guard day off for his time.

OUR WEIRDEST ANNIVERSARY YET

Nancy Murdock

Floyd had a big hand in the celebration of our 49th wedding anniversary. At Lynda Brugge's suggestion, we mapped out a trip that would allow us to celebrate our anniversary by going to the quilt show at Fort Washington PA, eating a fine dinner out, and staying at a motel somewhere on our route to MA for my 50th high school reunion. By Wednesday, we were pondering the wisdom of starting out with a possible hurricane on its way. OK, we said, we'll check the weather channel and Internet tomorrow morning and pack and go if it sounds safe. I offered to drive all the way, as Bob detests driving in a big rain.

Thursday he greeted me with, "Well, no question about it; we're going." After a slow start, we got on our way about 10:30 AM, calm and eager for a 4-day trip. I had no problem with the driving, since there were few cars on the road. At noon we stopped for a piece of pizza at the DE Turnpike's rest stop. We had no problem crossing the Susquehanna River Bridge. As we got near Fort Washington, traffic slowed down a lot. In fact, we got down to a crawl, and then noticed we couldn't go into the next intersection because it was flooded. A policeman and yellow plastic tape attempted to keep the matter under control.

With Bob's excellent navigation and his street map of the area, we tried several other routes, all to no avail. We kept running into flooded areas, quite literally. When we ran out of possibilities we said, We'll call this an adventure and check into our motel, then go to dinner. We called the motel on our cell phone to ask directions and were told they were flooded, but to call back in two hours. We asked where we could go to get out of the car, and they directed us to a mall in Willow Grove. Would it surprise you to learn that the mall had just closed? One department store was open, so we used the phone book to call several more motels, with no luck. We got directions to several motels and went back into the torrential rain to try some we couldn't reach by phone. Spotting a pizza place that was open, we figured we'd better grab the chance to get some food for supper, as everything else was closed. "Have you already ordered?" they asked. "We've already turned off the ovens and are closing." Back to the car, with more directions. We got into really deep water on one street but got back on track with only a short time of non-braking brakes.

No luck anywhere, but we did find the restaurant open beside Day's Inn. At 8:30 PM we went to sleep in our car in the parking lot of the motel, where we at least had access to their restrooms. We slept in our sweatsuits and jackets, and I added my gloves for good measure. I slept like a log for the first 4 hours, and Bob conked out for the second half of the night. It was truly our weirdest ever anniversary celebration.

[*This is the first story of 3 unusual anniversaries.*]

50TH HIGH SCHOOL REUNION #1

Nancy Murdock

Gardner High School, which I attended junior and senior years, held our 50th reunion in September. We were told it was all casual dress. We began with a wine and cheese get-together at the Gardner Historical Society building, which Bob knew as the public library in his youth. Fortunately all the graduates had badges containing our photos from the HS yearbook, because I didn't recognize anyone until I had peeked. I was concerned about abandoning Bob while I got reacquainted, but he was having a blast interviewing people who had lived in his neighborhoods, and anyone with the same name as his buddies.

Saturday we began with a tour of Priscilla Candy Shop, owned by two classmates. I thought it was a strange thing to include in a reunion, but it turned out great. Their son-in-law gave us an in-depth explanation of everything involved in making high-quality chocolates. After lunch we went to the museum at Heritage State Park (near the old Heywood Wakefield factory) where a ranger described the history of Gardner's furniture manufacturing and silversmiths. Bob's father worked at Heywood Wakefield, whose products are now collectors' items. My father at one time worked for a silversmith. Then we trailed through Dunn's State Park, which is near my brother Steve's house. Gardner is very proud of its excellent disability access, and a classmate who acted as guide was involved in getting it accomplished.

Our dinner that evening (planned as a barbecue but moved inside Westminster Village Inn because the tent was blowing too much in Floyd's winds) was very interesting. Classmate Bill Bohman told of the events and conditions leading to the decline of Gardner and the group who got together to revive it. They identified goals and were very successful at meeting them at every step along with way. Gardner is now a lot different from even 10 years ago. It was a classic example of what can be done with a small city. We sat with three other Hubbardston graduates: Lennie (Murdock) Schlicke, Ruth (Wells) Morain, and Selma (Walkinen) Mangs. It was a wonderful chance to reminisce with friends from childhood, when Selma lived two houses down from me and we bought our eggs from her grandfather. I finally saw one person who looked exactly as I remembered: Alan Goddard, our class president. We all had our picture taken together, and it arrived last week: a fine memoir of a fine reunion. Now I need someone to label the faces!

Sunday we stopped at Dotty Salminen's for brunch and Scrabble. It's always fun to be in our hometown area, where we have lots of special people to visit. And Dotty is a worthy opponent at Scrabble.

Looking back, I'm not sure who had more fun, Bob or I. I have a lot of good memories of the reunion, and the committee did a great job of offering lots of interesting things to do. But the whole weekend, Bob was talking with people, gathering information, and acting more like one of the class members than a guest. Pretty good for a 73-year-old man who began the event after riding through flash floods, sleeping in the car, and being caught for 1 ½ hours on a closed NY parkway .

50TH HIGH SCHOOL REUNION #2

Nancy Murdock

In October we attended the 50th reunion of the class of *Athol High School*, where I spent my freshman and sophomore years and actually had more friends that at Gardner. We stayed at Winterwood, a Victorian inn in Petersham, with Charlie and Orrel (Handy) Frost. At least I was sure of recognizing one graduate! We began with a buffet and entertainment at the Franco-American Club. The reunion committee, like Gardner's, was creative in making the plans. The skits put on by the committee were hilarious. They began with a narrator describing the petite, perky cheerleaders in '49 doing the old Athol cheer, as five women came prancing out with short white skirts and big red A's on their tops. Then after we all joined in the cheer and heard some more reminiscences, they left and the narrator described the same scene in '99, and the women hobbled up to the stage with their walkers and limps. As they did the same cheer, they croaked, groaned, or fainted. Ah, we're not the same as then!

Saturday after breakfast at the inn with Orrel and Charlie (*see pg. 5*), we spent the day in Barre at a craft show, art show, and book sale, eating homemade muffins and enjoying the sunshine. We hadn't planned on an unstructured day and had not made plans to visit anyone. We couldn't reach Art and Lorraine by phone; they were probably involved in wedding plans! However, we did get to visit with Tom and Marcia Howlett, who caught us up on their family's news.

At the banquet we sat with several of my old friends, arranged by Jeanne (Cameron) Forand, who said it was a perk of being on the committee. Nancy (Colson)Lynch, who had not planned to come, had changed her mind when Jeanne told her I was coming. (We've invited her and her husband to come visit us now.) Orrel wore a knockout red dress and silver necklace. She had gone to elementary and junior high school with many of those people and enjoyed meeting them after all those years. One person I was really looking forward to seeing was Richard Kennedy, who sat behind me in all the classes, since we were alphabetically arranged. He used to tap me on the shoulder and show me his drawings, forged signatures, etc. I was excited to locate him at the banquet and ran up to introduce myself. After several tries to describe who I was, I realized that he didn't remember me at all!

There was a nice setup of photos of the 20 classmates (out of only about 90 total graduates) who are known dead. After the usual giving of amusing gifts, we danced to entirely 40s music by an enjoyable live band, the choice of one member who said those are the best songs ever. At first I had to cajole Bob into trying anything, since there were no polkas or rock and roll. He finally ventured into a waltz and even agreed to try a foxtrot, although reluctantly. But after he got into the swing of it, he even did the jitterbug and loved it. We danced until they closed the place down! I don't know what happened, but conditions were just perfect, I guess. Or maybe it was the old songs that we actually used to dance to during our dating days. A few days after we got home, Bob said, "At first I thought it wouldn't be as much fun at Athol as at Gardner, but now I think it was at least as much fun, *especially the dancing.*"

UNUSUAL ANNIVERSARY

Cathy Howlett

Most of our goings of have been of a medical nature. Johnny and I had an unusual anniversary evening. He was scheduled to work, so we hadn't planned anything more than a nice supper together. Instead, he was admitted to the hospital with chest pains that afternoon, and I had stern conversation with the Good Lord about irony that night. After a couple days of tests, he was sent home with medications and a warning to eat right, get more exercise, etc. They never did figure out what the pain was from, but they ruled out all the really scary stuff. Johnny says he had probably pulled some muscles a couple weeks before and kept aggravating the pull until it developed a life of its own.

Lori was in the hospital, too, recently. She had some long-delayed exploratory surgery, which was also inconclusive (at least they removed her pesky appendix). She is still interviewing for a new job, which puts us in an awkward position. We're not sure we can be equally supportive about the interviews down in Massachusetts...I know it's selfish of us to root for the positions in NH, and realistically, she will be working down there within a year anyway, but just the same...with your chicks spread all over the map, you know how hard it is!

Sarah has started her doula training, and is enjoying it every bit as much as she expected. Her classes at UNH are going well, and she finally got her Jeep repaired completely enough to be safe, if not fuel efficient. She has a new "boy friend" too, a sweet guy named Gary. So if she could just get healthy, her life would be as challenge -free as we could wish.

Sean and Kris just came back from a week's trip out to Michigan to visit with her grandparents. Lori, bless her heart, went out to Belmont every day to feed their cat, Ozzy. Ozzy is a doll, but she gives new meaning to the expression "fat cat". I was going to be the designated cat feeder, since I'm the only driving adult in the family not allergic to the pudgy feline, but Lori was willing to risk the runny nose, etc. She was able to spend a little more time each day with Oz, so kitty was really happy.

I'm still working on "repairing" my left hand. We've done physical therapy (massage and ultrasound), a splint, medication changes, and cortisone injections. We've also discussed surgery, but I think we'll try one more session with the injections before considering it. Johnny likes to joke about what a threat to our sanity the dog would be if he had opposable thumbs, but he's lucky not to, from my vantage point. [*This is the 2nd of 3 unusual anniversaries.*]

MUSHROOMS, AND OTHER FUNGI

Marge Aukstikalnis

What an interesting seminar. Dr Rick Van De Poll spoke to about 80 of us on the history, biology, and properties of mushrooms, entertained us with his own horrible and delectable experiences of eating them, then took us on a tour of the woods where he identified several dozen species. I recognized some of them .. especially the poisonous (deadly) ones. We learn those first and best for self preservation, I guess. Rick said he had one

violent mushroom episode, where he got severely ill from eating a bolete. It was his first year eating mushrooms, and he said he made three near fatal mistakes. 1. He identified the class (bolete) but not the species. 2. He served it also to his MOTHER! (Groan from the crowd) 3. They both ate it RAW (Huge groan from the crowd)

I learned that mushrooms preceded animals by several hundred billion years. So much for the six day theory I learned in Sunday School. I learned that Jack's favorite, the rusella, is 60% of a deer's diet in summer and early fall. (No wonder Jack likes them so much. He's such a dear) I learned why the Ling Chi was fed to the Emperor to prolong his life. (It boosts the auto-immune system, thus helping to prevent illness) There are 110,000 known fungi. (And I patted myself on the back for knowing about twenty) And puff balls are edible IF they are still white inside.

I found out how to make "slimies" firm and which ones are only good for soup. Turkey tail is anti-tumeral, but you can't eat it. You either chew it and spit it out like gum, or pound it and steep it several times and drink the broth. The "artists conk" from birch trees, that we all have drawn pictures on and preserved, dates back to the iceman. And a whole bunch more. It was a great day.

The Harris center, which sponsored this free seminar, is a non-profit foundation to provide conservation education, especially to children, but they also offer nature walks, canoe trips (bring your own canoe), and snowshoe seminars and hikes to adults or family groups. Quite a place, WAY out in the woods.

And pat me on the back!! I drove myself - to unknown country - 30 miles from home AND took a different route home so I could go to Keene to buy a VCR to replace the one we had which died. Pretty proud, I am, I am.

NEWS FROM BARRE, MASS.

Art Murdock

Two weeks ago I wrote that we were getting ready for a short vacation in Las Vegas for Lorraine's nephew's wedding. Matthew is a dealer in the high rollers section of the Luxor hotel/casino, and recently granted one of his players a one million dollar credit line.

I hear the wedding was really nice. Unfortunately Kim and I got caught in some nasty traffic and missed the whole ceremony. I'm just glad all the immediate family made it on time. That includes the bride and groom, although the bride showed up shoeless beneath her gown. I guess that's better than forgetting the rings.

My promotion with the Prescott Companies is now official. Today I was named Superintendent of Operations at our manufacturing facility here in Barre. I received a huge vote of confidence from company officials along with a modest pay increase. Most exciting to me, however, is the opportunity to promote the ideas of teamwork and proactivity that are working so well in corporations all over the country.

A LITTLE Y2K HUMOR

Submitted by Nancy Budach Murdock

Please take time out of your busy lives to check your toilet paper stockpile. Make sure it's Y2K compliant!!! Word has it, if it isn't, come Jan 1, 2000, it will roll back to 1900, then turn into Sears Catalogs!!!! YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!!

Memo from blonde secretary to Boss:

I hope that I haven't misunderstood your instructions because, to be honest, none of this Y to K problem made much sense to me. At any rate, I have finished the conversion of all of the months on all the company calendars for next year. The calendars have returned from the printer and are ready to be distributed with the following new months: Januark, Februark, Mak, Julk.

I also changed all the days of each week to: Sundak, Mondak, Tuesdak, Wednesdak, Thursdak, Fridak, Saturdak.

We are now Y to K compliant.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Doug Howlett

Thank you for that wonderful poem. What a great way to wish us a happy anniversary! I'm going to print it out for others to enjoy.

We started our anniversary by bringing Mildred to the emergency room at about 3PM. She had fallen that morning but didn't seem too hurt at the time -- mostly a bump on her elbow area and a sore rear because she kind of sat on the floor. Later on she seemed to have a hard time walking into the bathroom and even laying down. I called Carol at work and she came home early to bring her Mom to ER. We spent about 4 hours there having her checked out and x-rayed. No broken bones so they were going to send her home, until they went to sit her up to listen to her heart and realized there was no way she would be able to leave except by ambulance.

When we mentioned our 33rd anniversary, they said to go ahead and leave and they would take her to re-hab in Westboro. Carol went there the next day to bring her some clothes and things and found her to be okay other than some pain. The next day (Sun.) they called us to say she was being sent back to Marlboro to check out fluid in one lung with difficulty breathing. Monday she was in ICU although a nurse told us that she didn't think she needed to be there. Anyway, she's still there and earlier on they removed some fluid from her lung and now she doesn't have trouble breathing. We'll check later to see if she'll be returning to rehab or what.

I'll be sure to show Carol the poem when she gets home in about an hour. Thanks for the rose in the midst of thorns.
[This is the 3rd of 3 unusual anniversaries celebrated since the last Muse. Three out of 6 siblings had these experiences within one month! I wrote a poem as an anniversary greeting.--NAM]

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
 MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

THAT TIRED WEATHER TOPIC

Valerie Davidson

When I lived in Minnesota, we definitely discussed the weather a larger percentage of the time compared to what I have found here in California. It's boringly lovely here, you might say, although in truth, not everyone loves the climate of San Francisco. A famous quotation often heard here from Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain) is that "The coldest winter of my life was the summer I spent in San Francisco." However, after a person has spent some time living here, the sheer mildness of the climate becomes a lifelong habit of sleeping well during the night.

The reason I mention this is to put the following news in some kind of context. In the 20 years I have lived in the SF Bay Area, I have never seen a thunderstorm here. Coming as I do from areas that have spectacular, energizing, cathartic thunderstorms, I have often laughed over the fact that one never hears a second crash of thunder here. One crash seems to be the limit. Silly, almost.

This week we had a thunderstorm that lasted 12 hours. It was downright scary, scarier in fact than any I had experienced before. To what extent this is due to the rarity of a thunderstorm here I have no way of gauging. However, even factoring that in, there was something about this storm, besides its ridiculous duration, that was frightening. Perhaps it was because I am accustomed to storms coming from one direction, getting closer, finally overhead, then fading away in the opposite direction. This was a series of bursts of heavy thunder that thudded more than they boomed, if that makes sense, and came from every direction at once and no direction at all. Twice I awoke from a sound sleep during the night by rising off the bed in fright after a loud crash. Dogs here, unaccustomed to thunder, shook all night long and gave their owners no sleep until 5:00 AM, when things began to diminish.

I had to leave my son a note cautioning against showering if the storm is nearby because, at the age of eighteen, he has never experienced this phenomenon in order to know that already. When he was ten years old we vacationed in Minnesota and experienced a grand thunderstorm while we were there. As we were driving down a road shortly after lunch, a large fork of lightning streaked through the sky in front of us. "What was that?" he asked, amazed. He had never seen that before.

Mild weather just doesn't have the soul-shaking ability of crass climates, but cool nights every night of the year except maybe four has turned me from an insomniac into a grand sleeper with good dreams. This recent burst of bad weather has had no precedent in many people's lives here, although some remember a storm twenty-two years ago that had a lot of thunder and lightning.

I know that most of the Muse readership lives in areas where thunderstorms are a way of life, and probably most people love them, like I did. I miss that soul-cleansing sense of catharsis and ozone that comes afterward. Like burning out the carbons in the engine, or something.

Let's not forget that we're talking 9-9-99 here. Did that Armageddon thing have anything to do with my fear?

JUST SAY BYE-BYE

Nancy Murdock

About 10 miles into our trip to Fort Washington (pg.1), we noticed a strange noise in the car. It wasn't affecting the driving, braking, or ride; there was no dash light signaling to us; and the rain was coming down in buckets; so we elected to ignore the noise unless it should become unavoidable. So after Dunn's Pond, when we went to see Steve and Terry Howlett, we asked if Steve was good at diagnosing a car's noises. "He sure is," said Terry. Ah, gold on the first try!

After examining the car, listening to its vital signs, and obtaining a history of the ailment, Steve made a tentative diagnosis that the heat shield on the catalytic converter was loose. He explained that it was nothing to worry about, so we could go to our regular doctor - er, garage - on Monday. A little later his son Foster came by, and Steve got him to verify the diagnosis. When we were leaving, Steve told us not to worry about it. "Even if you're driving along the New Jersey Turnpike and hear a loud noise and look behind and see something good-sized that's fallen from your car, you don't need to worry. Just say bye-bye and keep driving." So we took his advice and enjoyed our ride home, even though the noise got a little louder as time went on.

On Tuesday, Bob took it to the Toyota place to get it bolted back in place. He was informed that the correct way to deal with it is to remove the heat shield. "You won't have any trouble," they said. They didn't even warn us, as Steve had, not to park on any dry grass, in case we might start a fire from the extreme heat. Now my question is: Why do they put it on in the first place, if it isn't needed? Signed, *420-Mile Commuter*.

ATHOL HIGH REUNION

Orrel Frost

We had a wonderful time being with Nancy and Bob at the Athol High Reunion. It was absolutely delightful seeing and talking with Richard Kennedy. The 30-second encounter with Sylvia Plotkin was fun, too. And, of course, it was just great sharing breakfast time with the Murdocks at Winterwood.

We went to church at my childhood church in Athol and met several old friends I hadn't seen in 50 years! Again, my aunt, uncle and cousin were there. (We had taken them to lunch at the Old Mill the day before. That put the frosting on the cake, although the food was disappointing.) We went to the reunion brunch after church. It was already winding down -- we closed up the affair with Jeanne (Cameron) Forand. Altogether a very memorable weekend.

ONLINE MUSE?

Becky Murdock

In the latest Muse I read the suggestion about going online with it. Personally, I love to receive it in the mail, for you can always reread over and over. But I'm sure that would be easier and cheaper. [Ed. Note: My quilt guild is using a slightly different "online version" for our new web page. All addresses are edited out, and color graphics are added to the front page.

We're all still getting the paper copy, but others can read about our guild.]

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Daniel Leskinen

Here it is Monday morning. This is the day I like to go to work early. That extra hour is a godsend. No traffic, no other people at the office to bother me, just free time to catch up. After all Monday is meeting day. How can anyone get anything done on meeting day?

This morning however, Calder decided to get up early, and beckoned me to sign his homework review sheet. I looked at the pile of papers to review and I looked at the time. Something was going to have to give. I thought about the fact I had to stop and get gas for the truck. I thought about the weather slowing me down even more. I thought about that one hour drive to work turning into a two hour drive.

Then a bright light turned on inside of me. I thought about the importance of spending time with a child's education. Sure, I told him - but next time show this to me before Monday morning. I reviewed each page individually with him and gave him praise where appropriate and discussed areas where he had trouble. We were both richer for the moment. This important moment only took fifteen minutes, and my drive to work was seventy minutes. Here I still had time to write this note.

70th BIRTHDAY

Dotty Salminen

Sept. 3, 1999 - I just got home from yet another birthday party. I will be up until at least midnight answering all of my birthday email! What a wonderful, loving family I belong to and my friends just keep coming out of the woodwork! From everywhere! I am so blessed. And so happy.

The Muse played a large part in making my 70th so wonderful. Hearing from nieces and nephews that I hardly know was thrilling. Thank you so much!

[Ed. Note - Cousins, too! (See below) --RDM]

CELEBRATING DOTTY'S 70TH BIRTHDAY

Priscilla Januskiewicz

A few years ago, when Mum and I were visiting Christel at the nursing home in Gardner, Dotty came into the room with a cup of ice cream (among other things) for her mother. I think it was her birthday. She seemed happy to see Dotty and enjoyed all the attention and her special treat. (She was so polite that she didn't want to eat it in front of us, but it was melting fast, so she had to.)

The other day I went to Mum's to help pack her suitcase for a visit to Joy's house. On the way, I stopped for some ice cream and brought it to her. Of course she loved it, just as Christel did.

How sweet it is to share something with someone you love, and to savor, long afterward, the delicious memories of those special times together.

Oh yes. I did something else today that Dotty would enjoy doing on her birthday. I spent my birthday money at the mall!

TRIP REPORT

Gene Murdock

The Anasazi have always fascinated me, so Chaco Canyon, New Mexico was one of the main things on my southwest agenda. Anasazi natives lived here from about 900 to 1150 A.D. During that time they established a flourishing nation that stretched 100 miles in all directions and traded with neighbors thousands of miles away. Even though they possessed neither wheel nor horse, they established a vast road network of straight 20-30 foot wide highways. They built massive stone lodges and houses (the cliff-side pueblos came much later). Around 1150 they disappeared, probably due to extended droughts that made the growing of crops impossible.

I came here intending to travel some of the roads to get a better feel for the beautiful scenery Tony Hillerman described in his series of mystery novels. I had three different maps of the area and all three gave different numbers to the roads. Not to worry! I just printed out a map and on each road wrote all the different numbers. The roads became packed dirt, and got worse and worse. In many spots they were only one track wide, and when they dipped down into a gully, they were all ruts and bumps. I got jolted, bumped, tossed and mortified. In three places the ruts were so bad I had to creep over to the edge and get one wheel up on the side banking as a precarious angle and hope and pray I would make it through. I seriously considered turning back, but I had already come 10 miles, and the book said it was only about 20, so I pushed on. The rear view mirror kept lowering down from all the bumping, and on THREE occasions it got so bad that the mirror worked its way up off the windshield bracket and fell to the floor. It wasn't lonesome, because all my maps and books from the seat were already down there. I finally made it after some 50 miles of this unpaved road. If you ever go to Chaco Canyon, do NOT take the southern road unless you have a native guide with you.

When I got to the park I asked people if they had to traverse that route every day. When I described it they looked at me as if I were crazy and said why did you take that road. The ranger at the information counter sort of grinned and said the sign for the proper road was rather hard to see.

I left the center and took the self-guided driving tour through the canyon to several other building sites. Here I was able to get away from reality and place myself back with the Anasazi and see the world as they saw it almost two thousand years ago.

Coming back through Tucumcari, New Mexico just before the Texas border I was reminded of the time when Chris and I (and Scott) came through that town, west-bound for California on the old Route 66 about 1962. That was before the Interstates, and there were signs in Tucumcari warning of the desert ahead, and saying to check your gas, oil and water. Many of the cars had canvas water bags hanging from the radiator caps on the front of the vehicles.

I covered about 6,100 miles in 9 days for my trip to NM and TX. I have many good memories from these travels.

WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS

Rick Murdock

In a 2-week period I recently encountered/observed the following wild animals during my travels through Western Iowa and Eastern Nebraska:

Bald Eagles, Red tail Hawks, Deer (including the one I hit with my car), Porcupine, Squirrels, Rabbits, Opossums, Raccoons, Beavers, Muskrats, Red Fox, Coyote, Wild Turkeys, Pheasants, Canada Geese, and Badger.

Of these the most interesting were the eagles and the red fox. The eagles are just so big and magnificent looking. The fox was a pup and was wandering aimlessly (just down the road from our house) as if it were lost. I know that there is a family of them that lives down the road from us, so I wonder if he was out on one of his first solo excursions. We also have a family of coyotes that lives out behind our house in the back part of our neighbors pasture. Fortunately I have never seen any of them anywhere near our house. We still have something living under our shed out back that we haven't identified yet... Timmy saw it the other day and swears it was a badger. I sure hope he is wrong. I hope it is a mole or prairie dog or something else with a somewhat better temperament than a badger. Whatever it is, it drives our dog crazy and digs tunnels all over our yard (always just out of reach of the dog).

In addition to the animals, the autumn sunrises and sunsets here are absolutely gorgeous with swirls of pink, blue and purple.

ANNIVERSARY PREPARATIONS

Nancy Murdock

Our daughter Valerie Davidson, chair of our 50th anniversary celebration, is doing a great job of organizing this event. The date will be either the 2nd or 3rd weekend in August 2000, depending on Val's high school reunion date. The main festivities will be on Saturday, with something on Friday and Sunday for those who be there. It will be in Worcester, MA, the city where we were married in 1950. Val has given out assignments to other committee members according to the things they do best. She is having a blast doing this planning. She said she didn't have a big wedding to plan so she is doing this instead. When I repeated this to Bob, he said, "Wouldn't it have been our job to plan her wedding?" I said, "Yes, but don't mention this to her. I'm really glad she's doing this one."

So make your plans to be there. We want all of you to join us. It's sort of a combined Howlett-Murdock reunion for all our family and friends, as well as a celebration of 50 years of marriage. For me, it's a long-time dream come true.

POSSIBLE BONE MARROW DONOR

Missi Howlett

A year or two back I donated blood at a benefit for a woman who was in need of a bone marrow transplant. They sent my sample to the national registry and I received a call in Sept. saying that I'm a potential donor for someone. I have to donate more blood and they'll need to do more tests, but there is a 1 in 10 chance that we will be compatible. Isn't it amazing? He is 27 and has non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Please pray for him.

ST. PAUL NOTES

Nancy Murdock

Darrel Murdock reports that he is back to working with autistic-aggressive youth. School is going *very* well. He is in a classroom with staff he likes a lot. The mother of a former student, Justin, asked to have Darrel work with her son again. There are 6 staff for 7 students. It didn't work out for Justin to be in a different environment.

As of 10/7, Darrel reported that he still had lots of color all around his yard. One item that did well was his snapdragons. He said the secret is that he deadheaded them constantly, so they continue to branch out and bloom. He planned his garden to have color in the front and both sides of the house from mid-March until snow. His co-owner does the rear, and it also looks very good. This has been a good year for their landscaping.

MUSE EDITORS ON THE WEB

Bob Murdock

We don't have a Muse web site yet, but recently articles by both Nancy and me made the big time in separate Web pages.

Nancy was recently elected president of the Faithful Circle Quilters, the biggest quilt guild in our area. The monthly FCQ newsletter is featured in the guild's new web site, and there is the President's message by Nan, right on page one! Here is the URL for the FCQ website:

<<http://www.vishuddha.com/quilting/>>

My offering is a report describing the 10-day visit by three Japanese visitors hosted by our church, The Episcopal Church of Christ the King (ECCTK). It appears in the ECCTK web site in a section called "From Japan". Here is the URL for that web page: <<http://www.ecctk.org/japan/ecckjp99.html>>

CALIFORNIA QUAKE

Becky Murdock, Oct. 24

Good Morning Los Angeles!!!! What a wake-up call. One week ago we had quite the shaker. As all of us were in a deep slumber, it hit. Slow at first, and then harder as it continued. The transformers in back of our house were popping and lighting up the house, and then complete darkness. Ian and I were panicking and the kids went to their doorways.

So much for our earthquake preparedness. Ian went in search of candles and our big flashlight. Instead we settled for my favorite vanilla candles and his mini car flashlight. Oh well, at least we could see now! Being in complete darkness was an eerie feeling, even though our neighbors were all outside with the same feeling.

We hopped into the car to go examine the damage. All the traffic lights and business lights were out around us. Emergency vehicles everywhere, it had the atmosphere of a movie. But we didn't see a lot of damage- we came out of this one pretty well. We drove home and all went to bed, and around 7:00 am our lights came on. It all seemed like a dream, one I don't wish to repeat anytime soon.

JENNIE'S WEDDING

Rose Martz

Jennifer Lynn Martz became Mrs. Cambyes Anthony Movafagian on July 31, 1999. The bride was blonde and beautiful; the groom tall, dark and handsome. A five year old friend declared (in an audible voice) that she looked like a princess as she walked down the aisle on Carl's arm. The wedding was held on the campus of Pomona College in Claremont in a wonderful old building used as both a chapel and auditorium. The front wall is all pipes for the organ. When the organist began the wedding march, the lump in my throat was so big I didn't think I could breathe. The ceremony was Episcopalian and very moving.

There were 12 in the wedding party, with Sarah serving as maid of honor for her sister. Jennie truly surprised me by wanting to wear my wedding dress. After a lot of searching, we found a seamstress willing to take on the job of redesigning my dress, and she did a fantastic job.

The reception was held at the Faculty House for the Claremont colleges with approximately 150 guests. Great fun, but why do the d.j.'s have to play their music so loudly? The only Howlett connection in attendance was Julie Fair, Allyson and Jim's daughter. The affair ended with Carl and me broke and exhausted, but it is a day we will long remember.

Jennie is now working as an R.N. in the critical care unit of a hospital in San Bernardino. Cam's official title is "crude oil scheduler" for Equiva, an oil trading company. He has his M.B.A. and is a financial analyst. They own a home and the address is 14294 Stanislaus Court, Fontana, CA 92336. Telephone is 909-822-2846.

Carlton S. Martz is the new President-Elect, Southern Section, of the California School Library Association. This means he goes to conferences in order to plan more meetings. When he retires in June 2001, he'll go out in a blaze of glory. [Ed. Note: Check out <<http://www.schoollibrary.org/Board/southern.html>>.. It even has Carl's picture!]

HELLO FROM CRISFIELD

Doris Howlett

Hello! I noticed that I had my grandfather's age wrong for the Muse. He (Russell Richards) will be celebrating his 100 th Birthday

We are very proud of him. He's doing well; he was a waterman and a boat builder, and he did not retire until the age of 93 . He has outlived two wives and his only two sons. My father and uncle both died at a very young age of heart disease.

Crisfield is celebrating it's 52nd National Hard Crab Derby. We have pageants, rides, games, food, fireworks, entertainment, etc. Foster Howlett made it down one year for these even's. Crab racing, boat docking contest, crab cooking contest, crab picking contest. Lots of things to see and do. A great place to bring your sail boat to our nice marina and visit our seafood capital of the world. I have to say we in Crisfield MD have the best crab cakes. Missi Howlett has my recipes from the Howlett reunion.

A RESISTANT INFECTION

Pauline Soberg

Carl was in the hospital for over a week. He started out with what we thought was the "flu". He had stomach pains, vomiting, fever and chills. One week later I took him to the emergency room at 11:30 PM. Thank heavens the doctor on that evening was very thorough and didn't just brush it off with a "take two Tylenol and call me in the morning." He admitted Carl at 3:00 AM. After doing CT scans, other internal probings etc., they decided he had something that seemed to be resistant to the regular antibiotics. Anyway, they believe he had a viral type infection somewhere in the prostate or the urinary areas. He couldn't go home until he had no fever for 24 hours. It's kind of scary as I keep thinking of the stories about infections that take over and can't be stopped by anything. Well, that's a little far out.. He's home now, doing better, and the pain is subsiding.

WEDDING BELLS

Barb DiStefano

Yesterday, Oct 23, David Leskinen was married to Cindy Unger. She has a son and daughter, and Dave has Brett and Lisa. We welcome them to our family. We did not attend the wedding as they decided to save money and hassle and just have a quiet ceremony at her home then tell everyone afterwards. During the afternoon they made the rounds to tell the rest of the family. NO ONE WAS HOME! So they ended up leaving notes everywhere. Next year Derek is getting married, and also Wendy.

WHITE-PAWED CAT

Meredith Murdock <MeriCat@webtv.net>

I went to the kitchen for about thirty seconds and when I turned back toward the living room I caught Magic white-pawed! He was scooping milk out of my glass, drinking it, and didn't have the grace to look embarrassed! Luckily I only had about an inch left which I poured into a bowl for him. He sat and washed his face in a very contented manner afterwards. Spoiled brat!

[Ed. Note - Besides sending cat stories and other Email text messages, Meredith has found a way to transmit voice clips as .WAV attachments, using a microphone and her Web TV gear. We have heard her voice and Tim's and Natalie's. --RDM]

AROUND THE NET

Bob Murdock

Sally Bacon - Hi. I wanted to let you now that I recently joined EarthLink, America's fastest-growing Internet Service Provider, and I have a new email address. Please send your emails to: <polarbrr@earthlink.net>

Missi Howlett <alouette99@netzero.net>

Just wanted to let everyone know I changed my email address (again). Always looking to save a buck or two!

Viki Blakley - My Email address is now <msblakley@banet.net>

Ian Murdock <bandi-m@webtv.net> - Rodney Walker died today in bed - he was not ill and there was no warning. He was

my last living friend. It does seem unfair to me to have five best friends pass away; luckily I have Beck and other family to buoy me at times like these!

ONA FELLOWS TURNS 88, NOV. 1



Bob and His Aunt Ona Fellows, June 1999

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER DATES

-Bob Murdock

Wedding Anniversaries

- Nov. 4 Jeanne and David Tripp (4th)
- 14 Michelle and Larry Boudreau (12th)
- 20 Gregg and Carla Howlett (17th)
- Dec. 10 Tim and Doris Howlett (16th)
- 24 Ian and Becky Murdock (16th)
- 31 Priscilla and Roy Januskiewicz (41st)

Birthdays

- Nov. 1 Ona Fellows (88), Cathy Howlett
- 3 Gregg Howlett
- 4 Orrel Frost
- 6 Carol Howlett, Allison Schlicke (17)
- 7 Tom Howlett, Tim Hiscock
- 9 Khendra Murdock (15), Nathan Hiscock
- 10 Kris Andersen Howlett
- 11 Bob Schlicke (73)
- 12 Becky Jean Murdock
- 13 Adam Howlett (16), Ashley Murdock (8), Pamela Clark
- 16 Timothy Christopher Murdock (12)
- 17 Polly Soberg, Kevin Leary Jr. (9), Keith Howlett, Randy Salminen
- 23 Victoria Rookes (7)
- 24 Gary Richard
- 25 Stephanie Frost Chamberlain
- 26 Tim Howlett Jr. (4), Heidi Patria (20)
- 28 Jeremy Ruth Revilock-Frost (18)
- Dec. 2 Jerod Davidson (19)
- 3 Marge Aukstikalnis, Tony Oman (20), Jennifer Martz
- 6 Eric Bacon
- 7 Tami Murdock, Russ Aukstikalnis, Jack Jones, Richard Clark
- 11 Janet Heald
- 12 Dan Leskinen
- 13 Nicholas Raulston (3), Matthew Harvey (15)
- 16 Hunter Schindo
- 17 Carl "Chip" Martz
- 19 Steve Schlicke
- 21 Lennie Schlicke
- 22 Nic Murdock (20)
- 23 Samantha Ann Tripp (2), Andy Murdock
- 27 Denise Chapman
- 28 Maria Leary
- 30 Darrel Murdock, Dillon Salminen (8)