

Once Told Tales of 2016

or the further adventures of Aleda, Jim, Mark and Leanne

The Browns of Greystone Terrace

Leanne and Kurt are continuing in their vocations and avocations and the raising of Benjamin Carter which involves both. They celebrated Ben's first birthday July 1st with a mighty gathering of friends and family. Kurt has a



new job but now works in downtown St. Louis rather than at home. Leanne continues with her work at Elan-Polo, a shoe wholesaler, as a sales analyst. Ben continues in his work as chief drawer-emptier, climber-extraordinaire, dog pesterer, and day-care goer. In recent months his skills of communication are daily improving, mostly non-verbal,

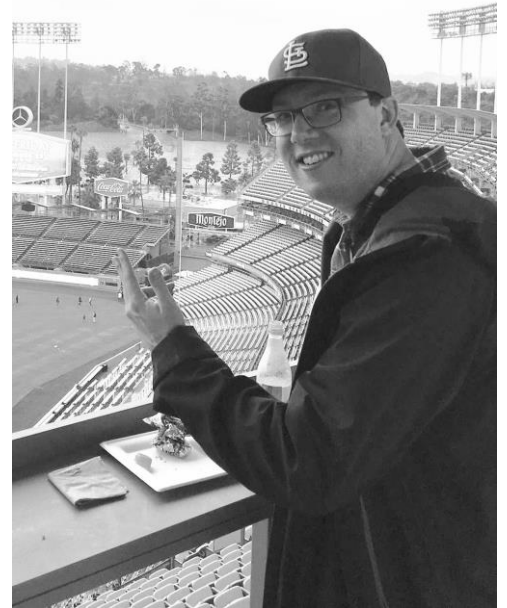
mostly by hand signals. They ought to teach semaphore in day-care. Yet he is starting to vocalize intelligible words and now likes to make faces. Attached is a recent photo of Ben and Santa.

The Chicago Lawyer

Mark continues his work in downtown Chicago at the law firm of Penland and Hartwell. He seems to enjoy that niche market of condo-law (aka: association law) and is doing well. However, this does require somewhat of a trek every day on the Metra train from his house in Downers Grove ("Apostrophe free since 1833!") where he has adopted the mantra of his father, Mr. Handy-Man, Jr. This Thanksgiving he flew to Los Angeles and then to Mexico City to visit with some old friends. He is anticipating going back to LA next year for the Inter-national World Series of Baseball. Golf

remains an active interest, but doesn't get to play as much as he'd like to.

For the inquisitive, you can solve the following anagram: Mr Kit Craved Good. Right is from his recent visit to Dodger's Stadium in L.A.



Aleda

Aleda's adventures might be described as a triple alliance of Health, Hearth and Help. In reverse order, she continues with her weekly churchy activities involving what Jim calls, *The Sisters of the Skillet*, i.e. the church's women's organization. This was an epithet he inherited from his father who had applied that name to Jim's mother's bridge club. However, in this instance it involves various activities of this group, mostly involving the Tuesday luncheon and their various charitable activities. Hearth is the mundane of household and the garden. Health relates to an exercise class, which is like a penance to her, and keeping track of her expenditure of "steps" on her Fitbit. The goal is 5000 steps per day. Trifling to some of you, I know, but this goal is sometimes gained, sometimes not. She has added another goal of finding out about her Swedish ancestors and also about Swedish culture. For the latter, she joined **the Swedish Council** here in St. Louis. It's the St. Louis Swedeophilia club but not as kinky as it sounds. For example, we went to the St. Lucia ceremony with lots of folk dancing and folk songs

and folk food and a lighted wreath upon Lucia’s head singing the Italian folk song *Santa Lucia*. But we have also been delving into Aleda’s Swedish genealogy. For example, in November we drove up to Augustana College in Rock Island, IL and visited with one of the genealogists there to help track down her mother’s ancestral kin, the Ostroms. By a bit of serendipity we have made contact with a genealogist in Sweden, Tommy Jacobson, in the town of Umeå (pronounced, Ou-me-oh) in northern Sweden. It was from here, in the Savar valley, that the family emigrated to the States at the end of the 19th century. By a set of curious circumstances it turns out that Tommy Jacobson was teaching a genealogy class and one of his student’s great, great grandfather was the one who bought the family farm from Aleda’s great, great grandfather when they left for America. It is our intention to go to Sweden this coming summer and buy the farm back, as well as the cow, though likely it’s a different cow.

Jim (aka Jacques Petit-Champ in his French class)

A lot of folks ask Jim, “What do you do all day now that you’re retired”? And his answer is, “Whatever Aleda tells me to do”. It’s Mr. Fix-it, Gopher Pile, Monsieur Plumber, Herr Computerbildschirm, Señor gardener, a.k.a. the Mole-Catcher (a euphemism) etc. etc. However, to offset these chores he is taking a creative writing class at the local community center and he has returned to the French lessons at the Alliance Française. The former involves writing a composition (500 words or less) about every two weeks. So far, the essays are mostly travel stories: “Scotland the Brave”, “Flying Down to Rio without Fred or Ginger”, “The French Lesson”. The teacher also challenged the class to write a poem, something Jim had never done. It had to be in pentameter (five syllables per line) and to contain the words “snake”, “honey” and “thaw”. I am including “After the Fall” for your reading assignment for this week. Jim continues with his lectures to the students at St. Louis University in nuclear medicine, but this usually only lasts through the month of September. And there is also the occasional lecture to the regional chapter of the nucleons, i.e. Jim’s professional society. Another diversion is Estate sales (also called Tag-sales). Jim likes to say that there should be two phases in one’s life, the acquisitive phase and the dispersive phase.

Unfortunately, these sales are counter-productive to the dispersive goal, but at least he tries to throw one thing out for everything that comes in the door.

After the Fall or Herpatology 101	
“Honey”, I asked her Have you seen the snake ?”	
I	
Quickly awakened from her slumber’s rest, she hoarsely shrieked, then jumping up in bed anxiously replied, “Adam, the last time when I awoke and you said that,	
I almost fainted with that creature upon my shoulder. I wish you were more feared of snakes. It only makes me older.”	
II	
“Our Bob only wants a warm place to rest and thaw his cold blood and keep from going dormant” “It’s fine for that damned snake” she quickly cried, and then becoming bolder “As for me, don’t bother”. With rising voice, “You have no choice. That’s serpent’s gone or I’m going back to mother”	
	III
	No, she’s Eve, I thought. I knew full well that the treat was hollow. Yet, since the boys were not yet grown, who knew now what would follow.
	I caught the snake and quickly threw him out, a demonstration of hell’s road now paved with my good intention.
	The serpent gone, and Eve now calm, we soon rushed back into the sack and with some elation resumed our given task of humanity’s creation.

Jim continues with his interest in trivia nights and helped to set one up and was the m.c. for such at church to benefit the junior girls choir. This raised a fair amount of money though we could have done better with better marketing. We also have been seen at some fancy dinners to support the Winter Opera Company of St. Louis. This company put on Lehar’s operetta “*The Merry Widow*” in the fall, which we both enjoyed very much. He was given the task of providing Christmas music for the annual Christmas luncheon for the Skillet Sisters at church. It seems that the “Honey-Do” list never reaches the last item as it is always (n + 1).

Scotland The Brave

We flew from ORD to EDI in late August. If you were contemplating a trip to Scotland then I suggest you go in August. The weather is most salubrious at that time of year though there is always the chance of showers. But the sun, never far behind the clouds, soon brings welcome warmth to the walker. There are two additional attractions that make August an alluring time to visit Scotland's capital. One is The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. In Edinburgh, a tattoo is not what you have engraved on your arm with the name of your latest *amour*. Rather, it is *the* tattoo, a military parade extravaganza that takes place the entire month of August. The word derives from the drum or bugle call to summon soldiers to their barracks at the end of the day. Edinburgh's tattoo is a presentation of massed bag-pipes with kilt clad pipers, drum and bugle corps, drill teams, dancing Highland lassies, motorcycle daredevils, fiddlers from the Shetland Isles and fireworks above the castle, all a grand display of Scottish pride and culture. It is staged on the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle, the open area in front of the castle gates. Here there are large grandstands –quite similar to a football field in either the continental or American sense of the term– allowing excellent views of the spectacle below. The festival begins with the entrance of the Black Watch regimental pipers skirling *Scotland the Brave* and ends with the Lone Piper playing a mournful tune on the castle ramparts. Between come presentations by The King's Guard of Norway, the New Zealand Army band doing a haka (a Maori war dance), the Nepalese Army band, the band of the Royal Marines and many more acts. The other attraction, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, also takes place throughout August. This event is hard to describe. Picture a street fair



with free-for-all buskers, a side-show at the circus, Carnival, plays, musicals, cabaret, comedy, all rolled into one. This August there were 3,269 shows with 50,266 performances mostly by amateurs from all over the world. For example, a street production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by Kabuki players from Japan. At least that's what it appeared to be. But it could have been something entirely different. Perhaps it was in English; perhaps it was *Othello*; perhaps they were Korean. There were clowns and face painters, jugglers and magicians. It's hard to beat the mystery of three card Monte. Some tried. We bought tickets for "Exposing Edith". Not the recollections of Archie

Bunker's wife as an ecdysiast but a cabaret performance of the life of Edith Piaf. "Incroyable!"

In the company of our good friends **Barbara** and **Pat Fillette**, we set off from Edinburgh into the highlands for visits to intact castles, ruined castles, a distillery tour for a wee dram of the "Deoch-and-Doris", lochs like Ness where we spotted Nessie, and Lomand on the high road, and finally Glasgow, the largest city in Scotland. We also visited cathedrals, churches, abbeys, chapels, graveyards, cairns, battle-field memorials. We saw kelpies and selkies (you'll have to look those up) and a fae. One of the most memorable events was the Highland games in Oban, a small town on the west coast. Here we saw athletic events like tossing the hammer, running the track and jumping over the high bar. There were dancing lassies and pibroch playing pipers and the marching high school band of pipes and drums. A warm day in the Scottish sunshine left us roamin' in the gloamin' with our lassie/laddie by our side. At the end of the day we took a relaxing boat tour of Oban harbor and saw some neat sights such as a Stevenson lighthouse (Eilean Musdile), grey seals, a salmon farm and beautiful sailboats upon the water. There were even red sails in the sunset.

A Half Century

ago, in the Eisenhower Chapel on the campus of the Pennsylvania State University, a couple were united in Holy Matrimony by the Rev. Quentine Schaut, O.S.B.. A small group of family and friends were in attendance. The best man was Beal Traister of Richboro, PA. The maid of honor was Jean Hlinsky of Sharon, PA. (They were the respective roommates of the groom and bride.) The date was June 11th, 1966. A small reception was held afterwards at the Holiday Inn, State College. The happy couple departed that evening for the Grand Canyon (of Pennsylvania) in Wellsboro, PA accompanied by Jim's organic chemistry book.

A half century later Jim and Aleda celebrated their anniversary with their children, Leanne and Mark and their grandson, Benjamin, along with Leanne's husband Kurt. They decided a somewhat less obscure place such as Branson, (Motto: "There's only one") Missouri would be more convenient for the occasion. There were shows ("The Million Dollar Quartet" and "Liverpool Lads") and exhibits (The Titanic) and amusement (Silver Dollar City) and a nice dinner out. Ben is really good at meals, especially when mac-and-cheese is served. So, in between those dates there were 18,263 days of wedded bliss as well as the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

A quote from the Bard of the Mississippi
(Our wedding day) will be the mightiest day in the history of our lives, the holiest, & the most generous toward us both -- for it makes of two fractional lives a whole; it gives to two purposeless lives a work, & doubles the strength of each whereby to perform it; it gives to two questioning natures a reason for living, & something to live for; it will give a new gladness to the sunshine, a new fragrance to the flowers, a new beauty to the earth, a new mystery to life... It will give a new revelation to love, a new depth to sorrow, a new impulse to worship. In that day the scales will fall from our eyes & we shall look upon a new world. Speed it! (Samuel Clemens to his bride Livy, 1869).



Won't you be my Teddy Bear?

A new family member: After a pet-free hiatus of a year or so we adopted a new cat, an adult male tabby. His birth name was Teddy, but his previous owners called him "Bear", so we called him "Teddy Bear". We hope that he's a good mouser. He seems to have a good appetite, in fact, an excellent one. He is one of a long line of cats in our family but we've only had one dog: Clifford.

Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year
Jim and Aleda
Littlefield

