

Things I would liked to have shared with my most valued teacher

Bob Nuckolls
circa 1992

Dear Blondina,

I am saddened to read that so much sorrow has visited you; all at one time too. When I was writing the letter to begin a search for your new home, I knew that it had been much, much too long since I had been in contact. Your news was very sad and affected me greatly. It has taken some time to gather up a wherewithal to reply. There are many things I would have shared with Ed. I'll try to assuage some of my personal recriminations by sharing with you.

You may recall, I met Ed (like many other hams in our neighborhood, cruising the streets on a bike and being mindful of antennas and license plates. I think I was still in the 6th grade at Allen school when I first knocked on your door. I don't know how much of teenaged years family life you were personally aware of.

My folks were divorced shortly after we moved into the house on south Ridgewood. Their marriage suffered badly as a consequence of my mother's schizophrenia. I did not have the benefit of contact with my father for nearly 7 years after their divorce. Ed proved to be like no other adult I knew. I am unable to describe the difference in terms I would have used then. Today I know that he was as close to a father as I would have for the next six years. In many respects, he was better than my own father could have been. He had superior skills and knowledge in a discipline that was significant to me but more importantly, Ed was a teacher in the most practical and honorable sense of the word.

All the way through junior and senior high school, Ed shared generously of his time, skills and knowledge. Those commodities were valuable but it was many years later that I became aware of another gift from Ed Fistor. It had to do with the way Ed shared of himself. He could be very demanding in what he expected of me but without being demeaning or making me feel inadequate. Conquering ignorance was simply a matter of building on what one already knew. That was his unique method of teaching. I don't think Ed ever directly answered a question. I learned to expect a follow-on series of questions. He would make me explore everything I already knew as foundation for the answer. Often, as a result of this process, I would answer the original question for myself. His most important gift to me was an attitude. A way of thinking and working with people to make the most of what they already possess and to make them believe in what they could accomplish.

(As I write this, I am on an airplane bound for Los Angeles. I am to meet with some attorneys who are defending a railroad being sued for the results of a serious accident. Attorney's are well versed in the dogma of their teachers and as a class of professionals I find them especially lacking in creativity. It is almost as if the "law", as it was taught to them, has cast their actions and thinking into stone. My task is to help them mount their defense on technical grounds which they do not understand. I will be relying heavily upon the Fistor technique to help them define and perform their task.)

I recall during our last meeting in California, telling you how startling it was to see Ed again after so many years. It was almost eerie how much of Ed I could see in myself. His mannerisms and some forms of speech were like looking into a mirror. I hadn't realized until then how much of him had become a part of me. I recall his disappointment in the fact that I did not finish college.

I don't know if "disappointment" is exactly the right word to describe his reaction. It is difficult to describe what transpired in that brief exchange. We were sitting at the table in your kitchen and I was bringing him up to date on my activities since you'd moved to California. I don't remember his words so much as the feelings behind the words. For my own part I was feeling like the kid being confronted by a loving grandparent for some serious breach of promise. There's not another person on the face of this earth who could make me feel that way.

I don't know if a degree would have made a great deal of difference in my present condition. Wichita general aviation industries are unique in a way that was beneficial to me. When I was heavily involved in the aviation industry, engineering departments still echoed with the footsteps of Walter Beech, Clyde Cessna, Duane Wallace, Bill Lear and the like. There were "old timers" in those rooms who had wonderful stories to tell about the early beginnings of aviation in Wichita. Most interesting were stories of a designer becoming suddenly aware of someone looking over their shoulder. It might have been Bill, Clyde or Walter who would be checking into how-goes-it. They might leave without saying a word. Or, they could just as easily completely revise the work in progress, much to the consternation of the "victim". The unique feature was a patriarchal interest and participation at all levels of the corporate experience, especially in the creative effort.

When I began to pursue a profession, engineering departments in local plants still operated with an attitude, "If you can do the work, you can have the job." They were more interested in results than an ability to attend classes and pass tests. Wichita was big enough to have these industries but small enough to permit one to build a reputation. Corporate competition aside, everyone was familiar with the who's who of aviation. This resulted in my being able to work for all the aircraft plants and a major supplier to the aircraft industry in an engineering capacity. My last position with general aviation was with Gates-Lear jet where I was supervisor of the electrical/avionics group for design of a totally new airplane.

To say that my association with Ed was responsible for my successes might be stretching a rational evaluation of cause and effect. It is certain that Ed made a major contribution in showing me an approach to problem solving. Few good ideas are flashes of pure inspiration. Practical, if not elegant solutions are evolutionary progressions based upon what is already known. Step one in any task: review what you (and your colleagues) already know and build on that. Ed taught me how to do that.

When I last saw you I was married then some 11 years. I was raising two sons by Melissa whom I met after graduating from high school and while working at Boeing. When Boeing laid me off in the fall of '62, Ed helped me get a job teaching electronics with the industrial education department at the University of Wichita. It was there I discovered the joy of teaching. It was also gratifying that former supervisors from Boeing (who undoubtedly considered Bob Nuckolls to be a smart-assed, wet nosed kid) turned up in some of my classes. That job could have been my ticket to a degree. I was working on campus, taking classes on one side of the street and teaching classes on the other. Had that situation held for a couple of years, I suspect that I would have finished. Early on, the courses I taught were changed from adult continuing education classes to college credit courses. I was demoted from instructor at \$600/semester/class to "teaching assistant" for \$1.50/hour. An income of about \$50/week wouldn't support me to stay in school. I had left home just prior to getting the job at W.U., my mother's illness had become more than I could deal with too.

At the invitation of my future father-in-law, I moved to Tucson and lived with him while getting established there. I got an excellent job at Hughes Aircraft

as an electronic technician. This was the first job where my graduation from the Fistor school of problem solving really paid off. The job prerequisites in the newspaper ad sorely missed the mark. People who just met the requisites would have a difficult time. My task was to put first- power on components of guided missiles which were manufactured there. If the device didn't work, I was to trouble shoot it and send it back to the assembly line for replacement of parts. I worked second shift and it was pretty quiet. Only a dozen of the fifty or so work stations were occupied then. One night my supervisor called me into his office and I was shown a big chart on his wall which compared "productivity" of the various work stations on other shifts that were also doing my job.

He pointed out the column for "Completed Units" and queried me as to why my little box had numbers like 3, 7, 4 and other shifts had 20, 32, and 19. I took him out to my work station and showed him the stack of modules that did not work. These had been put aside by operators on other shifts. Presumably they would get back to them when they ran out of modules that required no repairs. As a result, their numbers for completed work were impressive. I spent most of my time diagnosing problems and ordering repairs on the units they wouldn't or couldn't fix. My boss just nodded his head and said, "drive on." "If anyone bugs you about the numbers again, just tell them to talk to me." Nobody ever did

While living in Tucson, Melissa and I got married. I worked at Hughes until being laid off at about 9 months. We joined Melissa's folks again, this time in Pittsburgh, PA. I found a job with a little company in Apollo, PA, called NUMEC. They manufactured nuclear fuel rods for reactors. I was very fortunate in that I was hired to work for a very talented and intelligent engineer who was also a bit eccentric. I don't think he was an employee of NUMEC but a contract consultant. He had several other jobs in the area and I would see him for only a few hours a week. We never conducted business in the plant. He would show up about 10 in the morning and hustle me and my notebook off to the restaurant across the street. There, much to the chagrin of the owner, he would spread drawings out on several tables and order only coffee for two. We were almost literally thrown out of the place when we occupied this space too close to the lunch hour!

Ed would have approved of Len Walak as supervisor to a young electronics freak. Len would always ask what I thought was a good approach to a problem. I don't know if he really couldn't think of a better way but more often than not, he would let me try my idea first. Maybe he was just a bit lazy. Whatever his motives, he provided me with an environment to develop and build creative skills. When faced with a decision without benefit of his guidance, he never disapproved of me trying something on my own. As a result, the stuff we built were as much my creation as they were Len's. Shortly after JFK was killed, the factory side of the plant went on strike. The door to my workplace was being "picketed" (guarded is the more appropriate term) by a very big guy with a sign on a big stick. Melissa and I packed up and headed back to Wichita. I would have liked to work for Len further; he was very instrumental in letting me explore my own capabilities.

Melissa was pregnant with our first child and we rented a small apartment on east Central. I found a job with Graham Two-Way in El Dorado. The job only paid \$1.25/hour plus a gasoline allowance for commuting. We worked a 58 hour work week plus double time for work on towers over 50-feet off the ground. Needless to say I was their most enthusiastic volunteer for tower work! Our first baby, a girl, was victim of a tangled umbilical and lived only a few hours after birth. Melissa was devastated and I really needed to upgrade my job so we could move out of the little apartment. I was on my way to a job interview with Cessna when I stopped to look into a newspaper ad looking for

teachers. The ad was placed by a head-hunter outfit looking for contract instructors at Great Lakes Naval Training Base near Chicago. I never made it out to Cessna. A few days later, Melissa and I packed virtually everything we owned into a '59 Chevy and a small trailer (the trailer was full of electronics parts! Living stuff had to fit into the car . . . you probably understand how those priorities worked!).

The teaching job at Great Lakes was more fun than work. The school in which I worked ran fourteen two-week segments which taught basic electronics. Most of the students were recruits; some were individuals who re-enlisted to take advantage of the Navy's excellent schools. It was an ideal teaching situation, all military rank disappeared at the classroom door and the students were constantly reminded that learning was their sole purpose for being there. While the curriculum was quite good, the school's management did have a basic flaw. Students were tested every Friday afternoon on the previous week's work. The tests were multiple choice chosen from a large bank of questions at the testing center. As large as the bank was, it did not take long for instructors to learn the test material. A trap for many instructors was that they began teaching to the tests. The problem was exacerbated by a practice of letting the high score class for each section (and their instructor) off early on Friday right after tests were scored. The other students didn't get weekend "shore leave" until 6 or 7 that evening.

I taught in the upper four segments of the course. I had been there for several months and really felt like I was doing a pretty good job. One Monday morning, an older Navy Chief (who re-enlisted for the schooling and better pay) hit me up for my "poor performance" as an instructor. I was flabbergasted. I'd really never thought about it much but he pointed out that I never had made high class for a Friday exam. It took only seconds for me to formulate the response. The Ed Fistor in me rose up and said, "My friend, my job is not to teach you how to pass a test. That's your problem. My job is to teach electronics. If you pay attention to what's going on up here and hit the books when you are not here, you're career in electronics will benefit whether or not these people hit the taverns early next Friday."

It was a good thing that Navy policy gave such power to instructors, I was 22 years old and that Chief was a 10 year veteran of the Navy. I found later that my "reputation" was so pervasive that classes coming up had me pegged as the most undesirable of instructors, which suited me just fine. I renewed my resolve not to teach to the tests . . . in spite of the fact that I could hear instructors across the hall doing just that. I would have stayed longer, I truly enjoyed teaching. I just couldn't live on \$90/week and pay \$195/month rent on a barely livable apartment. The last Friday I taught there, just hours before I was to depart for Wichita, my class nailed high score in the section. Melissa and I headed for home a few hours earlier. That Chief was long gone from the base but I sure would have liked show him that I knew from where I spoke.

Amazingly enough, that job I was going out to interview for at Cessna some months earlier was still open! I went to work as a technical writer for production of kits and instructions on field installations of radios. There I learned to illustrate, a skill which still serves me well. I also learned to organize thoughts and put them on paper. My design skills were applied there too but not in the handbooks department. The electrical design group was right across the isle from me and I probably spent a third of my time over there, participating in design discussions. After more than four years, I had worked my way up to salary and I was beginning to feel the pressures of not learning anything new at my job. I asked for a transfer to the design group. The supervisor was willing but he wanted to bust me back to grade 3 hourly. His rationale was that I didn't have any experience at the job! Little did he know

. . . .

While at Cessna, another fortuitous chain of events took place. The chief of flight test was partners with another man in the ownership of what was already a classic, if not antique, air plane. He had purchased a surplus radio from Cessna and was asking around for someone to install it. The airplane was a 1954 model 195, all the mechanics around then were familiar with 1968 models. Bill could find no one who was eager to do the installation in his "old" airplane. My job for the past four years had been to research drawings on older airplanes and architecture installation kits. I told Bill I'd be glad to do his installation.

While laying on my back in the grass, drilling holes in the belly skin of the 195, a car pulled up in front of the airplane and the driver got out. I stood up to meet him and the stranger introduced himself as Ken Razak, second half of the partnership in the airplane. Ken Razak had been dean of engineering at W.U. while I was still a student there. I had been in his office for paper work and knew who he was but I'd never met him. It didn't take Ken long to find out who Bob Nuckolls was, where he was going and how he thought he was going to get there! Some weeks later, Ken called me on the phone. He said he was working on a piece of hospital equipment which would require a rather extensive electrical system. He asked if I would like to do the design work on it. Ken was my first consulting customer while I was still working at Cessna late in 1968. Later in '69, after being turned down for transfer to the design group at Cessna, I left to work full time with Ken on the Mobilizer. A very unique and capable piece of patient handling equipment.

I worked as a consultant mostly to Ken but I picked up a few short term jobs with other clients over the next two years. One of those clients was a company who needed a new security system designed for a central station burglar and fire alarm company. This was a job that gave me a good lesson in financial management. I was to receive progress payments on the task and I had committed my personal credit to procurement of materials for their job. One day about half way through the project, I went to their office to pick up a check and found it cleaned out. They had gone bankrupt. Most of the stuff I had committed for was not returnable; I was right behind them in filing for bankruptcy.

By this time I had two sons, Eric (1965) and Scott (1968). One of my consulting customers, ElectroMech, Inc., offered me a full time job and I took it. The job entailed design and development of custom electronics products for the local aircraft industry. My interviews with Fred Coslett, owner of ElectroMech, suggested that I target "Chief Engineer" as a job goal. This was the first time that I was really able to expand my skills as a designer. The job with ElectroMech went quite well for several years. One day, without warning, a new face showed up in ElectroMech's engineering department. The man was formerly an engineer with Cessna and I had worked with him briefly on several projects in the past. About two weeks after Pete showed up, Fred announced that Pete was to be our new "chief engineer." I was surprised but not terribly hurt. I don't think Fred even remembered our conversations of some years earlier. I reasoned that it was just possible I could learn something from Pete . . . he did have many years experience at Cessna.

Over the next year we determined that Pete had little technical skills to contribute. His management style was somewhere between lord of a medieval serfdom and prison warden. For the most part, he became the butt of many jokes amongst his staff and most of the plant that had any contact with him. When he made a big deal of announcing upcoming performance interviews with the engineering staff, we were all somewhat amused with idea that he could realistically evaluate any of us!

It took him a whole day to "evaluate" the first two victims and half of a second day for the third. I was to be last. I had the advantage of knowing

what to expect after having talked with my colleagues beforehand. His technique was to be especially demeaning before finally giving a raise. He also instituted some especially tight rules about taking personal briefcases in and out of the plant. He alluded to some "missing" drawings and other documents. My interview lasted fifteen minutes. I called his bluff on some poor performance issues he raised. I deeply resented being suspected a thief and told him I needed my brief case to carry books and tools between home, school and work. However, he could feel free to inspect my briefcase at any time, with or without my specific permission. He gave me the raise and terminated the interview. The briefcase rules were rescinded next day. The following week I began to look for another job.

The next job was with the owners of television channel 3. The company was Kansas State Network (KSN). I was supposed to be a production manager but the chief engineer for the job sort of lost interest after he'd seen the product work the first time. It had a lot of producibility and reliability problems. I received what was to be a crash course in video design and spent nearly two and a half years upgrading the product. That was the job I held when I saw you last in Sunnyvale. KSN folded in spite of our engineering and production efforts. Our division manager turned out to be pretty inept. He was son-in-law to chairman of the board . . . being groomed for greater things in future years. Too bad he couldn't manage better. I Guess KSN got off lucky. It was best to find out how bad he was and cut their losses at 2 million dollars! Given bigger responsibilities he might have really hurt them!

After KSN folded, I began to do consulting work again. A fallout of the KSN debacle left me with a ready made clientele for video work. We had built about 400 time base correctors and I was the sole source for repairs and updates after KSN went out of business. I took a consulting job with a company in Lawrence, Kansas and would live every other week in Lawrence. Ken Razak continued to be an occasional but steady source of project work in his accident investigation, analysis and expert witness practice.

Over the next three years, Pete finally showed all of his true colors at ElectroMech and was dismissed by Fred. Fred also hired me as a consultant to do a few small jobs. He later made a full time offer which I accepted. ElectroMech had done rather well for itself in spite of Pete's ineptitude and dishonesty. I was to become involved in a number of big projects for Electro Mech. One product was retrofitted to the entire fleet of LearJets in answer to an FAA airworthiness directive. That project got me a fat raise and free flying lessons! All totaled, I worked at ElectroMech for over 7 years.

About 1982, my kids were nearly grown and Melissa had finished her masters degree in sociology. Our personal and professional lives had been diverging for over ten years and we decided to get divorced just days before our 20th anniversary. She moved to Lawrence to teach and pursue a PhD. Both sons worked in the Wichita area for a time after graduation. They both went through a tough time of adjusting to the responsibilities of providing for themselves. Scott is now married. His mother-in-law is a professor at KU in the biology department; the father is an M.D. in student health services. Both Scott and Kathleen (his wife) are studying at K.U. Eric has a live-in intended. They are buying a mobile home near Lawrence and have made plans for a wedding next June.

About that time my brother Tim was planning a trip to New Mexico. He was to be featured in an art show in Santa Fe and appear in person on a Friday night before Labor Day. He didn't have the money to travel to Santa Fe. I was also short of cash but I did have a generous flight proficiency budget from ElectroMech so I offered to fly him there for the weekend. We sat around talking about what to do with the rest of the weekend (he only needed to be there Friday night), without spending much money. We decided to take the

airplane's rear seat out and pack our bicycles. We planned to fly to Angel Fire in the mountains east of Taos, cycle around there for the rest of the weekend and camp out. It had been years since I'd ridden a bike for long distances much less at 8500 feet! I began training for the trip by riding my bike about 15 miles a night after work.

I began to stop every evening, a short distance from home at a convenience store to drink an orange juice to cool down. For most of my visits, lady named Deanna was clerking. We became acquainted over the weeks I was preparing for the trip. I didn't ride the bike any more that year after the trip. Next spring, just for fun, I dug the bike out and went for a ride I stopped at the store again and Dee was still working there. She remembered me from the previous fall and asked about the trip. One thought led to another and I invited her to go flying. I really wasn't looking to get married again but I was very taken with the lady's personality and intelligence. She was just becoming divorced herself and had a 2-year old boy by that marriage. His name is Zachary. A few weeks later we flew to Santa Fe for a weekend and I think I fell in love with her there. I asked Dee to marry me the next Christmas morning. One year later, on Christmas day, and we were indeed married.

My job at ElectroMech was beginning to stagnate and Gates-Lear jet had struck a partnership with an Italian firm to design and build a rather revolutionary turbo-prop airplane. This was the first time in over twenty years that a Wichita firm started a new model design from a clean piece of paper! I talked with some of my contacts at Lear and was hired into the electrical/avionics group for the new GP-180.

My supervisor was a long time acquaintance and former customer of ElectroMech. He was a capable engineer but a weak manager. About a year into the program, I was promoted to supervisor of the group. My shot at the GP-180 was hauled up short when Lear jet got into money troubles on the jet side of the house. They elected to bail out of the GP-180. They offered me a job on the jet side but I just couldn't get very excited about those air planes. I put out some feelers again and was offered a position with Beech's Missile Systems Division. Beech was cultivating a partnership with Martin, Sperry, Ball Aerospace and Singer-Kearfott on a remotely piloted reconnaissance airplane. This was much to my liking, I've never been very comfortable working on "people-killing" machines. I wore two hats there, one as assistant to the project manager for coordination of electrical/avionics issues between the partners (got to travel a lot!) and as a design engineer on a portion of Beech's systems.

Beech wrote a pretty good proposal but our choice of Martin as prime contractor proved to be a poor one. The group of "engineers" I was working under at Martin all held PhD's. Everyone was addressed as "doctor." Never in my life have I met such an incapable collection of people. They couldn't even produce a credible outline for our proposal documents much less write them. I am certain that they were equally incapable of designing functional systems. My engineering boss and I spent days in Baltimore proof reading and reorganizing their proposal text on the electrical/avionics systems. When I received a copy of the final proposal I was dumbfounded. There were major portions of the document I couldn't understand and I was supposed to be helping design the thing. The Navy said we lost the bid on price. I think they were being kind. I think they must have given up in disgust. I don't think anyone figured out what kind of machine we were offering to build!

Since my serendipitous meeting with Ken Razak some 24 years ago, I have been privileged to work with him in support of his accident analysis and expert testimony. Until three years ago, I was a consultant to him but when the Beech experience began to sour we began to discuss a new business. It is difficult tasks for any witness (and examining attorney) impart a common images in minds jurors as to the facts of their testimony. It is especially difficult to

produce a sense of timing. Ken has testified in over 1000 cases and provided expert services in perhaps 7000 more. His understanding of this problem is quite unique. About four years ago we began to develop a technique for producing video animations of accidents to illustrate witness testimony in court. A number of our contemporaries are doing similar work using computers for image development and depiction of motion. Ken rightfully perceived a difficulty in getting courts to admit computer imagery; it is too "cartoonish." Further, motions depicted are controlled by "closed" software which cannot be cross examined. Our approach moves vehicles on scale models using computers for which we wrote our own software. Computers are heavily utilized in our business but in ordinary support capacities as computational aids. All software used to portray vehicle motions is generated in house and open to cross-examination. Our scenes are very realistic; clients and eye-witnesses often have trouble distinguishing our studio scenes from those shot on site.

The business has done well and returned all original investment plus a nice profit to Ken in under three years since incorporation. In anticipation of his retirement, Ken set up Videmation, Incorporated, as a separate entity from Razak Engineering, Inc. Razak Engineering has been Videmation's biggest client. Ken is not going to take any new cases after this year (he is 74 this summer!) and our big goal for the year is to widen our client base and stand Videmation up on it's own feet. My trip this week was to L.A. on a pedestrian accident at a railway depot in San Juan Capistrano. The firm representing Amtrak in this case is a very large one with offices in several major cities. The attorney I am working with appears confident and capable. She is an administrative partner of the firm. I plan to do an especially attentive job on this case which may provide an entree' to more work.

Dee and I have been married for 8 years and we are building a good life together. We moved from Benton, Kansas, last summer and bought a house in Wichita (I've been renting since my bankruptcy in '72). We had moved to Benton in April of '90 when we took over the little airport there. One of my hobbies is amateur-built aircraft. I have about 650 hours as a pilot and we hope to build our own airplane soon. One of my fondest dreams was to live on an airport. There are a number of community airports around Wichita where houses line both sides of a runway; people have hangars in their back yards. The opportunity came when the whole airport at Benton was for sale. There were no real books for the business and we bought the airport on minimal but favorable data. After two months we began to see that the former owner failed to tell us about a number of important facts!

The airport was to be Dee's project mostly with me retaining my job at Videmation. Never have we worked so hard and spent so much money to have so much fun! Working with airplanes and people who fly them was very gratifying. It was just not possible to salvage the business side of the operation.

We really liked living in the country, very quiet. The biggest problems were wear and tear on cars and the time it took to do even simple procurement . . . the nearest grocery store was 7 miles away. We after we bailed out of the airport, we tried to find a house in the area. Looked for six months with no success.

Finally, back in Wichita, we looked at three houses and bought the second one. It's the nicest house I've ever lived in. Plenty of room for ham shack, dark room, garage to build an airplane, etc. It's also quite livable. One of the best features is that our back yard adjoins the back yard of Dee's parents. They are fine people and I was happy with the prospect of living close to them. They helped us a lot in raising the down payment.

Dee is working as a clerk in a warehouse a few blocks from Videmation. She was

working with me at Videmation before we took over the airport. I just couldn't put her back on after we came back to Wichita which pains me a lot (her too; her wage at the warehouse is about half of what she made with me as a technician and model builder). Dee did 95% of fabrication and assembly work on a piece of equipment we use to move vehicles on models. She had worked at Beech some time before Zach was born; learned to read and assemble from drawings. As soon as we get her folks repaid on the loan, our #1 priority will be to get her back into school. She started an engineering degree several years ago and has a lot of core work done. She'll probably change to a psychology major with a goal of entering the family and personal counseling field. She would be good at it too. I can tell.

Although our major cash flow is from non-electronic tasks, I am still very much immersed in it. I have trouble keeping my money in my pocket at some garage sales and surplus stores. I've been collecting selected, but now difficult to find, components in case I run across a certain "kid" who may have need of them. I publish a periodical which addresses electrical/avionics issues in airplanes with over 300 subscribers in 7 countries. I put on two or more forums at the Experimental Aircraft Association Convention in Oshkosh every summer. The "teacher" in me is keeping active. The airplane we are considering will carry two people and baggage 1000 miles at 200 miles per hour. A nice way to get somewhere for the weekend. I plan to offer weekend seminars to EAA chapters around the country if they will pay out-of-pocket expenses for us to get there.

Zach was 11 years old last November and he is just beginning to do well in school. He is burdened with poor attitudes toward many things in life . . . he gets reinforcement doses every two weeks during visits to his natural father. Fortunately, I have the edge. I've got him 12 days out of 14 and we're beginning to talk in more adult terms about a lot of things. There will come a time I am sure when Zachary will point up a difference in "station" between myself and his father. I do not dread it. I will sit down and tell him about another young fellow, just about Zach's age, who's natural father (for a lot of reasons) was unable to address the intellectual needs of his son. I tell him about a man who volunteered to guide and to teach simple basic values that served him well for the rest of his life. I will tell him that I do not expect him to ever call me "Dad." However, I will suggest that I am (like Ed was to me) the best friend he will ever have.

Well, here's 30 years in a nutshell. I didn't have any preconceived notion of how much I intended to write when I started. I guess 2-1/2 years per page is pretty condensed. It has been a useful review for me and I hope you will find it useful too. Dee and I have often reflected upon some of the miserable times in our past and how it might have been nice for some events not to have happened. Taken as a whole we must acknowledge that a single alteration of events might have prevented our paths from crossing. From that perspective I cannot regret anything in my past.

It will take me some time to get over my procrastination in locating you. I would have dearly loved to see Ed another time and to share these things with him. It is done and so be it. Please know that in spite of my silence, my thoughts have and will continue to be with you often.

Very best regards,