

In 2023 I combed through the files on my old computers looking for blogs I had made. I used several of vehicles: just email and a couple of blog sites.

This is the second installment, emails from 2018 to April 2020.

I'm posting them in pdf format on my web site for several reasons. One, at 81, there are several reasons why it is better now than later. Secondly, they provide an insight into what I saw, as a resident of Kyiv, during the Yanukovych, Yushchenko, Poroshenko and now Zelensky years.

Graham Seibert

February 12, 2024

**buttface.docx 07/11/2019 12:11 PM**

The story of Buttface. In lieu of a Facebook post.

Yuri and Polina, who shared our house, brought the neighborhood cats into our lives. First was the appropriately called Pyervuiy, первый in Russian, a pathetic soul who just wanted food.

Some cats are good at the cat business and some just aren't. Pyervuiy was neither very friendly nor very assertive. He depended on sympathy for his food. And, probably due to his wishy-washyness, he got himself killed by the feral dogs in the neighborhood. Our neighbors Gennady and Valya, who had been feeding him under an assumed name, reported that they found and interred the corpse.

Yuri and Polina had both affection and cat food left over. Next came one initially called simply "number two" but later Raccoon, ЕНОТ, because he had something vaguely resembling a mask. Another male, but this time one confident enough to demand his food and offer some appreciation.

When Yuri and Polina moved out last September they left some food and strict instructions to continue to befriend Raccoon. In the course of feeding him I overcame his fear. Step-by-step he learned not to run away when I came out, then to anticipate getting fed, then to tolerate being petted, and then to jump up in my lap and accept it with gratitude. He knows the cat business.

He was also pretty tolerant of Zoriana as she poked, prodded, and pulled his tail. But he had his limits. Although I constantly told her to be nice to the cat, she never learned. Raccoon taught her one day, with a quick scratch to her cheek.

All of these cats are opportunists. Raccoon must've found a better deal someplace else, because he started being scarce. A couple of contenders came to fill the vacancy, including a smallish white cat with a gray tail and gray spots here and there. The kitten's modest demeanor led me to believe it was a female. It was a good deal quicker than raccoon had been to adapt to the notion that being friendly and getting fed were closely connected. A natural lap cat. I named the cat Lady.

Lady, lying in my lap one day and having "her" belly – obviously an erogenous zone – scratched, became somewhat tumescent. Another look under the tail revealed a couple of growing marbles. A need to rebaptize the animal.

I proposed the name Smokestack for his gray tail, but Eddie trumped me with the proposal of Buttface. You look at him from the back and that's what you see. Given that this little male pussycat was becoming increasingly pushy – наглый in Russian – I agreed it was totally appropriate. You can judge from the picture.

That's where things stand. Buttface comes around every day pestering us for his food, makes a pest of himself jumping on our laps when he's not wanted and inserting his claws deep into our thighs, and comes in the house whenever we are not vigilant enough to block his way. Whether intended or not, we have a cat.

Zoriana enjoys playing with him. He is more tolerant than Raccoon, never scratching her despite the most egregious abuse. The other neighborhood kids – [here's a video](#) – love him as well. He's part of the family now.

And that is my would-be Facebook post for the day. Mark Zuckerberg, eat your heart out. I'm gone. Please write if you are not interested in being my ersatz Facebook friend.

Graham

**swimming.docx 07/19/2019 04:56 PM**

Phony Phacebook – swimming in Kyiv

You Americans are hogging the blanket – it's freezing over here!

While you bask in summer weather, we are having the coldest July I can recall. It has not cracked 80 all month. Five days it has not even hit 70.

Nonetheless, I have continued my daily swims. Today was not that bad – 75° outside.

As Shakespeare had it, sweet are the uses of adversity. The mosquitoes remain in hibernation. As usual, I had the lake all the myself.

Here's the story of how we happen to wind up next to the lake. In my wanderings through Kyiv in my first couple of years here I stumbled across Russanovski Sad and concluded that it would be an ideal neighborhood. Isolated, tranquil, close to the river, and yet only 3 miles as the crow flies from the presidential palace. Oksana shared my opinion and we

bought two lots here shortly after we were married. Initially as an investment, but it wasn't long before I was doodling with architectural plans. We moved in 2013.

This lake, only 200 yards from our house, has no motor boats. Few boats at all.

They cut it in half for the Metro line under construction, the one that will end our isolation. You can see a crane atop the grey stone dam/bridge in the distance.

Here's a picture of Eddie at the landing, around the bend a couple hundred yards further from the construction. My swim to the end is about two thirds of a mile round-trip.

Neither Berkeley/El Cerrito, where I grew up, or Washington DC had anything like this little lake. Lake Anza, in the Berkeley hills, was small and well supervised by lifeguards. Lake Merritt, in Oakland, did not allow it whatsoever. The public is simply not allowed to swim in the Potomac River, Rock Creek, Lake Needwood or any other natural waters I know of around Washington DC.

Why not? Big brother is looking out for our safety. Big brother is also acutely attuned to the litigious nature of American society and the likelihood that some damn fool will do something stupid and drown.

Ukraine is different in just about every respect. We barbecue outdoors. We burn leaves in the fall. We encourage neighbors to pick up after their dogs, but we don't jail them when they don't. None of the many attempts to get us to sort our trash seem to have taken. Nobody bugs me if my lawn is not mowed or if my kid walks to school.

Getting back to swimming, the people who own the dachas facing the lake wave me away if I get close to their fishing lines, but otherwise aren't bothered that I'm there. The attitude is that if I happen to drown it's my fault.

Ukrainians are Libertarian in the PJ O'Rourke sense: "There is only one basic human right, the right to do as you damn well please. And with it comes the only basic human duty, the duty to take the consequences."

This came home to me Sunday when we did something kinda stupid. I took Eddie and his friend Lolika on a rowboat that we rented in Hydropark, the Soviet era amusement park on Venetsiansky Island in the middle of the Dnipro River. We rode west through the channel separating this from

two other islands, into the Dnipro itself. I asked the kids if they were up for the 4 mile trip all the way around the island. They eagerly assented.

There was a stiff breeze blowing upriver and some dark clouds in the West. I thought, no problem, the wind will blow the clouds away from us. As we got halfway down the length of the island, we observed that the storm on the opposite bank of the river was staying put and there was quite a dramatic lightning show. The wind was still very much in my face as I continued paddling downstream. The storm, however, seem to buck the wind and follow us.

As we rounded the bottom of the island and started back up, the wind shifted and was in our face again. More than that, it started to rain a little bit. I poured on the steam, but by the time we got a bit past halfway up toward the pier it was raining cats and dogs. The lightning was immediately overhead, the thunder instantaneous. I wasn't worried about being struck – the tall trees would be hit first, there is never a report of people getting hit by lightning, and the fishermen were staying put along the banks – but we were thoroughly soaked by the time we got back to the dock.

I doubt there is any place in the United States where you would be allowed to paddle four miles on a busy waterway in the middle of the capital city. It is not without its dangers. When I was first doing it a decade ago I once repeatedly heard some odd honking sound. It got my attention.

Turning around, I saw a tow-boat driven barge coming right at me. They weren't going fast, but they couldn't have stopped if I had been totally oblivious.

Getting back to the theme of swimming, yes, I am on my own. I have decided to favor the end of the lake where there are dachas every couple of hundred feet rather than the more scenic, isolated south end. If I really got in trouble I could probably make it to shore, and there's a possibility somebody might even hear me and jump in to grab me. But I would not bet on either.

The end would be quick, fitting, and offer no work for the legal profession.

Graham

**This phony Facebook is much better than the real thing.docx      07/22/2019 12:40 PM**

This phony Facebook is much better than the real thing. I was extremely pleased to get notes from Mike Weaver and David Baker. It is hard now to imagine the idyllic childhood we enjoyed. In the our thousand square-foot houses, 23 of them on the dead end 7300 block of Gladys Avenue in El Cerrito there were at one time 53 kids.

Amazingly, these included five boys my age: Kim Stoddard, John Fitzgerald, Ricky Baker, David Baker and me. The last three of us born in a two-week span in December 1942.

Kim Stoddard was a bad kid. He played with Nikki and Norris, two other troublemakers from the next block down. Mike Weaver was a couple of years younger but fit in with us "good kids." So we had a gang of five boys. By some coincidence, there were no girls our age within about a four block radius. It was a masculine fraternity.



Mike was an only child. His parents, Alberta and Ken (whom everybody called Weaver) loved kids and loved having us over. Some of my fondest memories, and some of my most significant learning, came through them.

Alberta and Weaver loved to play pinochle. They taught us children. In my recollection, among card games we also played canasta and hearts. Canasta is largely a game of luck, but the other two involve a considerable element of strategy. My recollection is that we played at an adult level, in terms of skill and decorum. There wasn't any crying, cheating, or bad sportsmanship that I can recall.

We played board games endlessly. Monopoly was a favorite, also Parcheesi and something called Star Reporter. In the latter, the players were reporters racing against each other to get scoops about events such as the "Lancaster Disaster." I doubt that the game is still in print, but we found it just about as engaging as Monopoly.

These lessons from my youth remain with me as I raise my late life family. We have a double twelve domino set and Oksana, Eddie and I play fairly frequently. Eddie likes to play card games such as "Go Fish," though I find it a little bit too simple.

Two months ago he asked me to teach him poker. I don't even know how he learned about the game. I taught him the values of hands - what beat what - and showed him using Excel how the hands became rarer the better they are. Three of a kind beats two pair because there are fewer combinations that make three of a kind.

We play using monopoly money – more on that below. So far Eddie knows only three games: five card draw, five card stud and seven card stud. At his insistence we included the two jokers the last time we played, and he appreciated the fact that they changed the relative scarcity of the hands.

He figured out bluffing on his own. He hasn't figured out pot odds or the strategy of raising. I would like to bring the message home by showing him that how you play the cards you are dealt is the thing that separates long-term winners from losers. However, so far he has enjoyed beginners luck and is winning more often than losing. The most important thing, however, is that he and I are engaged in something that is fun and makes him think.

I don't know where we will find more kids to play with. The good thing about the kids he plays with is that they are not, for the most part, addicted to video entertainment. They do things. However, their activities don't seem to involve the parents as much as what we were doing.

As a measure of how close Eddie's childhood resembles mine of 70 years ago, we bicycle every place in the neighborhood. He has been inside a movie theater exactly twice, the second time yesterday. When the weather is warm enough – not this summer, though yesterday finally broke 80! – the kids walk to the lake to go swimming. Eddie has the accoutrements of a young scientist – an insect net, a microscope and a scoop net for fish. Unfortunately, none of the other kids are much into nature. Eddie and I will sit with the Smithsonian natural history books, bird and insect books and parse things out, but his friends are usually not involved.

The other thing that kids don't do, and I'm sad to say Eddie is not doing it either, is reading. In this context I remember David Baker the best. David always had good books on hand. I remember his fondness for the Horatio Hornblower series. He had a book called Minn of the Mississippi about the adventures of a snapping turtle. His parents had a book by Carlton S Coon on human evolution. Coon's theory – that the races of man had evolved separately over a long course of geological history – has been proven false by subsequent archaeology, such as that of the Leakey's and especially by the modern science of genomics. Modern science has also shown what Coon should have deduced from looking at domestic animals – evolution can accomplish a great deal in a short period of time.

We have a good collection of books in English, Russian and Ukrainian. Eddie loves for me to read to him, and is fascinated by natural history, the history of warfare, cookbooks among other things. I'm confident that there will be a breakthrough when he gets past laboriously phonetically decoding what he reads and starts to recognize most of the vocabulary in these three languages.

I count my blessings that Eddie still enjoys being read to and isn't spending his time with electronic diversions – of which he has none. That's my note for today, and my thanks again to Mike, David, and your parents. It was a great childhood, wasn't it?

Graham

PS: When I went to the store to buy a set of Monopoly, all they sold was something called "Grab and Go Monopoly." It cost about 10 dollars, so I figured it must be Monopoly and I bought it. When we opened it up, it was cheap beyond description. You had to tear the property deeds out of a stamped sheet of paper. The tokens were small and cheap plastic. The money was in pieces about one inch by half an inch. It was so disgustingly cheesy that we have never played it. Parker Brothers goes on my list of American companies that are mining their reputations, bilking customers for substandard products. Levi Strauss is another of my favorite childhood brands that recently joined that same never–again list. My last couple of pairs have turned to rags within a year. Their advertising also changed. In my childhood they portrayed the kind of man I wanted to become – and think I am today. Today they portray exactly the kind of man I want my son not to be.

It's not just American companies. I tried for months to get an ordinary set of Lego here in Kyiv. They do not sell just plain Lego bricks. Instead, you pay 20 or 30 dollars for something designed to create just one machine or creature, with all of the imagination engineered out of it. No way. Harumph!

**crap.docx      07/27/2019 09:31 AM**

You did not hear about it on the evening news

But if my recollections, and the the five day weather forecast, are correct, the temperature in Kyiv will have broken 80 exactly one day in July. By far the coolest I can recall. But that is not deemed newsworthy.

When I posted the aphorism from PJ O'Rourke about libertarianism, Mike Weaver wrote back to remind me of the good things that government has done on our behalf. They cleaned up smog in California.

This is indubitably true. Driving over the Grapevine Hill into Los Angeles with my mother in 1963 I can remember my eyes smarting so much going down into the Los Angeles basin that I could barely see to drive. Without the mandate to get the lead out of gasoline it would certainly have become impossible by now.

Government solutions are not an unmixed blessing. US environmental advocates condemned our part of the world to 1.5 litre low-flow toilets. It does save water - on the first flush – but it does not get the poop down the toilet. You need to flush it three or four times, sometimes leaving the poop to marinade until it is soft.

Dealing as I do with poopy diapers and heinies several times a day, it occurred to me there is an obvious solution. You wash your hands after going to the bathroom in any case. Don't be squeamish. Before doing so, just reach down into the potty and push the offending crap down and around the corner. It works! If only all government-induced crap were so easy to dispose of.

A problem with government bureaucracies is that they never die. The FDA and EPA yielded significant societal benefits in their early years, dealing with thalidomide and smog. But they keep on going! They must find new causes to justify their existence. The FDA let itself be complicit in the opioid scandal now unfolding. They block a vast number of drugs that are available to us in Europe and seem to work just fine. I have another blog to write on how cheap things are in the sectors controlled by the most corrupt Ukrainian oligarchs, notably pharmaceuticals and energy, compared to the "free" markets in the West.

After getting the lead out of gasoline, the EPA looked for other dragons to slay. Among them are nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide (collectively, NOx) in diesel omissions. The Europeans, especially the Germans, became especially good at making efficient diesel engines. Diesels come with a trade-off – depending on the operating temperature, they either emit soot or NOx, which in large quantities are harmful to health. How large is a difficult question to answer. European consumers didn't complain very loudly.

The environmental protection people in America wrote stringent emissions restrictions for diesels. I'm sure that American auto industry lobbyists – behind with diesel, doing okay with electric – popped a few corks when that legislation passed.

The leaders of the corporations affected – primarily German – concluded that they could not meet the strict standards. Nobody could. They chose an audacious course of action – cheating on emission controls. They tuned the engines such that emissions would be within limits while they were being tested, but otherwise they would revert to normal operation in which they would yield satisfactory performance. Presumably at higher temperatures.

This deception went on for a number years. There was no hue and cry from the public about unbreathable air. It was the emissions control people who discovered the fraud. It turned out to be a tremendously expensive black eye for the automobile industry, especially in Germany. I reviewed (favorably) a 2017 book entitled "[Leadership lessons from the Volkswagen saga](#)." The author is sympathetic to the bureaucrats and wonders why industry would do anything as terrible as to defy them.

My take is that they were between a rock and a hard place. Government performed no cost-benefit analysis weighing the public health benefits of controlling diesel omissions against the societal benefit of having reliable, efficient cars. Cars are inherently dangerous and polluting. What's a blip two places to the right of the decimal point in mortality statistics? And, who can demonstrate that gas fueled cars or even electrics, with the pollution displaced to distant electric generating stations, are inherently better? It is ultimately a question of politics.

A humorous upshot is that the market for used diesel cars in Western Europe has almost dried up. Ukraine has been flooded with them. Recent model, economical, good performance, and so far as I can see no complaints about decreasing our air quality.

While I'm verging on getting political, I'll note that "The End of Democracy," which I reviewed this week, describes why such tangled outcomes are inevitable. .They furthermore posit that democracy, like nature, hates a vacuum. The "legislative vacuums" I cited concerning swimming in lakes, loud parties and un-mowed grass will be filled here just as elsewhere. I invite your [comments on Amazon](#). Now, back to raising kids!

Graham

**the beach.docx      08/08/2019 03:14 PM**

Becoming a curmudgeon is a natural part of the aging process. You have done what you came to do. Found a mate, built a career, and raised a family. You are ready to move aside and make room for rising generations.

Being curmudgeonly makes the process comfortable. You keep yourself from being exposed to novelties that you don't need and can't incorporate, and stress that you really don't want to disturb the comfort of your decline.

Late life children disrupt this process. They want novelty. They need new experience in order to form themselves. They're pushing his new directions at the same time you are pushing back. It's a unavoidable tension.

I felt this strongly this last week as we took a family vacation down to the Black Sea. My wife Oksana returned from a weekend Ostrow, Western Ukraine, where she had been studying Orff music. She got home at 11 at night and the taxi picked us up at five in the morning to go to the Black Sea shore.

We spent all day on the train. It is not the kind of thing you want to sign up for in retirement. I barely had time to shave, get out the door. The taxi got us to the train station early, about's 6:05 for a 6:36 train. However, they didn't post the track it would be on until 6:20. We had to scramble to get there.

Oksana knew a shortcut that didn't involve carrying our 12 pieces of baggage - suitcases and shopping bags - up and down stairs. I was game. So we went. It involved doing an end run clear down past the end of the longest trains and back.

Our train was already standing there and we were running out of time. Her mother took a shortcut across the tracks and I followed. I was carrying Zoriana. So we let Oksana and Eddie take the long trip and we got to the train got to our car just in time. We boarded and got our 12 pieces loaded (four trips up four feet of steep stairs) and stowed. Just as it was all in place the clock struck 6:36 and we started to roll.

We had upper berths in two separate compartments. Two compartments. Fortunately, the attendant on the train – and this is characteristic of the good things that they do for you and Ukraine – arranged so we could have compartments all to ourselves. Halfway there she switched us from one to another. Since it was a day train the upper berth factor didn't matter.

Spending all day on the train with children is interesting. Fortunately, the kids are pretty good-natured. I wound up holding two-year-old Zoriana up to the window large part of the way. She wasn't content just to watch. She used the rails like monkey bars climbing up and down , and sidewise and upside down. But it kept her occupied which is the major objective. She did sleep for a couple hours. Eddie amused himself equally, looking out the window, and talking with dear old dad about this and that. I tried to think of a alphabet game we played one where you I name a country and he names the country to start with the last letter of the one I named. I'm sure that there better alphabet games to play, but I couldn't think of one.

In Odessa we looked for a taxi to take us to Lebdivka. Oksana called her three taxis was shocked at the price she was quoted. The hotel said 700 hryvnya – about \$27 – and she was getting quotes in the range of \$38 and up. I had no idea where Lebdivka was - she had done all of the arrangements.

She finally got a commitment from a taxi for 920 and we waited 25 minutes for the guy to show up. Alexi was a nice and smart guy. We went west from Odessa. And west. I kept expecting to see signs around the next corner, but they did not appear. After two hours we stopped. No, we had not arrived. Oksana wanted to get some nourishment from the trunk.

You can imagine a 2½ hour taxi ride for only \$38 dollars. Instead of thinking it to be outrageous, I was thinking this guy is losing his shirt. So it turned out. When we arranged with him to bring us back, he said that 920 was far too little. The return trip would be 1100. I had to agree with his reckoning. I gave him 1200 (about \$46) including a tip. To ensure that he would return to pick us up from the middle of nowhere.

Finally we were there, about 8 o'clock. Place is entirely run by women. Nice, but not too robust. I carried our suitcases – about 30 and 40 pounds – up two stories by myself. Thinking, at some point I'll have to give this sort of thing up.

It was late for dinner. They had only two choices on the menu kapustnyak and pelmeni. Two ordinary, inexpensive Ukrainian images. However, they were both extremely well prepared. We had four dishes, two of each, and I certainly filling. They had wine, locally made, for a dollar for quarter leader carafe. It certainly couldn't beat the prices. After the stress of the day hustling to make to make the train, dealing with restless children for the eight hour trip to an hour trip six in the morning until four in afternoon 10 hour trip, and then the English taxi driver right, it finally worked out well in the end. This is the way things usually work out in Ukraine. But it is not something that makes an old man much younger.

The next morning started with equal drama. Had a phone call from our house sitters that the well was working. The pump was out. Thank goodness. Oksana had handled that negotiation the past time to time. She had the name of that guy on her arm in your mobile phone. After endless calls – 20 or so back and forth among the house. The fungi and so on, that which is all I don't know how I'm glad I don't I get to resolve my share. I'm thankful that she competently handled her share.

We had an ordinary breakfast, once again, ordinary, nutritious and filling Ukrainian food. Except for myself – I ate the remaining potato salad I had made the journey. I love my mother's potato salad. Press be available on demand.

Got the Wi-Fi. The signal is very, but I was able to confirm that there weren't any important messages and that the price of our invite investments. It actually done fairly well on Monday. Oksana and her mother went for a walk. As I was fiddling with the computer, catching up. For lunch we had this lovely Ukrainian spread. Soup, chicken and rice. I was sure that I would not be able to finish it, but as the French say, the appetite comes with meeting. Once we got started, it all went okay. You need to rice – we save that for Oksana for Zoriana.

There are things not to like about the room. Eddie is quick to point them out. Our room has a double bed in a single bad – Boston Zoriana. It has a skinny closet – only about 3 feet wide – and no shelves. Certainly not in the bathroom. In the I had not wanted to go to the ocean in the first place. Where we live is actually beautiful for swimming. It's only good performance out of the year. I wasted time going away and inside the on the home. However, there the kids to think about. Going to the ocean is a new experience. It's a broadening experience.

Broadening in what ways? Among other things that got to hear different opinions among the parents. Here parents working things out in a way that you might not. In another contact. Edward got a tour of the south coast of Ukraine. Furthermore, you got a visual overview of the entire country from north to south. As we went to to Odessa. It see the forest merging into the steppe land. From Odessa West. We got to see crops that you do not see where we left. A lot are musk melons and watermelons growing in the fields. A lot of grapevines. We passed by a port and you got to see the great screens that load the ships, the gantry cranes over the rails, the ships and dock, and the many grain elevators for exporting Ukraine's primary product, agriculture. I thought about the town of the beliefs, Beers, only to mean streets, both pedestrian streets. That's a bit unusual. From their intersection is a street to run straight down to the beach. At the other end of one. The parallels the beach is a is the road takes you down town to another stairway down to the beach.

There is a lot of our vendors selling food along the walks but not much in the way restaurants. Have a feeling that this is for this is the settlement where ordinary people come to vacation. They rent our houses or apartments where there cooking facilities and they fixed their own food. A lot of fresh seafood here. The Black Sea is a pretty rich fishery. Last night we had beach key, a small fish like us hard sardine that is native to the Black Sea.

There's not much serve here. Black Sea is not that big – there's not enough etch to get waves that are big at all. The airwaves may be our 8 inches or a foot high. If that. They get a little bit of a arm comb or affect. When I swim along. Parallel to the beach they wash over me, truly. It's really pretty pleasant, there is no danger of being rolled over or anything. I do get a little bit of water on my face. That's about it. We had an incident as he left that the well that the pump and are well at home stopped. Our house sitters called us and it took all day to straightened out. This is the kind of thing that will add this is how you know your friends. They stayed stayed with the project and got it done. Our hind grateful for Oksana's friends.

The function of age. As I get older, more and more of my friends are dying off. I lost couple last year to our Alzheimer's. So I really I don't have any family on my side who will be interested in me or my kids as I get older. Thank goodness for our friends and acquaintances here in Ukraine. As nobody and you keep in Oksana's family that will be terribly useful to us, but we do have a fairly good network of friends. I was a Russian saying that hundred friends are worth more than 100 rubles. Obviously, dates back to the so when a ruble is worth something. But it is true you do need friends. This is one of the great things about Oksana, she's good at making



them.

**Apple Pie 08/12/2019 07:06 AM**

Just about everybody in the former Russian Empire has a garden plot to raise fruit and vegetables. It is a useful hobby. During the economic crises of the 1990s and 2008 many families lived on what they grew.

The soil on our 1/3 acre plot is a mixture of the famous Ukrainian black earth and sandy river bottom. This year Oksana is growing raspberries, strawberries, cucumbers, zucchini, pumpkins, dill, parsley, lettuce, onions and garlic. Cucumbers to especially well. We have so many there is only one thing to do with the excess: pickles.

The property came with five mature walnut trees, 12 apple trees, a prune tree, a couple of cherry trees and a prodigiously productive cherry plum.

Oksana has changed the balance. The elderly pear tree and half of the apples and walnuts are gone. In their place she has planted two peach trees, and apricot, and a new apple and pear tree. The trees themselves are flourishing, although quirks of weather and peach leaf curl have diminished our harvests.

This year only two apple trees seem to be yielding. That's enough! Every day we have about 4 pounds. That's all windfall – we don't bother picking them off the trees, and we don't attempt to salvage useful fruit when it is wormy or part rotten.

What to do with them? My mother taught me how to make an apple pie, and that's what we do. I'm happy to say that Eddie joins in enthusiastically.

Here are pictures of the apple trees. We mostly use the green apples.



An apple pie should be a little bit sour. We add a dozen or more cherry plums in lieu of lemons. They are appropriately sour and they don't cost

money.

I'm attaching a PDF here showing how I make them.

Here is the end result for a pie. Black current this time – I forgot to snap the apple pie. There always seems to be a problem of juices running over – we line the bottom of the oven – but this time it appears that we could have avoided it if the bottom crust had not had a small crack in it. You see Eddie in the picture here and throughout those in the recipe itself. He loves to cook and was a big help in preparing these pies. One of the keys to winning Oksana's heart was my cooking. I'm giving Eddie the same preparation. I want grandchildren!

## **Home Alone      08/12/2019 07:06 AM**

Home alone

Eddie and I are alone this week, as Oksana is off at a conference for Orff musicians. Her mother Nadia went along to take care of Zoriana.

As women are wont to do, she left extensive instructions on what we should eat, how we should dress, how to take care of the garden, and what to do.

As men are wont to do, we ignore it. He wears what he wants. We are having hamburgers every day. We like hamburgers. We make popcorn when we want to. The eggplant sitting in the bottom of the refrigerator will go bad because nobody eats it. Eddie doesn't like eggplant.

We went to the park yesterday where Eddie had an ice cream called "black ice." He got it all over his face. I told him about it. It didn't bother him, so I didn't let it bother me. When we got on the bus on the way home, Natasha, a neighbor, was horrified that I should be so negligent. She pulled out a moist towelette and cleaned him off.

Reading heads our agenda this summer. Every day Eddie reads Ukrainian and English and practices handwriting in Ukrainian.

The Ukrainian he is reading is more advanced than the stuff the schools provided me in second grade. It is not "Fun with Dick and Jane." It is really building his vocabulary.

The English he studied last year was from the Pearson "Fly High" series. I pulled out all of the unique vocabulary – 371 words over 27 chapters in the course of a year – and put them into an electronic flash card system for him to study.

Through the end of June he had finished exactly four chapters, and the old computer we were using for the flashcards died. I used my good computer to print the words out – with Ukrainian and Russian translations. We have been going through those, one chapter a day, and we are now up to chapter 20.

The fact that I am learning in Ukrainian those words that I didn't already know, at the same time he is learning to sight read the words in English, is a real advantage. He sight reads the word, then I say it in Ukrainian. We correct each other as necessary. He is learning that you can learn at any age. He is also learning to be polite in correcting dear old dad. He should not be triumphant or sarcastic when I make a mistake – simply correct me.

This week, with two of us alone, he has finally started to read English books. Specifically, Dr. Seuss' "Hop on Pop" and "Green Eggs and Ham." They are not as demanding as his Ukrainian. His brain is pretty good at deciphering Cyrillic letters. At the beginning of the summer he was still having problems distinguishing between the Latin mirror letters b and d, i and j, and p and q. Now he has them straight.

My original plan, homeschooling Eddie, is still alive in my mind. I am rolling over the pluses and minuses of Sunflower, the school he attends.

On the minus side, I was not impressed by my experience teaching middle school English. The school provided me no curriculum – I had to generate my own. They provided no guidance – what tests would the children have to pass at the end of the year, how much homework should I expect, how were the children to be graded, and what to do about discipline problems. I put a lot of work into developing dual language teaching materials [like this](#), and the students, parents, and administration alike simply did not seem to care. When Eddie is in the sixth and seventh grades I would certainly like to see higher expectations laid on him.

On the other hand, it is impressive what he has learned. As I mentioned, the stories they read in Ukrainian are far more mature, and employ more vocabulary, than I experienced in the second grade even back in the dark ages of the late forties. If Eddie can master them, he has done something.

With my help, he is doing adequately in English. My sense is that he is the only second-grader who got much out of English last year, and that because I was by his side working with him, but the fact is that it worked for us.

Eddie and I always love to talk, but with two of us together we have had more opportunity than usual. Last night I learned some surprising things. His teacher Christina taught him about surface tension – how a needle floats on water. I was impressed that he understood that.

But when the conversation turned to anatomy, and where blood cells come from, I was amazed. I told him that red blood cells are formed in the marrow of the bones. He said that he knew that. Christina had told him. I told him that white blood cells also probably come from the bones, but I did not know for sure. Eddie blew me away. He told me that Christina had told him that both "trombociti" and "leukociti" (ie, thrombocytes and leukocytes, that is, platelets and white blood cells) did indeed come from the bones.

He went to get this book, which Oksana had bought for him a couple of years ago, and together we looked up this picture which confirms what he was talking about. He was able to look at the diagrams in figure it out himself.

I wrote earlier that kids learn to read when they're good and ready. Add to that the observation that they are inclined to read what they want when they want. So, while we are still at a first or second grade level as far as recognizing written English goes, we are already messing around with college-level texts for Ukrainian references.

The most important thing is to sustain his interest. The conversation turned to plate tectonics and how the movement of the continents had affected evolution. His dinosaur book had a pretty good picture of how the

continents had drifted over the past 250 million years, but the Internet provided us with an animation not only of that period of time but of the 250 million years to come.

I'm happy that Eddie is going to return to Sunflower School for the third grade. The material he is getting is interesting, and the teachers not only know quite a bit, but have a gift for getting the children excited about the material. We recognize that the good thing we have is subject to change from year to year – we will have to play it by ear – but we are thankful for our good luck to this point.

Yesterday the topic turned to history. Why did the Russians kill 6 million (or whatever) during the Holodomor? Was the motive robbery? No, it was to impose an ideology of equality. Communism.

What is communism? It is the theory that all people are equal, and that material goods ought to be distributed equally. What does that mean? Well, Eddie, we have more money than other people like your uncle Sasha. Is that fair? Why do we have more money? Should we do anything about it? Should the government do anything about it?

We had some discussion on these perennial questions. I am glad it is me talking to Eddie instead of some teacher who thinks they know the answer. There aren't any universal and eternal answers, and people who think they have them are dangerous. He needs to know that much – they killed his great grandfather and devastated the family.

Graham

**day with Zoriana      08/17/2019 06:49 PM**

My day with Zoriana

I spent the morning, then all afternoon and evening yesterday with Zoriana. Oksana was tied up with doctors and dentists until eight at night. Our usual babysitters, Anna and Klem were unable to make it.

A two-year-old is pretty demanding. Men and women react quite differently to those demands. I'm writing about my observations.

How do you keep a kid occupied? How do you keep her out of trouble? If the women (Oksana, her mother, the babysitter, visiting mothers...) are around, you do it the women's way. There is a presumption that women know best when it comes to children. We males are well advised never to dispute that wisdom.

The women in our house won't use a playpen. Instead, they leave Zoriana in a high chair with some food to play with. It serves the same purpose. Predictably, Zoriana throws food and breaks crockery. It is a price we pay.

The women give Zoriana a prescribed amount of food, a balanced diet of fruit, oatmeal, milk and kefir. What she does not eat remains on the high chair tray for her to practice painting and marksmanship until they are ready to take her down, at which point the remaining food disappears into the refrigerator to be thrown away in two or three days.

Kids change. Zoriana's eating habits have changed. I make oatmeal for her. She used to ravenously go through two bowls, eschewing the peaches or bananas and eating all of the oatmeal. In the last month she seems to have hit a plateau. She will let me feed her half a bowl, and then show no particular interest in the rest.

The women feed her in her high chair, either spoon feeding her or letting her feed herself as they relax and watch. I like to keep Zoriana on my lap at the table and talk to her. The conversation is mostly one way when she's eating. I will nuzzle her ear and tell her what a good girl she is. When she stops eating I'll say "enough" and push the bowl away.

Woman that she is, Zoriana wants to make these choices herself. Once I push the bowl away, she wants it again. I'll bring it back and feed her another mouthful or two before she acts bored once more. I'll wait a moment, then push it away. We go through three or four iterations until she finally decides she's tired of this game.

The next game is to ask me for milk. The milk game she likes to play is to get a glass, take two sips, and either put her fingers in it or spill it. My game is to pour only two sips into the glass in the first place and let her drink it. I'll make her beg to get more, and then another two sips. She'll eventually outfox me, pouring the remaining milk on the floor or on herself, but it doesn't make too big of a mess.

How do you entertain a two-year-old? Watching work seems to keep her busy. After breakfast I ironed – five of Eddie's shirts, four of my own and two pairs of pants – as she watched. It's a good activity because I can talk to her while I'm doing it. It is not like computer work, which doesn't look to Zoriana much like work at all and leaves no attention for her.



After her midday nap she was all mine. We went shopping. It is different with daddy than mommy. Mommy makes it an expedition, the centerpiece of which is a baby buggy. It folds, but it remains awkward every place you take it. It is difficult to get on and off of a bus, especially with the child in tow. It doesn't fit well in the narrow aisles of the market. I just take her by the hand and walk.

Although Livoberezhna is the commercial hub for about a quarter million people, the vendors in the farmers' market all know us. The gregarious old American with the two kids. They were delighted to see Zoriana and attempt to talk to her. She is shy for about two seconds when she meet somebody new and then she opens up quite engagingly.

She already knew the man who sells us eggs, the butcher lady who sold us some beef, and Tanya who sells me fruits and vegetables. I let Zoriana tug me this way and that in the market. There's a lot of interesting things to see and not much way to get in trouble. I tell her to keep her hands off food displays – that's about it.

We returned home. After a couple of hours we had to pick up Eddie from a play date. We retraced the route Eddie and I had taken in the morning. A bus to the end of the line, a scramble up a steep gravelly embankment to the train/tramway station, three stops and then a long walk.

Zoriana sits in my lap on buses and tramways, usually squirming, and when there is room enough she may get a seat to herself to do monkey acrobatics. Most kids like to be in motion.

I hold her by the hand as we walk. When she's well rested she will walk alongside me. When that wears out – fairly quickly – she resorts to the "dead weight" trick that every two-year-old employs. She goes limp and makes me drag her. I'm game. I will drag her. I don't mind if she gets dirty in the process. I don't mind if it's uncomfortable. Often enough I will lift her off the ground with one hand, gripping her tightly enough that it must hurt just a little bit. She usually figures that out fairly quickly that the ploy isn't going to work and finds her feet. Or, she will pull my hand like a Doberman on a leash, trying to get away. It is amazing how strong a two-year-old can be.

A more successful ploy is to ask to be carried. If my hands are free and I'll sometimes pick her up and throw her on a hip, with one hand wrapped tightly around her waist as she hangs on with her legs. That's usually good for five minutes or so, after which she goes limp to let me know she wants down.

For the 15 minute walk to pick up Eddie I put her on my shoulders. This is a daddy exclusive. I pick her up, duck my head beneath her legs and set her down. She has learned that if she doesn't pull my hair she can stay for quite a while.

On my hip or on my shoulders she is on a par with the adults. She loves the attention from other passengers standing in line for the bus, the vendors in the market and passerbys on the street.

I got a call that we should pick up Eddie's friend Lolika as well at Andrew's house. We took a longer route home involving two buses and a Metro so that Zoriana wouldn't have to walk. After having been fairly angelic all day, she turned tired and cranky by the time we got to our home stop at 8:45. Lolika's mom was waiting and the two kids and I walked home. It had been a full and exciting day with daddy.

This is most unlike a day with the women. We men are gifted with physical strength, and we use it. A little girl appreciates that daddy can use it to carry her around – and that daddy can use it to restrain her. When she has our attention, she is more likely to have all of it. And when we are doing something, not much of it. Zoriana is trying to get my attention as I write this, and I'm inclined to simply shut my door and push her out. Men and women are different. Any kid needs to learn from both.

## **beach 08/18/2019 11:13 AM**

Becoming a curmudgeon is a natural part of the aging process. You have done what you came to do. Found a mate, built a career, and raised a family. You are ready to move aside and make room for rising generations.

Being curmudgeonly makes the process comfortable. You keep yourself from being exposed to novelties that you don't need and can't incorporate, and stress that you really don't want to disturb the comfort of your decline.

Late life children disrupt this process. They want novelty. They need new experience in order to form themselves. They're pushing his new directions at the same time you are pushing back. It's a unavoidable tension.

I felt this strongly this last week as we took a family vacation down to the Black Sea. My wife Oksana returned from a weekend Ostrow, Western Ukraine, where she had been studying Orff music. She got home at 11 at night and the taxi picked us up at five in the morning to go to the Black Sea shore.

We spent all day on the train. It is not the kind of thing you want to sign up for in retirement. I barely had time to shave, get out the door. The taxi got us to the train station early, about's 6:05 for a 6:36 train. However, they didn't post the track it would be on until 6:20. We

had to scramble to get there.

Oksana knew a shortcut that didn't involve carrying our 12 pieces of baggage - suitcases and shopping bags - up and down stairs. I was game. So we went. It involved doing an end run clear down past the end of the longest trains and back.

Our train was already standing there and we were running out of time. Her mother took a shortcut across the tracks and I followed. I was carrying Zoriana. So we let Oksana and Eddie take the long trip and we got to the train got to our car just in time. We boarded and got our 12 pieces loaded (four trips up four feet of steep stairs) and stowed. Just as it was all in place the clock struck 6:36 and we started to roll.

We had upper berths in two separate compartments. Two compartments. Fortunately, the attendant on the train – and this is characteristic of the good things that they do for you and Ukraine – arranged so we could have compartments all to ourselves. Halfway there she switched us from one to another. Since it was a day train the upper berth factor didn't matter.

Spending all day on the train with children is interesting. Fortunately, the kids are pretty good-natured. I wound up holding two-year-old Zoriana up to the window large part of the way. She wasn't content just to watch. She used the rails like monkey bars climbing up and down , and sidewise and upside down. But it kept her occupied which is the major objective. She did sleep for a couple hours. Eddie amused himself equally, looking out the window, and talking with dear old dad about this and that. I tried to think of a alphabet game we played one where you I name a country and he names the country to start with the last letter of the one I named. I'm sure that there better alphabet games to play, but I couldn't think of one.

In Odessa we looked for a taxi to take us to Lebidivka. Oksana called her three taxis was shocked at the price she was quoted. The hotel said 700 hryvnya – about \$27 – and she was getting quotes in the range of \$38 and up. I had no idea where Lebidivka was - she had done all of the arrangements.

She finally got a commitment from a taxi for 920 and we waited 25 minutes for the guy to show up. Alexi was a nice and smart guy. We went west from Odessa. And west And west. I kept expecting to see signs around the next corner, but they did not appear. After two hours we stopped. No, we had not arrived. Oksana wanted to get some nourishment from the trunk.

You can imagine a 2½ hour taxi ride for only \$38 dollars. Instead of thinking it to be outrageous, I was thinking this guy is losing his shirt . So it turned out. When we arranged with him to bring us back, he said that 920 was far too little. The return trip would be 1100. I had to agree with his reckoning. I gave him 1200 (about \$46) including a tip. To ensure that he would return to pick us up from the middle of nowhere.

Finally we were there, about 8 o'clock. Place is entirely run by women. Nice, but not too robust. I carried our suitcases – about 30 and 40 pounds – up two stories by myself. Thinking, at some point I'll have to give this sort of thing up.

It was late for dinner. They had only two choices on the menu kapustnyak and pelmeni. Two ordinary, inexpensive Ukrainian images. However, they were both extremely well prepared. We had four dishes, two of each, and I certainly filling. They had wine, locally made, for a dollar for quarter leader carafe. It certainly couldn't beat the prices. After the stress of the day hustling to make to make the train, dealing with restless children for the eight hour trip to an hour trip six in the morning until four in afternoon 10 hour trip, and then the English taxi driver right, it finally worked out well in the end. This is the way things usually work out in Ukraine. But it is not something that makes an old man much younger.

The next morning started with equal drama. Had a phone call from our house sitters that the well was working. The pump was out. Thank goodness. Oksana had handled that negotiation the past time to time. She had the name of that guy on her arm in your mobile phone. After endless calls – 20 or so back and forth among the house. The fungi and so on, that which is all I don't know how I'm glad I don't I get to resolve my share. I'm thankful that she competently handled her share.

We had an ordinary breakfast, once again, ordinary, nutritious and filling Ukrainian food. Except for myself – I ate the remaining potato salad I had made the journey. I love my mother's potato salad. Press be available on demand.

Got the Wi-Fi. The signal is very, but I was able to confirm that there weren't any important messages and that the price of our invite investments. It actually done fairly well on Monday. Oksana and her mother went for a walk. As I was fiddling with the computer, catching up. For lunch we had this lovely Ukrainian spread. Soup, chicken and rice. I was sure that I would not be able to finish it, but as the French say, the appetite comes with meeting. Once we got started, it all went okay. You need to rice – we save that for Oksana for Zoriana.

There are things not to like about the room. Eddie is quick to point them out. Our room has a double bed in a single bad – Boston Zoriana. It has a skinny closet – only about 3 feet wide – and no shelves. Certainly not in the bathroom. In the I had not wanted to go to the ocean in the first place. Where we live is actually beautiful for swimming. It's only good performance out of the year. I wasted time going away and inside the on the home. However, there the kids to think about. Going to the ocean is a new experience. It's a broadening experience.

Broadening in what ways? Among other things that got to hear different opinions among the parents. Here parents working things out in a way that you might not. In another contact. Edward got a tour of the south coast of Ukraine. Furthermore, you got a visual overview of

the entire country from north to south. As we went to to Odessa. It see the forest merging into the steppe land. From Odessa West. We got to see crops that you do not see where we left. A lot are musk melons and watermelons growing in the fields. A lot of grapevines. We passed by a port and you got to see the great screens that load the ships, the gantry cranes over the rails, the ships and dock, and the many grain elevators for exporting Ukraine's primary product, agriculture. I thought about the town of the beliefs, Beers, only to mean streets, both pedestrian streets. That's a bit unusual. From their intersection is a street to run straight down to the beach. At the other end of one. The parallels the beach is a is the road takes you down town to another stairway down to the beach.

There is a lot of our vendors selling food along the walks but not much in the way restaurants. Have a feeling that this is for this is the settlement where ordinary people come to vacation. They rent our houses or apartments where there cooking facilities and they fixed their own food. A lot of fresh seafood here. The Black Sea is a pretty rich fishery. Last night we had beach key, a small fish like us hard sardine that is native to the Black Sea.

There's not much serve here. Black Sea is not that big – there's not enough etch to get waves that are big at all. The airwaves may be our 8 inches or a foot high. If that. They get a little bit of a arm comb or affect. When I swim along. Parallel to the beach they wash over me, truly. It's really pretty pleasant, there is no danger of being rolled over or anything. I do get a little bit of water on my face. That's about it. We had an incident as he left that the well that the pump and are well at home stopped. Our house sitters called us and it took all day to straightened out. This is the kind of thing that will add this is how you know your friends. They stayed stayed with the project and got it done. Our hind grateful for Oksana's friends.

The function of age. As I get older, more and more of my friends are dying off. I lost couple last year to our Alzheimer's. So I really I don't have any family on my side who will be interested in me or my kids as I get older. Thank goodness for our friends and acquaintances here in Ukraine. As nobody and you keep in Oksana's family that will be terribly useful to us, but we do have a fairly good network of friends. I was a Russian saying that hundred friends are worth more than 100 rubles. Obviously, dates back to the so when a ruble is worth something. But it is true you do need friends. This is one of the great things about Oksana, she's good at making them.

**Welcome back sucker      8/20/2019 11:53 AM**

Welcome back sucker

Eddie's school starts in two weeks. Oksana just got a phone call – would she teach English to third, fourth and fifth graders?

I think the answer is yes. And I think it will include me.

I have a spotty record as a teacher. Prior to retiring in 1997 I served twelve years on a couple of Episcopal school boards. After retirement I substitute taught in Washington DC area private schools, then Kyiv expatriate private schools.

I got along pretty well with the kids and the people who schedule substitutes. Administrators weren't so sure. I was politically unreliable, and in one case I gave too honest of an answer when an administrator asked me for a professional opinion on a statistical analysis.

When Eddie entered the Sunflower School in April 2018 they immediately asked me to substitute for fifth and sixth grade English, and they made it a full-time gig starting in September last year.

I tried to sort out some irregularities. I didn't know who was in my class – I had no roster, and different kids showed up every day. They didn't give me a curriculum. They didn't have any written criteria for what I should teach, or sample tests of what the kids should be able to do at the end of the year. There was no grading policy. I made it up and did my best.

Learning a language requires that the student study on his own. The "Dixie cup" method – open the kid's head, pour in knowledge, and close it up again – doesn't work. You need homework. Which the kids steadfastly refused to do.

Ukrainians are nuts about grammar. I joke that the Ukrainian student of English may not know how to ask where the toilet is, but by God, he will express his ignorance using the right grammatical case. I told them that learning grammar is incidental to learning how to speak – vocabulary and pronunciation – and the kids would pick it up.

Wrong answer. Parents complained, and in February I was informed that I would be teaching one day a week and that somebody else would teach grammar one day a week. My reply was "Don't bother – give that other teacher two days a week and let me off the hook." In the end, they never found that one-day-a-week grammar teacher. We compromised that I would teach only the kids who were supposedly interested in learning, two days a week.

Still no homework. No policy to deal with it. This is part of a systematic problem. The school has no written policies or procedures. No written financial records that anybody can see. Nothing!

At the end-of-school meeting I propose that we parents get together with the headmaster and draft some policy and procedures for the school. The idea was met with enthusiasm on the part of the parents. So I [drafted something](#). It helped that I had done this before.

Sometimes suggestions like this get slow rolled so they will disappear. This one got fast rolled. I sent it to the headmaster and it went absolutely nowhere. Well and good. Three weeks ago I sent the headmaster an email simply stating that I would not be teaching middle school English. If I could be of help teaching Eddie's class I would be interested.

I had previously observed that the language immersion approach that they were using with Eddie's class was not appropriate. You cannot immerse second graders in English for two periods per week and expect them to be anything but lost. Instruction has to be in Ukrainian as well as English. Eddie was the only one who got much out of second grade English, and that is of course because he speaks English.

I suggested that they use music as a vehicle for teaching English. Use songs like Old MacDonald, Farmer in the Dell, Little Bo Peep and so on to give the kids some English vocabulary and have some fun at the same time. If they learn what the lyrics mean, they will learn a bit of English.

Oksana is the music teacher. She has the feeling this is what they have in mind. If so, I will be drafted to come up with English nursery rhymes and probably the printed materials so they can learn the vocabulary. The stuff will be too simple for Eddie – his role is more likely to be as an assistant instructor. Also good experience.

I have cautioned Oksana to make sure that her agreement is in writing. With no written policy, the headmaster lets parents tug her this way and that every day, as happened with the phantom grammar teacher last year.

And – for better or worse – I think I am in the barrel again.

On other topics, I was wrong about the July weather forecast. We wound up having three days over 80, one almost touching 90. In August we have had for days over 80. Global warming it ain't, but summer warming is welcome.

Graham

PS: I got quite a bit of feedback on the piece about Bitchute.com. The primary question was how in the world I could say anything good about Alex Jones. This is probably the topic of my next missive. The subject interests me because I also face online censorship. I will identify it as political in the subject line so you can avoid it if you want.

## **A walk in the park.docx      08/25/2019 01:43 PM**

A walk in the park

It is a beautiful late summer day – temperature in the mid-seventies. Just for the record, we have had four 80° days in August and there are no more in the forecast. Our lawn never looks this beautiful at this time a year. Dandelions excepted, of course.

I have spent a lot of time with the kids lately. Our babysitter is taking the month off. This morning I took them to Park Pobeda - Victory Park - for three hours. I took a camera along to share a bit of Kyiv with you.



Our neighborhood, Russanovski Sad, is cut off from the city by the Desno river on the west and the railroad on the east and north.

We walked east along the marginally asphalted road on which we live, past plum trees and grapevines. Here Eddie is offering some grapes to Zoriana.

To get to the railroad we cross a low dyke. Nobody knows what it was built for. This photo gives you a sense of the rustic character of our neighborhood. The people along the street maintain this set of stairs made out of rough lumber. The fence is made of the rounded outside pieces of logs that have been cut into boards by a local sawmill.

There is a 2 acre paddock on the other side of the dyke where they usually run goats. Last time Zoriana and I walked past she got a kick out of feeding them juicy dandelions she shoved through the fence. But the goats were not there today.

From there we walked up the embankment on which the railroad is built, about 30 feet vertically above the floodplain on which we live. Here is a picture of the three of us at the train station, and another picture of the local electric train. I think Stalin himself was in charge of the last paint they put on this one.

Next we walked past a lake and a playground. Here is Eddie atop a climbing frame. You see a beach in the background and you might make out a guy in the water. People here love to swim.

All this is within a half-mile of our house. We walked another quarter-mile to a bus stop and rode three stops down to the park. Here's a picture the kids at the entrance.

The park is dedicated to the Soviet Union's victory in the Great Patriotic War. It is a big deal. The Soviets lost twenty million killed. The dead were disproportionately Ukrainian. First, the Germans swept through the country four times, twice coming and twice going. Secondly, many Bolsheviks considered Ukrainians to be a bit more expendable than ethnic Russians.

The weapons shown here – an artillery piece and a tank retriever – date from the late Soviet era. I gave in to Zoriana's request to climb up on top of the latter. She refused to come down! She had a great time up there. I finally coaxed Eddie to go up and lead her to the edge so I could bring her down.

Eddie made friends with a little girl shown playing here on the artillery piece. He has a gift. Zoriana chased the pigeons. I enjoyed the sunshine. Then it was time to go home for Zoriana's nap. We walked to the Metro, got to our bus just as it was leaving, and got home on the stroke of twelve.

Graham

**back to school with eddie.docx 08/27/2019 12:34 PM**

Why do we have Eddie in a private school?

I recently wrote about my frustrations teaching in Eddie's school. No written procedures, no guidance for teachers. Nonetheless, the teachers in the early grades are intelligent and motivated. Here is the flip side.

Oksana, as one of the lower school teachers, attended a two hour preschool meeting. They discuss the kids' individual needs. The kids will have pretty much the same teachers again this year.

Their observations about Eddie were candid and on target. He is enthusiastic about the things he's good at, such as math. On the other hand, he avoids and makes elaborate excuses about the things about which he is not confident. That is what we have been seeing all summer, especially with regard to reading. He is not a particularly strong reader and does not appreciate that he must overcome the weakness, not avoid it.

The teachers made an observation that I had only suspected. He is not as well-developed physically as the other kids in his class. This observation holds even given that he is the youngest student. He is physically lazy and makes excuses for not doing things.

I had hoped to bicycle and swim with him this summer. I let him talk me out of it all too often. As far as swimming goes, I have been swimming two thirds of a mile a day pretty religiously. Eddie swam across the river and back with me one time, maybe one third of a mile.

Oksana and I have all the advantages in the world. Most important, she sees the problem perhaps more clearly than I do and knows that we should do something. She observes that if we get him involved in martial arts the bulk of the program will be in physical development, not learning fancy moves. I had not known that. In any case, he should be swimming, running, and bicycling to develop his stamina. At approaching eight years old he should probably be swinging on monkey bars to develop his upper body.

For Oksana and me to agree that these are our problems, for us more than the school to solve, and that we need to work together on solutions is radically different than my experience with my first family. My three grown children were likewise lazy and resisted my invitations to bicycle, swim, run and walk. They studiously ignored the example I set in these regards.

Neither my former wife nor the schools saw it as a problem. Those kids also had expensive lessons that were supposed to develop them physically. The pool offered competitive swimming and diving. Naturally, they chose diving – swimming is hard work. We stuffed them into car seats and drove them everywhere to diving contests for which they had no enthusiasm and demonstrated no talent. And from which, of course, they derived no benefit.

My grown children's schools were interested in competitive sports. They would nurture kids who might bring glory to the school, but were resolutely uninterested in the physical condition of average kids. I was ignored when I raised this issue as a member of the school boards. It is a breath of fresh air to be in a school that has no competitive sports and is interested only in the well-being of the students.

Some of Eddie's aversion to exercise is undoubtedly inherited. At his age I was a fat and lazy kid. Among your readers, David, Rick, and Mike may remember this. I was the last to learn to ride a bicycle, the only one never to have a paper route, and decidedly uninterested and untalented when it came to team sports. The wake-up calls came later.

At the age of twenty-one I had figured that continued smoking would kill me, and the Army had made me run a mile for the first time. Four years later, en route to Vietnam, I read Kenneth Cooper's classic "Aerobics" and started a running regime which changed my life.

Threading back to childhood, I and all of my children were lazy and unmotivated at the age of eight. I was the only one to overcome it, late in the game.

Early is better than later. Being in good physical shape makes you self-confident, encourages you to compete, to seek leadership positions. All things which I did not do. David, you became an Eagle Scout. I refused to try because I could not earn the Physical Fitness merit badge. It wasn't until I was approaching fifty that I could do the pull ups – and once I got started, I reached the ability to do thirty-five. It is a matter of discipline. This is the time to encourage Eddie to develop himself physically. To accept physical challenges and push himself to meet them.

Experience shows that accepting academic challenges is a similar process. We need to encourage Eddie to continue to read. I will put special emphasis on writing. One of the most difficult things to do is to accept that you can collect and organize thoughts and present them in a paper or a speech.

Once again, I came late to the game. When asked why I pursued math at the University of California, I answered "No papers, no labs." The lazy man's approach. My epiphany with respect to writing came when I was in Vietnam. IBM's policy of reimbursing piaster (local currency) expenses in US dollars (1) encouraged us to use the black market and (2) overstated earnings on our W-2s. I wrote a paper advocating that IBM change the money and reimburse us in local currency, reporting it at the widely publicized black-market rate. My managers in Saigon were supportive, and the proposal rapidly went up the chain through Honolulu and San Francisco to Washington DC for approval. It was an epiphany. In computers, the ability to write is just about as important as the ability to program.

Returning again to Eddie, I encourage him to recount in some loosely organized way the adventures that we share. This year I will ask him to tell his stories to a voice recorder, then transcribe and edit them. Being able and willing to express your thoughts is an essential step in taking control of your life.

The math and science in the third grade curriculum will be interesting and will come easily to Eddie. Academically, our focus will be on the Ukrainian and English languages. And beyond that, we will have to figure a way to get his body in shape. A cardinal rule will be "Don't waste your time." He needs to develop the habit of looking for something to do when he is idle, not looking for excuses to be idle when he has something to do. I am glad to have strong allies in his teachers and his mother.

Graham

### **birthday.docx      08/30/2019 10:39 AM**

Oksana's 40th birthday celebration was a typical Ukrainian affair. It came together at the last minute in a haphazard way and turned out wonderfully.

We wanted to invite Aunt Lyuda and her husband Vanya. Lyuda was like a second mother when Oksana entered the conservatory here in Kyiv a couple of decades ago. She called and called, but got no answer.

Apropos of nothing except the coming birthday, about three days before, mother Nadia and father Sasha called to say they were coming. About the same time Yuri and Polina, who had lived with us, called Oksana to talk about something else and she invited them. And, of course, we invited Valya who lives with us. Finally, the morning of her birthday, Lyuda called to say that she and Uncle Vanya would be here.

I love this family. Nadia is devoted to her grandchildren. She comes the 150 miles from her hometown of Svetlovodsk several times a year to help out. Last month, for instance, she traveled with Oksana to run an Orff music conference in Western Ukraine and then down to the Black Sea with us for a few days at the beach.

These gatherings remain a bit of a challenge for me. I have never become sufficiently proficient in any foreign language to keep up with the native language banter at a party like this. However, I managed the one-on-one conversation. I joined Sasha as he went out on the back porch for a smoke. He had had enough wine to loosen up and I got a better insight into the man.

It's a typical marriage for any part of the world. He is a nice, docile guy who has learned over the course of forty-seven years that it is prudent to do things his wife's way. In that he is a quicker study than I am. He keeps his head low, doesn't often offer his opinion, and drinks more than she would like as he retreats to a comfortable chair with a book.

I wish the children had known their other grandparents, now two decades gone. And I wish my parents had had the chance to meet Oksana. She is not the woman that my mother would have chosen for me. My mother was an editor at the University of California and would have favored my marrying an academic or professional woman. She was zero for three when it comes to academics, and had only one hit with regard to professional. As it turns out, doing equal justice to children and a career is a difficult balancing act. It doesn't bother me whatsoever that Oksana is only starting her career as an early childhood music teacher. She gives herself fully to the children.

I wryly note that my mother didn't greatly prize feminine good looks and graces. Despite the fact that I professed to be looking for the woman of my mother's dreams, whenever I found such a woman she seemed to be uninterested in me. Of those who were – some among your readers – none were academic, but most have been amply endowed with charm and comeliness. I have to say I enjoyed it. And I marvel at the fact that Oksana looks just as good at forty as the day I met her.

What's the secret? You American ladies of my generation generally took pride in your appearance, and we of course took pride in being with women who cared about appearance. It seems the whole world was like that when I was young. Lilliane Pagnet, whom I met on the beach at Nice, told me that a Frenchwoman could wrap herself in a rag and still look classy. Vivianna Borda made a similar claim for Argentine women. They were right.

The paradigm shifted. During the three years I was single in Germany I had only one love, a beautiful slender Hungarian woman. The German women simply did not seem interested in making themselves attractive. My friend Mark Taylor, visiting from Berlin yesterday, assures me that it has not changed. Although I would not have been collected enough to articulate it thus at the time, when I returned to the United States in 1976 American women seemed to have adopted a similar outlook, one which has persisted until today. A recurrent theme in literature is old lechers hitting on their daughters' friends – like Averell Harriman did with Pamela. The sad fact of my life is that I found none of Naomi and Susy's friends attractive. Not sad for me – I wouldn't have acted on such an attraction in any case – but sad that the girls didn't have enough sense of femininity to try to make themselves appealing to men.

It will be twelve years Sunday since I first came to Ukraine. The weather was just as beautiful as today. The passing scene on Khreshetik Street is just as attractive. Some of the women go out of their way to dress for men's attention, but for the most part what you observe is simply women who take pride in how they present themselves. They dress modestly and appropriately, and walk and hold themselves like women. They depend on masculine instinct to do the rest. It seems a pretty solid wager, as Mark and I sat in the sidewalk café watching.

## **relevance.docx      09/01/2019 07:51 PM**

Our tremendous information advantage as Americans – if we use it!

Two thirds of the way through my eighth decade there are signs that I'm getting old. More and more people stand to give me their seats on the Metro. They have long since stopped asking me for fares on the bus – they look at my face and assume I ride free. As a foreigner I don't have that privilege, and I would gladly pay, but it is easier not to make a fuss and to save the 30¢.

Certain signs of aging are hard to ignore. This morning I bought 15 eggs at 25.50 hryvnya for ten. I did the arithmetic in my head and handed the guy ₪37.75. Wrong, he said. Another 50 kopeks. Ten years ago I didn't often make mistakes like that. Names come back to me is more slowly. I'll greet an acquaintance and stick out my hand, but his name won't come back to me until two minutes after I should have uttered it. I'll be rattling along in Russian and a word that I know well will simply fail me at an inconvenient time. Fortunately the pace of change hasn't accelerated over the last decade. Have other people started to notice? I know they will – I see it in others.

The sign that concerns me most is losing relevance. People no longer ask me to do things. They don't ask for my opinion. People used to solicit me more often to teach English, translate things, and offer advice. Why not? My peers are no longer doing things that could use my assistance. Younger people don't know me. Some may assume that is not worth the trouble. Why bother the old guy? He might have lost his edge in any case.

I started this blog as I dropped out of Facebook. There were not as many people interested in communicating. Those who were clung increasingly stubbornly to fixed political positions. They were often ones with which I disagree. Not a few either unfriended me or (apparently – Facebook doesn't tell me) ask that my posts not be presented to them.

Thank goodness the millennials I hang around with here don't differentiate much among distant generations. I'm an older guy, but whether forty or fifty years older is all the same to them. I am a unique personage in their worlds. An American who speaks their language. Somebody who witnessed the inception of commercial television and was an adult by the time of the sixties' revolutions of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Perhaps most significantly, a person who has exploited the incredible luck of being born into the English language by reading just about everything, becoming a top 500 Amazon reviewer.

I recently posted about the wide spectrum of political commentators whom I read. Three conversations with Ukrainian millennials over the past three days reinforced my conviction that I am extraordinarily lucky to have the access that I do.

Kate is the mother of one of Eddie's playmates. Sasha and Veronica are English teachers who belong to our Toastmasters club. Anna and Dasha are the mothers of kids Zoriana's age who study music with Oksana. They are all well-educated and do their best to stay well-informed. My observation is that they do not have the advantage of reading English fluently, and perhaps more important, belonging to groups that might discuss the reading in any case.

Kate is avidly curious about everything. It is interesting what her curiosity has uncovered and what it missed. She does not know about Kevin Spacey, Harvey Weinstein or even Jeffrey Epstein. What she knows about Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton comes from Ukrainian news sources. She knows that Trump is a buffoon. She did not know that Hillary is tainted by corruption. She, like most Ukrainians, is oblivious to and unperturbed by the thought that the Internet companies they adore such as Facebook, Google and Twitter might be spying on them and propagandizing them.

Mark Twain observed "If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're misinformed." That is without a doubt true here in Ukraine. Ten years ago I worked for Jewish News One, an English language television start up, as an announcer. It was owned by Vadim Rabinowitz. Igor Kholomoisky, his partner in founding the European Jewish Union, had a strong interest. Working out of offices associated with their many Ukrainian language outlets gave us an appreciation of their power.

Four years ago I attended the Lions Club for a year as I contemplated membership. Writers and editors from the Kyiv Post are well represented there. There was an astounding uniformity of opinion. I was hooted down when I joked to the effect that Donald Trump's words captured by Billy Bush were not as offensive as actual acts committed by Bill Clinton. Such heresy would not be tolerated! It is coming out now that the Ukrainian political elite, controllers of the press, practiced some of their standard unsavory tricks one behalf of candidate Clinton.

"Free press" here is freely controlled by a small group of oligarch owners and generally adopts storylines set by Western media on themes such as migration, feminism, LGBT issues, climate change, banking and the economy. There are no alternative outlets to offer Ukraine – and the many other minor-language countries of Europe - the diversity of opinion available to Americans. Unless they delve into English language sites, Ukrainians remain captives of the mainstream.

Kate's take on Elon Musk is telling. Everybody she knows adores him. She is familiar with Tesla, Solar City, Space X, and the Boring Company - the Los Angeles hyperloop. Until we talked, she was not familiar with the Tesla problems of autopilot accidents, spontaneous fires and quality control. She did not know what



short-sellers are, and that shorting Tesla has been one of the best investments of 2019. She did not know that Solar City has had trouble with spontaneous fires or that it faces strong competition. She did not know about the progress (or lack thereof) Musk has made with the hyperloop.

Neither did she know about Musk's predilection for talking himself into trouble. She did not know about Vern Unsworth and the rescue of the Thai boys trapped in a cave, or that Musk had repeatedly and baselessly called him a pedophile, and that Musk is losing the resultant defamation lawsuit. She did not know about his dark predictions about artificial intelligence, and countervailing opinions such as that of Alibaba's Jack Ma.

Kate is not alone. Yurii Karabach, a longtime friend who is in the picture taken at Oksana's birthday party, is also an Elon Musk fan. The take-home point for me is that it is difficult for a Ukrainian, however intelligent and diligent, to be well informed about world affairs. Even we who speak English have a devil of a hard time sorting out truth from error and deliberate propaganda. In countries where the media market is much smaller and control even more tightly in the hands of oligarchs it is extremely easy to not know what you think you know.

Saturday's discussion with Sasha, Veronica and Igor was surprisingly well informed. These women teach English – obviously they read it fairly proficiently – and they have an interest in politics. They were quite familiar with the high level of immigration into America and Western Europe. I told them of my contact with Turkish guestworkers in Germany 45 years ago. They already knew about the Turks' participation in the German economic miracle (Wirtschaftswunder) of the 1960s. They and I had a somewhat different takes on the recent immigrants. Their opinion was that Germany and Scandinavia had an ongoing need for imported labor. From what I read, the more recent immigrants have high levels of unemployment, due somewhat at least to restrictive labor laws. More than that, the immigrants are there as much for the handouts as they are for the prospect of work. In that the situation in Europe differs from America. Whatever else may be said for the influx of immigrants to the United States, I offered, the first generation does appear quite willing to work. However it is not my opinion which I wish to report, but rather Ukrainians' familiarity with the situation.

All I talked to were unfamiliar with the programs being advocated by contenders for the Democratic nomination in United States. I briefly described the promises of universal healthcare, universal free college education, guaranteed jobs and so on. These people don't have personal memories – they were either very young or unborn when the Soviet Union fell. But they had heard about it. They shared personal stories about their grandparents' and great grandparents' generations. A few died in the gulag. Those who had been transferred to Germany to work as slave labor – Ostarbeiter – were considered upon their return to be tainted, unable to join organizations such as the KGB and excluded from certain universities and workplaces. This had been true of my wife Oksana's grandmother as well. Oleg spoke matter-of-factly about a man in his village who had two wives. It was agreeable to everybody concerned – there were simply not enough men to go around. At the end of the day, they knew better than to believe in the promises of socialism or communism. "Free stuff" was a promise that had been offered to their ancestors and had worked out badly. No thanks.

Sasha and Veronica spoke openly about the differences among the races that are coming together through mass immigration into Western Europe. When I told them that uttering opinions such as theirs would create consternation in the West, they accepted my opinion as confirming what they had heard before.

I don't know how they formed their views on human evolution and diversity. I haven't seen much in print one way or the other here in Ukraine. Everyone who has traveled to Western Europe and seen Paris, London or Berlin knows that immigration is an issue. Sasha mentioned that her Russian relatives are concerned about Muslim immigration into Moscow. The issues seem to be similar to those in the West – there are not enough ethnic Russian babies being born, and the Muslims are moving to fill the vacuum. Although it begs the question for Ukraine, with a low birth rate and a fairly high level of emigration, the conversation didn't go there. Having witnessed what it has done elsewhere, nobody endorses third-world immigration.

Dasha and Anna, the parents of the toddlers who study music with Zoriana somehow wind up having dinner with us every other week. We have covered a lot of this ground in the past. Yesterday's topic was what's happening in the economies of Ukraine and the West.

Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelinski, is receiving unstinting praise from the mainstream, both in Ukraine and the West. These women, and the others previously mentioned, maintain what seems to me to be a prudent level of skepticism. Skeptical first because Zelinski was brought to power by Kholomoisky, the premier Jewish oligarch, and secondly because despite his control of the legislature there are great many vested interests who will be threatened by any reform. This is still the honeymoon phase.

All of these young people are more scared of the Russians than I am. They are afraid that Zelinski will sell the country out in order to achieve a simulacrum of peace. Putin did himself and Russia incalculable long-term damage for the short-term rush he got out of annexing Crimea and fomenting the rebellions in the Donbas. Nobody here accepts any of the Russian propaganda to the effect that the people of Crimea and Donbas wanted this. There are simply too many refugees here, and too many ties to family back in those areas. Life is worse, and it is Russia's fault.

I would like to be a bit of a Pollyanna, saying that Putin found out the hard way that there is no residual love for Russia here in Ukraine. It would be absolute folly for him to attempt to bite off more of Ukraine, especially now that the country has a functioning government and an effective military. Putin's best move in my opinion would be to defuse the situation and attempt to persuade Ukraine that it does not need NATO to protect it, and that Western decadence is antithetical to their Orthodox conservatisms. I observe that I am somewhat isolated in this opinion. Nobody has a recipe for peace, but even less do they want to trust the Russians.

Graham

## **little girls.docx      09/05/2019 12:07 PM**

Little boys and little girls

Oksana and I had the kids to ourselves the last five weeks. Our babysitter Anna is taking an extended medical leave, which every week gets pushed out again.

School is back in session as of this week, so Eddie is occupied during the day. Oksana and my longtime deal is that I take the kids from the time they wake up until 9:00 in the summer, or 8:45 when school is in session and I have to leave with Eddie. I like being busy, and busy it is.

I take off Zoriana's diaper, clean her up after she poops, and get her dressed. I feed her oatmeal and agree with Eddie what he's going to have for breakfast. This morning he made banana fritters out of some overripe bananas that my market lady Tanya had sold me at a good price.

There was a minor crisis as we could not find the baking soda to make the banana fritters. Oksana believes it is essential to clean bathtubs with baking soda prior to using them, and there are three bathtubs in the house. Such sanitary concerns take precedence over cooking. I looked everywhere before finding a box in a dark corner of the upstairs bathroom. I exclaimed "Nobody ever puts things back where they belong in this house!" which is close enough to true that I say it often. To no avail, of course.

The deal is that I supervise Eddie vacuuming the kitchen floor. This morning, between the banana fritters and collecting everything he needs for an overnight tonight at school, I didn't hold his feet to the fire. Mother, getting up at 8:30, did. While I would have handled it a bit differently, I certainly could not agree with Eddie that he was being abused, especially after he had twice ignored my request to clean up the mess he made with banana fritters.

Of things like this is family life made. Zoriana bothered Eddie constantly as he was trying to make the banana fritters, then she lay down in a halfhearted tantrum when I grabbed a foot and dragged her away. An instant later she was sitting on my lap laughing as we waited for Eddie to finish them. Although Zoriana had already had a healthy breakfast of oatmeal and bananas, she found room for the delicious banana fritters.

Eddie and I biked the two thirds of a mile to school. Though he should be getting stronger and faster, it seems that he drags tail more and more every day. He knows the way well. I simply set a pace that he could easily match – no more than about 8 miles an hour – and refused to look back. When I got to the school he was half a block behind me. It turns out to be a bit more comfortable this way. When I let him lead, he tends to slow down abruptly, risking getting run over – hasn't happened yet – and getting yelled at, which has.

On a positive note, I told Eddie that I had entered the Army fat and out of shape at the age of 21. After eight weeks of basic training I could run a mile in Army clothes. More significantly, they had all of the trainees navigate a horizontal ladder that stood in the line to the mess hall. When I first got there I couldn't make more than about two rungs. At the end of eight weeks I could make it clear to the end – 10 or 12 rungs – and back again.

It turns out that Oksana had a horizontal ladder built into the ceiling of the upstairs common room. I challenged Eddie to give it a try. With me standing underneath, he made three rungs on his first try, slipping his foot into a support halfway through. Next day he made two rungs without support. And last night – five! I'm sure that's better than I could have done it seven, and I told him so. I am optimistic that this will turn out well.

These anecdotes lead to my renewed observation that little girls are quite different than little boys, and their relationship with their father is different than with their mother. I had made these observations as my first two daughters passed this age, in those antediluvian days when a man could comment on such observations without risking a social catastrophe.

I called Naomi and especially Suzy my "bat babies." Little girls emit amazingly powerful high-pitched screams when they are upset about some little thing. Little boys will yell, of course, and squirm and try to get away. Little girls are dead set on letting the world know about the injustice and inviting white knights to ride to their rescue. Zoriana is exactly the same.

She is a cunning little rascal. She understands all three languages pretty well. If I ask her to pick up a sock off the floor, get her potty from the bathroom or throw away an apple core, whether in English or Russian, she invariably understands what I mean. If I ask her to do something she doesn't want to do, I get the scream. Not as much, however, as mother. She is also well enough acquainted with the personalities to know that my nervous system is not very well tuned to react to little girls' manipulations. Women cannot stand to hear such screams, a fact which Zoriana exploits to the fullest.

Little girls love clothes. She will go to this closet and try on every piece she can reach – the ones on the bottom. Before we swapped Eddie's Hawaiian shirts to the top bar, she would try those on as well. It has to be something genetic. Oksana is not whatsoever a clothes horse. Zoriana has no example of anybody spending hours trying on different outfits.

Anna's absence left Oksana putting Zoriana down at night and for her nap. Zoriana is a restless sleeper and Oksana constantly complained that she was awake all night. Fine – us older people don't sleep very well anyhow, so she keeps me awake it's no loss. I have been putting her to bed. It entails a half hour of play before she goes to sleep. She crawls around under the big quilt like a mole. She climbs up on top of me and bounces. She fiddles around with my ears until I quietly remove her hands. And, rather than sleep in the crib next to the bed, she will often snuggle next to me.

She follows me to the bathroom when I get up in the morning, extremely attentive to male rituals such as shaving. I do not recall my sons being quite so attuned. Their focus has been more on practical matters, like getting daddy to read a story, play a game or such.

I am sure that gender differences in the behavior of two-year-olds would be a rich field for study. I'm equally sure that a grant proposal for same would not find funding in today's academic environment. To any brave researcher wanting advice on how to operationalize measurements of the differences, I offer my assistance.

Apropos of the differences mentioned here between Oksana and me, I include an Ogden Nash poem I remember from childhood. You have to have a sense of humor.

Graham

*I Do, I Will, I Have*

How wise I am to have instructed the butler to instruct the first footman

to instruct the second footman to instruct the doorman to order my

carriage;

I am about to volunteer a definition of marriage.

Just as I know that there are two Hagens, Walter and Copen,

I know that marriage is a legal and religious alliance entered into by a

man who can't sleep with the window shut and a woman who can't

sleep with the window open.

Moreover, just as I am unsure of the difference between flora and fauna

and flotsam and jetsam,

I am quite sure that marriage is the alliance of two people one of whom

never remembers birthdays and the other never forgets,

And he refuses to believe there is a leak in the water pipe or the gas pipe

and she is convinced she is about to asphyxiate or drown,

And she says Quick get up and get my hairbrushes off the windowsill,

it's raining in, and he replies Oh they're all right, it's only raining

straight down.

That is why marriage is so much more interesting than divorce,

Because it's the only known example of the happy meeting of the

immovable object and the irresistible force.

So I hope husbands and wives will continue to debate and combat over

everything debatable and combatable,

Because I believe a little incompatibility is the spice of life, particularly if

he has income and she is patable.

**Vasil Cherepushko speech 1.docx      09/09/2019 09:53 PM**

**At yesterday's meeting we broke all three Toastmasters taboos: politics, religion and sex**

A former member who had swept just about every speech contest he entered when he was with us told about his experience over the past year and a half with clubs in Accra, Ghana. His description of effusive and grandiose gestures of hospitality and welcome, the seamless integration of religiosity and begging, and the way his small and slight physique was subsumed into the brood of large, laughing and full-bodied African ladies was funny. That was his intent.

It reminded me of the week I had spent in Haiti with the Episcopal Church. His speech was no more than simply descriptive – he offered no judgments whatsoever – but one can easily imagine listeners for whom an accurate description of reality would be construed as deprecating. At the conclusion of this speech, we had almost touched two of the third rails of politics and religion. Sex remained.

Vasyl covered sex. He is a frequent speaker, but he revealed an entirely new side of himself. He is a university student, a bit of a nerd, good in math and science and extremely fluent in English. A woman named Maia had invited herself over to study with him. He questioned why she would do that – spend an hour each way for a one hour study date. She slowly opened the kimono – figuratively and then increasingly literally. What she really wanted was Vasyl himself.

The description of the moral dilemma a man feels under such circumstances was excruciatingly close to home. On the one hand society and all of your friends would tell



you to go for it. But yet, but yet you know it is wrong. However, you might find it difficult to articulate why it is wrong.

We are more than animals. We are endowed with sex for more than mere recreation. Vasyl has a sense of what he wants to do with his life, and an encounter like this would be inconsistent with his greater vision for himself. He found a pretext, something urgent that he had previously scheduled following the study date, and let the young lady go.

Sexual mores have vacillated radically since my youth. My behavior swung moderately in the directions of the changing mores. My beliefs echoed these behavioral changes more moderately still, and always with reservations. There are signs that things are swinging back. Vasyl's speech was a straw in the wind.

Among you readers are people who have known me at every stage of my life. From public school, where the notion that some girls "did it" was only whispered, to college as they abandoned *in loco parentis* at the beginning of the sexual revolution, to the fleshpots of Asia during the war, to the reign of feminism in Germany and Washington, culminating with my grad school career at the University of Maryland 2004-2006, and then my days of courtship and marriage here. It has been quite a ride.

I am happy to say that I am back where I belong. A happy prisoner of religion, traditional values and marriage.

It is gratifying to see others coming to the same realizations as Vasyl and I. I am attaching a somewhat lengthy philosophical piece on the subject by Christopher DeGroot that showed up this week. Several members of the manosphere have come around. Daryush Valizadeh (Roosh V) has gone from writing a series of books on the art of seduction – I first encountered him when I reviewed "Bang Ukraine" eight years ago – to leading an almost monastic life and advocating marriage. The odd thing is that the establishment could handle his former self. Now that he is telling uncomfortable truths, he has become a pariah. Banned by Amazon - I'll send the review if you ask.

We have even seen a couple of bloggers at our club. First, Kyle Trouble – search on that name – is a conventional manosphere blogger. Matt Coast is a more significant figure on YouTube, with a following in the hundreds of thousands. He lives in Kyiv for the obvious reasons: freedom of thought, speech and travel, and beautiful women. Matt's YouTube channel is dedicated to giving women advice on relationships. The advice he dispenses – what women want – seems pretty traditional. It echoes "The Rules," a book I recommended (absolutely in vain) to my daughters 20 years ago. Matt articulated a couple of observations worth sharing.

First, after a woman has had a certain number of lovers – he puts the number about eight – she becomes blasé, not that excited about any single man and not optimistic about the prospects of happiness. And not interested in being faithful. This would echo "The Rules," the DeGroot article attached, and the common sense of my childhood.

Matt's second observation is that a woman sizes up a man within the first few minutes and pigeonholes him as a player or a potential husband. The man who is interested in action had better come off as a player. They will use and discard each other quickly. A woman will be more careful choosing a prospective husband.

That has been the experience of my lifetime. I am the quintessential marrying type. By temperament I want one woman, and I believe in a commitment to that woman. I am a homebody who likes to cook and doesn't mind ironing, dishwashing and taking care of children. I'm not particularly quick or witty, but I exude steadiness and intelligence. Not surprisingly, during the sexual revolution, which was mostly about building careers and playing, and not much about marriage and kids, I was fairly widely ignored. The feeling I have here in Ukraine is that most of my wife's friends are somewhat envious of her situation, and might even be open to entertaining a much older man should a good prospect appear.

The thing that distinguishes me from the aforementioned manosphere figures is that I walk the walk. They have stayed single. Instead of just expounding on what ought to be, I have formed the family. Instead of dispensing my advice to the world, I spend my time raising two kids to the best of my ability. I have passed on my genome, but passing on my culture and beliefs as a lifetime job. It is to that that I am dedicated.

I am gratified to know a number of young couples in Toastmasters and elsewhere in this society who share my belief in relationships, marriage and children. I am somewhat

disappointed that many of the most promising are taking their time starting their families. They simply won't be able to have more than one or two – not enough on average to sustain the culture. The good news is that they come from religious families and for the most part maintain the outward observances. They believe in Ukrainian culture and want to raise their children traditionally. The schools likewise support traditional values. To my knowledge there is no sex education. That is the province of the family. To see a diametrically opposite approach back where I used to live, search the net on "MCPS LBGTQ SCHOOLS."

I trust that Vasyl's intelligence, loyalty and values will appeal enough to one of our Toastmasters ladies that she makes a point of being places where he might notice her. That is how it was done when I was a kid. That's how Oksana did it, and I think it remains the best approach.

Graham

**songs.docx      09/14/2019 09:24 AM**

Oksana's English and music classes drive our schedule these days. Monday and Wednesday she has first-graders for music at 9:00, then third and fourth graders for English followed by music from 1:00 to 4:00.

Oksana is using songs as a vehicle for teaching English. The school is using her even though it is clear that it would be impossible to select songs consistent with the vocabulary and grammar expectations of the year-end testing regime. I don't think it matters that much – vocabulary and pronunciation are the important things in learning language, and even which vocabulary it is not vitally important. If they enjoy the songs they will learn what they mean.

We are looking for songs that the kids would like. Oksana favors songs that use body movement such as the Hokey Pokey or The Grand Old Duke of York. I propose songs that kids will find funny, like "Happy Birthday to you. You belong in a zoo," "I stuck my head in a little skunk's hole," and one of Eddie's favorites, "Nobody likes me everybody hates me I'm going out and eat worms." I am delighted at the number of childhood songs I still remember. Just this morning I wrote down 50 titles, and I am sure that at least that many again passed through my head before I got systematic about it.

I remember the songs because we learned them in school and from other kids. There were also a lot that were part of the popular culture. John Fitzgerald was a great fan of Burl Ives, who recorded lots of songs suitable for kids.

It looks like our babysitter may not return from her medical leave. She may also have concluded that this job is simply not worth an hour and a half's commute. The upshot is that I have been spending a lot of time with Zoriana.

I have always had the kids first thing in the morning, until I have to take Eddie to school. That is time to get Zoriana to the potty, cleaned up, dressed and fed. Time to get Eddie organized for school. Almost, that is – I am reminded almost daily of something I forgot.

The past couple of months I have also been putting Zoriana down for her nap and to bed at night. It is easier to wean her if Oksana is simply not there. Also, Oksana has long complained that if Zoriana wakes her up in the middle of night she cannot get back to sleep. I don't have that problem.

I often take Zoriana for walks during the day. When we have a destination I will give in to her demand that I put her on my shoulders half the time. However, if our only objective is to be out of the house I let her meander at her own pace and tell her no, I'm not going to pick her up. Our destination is often a playground, with the usual equipment – slides, swings, climbing frames, merry-go-round's and sandboxes. Inasmuch as these things keep her amused for half an hour at most, it is actually advantageous that it takes a half-hour walk to reach them. She is never bored ambling along the street, picking and eating grapes, feeding the goats, watching the trains, talking to the dogs and teasing the cats.

Affluence has changed our neighborhood in the eight years since we bought the property. There are more and more Lexuses, Range Rover's and big Korean sedans going through our narrow (10 feet wide) streets. Everywhere in the world there is a kind of tension between drivers and cyclists and pedestrians. We

would like drivers to give us more room and to slow down, whereas they, on their way to do important things, wish that we would find other places to be idle. They swish by us at 25 mph, the rearview mirrors sometimes no more than a foot away.

The small increase in danger concerns me less than the lack of community. When more of our neighbors walked to the bus, we would invariably greet them on the street. We all knew each other. Now I recognize the cars as they go by but I have no idea who the people in them are. Those cars will park in garages attached to very nice homes, homes which their atomized lives make us unlikely ever to enter. This is precisely what I did not like about our air-conditioned castle in Bethesda, Maryland. I do not remember that we ever shared a meal with our neighbors. We didn't know the names of more than half a dozen of them. Since nobody walked anywhere, we rarely had occasion to talk to them. Now it's happening here.

Although I would not want to live in the United States again, this is one area in which I think the United States may be improving somewhat. Since the advent of Uber and Lyft more and more Americans are living without cars. I project – I hope – that they are getting reacquainted with their neighborhoods.

If I have grocery shopping to do I invariably take Zoriana with me. The bus and the market are interesting, and it keeps her occupied while Oksana is preparing for or delivering lessons. As I have mentioned before, such markets seem to be a dying institution. Many of the stalls remain unrented. The proprietors are almost all middle-age or older. The customers are not so young either. Our friends mostly have cars, and mostly shop at the European owned supermarket chains analogous to Safeway or A&P. Whereas I am quite sensitive to prices of such things as milk and bread, they simply pay the impersonal, interchangeable cashier whatever the computerized check out demands and get on with their busy lives. I expect Zoriana will look back on the Livoberezhna market with the same nostalgia that I look back to the trips I made with my mother on the Key System trolley to Oakland's Tenth Street market.

The weather has been beautiful this month. The climate catastrophists among you will thrill to schadenfreude when I report that we have above average temperatures. Yes! September has been warm. We have even had a couple of 80° days. Keeping it in perspective, June and February were also above average. However, I must dampen your sunny spirit of gloom by repeating that the other eight months since November were indeed below average. Trading 90° days in August for 80° days in September strikes me as a good bargain. I've been swimming every day.

**older father 09/19/2019 06:49 PM**

Pointing out the risks involved in men's siring children later in life is a constant theme in the anti-fertility drumbeat. The thesis has been that the world has enough people already and we should avoid having children unless we are ideally positioned to do so. Older men, so the thesis goes, are not.

The fact is that developed societies throughout the world are not reproducing themselves. This includes the most numerous and most highly intelligent, the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, and European peoples on that continent and its former colonies.

A significant number of older men become available for marriage. Though some are widowed, the more common path is divorce. Women are more often drawn by progressives' emotional appeals while the husband retains a pragmatic, traditional view of the world. Or, she becomes wrapped up in a career and no longer needs him. One way or another, whether they sought the freedom or not, older men find themselves no longer bound by obligations to former wives, children and grandchildren. They are free to start over.

Having children is in the interest of the human societies – not always identical with their governments – and of the governments themselves. Children of our peoples will enjoy better prospects among others like themselves than among a mix of other ethnicities. Governments, whoever their citizens may be, have a constant need for new generations of taxpayers and soldiers.

The thesis that older men should not have children is misguided and detrimental to both society and government. Identitarians, the people that are making the strongest case for increasing the fertility of their own groups, should look at older men as natural allies and recruit us to the cause. Older men identify more strongly with the societies into which they were born. They retain traditional values. They have demonstrated by their survival and success that they have "the right stuff," worth passing on to a new generation. And, they generally have the material resources to support children. If they are denied the opportunity to pass their culture down to their grandchildren, they should consider simply starting a new family.

Ignoring this resource, encouraging older men to fritter away the last few decades of life traveling and playing golf is precisely the wrong thing to do. They should be standing shoulder to shoulder with young men who are re-finding their identities as both work to raise strong families to perpetuate their heritage.

## Genetics

Genetics lie at the core of most arguments against older fatherhood. The argument bears examination. Although the bulk of the deleterious mutations that appear in every person's genome are inherited from their parents, older men are more inclined to have de novo mutations to their genome - those that appear within the lifetime of the carrier.

According to Alexey Kondrashov, author of *Crumbling Genome*, most mutations arise spontaneously, attributable to neither radiation nor chemical interference. It is simply a risk involved in the process of cell division and replication. Different organisms experience different rates of mutation. In human beings it is approximately 100 de novo mutations per generation, of which 10 are deleterious. These originate in the parents and are passed to children through their gametes. To keep the mutation load on a genome constant, the same number of mutations has to be eliminated in each generation – dropped from the genome, not passed along - as appear de novo. Kondrashov and others note that natural selection has been less operative among humans since the Industrial Revolution. Since so few die young, and society supports the children born to our worst specimens, deleterious mutations have been accumulating.

The germline cells in the mother do not duplicate themselves after her birth. The father's germline, on the other hand, continues to divide throughout his life. The number of mutations is a function of the number divisions, which is a function of his age. As a rough approximation, a child will receive a number of de novo mutations equal to about half the father's age. Most mutations being neutral, this means that the load of deleterious de novo mutations will range between 10 and 30, depending primarily on paternal age.

This arithmetic would favor younger fathers. On the positive side, one could also expect that a disproportionate number of beneficial mutations would also come from older fathers. But this is hard to measure. Beneficial mutations are more rare. Moreover, they are usually associated with complex traits, whereas the detrimental ones are frequently associated with a single gene.

Although de novo mutations tend to be more deleterious, their number is small alongside the thousand or so inherited mutations. Kondrashov presents a table showing that in the genome of a newborn, de novo mutations make up 10% of the most deleterious mutations (reducing fitness by 10% or more), 1% of the next tranche, those which reduce fitness by 1% or more, and 0.1% and .001% of the lesser orders of magnitude of deleterious mutations. However old a father may be, he can take comfort in the fact that a significantly greater percentage of his children's load of deleterious genes will be ones he and his wife inherited rather than de novo. The increase in their risk of deleterious mutations would appear to be no more than about 25%. If the other components of his genome gives them a 25% edge in terms of charm, good looks and intelligence it would seem to be a fair trade.

### Genetic advantages of an older father

An older guy who is available for marriage probably inherited fewer deleterious mutations than most. He obviously didn't inherit anything that would kill him young. Heart disease is about 30% heritable. The older guy was fit enough to marry probably doesn't have it. Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are about 50% heritable. The older husband who doesn't yet show any signs of dementia is less likely to carry those mutations. An older guy on the marriage market is less likely to carry genetic mutations favoring bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or other conditions that reveal themselves over the course of adult life.

The older fellow who is available for marriage it is probably genetically blessed with of the personality traits that make a person successful in life. On the OCEAN scale, he is more likely to be open, conscientious, and agreeable and less likely to be neurotic. He may also be a bit less extroverted – statistics show that extroverts are prone to take both physical and health risks that cause them to die a little bit younger.

An older man who is available for marriage has almost certainly been successful in life, and intelligence is a major predictor of success. Intelligence is about 80% heritable. As an aside, the other 20% is not due to environment – it simply can't be explained. A woman cannot control her own contribution to the child's intelligence – it is baked into her genome. But if the older partner she attracts has a 30 IQ point advantage over a younger suitor, she can reasonably expect her children will be correspondingly smarter. 15 points of IQ is a huge advantage in life, the difference between a teacher and a professor, or a paralegal and a lawyer.



Part of the argument about de novo mutations is that since the rates of childhood mortality fell from about 50% at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution to today's 1%, an increasing number of deleterious genes are retained in each successive generation. They are not being flushed out of the gene pool by failures to reproduce. The older father is one or two generations less removed from the Industrial Revolution. If one were to assume that more deleterious mutations would have accrued to his father and grandfather and been passed down to him had he been born later than would have been lost, his overall load of deleterious mutations would not be increased at all.

Those of his de novo mutations that are deadly would have been deadly as well in the intervening generations. He would not have received them. However, those that are survivable, such as those contributing to a disagreeable personality, might not be flushed out. Modern society supports and even pampers individuals with antisocial personalities, whereas prior to the Industrial Revolution if you did not have what it took to make a living and attract a mate you may well have perished childless. Moreover, your children would have died rather than being saved by the state as is the case today.

In the end, though the older father will have somewhat more deleterious mutations, his genome will probably be superior as well in many particulars to that of a young woman's younger potential partner.

### What do we want out of life?

Taking the genetic arguments as a background, it is worth looking at the broader context. The happiness of the individual is the focus of just about every argument concerning parenthood in general, and older fatherhood in particular. But there are broader concerns too. The points of view to take into consideration include:

- The older man's point of view
- The younger wife's point of view
- The children's point of view
- The state's point of view. The political entity needs a self-renewing population to perpetuate itself.
- Society's point of view. Society has an interest in perpetuating itself – the culture, values, traditions and so on. That interest may be at variance with those of the individuals and the state. Big multi-ethnic states can embrace many societies, often with conflicting interests.

What do people want out of life? What are a person's personal goals in life? These apply about equally to people of any age. They are cast here in terms of the potential older father, as he is presumably the one who would initiate the marriage. "Pursuit of happiness" is written into the United States Constitution. In today's interpretation, it most often means the pursuit of pleasure. Will children make a man happy?

Children take time and money away from the pursuit of commercialized happiness. They leave a man less time to pursue tennis or golf. It is harder to slip away to a movie. He can find time to watch a video at home only by ignoring the kids for a while – maybe parking them in front of a video instead of talking to them,

playing with them, or helping them learn to cook, clean, and study. A man whose concept of "happiness" is defined by skiing, surfing or attending rock concerts will find that children are antithetical to happiness.

Personal consumption is a major element in many men's concept of happiness. They want the latest iGadgets, imported wines and prestigious Swiss watches. Children are expensive – all but the wealthiest men have to make trade-offs. Children themselves can be a vehicle for conspicuous consumption. Sending them to expensive private schools, exclusive camps, and Ivy League universities burns money almost as effectively as buying yachts.

It is impossible to measure the absolute level of pleasure that comes from sex. Nonetheless, it is obviously a scarce commodity. The more desirable the partner, and the more frequent, the rarer it is. To a real horn dog like Bill Clinton or Harvey Weinstein, a marriage – even more one with children – is an impediment to sexual gratification. The man raising children within a marriage can be reasonably sure of getting sex every now and again, but he can be equally sure that he will not get all he wants. The man who equates happiness with frequent sex is better off being a wealthy bachelor, frequenting prostitutes, using Tinder, or being homosexual. Just by the way, an older husband, presumably with a somewhat reduced libido, has is likely to be better matched to his wife in this regard.

Happiness used to mean satisfaction rather than mere, fleeting pleasure. It is the satisfaction that comes from status in the community. The respect that comes from being successful in one's undertakings, having a successful marriage, and being a contributing member to the church and other organizations.

Responsibility for a family gives a man a reason for living. The family provides emotional support. A lifelong partnership gives a man an anchor in life, a sense of stability. Happiness comes with satisfying ones felt obligation to God and/or the church, one's clan, one's tribe and one's nation. For a patriot, serving his country brings happiness.

#### Family financial stability

For the past half-century the government has been a better bet for long-term financial security than children. For one thing, at the present, fewer children are doing materially better than their parents. They are not in a position to take care of them. For another, the government has shouldered aside children, private charity and all else who might enter the business of caring for the elderly. It is government turf. Raising children in the hopes that they will care for you and your declining years has been a losing proposition.

It is increasingly clear that there is no way that government can fulfill the promises that have been made with regard to health care and pensions. Both government and private pensions are underwater. In an atmosphere of 0% interest, they simply cannot earn the actuarially projected 7% annual return. Although few people are yet talking about it, it appears that there will be no alternative to supporting yourself or having your children support you in old age. Health care is worse. Just as more people are attaining a ripe age, there are fewer doctors, and fewer children with the skills needed to become doctors. Government control of the healthcare sector and healthcare funding has made it an unattractive field for doctors to enter. They have also made healthcare insurance and healthcare itself extremely expensive. As usual, the baby boomers are in better shape than the succeeding generations.

### Community involvement

Being married provides a man with a secure niche in society. Other people know how to peg him: married with children. He is automatically included in other social groupings – the PTA, parents who carpool, babysitting cooperatives, swimming pool parents and the like.

These connections keep an older father involved in society. It is easy for a retiree to let go of life bit by bit as his family obligations are satisfied and no new ones appear. A late life family poses real obligations and compels a man to remain connected with society.

### Why would an older man start a family?

Having children doesn't offer any material benefit for the older prospective father. If he is already old, he won't last long enough for children to care for him in his dotage. Having a younger wife will confer status whether or not she bears him children. The tax and welfare benefits of having children are laughably small. In the final analysis, the only motivation is to have children for their own sake. To follow some higher calling, such as an obligation to ancestors, society or the church.

### Why do women have children in the first place?

All of Western society has been drenched for decades with anti-fertility messages. There are too many people on earth, it is claimed. Westerners, because of our material consumption, are the most damaging. Our societies are inherently unfair to women, racial minorities and sexual minorities among others, and should simply be allowed to die out. Add to that the scare stories from women's magazines about the genetic risks of an older father.

The practical arguments against having children are parallel those for a man, only in a somewhat exaggerated way. A woman, being the primary caregiver, typically gives more of herself to a family than does her husband. She is the one who carries the child for nine months and gives it her breast for another two years. She enjoys the status of being a mother, however much that status is worth in the society in which she finds herself. Motherhood is more highly esteemed in less-developed countries than in today's West.

An advantage which is currently underrated, is the children will give her support later in life. Modern society offers a vast number of examples of women past their childbearing years who do not have the support of either a husband or children. Surveys find that they are just about as content as married women. They live longer than single men. How they will do when and if their promised pensions come up short is a good question.

In the final analysis, a woman will be inclined to have children for more or less the same reasons as a man: for their own sake. To follow some higher calling, such as an obligation to ancestors, society or the church.

## Why would a woman have children with an older man?

If a woman decides despite all argument to the contrary that she wants children, what are the advantages and disadvantages of an older man? The age of the mother is dictated by biology. A woman's fertility declines quickly after 35. If she is over 40, the couple will almost certainly seek medical help one way or another, and will probably stop at one child. It is asymmetric: he has three more decades of fertility than she.

In Western society a woman who has decided to dedicate her fertile years to having children, for whatever reasons, is in a privileged position with regard to mate selection. Particularly for intelligent and educated women, the siren call of careers has beguiled a majority of their potential competitors. A woman interested in children can choose a partner from more or less her own age up to the limits of male fertility – in his 70s at least. Given the wide range of options, why would she choose an older man?

### Financial resources

Raising a family takes money. A woman has an obvious interest in finding a man who can provide for her.

In choosing a younger man, a woman is betting on the come. He should be on an upward career trajectory. How high he will rise is uncertain. He may burn out – and prove to be an unsuitable provider. On the other hand, he may become spectacularly successful, pulled away from his wife and family and subjected to all kinds of temptations. With an older man, what you see is what you get. The drama has already played out.

Older men tend to have more money. This is especially true of older men looking for younger woman in the marriage market. They would not be looking unless they were successful. It is also a phenomenon somewhat specific to this generation. The baby boomers have been running society for more than forty years now, and they have stacked the deck in their own favor. The baby boomers are the richest generation in America's history, and the Western Europe's also. Younger men are simply not likely to have as much money.

Men already on pension are probably receiving fairly healthy ones. This is on top of the wealth that they have accumulated over a lifetime from appreciating houses and other assets. On the other hand, Gen X and especially millennial men have had a harder time scraping together the wherewithal for a down payment to benefit from the inflation in stocks and real estate. Moreover, they have been cheated out of their pensions – there will be nothing but a dry well for them. These arguments were not as applicable in previous epochs, and are unlikely to be applicable in the future. But at this writing, and 2019, they are highly pertinent.

### Maturity

People tend to become more stable and predictable as they get older. They know more about life, and they fall into habits that have proven successful. An older husband is less likely to make erratic decisions, such as changing careers, moving, or developing a newfound taste for drugs, alcohol or video games.

Arguments and stress are a part of every marriage. A mature man is more likely to clearly see his long-term self-interest. He will weight the long-term benefits of marriage more heavily than short-term concerns about his self-esteem.

A woman should enter marriage with the expectation that her partner will be there for the twenty years or so it takes to raise children. An older guy is a better bet. Actuarially, an older suitor in good health is very likely to survive another twenty years. Psychologically, he is more likely to remain the same person over that twenty year period.

#### Likelihood of fidelity

A woman would be unwise to bet on a man who is unlikely to settle down. A man's character becomes obvious by the time he is fifty. The majority will have come to the conclusion that marriage is pretty much the same deal with any woman, just as long as she is a reliable partner, and will not let his affections wander.

To return to a previous point, the primary reason an older man would want to marry a younger woman and have children is because he – wants children. Far and away the best way to succeed at having and rearing children is to remain in a monogamous marriage. Children in a stable marriage are more likely to succeed, and the man himself is far more likely to have more children with a single loving spouse than he is with whatever paramours he may find by stepping out.

#### Traditional values

The rate at which society changes has accelerated dramatically just over our lifetimes. We members of the silent generation grew up attending church, not cursing (very much, anyhow), believing in the Golden rule and that honesty was the best policy, and in the expectation that we would marry and stay married.

Our millennial children think we are hopelessly square. More than that, they slur us with epithets such as patriarchy, racist, bigot, homophobe and whatnot when we utter what was merely common sense when we were younger.

A woman might reflect that the family values with which an older man grew up are probably a better foundation for a family than the social justice notions that fill the minds of younger men.

#### Commitment to children

Convincing a much younger woman to have children is not an easy task. A man who does so has already shown his commitment to children. The chances are he already has some children. A prospective bride can talk with him about what worked and didn't, and how he will contribute to raising a new family. A man who has never married may not have given the subject too much thought, and except for a few who have had the chance to help raising younger siblings, not much experience either.

### Experience

Older men who are inclined to marry have probably done it before. They have experience changing diapers and babysitting. They probably have experience washing dishes and keeping house. It is a question of energy as much as anything else. If the guy has kept himself in shape, as a great many have in this day of bicycling and health clubs, he should be up to the task. A man who works to stay in shape can sustain himself pretty well until he reaches his seventies, but at some point age catches up with him. An offsetting benefit is that an older husband is likely to have more time to spend with his wife and family

### The Wife's Career

The odds are strong that he has already made whatever career progress he is going to. If he is a workaholic it will be evident – and he will probably not want to saddle himself with family responsibilities in any case. If he truly wants children, there is a strong chance he will be able to find time to spend with them.

If her husband has more time to spend with the children, his younger wife may find her own life easier. It will be more possible for her to pursue a career, if that is her pleasure, or to take music lessons, attend seminars and do other things strictly for herself.

### Predictable problems

An older man will have a different circle of friends and different interests than a younger wife. If both man and wife come from the same country and culture, the wife may face an expectation of socializing with people of his generation. If they come from different countries, as is often the case with modern May-December marriages, one of them will have to adapt to a whole new environment and make a new set of friends.

For an older man, the better option appears to be to rise to the challenge of learning a new language, making new friends, and adapting to new customs in his bride's country. If it is the woman who is doing the adaptation – moving to a wealthier Western country – there is a chance the new environment will change her perception of her husband. Not a few older men have seen their tender Asian or Eastern European brides adopt quite feminist attitudes and decide that marriage may not be exactly what they wanted.

### Advantages to children of having an older father

The children of an older father will see more of their father. They can spend more time with him. Spending time with father doesn't contribute to intelligence or the formation of personality. These things are mostly inherited. However, boys especially have better life outcomes if they grow up in intact families and have frequent contact with their fathers. When mother and father agree that developing a child's character is important, it appears that they are able to make a fair impact. Even in a therapeutic society dedicated to the proposition that every child should be "happy," parents who emphasize the virtues of responsibility and hard work seem to be rewarded.

## The good of society

A society absolutely needs children in order to perpetuate itself in the long term. This is true no matter how society is construed. A culture needs new generations to share everything that defines culture: customs, religious beliefs, history, dress and so on.

In absolute terms, older fathers will be a benefit for society. The more fathers, the more children. The more children, the better. The extent that older fathers sire more productive children – intelligence, personality, etc. – their children make more positive contributions than average.

If we look at society as a gene pool, the genetic argument applies just as it does for prospective mothers. An older father's increased load of de novo mutations is more than offset by the likelihood that he is perpetuating superior genetic material in the form of the DNA responsible for intelligence, longevity and positive personality traits.

The argument in favor of older fathers is even stronger with regard to their benefit to society. Whereas a prospective wife may decide that her personal success and happiness does not depend on having family, society absolutely depends on children for its renewal. The children of older fathers would be of benefit whether or not they were qualitatively superior to other children. It is the numbers that count.

However, they will be qualitatively superior. The children of older fathers will have higher average intelligence and more positive personality traits. They will have more of what it takes to succeed in a modern society.

## The good of government

A government needs soldiers and taxpayers to perpetuate itself. Government benefits from children, whoever the father may be. In the short term children require investment. They need education and services. The government would have to provide these in any case.

Older fathers do not impose any special costs on government. The pensions not go up. The costs imposed by children – educating them, child welfare services and like – are the same regardless of the father's age. An older father is more likely to be solvent – less likely to be dependent on welfare – than the average father. This financial benefit is certainly more than enough to offset the marginally greater likelihood that he will die and his family will join the welfare rolls.

## Conclusion

We of today's older generation are better positioned than any in history as far as education, material resources, and time. Although we do not have as much of a feeling for our family, tribe and nation as our ancestors did, we certainly have more than the generations following us. If there is going to be a revival of the sense of ethnic identity among people of our heritage, we should definitely be highly involved.

Many of us are already committed. Jared Taylor is committed to white identity, the simple notion that white people have as much of a right to a sense of identity as any other group.

Awareness alone, however, will not solve the problem. We need new generations of people like ourselves. We white people need to be raising white babies. Japanese need to be raising Japanese babies, and Chinese, Chinese. There is no danger in encouraging everybody. We need not even consider competition for resources. Given our shrinking numbers, the world certainly affords room for all of us.

Older men, ranging from Generation X back to us of the silent generation, can give our lives new meaning by reclaiming the identities that have been swept away by the progressive dogmas of the past half-century. We as a society, and as nations, reached the zenith of human accomplishment when we had pride in ourselves and our people, and retained the commitment that what we possessed was worth passing on. We can do it by spending time with our grandchildren, and when possible, by starting new families.

Resolving to start a new family, and finding a partner who shares the commitment, is not an easy task. But neither is it impossible. There are traditional women within our own countries, women who have retained religious commitment, who have not been swept up in the moral ambiguities of the age, who are looking for reliable partners. There remain countries such as those of Central and Eastern Europe where something approaching a majority of women of childbearing age would respond to the prospect of a traditional family. That is the challenge. Stop lamenting the unfortunate changes that have affected our countries and our society, and create a new generation to perpetuate all of the good that we inherited and cherish.

pleiotropy - multiple traits

**cather.docx      09/20/2019 06:38 PM**

Traditional values, traditional borscht

Oksana's mother Nadia is spending two weeks with us, taking care of Zoriana while Oksana prepares her English lessons and I have a little time to myself.

That's the theory. In practice I'm spending most of my time helping Oksana. She took on a huge task, developing a third grade English course from scratch starting just two weeks before school.



Our observation is that children like and remember songs better than mere text. Most of what she does involves MP3s [such as these](#). They also like picture books. There is a lot of rich material available. Here is a link to our video of [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#). It is a popular children's book – my grown kids had it 30 years ago.

Since I'm the one who understands the audio and video software, I am intimately involved. She is willing, but there is a lot to learn.

As I've written previously, I adopted my mother's philosophy of raising children. She had three kids running around as she ran a household including a couple of boarders while my father worked nights and attended the University of California during the day. She absolutely had to multitask.

Oksana is different. She doesn't like kids underfoot while she is cooking, cleaning house or preparing her lessons. It turns out her mother is the same way. She hates to be idle, but she doesn't want to divide her time between watching Zoriana and doing something else. This morning she asked me to watch Zoriana while she cooked the borscht. I said, "Sure." I hadn't paid close attention to what her cooking borscht involves.

For me it is pretty simple. I try to choose potatoes with clean enough skins they don't need to be peeled. I peel the carrots and beets. I cut the cabbage into large chunks. I carry it all over to the Kenwood Major Titanium food processor and let the slicing and dicing blades do the rest. After 15 minutes it goes in the pressure cooker; after another half hour it is done.

That is not the way Ukrainian women have done it since time immemorial. You can't argue with the results – hers always tastes delicious. Here is how she did it.

1. First, peel all the vegetables with a paring knife, not a potato peeler.
2. Next, slice the beets and cabbage very fine with the same small paring knife.
3. Next, sauté them in a frying pan.
4. Next, cut the potatoes and carrots very fine, again with a paring knife. Boil them half an hour.
5. Add the sautéed cabbage and beets and boil another hour.

Nadia was working constantly and efficiently, considering her technique, for an hour and 45 minutes before she could take Zoriana back as the borscht simmered.

It is a different philosophy of life, a slower philosophy. I reflected on a couple of books I read this year about pioneer life on the American prairie. I had assigned "Sarah Plain and Tall" to my middle school English students. Just this week I read Willa Cather's "O Pioneers." They are set respectively in Kansas and Nebraska around the turn of the twentieth century. The female protagonists in both works enjoyed work. Working together bonded the community.

Women working together in the kitchen is a constant theme. My Vietnamese wife of half a century ago loved nothing more than getting together with a handful of girlfriends to prepare a feast. My Japanese mother-in-law of a quarter-century ago likewise loved working with her daughters to make a lavish New Year's dinner.

I take pleasure in the pleasure that Nadia gets out of cooking. We have a kind of mutual admiration society. I love her borscht and blintzes (here called mlini) and she loves my quiche and pizza. She appreciates my use of the food processor, but doesn't show any desire to have one of her own.

Reading about the hardships of immigrants taming the prairie in Nebraska at the turn of the last century, and even thinking of the major events that marked my parents' lives I have to be grateful for the peace and tranquility that has endured through my lifetime.

I have to be thankful for the richness of my life. The protagonists of Cather's book made unfortunate marriages because they simply didn't come in contact with many potential partners. My parents got lucky finding each other – neither one had any other serious loves. Oksana's parents have remained together, if not quite so happily, since they married in their early twenties.

People on the frontier made bad decisions about medicine, personal finance and careers because they didn't have access to information. They died younger, of disease, injury and violence. Cather's most appealing characters die off young. Despite all, the family and the land persevere. I reflect on how different my concerns are than a person without children. Mortality is a natural part of the cycle of life, easier to accept knowing that I have done my part to carry it on.

Reflections on the past help me keep things in focus as I read daily about doom and gloom. I reviewed my fourth book in ten years on the [coming race war in Europe](#). It may be coming, but yet, it doesn't ever seem to happen. Conservative writers frequently note that the government just keeps printing more and more money. Trump is the most profligate president we have ever had, and it looks like any of his 2020 opponents would make him look like a piker. And still the economy chugs on.

Things cannot be said to be improving, but neither do they collapse. The track record of the Cassandras on the left isn't any better. Global warming never seems to arrive. Here is a summary of their [unmaterialized catastrophes](#) over half a century.

What are you going to do? "Nothing" seems to be about the right answer. It's all that is in our power. And we must be grateful for what we have. A friend sent this [wonderful link on gratitude](#).

It is hard to guess exactly how we will muddle through. All we can do is note that our ancestors faced catastrophes and always survived them somehow. Offer prayers of gratitude for what we have, and pray for wisdom and strength to survive whatever new comes our way.

My review of the pessimistic book about Europe concludes with the observation that the locus of Western civilization has shifted many times over history: Greece to Rome to Byzantium to Italy to northern Europe to the United States. It may survive another shift, one which could bring it back eastward. I have positioned my family to survive. What remains for me is a large role on a small stage: raising my children in the tradition of their ancestors, so they can carry it on.

I am glad they can see their grandmother cooking borscht. I hope they inherit her appreciation for their own heritage, and her patience and appreciation for hard work. And her recipe.

Graham

**Mitteilungsbedürfnis.rtf      09/22/2019 08:25 PM**

Mitteilungsbedürfnis – Compulsion To Communicate. And borscht again.

As you might have gathered from the very fact that I have created this blog, I love to communicate. I love to share my life's experience.

It's a very human trait. Eddie and Zoriana have it in overabundance. Eddie will talk the ear off of any audience willing to sit still.

My mother had it. She had the right tools. She was a very proficient professional editor and typist. She could compose a letter in her head and type it without error. Very important if you are making five carbon copies, for kids and siblings. I have a trove of her letters to me in Vietnam and Germany.

Tecumseh Fitch calls this trait by the German word *mitteilungsbedürfnis*. Too bad for language snobs he never got it to catch on in English. It would put *schadenfreude* to shame and made a much better showing than *weltanschauung*. I must report, however, that the English translation, *compulsion to communicate*, conveys the idea perfectly. Whatever *angst* or *weltschmerz* it may cause academic pedants, English is a perfectly functional language without the foreign embellishments.

Fitch writes in "The Evolution of Language" that the human species got a tremendous leg up when it evolved this need to communicate. A woman is able to tell her relatives what needs to be done. Sound familiar? The result is that a human mother can have a baby every two years whereas chimpanzees and gorillas have to wait six. They ask for and get help. It worked. Some might say, all too well.

Just as an amputee feels pain in his phantom limb, I still feel some pain at being cut off from my former family. There are events in my life I would like to share.

Two days ago Eddie came home with a rum baba and a chocolate baba. These were a family favorite when I used to buy them at the Bradley Center on Arlington Boulevard. I would like to remind my grown children of those good times. And invite them to taste the real thing, which is much richer.

Two of Zoriana's favorite songs, Little Bunny Foo Foo and All the Little Pretty Little Horses, came from Aunt Rosie. I would like to thank her. I sometimes think some of Aunt Denise's Philadelphia usages such as "looked like a smacked ass" are the most appropriate expression for a certain situation.

Oksana is teaching English using [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) by Eric Carle. If I remember right, my grown children got the book as a gift from Uncle O'John. I'd like to let him know that it still appreciated today. I would like to thank O'John as well for simple mathematical notions such as the inductive proof that there are an infinite number of primes. I am passing them on to Eddie.

I would also like to hear how nephews John-O and Anthony are getting along. Laney Decker as well. I would like to tell her that she has a namesake in our daughter Zoriana, who in turn was named after her grandmother. It came in handy. They would not baptize a Zoriana because there had never been a St. Zoriana. St. Melania, there was. She is thus baptized.

However nice it would be to have links to the family, it appears that I am cut off in perpetuity. For a variety of reasons. Suzy cut me off ten years ago just after she spent her two week vacation from university in Ireland visiting Oksana and me in Kyiv. The cutoff was so abrupt and complete that I don't know for sure what prompted it.

Her flight out of Kyiv was one day before Oksana and my long-planned and prepaid trip to Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. We got her to the airport and said goodbye. She somehow missed the boarding call and had to stay another night in Kyiv.

I was in a difficult position. I had to choose between letting my 21-year-old daughter, who had made a careless mistake, fend for herself or my new love and a several thousand dollar vacation. I figured that Suzy would make it somehow, so Oksana and I left. Mary Ann, who had not been happy that Suzy came in the first place, got involved because Suzy needed more money. Neither of them have answered my emails or phone calls since. I do not hear as well from Mary Ann's siblings. I think it is a matter of family solidarity. The siblings respect the sentence of excommunication Mary Ann has pronounced.

Naomi was a gracious hostess when I visited Washington DC in 2011, I tried to see Jack on that trip. We spoke by phone, but it was impossible to have a conversation without somehow giving him offense. Dealing with Jack had always been like walking on eggs, and I guess it got to be so painful that he simply refuses. I have not talked to him since.

Jack spent his childhood as a lab rat in a bunch of expensive (for us) experiments run by PhD's. He wasn't quite like the other children. Lots of boys are not – it goes with the Y chromosome. Instead of asking him to suck it up, work hard to overcome his difficulties, the reigning therapeutic approach was "Oh, poor child! We will try to make him happy in spite of everything."

They certainly did not succeed in making him happy. They don't want to take responsibility for the outcome. One of Jack's most impressive decisions was to say "No more!" to the regime of amphetamines he was taking for his diagnosed ADHD. He quit cold turkey from taking an incredible 30 mg or so a day of dexamyil. It didn't change his life either way, better or worse.

The ADHD diagnosis was fashionable, but bogus in my opinion. A lot of people are now concluding the same. I would like to share with Jack [a video](#) on the subject with which I expect he would agree.

The experimental psychologist who prescribed Jack's meds was Dr. Jay Giedd. Twice I have come across references to his writings in the books I review. I wrote to Dr. Giedd, again twice, to cordially renew acquaintance and to ask a simple question. Was he interested in following up on what happened to his patient 15 and 20 years later? He never bothered to reply. I likewise tried to contact Doctor Barbara Ingersoll who had made the introduction to Dr. Giedd. Again, no response.

I was tempted to call Doctor Dan Drake, the psychiatrist that Jack was seeing, but I don't even know what questions I would ask. Whatever he was attempting with Jack was confidential, between him and Jack, and perhaps Mary Ann. I think we can say whatever it was it didn't work.

I should think that professional ethics should require that they at least fake an interest in what happened as a result of their interventions. They are absolutely, flatly not whatsoever curious. In my opinion they just took the money and ran. I would be interested in hearing Jack's opinions on the matter 20 years later.

When Naomi visited us in 2014 we got along fine . It was an exciting time, right in the middle of the Maidan uprisings. Later that year she got engaged to Chris Dupre. Our communication became distant as she attempted to ensure that I never had contact with him. We didn't talk much at all during the marriage. She renewed contact after it fell apart. Our last conversation was one hour over Skype in April 2017, at the end of which I told her that Oksana was pregnant with Zoriana. As is always the case, she did not tell me why she dropped me.

I got a clue when my distant cousin Adam Seibert unfriended me on Facebook, calling me a hopeless racist (and, of course, the entire litany of fashionable pejoratives) for having suggested that Angela Merkel made a mistake in opening the doors to a million African and Middle Eastern immigrants. Naomi and Suzy chimed in on Facebook to agree what a despicable fellow their father was.

I am the same despicable fellow I always was, but the fashions of despicability have changed. My guess is that it was merely a useful pretext for cutting me off.

Within a year after Adam cut me off, cousin Nathan up and died. He was a handsome and smart fellow, yet never married, no kids, out of work and living with relatives. He took vehement, profane exception to just about every opinion I posted on Facebook, but at least he maintained the contact.

No cause of death given, which leads one to wonder. It appears to be an all-too-familiar story with white men of Generation X. In any case, it leaves me with few contacts on either side of the family. And, it means my young kids belong to a very sparse cohort as far as carrying on the family goes.

There it is. None of my grown kids talk to me, and neither does my ex-wife. A couple of you on this blog mailing are mutual acquaintances. I am sure that I will hear through you if anybody gets married or has children.

I would really enjoy having normal relations with them. Being able to talk about memories from childhood and what they are doing with their lives. If you have the occasion, please let them know that I would welcome getting back in touch. I don't bear them any ill will. I would be tickled to death if they would someday chat over Skype with their half-brother Eddie. Who, as I mentioned, always has a lot to say. Even Zoriana can already be appealing over Skype.

Nadia's borscht is an oral tradition recipe that really doesn't want to be written down. I was embarrassingly far off when I sent it to you. If anybody is interested, I am attaching an updated version. No guarantees, of course. It is never made the same way twice, but always delicious.

I am thrilled to hear from Jackie and Angele that you are interested in trying the borscht. Borscht was not exactly a staple in Vietnam, but Jackie loves to try anything delicious. I mentioned her cha gio, in response to which she sent this picture. It will bring back delicious memories to many of you. I love it.

Graham

**ukrainian stories.docx      10/02/2019 10:27 AM**

Eddie has had enough of grandmother.

Nadia has been here for two weeks and they get on each other's nerves. Grandmother gives him millions of little suggestions that she frames as demands that Eddie doesn't obey.

Grandmother's life is ruled by superstitions. All you can do is laugh – I [made such superstitions](#) the topic of one of my recent Toastmasters speeches. I'll have to admit that it's easier for me to laugh than for Eddie. I'm older than everybody in the household and I paid for the house. It gives me an immunity that a seven-year-old lacks.

What are the superstitions? The child must drink water before eating breakfast. Fried foods will ruin his stomach. He has to wear five layers of clothes (approximately) when the temperature falls below 50. No child can go outdoors without a hat to protect against sun in the summer and cold in the winter. Coca-Cola is poison. Meat must be cooked until it is a solid, dead gray all the way through. Every child has a temperature all the time, although sometimes you just can't measure it. Every child who is coughing is contagious and must be kept home from school.

Superstition theory says that there you have to assign a cause to everything. Two days ago my stomach was in a knot all day. Oksana and Nadia would not leave it alone. It must be the bacon I eat (fried meme above). It must be the hamburgers (raw meat meme above). It must be the alcohol. It must be something. They cannot accept that the person sometimes gets a stomach ache and it will go away.

For us it is a constant fight for Eddie to assert his emerging adulthood. Sometimes it leads to mistakes. We work very hard just to escape the house in the morning without superfluous advice. Yesterday morning was 50°. Eddie was wearing a shirt, an undershirt, and a sweatshirt. I hustled him out the door so quickly that no woman had time to notice his lack of a jacket. In the process we forgot his backpack. Sure enough, by the time I got home, there was a call from the women at school saying Eddie needed his backpack. Well and good. I was more than willing to ride the 10 minutes back to the school to bring the backpack. Eddie and I had a laugh about it on the way home.

We are not likely to die even if we are wrong. And we have to admit that sometimes will be wrong. Sometimes Eddie will go out with only four layers of clothing and will be cold. Sometimes he'll go out without a bottle of water and will get thirsty. Sometimes he'll go out without having eaten and get hungry. My attitude is that he'll figure it out.

In the larger scheme of things, Eddie has to learn how to get along in a world of people with different opinions. He has to recognize that there will always be people who will criticize him. He can't satisfy everybody. He has to learn the art of politics – how to navigate different opinions.

I ask you Americans to interpret this as "We don't want to raise a snowflake." Catering to his every whim would not be doing him a service. Exhibits A, B and C are now 30, 35 and 37 years old. They still take criticism very poorly.



My advice to Eddie is to be political. Perhaps a little bit subversive. Recognize who has the power. In our household the women definitely wield power over an seven-year-old boy. As soon as he sees that argument is futile, he should back off and keep his pride intact. Definitely do not let the women make you cry! Crying is the mark of a little boy. Be a man! Instead, make them sacrifice their own dignity by forcing something on you. You can simply not say anything and make them look weak by repeatedly asking "Do you understand?" You can say "Yes" in a tone of voice that clearly indicates "No" and then ignore them to the extent possible. You can jury shop. If you know in advance that daddy supports your position, navigate the discussion close enough that daddy will hear you and see if he might intervene on your behalf.

At any rate, having Nadia and babysitter Anna in his life gives Eddie an opportunity to confront adversity in a not too harsh environment and learn to grow from it.

Looking at adversity, Eddie's Ukrainian teacher Olga told us what we already knew. Eddie is a little bit slow in reading. I have observed this and written about it. He has difficulty in the mechanical process of translating the symbols on the page into syllables and words. This is a developmental problem that affects boys more than girls, bilingual kids more than others. Trilingual Eddie, the youngest in his class, is probably a little bit behind developmentally.

A United States school would be inclined to (1) define this as a problem and then (2) look for a therapeutic solution. Oldest son Jack went through this repeatedly. We are taking a decidedly different tack. We are working closely with Eddie, emphasizing the importance of learning to read in both languages. We read to him, and help him to understand. We talk about it. We encourage him to do his homework, and we simply keep the environment clear of distractions, especially electronic stuff. We have faith that he will outgrow it. Even if he doesn't – turns out to be somewhat dyslexic or whatever – he will feel good about himself and good about the stuff at which he does excel such as arithmetic.

Grandma is going home today or tomorrow. It is wonderful having her around. Zoriana, even though at the age of two she is already arguing fairly strenuously with grandma on the subjects of the above named superstitions, loves her grandmother. Grandmother herself gets worn out around the kids. She has done that. But on the other hand she feels an obligation to support her daughter and to participate in raising the grandchildren as well as possible.

I have written that I am impressed by Eddie's third grade Ukrainian. It has been several decades since I was in the third grade, but I don't remember material as interesting as this. He has to read one of these stories more or less for each class period.

I try to read them as well. As I have said, I'm quicker at the mechanical act of reading the characters and expressing them verbally. Eddie more often knows what the words mean. I could read each of the following well enough to get the just of the story, but needed to look at the translation to figure out the meaning of about five words in each paragraph.

Reading is important in order to understand what's going on in the world. Especially, to understand how you are being manipulated.

You know how to tell when a politician is lying. His lips are moving. How do you tell when a government is lying? When it's printing press is moving. Here is a wonderful example of a government publication and a dispassionate refutation. This topic happens to be climate change.

Here is the scare picture from the [government website](#):

and here is [the analysis](#). You be the judge. Is your government lying to you? Why?

I am already having conversations with Eddie about topics like this. If he were in an American school I can well imagine that we would be having conversations about why what daddy says is different than what the school says.

Those of you who follow my book [reviews](#) will notice that I have written a couple recently that address these topics. I'll probably get back to that later.

Graham

**climate feedback.docx 10/07/2019 01:29 PM**

Doctors, barbers, books and climate change deniers

I went to the dermatologist to have her look at a thorn in my foot. A foot doctor might've been a better first choice, but I know this dermatologist. The way it played out tells you a lot about medicine in Ukraine.

Natalia looked at my foot and didn't find any thorn. She probed – not as hard as I would have myself if I could've reached it – but enough to conclude that there is nothing there anymore. Whatever the foreign object was in my foot, it probably got encapsulated in a cyst. There is a small inflammation in the cyst. Treatment: wash it daily and apply a topical antibiotic. As I write this a week later, nothing has changed – the foot still hurts. But not enough to worry about. I will simply let it work itself out

While I was there I asked her about a large cyst that developed out of a pimple on my back a couple of years ago. I have had them before. They will go years and then finally ripen and pop. If I could reach this when I would lance it just to get rid of it now. She said that knife work is for the surgeon – she wouldn't do it – but that the cyst is absolutely benign and if I can live with it I should leave it alone. That would've been my precise diagnosis. I am leaving it alone.

While she was there she looked at the rest of my back and chest just to be sure that there was nothing precancerous. There is not. Then she ventured out into some somewhat unrelated advice.

There are dark spots on my skin. Happens as you get older. She said that eating lots of fresh vegetables would diminish them. She also told me to rub them with castor oil and they would diminish and might even disappear. I'm giving it a try. Castor oil is cheap and it has been trusted for centuries.

Lastly, and only remotely connected to dermatology through this fresh vegetables theory, she asked about my digestion in general. I told her that I occasionally had acid reflux. I have been taking what is in Russian called rostoropsha (*Silybum marianum*) for my gallbladder for about a year, and it seemed to work. It gives me faith in these other herbal medicines.

She suggested that I drink something called Aira (calamus rhizomes) before meals to prevent heartburn after meals. It is the root of a water plant. Oksana and her mother Nadia had heard of it and agreed that it might be a good thing. I felt a little bit nauseous when I first tried it. Looking it up on the Internet, I find some significant contraindications for calamus. One of which is prolonged vomiting. On the other hand, it has been in use for centuries. I resolved to give it a guarded trial. However, every time I look at the box I manage to postpone it. The best medicine seems to be not eating a lot before dinner time, especially politely minimizing my portions of Nadia's dishes that are loaded with onions.

I thanked her for everything and paid the bill – \$20 – and went to the drugstore to get all of these herbal medicines which cost altogether another \$3.

Which provides me a segue to the broader topic of medicine in Ukraine. Some of you have expressed interest in moving here and others may be interested in medical tourism. I'm working on a blog with my observations. Oksana and I are just completing pretty extensive dental work, and I think the price and quality are worth talking about.

This blog is a lot more enjoyable than Facebook ever was. It is wonderful to get mail from so many of you.

I got feedback to the effect that climate change is indeed real – how can I possibly be a denier? That wasn't the question. The question was whether the government document [here](#) (Fig 1.2, View Static Image) was cherry picking

start dates for their graphics to make climate change look worse than it is, as claimed [here](#). I think the answer is that they were. I find it inconceivable that it was by accident. It begs the question, why did they do it? Why do they so compromise their integrity? If we can't believe the integrity of government science, we will have a difficult time dealing with any tough technical issues.

Climate change is a huge question, and those of you who wrote pretty much said there aren't any simple answers. I have to agree. As I say in my [movie from two years ago](#) on the subject it is indisputable that carbon dioxide has gone up from 280 ppm to over 400 ppm since the dawn of the industrial age. It is moreover indisputable that carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas which forces warming. I furthermore agree that we are schmutzing up our planet through fracking, the extraction of tar sands in Canada, and mountaintop removal to get coal. Whether or not global warming is a dire threat, we should be looking for alternatives to fossil fuels.

It also seems pretty clear that the dire predictions of the 1990s have not come to pass. There are many other factors at play. Among the ones that work more or less continually are changing cloud cover, changing sunspots, changes in the Earth's axis, distance from the sun and so on. Periodic massive changes – the ones that caused the five great extinctions over the past 600 million years – are due to huge volcanic releases of carbon dioxide due to tectonic activity. As my movie notes, these have been orders of magnitude larger than would be created even if we burned all of the fossil fuels remaining in the earth. The movie includes a bibliography.

The epitaph "global warming denier" is applied to people who don't buy the entire story hook line and sinker. Just as people who don't accept the entire Holocaust story – which nobody had even if heard of until I was in high school in the 1950s – as gospel (or Talmud?) are called "Holocaust deniers," people who believe that race is something other than a pure social construct are called "racists" and people who believe that there is some biological basis to sex differences are called "sexists." There – I have just open myself up to every slander in the contemporary lexicon. Sock it to me. Fundamentally, just like Mario Savio in 1964, I hate to be told what to think, or to shut up. I'm too old and curmudgeonly to start now.

Barber shops seem to have the longevity of fruit flies. Every time I find one I like, it seems they go out of business. When I got a haircut a month ago, I thought it looked lousy and the barber had doubled the price. I'm sure you Americans will be shocked – it went from \$4 to \$8. So I thought I would try another barber. I have been going by this one shop that offers cuts for 60 hryvnya, \$2.40. I thought that it couldn't be worse – I'll give it a try.

It is worse. Here is the result.

I just reviewed two deliciously politically incorrect books, Douglas Murray's "[The Madness of Crowds](#)" and Kevin MacDonald's "[Individualism and the Western Liberal Tradition](#)." Murray has the good fortune to carry a get-out-of-jail-free card – he is gay. They can't shout him down. His book is getting a pretty good reception. MacDonald's book is equally interesting, but he has long been well beyond the pale of respectable conversation. I recommend my review in any case. He makes the case that monogamy and romantic love are products of evolution that appeared primarily among us of European descent. Monogamy is what kept our women out of purdah and harems. Northern Europeans came late to agriculture, and hunter gatherers were too poor to afford to cloister women and keep them from being productive. Before you decide to hate the book just on the basis of who wrote it, you might take just a few minutes to check my review to see why women in the West have been less beset by patriarchy than others.

Graham

**dermatologist.docx      10/08/2019 11:05 AM**

I went to the dermatologist to have her look at a thorn in my foot. A foot doctor might've been a better first choice, but I know this dermatologist. The way it played out tells you a lot about medicine in Ukraine.

Natalia looked at my foot and didn't find any thorn. She probed – not as hard as I would have myself if I could've reached it – but enough to conclude that there is nothing there anymore. Whatever the foreign object was in my foot, it probably got encapsulated in a cyst. There is a small inflammation in the cyst. Treatment: wash it daily and apply a topical antibiotic. As I write this a week later, nothing has changed – the foot still hurts. But not enough to worry about. I will simply let it work itself out

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look at the box I manage to postpone it. The best medicine seems to be not eating a lot before dinner time, especially politely minimizing my portions of Nadia's dishes that are loaded with onions.

I told the doctor that I had been taking what is in Russian called rostopsha (*Silybum marianum*) for my gallbladder for about a year, and it seemed to work. It gives me faith in these other herbal medicines.

I thanked her for everything and paid the bill – \$20 – and went to the drugstore to get all of these herbal medicines which cost altogether another \$3. They can't hurt. Too much. Some such recommendations have obviously helped in the past, and you can't argue with the price.

Which provides me a segue to the broader topic of medicine in Ukraine. Some of you have expressed interest in moving here and others may be interested in medical tourism. I'm working on a blog with my observations.

Drugs, doctors, insurance and dentists in Ukraine

Yesterday I sent what I had written about my visit to the dermatologist, Natalia. It is turning out just as she said. Ten days after the visit the pain has mostly gone away in my foot. I am still not taking the aira she recommended for acid reflux. Eating less dinner seems to do the trick, and it no doubt helps in other ways.

I said I would send more. Here are my observations on drugs, doctors, health insurance and dentists here in Ukraine.

Drugs



Outside of amphetamines and opioids, I have yet to encounter a drug that you can't buy here. Moreover, you don't need a prescription except to explain to the pharmacist what you want. They trust that you are smart enough to take care yourself. Amphetamines, by the way, are available over the Internet. My guess is that they are not legal but law enforcement has better things to do than to worry about it.

I should add a note on OxyContin. My dentist in the United States prescribed it rather matter-of-factly when I had oral surgery. I have been to a half dozen dentists here and nobody has ever suggested it. I'll have to admit that I don't know what the painkillers are that they prescribed – I never filled the prescriptions. Nevertheless, I can safely say that they are skittish about opioids. I like that.

Drug prices vary widely. A great many of them are knockoffs of Western drugs manufactured in India. These are usually extraordinarily cheap. For instance, the standard dose of amoxicillin that I take for strep throat a couple times a year costs a couple of dollars. Aspirin costs about a nickel a tablet.

One expensive drug that I took was Levofloxacin, a new generation antibiotic. It was a disaster. The doctor did not look up the counter indications, one of which was muscle tears. Some of the muscles in my calf got sore and broke toward the end of the course of treatment. The moral of the story is that you should always research whatever drug is prescribed for you before you take it. The pharmaceutical companies encourage doctors to prescribe new and more expensive medicines. The doctors cannot reasonably research all of the side effects. They take the freebies and follow the suggestions.

I should've known. When I had told the same doctor about my acid reflux, he prescribed a four drug regime of duspatalin, mebeverine, espumisan and omeprazole. One of these is a proton pump inhibitor. I took them for a while before researching them on the Internet. What I found horrified me. It is a classic case of short-term gains and long-term risks. I concluded immediately that the proper course of action was to stop drinking so much beer. Stop

irritating my stomach and let it heal itself. With, of course, the help of the rostopsha thistle herbal tea mentioned above.

I recommend that you have a couple of books on your shelf on alternative medicines. I use "Digestive Wellness" and "The desktop guide to alternative medicines." While I like them, I am sure that there are other books that do an equally good job. The key insight is that an author rarely has the financial incentive to advocate one medicine or another. You can expect more objectivity in books than from doctors. On the Internet, I use WebMD among other sources. You don't have to look at more than two or three to get a pretty good picture of what's going on with a medicine.

### Doctors

Being a doctor is a prestigious profession in Ukraine, but it does not pay well. Most doctors work for the government health system for a few hundred dollars a month. Many of them moonlight as well for private clinics. These are the ones that I see.

Most graduate from Ukrainian medical schools, which have systematic problems. They don't have proper labs or state-of-the-art equipment. They tend to be hierarchical and bureaucratic, just as they were in Soviet times. Innovation is not encouraged. Corruption is fairly widespread. Students can pay for grades, and if they are female, find other ways to appease the professors.

All that said, doctors are generally pretty intelligent and motivated. It is a matter of finding the right person. I would rather take my chances finding the right doctor in a private practice environment such as Ukraine than with a government health system. Throughout Europe the government systems hire immigrants with degrees from foreign medical schools. Though such doctors usually come from good backgrounds within their home countries, the fact is

that intelligence as a whole where they come from is significantly below that of the countries to which they immigrate and the quality of the medical education is probably no better than that of Ukraine. One way or another, anywhere in the world you get what you pay for.

Most doctors know English well enough to read it. The good ones stay abreast by reading the New England Journal of Medicine, Lancet and specialist journals. They have the same tendency to overprescribe prescription medicines as doctors in the United States. They have a little bit less incentive, however, because the pharmaceutical companies do not seem to have the armies of detail men encouraging doctors to push new drugs.

### Insurance

Americans I know here have an insurance mindset. It is all the more important to them here because Medicare doesn't work. I am an iconoclast – an exception. I have never paid for health insurance in my life. I could not buy what I wanted – catastrophic. It is not very profitable for American insurance companies to sell. They get rich because most people have been brainwashed into thinking they need full insurance, to the point that they fill out a claim every time they buy in aspirin and then feel proud at how they got the insurance company to pay for it. All of that for \$20,000 a year in premiums.

Insurance rates are set by actuaries. They work on statistical analyses – what happened to large numbers of people. I am not a typical man of 76. If I bought insurance I would be subsidizing a vast number of people who didn't inherit my favorable genome and didn't take care of themselves. I don't want to do that.

One of you readers had a pancreas problem that cost a few hundred thousand dollars to fix. And it is fixed. If I come up against a similar problem I will have a hard decision to make: dig up the money to treat it or risk an early death by hoping it goes away. I keep in mind that \$100,000 buys much more doctors' time and hospital care here than in the

United States. There isn't much curable that could not be cured here for that price. Put another way, that money would get me through anything that I actually wanted to live through. I don't want to engage in a prolonged fight against terminal disease.

Medical and hospital insurance are concepts that are getting started in Ukraine. Under socialized medicine there is no need – treatment is free. Fee for service is relatively new, and the idea that you need insurance to pay for it is newer still. Most people don't have it. They rely on the state system, free and worth the price. There are long lines and indifferent, underpaid doctors. I try to avoid them, but I have had to take Eddie to get his measles shot and been browbeaten into taking a kid to the pediatrician on account of an ill-defined cough and a vague temperature. I spent a night in a hospital after a bicycle accident left me unconscious for 15 minutes. I didn't want to go, but I was not in a very good position to resist the full ambulance crew and my wife who were insisting on it.

The level of training is not as high here. There will be instances in which you die in Ukraine whereas you would not in the United States. I would submit that they are rare cases, more common in people who already have medical problems and who have not taken care of themselves. Life is a risk, and I take those risks., Just as I risk my life when I bicycle to town here in order to stay in shape. Just as I would risk my life walking down the street in Washington DC or attending the Great Frederick Fair in the United States.

### Dentists

I went nine years here in Ukraine without any serious dental work. Three years ago I was feeling some pain – not sharp but persistent – in an upper incisor that was an anchor in a five-tooth bridge. The doctor did a scan and discovered that the tooth was rotten way up. It had to come out.

This points to one of the shortcomings of Ukrainian dental care. In America they give you panoramic x-rays / CT scans every year or so to look for problems before they occur. Ukrainian dentists pass up a moneymaking opportunity by not even bothering to call you for periodic checkups. When they do a checkup, they don't do scans. I don't know if they could have headed this problem off, but they certainly could've found it earlier.

The upshot of that was that I lost the front incisor and had to build a seven tooth bridge to replace the five tooth bridge. I didn't keep track of the total cost – it was on the order of \$5,000. I found a new dentist for the job - one that used CT scans more routinely.

Six months ago I felt a little something in my lower jaw and went straight to the same dentist. They did the CT scan and came up with a fairly significant amount of work to be done. A root canal had gone bad in the tooth that hurt. They were unable to get the pin that held the crown out of what was left of the tooth, and finally opted just to remove the whole thing and do an implant. There was another tooth on the other side that wasn't painful but had a similar problem – another implant. I mentioned that I had had occasional pain on the top as well, and they concluded yes, fillings had gone bad and there was significant decay. Two root canals. There was another crown that had gone bad and needed to be replaced.

The total cost for all this work will be on the order of \$6,000. That is significantly less than my United States dentist would've charged 15 or 20 years ago. However, before you hop on airplanes, I have to note that this process involves a lot of back-and-forth to the dentist. Implants would require at least two trips to Ukraine and stays for a minimum of a couple of weeks each.

That's my story. Oksana's is even more complex. She had problems in the mandibular joint even when we married. The diagnosis, confirmed by a couple of dentists, is that her teeth were too short. They had to be built up so they

met properly. That involved getting veneers pretty much all around. And, before they could do that, she needed orthodontia to get them straight.

The orthodontia took more than two years. I didn't keep track of the cost, but it must've been \$3000 or \$4000. No way you could do orthodontia by medical tourism – you have to see the doctor every couple of weeks over a long time.

Her teeth were finally judged to be straight sometime last spring. She got the upper veneers a couple of weeks ago and is going this afternoon for the lowers. The total cost is going to be somewhere around \$7000. This I think is the kind of thing that lends itself to medical tourism. It's a big ticket operation that can be done in a few weeks.

There is a side benefit to Oksana's treatment. The teeth she was born with, in addition to being a bit crooked, were somewhat yellow. She now has a totally bright smile. They approach what my US dentist used to call "toilet bowl white." Tastes have changed. So many people now have artificial teeth that very white ones no longer look shocking. Bottom line, in one husband's opinion, is that it is worth the money. She always has been easy to look at, but improvements are welcome nonetheless.

**Propecia and Social Security.rtf      10/19/2019 03:46 PM**

Dealing with governments

Yesterday I received my propisca. I am officially a resident of Kyiv. Up until now I have been officially a resident of Svetlovodsk, as was my wife.

You Americans will think this is unusual, but it is in keeping with the European family book tradition. I know many of

you from Germany and Vietnam, where similar systems prevailed.

The idea is that the government should know and control where you live. They want to keep track of you. They want to know where the taxpayers and potential soldiers can be found. The Germans and the Soviets wanted to know where ethnic minorities could be found. The Chinese want to keep the peasants from flooding to the cities.

I tell Ukrainians that the United States doesn't have such a system, they asked me incredulously "How do you keep people from voting twice?" "How do you keep illegal aliens from voting?" They are incredulous when I tell them we don't. The watchword is "Vote early and often for the candidate of your choice." In the sense of one man, one vote, Ukraine is ahead of the United States.

Here in Ukraine one's official residence is based on property ownership or a lease. Since we own a dacha, which is not zoned for permanent residences even though they have been being built here since independence, we could not officially live here. So we thought.

The upshot was that Oksana traveled 150 miles to Svetlovodsk in order to vote in the last election. We could not get the Kyiv ID card in order to get discounted fares on public transportation. Most important, since we were carried on the books in Oksana's mother's apartment, the utilities for her apartment were computed as if there were five people living there. That was the source of endless complaints from mom.

Over the years we talked to a great many people about what to do about it, never finding a definitive answer. Most of the answers involve lawyers and thousands of dollars. But even those were not very concrete; had they been, a lawyer probably would've done well by us.

Just by happenstance, Oksana happened to mention the problem to a neighbor. Who told us to simply go to the government office in charge of such things, SNAP (citizen services) and asked them. Oksana did that. It took less than a week and about \$10. Why didn't anybody know?

And that is how things work.

It is not just the Ukrainian government to make things complicated. I have been trying to have Social Security change my address from the US Consulate, which strongly desires not to be in the middle, receiving my mail and then sending it by courier, to my Las Vegas mail service. I have asked Social Security to do this five times. Last time I had a long conversation with the lady in Baltimore telling her that in the four previous instances it had not worked. She researched it and could find no reason for it not to. And she put the change in, and sure enough it has not taken. When I login to Social Security online it still tells me that the change will take place October 4, 2019. That obviously didn't happen.

I wrote to the Consulate, sending them a screenshot of the notice that it would be updated on October fourth. I have not heard from them.

Other parts of the US government also work slowly. It took a year and a half and about 50 exchanges of email to get our Social Security straightened out after I reported Zoriana's birth. We were behind about \$11,000. It is not a lack of goodwill – the individual people I talked to were surprisingly intelligent and polite. Nonetheless, the system that they work with is archaic and uncoordinated. I ask myself all the time how people without a high level of literacy and numeracy are able to grapple with our bureaucracy. They must be endlessly frustrated.

A couple of you have written to say that you tried and liked the borscht recipe. Grandmother Nadia is all over smiles. I will try to send other recipes as well. However, I have noticed in Vietnam and Central America that having a highly varied cuisine is not high priority. They seem to be happy cooking the same simple things over and over again and doing it well. Whereas I occasionally cook beans from a recipe that my father's father picked up while working on the railroad as a young man, in Nicaragua they would eat the same recipe every day and not complain. In Vietnam and Ukraine the menu is a bit more varied, but nobody feels a compulsion to try something new every week or so.

A couple of others wrote with advice on medications. Thanks for the input – I'll save those emails. But my first line of attack is to stop eating so much and to cut way back on alcohol. I'll only be persuaded to take medications when



those don't work.

I have finished eight speeches in the Toastmasters Engaging Humor series. Most of them are about my single life in the few months between separating in 2006 and coming to Ukraine in 2007. It was hard enough when I was in my thirties to find a woman who wanted to marry and have children. The one I found, after a long search, really didn't so much. It was amusingly difficult when I was looking for a woman half my age. And that's the story.

Graham

## **I need to do some reading on voter registration.docx      10/20/2019 09:27 AM**

I need to do some reading on voter registration

Ukraine, and most countries in the world have a national ID system. Oksana has an internal passport with a photograph that indicates her name, date of birth, marital status and residence.

The United States has never done that. It refuses on principle. First of all, dealing with the citizens is not one of the powers given to the federal government by the Constitution. It is up to the states.

The United States has a strong tradition of individual freedom. Ever since Social Security was implemented in 1935 they have worked strenuously to ensure that it is not used as a national ID system. Your Social Security card is only a card with a name and number – nothing more.

An American's major piece of picture ID is a drivers license. Most state motor vehicles departments have expanded their remit to provide identification cards to non-drivers as well. This is the only piece of identification usually required to prove your age when you are buying cigarettes or liquor or talking to a policeman. The motor vehicle departments of course provide their information to the police, but they are not law enforcement. Of course, a drivers license has nothing to do with citizenship.

Many noncitizens, among them green card holders, carry Social Security cards. So far as I know they are identical to those carried by citizens. We citizens have no single piece of identification to testify to that fact. I have a passport – so can anybody. My birth certificate does not say I'm a citizen, but it is the best I have – it shows I was born in Berkeley, prima facie evidence under current law. There are no standards for birth certificates. It would be pretty easy to use Photoshop to create a fake one.

In conclusion, there is no uniform set of documents that would demonstrate where a person lives or establish their identity for voting purposes.

I'm going to put on my hat as a systems guy and observe that this creates the opportunity for abuse. Many of you who wrote me are systems people. Tell me how your jurisdiction prevents abuse. How do you prevent a person from registering to vote under two names? How do you prevent them from registering to vote in two states?

I observe that Big Brother certainly has the information that they need to do the job. They have surreptitiously collected facial recognition data, signature recognition data, voice recognition data, and all sorts of factual data on each of us. However, Big Brother appears to me not to want to deal with this issue. First of all, is not in the job description – which they take seriously when it is convenient. More than that, the deep state is more aligned with the Democrat party than the Republicans, and the Democrats – as party chairman Robert Strauss stated openly after the Hart Celler immigration act was passed in 1965 – are quite open in wanting to invite immigrants, documented or not, in order to expand their voter base.

Please, somebody, tell me again about controlling voter registration. How do they do it, and who has the will to do it? Is there any effort at all at the national level, or does it all depend on the states and localities?

Meanwhile, I sit in Ukraine finishing my read of "[On Genetic Interests](#)." It deals directly with how these issues apply to the world my kids will grow up in. A quick look tells you that to Amazon it smells like dead fish. If you count the reviews, there are six five-star reviews, two four-star, two three-star and one one star. A total of 11 - discounting the fact that JP Rushton (totally politically incorrect, often reviled but never refuted) somehow managed to post two. Then look at what Amazon tells you people think. They don't want you to like this book. I'm just enough of a stinker to say if Amazon is against it, I'm for it. I should add that Amazon has priced it not to sell – \$46 for the Kindle version, which costs them nothing to distribute. With a little digging on the Internet I came up with a free copy if anybody wants to take a look.

Graham

## **O tempora o mores.docx      10/23/2019 09:16 PM**

O tempora. O mores! O Metro! O Russians!

As a prelude to a story about the Kyiv Metro, I need to recount my experience with subway systems in general. When I left for Vietnam in 1968 California was building its first, Bay Area Rapid Transit, or BART. I had occasionally ridden subway systems in New York and Chicago.

The first system I rode overseas was in Tokyo, en route to Vietnam. It was a daunting experience. None of the signage was in English and it was a fairly large system. Nonetheless, I managed to get from my hotel to the Shinjuku area to buy a camera. Over the next eight years, living in Vietnam and Germany, I rode the systems in London, Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin and perhaps a few smaller cities. The ridership was middle class – this was before automobile ownership became universal in Europe. The riders were courteous, although not all had gotten in the habit of frequent bathing. I'm not squeamish, but I could sympathize with those who were.

Washington DC opened its Metro system in the first of the 30 years I lived there. It never has been comparable to the European systems. The coverage is not nearly as dense, and the geographic reach is longer. This reflects America's penchant for life in distant suburbs and the history of segregation/racial tensions in the center of the city. The bus systems that feed the Metro are also inadequate. The regional Metrobus system has always been plagued by the same problems of geography and demographics, compounded by strong public-sector unions. It was and remains expensive, money-losing, and less than reliable. People who can afford cars avoid public transit.

I lived in the toney Bethesda area. Although I always had cars, I usually traveled by bicycle and made a point of riding the buses when it made sense. There was a bus a block from our house that went straight down Massachusetts Avenue into the city. I rode it every now and again. I do not think that my former family ever did.

With one exception. When daughter Suzy was about 13 we got an au pair from Germany. She rather matter-of-factly took Suzy on the bus into the city. She had her instructions wrong and they wound up among a sea of black faces in Anacostia. The au pair was horrified, although nothing untoward happened and the bus driver gave them instructions how to get where they were going. I believe that was the single exception. One of the requirements for au pairs was that they drive. There was a car at their disposal, and that is what they did.

The city of Kyiv was not built for cars. It has a few grand, wide boulevards such as those in Paris and Moscow, crisscrossed with a number of average sized streets. Buildings throughout the downtown area are mostly between six stories – the maximum for a walk up – and 20 or 30. We don't have any extreme high-rises.

Even new construction is mostly vertical. Very few of us live in detached houses. Builders are quickly filling in available parcels close to the Metro system with buildings that seem to be a uniform 26 stories high. The apartments are quite livable inside – 600 to 1500 square feet – and cost upwards of \$100 per square foot depending on the amenities and the location. The new buildings do not have nearly enough parking for the number of units. People owning cars have to be inventive and get used to walking. They also have to get use to staggered work hours. Friends in the new neighborhood of Sofievska Borshagovska have to get on the road well before seven to avoid traffic jams. Nonetheless, drive they do. Less expensive apartments are a ways out, and women especially don't like to rub shoulders with the hoi polloi on the Metro, no matter how bad the traffic.

The upshot is that I bicycle and ride public transportation. I am quite certain that each of you readers continues to drive if you are still able. In the US, not driving is a severe disadvantage, though I expect it has gotten a bit better since the advent of Uber and Lyft.

Sharing public transportation is a democratizing experience. That brings me, after a couple of pages of preamble, to my reflections after a trip on the Metro yesterday.

I got on that the Shulyavska station on the west side of town heading for Livoberezhna on the east side. As usually happens, a younger person courteously offered her seat to the older gentleman – that being me. About two stations later a mother and two daughters, probably five and nine, got on the train. Protocol gives them priority even over us seniors. There were also several teenage boys and/or young men who certainly should have been the first to get up.

They fiddled with their electronic devices and pretended not to notice. The mom and kids stood until a seat was freed up by somebody getting off. Then a father with a three-year-old in his arms got on. Likewise nothing. I thought to myself, I should give him my seat. But I didn't. Instead, after about one stop, probably equally disappointed in her fellow riders, the woman next to me offered them her seat. She was a portly lady in her fifties. It should not have been her.

I felt rather shabby that I had not offered myself. Reflecting on it, I think that the lesson for the thoughtless kids would have been stronger if this guy approaching 80 had offered his seat. I could have done it in a fairly ostentatious way, to drive the point home.

Even more strongly, I could have said something. I have done that before, though not frequently. Oksana tells me not to – it could be dangerous. That has not been my experience. Every time I have done so the young people I addressed have acted somewhat chagrined. Though they could have been belligerent, or

stonewalled and ignored the foreigner, they have given up their seats. They still know right from wrong, and still have some respect for their elders. For obvious reasons I would not try this in London, Paris, or New York.

Which leads me to another anecdote worth repeating. Gary and Marina, our former housemate who moved to London a year ago September, got on a bus in Croydon, a suburb of London. A mother got on and left her pram with the baby in it by the door. This is neither proper protocol nor a good idea – the baby is in some danger, and it inconveniences other passengers. Gary politely pointed this out. As Marina tells it, he rapidly became aware that they were the ethnic minority on the bus, and the majority rather menacingly hooted them down.

Yesterday I looked up a couple of statistics that even you Ukrainians may not know. Searching on "ethnic composition of Ukraine" I find that it is 77.5% Ukrainian and 17.5% Russian. That statistic, however, encompasses Ukraine as it still imagines itself, including Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk. Another search revealed that those three provinces which have largely gone to Russia, and presumably included the bulk of the ethnic Russians, made up 19% of Ukraine's population. It appears that Ukraine is approaching the level of homogeneity of Japan or China, for which we can thank Vladimir Putin. I can add that they feel themselves more Ukrainian than six years ago; there is nothing like a war to cement ethnic identity.

The courtesies that I observe on public transportation, and in the marketplace and among my neighbors, are the courtesies that evolution produced to ensure in-group solidarity. As Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam writes, these are the marks of civility that decrease in multiethnic societies. Ukraine is materially less well-off than any country in the West, but in some major sense we can afford it because we don't feel compelled to spend a lot of money to live in expensive urban enclaves or isolated suburbs, buy large cars for long commutes, send our kids to private school and so on.

I keep going back to the book "On Genetic Interests." Just about every chapter seems written for me personally. It covers these issues, among many others. I will finish the book today and write a fairly lengthy review.

Several of you keep riffing on the Russian theme now in vogue in US politics. I'm the one who lives next door to Russia, without the protection of the US nuclear umbrella. I don't buy the Russian threat whatsoever. Russia is what it has always been – read [my review of "Letters from Russia"](#) almost two centuries ago. It is a paranoid bully, but cautious. The modus operandi never changes. They tackle small targets, at opportune moments, with a bodyguard of lies and plausible deniability. The scenario in Ukraine had played out many times before. Read my review of [Putin's Wars](#). Phony patriots fomenting demonstrations, fake referendums, soldiers without insignia. The world pretty much sees through it. The United States has absolutely nothing to fear from them. Our European allies have far more to fear from within their borders than from Russia.

Ukraine itself has nothing to worry about. Its fifth column is gone – Russia already enveloped them. They got less than they expected, at a much higher cost, in taking Donbass. There is no plausible deniability left. Ukraine was forced to find its sense of nationhood. It rallied to fight Russia – 40 million vs. 140 million, both in underpopulated countries. War makes no sense. However evil you find Putin, nobody thinks him dumb. If there is a war, it will be started by an American loose cannon like Bolton or McCain. Trump is lucky to be rid of both.

Russia had innumerable FSB assets in Ukraine at the fall of the Soviet Union, and has certainly maintained them since. If there were any elections they could sway it should be ours. And yet – we elected a Jewish comedian who is certainly not their man. The fact that Russia calls him a Nazi is extremely funny. Take a look at [my favorite Russian propaganda](#) site to check out their nonsense on Ukraine. I do not think that the FSB is as inept as our CIA, but they approach it. To imagine Russia could subvert American politics is ludicrous. Their high-water-mark was before I was born, in the Roosevelt administration, when the Soviets could present American leftists with somewhat plausible lies about the fantasy utopia they were building. What on earth could Putin offer Tulsi Gabbard or Jill Stein? Get real!

I recently reviewed Matt Taibbi's book entitled "Hate, Inc." Have I talked about books that the establishment doesn't like being buried? This Rolling Stone reporter, whom the establishment loved when he was attacking the giant vampire squid with its tentacles wrapped around the face of humanity, sticking its blood funnel everywhere it smelled money (ie, Goldman Sachs), finds himself suddenly unloved. The book has not attracted nearly as many reviews as you would expect. [Mine remains the most popular](#), with only 24 likes. Here he is again in [Rolling Stone](#).

You have to ask yourself whether the Russians have anything on Matt Taibbi, or if, just possibly, Russiagate might be as he says – a three-year-old steaming crock of BS. Hell, you might have the feds waste a few of your tax dollars investigating me as well. I speak Russian and fear them less than I fear NATO and the European Union. Never in its history has Russia destroyed a country (except their own Soviet Union) as thoroughly as we destroyed our "friend and ally" Vietnam. Our proclaimed good intentions brought disaster to Nicaragua – I have had long conversations there with people who lived through it. We have brought carnage rather than peace and prosperity to Libya, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, lemme see... there must be more but I forget. Now the cri de coeur is that we are abandoning the Kurds, whose major failing seems to be that they were naïve enough to ignore the CIA's history and believe the US would live by their commitments. It was as stupid of us to get involved with them as them with us.

Nope. I don't fear the Russians as much as our own team. We will be better served by just leaving the Russians alone. A good start would be to follow their example, reducing the level of our own meddling in foreign elections to below that of the Russians.

Demagogues have exploited the fear of foreign enemies as long as I can remember. JFK's mythical "missile gap," Reagan's "Axis of Evil," Bush's weapons of mass destruction, and Russia's current hysteria about "Ukrainian Nazis." All BS. Ignore it. Certainly we should ignore today's Iran hysteria. They are not nice people,

but what could they do to us? China does have the potential to threaten us, and they will develop no matter what we do. Let's not antagonize them along the way.

Graham

## **Tae kwon do.docx      10/27/2019 07:01 PM**

Tae kwon do, home repairs and a sad sack English teacher

We have lived in our house for six years. The first couple we spent a lot of effort fixing the stuff that wasn't done right in the first place. The electrician who wired it has since suffered an alcohol-related death. Our house showed the effects of that alcohol. For some reason the hot water heater kept tripping its circuit breaker. About two years ago it stopped acting up. I don't trust it, but I'll take it.

During the first five years we had to have our guys Valery and Alexii come a couple of times per winter to fiddle with the heat. This winter, for the second year in a row, with our fingers firmly crossed, we turned the heat on and it worked. Valery and Alexii have still done okay by us – they installed attic fans and cut holes for a ventilation system in the house.

Nonetheless, with a house there are always things that need to be done. I wrote about the problems with the plumbing, which seem to be resolved. The backlog of unaddressed problems included a couple of things in the kitchen.

Now, it happens that Eddie has been taking tae kwon do since school started. The studio is 15 minutes from here by bicycle, half an hour by foot. The lessons are one and a half hours long. So – spend half an hour to one hour coming and going, twice, or find something to do in the hour and a half he is working out.

The studio is on the way to the biggest building supply market in town. Covering about three normal sized blocks, the Yunost market includes well over 100 market stalls where they sell just about everything. Anything you want is there – the challenge is to find it.

The sellers are used to dealing with people who know what they want – tradesman such as our plumber Dima who, riding a motorcycle instead of a plumber's truck, usually has to interrupt fixing things to head for the market to buy replacement parts. They have varying levels of patience for an American tyro who

doesn't have the right technical language to describe what he wants and doesn't need a whole lot anyhow. For my first 10 years here I entered the Yunost Market with some trepidation, confident that I would embarrass myself in one way or another in dealing with the vendors.

But – there were things I needed and Yunost was close to Eddie's tae kwon do.

In another twist, Oksana arranged for Clem, the kid that babysits Zoriana every now and again, to pick up Eddie from school and take him to tae kwon do. All I needed to do was pick him up. Oksana had a further brainstorm. If I took Zoriana with me to pick Eddie up, it would free her up for two hours.

I mused on the situation, got out my maps, and figured that I could travel to the Yunost market by marshrutka, Metro and tramway in about 40 minutes. There is another marshrutka that goes directly from Yunost to tae kwon do. So... I could go to the market and try to resolve the problems I had with the house.

In fixing a plumbing problem in the kitchen a couple of years ago Valery and Alexii (above) knocked a lot of scale from the inside of the pipes loose. The aerator on the kitchen sink faucet kept getting plugged. I had never replaced an aerator before, although it seemed like a fairly straightforward procedure. But I didn't know where to buy one. So – I would boil the aerator in vinegar periodically to dissolve the scale. It did only a so-so job the first time, and after a couple years the faucet almost didn't work. I had to do something.

Again with trepidation, I brought the old aerator to Yunost to show to people. And voilà! The first guy I showed it to said "Oh, yeah!" and sold me a replacement for 60¢. Not only that, I discovered that the new food market hall – put up within the last year or so – carried peanut butter, imported pastas, imported cheeses and chocolate bars. It was a great trip. The aerator fit exactly and is doing what it should do. Having Zoriana on my shoulders softened the vendors up a bit – everybody likes a kid. There aren't enough children in the society, and for a superannuated foreigner to show up with the baby on his shoulders is not an everyday occurrence.

Another thing that had given out was the strips of light emitting diodes –LEDs - over the kitchen counters. They were down to just barely glowing. I had never dealt with LEDs and didn't really know where to start. On the trip buying the aerator I had talk to one of the vendors and determined that I needed to figure out whether our LEDs were 12 VDC or 240 VAC. Back home, I traced the wires and found a transformer. I also used the voltmeter just to be sure – 12.5 volts direct current. I measured and found that I needed just over 3 meters of lights.

On the next trip I bought the lights I need and a couple of adapters – leads to for the 12 V system coming out one end, and a clamp to hold the light strips on the other end. The system as it was installed didn't have such a clamp, so I needed to solder the adapters in place.



There are always surprises in a home improvement project. The surprise this time was that Eddie's using the soldering iron to melt Styrofoam blocks had reduced it to the point that it would no longer melt solder. I needed to buy a new one.

Saturday night, the next time for tae kwon do, I was out past closing time for the Yunost market. It was also too late to bring Zoriana with me. So I hightailed it to Epicenter, our local version of Home Depot or Lowe's, and bought my soldering iron.

And – it all worked. It was a wonderful experience this morning. The 12 V lead didn't stick out very far under the cabinet and was hard for me to reach. More than that, it was hard for me to see. But Eddie is a lot smaller and has better vision. With me holding the soldering iron and him holding the two leads and a pair of pliers in one hand and solder in the other we were able to make the connection. I make it sound simple – including trial and error it took a couple of hours to get 53 cm in one strip and 2.6 meters and the other strip. Eddie did at least half the work and feels justifiably proud of himself. And it is incredible to see how much brighter it is with new lights.

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Thrown him out under very peculiar circumstances. She doesn't have a job – she depends on Jason to pay the bills. All four of the other people at the table know the wife and had called her that very day to plead with her to take Jason back. She so far had not relented, so Dima number one was giving him a bed for the night.

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Graham

We have lived in our house for six years. The first couple we spent a lot of effort fixing the stuff that wasn't done right in the first place. The electrician who wired it has since suffered an alcohol-related death. Our house showed the effects of that alcohol. For some reason the hot water heater kept tripping its circuit breaker. About two years ago it stopped acting up. I don't trust it, but I'll take it.

During the first four years we had to have our guys Valery and Alexii come a couple of times per winter to fiddle with the heat. This winter, for the second year in a row, with our fingers firmly crossed, we turned the heat on and it worked. Valery and Alexii have still done okay by us – they installed attic fans and cut holes for a ventilation system in the house.

Nonetheless, with a house there are always things that need to be done. I wrote about the problems with the plumbing, which seem to be resolved. The backlog of unaddressed problems included a couple of things in the kitchen.

Now, it happens that Eddie has been taking tae kwon do since school started. The studio is 15 minutes from here by bicycle, half an hour by foot. The lessons are one and a half hours long. So – spend half an hour to one hour coming and going, twice, or find something to do in the hour and a half he is working out.

The studio is on the way to the biggest building supply market in town. Covering about three normal sized blocks, the Yunost market includes well over 100 market stalls where they sell just about everything. Anything you want is there – the challenge is to find it.

The sellers are used to dealing with people who know what they want – tradesman such as our plumber Dima who, riding a motorcycle instead of a plumber's truck, usually has to interrupt fixing things to head for the market to buy replacement parts. They have varying levels of patience for an American tyro who doesn't have the right technical language to describe what he wants and doesn't need a

whole lot anyhow. For my first 10 years here I entered the Yunost Market with some trepidation, confident that I would embarrass myself in one way or another in dealing with the vendors.

But – there were things I needed and Yunost was close to Eddie's tae kwon do. In another twist, Oksana arranged for Clem, the kid that babysits Zoriana every now and again, to pick up Eddie from school and take him to tae kwon do. All I needed to do was pick him up. Oksana had a further brainstorm. If I took Zoriana with me to pick Eddie up, it would free her up for two hours.

I mused on the situation, got out my maps, and figured that I could travel to the Yunost market by marshrutka, Metro and tramway in about 40 minutes. There is another marshrutka the goes directly from Yunost to tae kwon do. So... I could go to the market and try to resolve the problems I had with the house.

In fixing a plumbing problem in the kitchen a couple of years ago Valery and Alexii (above) knocked a lot of scale from the inside of the pipes loose. The aerator on the kitchen sink faucet kept getting plugged. I had never replaced an aerator before, although it seemed like a fairly straightforward procedure. But I didn't know where to buy one. So – I would boil the aerator in vinegar periodically to dissolve the scale. It did only a so-so job the first time, and after a couple years the faucet almost didn't work. I had to do something.

Again with trepidation, I brought the old aerator to Yunost to show to people. And voilà! The first guy I showed it to said "Oh, yeah!" and sold me a replacement for 60¢. Not only that, I discovered that the new food market hall – put up within the last year or so – carried peanut butter, imported pastas, imported cheeses and chocolate bars. It was a great trip. The aerator fit exactly and is doing what it should do. Having Zoriana on my shoulders softened the vendors up a bit – everybody likes a kid. There aren't enough children in the society, and for a superannuated foreigner to show up with a baby on his shoulders is not an everyday occurrence.

Another thing that had given out was the strips of light emitting diodes –LEDs - over the kitchen counters. They were down to just barely glowing. I had never dealt with LEDs and didn't really know where to start. On the trip buying the aerator I had talked to one of the vendors and determined that I needed to figure out whether our LEDs were 12 VDC or 240 VAC. Back home, I traced the wires and found a transformer. I also used the voltmeter just to be sure – 12.5 volts direct current. I measured and found that I needed just over 3 meters of lights.

On the next trip I bought the lights I need and a couple of adapters – leads to for the 12 V system coming out one end, and a clamp to hold the light strips on the other end. The system as it was installed didn't have such a clamp, so I needed to solder the adapters in place.

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Graham

**race - my history.docx      11/02/2019 09:40 AM**

The Kyiv crime blotter. If this is as bad as it gets, it's pretty good

Two weeks ago Oksana was in a swivet. There was a rash of murders in the neighborhood. We should all stay indoors.

I went on the Internet [and tracked it down](#). The Voskresenka Maniac stalked single older men walking alone in the late evening and killed them with a knife. I am never on the streets after 10 o'clock, but I am certainly aware that there are a lot of guys who drink in the evening and make their way home by themselves.

One thing was certain. The killer would be a white man. Who else is there? Here is a piece of scary click-bait and a composite drawing.

There were lurid headlines in all of the neighborhood newspapers from August through October. It also made the Kyiv dailies. The last of the articles says that police had detained a man, and previous patient of psychiatric hospitals, for one murder and three or four attacks.

Is this a bad sign? To make all this fuss about one murder, and have it turn out to be just an ordinary crazy guy without any political agenda, seems to me to indicate things are not that bad here in Kyiv. At any rate, I'm telling Oksana not to worry about Eddie and my walking home from tae kwon do at 5:30 in the evening. Even if it is the Voskresenka neighborhood.

Some of you have implied, in the nicest, gentlest way possible, that I am a racist white supremacist Fox news watcher.

To dispose of the most serious allegation first, I have never bought a [television](#) for my own use. I have only rarely ever turned a TV on – if I see it, the damned thing is blaring when I walk into a room. My former family consists of entirely of liberals who would never have watched Fox. If I have seen Fox it was by accident – in airports and bars.

As to whether I'm a racist or a white supremacist, I put together [this lengthy account](#) of my recollections about race since about the end of World War II. While the races themselves have changed hardly at all, and scientific opinion hasn't changed much, the amplitude and frequency with which people tell you what you should think about race has gone up exponentially.

Though it doesn't have the same *éclat* as "white supremacist," I think this account will show that I am a "white middle-of-the-packist." The most you can tag me with is the observation that the races are different. And if you did not notice the same thing you wouldn't be making a fuss.

As a retired guy thousands of miles from the United States I have more freedom of expression than most of you. Try this in the United States or Sweden and you subject yourself to vicious attacks that have nothing to do with the truth of what you're saying. Caution led even me to remove a couple of hyperlinks proving my point. In any case, I have described – just the facts ma'am – without much admixture of opinion both the good and the bad of what I have seen over a lifetime.

My most significant observation is that white people have been wrongfooted, backpedaling on the issue of race for half a century. I was subject to racial discrimination, some by individuals, some by employers, but mostly by governments. Fortunately I was able to ignore it, fight it or move someplace where I could avoid it. I'm not bitter or angry. I'm gone.

Most Fox news fans don't have my resources. They have had experiences such as I describe and couldn't do anything about it. Actually, worse. My upper middle class income insulated me from public schools, child welfare agencies and the like. Fox folks certainly know better than to talk about their experiences. But they vote. And they increasingly use opioids, drop out, and commit suicide. Just as a PS, I gave up Prozac within months of moving here. Kyiv has been good for my mental health.

This week Oksana's mother Nadia has been with us as Oksana herself is in Chernigov for some sort of musical training. She is taking advantage of my good nature slipping off like this several times a year. I accept it with good grace. I have a beautiful young wife and children. I'm getting my end of the bargain.

Psychologists write that in a family everybody stakes out an individual niche. Even identical twins distinguish themselves by selecting separate specialties. Oksana's mother is a workaholic. When we invited her I swore that I would do half the work and she would not have to spend time in the kitchen. That's a laugh. I cannot keep her out of the kitchen.

I told her I would fix dinner last night – chicken drumsticks baked on our bed of macaroni. I told her I would take the children for a walk. She engineered it such that it was about 4:00 before I got out with the kids and when we returned she had already cooked dinner. She had never done the bit with the macaroni before and had not boiled it prior to laying the chicken on top of it. But there it was – baked chicken atop raw macaroni. Not that we needed it because the spareribs she had cooked two nights ago were still in the refrigerator. Moreover, she had taken the somewhat old eggplant and zucchini that Tanya, my greengrocer had given me for free and made a wonderful stew.

The upshot is that we had a delicious dinner. Of course I was not allowed to fill my traditional role as dishwasher. I'm happy for the holiday. Oksana is the opposite of her mother in that she will let me do everything I want and will ask me to do that much more. All the while hugging me and kissing me and telling me what a wonderful husband I am. This is the deal I have made with life. I can laugh about it. I'm happy with it.

Speaking of niches, Eddie has staked out the role of chef. He has fixed banana fritters for breakfast – he loves my recipe. I am off to join him.

Graham

**mencken.docx 11/07/2019 11:00 AM**

The wisdom of the ages, on the common cold and human affairs

The last three days I have been afflicted by the most pleasant kind of illness. It began with a very pronounced tickle in my nose. I thought that if I flushed it with saltwater it might go away. I have been trying that nostrum for years and I don't recall that it ever worked, but it's cheap – why not? Nothing else does.

My nose has been running like a faucet. Intermittently I get a bloody nose. They come easily to me. I am demonstrably sick with a cold.

This excuses me from my usual domestic chores such as taking Eddie to school. He will get there one way or another. I haven't even asked how. Oksana can walk him the half block to the bus stop, where he will meet other students on the bus who can walk with him to school. It takes all of 20 minutes. Or, he can walk directly to school which also takes only 20 minutes. He's eight years old. I was walking further when I was four. Besides which, I had to dodge dinosaurs and sabertooth tigers.

We have been lucky that grandmother Nadia was here these three days. She is leaving today – I might have to decide I'm a bit more healthy. I have called off my Toastmasters speech for Saturday and postponed my dental appointments.

My experience with these colds is that more than half the time the lingering sniffles will devolve into a cough that can last a couple of weeks. I am not at all sure that babying the cold makes it any better, but it's a great excuse for indolence. I am quite sure that I am still at the contagious stage, so staying away from the rest the family makes sense. I remain holed up in my room.

It is time for reading. I have discovered that if I set Kindle to the maximum text size and use a PowerPoint clicker I can lie in bed and read a book across the room. At that distance I don't need glasses. What a treat.

## Book Reviews

I finished reading the books I had committed to review, [Borrowed Time](#), an excellent book on human aging, and [Cleantech Con Artists](#). You can follow the links to my reviews.

The author of Cleantech Con Artists made a concerted effort to get me to do the review. Jim Rossi is a fascinating character. Graduated from Rutgers in the 1990s, worked as a freelance features writer, especially for the Los



Angeles Times, then went back to graduate school in environmental science at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. He is a smart guy and experienced writer. They soon put him to work organizing conferences, writing for their periodicals, doing publicity and so on.

They overlooked a couple of his shortcomings. He doesn't preach the IPCC gospel on global warming. Even worse, he is a straight white man. He did believe that some of the clean technologies made sense, and enjoyed the company of the student entrepreneurs who were pursuing them.

Rossi worked hard to make sure I got a review copy. By the time I did we kind of knew each other. We have a lot in common: Berkeley, Humboldt County, bicycling, admiration for Robert Trivers, and a skeptical view of journalism, universities, governments, social justice and climate change hysteria. A resume like that is going to be a nonstarter in today's leftist dominated world of journalism. I made a point of giving him as good a review as I could. He will need it.

I shared my observation that almost all of the smart young white men like him that I get to know don't have families. Where will the next generation come from? He seems to be so totally tied up with slaying the dragons of political correctness that he doesn't have time for family.

In addition to which, being an ungeded male in this age of milksops, he appears to have all of the female attention he needs. Why settle down? Those are the two sides of the fertility dilemma for men. The majority are uninteresting to women and increasingly uninterested in women. Rossi's minority has all the good times they want without making commitments. And inbetween, very few seem to be starting families. Meanwhile, here in Ukraine, I know a number of attractive and personable women who would love the opportunity to start families but can't seem to find the right guy. There is a monumental mismatch.

Reading

My approach to colds like this has not changed since college. I will hole up with a bottle of spirits and a pile of books until it passes. After finishing the two book reviews above, I surveyed my Kindle library and read a couple by Mark Twain: Tom Sawyer and Puddinghead Wilson. Both brought me back to the topic of race, which I had [discussed](#) in my last letter to you. It is only tangential to Tom Sawyer, although Mark Twain made it very clear that he saw slavery to be a great injustice. Race is central to Puddinghead Wilson. Two babies, one white, the other only 31/32 white are switched in infancy. The white boy grows up as a slave, the other grows up as the scion of a prominent family. Twain is not preachy – he clearly sees the differences between the races – but he holds slavery to be an intolerable institution.

After two years of work and a stint in the Army I returned to the University in 1965 with a newfound zeal. I got all A's my first semester, which entitled me to stack privileges at the UC library. I browsed the shelves and read everything I could get my hands on: Nietzsche, Spencer and several by HL Mencken. In particular, I read his autobiographical Days trilogy.

I thought that the opportunity of this cold would be a great time to take another look. Searching for the Internet's favorite price, I entered "H. L. Mencken Newspaper Days" pdf. It brought me to archive.com.

Archive.com is something new on the Internet. A repository of more than 100,000 books. Also lots of film and other stuff, and the way back machine which gives you the opportunity to search for content previously posted but now deleted from the Internet. In particular, things like Joe Biden's support for segregationists and opposition to gay marriage. Embarrassing things like that. After an hour's wrangling with some unnecessarily complicated and poorly documented software from Adobe, I was ready to download Mencken and start reading.

The man is amazingly fresh. Newspaper Days contains the quote "Whenever "A" attempts by law to impose his moral standards upon "B," "A" is most likely a scoundrel." I thought immediately of the hate speech crusade going on to suppress free speech in America and Europe today. Yes! Going on the Internet I found a vast number of others that seem extremely appropriate in today's world. I close with a sampler:

### A propos of global warming

- The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.
- No one ever heard of the truth being enforced by law. Whenever the secular arm is called in to sustain an idea, whether new or old, it is always a bad idea, and not infrequently it is downright idiotic.

### A propos of Matt Taibbi's [Hate, Inc.](#)

- A newspaper is a device for making the ignorant more ignorant and the crazy crazier. (Mencken was lucky to be spared the Internet)
- Whenever "A" attempts by law to impose his moral standards upon "B," "A" is most likely a scoundrel. (NB: Here is the Scientific American on [Moral Grandstanding](#), AKA Virtue Signaling.)

### On Politics

- On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their hearts desire and alas the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.
- In a world of sin and sorrow, there is always something to be thankful for. As for me, I rejoice that I am not a Republican.
- Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance.
- An idealist is one who, on noticing that roses smell better than cabbage, concludes it will also make better soup.
- Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage.
- It is even harder for the average ape to believe that he descended from man

Graham

**swimming 11/18/2019 11:25 AM**

Phony Phacebook – swimming in Kyiv

You Americans are hogging the blanket – it's freezing over here!

While you bask in summer weather, we are having the coldest July I can recall. It has not cracked 80 all month. Five days it has not even hit 70.

Nonetheless, I have continued my daily swims. Today was not that bad – 75° outside.

As Shakespeare had it, sweet are the uses of adversity. The mosquitoes remain in hibernation. As usual, I had the lake all the myself.

Here's the story of how we happen to wind up next to the lake. In my wanderings through Kyiv in my first couple of years here I stumbled across Russanovski Sad and concluded that it would be an ideal neighborhood. Isolated, tranquil, close to the river, and yet only 3 miles as the crow flies from the presidential palace. Oksana shared my opinion and we bought two lots here shortly after we were married. Initially as an investment, but it wasn't long before I was doodling with architectural plans. We moved in 2013.

This lake, only 200 yards from our house, has no motor boats. Few boats at all.

They cut it in half for the Metro line under construction, the one that will end our isolation. You can see a crane atop the grey stone dam/bridge in the distance.

Here's a picture of Eddie at the landing, around the bend a couple hundred yards further from the construction. My swim to the end is about two thirds of a mile round-trip.

Neither Berkeley/El Cerrito, where I grew up, or Washington DC had anything like this little lake. Lake Anza, in the Berkeley hills, was small and well supervised by lifeguards. Lake Merritt, in Oakland, did not allow it whatsoever. The public is simply not allowed to swim in the Potomac River, Rock Creek, Lake Needwood or any other natural waters I know of around Washington DC.

Why not? Big brother is looking out for our safety. Big brother is also acutely attuned to the litigious nature of American society and the likelihood that some damn fool will do something stupid and drown.

Ukraine is different in just about every respect. We barbecue outdoors. We burn leaves in the fall. We encourage neighbors to pick up after their dogs, but we don't jail them when

they don't. None of the many attempts to get us to sort our trash seem to have taken. Nobody bugs me if my lawn is not mowed or if my kid walks to school.

Getting back to swimming, the people who own the dachas facing the lake wave me away if I get close to their fishing lines, but otherwise aren't bothered that I'm there. The attitude is that if I happen to drown it's my fault.

Ukrainians are Libertarian in the PJ O'Rourke sense: "There is only one basic human right, the right to do as you damn well please. And with it comes the only basic human duty, the duty to take the consequences."

This came home to me Sunday when we did something kinda stupid. I took Eddie and his friend Lolika on a rowboat that we rented in Hydropark, the Soviet era amusement park on Venetsiansky Island in the middle of the Dnipro River. We rode west through the channel separating this from two other islands, into the Dnipro itself. I asked the kids if they were up for the 4 mile trip all the way around the island. They eagerly assented.

There was a stiff breeze blowing upriver and some dark clouds in the West. I thought, no problem, the wind will blow the clouds away from us. As we got halfway down the length of the island, we observed that the storm on the opposite bank of the river was staying put and there was quite a

dramatic lightning show. The wind was still very much in my face as I continued paddling downstream. The storm, however, seem to buck the wind and follow us.

As we rounded the bottom of the island and started back up, the wind shifted and was in our face again. More than that, it started to rain a little bit. I poured on the steam, but by the time we got a bit past halfway up toward the pier it was raining cats and dogs. The lightning was immediately overhead, the thunder instantaneous. I wasn't worried about being struck – the tall trees would be hit first, there is never a report of people getting hit by lightning, and the fishermen were staying put along the banks – but we were thoroughly soaked by the time we got back to the dock.

I doubt there is any place in the United States where you would be allowed to paddle four miles on a busy waterway in the middle of the capital city. It is not without its dangers. When I was first doing it a decade ago I once repeatedly heard some odd honking sound. It got my attention. Turning around, I saw a tow-boat driven barge coming right at me. They weren't going fast, but they couldn't have stopped if I had been totally oblivious.

Getting back to the theme of swimming, yes, I am on my own. I have decided to favor the end of the lake where there are dachas every couple of hundred feet rather than the more scenic, isolated south end. If I really got in trouble I could probably make it to shore, and there's a possibility somebody might even hear me and jump in to grab me. But I would not bet on either.

The end would be quick, fitting, and offer no work for the legal profession.

Graham

**deplatformed 11/18/2019 11:53 AM**

Dude, where's my video?

Many of the personalities I like best on the Internet have been disappeared over the past couple of years. Deplatformed – condemned to oblivion. Where did they go? And more to the point, can't anybody figure out how to make a buck by hosting them?

I blundered upon a site today that seems to offer a partial answer. Bitchute.com. It is free, and worth every penny of it. In other words, it doesn't work very well. But it does host Stephen Molyneux, Angry Foreigner, Paul Joseph Watson, Alex Jones, Jared Taylor and a few others who have been deplatformed, often disparaged but seldom refuted.

The Wikipedia entry – bowdlerized as usual in this day and age – informs us that "BitChute has accommodated far-right groups and individuals,[8] and has been criticized by the Southern Poverty Law Center for hosting "hate-fueled material".[9] There has been conflict between YouTube and right-wing video creators over the inclusion of hate speech and misinformation in videos, and YouTube responded in some cases by banning creators, blocking their videos, or through channel "demonetization"."

Google has a painful problem with YouTube. Conservative content draws more viewers than liberal content. One explanation would be that conservatives are smarter and more involved. Another would be that the biases of liberals



are flattered well enough by the mainstream media. Whatever the case, a lot of YouTube's profit comes from people that Google hates. There is a tough battle afoot between their greed and political bias. In preparation for next year's elections, the latter seems to be winning out.

An appeal to fair-mindedness goes almost nowhere in this day and age, but any of you with a curious bent can search on "Bitchute" followed by some controversial name of which you have heard and see what the fuss is about. Decide for yourself whether or not people like Angry Foreigner are truly advocating hate or are simply making insightful observations on the current scene. Observations that government and the liberal elite would just as soon not be shared. Some search engines like to pretend that Bitchute doesn't exist and won't take you to the channel. You may have to go to Bitchute.com and use their internal search – bad as it is.

In keeping with its advertised impartiality, Bitchute hosts presenters of different persuasions, such as these guys who think that the [school unions in San Francisco are not quite far enough to the left](#). Take a look. I don't find them quite as polished as, say, Blonde in the Belly of the Beast, Lauren Southern or Karen Straghan, but tastes and mileage may vary. Let them have their say. It's a (supposedly) free country.

There are some amazing stories among them. I found [Brittany Pettibone](#) in reviewing her [book of common sense advice for young women](#). Following her own advice, she fell in love with and married an Austrian political blogger named Martin Sellner. She tells a frightening story about how the establishment is trying to brand them both as terrorists, to exhaust them mentally and financially. Then there is [Soph](#), a surprisingly articulate Bay Area high school student who tackles issues with a maturity well beyond her 14 years. She turns me off because she uses the F bomb too promiscuously for such a young kid. But she's been banned?

I avoid Google. I will watch content on Bitchute if it is there, only turning to YouTube if it is not. Fewer eyeballs means less money, and less money for them means more freedom for me. I'll continue to upload my own videos to both, but the links I send will be Bitchute.

Graham

Soph <https://www.bitchute.com/ch...>  
Mark Dice <https://www.bitchute.com/ch...>  
Britt Pettibone <https://www.bitchute.com/ch...>  
Pat Condell <https://www.bitchute.com/ch...>  
Tommy Robinson <https://www.bitchute.com/ch...>  
Info Wars <https://www.bitchute.com/ch...>  
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## **the wild strain.docx      11/18/2019 01:51 PM**

I am married to a woman of the wild strain.

She was never subjected to the notion that she was anything other than a girl or should grow up to be anything other than a woman. She played with dolls. She has never subjected her body to any regime of synthetic hormones. Her education is in early childhood musical education. Her first significant job was as a dancer in a folk ensemble. She has never competed with men.

My life is like "I Love Lucy." Chock-full of what seems to me to be irrationality – but founded on love and centered around children.

Oksana came in as I was getting breakfast for the kids one morning last week. She immediately asked – demanded to know - had I given Zoriana any water? Had I taken off her sleep diaper? Had she gone to the bathroom? What did she have for breakfast? Her inquisition style is reminiscent of Perry Mason.

The objective can't be information. A quick feel will tell her about the diaper. It makes no difference when Zoriana last peed. She can see what's left of breakfast. And she can guess that if she doesn't see a cup, I probably didn't give Zoriana water.

Zoriana has, of course, survived for days on end with daddy taking care of her. To me the game here is to assert mom's primacy over all things having to do with the children. We see eye to eye on the important stuff and I readily concede the rest.

This follows the division of labor in a traditional household. I do my part, slaying the mammoths to keep meat on the table and dealing with the externals: paying the bills and keeping things fixed. She makes sure that the kids have clothes, do their homework, see the doctor and so on.

Anthropologist/evolutionary psychologists Sarah Blaffer Hrdy has covered this aspect of evolution in her books "Mother Nature" and "Mothers and Others." Raising children used to be a community effort. Typically, a collective of women. One-on-one with a kid wears a mother out, but it turns out that watching several at a time is little more work. The kids entertain each other, and the mothers benefit from shared expertise.

Of course the mothers share superstitions. I am regularly subjected to what seems to me like illogical positions on whether to force kids to drink water (above), whether to force a kid who is not sleepy to take a nap, whether a kid with conjunctivitis or a minor skin rash – impetigo – is a danger to the whole community. But while I may be serving scientific truth by standing up and arguing these points, I don't think I'm serving my genetic interests. It is better to let the women have their way. If they're wrong, it won't hurt anything, and I have the immense benefit of having kids raised by people who really care. I need to just shut up.

Bad boy evolutionary psychologists Edward Dutton and Michael Woodley of Menie make a couple of points about human evolution. Point number one is that it is very rapid. Their second point is that it has been spinning in reverse since the Industrial Revolution.

The rapidity of evolution is evident in our animals. The American Kennel Club says it takes about 50 generations to establish a new breed of dog. It has been about 50 generations since the Soviet researcher Belyaev started his attempt to tame foxes. The changes were very noticeable after only a half dozen generations. In half that time they had become as tame as dogs.

It has been about ten generations since the Industrial Revolution. That's ten generations during which the number of children who did not reach reproductive age fell from 40% to almost 0%. Ten generations in which any adult who felt like having children could, including people who would not have found a mate, or would not have been able to support children without the help of society. That's also ten generations in which the smartest among the human population generally didn't have that many children. These most intelligent were the first to slip away from the bonds of religion and tradition. Like the Greeks and Romans before them, they concluded that children were a burden that they did not need to assume.

At the time of the October revolution, the Industrial Revolution had not yet hit Russia and Ukraine. A look at the farmhouses in the Chernobyl Museum shows that they were still using homemade wooden shovels and pitchforks as late as 1986. Life was hard. The disease, wear and tear of rural life continued to cull the weak among the human herd until quite recently. You had to be made a pretty tough stuff in order to reproduce. Oksana's great-grandmother lived to 99. The daughter she bore in her forties, Oksana's grandmother Melania, recently passed away at 95.

The great wars of the twentieth century were dysgenic. Mortality among officers was higher than among commoners. War wiped out the scions of many of the great houses of Europe, and left a generation populated with spinsters. The best and brightest in the Communist world perished as well. Great-grandfather was a kulak. Like many other talented Ukrainians, he disappeared in the Holodomor, when grandmother was just a girl.

The upshot is that my wild strain wife is descended of physically tough stock. More than that, she inherited a belief system shot through with the kind of superstitions that promote family.

It has not been totally easy for me to adjust – arguing fiercely one minute about the germ theory of disease, but the next answering the frequent and sincere question "Do you love me?" It has, however, given me what I want. Healthy children who seem, as best I can tell, poised to grow up and have their own families of healthy children.

I'll close with a note on the downside of Ukraine. On Saturday Oksana noticed that workmen were tearing down the fence separating us from our neighbor. She asked them, why? It turns out there is a new owner, who gave her a really silly answer. As pay for work they were doing elsewhere on the property, he had let them take the corrugated fiberglass/concrete slabs in the fence. He proposed that we discussed the new fence and split the cost 50/50. He said he would call later to talk about it.

Later never came. I called him Saturday night to see what the deal was. He said he would call on Sunday, when he would be here. We didn't get a call. Oksana called him in the evening, and the deal had changed. He doesn't have any money for a new fence.

I asked the president of the community Association today two questions. First, how do we establish the property line? I have never seen a surveyor in the neighborhood. Secondly, is there any convention for how neighbors typically split the costs of a fence?

My guess is that I wind up paying for it out of my own pocket. I also guess that the exact location of the property line doesn't matter that much, but I would like to have it on better authority than guesswork. Oksana makes the good observation that we don't want to take too obvious offense at this young man's presumption, which may be no more than naïveté. Young men are prone to have loud parties and one thing and another, we don't want to burn our bridges.

I had talked with the previous owner about buying the property. I offered \$30,000, expecting to settle for a market value of \$35,000. The neighbor saw a rich American and would not budge from \$60,000. We left it at that. I figured she would come back when she wanted to sell it. Apparently I guessed wrong. We never heard it was for sale. I think the wise course of action may be to simply buy this young man out at small profit and save ourselves the aggravation. But we have to be careful – he doesn't seem like a very rational sort.

I'm sure there is more to tell as the story unravels. Wish us luck.

Graham

## **Irina French.docx      11/24/2019 08:23 PM**

Of fences and Frenchies, poets and tosspots

The fence situation resolved itself quite easily. I learned the options for building the fence – or so I thought. You can make a sectional fence, with pillars every 8 feet supporting rectangular elements, or you can use roll fencing. It came in roles of 10 or 25 m.

How secure did we want to be? The bad guys can get through any fence. It's a question of how difficult the we want to make it for them. Our property is surrounded by six fences – 20 m wide front and back, and four stretches of 30 m on either side of our two lots. Two of the 30 m fences are not very secure at all. Instead of putting this one a couple of steps higher insecurity, we decided to go cheap and make it comparable to the others.

I sent out a bunch of emails and one guy seems pretty enthusiastic. I don't think it is worth the effort to get competitive bids on a \$300 job. We went with him. And we learned a third way of making fences. They arrive with a bundle of 2 m long sections of bent wire and assemble the chain-link fence on the spot. They

were able to use the existing fence posts and most of the existing boards. It is ugly but serviceable. If Andrei the neighbor doesn't like it, he has only himself to blame for tearing down the old one.

I think we will attempt to beautify it by spreading morning glory seeds along the bottom of the fence. If it is covered by vegetation it won't look that bad, at least not in the summer.

\* \* \*

I split very cleanly from my former wife Mary Ann in 2006. I disappeared from the neighborhood and waited for our mutual acquaintances to contact me. There were not very many - Mary Ann is not a very sociable person and we didn't maintain a wide circle of friends. As a consequence most of our mutual acquaintances had not heard from me since I moved to Ukraine.

Our youngest daughter was a high school junior and the other two recently out of college when I left. All of them considered me to be a hopeless right-winger because I did not have proper attitudes on most topics. They simply did not want to talk with me, fearing (rightly perhaps) that I might offer some opinions about the unkind way they treated their boyfriends, their louche sexual behavior or their lack of interest in finding some sort of remunerative profession.

Mary Ann's business partners and siblings were really pretty decent people. I wanted to let them know that I was available if they had any desire to maintain contact, though I didn't expect it, and I also wanted to let them know that I was getting along okay in life. I felt the natural human desire to offer some justification for my decision 13 years ago to leave an untenable situation, and to point out that my fears for the former family's lack of success, as well as my confidence in my ability to start a new life had been well-founded.

After going over the family information, things that you have read on my blog, I added some observations on Russia and Ukraine. Both countries are very much in the news in the United States. I think people will enjoy reading personal observations of a guy who has lived in Ukraine throughout the period of the events described and has interacted with people who were fairly close to the action. I am including what I wrote them here below my signature. I know in advance that some of you disagree strongly on these points – please don't even bother to write to remind me!

\* \* \*

I have never been much of a bar drinker. I tried meeting people in Washington area bars after breaking up in 2006. I have summarized my experiences as a single guy for that brief period in a series of humorous speeches that appear on my YouTube channel. Basically it was a disaster. The women I met were past their

prime, either self-sufficient and still interested in confirming that they were somewhat attractive to the opposite sex, or looking for somebody to take care of them in their declining years. I certainly never met anybody who was looking for marriage and children.

Kyiv just doesn't have much of a bar scene. There are gentlemen's clubs, where you can pay outrageous amounts to watch near naked girls writhe around. There are places to go with groups of friends, but no real places to go and meet people. I did better with church, language conversation clubs (French, German, Spanish, Russian, English... you name it), people I met while teaching, social clubs like Rotary and the Lions and so on.

I noticed when I moved here to Rusannovsky Sad that some of the mom-and-pop stores had beer on tap. I hung around a bit, but never got into interesting conversations. I have mentioned before that there are a couple of barflies, Natosha and Sveta, that hang around our particular mom-and-pop store. I will sometimes enjoy conversation with them and the store clerk for the time it takes me to drink a beer.

An Italian deli opened up about four years ago in a storefront that had had about four to previous tenants, none of whom were able to make a go of it. The last one was a poultry outlet. It struck me that this is an improbable place for an Italian deli – you can buy Italian goods in the supermarkets, and there were only a thousand families living here year-round. In my mind I wish them the best of luck. I did notice, however, that Polina Karabach, who shared our house with her husband Yuri until a year ago September, did like to go there and buy stuff. Oksana has also developed a taste for overpriced imported cheeses. I might have noted that there was more to it than I had first imagined.

The proprietor is a guy named Timur - that's Ukrainian for Tamerlane, the 14<sup>th</sup>-century warlord. He is an engineer, a smart guy, and continues to tinker around looking for the keys to success. He has recently introduced food-service, beer, and a couple of tables on the street. And it turns out he has created his own demand. The more substantial inhabitants of the neighborhood – people with cars, more or less – have started showing up there. Over the summer I dropped in a couple of times for a beer as I was walking Zoriana and fell in the conversation.

I was in the mood for beer this afternoon so I dropped in again. It is not beer weather – about 20° outside – but I was thirsty. There was a new clerk who was talking to a couple of women, about 30 and 60. The clerk had a Mediterranean look about him and didn't speak terribly good Russian. The women recognized me – the only American in town, the old guy whom they often see on the bus speaking English to his two young kids. The older one, obviously with enough beer in her to be a bit mellow, started to talk to me in English. She soon apologized for the fact that her English wasn't that great and lamented that if only I could speak French.

Voilà. We had a long conversation in French, which it turns out she speaks very well indeed. She lived a couple of decades in France and has family there. Swept away with the novelty of the situation, and lubricated by just a bit of beer, she became very expansive. Moreover, the clerk joined in. It turns out he is an



Algerian studying medicine here. He is still struggling with Russian, does okay with English, and speaks French, Arabic and Berber natively. That left only the thirtyish woman out of the conversation.

So, we were all enjoying feeling so cosmopolitan and accomplished that we shared our life's experiences. Irena, the older lady, had a disaster to tell us about. Her neighbor rented her house to some displaced people from Donetsk. Somehow they got mad and set fire to the place, gutting the second and third floors. Three floors – that's a big house. The neighbor is devastated, and Irena is her comfort. She was at the Italian place just to enjoy a social moment before going back to join the neighbor for dinner.

I have heard a similar story twice before. Generous Kyivlyans (that's natives of Kyiv) have extended their hospitality to displaced people from the Donbass, Russian speakers who historically looked down on Ukrainians and have a sense of entitlement. I expect that I will see Irena again and may hear more about the story. Although maybe not. You remember the story about Jason, the English teacher whose wife had shut him out? I've been back to that beer joint twice and they tell me that Jason comes in only very rarely. They don't know how the story turned out.

It was a pleasant half hour that ended with the French air kisses on the cheek. French kissing in France is not like French kissing in the United States. And in fact it went on for a long time – we must've exchanged half a dozen of these kisses before Irena finally went home to her dinner.

You can be sure that Ill go back. It seems like every time I get out I wind up speaking English because that's what everybody else wants to practice. I welcome the chance for Russian and French.

\* \* \*

Our Toastmasters club had its poetry meeting yesterday. 27 people recited poems. They were in English, Ukrainian, Russian, French, German and Japanese. It was a competition, though certainly nobody there spoke all of those languages. The winner, our perpetual winner is Vitaliy Rulov with his rendition of Edgar Allan Poe's The Raven. It was a first rate effort. The second place went to somebody reading Maya Angelou. I have to confess I don't understand the attraction, but there obviously is one. The third place went to a woman reading her own composition in Ukrainian. I didn't understand it but her manner was very attractive. And I recited Three Prominent Bastards, one of the best works of Ogden Nash. Supposedly – with a bad word like bastards he disavowed it, although the style is very much is. I attach it.

Eddie, after vowing he would not participate, recited what is probably Ogden Nash's second shortest poem:

The problem with the kitten is that...

Eventually it becomes a cat.

Which begs the question of the absolute shortest. Candy is dandy but liquor is quicker.

With that I will close. My discourses on Ukraine and Russia follow. If you want to read more on the same subject, with citations of other authors, see my review of Stephen F Cohen's [War with Russia](#).

Graham

### Observations on US politics and Ukraine

I've had mixed experience in the political realm here in Ukraine. I joined the Rotary club when I first came to the country. In September 2010 I fronted the club \$9,000, paying an obligation in the United States to be paid back by dollars in Ukraine. I had to chase the treasurer for a month to get the money. This fellow was a loud, breast beating Ukrainian patriot, as were many others in the club.

Others soon had similar experiences with him. In January 2011 I asked for an audit – the bylaws call for one annually. The old boys in the club leadership turned on me, saying that I was calling the treasurer thief. Finally, in October the rest of the leadership sensed there was indeed a problem. Like a school of piranha, they turned on their buddy the treasurer as if they had not been whatsoever complicit. It turned out he had stolen \$50,000. They never made the connection between this local corruption and what happens at the national level.

After a couple more misadventures, in 2015 I decided to join the Lions Club. Many of the members were reporters from the Kyiv Post newspaper. It turned out to be a Hillary Clinton bastion. I committed a grievous error, saying in jest that what Billy Bush reported that Donald Trump having said was not quite as felonious as some of the things that Bill Clinton had actually done. The conversation froze and I was quickly corrected on that point. After 15 months, and an election result that came as a total shock to them, they still had not extended an offer of membership. I lost interest.

The people I worked with at Jewish News One, my television reporting gig, were of a similar political bent. Peter Byrne had been on George Soros' staff here a few years previously. The leader of our team, Peter Dickenson, is now working for the Atlantic Council. This was the time of Brexit, which every one of them adamantly opposed. They took their politics like religion. They held me not only to be wrong, but a heretic against their true church.

I attended the Democrats Abroad picnic a couple of summers. They always had a pretty good turnout. I asked if there were a similar Republicans Abroad organization. No, there wasn't. There are just not many Republicans.

The political establishment associated with the American and Canadian embassies likewise had a distinctively progressive bent. I think I was the only one who was shocked by Victoria Nuland's telephone remark about the uselessness of the European Union. I tried Russian language Internet searches to see if there was any serious allegation of CIA involvement in Yanukovich's ouster in 2014. I could not find any. One could conclude either that the CIA had no interest or that they were too inept to meddle effectively. I had seen too much of them in Vietnam to believe the former.

It is not surprising to me that the Ukrainian powers that be would have assumed that Hillary was a shoo in, and that their donations to the Clinton Foundation and her election campaign were solid investments.

### Russia

I'm not worried about Russia invading Ukraine. It does not generally initiate wars of aggression. It takes what it can when it can. It took Ukraine in 1648 by forming an alliance with Ukraine against Poland and then taking over when the Ukrainians were not strong enough to resist. They were already here.

Russia expanded eastward clear to California by occupying the land that was held by tribesmen. Again, a matter of opportunity. The USSR did start a small war of aggression against tiny Finland, but settled for a truce after the Finns put up resistance. They took part of Finland and left the rest as a neutral buffer.

In the big wars Russia has fought throughout its history, against the Mongols, the Turks, the French under Napoleon, and the Germans, they were always on the defensive. Defending their territory fiercely but not starting wars.

They do capitalize on opportunity. When the Poles were busy fighting the Wehrmacht in the West, the USSR grabbed their eastern provinces. After the war the Russian armies were already occupying Europe west to Berlin. They simply didn't go home. The countries they occupied were too exhausted to resist. They had phony plebiscites, the whole show of stage-managed referenda like the one recently in Crimea to legitimize their occupancy. But the fact was that they were never far from their own borders, working at minimal risk.

That brings us up to today. Before Ukraine, the closest thing to a Soviet war of aggression was in Afghanistan, as they attempted to curb the threat of militant Islam on its border – and not coincidentally, export communism.. It was a disaster for them the same as it's been a disaster for us.

Putin had a somewhat plausible excuse for snatching Crimea, Helsinki Accords notwithstanding. Among other things Crimea is resolutely Russian-speaking and many citizens had strong Russian sympathies. It had, after all, been part of Russia until 1954. As part of a basing agreement, Russia had soldiers there. So the

whole thing was just a question of deploying the soldiers that were already there and taking over while Ukraine was distracted by the chaos following Yanukovich's ouster.

Crimea was separated from Russia by a narrow strait. It was not self-sufficient in water or electricity. After his nearly bloodless success in winning it, Putin was emboldened to go a land connection. He used traditional clandestine means. He organized People's Republics, gave them weapons, recruited a bunch of thugs to run them, and stayed at arms' length to ensure plausible deniability. After fomenting rebellions clear across southern and eastern Ukraine, Putin must've been vastly disappointed that only two of them took.

The Ukrainians fought back. These were mainly Ukrainian civilians – the Army was useless. It had been weakened and infiltrated by Russians under Yanukovich and prior presidents. But the Ukrainian people showed that whether or not they spoke the language, they really didn't want to be Russian. In the end, Putin wound up with just Donetsk and Lugansk. He has destroyed their economies and driven most of the productive young people over here to Ukraine.

This loss is a great affront to Ukrainian pride. But the fact is that this is clapped out coal country. The inhabitants were mostly descendents of roughnecks brought in from all over the Russian Empire a century and a quarter ago to exploit the newly discovered coal. They were nobody's good citizens, certainly not Ukraine's. They were a drain on the budget and a wellspring of corruption.

It is as if Spain took back Puerto Rico and grabbed Mississippi in the bargain. But no Ukrainian politician can afford to be called the one who gave in to Russia, so the war plods on inconclusively. At the same time they are building very substantial "temporary" border control and customs facilities on the roads to and fro.

The bottom line is that it would be out of character and very stupid for Putin, with a country of 140 million, to declare war on our country of 40 million which he now knows for sure does not want him. It would certainly excite NATO and the many hawks in Washington. Putin is not a dumb man. I feel safer from war here than I would from civil disturbances in the United States.

## **Home economics.docx      11/28/2019 12:38 PM**

Home economics, Martha Stewart 101, advertising faux pas.

Quite a few grocery items you just can't buy here in Ukraine. Or, they are scarce.

When I arrived in 2007 it was merely difficult to find peanut butter. When I did, it was American brands like Skippy or Jif, generally overpriced. But after the crisis of 2008 the Americans became fewer, and peanut butter less available. If we wanted to buy it we had to truck clear across the city to Chinatown - peanut butter is a major ingredient for Southeast Asian dishes, and the Chinese seem to provide the groceries for every Asian in town. We learned to make our own.

Over the last few years European companies have made inroads into the Ukrainian market. We can find peanut butter again, but now it is from Dutch and Polish companies. It seemed kind of expensive – four dollars a pound. – although an Internet search shows that it costs about that much in the United States. I am simply insulated against inflation over here. In any case, when we get serious about peanut butter we usually buy peanuts for \$1.50/lb. and make our own.

Making your own is the story here. Pumpkin pie is another example. An American diplomat returning home gave me a gift of a can of Libby's pumpkin pie filling that he had bought at the commissary. It was to him a total treasure – otherwise unavailable. It sat on my shelf for five years before I found another American to give it to.

I decided that I wanted to make a pumpkin pie when we had the Rotary over for Thanksgiving 2015. Pumpkins certainly grow here. I discovered that making pie from a real pumpkin is easy and cheap. They cost only about 15¢/lb. You bake the pumpkin for an hour, scoop out the meat, and put it in a food processor with sweetened condensed milk, eggs, cinnamon, ginger, cornstarch and a pinch of salt. Put it into a pre-baked pie crust and there you go.

By the way, pie crusts are another thing that you can't buy here. Fortunately my mother showed me how to make them when I was a kid. The balance between tender and flaky and still capable of holding together is a trick that I continue to work on to these many years. I tweak my technique every couple of months.

I also make my own pickles, sauerkraut, mustard, salad dressing, hollandaise sauce, béarnaise sauce and other condiments. I used to refer to my Escoffier and Julia Child cookbooks, but today everything is on the Internet.

My latest yen was for corned beef. In America you just buy it in the market. Here they absolutely don't have it. So, I downloaded a recipe. It calls for beef brisket. What's a brisket? It's the breast of the beast, the muscle outside of the ribs. They sell it here, but only in the form of short ribs, cut up with the bones still in.

For the sake of experimentation, I figured the bones didn't matter. The pickling brine is easy to prepare. A quart and a half of water, a half cup of salt, a quarter cup of sugar, and a bunch of spices: coriander, mustard seed, whole black pepper, red pepper, allspice, a couple of cloves, a few chunks of ginger and a stick of cinnamon. Put the meat and the brine into a 1 gallon jar and let it sit in the refrigerator for a week.

The actual recipe calls as well for pickling salt – sodium nitrate. They use that because it retards botulism, ensuring that the meat will keep for a long time. But the Internet assured me that it wasn't necessary as long as I kept the jar in the refrigerator until I used it. The Internet additionally warns one against consuming too much sodium nitrate. Given my fondness of bacon I get my share of exposure without adding to it.

Oksana loved the final product so much that she wanted to invite guests over. It does taste delicious, and it is something quite new to the Ukrainian pallet. However, chopped up as it was, it fell apart in the pressure cooker and didn't make a very pleasant presentation. My next step will be to convince the butcher to separate the breast meat from the bones so I get just the brisket – something that remains big enough to carve into slices. That should not be difficult – he can use the bones and I can't. Short ribs are pretty cheap – \$1.50/lb. Ex-bones that will probably be \$2.00, still a bargain.

Oksana handled the invitations for Saturday night's dinner featuring the corned beef. Ugly or not, it all went quite quickly. This was the first time that Oksana had taken 100% responsibility for making up the guest list and inviting people. We had two other two-year-olds, early music students of Oksana's, with their parents. Oksana also invited the mother of an eight-month-old kid from around the corner. I am always especially glad to get to know the neighbors.

As always in these gatherings, there is a mixture of languages. The mothers of the music students and one of the fathers speak excellent English. They gravitate toward conversation with me. The other father and the neighborhood mom only speak Ukrainian and Russian. I made a point of circulating, trying to draw them out. In a gathering with little kids circulation takes care of itself. The mothers have to get up often enough to nurse, change, chase or chastise their kids. There is never a question of how to disengage from a dragging conversation - it happens automatically. The mothers, spending so much time alone with their kids, are extraordinarily glad to get out of the house and let the kids amuse each other.

We designed our house for kids. The living room/dining room/kitchen is about 30 ft.<sup>2</sup>, enough room for kids to really get up a head of steam. That is exactly what kids need in the winter, hard to do in apartments.

Oksana had more people on her list than we were able to invite. It won't be hard to put together another party. Maybe we can get one that will be more Russian-speaking, so everybody feels included and I get a chance to use the language a bit. To that end I have put a couple more pieces of beef into brine. This time I used what is called entrecote. Though it translates as Delmonico, unlike the meat by that name in the United States it is neither terribly tender nor terribly expensive. Next time, as noted above, I will see about getting a genuine brisket.

\* \* \*

There is more to tell about Walid, the French-speaking Algerian student I wrote about last time. He is a Berber, the tribe of the Atlas Mountains spanning Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. He apparently comes from a fairly substantial family in Saida. He is studying here because it is cheap – about \$3,500 a year. He says it is even less for Ukrainians, who get additional stipends, part-time work and so on from the government. It sounded almost like a complaint, but to me it seems like a wise policy to take care of your own. He is studying chemistry, it turns out. Medical school would cost more, about \$5,000.

I am glad to learn that Walid is paying his own way here in Ukraine. I have had conversations with other people from the Middle East and Africa, such as the French-speaking Cameroonian fellow who sold Eddie a pair of shoes. Nobody is getting any welfare – there is none to be had. These people have to be working, and the wages are not all that attractive.

If one were to generalize from the Africans and Middle Easterners that one meets here in Ukraine, one would conclude that they are a fairly capable lot. However, witnessing the extreme problems - ones that the governments are doing everything they can to ignore in France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Scandinavia - I conclude that Ukraine has been lucky so far but they should not wear rose-colored glasses. They should continue to make immigration difficult for everybody, as it was for me, and to refuse to extend welfare, especially to foreigners.

They should also allow the common sense that prevailed up until the last couple of decades to trump political correctness. Our ancestors were not moral pygmies. They were hardheaded, practical people who called things as they saw them. They went out of their way to educate, civilize, and integrate other peoples into the industrial societies they had built. They were sufficiently self-assured to note with pleasure that it worked with some, such as the Eastern European and Northeast Asian immigrants of a century ago, but not to blame themselves when it didn't with others. Of course there have always been many exceptional people of every background, but it is the averages that matter. Policy applies to peoples, not to individual people. Ukraine can welcome the best and brightest of all peoples, but not lose sight of the fact that that they are not representative.

At any rate, I will continue to enjoy conversation with Walid and wish him progress learning Russian and getting a medical education. If the topic comes up, I will encourage him to return to Algeria upon completion of his studies, marry a nice Berber girl and do what he can to make Algerian society successful.

\* \* \*

Is Coca-Cola asleep? Didn't they watch what happened to Gillette when they aired those commercials attempting to change society? Political correctness is running amok in corporate America. The Internet calls my attention to an advertisement for their Sprite brand showing two grandparents gushing over their transgender grandsomething.

[Here is a video](#). Call me whatever kind of troglodyte you will, but that grandfather would not be me. Tolerate? Accept? Yes. Just like I would accept them if they had AIDS, a heroin addiction or bipolar disorder. Celebrate? Never. My genomic interest lies with grandchildren. Coca-Cola is telling my children to look the opposite direction.

Visa and PayPal stop processing transactions for people that they don't like. One credit card company is just like another. These companies have no edge except their ubiquity and their advertising. If they lose brand image, mindshare, they have nothing. When it comes to colas, advertising notwithstanding, Coke tastes just like Pepsi. All their sugar water does is rot your teeth (not mine anymore – porcelain teeth are impervious) and give you diabetes. It is not smart for them to call to my attention the fact that I don't need either their products or their propaganda.

Levi's ads are egregiously in-your-face as far as I'm concerned. Starbucks ditto. Levi's used to be a quality product. Now it is made of third-rate materials in third world countries. I'll have to find some minority group to join so that advertisers will take my sensibilities seriously. Why aren't our Muslim brethren rising up against this blasphemy, celebrating the surgical and chemical transmogrification of Allah's creatures? I'll wait, but I'm not holding my breath. In the meantime I have switched to BIC razors, Marks & Spencer trousers, and the American Express credit card. Add Pepsi-Cola to my new list of favorites. I may soon be an expatriate in my consumption habits as well as my physical location.

I'm an old guy who doesn't consume much. But I am also a writer and a public speaker with a moderately large audience. I tell them what I think, and I am not impressed by Coca-Cola at the moment. I would have expected a backlash from Americans. I'm disappointed to turn out to be in the first wave. Tolerance has been our curse. Or maybe just timidity and indifference.

Returning to the topic of clothes, it is indeed true that we old guys are not very reliable consumers. Most of my wardrobe is 20 years old. I have set aside the thirty-year-old Elk Volunteer Fire Department (Elk, California) jacket I got from my father in favor of a one that my friend Gerry Gregg gave me when we lived together about 1964. There is a hole in the pocket of my dad's jacket that I need to mend. Jerry's is a Sierra Designs original, filled with eider down, so well made that it has never ripped and the zipper has never malfunctioned. It makes you wonder. If they could make them that well in the sixties...?

At this point I don't have an intact pair of Levi's, despite the fact that I have bought six pairs since I've been here. Every day I am wearing the black and khaki slacks that I bought from Nordstrom's, Kohl's and Target 20 some years ago. They have never even been mended. The Arrow dress shirts that I bought as business attire 30 years ago are holding up pretty well, and the recent ones from Marks & Spencer still look new after 30 or 40 washings. I conclude that the trend toward casual corresponds to a trend towards cheap and shabby.



Eddie is probably the only kid who wears ironed shirts to school, and I am one of the few men of my generation who still irons his clothes. The clothes look better and they are made better. If I ever buy jeans again it will be from Marks & Spencer. I have looked at them several times but just don't feel any compelling need.

Consumption in our household is focused on kids. I just had an "Oh, crap" moment. Pampers is manufactured by Procter & Gamble, the same corporation that makes Gillette. We have already figured out that Huggies leak. Firm resolve: next time I buy diapers, it will be from a foreign firm.

Eddie does not wear anything with the brand name on it. But he has given himself a brand. He wears Hawaiian shirts every day. I bought him some three years ago spring to wear that summer, and he is addicted. Here are pictures of three of his favorites:

Despite the temperature in the twenties he wore the one on the left today. It is one I love, with a drawing of the 1946 Ford Woody my family had when I was at his age.

Hawaiian shirts are a family tradition dating back 50 years. Some of you on this distribution know the antecedents better than I do. When I arrived in Vietnam in 1968 the local office had its own interpretation of IBM's famously restrictive dress code. We wore white shirts – yes – but with a couple of exceptions. On account of the climate in Vietnam they were always short-sleeved. That precedent had been set by the IBM office in Honolulu. All of the companies in Hawaii had a tradition of wearing Aloha shirts on Fridays. We gladly followed suit. Since our travels to the United States usually took us through Honolulu, it was easy enough to buy them.

My goodly supply of Hawaiian shirts lasted through my tour in Germany 1972-76 and into Washington DC. One way or another, I managed to always have some in my closet. I've of course worn them on all of our vacations and my work trips to Latin America. When Internet shopping came into being it became easy. All but a few of those I brought over to Ukraine 12 years ago are now rags, but I have been shopping mail order for myself all along. I got some for Eddie when he was five or so, and he fell in love with them. Our Hawaiian shirts certainly set the two of us apart from the crowd.

## **Russian French translation.docx 12/20/2019 02:43 PM**

Some of you may remember that last year I was involved with trying to generate interest in dual language texts for studying English. I got nowhere. Students don't read much anymore.

I have a new twist. I plan to translate books that ought to be read here in Ukraine into Russian and Ukrainian.

My first attempt is the book "If We Do Nothing" by Jared Taylor, the fellow who runs the website on which I published my recent piece about older fatherhood. Because he speaks French, I translated it into French as well as Russian as a proof of concept.

The idea is simple. Most educated foreigners read English the way I read Russian. I can understand it, but it is a labor. I am reluctant to read an entire book in Russian. But they do want to read the books.

The insight is that automated translation, although it is not 100%, works pretty well. If I can prepare a dual language text with the original English as the second language, a native speaker of another language ought to be able to get through the book fairly easily. On those occasions in which the translator has messed up – not that frequent, but problems do crop up – they can look at the facing page to figure out what the original English meant.

The advantages are speed and cost. Human translation is expensive. I have knocked out a French and a Russian translation of Jared's 265 page book in less than a month, inventing the process as I go. I should be able to do one book a week now that I know how to do it.

I invite you to take a look at what I have translated so far, which I have posted to [my website](#). I have broken each translation into two parts, to overcome the limitation that my web host will support only 5 MB uploads. Making a virtue of necessity, I have implemented a device to prompt just a little bit of feedback. I have password-protected the second half of each book. I ask readers to write and I will send the password. This will give me some indication of the level of interest.

I should include a note on how to use the book. The pages are small – 5 ½ x 8 ½ inches - so they easily fit two-up on a page. Tell your PDF reader to show facing pages and you will get a page of the translation on the left and the original English on the right. You can print them two-up if you want a hard copy dual text.

Where do I go from here? I will never get rich selling translations of books like this. I have reviewed several that are more popular but are not yet in translation. I'm using this to prove the concept, and then I'll contact the publishers of more popular works.

Along the way I isolated all of the individual words in the English source document, the French translation and the Russian translation. I was particularly interested in homonyms – words that are spelled the same but have different meanings. Shell, for instance, means a seashell or shell of a bullet. When police find shells at the scene of a crime they are not seashells.

This confirms what I had already suspected: I have a far richer vocabulary in French than Russian. I came out of the exercise with a list of Russian words that I really need to learn.

Looking for instances in which the automated translation had a chance to get things wrong, I am impressed at how much it gets right. It got the shells right, for instance. I have had to manually fix a few things, but few enough that I am quite confident that the translated text is totally readable.

On the kid front, Eddie has been pretty conscientious doing his homework the last couple of months. Yesterday morning I was delighted to find him reading a Ukrainian language world Atlas all by himself. Reading has come to him with some difficulty, but he is getting there.

The same with bicycling. He has been a little bit reluctant to bicycle everywhere. However, since that's all we have, and Oksana or I are always with him, he has not had much choice. Even into the winter we have continued to bicycle to his tae kwon do lessons, about a mile and a half away. He is accepting it better and sometimes even seems to want to race.

Zoriana continues to be interested in puzzles. Oksana has bought a slew of them for her. Up to 40 pieces, labeled 4+, she does by herself. Beyond that she wants help. She is also coming along with language. As we go through her 20 page book of fruits and vegetables she is able to name every one in Ukrainian. She understands most of what I say in English, although as I am the only one speaking it to her she isn't yet producing English.

With regard to the Pepe the Frog BDS scene, I am getting along fine using Bic razors instead of Gillette, drinking Pepsi instead of Coke, using a local diaper instead of Pampers, and wearing slacks instead of Levi's. I bask in that self-righteousness that has hitherto been mainly enjoyed by liberals. I am saving money besides.

I celebrated my 77th birthday yesterday with the family, including Oksana's mother Nadia. We are saving the big get-together for Christmas, where there will be up to 20 people for a traditional turkey dinner with all of the trimmings – stuffing, gravy, peas, and pumpkin and mince pies.

On the culinary front, having mastered corned beef I moved on to the Reuben sandwich. I have been making the homemade sauerkraut for years. I learned homemade Thousand Island dressing and homemade mustard. Although you can buy mustard in the store, it is not as flavorful. The Emeril Lagasse recipe on the Internet is totally easy and delicious.

Zoriana and I are now sleeping in my office, leaving Oksana alone in queenly splendor in our large double bed. For whatever reason the thin mattress on the single bed in my office is kinder to my back than the thick expensive double mattress.

As for Zoriana, she liked to wake up in the middle of the night and crawl all over us in the double bed. No double bed – no problem. She sleeps through the night. Another factor is that she doesn't keep me awake because I don't sleep that well anyhow. Knowing that there are no buttons to push when it comes to daddy, she doesn't really try very hard. The net of it is that we are all sleeping pretty well.

My back feels better after a week on this thin mattress. My stomach feels better with my regime of less alcohol and more milk thistle tea. I consider it a triumph to celebrate this birthday with every body part more or less working.

Graham

## **We spent New Year.docx      01/01/2020 04:13 PM**

New Years in Ukraine, Eddie to the Canary Islands, School News, Translation progress

We spent New Year's Eve with Victor and Sasha, parents of Yarema, one of Eddie's friends from the Sunflower School. They live in a three bedroom apartment which must be about 1300 ft<sup>2</sup> in a modern 25 story apartment building that covers just about an entire block.

Victor and Sasha met when they were 19 at Kyiv Mogilya Academy, the oldest university in Kyiv. It is resolutely Ukrainian – some instruction also in English, but none in Russian. It is sufficiently Ukrainian in character that Yanukovich's Minister of Education, a widely despised fellow named Tabachnik, tried to undo it.

From this we know that their educational credentials – and by extension their intellectual credentials – are pretty impressive. Victor is from a large family in a smaller town; Sasha from Kyiv. Sasha's folks hold modern opinions such as the notion that divorce is an option if marriage doesn't work out, not everybody needs to marry, kids are optional and so on. Victor's family is very traditional. Sasha says they took her to their bosom on just about the first meeting and started addressing her as a member of the family. And so she rapidly became, and happy to be so.

They have three delightful boys, the other two being Mikola, entering first grade next year, and Luka, just under a year. They exemplify the wisdom of marrying your own kind, the topic of my upcoming article on American Renaissance. They understand each other and they share each other's values. This is a couple that stands a good chance of celebrating a sixtieth wedding anniversary.

The two of them share my apprehension about the management of the Sunflower School. They summed it up in a couple of sentences. The school has a great spirit but no management. The great spirit is harder to generate, but it can't be sustained unless the school gets its act together well enough to survive.

Parents have been exchanging this observation for a year, during which the school has suffered a couple of setbacks. The biggest was the cancellation of the first grade. They simply didn't have enough kids, enough tuition money to keep it going. As a result they have neither a first or a second grade. The implication would be that next year, as the sixth and seventh graders leave, Eddie's class, the fourth grade, will be just about all there is. You simply can't run a school that way.

A meeting the headmistress called three weeks ago to discuss the problem with parents exemplifies the management problems we have. Her perception is that we need to have a bigger presence on Facebook to attract people to the school.

- She did not provide an agenda for the meeting.
- She did not prepare anybody to contribute ideas at the meeting.
- She pretty much ran the meeting, which stumbled along in a desultory manner.

- She did not ask for any resolutions, or get any.

After the meeting she sent a summary saying that what we needed was a bigger presence on Facebook – exactly what she went in with. I wrote back saying that it would be a good idea to post flyers in the seven mom-and-pop convenience stores in our neighborhood and to talk to the clerks so they know about the school. A couple of parents sent a response to all saying that they endorsed it. The headmistress was going to do it. Nothing has happened.

Victor said that he had told Anna, the headmistress, last year that the school needed better organization . She was deaf to him as she has been to me. We are in the difficult position of telling her something she doesn't want to hear. The school needs to be better organized and managed.

Anna has her virtues. She is a smart woman and personally charming. We could not run the school without her. But unless she opens herself up to receiving support and advice from other people the thing is going to collapse.

I, being the elderly American outsider, and by the way a 20 year veteran of private schools, am the logical one to take the bull by the horns. I'm going to try to start a Parents Association without the headmistress, starting with five of the most active parents in the third and fourth grades. In my view we need to agree with one another that something needs to be done. Since the very heart of the school is the three wonderful teachers that our children have – actually, a fourth being my wife Oksana – we need to bring them in as early as possible.

I have written a long document on how a school ought to be organized. I don't want to present it now – it would scare the hell out of everybody. They simply could not go from a total lack of organization to something as structured as I am used to. We need to go step-by-step, the first step being to get the headmistress to accept a Board of Trustees to support her and to establish some policies for the school.

The first and most obvious policy in my mind would be to automate the books and produce financial statements. It is inconceivable to me that even a \$100,000 a year operation would operate with manual bookkeeping and no financial disclosure. Even this I expect will be an uphill battle.

As I write, Oksana is getting contact information for the five parents I want to talk to. Rather than even write anything down, I think I will get in touch with them by telephone to sound them out.

My fervent hope would be that some Ukrainian will accept the role of chairman of the board. I am happy to be the grey eminence feeding my wealth of experience into the process without actually running it. Most likely thing would be for them to ask me to be treasurer, a position which would give me an entrée to affect policy in other areas.

On other fronts, I have passed [the link](#) to my translations to quite a few more people in the Ukrainian community and gotten some positive feedback as to the utility of the dual language approach.

With all of the other activity I have not been able to make progress on the German translation. I don't think it's that important. I'll get around to it in the next couple weeks.

This morning I received an email that Matt Taibbi is doing a new book to be entitled The Great Russia Caper about the madness around Russiagate and here in Ukraine. I wrote him immediately with an offer to translate it. He wants to use the same approach he did with his last book, [Hate Inc.](#), emailing it chapter by chapter to selected subscribers. My observation is that if he translates these chapters into Slavic languages he could well inspire sources to make contact and enrich the book.

Last Sunday we hosted Ben Schonle, the fellow who has offered to take Eddie to the Canary Islands. He is a delightful guy, a highly intelligent computer entrepreneur who is able to run his business from anywhere. We were thoroughly enchanted. The bottom line is that Eddie is going to join his friend Andrew and Andrew's mother Natalia on a trip to the Canary Islands.

As an oh by the way, Ben does computer work for Peter Brimelow of VDare, a website concerned with immigration. I have long been a fan of Brimelow's. If all goes well, we may well spend some time with Ben and the Brimelow family in Germany this summer. Oksana has been itching to travel to the West ever since I met her. It looks like we are finding some destinations that are attractive enough to overcome my reluctance to leave Kyiv and my antipathy towards airplanes.

Happy new year everybody

Graham

**New article on American Renaissance.docx 01/04/2020 01:30 PM**

New article on American Renaissance; frustrations of modern air travel; German translation

My article entitled "Marry Your Own Kind" is up on [American Renaissance](#). I am pleased to say that it is receiving lots of comments, almost all of them positive. This includes people who have married Asians as I did. They simply offer practical observations on the upside and downside.

I have posted my translation of "If We Do Nothing" into German on my [website](#). I know German fairly well. There was a reasonable amount of cleaning up to do, but I don't think there was anything that would've prevented an intelligent reader from figuring it out. Today and tomorrow I'm going to translate into Hungarian and Polish, languages that I really don't know, to see how the reception is with those.

That's it for now. Happy new year again.

Graham



**Common sense is pretty powerful stuff.docx 01/17/2020 11:47 AM**

Common sense is pretty powerful stuff

Whenever the powers that be want to overcome it, they find they have a stiff battle. The Communists used draconian methods to impose the dictum that all people are equal, and therefore "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" was workable. Paul Ehrlich's population bomb, peak oil and the global cooling notion of the 1970s, and now the global warming crowd work overtime to overcome our observation that the world is not changing much.

Common sense that has prevailed since the time of Adam is being assaulted on all sides. Men and women have different interests and abilities? People are best off learning to live with the sex they were born with? There are bad people in the world, and it's a good idea to have the wherewithal to defend yourself? The economy will collapse if the government endlessly prints money? The vehemence with which a proposition is attacked of seems proportionate to how obvious it is.

I'm happy to report that common sense is doing well here in Kyiv. Our daughter Zoriana goes to sleep at night clutching three dolls in her arms. Eddie never had a single doll or asked for one. This is certainly nothing we forced on the kids. Zoriana has a high-pitched, piercing scream that I remember well from my other daughters. The boys will cry, but they simply cannot hit the high registers as well.

Zoriana is amazingly inventive in her Machiavellian manipulation. Though the women in the house are of the strong opinion that she should sleep in her own crib, she wakes up every morning in my bed. My opinion is that girls learn about men from their fathers, and it is not a bad thing if they maintain the expectation that a boyfriend will measure up to him.

Little boys like guns. Eddie is an inventive kid. It seems like every day he comes up with a new plan for a weapon of war. He liked sticks immensely as a little kid. Zoriana never runs around with a stick in her hand.

Occasionally something comes home to me with regard to the extent to which the propaganda against common sense has permeated American culture. I'm reading Zoriana a Ukrainian storybook with these pictures and text.

American storybooks can be silly, but I don't think they can be silly with guns anymore.

Eddie is coming home from the Canary Islands on Saturday. He had a wonderful time. I gather that Andrew, the kid he went with, and Andrew's mother Natasha did as well. Nevertheless, the host Ben Schonle is a pretty intellectual guy with whom they didn't find too much in common.

Among other things, the plan that he do his homework while he's there didn't seem to work out. We are happy that Eddie is coming back. It was a marvelous adventure, and it may well be that we travel to Germany this summer to catch up with Ben again.

Returning to the theme of common sense, I have just translated Philippe Rushton's well-known book "Race, Evolution and Behavior" [into six languages](#). The book created quite a furor when it appeared 25 years ago. A few writers in the social sciences such as Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin attempted to rebut it at the time, but the most common reaction in government, the universities and polite society was a simple "You can't say that." I know of no recent rebuttals by scientists.

That's what they said about Darwin 150 years ago. The religious people said "You can't say that" because Darwin's claims contradicted the Bible. There were heated arguments. Today we have a new Bible, but the strife is similar.

Rushton writes that social scientists over the past century and a half have mostly been spending their time demonstrating the truth of Darwin's hunches. As you know, I read pretty widely. I'm writing an article to the effect that over the last quarter century the social sciences have been validating Rushton's hunches. The most interesting aspect is that the people who are doing so mostly identify themselves as card-carrying liberals and do everything

they can in their books to distance themselves from Rushton himself. However, science is a quest for the truth, and they cannot avoid the truths that they themselves uncovered. Their mental contortions are amusing.

I am pleased with the results of my translations. I think that the dual language books are eminently readable even if the translations are not beautiful literature.

You may recall that last year I had a scheme to create dual language textbooks for students who wanted to study a foreign language on their own. Briefly put, students who are willing to do homework. There are too few of those around, and the idea didn't gain any traction.

The new proposition is that while most educated people read English, they do better in their own native languages. They will put up with a less-than-perfect translation into a language with which they are familiar, especially if the English is right there is a backup.

My target languages this time were French, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Hungarian. I know the first three fairly well. I can figure out what's going on in Ukrainian and Polish because of their similarities to the first three. Hungarian might as well be Swahili as far as how little I recognize.

My observation is that while I do better with the languages I know, the difference is not that great in my guess is that the Hungarian is fairly readable. I of course invite your comments.

My next step is going to be sending freelance translations to the authors of books I have recently reviewed by guys like Matt Tiabbi and Douglas Murray. My hope is that they will see some benefit in dual language productions of their successful books and that I might make a couple of dollars now and then off this project. More than that, I might make a business that Eddie could grow into.

That's it for now,

Graham

**An interesting topic.docx      01/18/2020 10:21 AM**

An interesting topic. One that in previous ages would not have arisen for discussion.

Oksana and I are both very impressed with Zoriana's intellect. Eddie does okay, but she is the more precocious. My fear for her is that she will be drawn into some moneymaking ventures that will keep her from having a family. Whatever the case, she is definitely going to be her own woman. She pretty much runs the house at two years four months. Please come over and visit us. I think spending a day with Zoriana will allay your fears. Did I mention Machiavelli?

I want Zoriana to be independent enough that she is totally free in her choice of a mate – she does not choose somebody just to take care of her. I don't think we have any concerns in that department.

I want Eddie to be in a position to support himself and a wife. I have the atavistic, Neanderthal, troglodyte, knuckle dragging, old-fashioned notion that a man should take care of his woman. A supremely intelligent woman can be a great mother. I had a wonderful example in my own mother. If she works – okay – but the higher calling is to raise children properly.

I just repeat, come on over and take a look. I would love to see you. And as a PS, thank you for not giving me crap about the other aspects of the letter that might have aroused controversy.

Graham

My views are fundamentally at odds with those of our age. The age celebrates the individual and recognizes individual success as the only success.

I look at evolutionary success as the only meaningful success. That means, having children, and raising them in a culture conducive to their being able to raise their own children. Historically that has translated into raising them to cherish and preserve the values of their society. There is no doubt that values themselves evolve – we see the world differently than our ancestors of a few centuries back – but we enjoyed the most success when they evolved slowly.

It is no coincidence in my mind that the past two centuries, since the Industrial Revolution, have seen very rapid evolution of our culture and memes, and at the same time have witnessed a general decline in the heritable traits that we most treasure – intelligence and good nature. The recent book "At Our Wits End," tackles this question from five different directions and concludes that at least with regard to intelligence we are headed downhill. Inasmuch as every researcher finds a fairly high correlation between intelligence and good nature, what we see happening in the world would verify that our temperaments are becoming less suited to civilization.

I locked my door.

Ukraine is a country of only 800 psychiatrists it's a testimony to our mental health. We don't have that many psychiatric problems because we don't have psychiatrists to invent them. I'm only being probably facetious when I say that.

With regard to Zoriana sleeping in her own bed. She does not always sleep with me. When we put her down for a nap. She stays in her own crib. When she tries to get out. Daddy yells at her. Daddy is able to tolerate the crying. Small children. It is an essential parental attribute. She cannot tolerate the crying. Small children you are hostage. So I leave her in her crib until she goes to sleep crying notwithstanding. The other night we tried this for the best as well. She peed her pants, which she knows she shouldn't do. I told her your beggarly Peter Pan to sleep in your own bed tonight. She cried for an hour and a half. I listened patiently for an hour and half and she wants to sleep. That's how it was.

This whole business of peeing in her pants is the difference of opinion between Oksana and me. She started potty training Zoriana at the age of eight months. Now at the age of two years and four months, it still hasn't worked. When I asked my opinion, Br'er Fox. He lay low. I go along with this, but she knows that I don't agree with it. We went through the same thing with Eddie and we had the same problems. My attitude is that we can afford diapers and when the kids ready the let you know when there were ready to come out of diapers. As it is, I am quite sure that Zoriana uses peeing in her pants as a means of expressing displeasure with whatever the regime is. So unless you unless there are consequences of peeing in your pants, we will get P in pants. However, this is a battle that I am ducking for the moment.

**Poor Graham.docx 01/24/2020 07:48 PM**

Poor Graham's Almanac. Whose bed is it anyhow? Rushton

The weather you have been having in the United States has been enough to dissuade almost anybody from the global warming argument. I suppose it is safe for me to confess that we have had the warmest January in my memory. The last couple of years we had pretty consistent snow cover for December through March. This season we haven't had anything that stayed on the ground more than a day or so. The temperature is hovering right around freezing.

Here at 50° North latitude – that's Winnipeg or Newfoundland – we really appreciate the change in seasons. The sun went down by 4 o'clock in late December. Now it's about 5. We can feel the days getting longer.

Eddie is back from the Canary Islands. It is as if he had never gone. He is immediately back in the swing of things at school. I am happy to say that he is broken to the saddle. He does his homework pretty much without being asked, and without often asking for help.

I enjoy hearing back from people about my experiences. Denny, whom I have known since we were seven, wrote to suggest that perhaps letting Zoriana sleep with me was not such a good idea. It could be a hard habit to break.

I agree, but the bigger issue is who is in charge. If I were unable to break her of the habit it would indeed be a problem. A parent needs the ability to say no and make it stick. It turns out that I had said "no" just the night before. Zoriana had peed on the sofa as I was reading her and Eddie a bedtime story.

At two years four months she knows better. I spanked her (I hear gasps of horror from the Spock fans out there; I don't mean Star Trek) and told her that is not permissible and that she would sleep in her own bed that night. I was serenaded by an hour of caterwauling and crying, but by God she slept in her own bed.

Last night she peed a couple of drops in her pants but told me immediately she wanted the potty. I praised her for asking for the potty and threw the pants in the wash. Maybe were making progress. Who knows?

Eddie and I finished reading Calvin and Hobbes for the fourth time. I assured him it is the final time. Calvin and Hobbes is Eddie's "Hamster Huey and the Goopy Kabluie." Bill Waterson is often too sophisticated even for an eight-year-old, but Eddie loves it nonetheless.

We have gone on to Roald Dahl We had already read The Fantastic Mr. Fox, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, James and the Giant Peach and a couple of others. I thought we had seen the best of him. Not at all! Eddie picked out Matilda and now we are reading Danny the Champion of the World. They are as good as any of the foregoing.

It is interesting what kids like. One of Eddie's favorite's was "Wind in the Willows," about Toad and Toad Hall and all that. The vocabulary is incredibly rich even for Victorian times. There were a vast number of adjectives I'm sure Eddie didn't recognize at all. But the work has a flow to it, a feeling to which he responded rather automatically. I only wish I knew of more like it.

Now that we are finally done with Calvin and Hobbes, and given that even at the age of eight Eddie still adores being read to, there is a question of what comes next. The first thing that comes to my mind is "The Call of the Wild." The second thing is (shout out to David Baker) Minn of the Mississippi, which is available in PDF. I read now that "the history of the Mississippi Valley is told in text and pictures by the adventures of a snapping turtle as she moves downriver." Oh! I thought it was a great story about a snapping turtle. I am sure I will get a lot out of the second reading.

Another book I read, but one so sad that will bring tears to his eyes and mind, is "Ishi, the Last of his Tribe." My mother edited this book for Theodora Kroeber, the wife of Alfred Kroeber, the founder of the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, student of Franz Boas. I have an autographed copy.

I read a lot, and often write about human evolution. The story of Ishi is an extinction event. His tribe, living in the mellow surroundings of California did not develop the skills necessary to survive after the white man moved in. The budding anthropologist Kroeber took in this shivering derelict, found huddled by the railroad in Northern California, and learned his language and his history in the few years before he succumbed to tuberculosis or some other white man's disease. The story is riveting but almost too sad to tell. But this may be the time.

Writing about evolution lost me a reader. Although Philippe Rushton seems to be right on the money as far as science goes, he is persona non grata in the social justice community. He not only describes the measurable differences among the races, but provides an evolutionary explanation of how they came about.

The ex-reader in question, whom I know from Reed College, is dedicated to helping Muslim asylum-seekers resettle in California. She does not even want to consider arguments to the effect that it hasn't previously worked anywhere else – Minnesota, Germany and Sweden would be three examples – and it won't work in California. Nope! I am an evil racist for even thinking so. I must be shunned.

It begs the question, if we are so evil and racist, why the hell don't foreigners just stay home and avoid us? And a question for Donald Trump. If you want them to stay home, why don't you stop bombing them?

When I mentioned that I might form a business that Eddie could grow into, another reader asked, "Why not Zoriana too?" It is very sexist of me to omit her.

The first and easiest answer is that it was an oversight. I have been thinking about what Eddie would do in life for a long time. Zoriana is only two years old.

The deeper answer, however, is this. I am still traditional enough to believe that a man should take care of his woman. Eddie should have the wherewithal to take care of his wife, his children, and probably his mother. Doing so is a man's primary calling in life.



Women are uniquely capable of bearing children. Evolution has suited them to the role of nurturing children. More than that, it has genetically conditioned children to look for care from a mother – soft, comforting, high-pitched voice – rather than a gruff, rough father.

Whereas a woman may be able to make a living, in fact, in these uncertain times should be able to make a living, she should not be expected to take care of more than herself. When a single mother has to provide for a family the system has broken down. A woman should be able to depend on a man.

My fond hope – and it can't be much more than that – is that Zoriana will grow up to be the kind of woman who will make somebody a good wife and will be the mother of the kind of children a man can be proud of. She is a smart girl and I'm quite sure she will have many other skills. My own mother was an extremely talented editor, typist, cook, knitter and seamstress. But in her own mind, she was first and foremost a mother. And an awfully good one. I can hope that in Zoriana's day her society will appreciate that skill.

It is healthy that we have differences of opinion on matters like this. I know I will lose readers by expressing my opinions. Moreover, I know that most of those readers will be progressives. There is a sad tendency in academia and intellectual circles to simply dismiss people with whom you disagree. I am certainly one of those who is often disagreed with.

If you disagree with me, please offer an argument. I do not shy away. But simply dismissing me will not make the issues go away. And dismissing the "basket of deplorables," among whose cargo you place me, does not appear likely to win you the argument in the long run. The Antifa tactics of trying to destroy people with whom you disagree is simply not working. Trump is still standing and mocking the impeachment process. The nationalist parties of Europe are resurgent.

With that preamble, I offer a [link to the Rushton article](#) that I submitted to American Renaissance a week ago. I have not heard from them, which is rather unusual. They ordinarily get back quickly. I don't know if it will appear in print. If it does it will probably be edited down by a third.

In this article I cite about 50 books I have read on the subject of evolution. I am absolutely confident that they represent mainstream thinking in the scientific community. I'm quite confident that my understanding of the books is reflective of what most scientists in the field of evolution think. Please feel free to disagree with me, but do so by citing sources that disagree with what I have written, not by painting me as a moral pygmy for not having adopted the politically correct position.

There are some interesting straws in the wind. Alan Dershowitz is defending Donald Trump. I don't think he is just being opportunistic – I think he honestly feels that Trump is being unfairly persecuted. Stewart Brand wrote a very intelligent book on the environment. Matt Taibbi, whom I found amusing as a Rolling Stone takedown artist, wrote a book that I really like: *Hate, Inc.* Although there is much to dislike on both the left and the right, it is more surprising that he would attack the left. You decide to which side his 10 rules of hate apply best.

1. There are only two ideas
2. The two ideas are in permanent conflict
3. Hate people, not institutions
4. Everything is someone else's fault
5. Nothing is everyone's fault
6. Root, don't think
7. No switching teams
8. The other side is literally Hitler
9. In the fight against Hitler, everything is permitted
10. Feel superior

To me, several of them seem to come right out of Saul Alinsky. I love the book, and I am translating the first quarter of it in the hopes that I can persuade Taibbi that the book should appear in translation.

That's a wrap for now. Please keep those cards and letters coming!

Graham

**Murray and Caldwell.rtf      02/02/2020 09:39 PM**

Ben –

Please excuse the delay. It's pretty chaotic, and I'm not the one who had the best information to answer you. Oksana is sick and I'm taking care of two kids.

Briefly: Eddie needs to stay here in school. As for both academic and family reasons. We really do like to stay together as a family. We would like to see you again, but probably the summer traveling as a unit.

Oksana since your contact information to Katya. She expected the cocky would contact you. But if not, why don't you contact her.

On my front, I have written to more articles for American Renaissance, one of which should be coming up this week. Two important books came out which I reviewed this week, "The Age of Entitlement" and "Human Diversity." I tipped Jared Taylor off to both of them and he has done thorough reviews. Meanwhile, Amazon doesn't want to post mine.

That's about it. The kids are killing each other in the background.

Good to hear from you. I will stay in touch when I have more time.

Graham

**end of winter.docx      02/20/2020 11:30 AM**

No news simply means that news is accumulating. It has been busy.

I'm of two minds. Yesterday I received a phone call from Edward, after whom our Eddie is named, asking if I were well. I haven't posted lately. I would like to hear from more of you – you have my phone - but on the other hand, there's been quite a bit happening. Let's get going.

Spring is coming on very quickly. The birds are tweeting, the buds are swelling, and everything is in preparation. It wasn't much of a winter. A very chilly November and then nothing. Forecast is for weather in the 40s through the end of the month – the end of winter, by Ukrainian reckoning.

It's delightful to observe the days so palpably lengthening. Sharing a room with Zoriana, who wakes up with the sun, we arise several minutes earlier every day. We are down from 7:30 to 6:30.

Eddie and I have managed to bicycle to school throughout the winter. We likewise bicycle to tae kwon do. In winter we needed headlights both ways. Now we're to the point we don't need them at all.

There are profound differences between men and women. The most important, the most politically incorrect fellow that I'm currently associated with is Edward Dutton. I just reviewed the fourth of his books, a [biography of Philippe Rushton](#), and have a fifth in my hopper. His titles are always provocative, guaranteed to shock you church ladies.

Dutton sent me the biography to review after I sent him a one-liner to the effect that I had provided links to two of his books in my American Renaissance piece on Rushton, which was finally published last week.

That article, with its academic rather than biographical flavor, has received far fewer comments than my last few. Good quality comments nonetheless, and I am gratified that YouTube tells me close to 100 people have looked at my [video on human evolution](#).

The most shocking thing Dutton has done is his [recent video](#) about what makes Western women so woke. It's enough to make any dogmatist lock their jaws and want to shoot the man. On the other hand, there is some truth involved. I would recommend that if your blood pressure is somewhat low, or you're wanting in adrenaline that you give it a look. I think he's on to something, even if he may overstate his case. One guarantee – nobody else has the cojones to say what he does. This man may be a canary in the coal mine as far as free speech on YouTube goes.

With that. I'll segue back to home. It seems to me that the women in our lives are focused on two things when it comes to children: eating and excreting. I am heavily involved in both, and despite years of practice never manage to do it to their satisfaction. I am inclined to feed the children when they're hungry and let them tell me when they need to go to the toilet. Moreover, I am inclined to leave diapers on them until they indicate that they are ready to be toilet trained. Wrong wrong wrong.

We have been working to toilet train Zoriana since she was one year old. At two and a half it still hasn't taken. Last night she peed on my bed. And I got upset. I'm not supposed to do that. I asked why didn't she have a diaper on? That's the obvious solution in my mind. It seems unreasonable to take a year and a half, and the process involves putting her on the toilet for a half-hour at a time urging her to poop. Wouldn't it be easier just to wait until she's ready? We men are not allowed to ask such questions. Not of Oksana, not of our babysitter Anna, and certainly not of mother Nadia. So it goes with the battle of the sexes. I should celebrate the fact that we're still fighting that battle here. It's a sign that the human race is continuing, at least locally.

I wrote that I was translating [Matt Taibbi's](#) book "Untitledgate". Translation is done. I sent it to Taibbi this morning to ask him what to do with it. Best of all worlds would be for him to put a link to it on his website, either in single languages, Ukrainian and Russian, or dual.

What to do with foreigners who will not be up to five dollars a month? My suggestion is to make the single language translations free. I think it would be well worth his effort – it would expand his readership and it would open up some more sources from the European side of the equation to inform him even better about what went on in the tangled mess of Ukrainian involvement in US politics and vice versa. Russian at least one way – we messing with them.

In any case, I'm not going to publish a link here, but if you want to read it write to me and I'll send it to you.

I talked to one of you on this distribution from St. Patrick's Episcopal Church in Washington DC last week. I note that I have relatively few friends left from that era, and I didn't really have that many friends when I was in Washington. People seem to be quite focused on their professional circles, into which I as a computer guy didn't fit.

Opinions run stronger in Washington DC than here. Most people I went to church with are lobbyists and lawyers. Advocates. They take strong positions on matters such as global warming, Donald Trump, and gender issues. I like to consider myself open-minded, but I find that just simply hoping to maintain an open mind. I am automatically pushed into the alt right camp. Very well – that's where I sit. It may not have been my inclination, but I'm not uncomfortable here.

In contrast, I have delightful conversations with people here in Ukraine. Sitting and waiting for Eddie to complete a music lesson last week I had a long conversation with a couple of Ukrainian grandparents, a bit less than my age, about this Matt Taibbi translation. What they know about Donald Trump is what they hear on their television and read in their newspapers. It is absolutely in step with mainstream media in the United States. There is no Rush Limbaugh or Fox news here. They don't even know that they don't hear alternative points of view.

When I offer Taibbi's perspectives their eyes light up. When I tell them that Taibbi is hardly a lockstep right-winger – he is the author of the book entitled *Insane Clown President*, and a writer for the *Rolling Stone* – they somewhat believe his impartiality. So that is the reason that I want to get Taibbi's permission to share his book here in Ukraine. When I talk about Bernie's free stuff, Bloomberg's massive underwriting of climate change advocacy, and the Democrats' universal disapproval of the notion that people should get to choose their own neighbors, their eyes rolled. They have lived through that before.

The other new acquaintance is a fellow who struck up a conversation on the bus. I was talking to Eddie in English and this Andrew smiled in a knowing way. He is a recently graduated, recently married, landscape architect just returned from a two month tour of Vietnam, 2,000 km from south to north. He visited places that I recall from half a century ago.

Then we talked about California, which he had also seen and he knew the Latin names of the three species of sequoias – two in California and one in China. As a landscape architect should, I suppose, but I was nevertheless impressed. Andrew has his place of business only about a quarter-mile from where we live and our lawn, planted in 2013, definitely needs a refresh and we need to do something about moles. This could be heaven-sent, and an opportunity for more conversation with Andrew.

I missed Toastmasters last week because I was home with a case of strep throat. The previous week I was Toastmaster for the fourteenth birthday party. It is a delight to be the member in the club with the longest institutional memory. I was well received with anecdotes of our founding and our perambulation's all around Kyiv through multiple restaurants until we finally found some stability using the age-old recipe of paying our way. Once we started the practice of staying for lunch after our meetings, putting some cash in their registers, we found ourselves much more welcome in the restaurants that host us.

At that meeting over lunch I met a Jewish guy from Scarsdale who had just spent a few years in Hungary and is now here. He dropped out of Brown University about a half-century after I dropped out of Reed College, and for similar reasons. He could not stand the pervasive, oppressive liberal indoctrination. He is a man who likes to ask questions. The price Peter has paid for his rejection of dogma has been similar to mine – his progressive neighbors, and even his family, barely talk to him anymore.

We hit it off immediately. I missed him last week – hope to see him again this coming Saturday. We also have a more predictable type, a Greek diplomat named Yannis, a man in his early sixties, whose openly stated goal is to find a younger wife much the way I did. My observation, though not to him, is that he shouldn't be quite so open about it and he should be in better physical shape if he wants to pull it off. Be that as it may, we also have interesting conversations. He is solidly in the anti-Trump camp, believing what he reads in the media and hears in diplomatic circles. I don't think I will have any success convincing him to read the Taibbi piece, but I'll at least offer it.

That's about enough of a brain dump for now. I will send this off and have some more for you in a couple weeks.

Graham

**Interesting times.docx      03/06/2020 09:04 AM**

Interesting times

The stock market went up a thousand points yesterday. On the strength of what? I maintain a mental list of problems in society that seem to need fixing, and by my reckoning none of them have been even addressed, much less fixed. Why the optimism?

It appears that if the Democrats win the election, we will have the first president from the silent generation. I am hardly cheered. I'm in pretty good shape for a representative of that cohort, and I more and more frequently forget things. Just like Joe Biden.

Elizabeth Warren impressed me with her 2003 book "The Two Income Trap." Two of the things that struck me were her accounts of Hillary Clinton's duplicity and Joe Biden's simplicity. In that benighted epoch she wasn't yet running for anything. She could afford to call it as she saw it. I agreed with her whole take and [gave the book 5 stars on Amazon](#).

Looking at my review after these 17 years, I see that she advocated keeping families together and even put in a defense of the men who were being bankrupted by divorce. The chief villain in her book was the banks, and she was critical of the senator from New York – that would've been Hillary – being in the pocket of the banks. Absolutely! Those banks' predatory practices led to the financial crisis five years later and seem to be leading to one again. There is a tiny problem in that they are a major source of funding for both political parties. Although Wells Fargo, Citibank and Goldman Sachs have recently paid huge fines, no bankers go to jail. Interesting world we live in.

Warren noted, as a Harvard law professor in bankruptcy at the time, the irony that as families get more income from having both parents work, they more frequently wind up in bankruptcy. Chasing the American dream can be dangerous to the partners themselves – not to mention the children.

I am pleased that Eddie is getting better and better at reading Ukrainian. My observation is that the mechanical task of decoding the symbols on the page and extracting the meaning is difficult for him. There is no solution except to keep it up.



For me, reading and decoding Cyrillic remains a problem. I don't think that the character set will be an issue for Eddie – it's the broader process. He just has to keep at it. I'll say the same for me. I have to keep at Ukrainian, and I'm pleased to note that Oksana, with very little encouragement from me, is sticking with her study of German.

One part of the equation is firmly in place. He is a curious kid and he loves when I read to him. We look things up on the Internet. We learned about tectonic plates and volcanoes as they relate to the Canary Islands. We talk about units of measurement. He asked about micrometers – microns in my youth – millimeters and meters. I told him that those expressions are in circulation because they are useful.

He asked about decameters and hectometers. I told him we don't use those because it simply not necessary. Anything we need to express can be understood pretty well in meters or kilometers. Likewise megameters – no need for the word. A thousand kilometers works fine.

That got us into discussing orders of magnitude. He asked how fast light travels. I told him 300,000 km/s is a very good approximation. He asked me how fast it travels in a millisecond. I invited him to work it out.

The first calculation is easy. 300,000 divided by 60 is 5,000 km/minute. He got the order of magnitude wrong – 50,000 on his first try. Not bad for an eight-year-old doing it in his head.

The next step, figuring the seconds, is a bit harder. A person experienced in measurement knows that five sixths is .833. Eddie wouldn't know that, so I told him. We come up to the speed of light as being 83 km/s. From there the answer is easy – that's 83 m/ms, or 83 mm per microsecond. About 3 1/2 inches. 60 years ago Admiral Grace Hopper used to give out lengths of wire that size to emphasize how fast computers were... and the limitations involved in computer design

This is all of course useless information, but pretty good exercise for his young brain.

Is the mental arithmetic useful? You bet! The hryvnya exchange rate is just under 25 to the dollar. I am constantly asking myself the American question, "How much is that in real money?" At this exchange rate it is pretty easy. Multiply by four and drop two zeroes.

Two weeks ago Eddie and I finished *Minn of the Mississippi*, which I remembered fondly from my youth. What a wonderful book! The evolutionary history of the Mississippi Valley from the perspective of a female turtle born in Minnesota and ending her days in Louisiana.

Along the way author Holling Clancy Holling weaves in the history of the French trappers, the Spanish conquistadors and the American settlers as they swept wave after wave over the original Indian inhabitants. He makes them all sound noble and interesting. His treatment of the Cajun families living on the River is both

realistic and compassionate. Back in the day we appreciated the diversity of the American mosaic without moralizing about how it came to be. Those Arcadians were refugees from Canada, driven out by British General Wolff about 1740. Louisiana was still French and would accept them. Fact of history – no more.

Repeat that theme with Tom Sawyer, which we are reading now. One feature of the book is how much independence kids had in this age. It rings true – I remember my grandmother's stories of her youth along the Mississippi a half-century later than the setting of Tom Sawyer. The chances kids took would make a modern mother's hair stand on end.

Another striking feature of the book is how monochrome their world was. The kids all had very English names. Rebecca Thatcher, Tom Sawyer, Alfred Temple, Joseph Harper, Amy Lawrence... There wasn't enough diversity even to embrace my grandmother's German/French parents, who operated a store outfitting river going-vessels in St. Louis a couple of decades later. .

Twain was from Florida, Missouri, which no longer exists. It was on the short (55mi) Salt River which enters the Mississippi around Hannibal, halfway between the Iowa border and St. Louis. As I remind myself, Missouri was a slave state (Missouri Compromise and all) and Illinois, on the other side of the river, a free state. The fictional St. Petersburg cannot have been far from Hannibal.

The only Native American in the story is the villain, Injun Joe. One already knows Twain's opinion of the Indians from his early book "Roughing It," and his later essay entitled The Noble Red Man.

In contrast, his treatment of Jim, the slave boy who would play a prominent role in the successor novel, "Huckleberry Finn," is quite sympathetic. Here's a quote: "He remembered that there was company at the pump. White, mulatto, and negro boys and girls were always there waiting their turns, resting, trading playthings, quarrelling, fighting, skylarking. And he remembered that although the pump was only a hundred and fifty yards off, Jim never got back with a bucket of water under an hour—and even then somebody generally had to go after him." As this brief vignette indicates, Twain considered that the races were rather comfortable with one another despite their different stations.

Twain of course uses the vernacular of his day, which is radically incorrect in ours. Eddie tried the N-word this morning at breakfast. I told him that it had become the most abhorrent word in the English language. It is the single word that nobody is allowed to utter.

It is a word that Eddie hears every now and again from Americans here in Ukraine. We are an odd bunch, refugees from this and that. Many of them choose to live here in part because of unpleasant experiences with minorities. Mine have not been that bad, My lesson for Eddie is to treat people as individuals when you can and take them on their own merits. Otherwise, don't be a Pollyanna. Listen to conventional wisdom, then make up your own mine. On that note, our neighborhood Gypsies Esmeralda and Vasya have greeted me in

the street the last couple of days. I didn't see them all winter – I expect they had found someplace else to stay.

Cats also come and go. Our friend Buttface has been gone since fall. Raccoon was likewise absent for a couple of months, but has reinstalled himself. Shortly after reappearing he got terribly beat up. His back right and left front paw were mangled to the point that he wasn't even able to jump up on the table to get some food. I gave him plenty to eat from a bowl on the back porch.

Cats are resilient. Within a couple of days he had enough spring in his legs to jump up on the table again. Five days later, as he was well on the mend in my opinion, he appeared with his back leg shaven. Some good Samaritan had apparently taken him to the vet.

I shared my opinion with Eddie. If you take a cat to the vet, just like if you take a kid to the pediatrician or go to the doctor yourself, you are more likely than not to get treated. It takes a tough minded Doctor to tell you that you don't need his services. In most cases you will get treatment whether you need it or not. I have a well documented track record of going to doctors, receiving prescriptions, researching them on the Internet, deciding I can survive without them and that the counterindications are probably more dangerous than the disease, and never filling them. It drives the women in the family crazy.

I am an oddity among men my age in that I have no regime whatsoever of regular medicines. Of course I have arrhythmia, aches and pains. My gallbladder sometimes acts up, I get indigestion, cramps, pains in my joints and so on. It happens. My life's experience convinces me that these kinds of problems are best treated by leaving them alone and modifying your behavior so you don't aggravate them. Drink less beer. Don't eat too much before going to bed. Don't eat too much junk food.

You don't too often hear an old man recite a list of problems that have gone away. Let me name a couple. My hip socket was giving me shooting pains for three days. I expected it would go away, and it has. In late fall my back hurt quite a bit. My diagnosis was that the expensive mattress on our double bed was letting it slip out of line. Better to sleep on the thin mattress on our guest bed. It took a month, but it has been better now for a month. My gallbladder is better, except when I fall off the wagon and tease it with a bit too much beer. So that's life at the age of 77 – a delicate balance, inevitably fated to go against me at some point – but for the time being pretty livable.

I had a lot of fun doing translations into Russian and Ukrainian, but nobody seems to be interested in my [dual language texts](#). I have to confess that I have done nothing to make them findable on the Internet. That will be my next step. It is gratifying to note that some teacher has found and seems to be using the text. reading and translation of The Fantastic Mr. Fox I posted on YouTube.

Amazon has been getting prickly about accepting my book reviews. The latest refusal was "How Islam makes you Stupid – and Means you will Conquer the World." [My review here](#) isn't any more politically incorrect than the title itself. Since I don't get any money for this, I have to wonder why I bother.

American Renaissance, after publishing my piece on Philippe Rushton, refused [this one on having faith](#) with the observation that it didn't go to their main concern, the fate of white people within the United States. I don't want to argue the point, but my conviction is that the white race's lack of faith in itself, our unwillingness to reproduce and to raise children to be like us, has far more to do with our problems than anything that the Muslims are up to. Yes, we white people are being treated unfairly by our governments, and people of every other race will take advantage of us when they can. But it doesn't help that we have affixed "kick me" signs to our own backsides. Instead of complaining, we should get on with the business of life, have kids, and simply fight a bit more aggressively to keep what is ours.

Tom Sawyer shows that there are things a man is supposed to know but that nobody is charged with teaching him. Tom found out the hard way. When he finally persuaded Becky Thatcher that she should accept his proposal to get engaged, and then wheedled and pleaded for a kiss, he attempted to persuade her by saying it was nothing. Why he and Amy Lawrence... Whoops! The whole next chapter is devoted to Tom Sawyer getting back in Becky's good graces.

Among the things a man is supposed to know, but is rarely taught, is how to curse. How to use bad words. The bad word mentioned above is easy – never use it! There are others that are more debatable. Oksana does not like us to use the word heck. She doesn't appreciate that hell is even stronger.

Boys of Eddie's age are fascinated by the subject. We boys – David, Ricky, Pat John, Denny and I - were lucky to have a teacher. Pete the janitor at Castro school loved to fascinate the young scholars with dirty jokes. By listening to them you kind of figure out the way of the world and also the ways in which language should be employed to describe it.

Eddie doesn't have quite the same opportunities here. For instance, he had not heard the expression Путин Хуйло (Putin is a prick) despite the fact that it is extremely widely used here in Ukraine.

Apropos of pricks, when Eddie commented that a BMW had sped past and splashed us, and that it was typical for BMWs, I asked him if he knew the difference between a porcupine and a BMW. No, replied Eddie. I informed him that with the BMW, the pricks are on the inside.

Apologies to Dick, Al, and everybody else who has owned them. As I have myself... two motorcycles and a Z8. BMW earned that reputation when they introduced the 1600 – 1800 – 2000 series in the early 1960s. Compared to the run-of-the-mill econoboxes like Toyotas or the Volkswagen I drove, they were extremely exciting. You couldn't help but drive them fast. Rather like a prick. Al, I still remember your enthusiasm as you



explained to me one day in the Bear's Lair at Cal why you had chosen a \$2,500 BMW over a \$1,800 VW. The BMW motorcycles I owned were something totally different – comfortable, reliable, and conservative. It was an education.

An eight-year-old has a rather concrete view of the world, and it took a while to make the connections among quills, pricks and хуйло, and why the joke might be funny. In the end he understood all of the words but I'm not sure he still appreciates why it is funny. If in fact it is. Nevertheless, forbidden knowledge is always fun and he has trotted the joke out on several inappropriate occasions. He gives me teaching opportunities. And occasion to remind him that prick is a word that he can use on some occasions, but the N-word is a never never.

I'm already way past the TL-DR cutoff. Time to go to bed.

Goodnight,

Graham

**Errata.docx**      **03/07/2020 08:19 PM**

Errata –

Warren Capps told me politely that Grace Hopper had handed out nanoseconds - 13 inch sections of wire. That was not what I had computed. So I had to go back.

The error is a pretty fundamental one. I said that the speed of light was 300,000 km/h. Wrong! Make that km per second. So I was off by a factor of  $60 \times 60 = 3600$ . That's 13 inches instead of three and a half, and nanoseconds instead of milliseconds.

It's the kind of mistake the average person makes. I should have double checked myself. Childhood knowledge is that it's 93 million miles to the sun and it takes sunlight eight minutes to get here. I should have known better.

Joe Biden wouldn't make this mistake – he wouldn't have tried the computation. Neither would Donald Trump. But you can be absolutely confident that if they did make the mistake, they would have a more artful explanation than simply screwing up.

Not that it will make any difference to Eddie, but I'm going to tell him that I made a mistake. Abraham Lincoln observed that you can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. Children are a bit harsher. If you play games with them they will figure it out quickly. The best thing will be to tell Eddie where I made a mistake, how I made a mistake, and what we can learn from my mistake. If he learns from that lesson, it will be extremely useful to him in life.

It's also a lesson in the genteel art of politely letting somebody know they are wrong. An increasingly rare quality in this Facebook age.. Thanks, Warren, for your grace.

This is a problem with politicians. They cannot afford to say that they were wrong. In many cases, they cannot even admit that they were right. Bloomberg's greatest gaffe was something he had said years ago as the mayor of New York. He defended police commissioner Bernard Kerik's "broken windows" philosophy of policing initiated under his

predecessor Rudolph Giuliani. It involves stopping suspicious young men on the street and patting them down to see if they were armed. It's called "stop and frisk."

Needless to say there was, ahem, a racial imbalance among the kids being frisked. Despite the fact that it undoubtedly saved a great many lives, most of them of the same ethnicity as the people being stopped and frisked, Bloomberg couldn't admit it. As Jean Claude Juncker so inopportunately conceded, "When it gets serious, you have to lie." This is especially true if it touches on race, the third rail of American politics.

So Bloomberg ends his vanity project, the pursuit of the presidency, having shown the whole world that he cannot be trusted to tell the truth. That's a good thing for us to know, given that he throws money to local governments to fund prosecutors who favor his views on climate and other controversial topics. I thought I had some respect for the man.

Everybody in the presidential race recognizes the need to lie, and does so frequently and easily, with a single exception. Tulsi Gabbard is dangerously truthful. For that quality alone I would probably overlook her policies and vote for her.

But – not to worry. The powers that be in the Democratic National Committee will ensure that I will never be faced with such a vexing dilemma. It appears that the choice will involve a moral contortionist of unusual agility pitted against Donald Trump, who does a much better job of appearing to tell the truth. Not that he comes through, but he looks sincere in not doing so. He's a shoo-in so long as the economy doesn't tank. Which, of course, it is in the process of doing. However, semi senile Joe Biden is so inept that he could, in the words of Peter Zeihan following close below, f\*\*\* up a free lunch. I think Trump is in fairly good shape even after the economy tanks. He was stupid to take so much credit for the good economy, but he will be right to say that its tanking is as much the work of his predecessors and the Federal Reserve as anybody else.

On the subject of moral flexibility, I just [reviewed "Disunited Nations,"](#) a book by a Peter Zeihan, whose artfully nonchalant cover portrait led me to believe he was a millennial. Nope – he is just ahead of his time. Trying to be

cool, in the style of Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson or Matt Taibbi, he peppers his oh so serious book on geopolitics with the F word. Rather like Jared Diamond, he cannot attribute the differences in outcomes for different nations to the people who inhabit them. Nope. It's all a matter of coastlines, navigable rivers, fertile soil and the like. His geographical observations are useful, rather like Zbigniew Brzezinski's "Grand Chessboard" three decades ago. I reluctantly gave him four stars, only to find what I might have suspected, that he had been assiduously soliciting five-star reviews from the whole world. My four stars are the first such that he received. I hope his ego can handle it. I was pleased to find [somebody else on the Internet](#) who shares my opinion

That's the follow up on the news. Thanks for your cards and letters – and especially the ones that tell me I'm wrong. I'm especially attuned to opinions on the economy at the moment.

Graham

**coronavirus.docx 03/17/2020 07:28 AM**

Thank God I get along well with my wife and children.

It looks like were going to spend a lot of time together this spring.

Ukraine was only slightly behind the rest of Europe in closing everything down on account of the coronavirus. We are actually ahead of the curve in that the country had so far been very little affected. So far just a handful of cases and one death – a 71-year-old woman who had returned from Poland.

Nevertheless, they have taken extreme measures. Shut down all international passenger traffic by air and rail, and so far as I can tell, automobile as well. The lockdown is for two weeks only, but one cannot imagine things will be better in that time.

They have shut down public schools, theaters, and public gatherings. People are being encouraged to work from home.

Eddie's tae kwon do is on hold – they meet in the public school. His choral group has been canceled for last Friday and today. The plan is to get together next Friday, but I think it is almost a given that they will decide not to do it.

The public itself has varying levels of concern. Our Toastmasters meeting came off as usual yesterday, but our district in Poland sent instructions today we should suspend face to face meetings until further notice. Yesterday I went to the Sunday farmers' market with Eddie and it was crowded. An [outdoor market on a windy day](#) with the weather it freezing is not going to attract sick people in the first place. My mother-in-law, on the other hand, sternly admonished me to stay indoors and avoid public transportation at all costs. I'm not sure she was mollified when I told her it was now bicycling weather in any case.

Eddie's school is still meeting. There are fewer than 40 kids in the school, some of whom were already sick with other bugs. They have only a handful of teachers. With so few cases of coronavirus in the country, the fact that kids are mostly unaffected, and such a local operation, they concluded that there isn't much danger. I agree with them. I also note that the school's financial position is so precarious that if they did close it down it would be unlikely to reopen.

By the way, at the farmers market I got a couple of small tuna – 18 inches long, 2 pounds apiece – for which the Internet doesn't offer recipes. The American mindset is that tuna comes in a can or big steaks. I'm going to bake one fish tonight in the hope that little ones taste about the same as big ones and will go just fine with spinach and potatoes in a salad.

Eddie and I finished reading Tom Sawyer. Even though Twain's vocabulary is somewhat advanced for any modern reader, and a bit archaic besides, Eddie thoroughly enjoyed it. It is more than a book. Like *Minn of the Mississippi* it is a tour of American history.

"Willful suspension of disbelief" is something that every work of fiction demands of the reader. I had not realized how implausible many plot twists in Tom Sawyer turned out to be. But it doesn't matter! Eddie asked me for reassurance throughout that Tom Sawyer would come out of every scrape alive. I told him that an author could not allow a character like Tom to die.

One of the things that impressed me most – and Eddie at least a little bit – was Tom's familiarity with children's literature. He loved to play robbers, pirates, and other fantasy games. In the chapter following Becky's refusal to talk to him and the doctor's murder in the graveyard, there is a long soliloquy in which Thomas feeling terribly sorry for himself and wishing he could die – if only temporarily. He quotes the sorrowful end of the tale of Robin Hood, in which that dying hero, being bled to death by a perfidious prioress, shoots an arrow out into the greensward and instructs his men to bury him where it lands.

In any case, one thing led to another and we are not reading Howard Pyle's 1883 Robin Hood, the same version of the story that I remembered from my youth. It requires quite a bit of elaboration as I describe to him what a clothyard arrow, yew bow, horn of ale, Lincoln green jerkin and so on mean. He is willing, and so we do.

Zoriana is also fascinated with books, though she certainly can't read and is only vaguely aware that I am reading to Eddie. She is generally playing around while we read, happy to be where the family is. Oksana listens and at times as well. It is a lovely family undertaking.

Last night we welcomed John Little into the merry band, to be rebaptized as Little John. The band of seven score men has been formed. You can't ask questions – such as how the king manages to keep enough venison to feed them all in a small forest. The next chapter promises adventure, as the Sheriff of Nottingham tries and fails to catch the elusive outlaw.

This kind of diversion is welcome from the series of depressing events that have befallen the world over the past week. I expected the stock market to fall. I smugly expected my holdings to hold up. Wrong! Everything got clobbered.

I keep reading depressing books chronicling corruption as a whole, that in the US government in particular, and specifically that of our spy agencies. I recently wrote about Matt Taibbi's book in progress about the United States' obsession with Russia. It is on [substack.com](http://substack.com) under the title "Untitledgate." As I wrote earlier, I have [translated it](#) into Russian and Ukrainian in dual-language format, with English.

A guy I was in communication with last year as I reviewed his book "Cleantech Con Artists" recommended another one for me to look at entitled "[Postgate](#)," about the collusion between the CIA and the Washington Post to bring down President Nixon. The author lived through that era and was drawn into the story through an unlikely circumstance – his granddaughter brought Mark Felt's grandson over to the house one day.

Mark Felt, as was revealed 15 or so years ago, was Woodward and Bernstein's source "Deep Throat." Certainly no fan of Richard Nixon! As a semi-senile man in his early nineties he allowed his lawyer, this author John Connor, to convince him to reveal his identity.

It turned out that the Washington Post and Bob Woodward in particular did not want that to happen and did everything they could to frustrate the process. They also had deep secrets to hide. The chief of those dirty secrets was that the CIA had been intimately wrapped up in the Watergate burglary, even instigated it, and the chief target was not political intelligence but compromising information about sexual trysts among high-level Democrats that were being arranged on the phones that they bugged.

Neither Mark Felt nor John O'Connor had any love for Nixon, but they did not have any love for the CIA or foul play by the press either. This is a story of deception, concealment, and betrayal by these two legendary newsman, Woodward and Bernstein.

Just yesterday I stumbled across something that should've crossed my radar earlier. When I lived in Frankfurt I subscribe to the Frankfurter Allgemeine, the German newspaper of record and read it assiduously.

It turns out that one of their later editors, Udo Ulfkrotte, wrote a German bestseller entitled Gekaufte Journalisten in 2014. It sold one and a half million copies in German. Since its topic was the way that the American CIA has corrupted German journalism, one would think it would be translated into English.

It was, but it did not get published! Or rather, it got unpublished. It came out as "Journalists for Hire" in May of 2017, and got 27 reviews on Amazon, all five-star. Then it disappeared in stages. First the price went up to \$500, and then it became unavailable. Strange things happened. Ulfkotte's career took several unpleasant turns, ending with his death at the age of 56 shortly after the American translation came out.

Such fates befall all too many books that I like. I set up [a directory](#) on my website for reviews I have written, and books themselves that have been subsequently vanished.

It has come out again in another English translation, this one entitled "Presstitutes Embedded in the Pay of the CIA: A Confession from the Profession." It is available only in paperback, which I cannot receive here in Ukraine, at a cost of \$35. Crazy man Paul Craig Roberts, who is not scared to write about anything and is right as often as not, wrote [this review of it](#).

No chronicle of the perfidious exploits of the spies would be complete without an account of their role in Kennedy's murder, which I read again recently though I don't remember where.

Too much truth! I have a kind of a Soviet sensation that I know too much. I should just shut up and raise my children.



Turning to a marginally safer topic – every subject you choose to talk about these days is toxic – here is a link to a great article about how we Caucasians came to have such [interesting and varied appearances](#), and how most peoples of the world would consider us to be the most attractive breed.

Just as I send this we get the news that two people in Kyiv are sick. They are shutting down the metro. The market fell another 3,000 points yesterday. Interesting times.

Look forward to your cards and letters. Thank God for the Internet. We'll all have a chance to slow down and catch up.

Graham

**gypsies.docx      03/24/2020 11:12 AM**

Kyiv under the coronavirus regime

We felt the bite of winter in late fall, and we're feeling it again now in early spring. Winter itself was easy.

It is been in the mid 20s for several nights now, and only in the low 30s during the day. We started working the garden a week ago but haven't made any progress since.

Coronavirus is catching up with Ukraine. I expect it is the testing regime catching up with reality as much as anything else. Reported cases in Kyiv jumped from 3 on Saturday to 9 Sunday to 29 yesterday, accounting for most of the jump in nationally reported cases to 73.

Public transportation was severely curtailed two weeks ago. No metro and a 10 person limit on jitney buses. Now that is gone as well. Only private cars and taxis.

I had planned to go to the Sunday market, then called it off on the advice of friends. However, as it was snowing that morning I figured there would be few people there. I got on my bike. Turned out there was no market in any case. I bought some bread and vegetables from sidewalk vendors.

There were few people on the streets and a few cars on the roads. Several of the vendors were wearing masks. I saw the same thing in our neighborhood as Eddie Zoriana and I took a walk yesterday afternoon. There were a few people on the sidewalks and a few people on the streets.

We stopped at the mom-and-pop store on the corner to buy groceries. There is about 6 feet between the sales clerk and the customers and only us in the store. I don't think there's much danger.

I observe that the rate of new infections in China fell quite rapidly after they implemented the social distancing/lockdown regime. The same seems to be happening in Italy. By my arithmetic we should be seeing the same thing here. The jump in reported cases is most likely due to a better testing regime identifying people who caught the bug a while ago. I expect that the rate of new infections has decreased significantly.

I'm going to repeat something that Garry told me in a conversation we had Sunday. Garry – correct me where I'm wrong. He was on a bus in London in late January with a bunch of Chinese tourists, all wearing face masks. However, the woman behind him took the facemask off so she could talk on her cell phone, coughing frequently.

He got sick. The National Health Service followed its usual protocol and diagnosed him remotely, by phone. They did not suspect COVID because it was early in the game. They told him to treat it like the flu, which he did. It took a long time to recover, during which time they did take some samples for testing. They were still not testing for coronavirus in February.

After he got well, the NHS told him that they had applied the coronavirus test to the sample that they had previously taken and lo and behold, that's what he had. So did his wife Marina though not as seriously.

Garry reports that all of London is in a minor state of panic over this virus. Certainly more there than we have here in Kyiv. We had, for instance, a three child music lesson here on Saturday morning. They came by car. Everybody is attuned to the threat of virus, careful to wash their hands and so on, but not unduly worried.

So far, we haven't heard from anybody in Ukraine, not even via Facebook, who has caught the virus. Everybody seems to be aware of it.

My crystal ball is pretty murky, but my best guess is that the number of reported virus cases will plateau in the next three weeks just as it did in China and is starting to in Italy. We are lucky not to have hard-to-control populations such as France's no-go zones or Germany's refugee camps to incubate and further spread the contagion.

Several of you responded to my invitation to offer feedback. With regard to relations with Russia and the end of NATO, I heard that I was a "Russian bot" Ukrainian patriots berate me for thinking you can trust the Russians in anything. I am comfortable in the middle.

With regard to my observation that the infection in Chernovtsy may have been among Gypsies, I got called on the fact that I had not used the politically correct term Roma. I don't hear anybody here in Ukraine use it. We have a single word for them, Zigan, related to the German Zigeuner. Whatever. We learn that Patients Zero in that region was a family that had returned from visiting relatives in Romania. Go figure. Is there any relationship between Romania and the Roma?

With regard to the collapse of the Euro currency, one of you wrote that the Euro is here to stay – it would be impossible to undo. Doing it will certainly be difficult. This is by design – there is no mechanism for leaving it, just like there was no mechanism originally built into the European Union for a member to exit.

We note, however, despite all prognostications that it could never happen, that Britain has in fact left the European Union. They are having great difficulty tying up the loose ends, but it is a fait accompli.

The Euro needs to end sometime. The weaker members – the southern members – do not have the fiscal discipline to balance their budgets. They have debt that cannot be serviced. The logical solution would be to devalue their currencies, which would make it easier to repay the debt at the cost of the debt holders suffering capital losses. But they can't do that.

Former Greek finance minister Yannis Varfarkis described the situation quite clearly in his book on the Greek financial crisis "Adults in the Room." Essentially, Europe would not let Greece leave even though some like German finance minister Scheuble wanted them to go. Everybody agreed it had been a bad idea to admit Greece in the first place.

Varfarkis' observation is that it takes six months or so at least to set up a new currency. During that window Greece's economy would have been buffeted from all sides by people who could see depreciation coming. It was an impossible situation.

He suggested something akin to what has also been suggested by the Five-Star movement in Italy – a parallel currency. The idea in Italy was to issue bearer bonds of Italian government debt that would be allowed to float downward in value. The bonds would be useful for paying taxes and for settling debts between citizens. However, Five-Star never mounted a strong campaign in Italy and the powers that be in Europe were aghast at the idea. It never happened.

My observation is that the crisis now upon us puts all of these issues back in play, and that the countries with the biggest vested interest in the Euro are losing relative power. It might happen. Anyhow, I don't feel like a fool for having put the notion forward.

I am attaching a piece written by an American journalist friend of mine, a very middle-of-the-road reporter, on the Zelinsky government, Russia and the coronavirus. He reports in a neutral way that the government is using the coronavirus to suppress demonstrations as it enters into direct negotiations with the leaders of the Donbas and Lugansk breakaway regions.

Most Ukrainians, my wife included, are in mortal fear of giving away any part of the country. I am more of a pragmatist. Those parts were a liability in any case. Malcontents, supported by the public purse in any case. Good riddance. In my view Ukraine needs to come up with some sort of a deal among those parties and Russia to end the war and normalize the status of Crimea and those territories.

The argument against doing so is that it would simply whet Putin's appetite for taking over the rest of Ukraine. I don't buy it. He doesn't have the manpower. Doesn't have the support of his own people. And he knows now what he didn't six years ago. The Ukrainian people don't want to be part of Russia.

The historical argument is that Russia wants a buffer between itself and the West, meaning in these times NATO. Let it be a neutral Ukraine, on good terms with all but beholden to none. Specifically, not under Russia's thumb through blackmail with regards to gas transshipments, sales of coal, passage of rail traffic to Europe or coerced membership in a customs union or anything of the sort.

This seems like a good time to strike a deal. Ukraine has greatly reduced its dependence on Russia. Last year China was its major trade partner. Russia has to realize that the cudgels it traditionally held over Ukraine have proven ineffective since Maidan. If Russia will recognize these realities and accept Ukraine as a fully independent state, not a vassal and not subject to bullying, it will serve both countries well.

As for rebuilding the lands annexed by Russia and destroyed by the hostilities, let that be Russia's problem. Ukraine seems to be doing a credible job on its side of the de facto border.

The doorknob to my office just turned. With Eddie home from school – this week with the scheduled vacation, and he doesn't even have any homework – and our babysitter not having been here for a month now we are really on our own, I spend a lot of time with the kids, but they are insatiable for daddy's company. These are times we will look back on.

We held our Toastmasters meeting Saturday using Zoom software. I was impressed at how well it worked. My brother, sister and I have scheduled a family reunion for this evening at 5 o'clock. It will be the first time we've had a family conversation since dad's funeral in 2002. Since we have two computers in the house it will be an opportunity for Oksana to join the conversation and really get to know Stephanie and Duncan. Usually it's just a couple of polite words exchanged when I hand her the headset as I am engaged in a Skype conversation. Is opportune as well and that Eddie can handle himself pretty well in an English conversation and Zoriana can at least introduce her self.

That's it for now. Time to get back to jigsaw puzzles or whatever is the order of the day. Please do keep those cards and letters coming. As you see, I take criticism fairly well and will be happy to elaborate on the positions I'm taking.

Graham