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From the President

Changes in My 60 Years with Torch



I have enjoyed a full life of service. I served in the Army Air Corps during WW II, am the Judge Advocate for the South Carolina State Guard, and belong to the American Legion. A graduate of the College of Charleston and the University of South Carolina, I became a Lawyer in 1951 and served as the South Carolina Assistant Attorney General. A member of the Columbia Torch Club since 1950, I served in all office positions, joined the IATC Board of Directors in 1994, and will retire as IATC President in July. I look forward to helping with the IATC convention in Columbia in June 2013.

My presidential term has been a very satisfying two years. Working with a competent Board of Directors, I have seen Torch make major leaps forward, providing greater value to Torch members present and future. As one who can barely

turn my computer on, I am surprised and pleased by the technological changes that will serve Torch better, create more opportunities for members, allow a legacy to build, and ultimately save us money. Proud of our progress, I am grateful for all who have patiently supported and endured these changes.

In my 60-plus years in Torch, I have seen a slight decline in membership, reflecting demographic shifts in our culture, yet the important things remain the same—close friendships, warm greetings, deep laughs, stimulating papers and conversations—and Torch has been enhanced by technology. I wish you all many blessings and much dancing, long into the future.

—Edward B. Latimer, IATC President

Gold & Silver Torch Awards

At our annual convention, special Gold and Silver Torch Awards may be given to individual members for truly outstanding service, through nomination by their local clubs, submitted in advance through the Awards Chairman.

Gold Award

The Gold Torch Award honors members who have served Torch at the local, regional, and—most importantly—the International level. To qualify for this award, the nominee must have been a Torch member for at least 10 years. In any one year, the number of Gold Torch Awards may not exceed 0.1% (rounded to the nearest whole number) of the membership of the International Association of Torch Clubs (i.e., three awards for membership of 2,500 to 3,499).

Silver Award

The Silver Torch Award recognizes members who have served in an exemplary manner at the local club level. To qualify for the Silver Torch Award, the nominee must have been a member for at least 5 years. In a given year, the number of Silver Torch Awards nominees by a local club may not exceed one for each 25 members or portion thereof.

Nominations for both Gold and Silver awards should be sent by March 31, 2012 to Charles E. Carlson at IATC, 11712C Jefferson Ave #246, Newport News, VA 23606 with copies to your regional director.

Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain

A remarkable feature of Islamic expansion was the history of religious tolerance in Spain.

By Jaime de Ojeda



About the Author

After his graduation in Law, *Prix Extra-ordinaire*, at the Complutense University of Madrid, Jaime de Ojeda joined the Spanish diplomatic service in 1958. His first post abroad was at the Spanish embassy in Washington from 1962 to 1969, and he returned to Washington as Spanish ambassador from 1990 to 1996 in his last posting. His career has focused on western politico-military affairs as well as diplomacy in East Asia. He opened the first Spanish embassy in the People's Republic of China in 1973, and was Consul General of Spain in Hong Kong and Macao between 1976 and 1979. From 1983 to 1990, he served as Spain's ambassador to NATO. Since his retirement in 1998, he has been Ambassador-in-Residence at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. Ambassador Ojeda has published numerous articles on international affairs, mainly for the Spanish magazine *Política Exterior*; and a book, *The Spanish American War of 1898 in the Congress and Press of the United States* (1998, in Spanish). He has translated into Spanish Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1972) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1974), and into English Lope de Vega's *The Dumb Lady* (1998). He also authored an article on St. John of the Cross for the Harvard University Symposium (1991) and another on "Spain and America: The Past and the Future" (1996, John Carter Brown Library, Rhode Island). He writes articles on musical history for the Spanish magazine

Claves. He has been awarded the Great Cross Military Merit (1986) and the Great Cross Civil Merit (1998), and is also a member of the Order of Charles III (1982).

Presented to the Torch Club of Winchester on May 7, 2008.



In memory of Jaime Oliver Asín, Spanish Arabist, professor of Spanish Literature at the Institute Ramiro de Maeztu in Madrid, who introduced me to the little known and remarkable history of Spanish Islam.

Religious toleration, now an essential part of our Western heritage, was espoused and practiced by European Muslims from their beginnings, enriching the cultural and social life of Medieval Europe for eight centuries. After a survey of the rise of Islam's influence in the region, this paper will focus on this Muslim principle as it was experienced in the history of Spain.

Pragmatic Value of Tolerance in the Expansion of Islam

Less than two decades after Muhammad's death in 632 AD, Arab tribes fired by the revelation of the Quran had overrun the old lands of the Byzantine and Sassanian empires, reached the border of the Chinese empire at the Indus river, and conquered Egypt and the whole of the Near East. They were soon faced with the problem of how to rule the largely urban provinces that they had conquered. Their nomadic style of life, along with their desire to preserve the purity of their religious revelation and the moral

integrity of their armies, prompted them to settle in their own separate garrison cities. Their revelation was so identified with their Arab tribalism that they did not conceive the conversion of non-Arabs, as long as they were not pagan idolaters, in line with the principle stated in Quran sura 2.256, "In religion there can be no compulsion."

Their military and religious isolation, however, presented the problem of how to rule the conquered. The advantages of maintaining the existing administrations in order to collect taxes and keep law and order inclined them into pragmatic compromises. In this they were led by Mohamed's views of Jews and Christians. The Quran is explicit about the "People of the Book," declaring in sura 29.46, "Our God and your God is One," and in sura 28.63 that Christians and Jews are said to have declared their belief in the Book "indeed even before we had submitted." The *dhimmi*, the "People of the Book," had to respect the authority of their Muslim rulers and pay a poll tax; in return they would be free to worship in their churches and synagogues and rule the life of their own communities according to their own laws and customs. The Islamic world, however, alternated between tolerance and contemptuous indifference regarding the *dhimmi*. The constant conflicts with Byzantium and the Turks in the East and against the Christian kingdoms in Spain motivated negative reactions against the *dhimmi*. Tolerance in secure times gave way to intolerance and even persecution in times of threat. Otherwise Muslims were quite satisfied to rule over a large population of nonbelievers and did not

feel a missionary need to convert them.

These arrangements allowed them to extend their conquest easily. Byzantine and Sassanian cities, already disaffected by religious strife and dynastic disarray, found it advantageous to avoid the usual scenes of sack and pillage by simply changing their imperial rulers for the new Arab ones. As in all conquests, wanton death and destruction also took place against cities that did not surrender or places that broke their initial allegiance. But between the Quranic injunctions to protect the "People of the Book" and the pragmatic solutions the nomadic Arabs conceived, the early history of Islam developed into an unprecedented climate of religious tolerance. No other conquerors in history have behaved with such restraint. Although the Arabs annihilated Byzantine and Sassanian legions, the people of their lands hardly felt the difference. Emperors and Priests bitterly decried the Islamic conquest as either another Christian heresy or God's punishment for their sins. But it took about a hundred years for the people to understand what had actually happened between 630 and 640. The process of conversion took centuries of coexistence. The religious and political autonomy the *dhimmi* enjoyed made Islamic rule tolerable, and slowly a hybrid culture permeated the old lands as Arabs started moving out of their garrison cities by trade, farming, and intermarriage, and Christians and Jews found profitable employment as scribes, translators, administrators, and councilors.

Competition within Islam

The lightning spread of Arabs over the old lands was interrupted by the wars between the followers of Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, in Mecca and Medina, and the generals and soldiers in Egypt and Syria, led by the Umayyad clan who succeeded in gaining the caliphate and establishing a more centralized and structured state in

*In the twelfth century,
when Christians were beginning
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reconciling reason with faith.*

Damascus. In 711, shortly after Islam had spread all throughout North Africa and converted Berbers from the mountains and deserts of Algeria and Morocco, Yemenis from Iraq and Syrians from Damascus destroyed the Visigoth kingdom in the Iberian peninsula. They were led by dissenting factions within Visigoth ranks and by the Jews whom they had badly persecuted. The conquerors continued over the Pyrenees all the way to Tours in the North and up the valley of the Rhone as far as Narbonne. Threatened by over-extension, they withdrew to Spain to consolidate their power. Only small pockets of resistance remained in the forbidding mountain ranges of the Iberian North and East, where Christian princes who claimed direct descent from the Visigoth kings would start the Reconquest until the fall of Granada, the last Muslim kingdom in Spain, in 1492.

Meantime, a puritanical movement from the Eastern reaches of the Islamic world revolted against the Umayyads. Their leader, claiming descent from Muhammad's uncle, Abbas, massacred the whole Umayyad clan in Damascus in 750. The only survivor, Abd el Rahman, escaped to North Africa and with the aid of his mother's Berber relatives and with his claim to the legitimate caliphate, was called to Al Andalus by warring tribes of Arabs and Berbers to reestablish order among them. In his thirty years of reign, Abd el Rahman defied the Abbasids from his capital in Córdoba and brought to the Andalusian city the refinement and splendor of Damascus in architecture,

literature, music, science, and philosophy.

Intercultural Renaissance under Arab Rule

One of the salient characteristics of the Arabs was their interest in the culture of the conquered. The Umayyads and the Abbasids were immediately attracted to the Roman, Greek, Persian, and Indian texts they found in the conquered lands. An intense period of translations followed, first in Damascus, then in Baghdad. The philosophy and sciences of the Greeks, the poetry of Persia, and the mathematics and astronomy of Chaldeans and Indians also appeared in the caliphal library in Córdoba. The supreme confidence in their faith allowed Arabs to assimilate this new and startling mass of knowledge and refinement. It was coupled to their own old and beautiful tradition of poetic odes. The poetic vein of the Arabs resurrected the Roman, Greek, and Persian poetry of love and the secular literature that the Christian world had shunned. The beauty and resilience of the Arabic language, also revered as the language chosen by God for the Quran, now became the lingua franca of culture and civilization, the language in which the classics of East and West could be read all over that immense empire, from Al Andalus in the West to the mountains of Afghanistan and the Indus river in the East.

The Arabs found in Spain a land ready to receive this extraordinary classic renaissance. Seville had given Rome her best emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, as well as Seneca, Lucan, Martial, and Quintilian. The Visigoths had been the most romanized of the Germanic tribes. As a result, Spain became a beacon of Roman tradition in Germanic Europe. In the sixth century, Isidore of Seville wrote his *Etymologies*, an encyclopedia of all he remembered from the classics that became the cultural cornerstone of the Carolingian empire for several centuries. Now in Al Andalus, Christians and Jews began to

enjoy and emulate the cultural influx of all the artistic and scientific knowledge of Greece, Rome, Persia, and India expressed in a powerful and elegant language. In 855, a hundred years after the arrival of Abd el Rahman in Córdoba, Paul Alvarus, a Córdoba Christian, was complaining that young Christians “have forgotten their own language. For every one who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write poems in this language better than the Arabs themselves.”¹

The Umayyads brought oranges, lemons, pomegranates, figs, sugar cane, cotton, and all kinds of new vegetables from the East, and improved agriculture with irrigation techniques from Persia and Syria which endure to this day in Spain as well as in New Mexico and Colorado. Al Andalus recovered its lost prosperity and Córdoba became a city as large as Constantinople and Baghdad, and as large as London, Paris, and Rome put together. They also brought paper from China. At a time when Europe was only using the expensive and unwieldy parchments for no more than forty known books, paper permitted the caliph’s library to hold 400,000 volumes, and as many more could be found in the seventy-three private libraries in Córdoba.

The caliphate was particularly welcomed by Jews. From an ill-treated and despised minority, they became a respected and privileged class. The caliphs needed their educated youth, their knowledge of languages and their Mediterranean network. They became the traders and financiers of the caliphate as well as advisers and emissaries to the Christian kingdoms in the North. A prominent Jew, Hasdai ibn Shaprut, a poet, physician and philosopher, became the grand vizier of Abd el Rahman III in the tenth century. Their flourishing prosperity was such that Jews identified Spain as Sepharad, the legendary land that Obadiah had promised would be

returned to Israel (Obadiah 1:20).²

The Christians in Moorish lands, known as “mozarabs,” still the majority of their population, were craftsmen and farmers. Christian bishops were employed as emissaries to Constantinople and the Carolingian court, allies of the Umayyads against the Abbasids. Bishop Racimundo of Elvira was sent as ambassador to the court of Otto I. The nun Hroswitha of Gandersheim chronicled the admirable Córdoba that the bishop reported, its size and cultural splendor.³ From Constantinople, Constantine VII sent Dioscoride’s medicine treatise to Abd el-Rahman, which Hasdai translated from Greek into Arabic. Thus, the ancient classics in literature and science began to reach Europe. Astronomical charts and the astrolabe were the most popular. A French monk, Gerbert of Aurillac, was brought to Spain by Count Borrell of Barcelona to study the Islamic culture. His learning took him to be the tutor of the emperor Otto II and of his son Otto III who exalted Gerbert as Pope Sylvester. He brought the Hindu-Arabic numerals to Europe as well as the abacus; because of his incomprehensible mathematical skills, he was accused of magic.

Torn by internal strife, the caliphate dissolved in the eleventh century, a victim of the reckless militarism of Al Mansur. It was succeeded by twenty-eight independent principalities, known as the Taifas, the “partisans,” which warred among themselves, often in alliance with Christian kingdoms and with Christian mercenaries. They continued, however, Córdoba’s cultural splendor. As in seventeenth century Spain, political decadence spawned a radiant cultural movement. In fact the eleventh century became the Golden Age both of Al Andalus and Sepharad. Rabbi Samuel Halevi, Ibn Nagrila, a cultural and cosmopolitan Córdoba Christian, a poet in Hebrew and in the most elegant Arabic of his time, became the vizier and victorious commander of the armies of

the kingdom of Granada; and calling himself “the David of my Age” revived the vibrant new Hebrew poetry known to later Jews as the Golden Age.⁴ Ibn Hazan, his contemporary Muslim, failed instead in his efforts to sustain the Umayyad caliphate in Córdoba; but writing in a style that can be read as if it had been written today, he left his remembrances of the courtly city in *The Dove’s Necklace*.⁵

Christian Reconquest Tempered by Tolerance

As Islamic rule waned, the northern Christian kingdoms slowly pushed on with the Reconquest: Leon and Castile in the West, Navarra and Aragon in the East. The strong and proud cities of Al Andalus, however, were not easily conquered. A Christian knight rejected by Alfonso VI of Castile taught them how to do it. After sieging them, he offered the same capitulations the Arabs had presented the Visigoths: free exercise of their religion, their laws and customs, and guarantees for their mosques and synagogues. He was so successful that he was called *El Cid*, the lord, by the Andalusians.⁶ Many cities, especially the brilliant Toledo, capitulated under this system, to Alfonso VI. In their coins, the kings of Castile styled themselves as “emperor of the two religions.”

The remaining Taifas appealed to the Almoravids of Morocco and Senegal to come to their help. These nomadic Berber tribes of veiled and garrisoned monks, fired by a militant and ascetic religious zeal, overran the Iberian peninsula and at the end of the eleventh century took over the rule of the Taifas. The Almoravids were destroyed a century later by a rival Islamic movement, the Almohads from Algeria. The fanaticism of Almoravids and Almohads drove masses of Jews and Christians to the Christian north, mainly to Toledo, where the Moorish architecture of Christian churches and Jewish synagogues reflects the mixed

culture of its three religions. Archbishop Raymond employed this new population to found the School of Translators, conscious of the treasure of learning contained in Toledo's Muslim libraries. Jews and Muslims read the Arabic classics in Castilian and Christians translated it into Latin. Visitors from all parts of Europe came to learn the rich trove of books and strained to send back the full texts of Plato and Aristotle, as well as the medical canon of the Persian Avicenna, the surgery innovations of the Spanish Abulcasis, and the Chaldean and Indian astronomical, algebraic, and calculus mathematics.

Spanish Jews in particular also traveled throughout Europe eagerly educating their European pupils. A Jewish convert, Petrus Alfonsi, became the physician of Henry I of England and translated into Latin all kinds of mathematical, astronomical, and philosophical Arabic texts that became the classics in European universities for centuries. Even more important, he introduced in Europe the Eastern tradition of storytelling. His *Disciplina clericalis* inspired the stories of Chaucer and Bocaccio.

Ferment of Philosophy in Spain

The revelation of Greek philosophy challenged the religious revelation of the three religions. In the twelfth century, when Christians were beginning to read Greek philosophy, Muslims and Jews in Spain were already immersed in the tremendous controversy of reconciling reason with faith. Moses Maimonides applied Aristotelian logic to the Tora, and Platonic metaphysics to the Talmud in his *Guide of the Perplexed*. Another two Córdobaans, Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rush Averroes, did the same in the Islamic tradition. They preached that God had endowed man with reason so that he could understand faith. Revelation was all; nevertheless, if there appeared to be a contradiction with reason, an intellectual inquiry was necessary. A century later Thomas Aquinas read their

books, brought by Michael Scott from Toledo to Sicily, and began the same movement in Christianity. In our days it is difficult to imagine the revolution these men brought to their religions, but the controversy ignited the intellectual life of the Middle Ages and led to the Renaissance of the 1500s. In the East, al Gazali reached the opposite conclusion: the revelation of the Quran was absolute, and philosophy a trivial and frail endeavor.

The rationalism of the Westerners could not satisfy the conundrum of reason and faith. In Córdoba, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Ibn Arabi reconciled the insolvable contradiction by appealing to a superior spiritual knowledge that transcends logic. He revived Sufism, the mysticism of Islam's early history, illustrating it with Platonic visions of the soul. In 1240, the same year Al Arabi died, the Jew Moses de Leon was born. Unknowingly he carried the same message through his kabbalistic *Zohar*, the mystical union with God through an exalted spirituality. Christians were impregnated by the same mystical transcendence of rationality. St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, both descendants of Jewish converts, introduced the same mystical vein in the Christian Spain of the sixteenth century. They were the offspring of the culturally mixed Spain of Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

While the Almoravid and Almohad fanaticism had paradoxically stimulated this extraordinary intellectual movement, almost at the same time the monks of Cluny and Citeaux had started a similar puritanical movement of militant reform in France. Under the soaring Gothic architecture of their monasteries, they preached Crusades to the Holy Land and Moorish Spain. The religious fervor they incited became the heart of the new national states that had begun to evolve in Europe. Alfonso VI brought the cluniac clergy into Spain, conscious of the unifying effect he needed to knit together his new expanded kingdom.

The Waning of Tolerance in the Reconquest

The spirit of the crusades that the cluniacs preached revived the dormant ideal of the Reconquest. The kings of Castile, Portugal, and Aragon slowly expelled the Almohads. Ferdinand III of Castile conquered Córdoba and Seville in the mid-twelfth century. His son, Alfonso X, called "the learned," found in Seville the way to turn his new kingdom into a rival of Baghdad and Córdoba. Just as his father's tomb is inscribed in Latin, Arabic, Castilian, and Hebrew, he gathered an enlightened team of the three religions to write a definitive compendium of human knowledge: the history of the world, the Quran, the Talmud and the Khabala; astronomy, music, poetry; and games such as chess and backgammon. His exhaustive law code, the *Siete Partidas* is still applied in Louisiana and the Hispanic Southwest. Although devoted to Christianity, he was consciously building a new Spain by fusing it with the Muslim and Jewish tradition. In consequence, his encyclopedic monument was no longer written in Latin but rather in the new language of Castile.

New social classes appeared in the Spain of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that claimed the protection of the crown, socially and economically. While Europe fought the Hundred Years war, in Spain the revived religious fervor of the Reconquest demanded its final fulfillment. As a result, the stronger the Christians became in Spain the more intolerant they grew. No longer were cities taken by the old system of capitulations; Muslims and Jews had to convert or face expulsion. The terrible mortality of the Black Plague was blamed by fiery demagogues on Muslims and especially on Jews. Spain was strongly criticized by the rest of Europe for its customary tolerance and conviviality with Muslims and Jews. Several Popes enjoined the Spanish to end this sinful intermingling. After all, Jews had been expelled from England

in 1290 and from France in 1306, and again in 1394; and Muslims had been the enemy for centuries. Bloody massacres marred the tradition of coexistence of previous centuries.

Suddenly, in 1453, all of Europe was shocked by the fall of the last Christian outpost in the East, Constantinople, under the sway of a new Islamic empire that threatened the very existence of Christian Europe. At the beginning of their reign, Isabella and Ferdinand did not welcome popular pressures to crown the Reconquest with the conversion or expulsion of Moors and Jews, convinced such a policy would rend the fractious society of the newly united kingdom. But now Jews and Muslims were seen as a dangerous fifth column. In particular, the new Christians who practiced their old rites in secret were loudly resented; to protest their faith they were among those who clamored most for the Inquisition. In 1492, the fateful year of the fall of Granada and the discovery of America, the edict to expel those who would not convert was signed. Muslim revolts stirred by Moorish kingdoms in North Africa led to their expulsion not long after.

It was the end of eight centuries of tolerance that had so enriched Medieval Europe. It is true that the three religions never really achieved a comfortable coexistence. They lived in separate quarters and were buried in separate cemeteries. Intermarriage was forbidden, although it could not be prevented. Time and again, violent outbursts against one another, especially against the weakest, the Jews, erupted in Muslim and Christian lands. The Islamic tolerance of the "People of the Book," however, was a most extraordinary political and cultural accomplishment. In spite of European reproaches, Christian Spain followed the Islamic example for three centuries with great profit both economically and culturally. The crusading fervor, however, was at the root of the new nationalities, and the fall of Constantinople turned it into a paranoid

creed.

This inspiring poem of Al Arabi embodies the lost tradition of Hispania, Al Andalus and Sepharad.

My heart has become capable of every form
it is a pasture for gazelles and a
convent for Christian monks,
and a temple for idols and the
pilgrim's Ka'aba
for the Tables of the Tora and the
book of the Quran
I follow the religion of love.

Notes

1. Every book on Spanish Islam quotes this translation taken from Jerrilyn Dodd, *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* (State College: Penn State University Press, 1990).

2. The biblical Sepharad, however, was supposed to exist in the East.

3. Katharina Wilson, trans., *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1998).

4. Leon Weinberger, trans., *Jewish Prince in Muslim Spain: Selected Poems of Samuel Ibn Nagrela*, (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 1973).

5. Ibn Hazm (d.1064), *The Ring of the Dove*, trans. A.J. Arberry (London: Luzac & Co., 1953).

6. See Richard Fletcher, *The Quest for El Cid* (New York: Knopf, 1990). The classic work on El Cid remains Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *The Cid and His Spain*, trans. Harold Sunderland (London: John Murray, 1934).

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The Japanese Garden: Myths and Meaning

More Thought and Tradition Go into a Japanese Garden than We Think.

By N. Hartley Schearer Jr.



About the Author

Pennsylvania native N. Hartley Schearer Jr. received a BA in Latin from Virginia's Hampden-Sydney College and an MA from James Madison University. He and his wife were Winchester Public Schools' Latin teachers for twenty-seven years, traveling extensively and taking student groups to Rome and Pompeii ten times. He engaged in a Rotary Professional Exchange to France, and in 1995 took part in a National Endowment for the Humanities month-long seminar in Avignon, France, taking early retirement five years later. In seven trips to Japan, Hartley has visited all of Japan's most famous gardens, learning the language after his first trip to enrich his subsequent visits. With a renowned Japanese garden at his home, he has visited most of the top Japanese gardens in America. Hartley has been a member of the Winchester, Virginia, Torch Club since 1998. His first paper, "What Are the French Thinking and What Should Americans Think About It?" was published in *Torch* in Spring 2006.

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Visitors to Japan are always asking about the meaning of Japanese gardens, often reflecting popular myths to which the very polite Japanese sometimes nod assent. In fact, Japanese gardens have a simple meaning, little known but worth discovering. The very words "Japanese Garden" are troubling to those who

study the topic. *The Journal of Japanese Gardening* intermittently changes its name to *Sukiya Living*, noting its problem with both "Japanese" and "garden." First, although this style of garden developed in Japan, the magazine feels that "Japanese" is now too limiting: one does not have to be Japanese to appreciate—or even to create—a Japanese garden. The journal's difficulty with "garden" is that it implies, in English, a separate, independent space, whereas the kind of garden at issue is inseparable from the building it physically and visually extends. This paper will, nevertheless, continue to speak of a "Japanese garden."

Basic Requirements for a Japanese Garden

What does such a garden need in order to be a Japanese garden? Flowers? No. Trees? No. Water? No. The first requirement is to have a rock or rocks—or, even more tellingly—the suggestion of a rock or rocks. Those familiar with Japan should not be surprised: many famous Japanese gardens exist with just rocks and so-called sand. Think of Japan's most famous garden, the dry sand garden composed of just 15 rocks at Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto. The only plants are "borrowed" from the view beyond the enclosing walls.

The next requirement is that it must have a wall or fence or hedge: it must be enclosed, separate from the exigencies of the crowded, frenetic world outside.¹ This need for enclosure caught me off guard. Carleton College's garden in the middle of its Minnesota campus is rated No. 10 of the best

Japanese gardens in the U.S. by *Sukiya Living*. For a long time, I could not explain my dissatisfaction with Carleton's garden until I considered this second requirement. That garden is in the midst of college buildings; it has no enclosure. Therefore, it is difficult to focus on just the garden; the viewer is not apart from the world. It would be a mistake to underestimate the value of a wall or fence or hedge around a Japanese garden.

Third, a proper Japanese garden must have regular and careful maintenance. A well-designed Japanese garden would cease to be recognized as such if it were not regularly and carefully tended. *Sukiya Living* annually rates the Japanese gardens in Japan. The No. 1 garden is the relatively new one (1970) at the Adachi Art Museum near Matsue. Every morning, before the museum opens to the public, all staff members tend the garden. As a result, it is not just beautiful, but beautifully maintained.

There are several sorts of Japanese gardens. This paper does not deal with large public parks or stroll-gardens, both of which may include red-painted half-moon bridges and other Disneyland touches. Nor does it deal at length with those dry-sand gardens often surrounding temples. Nor does it cover specifically those small gardens that are sometimes **inside** the traditional Japanese home. This paper focuses on those gardens **attached** to traditional Japanese homes, stores, inns, and restaurants. Although these gardens are inseparable from the building's living space, they usually are not entered. These gardens expand the feeling of roominess. Such gardens maintain an

affective connection with nature and offer an ever-changing view of the seasons (of which the Japanese count five).

A Brief History of Gardens in Japan

Gardens have been present in Japan at least as long as its recorded history. Native shrines were surrounded by white sand and fences as signs of sacredness. There are no extant examples of the first gardens, roughly before the year 1000, but literary works remain from those times, which are full of incidental descriptions of those early gardens. Prince Genji, the title character from Japan's first novel, written about a thousand years ago, loves a woman from the **wisteria** courtyard within the palace, presumably as opposed to other courtyards with other plantings predominating. One of Japan's first gardening books, *Sakuteiki*, was written almost 1000 years ago. Gardens in those early times had various uses: from pleasure parks for drinking and for poetry contests to areas of peace and quiet around temples to foster what we might call contemplation. Whatever their use, gardens were extensions of the living areas within the buildings around them. Whether or not these gardens were entered, they were designed primarily to be viewed from a seated position on the floor of the building.

Early historical gardens are not the golden age of Japanese gardens. Gardens change: for instance, Kyoto's famous Moss Garden was founded in the eighth century, but had no moss originally. In a later period, however, the almost two hundred and seventy years of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868) provided a model of the garden ideal. This 265-year reign not only closed Japan to foreign involvement and brought peace to the nation, but also marked a high point in the refinement and construction of

gardens. Perhaps the best garden from those times is that of the Katsura Detached Palace, a Kyoto retreat for members of the imperial family. The garden and its many buildings are closely correlated—neither element would be the same without the other. This almost 400-year-old garden stands as the pre-eminent example of the Japanese garden as an inseparable part of its buildings. It can be visited by applying to the Office of the Imperial Household. It is significant that the tea ceremony, and therefore tea gardens, blossomed during the Tokugawa Shogunate. Tea garden construction was formalized and had a “dewy path” that led to the teahouse, where an almost spiritual tea ceremony took place. Elegant rusticity and respect for old materials were and are prominent aspects of the tea ceremony. The function of such gardens was to put those attending a tea ceremony at ease in a peaceful environment. Not surprisingly, devotees of the tea ceremony at that time were the rich and powerful of their age. They could afford the teahouses and gardens required for the ceremony. Many additional gardens were built after Japan opened to the West in the nineteenth century. In spite of Japan's wholesale adoptions of Western technology and ideas, gardens continued the tradition of extending the living space, if only visually.

For this paper, it was instructive to consider what two contemporary authors on modern Japanese gardens consider as modern.² One focus of both books was on creating a garden in a space even smaller than was traditional. Not surprisingly, contemporary Japanese gardens continue to shrink in size as land prices and population have increased. Once again the Japanese ability to appreciate only a suggestion of something, in this case nature, allows the garden tradition to continue. These home gardens do not serve any overtly

religious or meditative purpose, but bring a suggestion of spaciousness and a remembrance of nature to the viewers. These modern gardens are still not intended to be lived in, just viewed from the building.

Common Myths or Misconceptions

Perhaps the biggest misconception about Japanese gardens is that those connected to homes have some religious function. As Tamao Goda writes, “Japan is one of the world's least religious countries, ... [b]ut if you visit public Japanese gardens in North America, you would get the impression that Japanese gardens are meaningfully related in some way or another to Buddhism, Shintoism, Taoism, or some other religious source.” She maintains that the garden/house pairing is a secular living environment, not part of any organized religious teaching. She feels that Kyoto's tourism industry may be partly to blame for promoting such misinterpretations, since most shrines and temples charge admission fees and depend on the income to support their gardens.³ Likewise, symbolism is erroneously thought to play a significant role in the “meaning of the garden.” Admittedly, cranes, for example, have long stood for longevity—especially in another Japanese art form, the haiku. In home gardens, symbolism is not the main point. In fact, such interpretations miss the main point: nature. Symbols may add to the rich layers of interpretation of Japanese gardens, but they can also be distractions.⁴

Still other misconceptions persist about the Japanese garden. China is often mistakenly given credit for the development of Japanese gardens. There may have been some influence from China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), but the Japanese developed and refined their gardens, for the most part, during the quarter of a millennium when the country was closed to

foreigners. Japanese gardens were developed by the Japanese people. Another popular mistake among many westerners is to define Japanese gardens by the objects within them; such as lanterns, statues, and metal cranes, whereas Japanese people regard their gardens as successful if they represent patterns in nature and evoke a certain sentiment in the viewer. Many Westerners likewise mistakenly associate the cherry blossom tradition with Japanese gardens. Cherry trees, ginkgo trees, and wisteria—plants thought of as particularly Japanese—have no place in the home garden because they either require too much space, grow so large that they destroy the human scale of the garden, or lack year-round horticultural interest.

More misunderstandings arise with the term “Zen garden,” an appellation that would impose philosophical meaning from the outside and would artificially prejudice one’s subjective interpretations, thus limiting the viewer’s experience. Ironically, dropping the word “Zen” as a defining label brings the term closer to the freedom of Zen. According to Tim Hansken, until the 1950s no historical work or garden book in Japan spoke of “Zen gardens.”⁵ A further misconception concerns the so-called dry-sand gardens. In fact, the rocks are not arranged in sand, which would not stay in place either when raked artistically for effect or during rough weather. That “sand” is decomposed granite, which is available in farm supply stores in small towns in America as turkey grit.

How the Japanese View Their Gardens

What is the response of Japanese people to their gardens? Here are a few defining responses that increase the experience of a Japanese garden for the Japanese people. Foremost among these is an emotional reaction to the

changing seasons. If there are symbols in the Japanese garden, the most powerful examples may be **one** plum blossom or **one** fallen golden leaf. Another consistent Japanese response is a reverence for things old. In the garden this extends to reused building materials in the walkways, for instance. The Japanese also have a high regard for imperfection. (Or is it a distrust of apparent perfection?) Furthermore, the Japanese greatly esteem high quality in materials. Some single rocks of a sought-after character sell for tens of thousands of dollars in Japan. A major investment in the building of home and garden could more easily be justified when it was expected that the family home would always be the family home. However, modern Japan needs a more mobile work force than agricultural Japan did. Thus, major investment in a family garden may not continue.

The Japanese people have a long tradition of borrowing ideas from abroad, but they usually put their unique imprint on what they borrow. (Look at their celebration of Valentine’s Day: Women give gifts of chocolates to men!) Now the rest of the world is borrowing “Japanese” gardens and putting its stamp on those gardens. The Japanese garden is an enduring legacy. It has changed over more than a thousand years, and it will continue changing, but a successful “Japanese” garden, wherever it is built on our planet, should still capture the essence of nature and should evoke strong feeling from the viewer.

Notes

[Among other sources, this writer is especially indebted to the many fine interviews, articles, and editorials which appeared in the *The Journal of Japanese Gardening* (alternately titled *Roth*—for Doug Roth, its publisher—or *Sukiya Living*) over the last twelve years.]

1. Tim McDaniel, “Creating Sukiya-style Garden Spaces,” *Journal of Japanese Gardening* (November-December, 2002), 8.

2. Joseph Cali, *The New Zen Garden; Designing Quiet Spaces* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2004); Michiko Rico Nosé, *The Modern Japanese Garden* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle, 2008).

3. Tamao Goda, “Biggest Misconception,” *Journal of Japanese Gardening* (November-December, 2003), 4.

4. Tamao Goda, “The Symbolism Trap,” *Journal of Japanese Gardening* (May-June, 2003), 4.

5. Tim Hansken, “The Zen Garden Term,” *Journal of Japanese Gardening* (March-April, 2002), 5.

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Undressing Emily Dickinson

Scholarship shines a new light on one of America's most enigmatic writers.

By Deborah Bauserman



About the Author

Deborah Bauserman, a Licensed Clinical Psychologist in practice for thirty years in Winchester, Virginia, earned a BA and MA at Michigan State University and an EdD at Northern Colorado University, with post-doctoral studies at the University of Virginia. She has been active in her community and church in cultural, environmental, and civil rights issues. In her glory days, she was a competitive equestrian, taijichuan practitioner (bare hands and weapons) and middle distance runner until age, injuries, and late-onset wisdom began modifications of her course; she is, however, still unwilling to give up her chain saw and tractor. A love of reading, creative writing, and art work beckon her toward the future. Her favorite quote from a movie is "I dearly love to laugh" (Elizabeth Bennett, *Pride and Prejudice*, 2005). With two grown sons, she and her husband divide their time between their home in Winchester and a historic family farm in West Virginia. She previously published "Gay Marriage: What is this World Coming To?" in *Torch* in Spring 2007.

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It was a magical night that slipped the strands of eternity when he approached the gentle hill, striding to the mansion near the crest. An auroral flare of bronze and blaze pulsed overhead. Reaching deep in a side pocket, he found an old brass key that just fit into the lock

box, allowing him to enter the private back hall and find the exact one among five stairways, rising up creaking stairs to the maiden poet's bedchamber. In a few steps he was behind her, hand reaching in slow arc to a stray tendril of coppery hair. She delicately laid down her quill. Slowly the night sky wheeled on its great axle toward dawn. Listen. He tells what happens next in his poem "Taking off Emily Dickinson's Clothes":

First, her tippet made of tulle,
easily lifted off her shoulders and laid
on the back of a wooden chair.
And her bonnet,
the bow undone with a light forward
pull.
Then the long white dress, a more
complicated matter with mother-of-
pearl
buttons down the back,
so tiny and numerous that it takes
forever
before my hands can part the fabric,
like a swimmer's hands dividing
water,
and slip inside...¹

But I fear the telling of our story so far is too much in the modern style: Scene I—seduction and sex; Scene II—introductions. Who is the man? He is Billy Collins, Poet Laureate of the United States in 2003. And besides that—cad, roué, bounder! But wait, what called him here? Perhaps he is an innocent party, only following a maiden's cry. Let's hear Dickinson's words:

But no Man moved Me—till the Tide
Went past my simple Shoe
And past my Apron— and my Belt—
And past my Bodice— too—²

Do we hear a plaintive call?
Perceive a sense of urgency? Let us

respond to her call instead. In the following pages we ourselves will undress Dickinson through layers of family and social life, sexual and religious identity, controversial personal relationships, and her magnificent bequest to future generations of letters and poems.

Born in 1830, Dickinson lived and died in Amherst, Massachusetts, all but a few years in the same home, where she and her siblings took charge in the light of their father's busy political career and their mother's lingering illness. Although she initially enjoyed an active social, religious, and cultural life—reading books, singing and playing the piano, taking nature walks—she gradually became a determined recluse by her early thirties. Why? In some ways it was a monotonous life. She said in a letter, "I rise, because the sun shines...and wash the dishes." Her father was a stern, moralistic man, her mother emotionally unavailable. "Father and mother sit in a state in the sitting room perusing papers only, as they are well assured have nothing carnal in them." As an upper middle class, white, Protestant woman, without the right to vote, she was privileged by class, but disenfranchised by gender, and faced with the relentless pressure of the Second Great Awakening to conform to strict Calvinist ideals through emotionally wrenching conversion activities everywhere around her. Her social withdrawal by 1860 signaled her resistance against God and man, a campaign of guerilla warfare, subversive and underground, that countered blatant power with covert wit and a vibrant intellectual life of letters. By concealment she countered her sense of vulnerability as a sensitive woman in a

nonliterary family amid an aggressively mercantile and political society.³ As a result, in her own lifetime and since, she has been the subject of bemused to unflattering myths, variously rendered as a helpless agoraphobic, a literary madwoman, a maiden recluse, and a neurasthenic misfit. Even her literary mentor and later publisher, Edward Higginson, referred to her as “my partially cracked poetess of Amherst.”⁴ Little wonder the intense interest in psychologically undressing Emily Dickinson, the woman in white hidden behind a dense veil of privacy.

Dickinson’s Poetry

What of her poetry? Harold Bloom claims: “Except for Shakespeare, Dickinson manifests more cognitive originality than any other Western poet since Dante. She had the best mind of all our poets in the English language, early and late...”⁵ Her poems, in the lyric style and numbering over 1700, are almost all vexingly brief and are noted for their ungrammatical novelties and irregular punctuation that conceal sentence structure.⁶ The most striking aspect may be her idiosyncratic style with its inventive use of irregularities in rhyme called slant rhymes shocking to her contemporaries and still distinctive today. Such slant rhymes work well with the almost hymn-like regularity of her poems because they mute a predictable metronomic drumbeat and instead create surprise and complexity. Listen for this example in the poem “Love’s stricken ‘why’” (F1392):

Is all that love can *speak* –
Built of but just a syllable,
The hugest hearts that *break*.”

In her slant rhymes of “*speak*” and “*break*,” the final consonant sounds are identical, but not the vowels, an auditory dissonance that captures reader attention.

Although the Bible and Shakespeare were chief sources, her poems have been compared to haiku poetry with

Buddhist overtones; to dissolve the paradoxes she creates, one reaches toward enlightenment.⁷ In her poems, we hear many voices—joy, pleasure, pain, faith, and doubt. Varieties of gender and pronominal changes challenge understanding and meaning. Her themes range over forty categories, depending on who does the counting, but life, love, nature, time, and eternity are the most notable, and in a single poem she may address all of these. Some describe her work as having no theme, just the “menacing ascendance of consciousness.”⁸ Yet all is not dark, brooding reflection, for Dickinson also loved to entertain her readers with sarcastic asides, puns, and riddles. We can enjoy guessing the nature of the subject in her poem “A narrow Fellow in the Grass” (F1096):

He likes a Boggy Acre –
A Floor too cool for Corn –
But when a Boy and Barefoot
I more than once at Noon
Have passed I thought a Whip Lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled and was gone—”

Another defining characteristic of her work is her use of dashes in place of words, producing leanness and sometimes elusive meaning. Poems are never neatly wrapped up and have been described as “vacant at the center” or “sceneless,” as in “Behind Me – dips Eternity - /Before Me – Immortality - / Myself – the Term between –”(F743). Thus, maddeningly, Dickinson suggests ways to map interior experiences, only to insist on the impossibility of doing it. One overwrought critic, confusing dashes with hyphens, compared her use of “hyphens” with a hymen, emblematic because it both joins and divides.⁹

Dickinson’s poetry functioned the same way as her letters. She carefully adopted personalized stances in order to seduce the reader into an intimate relationship answering her specific affection and need. Her intense writing

went into daring explorations with correspondents and readers, drawing them into potentially transgressive situations invoking sensual responses to her poems.¹⁰ Her achingly beautiful poem, “Wild nights, wild nights” (F269) comes to mind (and Collins’ response). All but the prudish recognized the eroticism of such poetry—which Higginson dreaded to publish. Later, Victorian publishers “dressed her” in regular punctuation, rhyme schemes and line placement in a futile effort to shield delicate sensibilities.¹¹ Thankfully, we have Collins to continue the undressing:

The complexity of women’s
undergarments
in nineteenth-century America
is not to be waved off,
and I proceeded like a polar explorer
through clips, clasps, and moorings,
catches, straps, and whalebone
stays,
sailing toward the iceberg of her
nakedness.

Iceberg vastness and hiddenness precisely describe her literary output. In her lifetime, Dickinson only consented to the publication of a handful of poems, preferring self-publication in the form of hand-sewn books (called fascicles) featuring her peculiar handwriting described as “fossil bird-tracks in the museum.” Original manuscripts reveal flowing, artistic calligraphy which add visual interest to word choices. For example, in “The Sea said/ ‘Come’ to the Brook” her careful stroke of the pen shows the “S” letter in the shape of waves undulating across the page. Dickinson is gleefully comic, according to Martha Nell Smith, as she reminds us that words can be cymbals as well as symbols.¹² Sharon Cameron notes that word variants create indeterminate diction in the handwritten manuscripts. Notations at the end of the poem offer word options that vary the meaning and intent. So the reader must choose between the variants, or else use both variants and thus experience the

necessity of choosing. For example, in the poem “I gave myself to Him—” (F426) she offers the variant “I gave Him all—” a slight variation affecting the sense of mutuality, then contests the entire proposition in the final lines, “Sweet Debt of Life – Each Night to owe – / Insolvent by Noon – .” Thus, a persistent, reflective reader is gently encouraged to spiral into an exploration of personal meaning.¹³

Critical Response: Who Is in the Bedroom?

Critical study has exploded in the century since Dickinson’s work has been available to the public. Peaking in 1986 with eighty-three listings, writers have steadily churned out an average of fifty articles per year.¹⁴ Together with five to seven book length studies per year since the 1980s, Dickinson has stimulated a formidable industry, including adaptations of her life and poetry in drama, dance, the visual arts and music, here and abroad. She has inspired such distinguished artists as Aaron Copeland, Joseph Cornell, Martha Graham, and Julie Harris. By one count, over 1,600 musical settings have been made of her letters.¹⁵ Biographical criticism for decades has been interested not only in her unconventional life and work but, fervently, in an alleged, elusive lover. Since her work has covered all the motions of the heart progressing through profound human experiences, biographers seek a parallel love affair in her actual life.¹⁶ In addition to highly charged poetry written when she was in her early thirties, three unmailed draft letters known as the “Master letters” provide tantalizing clues. The first of the three letters (L187) addressed “Dear Master” refers in subdued tone to reports of her illness and expresses concern about his own life-threatening sickness. The next two “Master” letters (L233), written two to three years later, markedly more passionate, have kept generations of readers guessing at the identity of the “Master.” In the first, she

opens with an apology for an unspecified offense: “You send the water over the Dam in my brown eyes—”.... “Master – open your life wide, and take me in forever, I will never be tired—.” The third letter begins with an emotional protest over “Master’s” refusal to believe what she has confided in him. She wishes “it had been God’s will that I might breathe where you breathed – and find the place –at night.” She longs “with a might I cannot repress – to come nearer than presbyteries – and nearer than the new Coat – that the tailor made—.” She urges: “I want to see you more – Sir – than all I wish for in this world—.... take me where Sundown cannot find us—.”

Initial attempts at identifying Dickinson’s elusive “lover” presume he is male; the majority point to Samuel Bowles, the influential owner and editor-in-chief of the *Springfield Republican*, a frequent visitor to the home of her brother and sister-in-law, and possibly her most dynamic, volatile, and fascinating friend. Handsome, energetic, still in his early thirties, Bowles was very much a man on the rise. Others point to Judge Otis Lord, a man twenty years her senior with whom she is known to have engaged in a torrid love affair late in life, to the horror of a family member who discovered her “reclining in the arms of a gentleman” in the sitting room. However, Lord, the apparent interloper, was only in the picture as a family friend at the time of the “Master letters.” According to biographer Alfred Habegger, only one candidate matches what we infer about the unknown correspondent, the Reverend Charles Wadsworth. First hearing him preach during a rare trip out of Amherst to Philadelphia, she would have felt the full force of his deep bass tones, reserved emotional power and luminous language. He made such an impression on her that she later solicited his counsel, initiating one of her most vital relationships. Was the “Master” an avatar of her “redeemer”?¹⁷ Billy Collins’s poem

provides a key hint: “What I can tell you is/ it was terribly quiet in Amherst/ that Sabbath afternoon,/ with nothing but a carriage passing the house,/ a fly buzzing in a windowpane.” After waves of religious revivals in her youth, Dickinson is not attending church with her family or the rest of Amherst, but “standing alone in rebellion.” As she said, “Although I am not a Christian I still feel deeply the importance of attending to the subject before it is too late.” With her usual tenacity, she explored the full human experience in her reflections on God, the trinity, the Bible, suffering, immortality, and eternity, stating with her usual economy—because it “keeps Believing nimble.” (L3). Roger Lundin calls her “one of the major religious thinkers of her age,” yet scholars disagree about her spiritual formation. Fred White argues that “her world-view is existential her poetic personae regard the individual self, and not divine agency, as solely responsible for the events that shape their lives.” Indeed, she values longing over gratification, the journey over the destination, and the creative process over its finished products. She remained as she called herself both a “Pugilist and Poet,” who wrestled with God and who continued to write in his shadow until the end of her life (L243).¹⁸

Recent Feminist Criticism

In the debate over the identity of Dickinson’s lover, feminist writers have recently advanced a different perspective that challenges the assumption that the “Master” was male. New research suggests that over 450 letters and 300 poems mailed to Susan Gilbert, Dickinson’s future sister-in-law, offer clues to a possible homoerotic relationship. The two women lived in adjacent homes and shared intimate details of one another’s lives for decades. Studies of her lifetime, in a culture with limited, heterosexual story lines, would have missed the sparkle of such a complex relationship she

described as being “Facts but not the Phosphorescence.” In terms of facts, Susan Huntingdon Gilbert, born nine days after Dickinson, also came from a distinguished and well-educated Connecticut Valley family. Only six when her consumptive mother died, she nevertheless showed a sense of maternal piety and religious orthodoxy, “her lips suddenly pursing at Sabbath letter-writing or visiting.” She was shuttled between households, including the dreadful home of her older married sister and husband, stiff with bourgeois respectability. It must have been a relief, finally, to be sent away to Amherst Academy at age ten for schooling, where she met Dickinson. Habegger describes Susan as an ambitious, polished, self-possessed young woman with a haughty edge. After beginning a friendship with Dickinson and a courtship with Emily’s brother Austin, she decided that Amherst was too small for her and the enmeshed Dickinson clan too entangling. She soon left to see more of the world, taking a temporary teaching position in Baltimore. Fortunately for future generations, their separation and conflicts stimulated a prolific outpouring of correspondence from Dickinson which over time crescendoed.¹⁹

Despite fierce censorship, we know that beginning around 1850, the young women’s relationship ignited with passion, particularly on Dickinson’s side. From the epistolary record we read of her fantasies of physical union, cast in terms of re-imagined Biblical metaphors, with all of the telltale signs of obsessive, unrequited romantic love, suggested in this letter to Susan in 1852: “...I hope for you so much, and feel so eager for you, feel I Cannot wait, feel that Now I must have you—” (L96). Such youthful intensity began to subside after Susan’s marriage to Austin, when the quality of letters began to reflect a fusing of erotic imagination with intellectual prowess. In later life, they faced together many losses and deaths including Sue’s beloved young son Gib, stimulating yet

more inquiries about faith and the meaning of existence. Susan Gilbert Dickinson was probably the first person to recognize Emily Dickinson’s strange genius, an appreciative, sensitive audience of one—intimately involved as an interactive reader. Overt clues in both poetry and letters point to the freedom that Emily enjoyed in experimenting with a range of gender identities—famously commenting “When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse....it does not mean – me – but a supposed person” (L268). According to Martha Nell Smith, “Like her beloved Shakespeare, Emily may have been disguising her characters by dressing a woman up in masculine pronouns and names...; she is brilliant in masking and unveiling.” For instance, in a much studied poem, “My Life has stood – a Loaded Gun – “ (F764), we have evidence of the ways in which she was subverting cultural clichés of identity by making female passivity and male activity appear to trade places.²⁰

Smith neatly summarizes the contrapuntal dance of dressing and undressing Dickinson when she notes: “Hiding, overlooking and ignoring Dickinson’s love for women, especially Sue, and privileging her affections and regard for men, especially “Master,” cloaks Dickinson in mystery, befuddles critics, confuses issues and closes texts.”²¹ Not what Emily would have wanted, as we consider her next important love relationship—her readers. If we may for a moment imagine her poems and our co-creation of them as a form of literary intercourse, then her poems become progeny and we as her readers become stepping stones to her immortality. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of audience in the process of meaning-making. Just as Susan Gilbert Dickinson once was a participatory reader, so we now are the members of her dialogic process which requires a new and challenging mode of reading, not an easy task given the oddities of her style. Her poetry’s

deliberate ambiguities make its meaning neither the exclusive result of the author nor that of the reader, but their collaborative interaction; both work on a text that simultaneously works on them.²²

But I fear we’ve left Collins too long. As he finally attains the very top of her corset, he confides: “...I could hear her sigh when finally it was unloosed,/ the way some readers sigh when they realize/ that Life is a loaded gun/that looks right at you with a yellow eye.” Now, forgive me for risking an anticlimactic question—but do Collins’s delicate, diligent efforts ever actually reveal the naked Dickinson? There is no mention that her skin was like alabaster, or her eyes were the color of wine pooling in a carafe, or the tiny mole on her shoulder was just the shape of a bee. If anything is true of Dickinson, it is that there is always room for doubt—she is the *master* of evasion and privacy. Just ask me—I travelled last autumn to visit her Amherst home and was stopped at the door by the docent. “I’m sorry,” she apologized, “the house is closed for repairs. The ceiling has fallen.” Point taken: respect her privacy and relish her fabulous body—of work.

Notes

1. Billy Collins, *Sailing Alone around the Room* (New York: Random House, 2001).

2. Emily Dickinson, “I started Early—Took my Dog—” (F656). Scholars generally reference Dickinson’s poetry to the systems of T.H. Johnson and/or R.W. Franklin. Subsequent references in this paper use the Franklin numbering (“F”) in the text. Lacking titles, Dickinson’s poems are known by their first line.

3. Dickinson’s letters are compiled and numbered most completely in Thomas H. Johnson, ed., *The Letters of Emily Dickinson* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958), cited in this paper as “L” and the Johnson number except when quoted as here by

an identified secondary source; Martha Nell Smith, *Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 14; Alfred Habegger, *My Wars Are Laid Away in Books: The Life of Emily Dickinson* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 180-81; William R. Sherwood, *Circumference and Circumstance: Stages in the Mind and Art of Emily Dickinson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 66, 17.

4. Habegger, 553.

5. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 291.

6. David T. Porter, "Searching for Dickinson's Themes," in *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, ed. Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbüchle, and Cristanne Miller (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 185.

7. Gudrun Grabher, "Dickinson's Lyrical Self," in *Handbook*, 234.

8. Porter, "Searching," 192.

9. Sharon Cameron, "Dickinson's Fascicles," in *Handbook*, 138.

10. Agnieszka Salska, "Dickinson's Letters," in *Handbook*, 165.

11. Smith, *Rowing*, 4.

12. Johnson, *Letters*, Set 11: L1210; Smith, *Rowing*, 85.

13. Cameron, *Choosing Not Choosing: Dickinson's Fascicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 70-75.

14. Marietta Messmer, "Dickinson's Critical Reception," in *Handbook*, 299.

15. Jonnie Guerra, "Dickinson Adaptations in the Arts and Theater," in *Handbook*, 385.

16. Messmer, "Critical Reception," 305; Sherwood, 74.

17. Messmer, "Critical Reception," 307; Habegger, 377, 330; Judith Farr, *The Passion of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 369.

18. Roger Lundin, *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* (Grand Rapids,

MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 3; Fred D. White, "Emily Dickinson: Existential Dramas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson*, ed. Wendy Martin (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91.

19. Smith, *Rowing*, 28; Habegger, 266.

20. Smith, *Rowing*, 18; Roland Hagenbüchle, "Dickinson and Literary Theory," in *Handbook*, 373.

21. Smith, *Rowing*, 129-154.

22. Messmer, "Critical Reception," 317, 375.

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The Wright Stuff: Poetry as Reflection of Life

A poet's work expresses joy and sorrow, serenity and playfulness, music and mature perspective.

By Wilbur Harold Wright



About the Author

Wilbur Harold Wright, born in Rochester, New York, on March 1, 1918, graduated Phi Beta Kappa with an AB from the University of Rochester. He taught English and Social Studies at nearby Leroy Central School. After military service in WW II, he was an administrator at Harvard where he earned EdM and EdD degrees and was elected to Phi Delta Kappa and the Harvard Education Review Board. From 1949 to 1977, Wright was an Administrator and Professor of Education at the State University of New York at Geneseo. He was a Fulbright Professor at the University of Tehran, Iran and a Fulbright Consultant in Greece. A member of the Rochester Torch Club for 46 years, he was a Board Member, Delegate, and President, and presented eight papers. He helped to found the Geneseo Torch Club in 2001 and serves as its secretary. He was Director of IATC Region 1 and received the Silver, Gold, and Honorary Lifetime Torch Awards.

Presented to the Geneseo Torch Club on March 19, 2009.

.....
*Nonagenarian re-birth
Survivors of our fears!
A time for love and mirth
In the autumn of our years.
Each age, it has its pleasures
Its style of wit, its way.
Time's traffic flows around us
Toward light at end of day.*

Personal Introduction

In the verse above, I celebrate the joys of maturity as I present this paper to share with a larger audience my joy in writing poetry, noting some larger principles of creativity.¹ I was destined to write from the very beginning. My parents, wishing to honor the Wright brothers' contribution to the winning of World War I, during which I was born, named me Wilbur Wright with the hope that I might fly high. My middle name, Harold, conveys the idea that I might inherit the writing skill of a best-selling minister/author, Harold Bell Wright, best known for the Ozark legend "Shepherd of the Hills." I salute my parents' dreams for me in this poem, cast in iambic tetrameter (lines with four feet in rhymed couplets), best enjoyed if read aloud:

The Wright Stuff

*Wilbur and Orville had the Wright stuff;
To dream of flight was not enough.
From childhood they yearned to get up in the air.
To fly like their toy was a goal they could share.
They found many flaws in "facts" of flight.
To try out their theories they flew a kite.
Their wind tunnels tested wings for best shapes.
Their gliders led to narrow escapes.
By warping the wings they learned to control
The plane for pitch and yaw and roll.
They had to invent an engine so light
To power propellers to sustain flight.
Kitty Hawk's Kill Devil Hill
Had wind and sand to fill the bill.
In 1903 the Wright day came
To test the Flyer and claim their fame.
A camera caught the precious sight:
An image of man's first powered flight.
We stand in awe of the brothers Wright
Who brought us all the gift of flight.²*

Vying for the "first in flight" mantle, Hammondsport, New York, native Glenn Curtiss inspired the following variation in my poetic scansion that features a mixture of iambic (daDAH) and anapestic (dadaDAH) feet in four-foot lines (tetrameter). Note that the fourteen lines are divided into three quatrains and a final couplet with rhyme scheme abba, cddc, effe gg. The poem notes the rivalry and eventual merger of the two companies founded in fierce competition:³

Glenn Hammond Curtiss

*Glenn Curtiss was a daring aviation pioneer.
His motorcycle engine made him "fastest on earth"
Seaplanes and flying boats gave birth
To "World Champion"—crowning the Curtiss career.
His dirigible engine wowed the St. Louis Fair.
Bell's phone fortune nurtured experiments to try.
Langley's Aerodrome was made to fly.
Albany to New York: 1910 by air!
World War I joined Curtiss and Wright.
"Jenny" planes taught pilots the trick.
Glenn's NS-4 first flew the Atlantic.
The "Father of Naval Aviation" fostered flight.
To the Curtiss fan the Museum delights
In honoring the hero of early flight!*

Up in the Air

One of my early recollections is assisting my brother, Stanley, to assemble and fly a kite which might be forceful enough to lift me off the ground. We also glued model airplanes together and flew them with rubber band motors. In 1927 at the age of nine, my interest in flight exceeded my caution as I subsequently wrote in a poem alternating four- and three-foot iambic lines, responding to a teacher's assignment to write about a "place":⁴

Lindy

*As children we played in Wilson Park
Across the street from home.
Its sidewalks and grass gave us the room
To skate, ride bikes and roam.
The space was special for many sports:
Soccer, catch and baseball.
My brother's kites and model planes
Flew high above us all.
A sight to see: Charles Lindbergh's plane
Above our park in flight.
This inspired me to see
The dream of brothers Wright.
Against all sense I started to walk
To the distant airport to see
The plane of fame and man of the hour
The Spirit of St. Louis and Lindy.
My grief-stricken parents nearly went wild.
Where was their wayward child?
When at last this nine-year old lad
Walked home hoping Dad's not too riled.
I was met with relief but also belief
That my act I must repent.
After lectures and thanks for my safe return
Soon off to bed I was sent.
From that memorable day to later events
My dream was to fly high and oft.
I flew the Atlantic thirty times
And circled the globe aloft!*

Disaster and Relief

After forty-nine years of a wonderful marriage, my wife died suddenly of a heart attack. I continued to administer our college Elderhostel program as a means of getting my life back on course, meeting and later marrying a Canadian participant who has shared my life for two decades. In my initial depression, I turned to poetry to find solace. My poem evokes those events with a modified Petrarchan sonnet. An octet of iambic pentameter abba cddc is followed by a sestet efg efg, featuring an internal rhyme. The root meaning of "verse," "to turn," emerges as twice this poem reverses from sadness to joy:

The Turning

*A tragic turn brings shock and disbelief.
The grief, regret, remorse and guilt we feel
Are mixed with pain and hurt we cannot heal.
Dark sorrow numbs our will to find relief.
With time there comes at last a turn toward light.
The loss is eased, the wound made whole. One lives!
New friends are made, new sites explored. Fate gives
Afresh the chance for love to turn out right.
Alone, confused, depressed one felt despair.
False starts and frantic feints seemed not to scare
The ghost of morbid brooding without cease.
Let love flood in! Take time to laugh and share!
Old fears are drowned; new joys are found.
We dare to dream of life once more restored to peace.*

Another occasion of creating poetry as a means of coping with catastrophe was my response to the 9/11 terrorist attack. Seated at the breakfast table, my wife and I were horrified to see the planes flying into the two World Trade Centers and to realize that thousands of lives were being lost. Everyone felt obliged to take some action in response. It was considered unpatriotic not to display the national flag or wear a flag pin on the coat lapel. Many thought a war on the terrorists' country was in order. I felt compelled to write a poem about what I had seen and sensed and name what action people were taking. The form used was the English sonnet of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. The first quatrain of abab describes the criminal attacks; the rest of the poem, ending with the couplet, names the action taken:

September 11 Sonnet

*Black smoke billows from a World Trade Center tower.
Aghast, we watch a plane plunge into its twin.
We gasp as the towers collapse in a deadly shower:
A burning Pentagon—a dreadful din!*

Flight 93 aims at Washington.

Men of courage foil the terrorist plot.

They bring the plane to ground—the scheme undone:

The field they plowed—a "heroes" sacred spot.

Anguished grief grips the horrified land.

To allay the pain, prayer sessions arise.

Blood is given; benefit broadcasts are planned

Security tightens: militia mobilize.

LIFE RESUMES; THE MARKETS DIP AND SOAR.

FLAGS FLY; THE COUNTRY GIRDS FOR WAR!

Contrasting Elderhostel Experiences

After enjoying other programs in France and Switzerland, our first American Elderhostel was held at the Holy Cross Monastery on the Hudson River, where I customarily wrote a verse thanking our hosts, set to a folk song. Sitting opposite a

tombstone to contemplate my mortality, I was shocked into a heightened awareness of the sensory joys of living by reading “Bishop Harold Wright” inscribed on the slab. I SAW the white robes the monks made and SMELLED the incense they sold to support their order. I HEARD the tolling of the bells and FELT the raindrops on my face. The “Monastic Elderhostel,” my most serene such poem, seeks to convey the stillness and peace of this setting permitting no conversation. It may be sung to the tune “St. Anne” (“Our God, Our Help in Ages Past”):

Monastic Elderhostel

*We leave the stress that takes its toll
In search of sun and peace;
To contemplate our inner soul
And give new life a lease.
The monks in silence supplicate;
Incense and robes refine;
With chant the canon celebrate
To live out God’s Design.
We Elders meet to meditate
‘Mid Holy Cross and shrine;
A hymn to sing, a verse create
A stroll ‘neath scented pine.
All this beside a mighty stream
Rainbow—Creation’s sign!
A bell tolls on to end our dream,
At peace, we wine and dine.
Renewed, refreshed, restored to health
For most, our tasks confine
Us to our worldly search for wealth –
Less thought of things divine.*

A very different Elderhostel experience featured the frenzied chaos of the chaotic Las Vegas Strip. I composed a poem in free verse to reflect the variety of entertainment venues, using alliteration to mimic the motley medley:

Las Vegas

*Meadow in the midst of mountains,
Mojave Desert oasis, Mormon fort,
Army post, pioneers’ paradise.
Rail stop for miners and travelers.
Gambling becomes the engine of growth.
Fueled by Hoover Dam water, juice and air.
A burgeoning building boom is born.
With easy divorce, marriage chapels multiply.
The Strip explodes—bursting with exotic palaces.
Bargain buffets and fancy restaurants increase.
Posh hotels feature fashion boutiques and art.
Volcanoes belch, falls cascade, and pirates prowl.
Song and dance abound from Rockettes to topless.
Comics, acrobats, and clowns create a circus ambience.
Daring rides and water slides thrill the jaded tourists.
The Meadow metamorphoses into a megalopolis.
The crush of crowds feeds claustrophobic fears.
Kaleidoscopic light at night dazzles with its glare*

cacophony crescendoes to a caterwauling chorus!

Poetry

At our fiftieth high school reunion, friends still recalled my vigorous recitation of Kipling’s “Boots” which won second prize in a contest. In college as an English major, I was exposed to the lilt of the language of Chaucer, the wisdom of Shakespeare, the beautiful expressions of the romantic poets. My first sustained effort to compose verse was when I was Director of the Waterfront and song leader at daily dinners for the Rochester YMCA Camp Cory on Keuka Lake. Each evening, in addition to folk music, we would sing doggerel that I had created commenting on the sailboat overturned by a camp counselor or some other *faux pas* of the day. For two years after college, I taught high school American Literature. After retirement from more than thirty years of college administration and teaching, I had the time and inclination to try my hand at composing poetry. I realized how important poetry is in helping individuals to feel and express emotions even though they might not truly understand all that is expressed. The couplets in the following lyric poem express the subjectivity, imagination, melody, and emotion that make up the essence of the art:

Poetry in Retrospect

*Poets try to find the words to say in rhythmic rhyme
Their deepest thoughts & feelings for a world that knows no time.
They call us by so many names, we writers of romance:
A gleeman, bard, or troubadour or laureate perchance?
With sonnets, odes & elegies the poets do their share
To court their loves & mourn their dead & please you with their fare.
The artist shades his images to render what he views.
The poet with resounding words depicts his tints & hues.
His meter mimes his mother’s pulse, imprinted by her heart.
His aim: to stir emotions, thus in verse to play a part.
Poesy can be a friend to soothe the cares of man,
Or lift us up to ecstasy as only nature can.
The poet’s measured cadence sings a music of its own.
Imagined pictures mingle with the sound of souls unknown.*

Robert Frost, considered the greatest American poet of his time, has been a strong interest of mine all my life. I had the privilege of attending his readings of his poetry and have visited the Robert Frost Farm museum in Derry, New Hampshire. Inspired by reading his works,⁵ I composed this poem about our legendary poet:

Robert Frost Revisited

*San Francisco boy makes good,
Writes poems as livelihood.
Assumes the Yankee rustic role
And speaks of many a stroll.
From Dartmouth’s drill and Harvard flown,
Reads classics on his own.
He takes the road “less traveled by”*

*His poetry to ply.
As published poet, Frost finds fame
And earns England's acclaim.
Honors and prizes at home abound,
A cultural icon is found.
Depression deepens when spouse is lost,
Turmoil torments Frost.
Good woman saves his sanity,
Poetry is the key.
"I had a lover's quarrel with the world,"
Frost's unfeigned flag is furled.
The life of Frost—a controversy,
The poems his legacy.*

Repetition can be an effective device in poetry. Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven" begins with the tapping of a bird and ends with the repeated "nevermore" as a refrain for the loss of a loved one. My poem "Reveille" begins with the tapping of a bird and ends with a resounding refrain. It has been fun to provide a break for the audience in the oral reading of poetry. This poem gets them up on their feet to join the percussion section by clapping their hands or pounding on the table for the repeated refrain in what became my most popular poem. One morning I was awakened by the frequent rapping of a flicker on our eaves trough. I was inspired to create this poem with the bird's beat as a refrain:

Reveille
RAT-A-TAT-TAT, TAT-TAT, TAT-TAT [repeated as refrain]
*The flicker taps the tin to call:
"This gutter holds a feast for all." (refrain)
He telegraphs his urge to mate:
"Come see me here, it's time to date." (refrain)
He raps: "Get up you sleepy one;
The sun shines bright, the day's begun." (refrain)
The clarion signal sounds each day
To wake us with its' Reveille. (refrain)*

Music

Looking back on the earliest sources of my interest in poetic expression, I am convinced that I was influenced before birth, that my mother's heartbeat reached me in the womb with a universal sense of rhythm that has lasted into my nineties. Growing up, I was daily exposed to verse set to music in lullabies, hymns, and anthems. When we were ill, we were comforted by listening to recorded music. My parents, brother, sister, and I all sang and played the piano, enjoying family musicales with friends on Sunday afternoons. I joined school vocal and instrumental groups, and at the age of sixteen played and sang in the Summer Rochester Centennial Pageant. In college, I played in the Eastman Concert Band and sang with the Glee Club for the Roosevelts in the White House and in a broadcast from New York's Radio City Music Hall. I have enjoyed singing in church choirs all my life, and have even directed a village band. During WW II in the Air Force Band, I performed in NY's Carnegie Hall and in weekly

broadcasts from Atlantic City. Music is a constant source of joy, as I portray in the colorful concrete images of this sonnet:
A Sonnet to Music
*Rhythm stems from the beat in our mother's breast.
Melody develops tunes from tone.
Harmony builds on sound to add zest.
Arrangements give voice to subtle sounds less known.*

*Performers work their body and mind in sync.
Choirs worship with "sweet singing" we hear.
Composers score their creative dreams in ink.
Conductors' aim: a universal ear.*

*Singers love music married to poetry.
Marchers hear the music through their feet.
Listeners set their secret feelings free.
Dancers get us moving to the beat.*

*Vibrating waves of sound have as their goal
Energize the body; lift the soul!*

Conclusion

To this review of what the poetic art has meant in my life, I offer an ecumenical benediction:

Prayers of the People
*People of the world find many means to pray.
Christians, Buddhists, Moslems, Jews all have their way.
We adore, confess and supplicate the Lord.
Prayers or mantras rise to heaven with one accord.
We speak to God in silence, song or sanctioned verse
Of sin and suffering—friendship in the universe.
We pray for mercy, peace and guidance as our way
Of seeking grace through love and piety each day.
May we humbly walk the path of life while we have breath.
Pilgrims all—we wend our way from birth to death.*

Notes

1. For the larger context of this creative art, see Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux, *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).
2. For background, see Russell Freedman, *The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane* (New York: Scholastic, 1993).
3. My inspiration for this poem came partly from a visit to the Curtiss Museum in Hammondsport, as well as a recent *Torch* article, Stephen J. Eberhard, "Glenn Hammond Curtiss: Local Treasure, National Hero," *Torch* 82, no. 3 (Spring 2009): 19-23.
4. A lifelong remembrance is seeing Charles Lindbergh and his plane in person in the air and at the Rochester airport.
5. Louis Untermeyer, *The Pocket Book of Robert Frost's Poems*. (New York: Henry Holt, 1946).

Modern Dragon Slayers—Wild Weasels

A bold new strategy gave American fighter pilots in the Vietnam War the means to combat surface-to-air missiles.

By Charles McCoy



About the Author

After earning a BS in Electrical Engineering from Tennessee State University in 1963, Charles McCoy became a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, completing training as a Navigator and Electronic Warfare Officer in 1966. Flying B-66, B-52, F-111 and F-4 aircraft, in 1967 and 1968 he completed 128 combat missions over Viet Nam, receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross and twelve Air Medals. In 1969 he joined the Wild Weasel force, helping to develop the equipment, armament, and effective attack tactics of the F-4 G aircraft and managing the intelligence and logistics aspects of Avionics Maintenance. During his military career, he also completed Masters degrees in Public Administration in 1975 and Military Arts and Sciences in 1979. Retiring from the military as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1985, he went to work in the diverse fields of business development and program management in the defense industry, retiring in 2008 as a Lockheed Martin Program Director for the development of F-16 aircraft flight simulators.

Presented to the Torch Club of Akron, Ohio, on June 2, 2008.

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The Growing Military Value of Aircraft

During the Vietnam War, the United States Air Force developed a program of aircraft and crews, nicknamed Wild

Weasels, to identify, locate, and suppress or destroy surface-to-air missile sites. In brief, the Wild Weasels' job was to bait enemy anti-aircraft defenses into targeting them instead of individual strike aircraft or formations. They were always the first aircraft in and the last ones to leave a target area. Looking back six decades, if Orville and Wilbur Wright hadn't been successful pioneers of powered manned flight, there may not have been a need for the Weasel mission. The importance of aircraft to modern military operations definitely was not appreciated at the time of their invention in 1903, when observers presumably wondered what possible value there could be in a contraption that flew less than ten feet above the ground for twelve seconds and traveled all of one hundred twenty feet at thirty miles per hour.¹

Aircraft development between 1903 and World War I drastically changed any skepticism about its value. Several military groups experimented with using aircraft in traditional combat operations of the time. The United States War Department tried using planes for battlefield reconnaissance. In 1911, during the Italian-Turkish War, the first wartime use of aircraft occurred when an Italian bombarded Turkish positions with hand grenades.² By 1913, long-distance flights were being made, albeit with many stops, and military leaders saw the potential to change warfare. Such capabilities could not go unchallenged; defense against the aircraft had to be created as aircraft began to alter the strategic outcome of ground warfare. Initially, riflemen were

relatively effective defense against the aircraft, which were fragile and flew at slow speeds and low altitudes. During World War I, aircraft speed improved so dramatically that the planes exceeded the riflemen's aiming capabilities. Fighter aircraft were created to provide defense against attacking enemy aircraft. The infamous Red Baron of World War I became the best at destroying other manned aircraft.

However, as aircraft production increased and it became impossible to defend every corner of the sky and protect battlefields with aircraft, new defenses had to be created. Anti-aircraft artillery was introduced to supplement the fighter aircraft, mostly field artillery pieces, such as the 75 millimeter gun, that were modified to fire projectiles vertically instead of horizontally.³ But by the end of World War I, aircraft could fly at altitudes of 20,000 feet and speeds up to 170 knots. The quest for better performance continued after the war. By the beginning of World War II, demonstrations such as Wiley Post's around the world flight clearly indicated any country in the world was vulnerable to airstrikes.⁴

During World War II, aircraft advances continued to the point that air defenses could no longer deter air attacks in any sectors of a given battle arena. Anti-air artillery and defensive aircraft were no match for attacking aircraft that could fly in excess of 260 knots at 25,000 feet and above; some bomber aircraft were literally "flying fortresses" equipped with such defenses

as machine guns to engage any defensive aircraft that approached them. The consequences of ineffective defenses against the aircraft were vividly demonstrated numerous times prior to the Viet Nam War. For example, the December 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor showed that an undefended naval armada—in this case the entire U.S. Pacific Fleet—could be easily rendered ineffective in one day with air power. In the latter days of WWII, the U.S. demonstrated it could virtually destroy two entire major metropolitan areas in Japan—Hiroshima and Nagasaki—with a single aircraft and bombs. Our Air Force now could literally destroy an entire country and its culture anywhere on the planet from the air. Finally, in the Korean War, Allied aircraft marginalized the numerical superiority of the North Korean and Chinese ground forces whose lack of air defenses permitted the U.S. to employ its airpower with relative impunity, allowing Allied Forces to achieve the current status of control on the Korean Peninsula. The development of aircraft that could fly several times faster than the speed of sound and operate in the stratosphere gave the U.S. the ability to fly missions with impunity anywhere in the world. This fact was not lost on America's ideological foe at the time, the USSR. The Soviets recognized the void that "aim and shoot" air defenses created, so they set about to create defenses with the speed, altitude capability, maneuverability, and destructive power to intercept and destroy modern aircraft. The obvious solution was a weapon that could identify and track intruding aircraft, achieve speeds greater than the targeted aircraft, fly higher than its target, and have sufficient power to destroy all intercepted aircraft.

The USSR developed the surface-

to-air missile system as a solution to unauthorized flights in their sovereign airspace. The system used radar technology from their WWII Allies and improved on a missile design initiated by the Nazis. The first SAMs, SA-1s, were deployed at fixed sites around Moscow, and the subsequent development of a mobile SAM, the SA-2, provided greater deployment flexibility because it could be positioned to protect strategic and critical tactical assets and did not require the large SA-1 support infrastructure. It was this system that would menace the United States air forces during operations over North Viet Nam.⁵ The U.S. had encountered the system before Vietnam, but it had not prepared for air operations in an SA-2 dominated air defense environment. The Soviets used the SA-2 to shoot down Gary Powers' U-2 aircraft over the USSR in 1960 and Major Rudolph Anderson's U-2 over Cuba in 1962.⁶

North Vietnam Air Defense

The North Vietnamese had been astute students of the air defense lessons from WWII, the Korean War, and unauthorized incursions of Soviet-controlled airspace. When the U.S. initiated bombing operations over North Viet Nam, the Vietnamese, with USSR assistance, designed and established its air defense structure around the SA-2 SAM system. By the end of 1965, the North Vietnamese had launched 185 SA-2 missiles and claimed 11 U.S. aircraft.⁸ The concentration of SA-2 sites in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas, among the most highly defended areas in the world, frustrated U.S. air forces because they could not be easily stereotyped and targeted for destruction. Individual SA-2 site activations were random and their target engagement tactics were continuously modified. The SA-2 sites were also

well-camouflaged and missiles were regularly moved between sites to minimize targeting from U.S. aircraft. The North Vietnamese also located anti-aircraft artillery at the SA-2 sites, making visual targeting more difficult. The North Vietnamese ultimately established roughly 200 SA-2 sites to protect its territory.⁷ The density of SA-2s increased the probability that such high value targets as rail heads, bridges, docks, and factories, as well as airfields and other strategic military targets would be protected from air attacks. This almost invulnerable air defense structure relied on over 200 radars, often mobile and operating in different areas of the electromagnetic frequency spectrum, defeating U.S. countermeasures to confuse enemy radar.⁸

Although the SA-2 missile was the focal point of the North Vietnam air defense structure, it did not operate autonomously. Instead, it was the final element in a chain of supporting systems that provided early warning, target acquisition, and missile guidance. Four very different radars provided this information in a highly coordinated manner to prevent individual radars from becoming targets. First of all, **Knife Rest radars**, strategically located throughout North Vietnam and operating in the Alpha section of the electromagnetic frequency range, gave the North Vietnamese early warning of impending air attacks. They were able to perform this task mainly because the U.S. attacked in large formations with aircraft requiring high altitude to achieve the range they needed.⁹ **Side Net radars**, operating in the echo-fox section of the electromagnetic frequency range and strategically located in the country to determine the altitude of all attacking raids, provided a second line of defense.¹⁰ A third system of **Spoon Rest radars**, also operating in the alpha section of the

frequency range, provided target acquisition information to individual or multiple SA-2 sites. Target range and azimuth information from individual Spoon Rest radars was provided to Fan Song radars at individual SA-2 sites. This permitted Fan Song radars transmissions to remain silent until they were ready to commit to intercept a specific target.¹¹ Finally, **Fan Song guidance radars** at specific SA-2 sites, using target range and azimuth data from Spoon Rest radars, operated in three sections of the electromagnetic frequency spectrum to perform two key functions: final target acquisition and missile guidance. The radar and its respective control center were designed specifically to cope with threats posed by small groups of aircraft. A single Fan Song radar could acquire as many as four targets before firing. After launching its missiles, it could guide up to three of them against a single target to increase the probability of a successful interception.¹²

North Vietnam received its first SA-2 surface-to-air missile systems in the spring of 1965 and claimed its first U.S. casualty on July 24, 1965, when an SA-2 exploded in the middle of a strike formation of F-4 Phantom II aircraft, destroying one aircraft and damaging the remaining members in the formation. This was just the first aircraft loss. Subsequent losses to the SA-2 became a regular occurrence. The North Vietnamese became efficient at destroying U.S. aircraft. Their efficiency rate grew to 5.7 percent; i.e., the number of aircraft lost (11) versus the number of missiles fired (194).¹³ With a steady supply of missiles from the USSR, the North Vietnamese could maintain this rate for a prolonged period and possibly improve their aircraft engagement efficiency as they became more proficient with the employment of the SA-2 missile.

Hampered by a negative political climate, a bureaucratic “shell game,” and antiquated reconnaissance film technology, American tactical aviation suffered unprecedented losses and missed targeting opportunities, obliterating its enviable pre-Vietnam kill-to-loss ratio. With no timetable for the war and only a finite quantity of airplanes and airmen that could be dedicated to the campaign, such a reduction in this ratio put an unacceptable strain on defense resources already largely committed in this Cold War era to avoiding or return a Soviet nuclear attack. Ill-prepared for a conventional war like Vietnam, America had significantly curtailed its WWII-era military manpower and airplane production in favor of building and delivering strategic missiles. With the pace of USAF air losses and an undefined end date for the Vietnam War, the USAF could not wait for industry to build more planes. Drastic and quick action to reduce the air losses was necessary. The U.S. Government eventually modified the air war rules of engagement to allow offensive action to be taken whenever the North Vietnamese employed air defenses against U.S. aircraft. The USAF used this change to revive a WWII strategy of attacking individual anti-aircraft artillery sites and update the procedure to locate the more mobile and better camouflaged Vietnamese sites, which nevertheless still had the benefit of radar, maneuverable missiles, and anti-aircraft artillery to enhance their survival.

Birth of the Weasels

So, out of necessity, the USAF decided to create a dedicated force of two-person crews—a pilot and an electronic warfare officer—with specially equipped aircraft to deal with the SA-2s, a force of aviators that would “hunt and destroy” active SA-2

sites to improve the probable success of bombing missions over North Vietnam. The Air Force selected the F-100F aircraft, equipping it with surface-to-air missile detection hardware. The program was originally named “Project Ferret” to denote a predatory animal that goes into a prey’s den to kill it, but was changed to “Wild Weasel” because the “ferret” designation had been used in World War II for bombers that provided radar countermeasures.¹⁴ The Wild Weasel program, launched September 15, 1965, was commanded by Captain Allen Lamb, one of the best F-100 pilots in the Air Force, who accepted the Temporary Duty orders to report to Eglin AFB in Florida without being told what the assignment was—only that he was to fly the two-seat F-110 already familiar to him. His open-ended orders that eventually carried him all the way to Vietnam established Eglin Air Force Base as the home of the Weasels. Once Lamb arrived there, he learned that he would be locating and destroying SAM sites in North Vietnam. The original Wild Weasel force authorization for two aircraft, later upgraded to four to cover losses or maintenance delays, brought him together with Captain Jack Donovan, Electronic Warfare Officer, as the first crew. Five crews were assembled for the first four aircraft and trained in four areas:

- 1) Improve team coordination;
- 2) Learn to use specialized Weasel avionics such as Vector IV and IR-133 radar-warning receivers and the WR-300 launch-warning receiver;
- 3) Sharpen their gunnery, bombing, and rocket launching skills to mark SA-2 sites for subsequent destruction by fighter-bomber aircraft;
- 4) Develop tactics for survival and effectiveness against the new SAM threat, replacing counter-air strategies designed for areas above traditional

battlefields protected by air defenses in aircraft-to-aircraft engagements.¹⁵

A variety of tactics were developed to specifically deal with the SA-2 threat. One tactic was to designate a Weasel strike formation leader to coordinate SA-2 warnings about direction of the threat and SAM launches. Individual aircraft in the formation were responsible for their own protection, maneuvering to create a miss distance between the intercepting SA-2 missile and the targeted aircraft. A second tactic was to assign the Weasels positions on both sides of attack formations, permitting the Weasels to provide SA-2 warnings and attack sites that were located adjacent to attacking aircraft formations. A third tactic, called Iron Hand, a formation of one Weasel and four F-105 aircraft, attacked suspected active SAM sites by creating reactions from SAM sites along a route that would subsequently be used by an attack formation. With this tactic, once the flight was targeted by an SA-2 site, the Weasel would use its onboard avionics to identify the geographic location of the targeting SA-2 radar emanations, a deadly game of “tag” that led to hectic “hide-and-seek” maneuvers. Seeking to visually locate the Fan Song radar, the Weasel aircraft used its speed and maneuverability to continually interrupt the SA-2 tracking solution until it found an opportunity to attack the Fan Song radar while the four accompanying F-105 aircraft bombarded the SA-2 site. With the obvious success of these tactics, now called hunter-killer operations, more capable Weasel aircraft were developed, eliminating the mixing of aircraft types as flights of four aircraft operated together, forcing SA-2 sites to select one of the four as a target. While the targeted aircraft engaged in “hide and seek” activity with an isolated SA-2 site, the remaining three Weasels either assisted with the

attack or located other active sites in the vicinity to attack and destroy.¹⁶

Weasels Sent to Vietnam

The hastily-trained cadre of Weasels, sent to Southeast Asia in the fall of 1965, initially suffered losses. That December Lamb and Donovan led an “Iron Hand” strike against Kep Airfield, outside Hanoi, a target that had already claimed the destruction of at least one U.S. aircraft loaded with LAU-3 canisters and 2.75-inch rockets. Using the call sign Spruce, the mission originated from Korat Air Base, Thailand. The F-100F Weasel, designated Spruce 5, took off first followed by four accompanying F-105 aircrafts, Spruce 1-4. The plan was to create an air picture, including standard mid-air refueling over Laos that looked like a typical USAF attack formation. At a pre-briefed point in the route, Spruce Five, the Weasel, took the lead, and two F-105s positioned themselves on the respective left and right wings of the F-100, heading for the Red River valley, a flood plain that was home to some of North Vietnam’s best air-defense systems. The mission parameters were flexible, unlike a traditional strike operation with a specific target and a series of alternates. The task of the day was to probe the enemy’s air defenses until they engaged the flight. In complete radio silence, with the flight switched to the mission strike radio frequency to preclude the North Vietnamese from discovering the deception, the team entered North Vietnam, where the EWOs Vector IV hardware had picked up a Fan Song radar in search mode about 100 nautical miles ahead. The aircraft increased to an air speed of 595 knots for optimum maneuvering. Homing on the radar transmission, the pilot, Lamb, almost immediately located the site visually and kept it within 30-60 degrees relative to

the nose of the aircraft to make the SA-2 site conclude that it was not a target and had not been observed. The next task was to locate some terrain that would mask the approach to the site and offer some protection. The remaining members of Spruce flight descended into surrounding shallow valleys to mask their approach. Intermittently, Spruce 5 would climb to an altitude that permitted the EWO an opportunity to update the azimuth or bearing to the site. This process continued for about 10 to 15 minutes.¹⁷

As the formation entered the valley, with radar warning receiver antennas on either side of the aircraft for homing on a specific target, the warning strobe indicated the flight was directly on top of the SA-2 site. Spruce flight initiated an ascent for higher altitude, but almost immediately there were indications of other active SAM positions on the left and right, putting Spruce flight between several active SA-2 sites. The flight climbed through 3,000 feet and rolled inverted to make an attack. The Weasel attacked first, but was so low that other members of flight thought it was going to mark the target with a crash, but the Weasel fired a salvo of rockets that hit the oxidizer van for the SA-2 missile liquid-fuel motors, creating a bright flash that served as a marker for the four F-105 aircraft, which then also attacked the SA-2 site with rockets. Each aircraft made a second pass, totally destroying the site’s intercept operations. Although it broke the cardinal rule of air combat, the second pass assured a kill and lifted the spirits of the attack-bombers’ aircrews over North Vietnam targets. The other SA-2 sites in the vicinity were left for another day and other missions. The entire flight, Spruce 1-5, survived the attack and all members of Spruce flight received the Distinguished Flying Cross for killing the first SAM site.¹⁸ Keith Ferris, a renowned aviation

historical artist, captured the feat in oils for the Air Force Museum.¹⁹

Weasel Evolution

This first SAM site destruction validated the Wild Weasel concept. At the Weasels' new home at Nellis AFB, Nevada, tactics, aircraft, and ordnances were developed to defeat guided surface-to-air missile systems that are the cornerstone of current air defenses. Since the F-100 aircraft's ordnances of cannons, rockets, unguided bombs, and napalm were no longer ideal for the Weasel mission, four different aircraft, the F-105F, F-105G, F-4CWW, and F-4G, were developed to defeat the SAMs as they advanced in capabilities. Unlike the F-100, each of these aircraft carried more fuel and was equipped with advanced attack radars, jamming equipment, and heavy armament, including smart munitions; but their primary weapon was the anti-radiation missile used to seek out and attack from higher altitudes and longer distances the various radars that supported surface-to-air missile systems.²⁰ These improvements reduced exposure to small arms fire and AAA, which was associated with visual SAM site attacks that used unguided rockets, bombs, and/or cannon fire. The F-105F, F-105G, and F-4CWW all participated in the Vietnam War and reduced the SA-2 effectiveness to a little over one percent (i.e., more than 4244 missiles had to be fired to achieve the destruction of 49 aircraft) by the end of the War.²¹ The last Weasel-specific airframe, the F-4G, amassed considerable achievements before being retired in 1996. In the Gulf War, the F-4G flew 2,596 sorties and totally obliterated the Iraqi air defense structure during the opening stages of the war. The aircraft fired more than 1,000 anti-radiation missiles, destroying over 200 targets.²² Although the legendary Wild

Weasel aircraft have been retired, Weasel operations today are elements of a more complex USAF mission called Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses conducted with the Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcon, Block 50D/ 52D aircraft, carrying on the proud heritage of the Vietnam War era.

Notes

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13. Momyer, 123, 136-37.

14. Wikipedia, "Wild Weasel," www.wikipedia.org/wiki/wild_weasel [accessed January 4, 2012].

15. Allen Lamb, "In Their Own Words #8: Eleven Stories for Veterans Day," posted by Michael Puttre November 11, 2005, http://edefense.blogspot.com/2005/11/06_archive.html [accessed January 1, 2012]. Donovan is credited with the semi-official motto of the Wild Weasel profession: YGBSM – "You've got to be shittin' me" "This was a natural response of an educated man, upon learning that he was to fly in the back seat of a fighter [aircraft] while acting as flypaper for enemy SAMs."

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The Construct of Successful Aging

Resilience can make growing old a more positive experience.

By Mary Ann Kirkpatrick



About the Author

Mary Ann F. Kirkpatrick received a BS degree in pharmacy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a MS degree in gerontology and a PhD in Urban Services from Virginia Commonwealth University. For twenty years, she taught in the School of Pharmacy at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). In 2001, she became the Dean for Student Affairs in the Bernard J. Dunn School of Pharmacy at Shenandoah University. Mary Ann has received several awards for her research, service and teaching, including an Honorable Mention for the American Society on Aging Research Award (1998), the Virginia Department of Social Services Outstanding Service Award (1993), the VCU School of Pharmacy Teaching Excellence Award (1991), the Virginia Geriatric Education Center Outstanding Service Award (2001), the Shenandoah University Wilkins Award (2008), and the National Alliance for State Pharmacy Association's Excellence in Innovation Award (2011). An active member of the Torch Club in Winchester, Virginia, since joining in 2002, she served as President in 2008/2009.

Presented to the Winchester Torch Club on December 2, 2010.

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Prologue

Last year during a routine physical, my ninety-six-year-old mother's physician told her that when he was in medical school he learned about

diabetes, congestive heart failure, hypertension and other diseases, but that he had learned about successful aging from his patients, especially her. He then proceeded to shake her hand and thank her for teaching him. As I thought about this encounter I began to wonder how this man, approximately half my age and not a gerontologist, might define "successful aging." I also wondered what researchers measured to declare a person successfully aging and what factors older people thought were important to age successfully. This paper seeks to identify a construct, or abstract concept, of successful aging that is defined by measureable or observable behaviors.

A New Emphasis in Aging Research in the 1980s

Prior to the 1980s, much aging research focused on age-associated declines and deficits. Then in 1986, successful aging was selected as a theme for the Gerontological Society of America meeting, signaling a shift in research focus that embraced earlier social theories such as disengagement, activity, continuity, aged subculture, and social integration which had been described as early as the 1950s. John Rowe and Robert Kahn published a pivotal paper in *Science* in 1987, "Human Aging: Usual and Successful," challenging researchers to move their thinking toward health promotion and disease prevention and away from age-related losses. A decade later, Rowe and Kahn developed a model for successful aging with three interconnected parts: "low probability of disease and disease-related disability,

high cognitive and physical functional capacity, and active engagement with life."¹ Much of what we currently know about components of successful aging has come from the work of other researchers operationalizing and testing components of this and other models. I will use the Rowe and Kahn model as an example.

An absence or low incidence of diseases selected by the researchers may include heart disease, stroke, arthritis, bronchitis, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis, emphysema, and asthma. Some researchers also include hearing problems as a medical condition.² Absence of disability often refers to being able to take care of oneself by performing activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, eating, using the toilet, moving from bed to chair, grooming, and walking across a room). Risk factors for disease, excluding genetics, may include behaviors such as cigarette smoking and a history of alcohol abuse³ or conditions such as "hypertension and obesity defined... as a body mass index of 30 or greater."⁴

Maintaining physical and mental functioning has been measured in numerous ways. Strawbridge, et al. observed study subjects to see if they had "the ability to walk one-quarter mile,...climb one flight of stairs without resting, the ability to stand up without fainting or feeling dizzy, and the ability to remember things without difficulty, to remember where one put something, or to find the right word when talking."⁵ Reed, et al. observed their subjects to see if they could walk 10 feet in four seconds, stand up five times from a chair in 15 seconds, reach over their heads,

lift 10 pounds, grasp small objects, fully rotate their right shoulder, and display a grip strength greater than 26 kilograms.⁶ For determining cognitive functioning, researchers may rely on standardized tests such as the Mini Mental State Examination better known as the MMSE. This exam provides a quick test of short- and long-term memory, arithmetic, and orientation.

Lastly in the Rowe and Kahn model, active engagement with life is usually evaluated by finding out if the person has “monthly contact with three or more close friends or relatives,” if the person is employed, provides childcare, participates in volunteer activities, or cleans their own house. Strawbridge and colleagues applied the Rowe and Kahn criteria to data from 867 persons aged 65 to 99 years and found that less than 20% could be classified as successfully aging. This was in contrast to over 50% of the same sample who self-rated themselves as aging successfully.⁷ In 2006, Depp and Jeste reviewed all of the large studies published to date on the topic and found a range of 0.4% to 95% of elders, with an average of about 36% of elders, successfully aging in the reviewed studies. The components that were most highly correlated with success were nonsmoking, an absence of disability, arthritis, and diabetes. Depp and Jeste also identified moderate support for engagement in physical activity and social interactions, higher levels of self-reported health status, an absence of depression and cognitive impairment plus fewer medical conditions. Interesting, in this same study, gender, income, education, and marital status were not related to successful aging.⁸

Theories of successful aging generally fall into two categories: biomedical and socio-psychological. The Rowe and Kahn model discussed

earlier falls into a biomedical category since it emphasizes physical and mental functioning even though the model does include social interactions. Socio-psychological models focus more on social functioning, life satisfaction, and psychological resources. Social functioning may include “social engagement, social roles, participation and activity, social contacts and exchanges, and/or positive relationships with others.”⁹ The theories I mentioned that were proposed as early as the 1950s, disengagement, activity and continuity, fall in this category. The concept of life satisfaction includes “zest, resolution, fortitude, relationships between desired and achieved goals, self-concept and mood, including happiness.” Psychological models focus on “personal growth, creativity, self-efficacy, autonomy, independence, effective coping strategies, sense of purpose, self-acceptance, and self-worth.” In this area, the idea of “selective optimization with compensation” has received a lot of attention and debate.¹⁰ These models provide a way for people to show how they contribute to their own successful aging by compensating when losses occur. Regardless of whether the model is a biomedical or socio-psychological, the construct of successful aging appears to be multidimensional. Longevity is certainly part of successful aging and is usually defined in aging research studies as aged 60 or 65 years or older, a note of hope for the average Torch member!¹¹

The Importance of Resilience

The inclusion of resilience in discussions of successful aging is not new but it has received more attention recently as older adults living with disease and/or disability are recognized as successfully aging. Resilience has

been defined as “the capacity to remain well, recover, or even thrive in the face of adversity,”¹² the ability to bounce back, to overcome negative influences that block achievement,¹³ and “the ability to adapt positively to adversity.”¹⁴ The concept was studied in 546 non-disabled persons over the age of 70 years who lived in the community and who had experienced a stressful life event within the previous five years. Data was collected on chronic conditions, medications, cognitive function, grip strength, dependence on others for instrumental activities of daily living, physical activity, depressive symptoms, self-rated health status, social support, and self-efficacy in addition to questions about their stressful event such as the significance of the event and the time needed to resume pre-event activities. The findings showed highest resilience in males, living with others, with high grip strength, independent in their instrumental activities of daily living, having few depressive symptoms, and having good to excellent self-rated health.

A very different review of resilience as an element of successful aging assessed “competence, adversity, assets and risk, and protective processes and vulnerabilities” in Alzheimer’s patients. In two case studies, Phyllis Braudy Harris described how assets may counterbalance risks and how protective processes can minimize negative outcomes. “Perhaps in our search for the ‘Holy Grail,’ successful aging,” she concluded, we have overlooked the “ordinary magic” of human beings present within us, regardless of age, the resilience of the human spirit, the human capacity to adapt and survive in the face of adversity. For with resilience as our aim, instead of successful aging, all older adults have the possibility of achieving

it. We can be inclusive, not exclusive. We can deal with some of the valid criticisms of the successful aging concept. For having the goal of resilience as we age, and not successful aging, does not preclude or marginalize people with disabilities....It can also acknowledge the positive or negative influences of gender, race/ethnicity, or social class (Harris 2008, 59).¹⁵

Empirical Data vs. Self-Rating

The empirical conclusions of quality researchers are important, but it is of equal value to know what older people think aging successfully means. Earlier in the paper I mentioned a Strawbridge study that found that less than 20% of an 867-person sample met Rowe and Kahn's criteria for successful aging yet over 50% of that same group self-rated themselves as aging successfully. In 2004, Elizabeth Phelan led a team that asked two large populations of persons aged 65 years and older to rate attributes of successful aging. One group was Japanese Americans (n=1985) and the second group was white men and women (n=2581). Interestingly, in both groups, 75% of respondents rated the same thirteen attributes as being significant: remaining in good health until close to death; feeling satisfied with their lives a majority of the time; having friends and family who were there for them; staying involved with the world and people around them; being able to make choices about things that affect how they aged, like their diet, exercise, and smoking; being able to meet all of their needs and some of their wants; not feeling lonely or isolated; adjusting to changes that were related to aging; being able to take care of themselves until close to the time of their death; feeling good about themselves; being able to cope with the challenges of their later years; remaining free of chronic

disease; and being able to act according to their own inner standards and values. In addition to these common thirteen, the white group also included continuing to learn new things as being important to successful aging. Less than 30% of participants felt that living a very long time was important.¹⁶

In a 2006 study, Lori Montross and her colleagues asked 205 community-dwelling adults over the age of 60 to self-rate the success of their own aging then respond to a series of items in an effort to determine if the components of the self-rated scores matched those found in the literature. Ninety-two percent of the respondents felt they were aging successfully and a majority of component items including "independent living, mastery or growth, positive adaptation, life satisfaction or emotional well being, and active engagement with life" matched researchers' criteria for successful aging. In this sample of people, "Only 15% met criteria for absence of physical illness and only 28% reported absence of any limitations in basic physical activities."¹⁷ In the Phelan and Montross studies, no differences were found between the genders. Other researchers have found that older people think a positive attitude, realistic perspective, and the ability to adapt to change are important for successful aging as well as continuing to seek stimulation, learning, feeling a sense of purpose in life, and being useful to others and to society."¹⁸

Forty employees of the Ozarks Area Foster Grandparent Program aged 61 to 92 felt successful aging included "interactions with others, a sense of purpose, self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy."¹⁹ In a study of about 600 persons over the age of 85 living in the Netherlands, Margaret von Faber and her colleagues

found that although the participants acknowledged various domains of successful aging, they valued well-being and social functioning more than physical or psycho-cognitive functioning. Most important for aging successfully was social contact. To this group, adaptation to physical limitations was more important than the types or number of limitations since they expected to experience some age-related limitations with advancing age.²⁰ A study of successful aging in middle-aged (n=139) versus older (n=148) married couples that focused on three aspects of personality (neuroticism, optimism, and hostility) showed inconsistency "among the dimensions of successful aging but striking similarity between spouses."²¹ If a wife scored high in optimism, chances were good her husband would also have a high rating in optimism.

In reviewing the constructs of successful aging, it appears that most successfully aging individuals do not meet all of the criteria all of the time. One cannot look at a snapshot in time and declare a person to be aging successfully but must look at a lifetime. George Vaillant had an opportunity to do that when he obtained data from three longitudinal studies: one group was socially advantaged Harvard graduates born around 1920; one group was a socially disadvantaged group of inner city men born in 1930; and one group was a group of middle class, intellectually gifted women born around 1910. The definition of successful aging for Vaillant after studying interview transcripts and data from all of these people is "to love, to work, to learn something we did not know yesterday, and to enjoy the remaining precious moments with loved ones."²²

Conclusion

From my perspective, the construct of successful aging is multidimensional and tends to ebb and flow over a lifetime. It includes adaptation, resilience, resources, an engagement in life, and living to a ripe old age which is whatever age one selects. Being adaptable means accepting change as inevitable and dealing with it gracefully. I think the concept of resilience includes determination and a scruffy willingness to “fight” as a self-advocate when necessary, doing the best you can with what you have. I believe resources, including social and community supports, are essential especially during times of physical or mental illness for a person to continue aging successfully. Lastly, being engaged in life means having interests outside one’s self. The concept of resilience is what I think my mother’s physician was referring to when he said she taught him about successful aging. After all, he is the man who said “unlike a cat that has nine lives, your mother has nine lives per diagnosis.”

Notes

1. John W. Rowe and Robert L. Kahn “Human Aging: Usual and Successful,” *Science* 237 (1987): 143-147; Rowe and Kahn, “Successful Aging,” *The Gerontologist* 37(1997):433.

2. Research contributed by William J. Strawbridge, Suzanne G. Leveille, J.M. Guralnik, and G.J. Andrews, in Colin A. Depp and Dilip V. Jeste, “Definitions and Predictors of Successful Aging: A Comprehensive Review of Larger Quantitative Studies,” *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 14(2006): 6-20.

3. George E. Vaillant, *Aging Well* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 2002).

4. William J. Strawbridge, Margaret

I. Wallhagen, and Richard D. Cohen, “Successful Aging and Well-being: Self-rated Compared with Rowe and Kahn,” *The Gerontologist* 42(2002): 729.

5. Ibid.

6. Dwayne M. Reed, Daniel J. Foley, Lon R. White, Harley Heimovitz, et al., “Predictors of Healthy Aging in Men with High Life Expectancies,” *American Journal of Public Health* 88 (October 1998):1463, cited in Depp and Jeste, “Definitions and Predictors.”

7. Strawbridge et al. “Successful Aging,” 729.

8. Depp and Jeste, “Definitions and Predictors of Successful Aging.”

9. Bowling, Ann, “Aspirations for Older Age in the 21st Century: What Is Successful Aging?” *International Journal of Aging & Human Development* 64 (2007): 266.

10. Ibid., 268-69.

11. Genes heavily influence longevity, but are not the focus of this paper. Knowledge of biomarkers and telomere lengths provides useful information to predict genetic versus environmental factors of longevity. Genes may also contribute to some quality issues of aging such as the presence or absence of diseases, adaptive and coping mechanisms, and health-related behaviors. See Colin A. Depp, Stephen J. Glatt, and Dilip V. Jeste, “Recent Advances in Research on Successful or Healthy Aging,” *Current Psychiatry Reports* 9(2007): 7-13. Studies of specific genes in animal models are currently showing correlations with the phenotype of successful aging. See Stephen J. Glatt, Pamela Chayavichitsilp, Colin Depp, Nicholas J. Schork, and Dilip V. Jeste, “Successful Aging: from Phenotype to Genotype,” *Biological Psychiatry* 62(2007): 282-293.

12. Susan E. Hardy, John Concato,

and Thomas M. Gill, “Resilience of Community-dwelling Older Persons,” *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 52(2004): 257.

13. Phyllis Braudy Harris, “Another Wrinkle in the Debate about Successful Aging: The Undervalued Concept of Resilience and the Lived Experience of Dementia,” *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 67 (2008): 45.

14. Amanda J. Lamond, Colin A. Depp, Matthew Allison, Robert Langer, Jennifer Reichstadt, David J. Moore, Shahrokh Golshan, Theodore G. Ganiats, and Dilip V. Jeste, “Measurement and Predictors of Resilience among Community-dwelling Older Women,” *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 43 (2008):148.

15. Harris, “Another Wrinkle,” 45, 59.

16. Elizabeth A. Phelan, Lynda A. Anderson, Andrea Z. La Croix, and Eric B. Larson, “Older Adults’ Views of ‘Successful Aging’—How Do They Compare with Researchers’ Definitions?” *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 52(2004): 211-216.

17. Lori P. Montross, Colin Depp, John Daly, Jennifer Reichstadt, Shabrokh Golshan, David Moore, David Sitzler, and Dilip V. Jeste, “Correlates of Self-rated Successful Aging among Community-dwelling Older Adults,” *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 14 (2006): 48.

18. Jennifer Reichstadt, Colin A. Depp, Lawrence A. Palinkas, David P. Folsom, and Dilip V. Jeste, “Building Blocks of Successful Aging: A Focus Group Study of Older Adults’ Perceived Contributors to Successful Aging,” *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 15 (2007): 194.

19. Bradley J. Fisher, “Successful Aging, Life Satisfaction, and Generativity in Later Life,”

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20. Margaret von Faber, Annetje Bootsma-van der Wiel, Eric van Exel, Jacobijn Gussekloo, Anne M. Lagaay, Els van Dongen, Dick L. Knook, Sjaak van der Geest, and Rudi G. J. Westendorp, "Successful Aging in the Oldest Old," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 161 (2001): 2694-2700.

21. Kelly J. Ko, Cynthia A. Berg, Jonathan Butner, Bert N. Uchino, and Timothy W. Smith, "Profiles of Successful Aging in Middle-aged and Older Adult Married Couples," *Psychology and Aging* 22 (2007): 714.

22. Vaillant, 16.

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Are We Making Things Too “Easy” for Ourselves?

In our age of convenience, what is easy may not be the best for us.

By Lowell J. Satre



About the Author

Lowell J. Satre taught English and European history for thirty-five years at Youngstown State University in Ohio until his retirement in 2003. The University named him a Distinguished Professor in Research in 1999, and the Ohio Academy of History bestowed on him the Distinguished Service Award in 2003. His publications include the books *Chocolate on Trial: Slavery, Politics and the Ethics of Business* (2005) and *Thomas Burt, 1837-1922: The Great Conciliator* (1999). Two of his papers have appeared in *Torch*: “Musings on a Life of Travel” in Winter 2009-2010, and “Intercollegiate Sports: What’s Wrong and How Do We Fix It?” in Spring 2010. Satre received a BA degree from Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and MA and PhD degrees from the University of South Carolina, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Satre joined the Youngstown Torch Club in 2003.

Presented to the Youngstown Torch Club on December 20, 2010.



We live in a world of ease. It is easy to get around, to communicate, to buy things, to eat, to lose weight, to learn, to relax. But is easiness all that it is cracked up to be? The automobile and airplane make it easy to get around and explore new worlds. Yet depending on the automobile deprives us of the physical activity of earlier generations

as we forsake walking for driving. Our society is oriented toward the automobile. Food, dry goods, libraries, post offices, and schools are rarely within convenient or safe walking distance. Children seldom walk or bike to school any more, and we have adopted the convenience of the drive-up window for fast food and pharmaceuticals. People drive around trailer parks, retirement communities, and campgrounds in golf carts when, for health’s sake, they should be walking. Modern buildings discourage taking the stairs. As soon as you enter many multi-story office buildings or department stores, an elevator or escalator greets you. If you want to walk up a floor or two, the stairs are often located at the end of the floor and the stairwell might be dark and dingy. Even if you go to a health club, you can punch an electronic door opener, avoiding the minimal exercise of pushing to get in. In our homes, we have gadgets that minimize our movements: using a remote for our television or entertainment center reduces the number of times we have to stand up, and the press of a button raises and lowers our garage door. Obsessed with maintaining picture-perfect landscaping to keep up with the Joneses, we hire landscapers to prepare the soil and seed it, to install water sprinklers set on a timer, to pour on fertilizers, and to mow it. Many homeowners who are do-it-yourselfers purchase a riding mower, a leaf blower, and a snow blower, to handle all seasons of the year. Why do many individuals

use that button to take the elevator to the second floor or to switch the channel? Because it is there, because it is a habit, and because we have been programmed by advertisers to enjoy such conveniences, which are legitimately provided for those with disabilities.

Fat Americans

How did Americans become, according to Greg Critser, the fattest people in the world?¹ In addition to the lack of walking, the ready availability of huge quantities of low-price food, much of it unhealthy for us, lures us away from healthier options. Despite complaints about the high cost of food, Americans spend proportionately less of their income on food than citizens of other developed countries, whether eating out or preparing it at home. In the middle of the twentieth century, as both men and women had jobs and found less time to prepare food, it became easier to eat out or bring food in, generally cheaper items with more calories and fat. This shift was encouraged by Richard Nixon’s Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, who encouraged farmers to grow more grain, especially corn, creating a surplus that made high-fructose corn syrup abundant and cheap. Though studies are inconclusive, it appears that the human body cannot process the high fructose corn syrup found in many of our foods as readily as sweeteners like sugar, and it is therefore turned into fat. Then in the 1970s, super-sized portions hit the

market. For what seemed to be just a little more money, you could get more food. What a deal! People on the run now purchase prepared food in throw-away containers including snack packs conveniently placed at check-out counters. “Dashboard dining,” accounting for a fourth of our restaurant meals, now features dripless pizzas. By the year 2000, according to Eric Schlosser, Americans were spending a mind-numbing \$110 billion annually on fast food, more than we spend on “higher education, personal computers, computer software, or new cars.”²

Moreover, in the early 1990s, several physical education associations adopted more user-friendly (i.e., easier) forms of exercise whose goal could be simply attained, partly in response to government funding priorities. Likewise, many physicians and advocates hesitated to tell people that they needed to lose weight for fear of offending them. Soda, now mainly made from high fructose corn syrup, is readily inexpensive and available in huge stacks greeting us as we enter almost any store. Sweet foods and drinks are prominent in many schools, as soda companies pay schools handsomely for exclusive pouring rights—money that is difficult for cash-strapped boards of education to turn down. Increased weight, combined with a decrease in exercise, has led to a dramatic rise in children with type-2 diabetes, an epidemic today in the United States. Yes, getting around and eating are easy, but is easy always good for us?

Easy Communication

Communication is another area that has become much easier. We maintain contact with family, friends, and colleagues through the telephone at rates far lower than when we were younger, or by texting or tweeting. For

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put them.*

many people, including writers and researchers, the computer and the Internet provide a reference library at little more than the click of a finger. We gain information through television and newspapers, or online. Although our Internet connectedness is a truly wonderful development, it does have its negative sides. Nicholas Carr, in his important study, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, indicates that he and fellow writers, all heavily dependent on the Internet, find it increasingly difficult to concentrate when reading long articles or books, as their minds quickly wander. The brain is actually altered, depending on the stimulus. The printed page, which Johannes Gutenberg helped to develop in the fifteenth century, changed our reading habits and, hence, our brain. We began reading much more deeply, more thoughtfully; we became lost in the book. Now our brain is being altered once again, and not necessarily for the better. Our constant reliance on the instant gratification of the Internet, Carr argues, has created “an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried

and distracted thinking, and superficial thinking.”³

As we seek information from television news, we are welcomed—as I was recently on Fox News—with a section that gives us all the world’s news in eight minutes. I also looked at CNN. Not only is there a person relating the events with words and pictures, but running across the bottom of the screen are two or three bars relating the latest breaking events, the upcoming story, the latest stock prices, and maybe sports scores. These channels also feature “analysts”—I use the term generously—who will digest the news for you. Unfortunately, many newspapers and magazines are little better. Instead of carrying substantial articles inviting the reader to evaluate what is occurring, they carry a large number of op-ed pieces or condense all the latest news into a series of very short side-bars. Except for a few select newspapers and magazines, long, detailed, news stories are a thing of the past, replaced by “News Lite.” According to Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Matt Richtel, “In 2008, people consumed three times as much information each day as they did in 1960.”⁴ Our attempts to cope with this overload can lead to social problems. The one-third of computer users who admit to a computer obsession are generally middle class and educated. They will have as many as three screens operating at one time, constantly switching back and forth between programs and incoming messages. This multi-tasking often leads to stress and the inefficiency of being unable to focus on any one task. Gadget preoccupation, often detrimental to relationships with friends and family, can be seen at a restaurant where instead of talking to each other, people are observed checking their iPod or chatting on the

cell phone. While hobbies and television are familiar distractions, this latest can be constant, as you can carry it with you and utilize it everywhere, all the time. Yes, it is easy to be connected, but is easy always good?

Easy Education

Improved materials and technology have enhanced education in the United States over the last few generations, opening new horizons, sources, and means of learning; we benefit from experiences—local and international—to broaden our understanding. Our nation has devoted time and money to improve our enormous educational structure, seeking to make it more effective and, dare I say, easier. But is easier always good in education? Teachers now are expected to entertain students—long accustomed to watching television or playing at the computer—to make learning fun and easy. A teacher at a local Youngstown school recently reported that her second graders were excited about reading with a Kindle—an electronic book. One young boy liked not having to turn pages: “It’s exhausting for your hands... With the Kindles, we just have to look at them.”⁵ Computer programs instantly tell students if they are correctly adding or subtracting, but they do not teach students how to do the problem. Maggie Jackson, author of *Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age*, contends that our fifteen-year-olds, though steeped in technology, do not compare well with similar-aged students in other nations in critical reasoning and problem solving. She cites evidence that many of our high school students “can’t synthesize or assess information, express complex thoughts, or analyze arguments,” and hence “often lack the critical thinking skills that are the bedrock of an

*We are also a people
who try to make full use
of our time, since to
appear idle is shameful.
Americans as a whole
are not good at taking
vacations; many people
pride themselves in
working overtime and
never taking a day off,
reflecting Benjamin
Franklin’s aphorisms
on success, “Plough
deep while sluggards
sleep” and “Never
leave that till
to-morrow which
you can do to-day.”*

informed citizenry and the foundation of scientific and other advancements.”⁶ Even though many critics, including teachers, agree with Jackson that the use of computers does not enhance critical thinking, the state of Idaho, under pressure from technology companies, voted in 2010 to require that high school students take two courses utilizing computer technologies as a means of acquiring computer skills necessary to join the work force and to “develop critical thinking skills.”⁷

“Easiness” can extend to music education. My violist brother-in-law who works at a Washington, DC, area violin store, remarks that parents looking for a stringed instrument for their child want something that is easy, fun,

and cheap. All too often for these parents, if it isn’t easy it is impossible, if it isn’t fun it is tortuous, and if it isn’t cheap it is unaffordable. In reality, learning how to play an instrument requires a financial investment and, more important, a concentrated and sustained effort. The drive to make studying easier is evident on the university level as well, with FlashNotes now making inroads via the Internet, enabling students to record and sell their class notes to others who miss class or can’t be bothered to attend. A senior Youngstown State University history major noted: “It would make work easier. You can still learn as much because you’re still getting the information, even though you’re not having to do the work yourself.”⁸ At the University of Florida, many courses, including a Principles of Microeconomics class of 1,500 students, are taped and transmitted live to accommodate students who prefer to tune in via their computer in the comfort of their dorm room, lounge, or cafeteria. Universities utilize this mode of instruction for financial reasons: they can reach more students at lower cost. It is difficult to compare the effectiveness of online or televised classes with a regular class, as it is hard to compare results in different settings. But a recent study at the University of Florida indicated that more students who attended a class earned higher grades, even if they did not engage in conversation with the instructor, than those who watched online.⁹ I find it hard to see how students can gain analytical skills—which our students and society so desperately require—if they do not participate in the give and take of discussion.

Ease of education also means that some college students are slow to develop independence from their

parents. Students may be deprived of decision-making opportunities, a vital part of education. “Velcro parents” (those who never want to leave their children) and “helicopter parents” (who come swooping in whenever they appear to be needed) are terms that have entered academia, partly as a result of instant communication. The dean at Colgate University, for example, reported that the parents of a new student attended all of her first-day classes and then accompanied her to the registrar’s office to change her schedule. Not surprisingly, universities are increasingly requiring parents of newly-entering students to leave the campus by a certain time, thus initiating the separating—and learning—process.¹⁰

The U.S. still has large numbers of brilliant citizens, including students, who are creative, critical, and productive. But as a nation, we don’t measure up well against many other countries in basic areas of education. We lack the ability to concentrate, living in a “sound bite” society. According to one critic, we are far too “distracted,” to the extent that we now have a field of “interruption science.”¹¹ Disturbances hamper thinking; to resume what we were doing we have to start the thought process over again. Essayist and critic William Deresiewicz argues that the sort of leaders our society needs are people with original ideas, not simply those regurgitating concepts of others. One comes up with ideas, he argues, through concentration or solitude: “In short, thinking for yourself. You simply cannot do that in bursts of twenty seconds at a time, constantly interrupted by Facebook messages or Twitter tweets, or fiddling with your iPod, or watching something on YouTube.”¹² Information, of which we have plenty, is not wisdom. Wisdom comes with contemplation,

which requires time and quiet. Unfortunately, most of us are increasingly comfortable with disruptions, often caused by technology. The turn-of-the-century French artist, novelist, and futurist Albert Robida, who intensely feared that new technologies like the automobile, the telephone, and even the bicycle would reshape people’s lives, wrote: “Their every day will be caught in the wheels of a mechanized society to the point where I wonder how they will find the time and enjoy the most simple pleasures we had at our disposal: silence, calm, solitude. Having never known them, they shall not be able to miss them. As for me, I do—and I pity them.”¹³

Pitfalls of Abundance

Since 1800, industrialization has provided an abundance of goods, many of them to our benefit, at markedly lower cost, but at the same time created a new problem—where to put them. Halloween is possibly the greatest junk-purchasing celebration of the year, so lucrative that merchants can afford to rent huge spaces at a mall for several months, fill it with masks, costumes, plastic pumpkins, and garish lawn decorations, hire and train clerks—satisfying a public that will purchase these items rather than use a worn out sheet to create a ghost costume for their child. What are we to do with all the “precious” items? While we are encouraged to use stuff and then throw it away, many of us are reluctant to so wantonly discard things. So we seek ways to store them, spawning a whole new industry—storage. We buy boxes from a store aisle piled high with plastic containers and stack the full boxes on shelves in a room or displace our car to put them in the garage. Better yet, we transport the boxes, carefully labeled for Halloween, Christmas, or whatever, to

a self-storage unit. If we have the means, we can hire a professional organizer to come to our house and rearrange all of our closets to cope with these goods.

Overwhelmed with advertising urging us to buy things to enjoy the good life, we ignore the credit crunch and seek quick and easy financing for these “must haves.” Credit is so readily available that we need not engage in any sort of self-discipline or planning that would ensure that we can realistically pay for fulfilling our dreams. Some of us, including many with memories of the Great Depression in our families, still do not make a significant purchase unless we are certain we have the necessary financial resources to pay for it, but we are in the minority. Our recent national financial meltdown came at least partly from easy credit in the housing market. In the book *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, journalist Thomas Friedman writes that the subprime money lenders convinced the American people that they could purchase a home “without the discipline or sacrifice that home ownership requires... We didn’t need to save and build a solid credit record. The bank around the corner or online would borrow the money from China or lend it to us” with a minimal credit check.¹⁴ Yes, easy credit. But is easy always good?

Easy Way to the Good Life

Why are Americans preoccupied with making things easy as the gateway to the good life of accumulating goods and enjoying the latest technology, even when it is not to our advantage? Part of the answer goes back to the founding of our country by people emigrating here to gain a better living. The Protestant Ethic, one aspect of that quest, implied that hard work and material success would display one’s adherence to a religious life. We are also

a nation that has been very comfortable with technology. In nineteenth century England, laborers often rioted against the installation of such machines as the steam-powered looms because they were seen as a threat to jobs. Such was not the case for nineteenth century Americans, whose shortage of labor resulted in higher wages, for whom labor-saving devices were viewed not as a threat but as a means to make their labor easier. We are also a people who try to make full use of our time, since to appear idle is shameful. Americans as a whole are not good at taking vacations; many people pride themselves in working overtime and never taking a day off, reflecting Benjamin Franklin's aphorisms on success, "Plough deep while sluggards sleep" and "Never leave that till to-morrow which you can do to-day." We are also a people who are constantly on the move. Alexis de Tocqueville, the nineteenth century French intellectual, referred to the "restless" nature of Americans.¹⁵ Once arriving in this land, Euro-Americans spent over three centuries occupying the vast territory to the west. Because we have always had such a low density of population compared to much of Europe, we have had to travel, frequently long distances, to engage in work or to see relatives and friends. Maybe we just need to stay put a little more, sit quietly, and attend the Torch Club once a month to hear original ideas that come from contemplation.

I have no "easy" solutions for the serious problems I have identified in this paper. It will take a major reprioritizing of personal and national aspirations in virtually all aspects of our life. I am not optimistic that we have the collective leadership, on the local or national level, to discuss these issues, to speak nothing of implementing meaningful change. Indeed, life in twenty-first century

America is easy, but is easy always good?

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1. Greg Critser, *Fat Land: How Americans Became the Fattest People in the World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

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11. Jackson, *Distracted*, 84.

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The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911

A century later, important social reforms recall an urban tragedy.

By George C. Ward



About the Author

George C. Ward received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from Brown University in 1971 and a JD degree from the University of Toledo College of Law in 1975. A personal injury defense lawyer in the Toledo area for over thirty-five years, Ward's interests in law and American history prompted him to examine the Triangle Factory fire as a tragedy which altered the nature of machine politics in New York City and inspired fundamental reform in the New York garment industry as well as comprehensive labor reform nationwide.

Presented to the Toledo Torch Club on October 19, 2009.

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Background

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911 was New York City's worst workplace disaster in terms of loss of life until 9/11. At the time when this tragic event occurred, the shirtwaist, a type of woman's tailored shirt, was a popular fashion statement for women in all walks of life. For working women swelling the ranks of garment factories in America's industrial revolution, this class-leveling outfit was an early sign of women's liberation. Unfortunately, women would represent a huge percentage of the one hundred forty-six victims of the Triangle fire. Located a half block east of Washington Square in the top floors of an impressive new ten-story skyscraper, the Asch Building, the Triangle was the flagship facility of the "shirtwaist kings," Russian immigrants Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, owners of that business and a number of other factories in New York and New Jersey. They designed the loft space to capitalize on the large open rooms, operating long rows of sewing machines attached to a driveshaft powered by an electric motor and flywheel, a sea change over the small tenement sweatshops of most garment makers. The Triangle Waist Company

employed over five hundred people, manufacturing, boxing, and distributing at least two thousand garments per day to supply department stores and women's shops throughout the country.

The waist industry was booming in New York at this time because of an almost unlimited supply of labor in the tidal wave of immigrants, including two million Jews coming from Eastern Europe between 1881 and the end of World War I. Those who were skilled with needle and thread formed a large and inexpensive supply of garment workers, whose families or neighbors followed them into the garment shops, oftentimes paying a high price for seeking work in a slave-like environment. According to one survey in the 1890s, the average workweek in the tenement shops was eighty-four hours—twelve hours per day every day of the week. Sweatshops essentially destroyed the spirit and physical being of countless women and men, driving untold numbers into early graves by sheer exhaustion or rampant tuberculosis. Those who survived became radicalized, becoming the building blocks of the labor unions that eventually spread urban liberalism in New York and labor unrest in the garment industry.

Threat of Unionism in the New Factory

The new centralized factory facilities posed a problem for the owners by consolidating workers in one working space where it was much easier for them to organize. In the Triangle factory, workers could discuss grievances or potential for strike or unionization. Blanck and Harris, especially vulnerable to strikes because of their extensive investments in equipment, leases, and factory materials in a single location, were confronted with a serious effort to organize an independent trade union in September 1909. Their initial response was to threaten to fire every employee in the Triangle Factory and to follow up their threat with a lockout. Workers reacted with the first significant organized strike in the garment

industry a month later, with a picket line set up outside the Triangle Factory. The owners met the walkout with a quick, violent response, dispatching both police and hired thugs to break the strikers' picket line with physical violence or arrest. Blanck and Harris took an energetic position in opposing the strike, not only soliciting assistance from Tammany Hall, but by preparing their fellow owners for a general strike and urging resistance to any negotiation with the strikers. The owners were right to be concerned. This strike proved to be a watershed event for the shirtwaist labor force, inevitably resulting in a full-scale confrontation between the workers and the bosses. After a series of emotional organizing meetings held in Manhattan, organizers—spearheaded by immigrant Jewish women from Eastern Europe—formed the WTUL, or Women's Trade Union League, as the representative strike and bargaining agent for the garment industry workers.

By November 1909, the strike had a profound impact on New York's East Side garment district operations, with the number of strikers reportedly swelling to over 20,000. Within a matter of weeks, the newspapers reported that five hundred shops, mostly smaller ones, capitulated to the strikers, granting returning workers a pay raise of 12 to 15 percent, a 52-hour week, and a pledge to run a union-only shop. Stunned by the swift collapse of so many owners, large factory operators like Blanck and Harris convened an emergency meeting to stiffen the resolve of the city's large manufacturers. To keep their workers in line, they used means both clean and unclean, issuing an unconditional "no surrender" declaration. Strikers were physically beaten and then arrested, taken to the Tombs—the city's downtown jail—and thereafter quickly sentenced by angry magistrates to several days' hard labor and fines. But the unsavory response of the owners began to generate sympathetic publicity for the strikers. Members of leading families, including the daughters of Vanderbilt and

Morgan, not only lent substantial financial assistance, but also rallied political support for the union.

Blanck and Harris took their strikers back at higher wages and shorter hours but successfully resisted the closed shop by “recognizing” the union, but only in the sense that they no longer prohibited membership. The *Jewish Daily Forward*, a widely distributed workers’ publication, sounded a warning in January 1910: “The Triangle Company—with blood this name will be written in the history of the American workers movement, and with feeling will this history recall the names of the strikers of this shop—of the crusaders.” Just over a year later, that warning turned out to be a horrible prophecy.¹

A Skyscraper Disaster

Saturday, March 25, 1911 was like any other workday for the shirtwaist employees of the Triangle Factory. Per usual, approximately 500 workers made their way to the factory building from the surrounding tenement neighborhoods, accessing the three top floors by a stairway or two freight elevators from a service entrance on the Greene Street side. Management entered from the main Washington Place door which led to stairway and two small passenger elevators. As quitting time approached at 4:45 pm, about 200 employees were working on the eighth floor, approximately two hundred fifty on the ninth floor, and perhaps sixty employed in packing, pressing, shipping, and administrative duties on the tenth floor. The initial cry of “Fire!” came from Isaac Harris’ sister, Eva, who screamed at factory manager Samuel Bernstein, the brother of Max Blanck’s wife and one of the earliest Triangle employees, dating back to the small-shop days. He ran the production plant on the eighth and ninth floors while Louis Alter, an older cousin, supervised pressing, packing, and shipping operations on the tenth. Bernstein later testified at the trial that upon hearing the shout of “Fire!” he could see, at the cutting table closest to the Greene Street windows, in the northeastern corner of the shop, a “big blaze and some smoke.”²

To this day there is no absolute certainty as to the fire’s origin, but New York City Fire Marshall William Beers

concluded after investigation that the fire probably began when a lighted match was thrown into either waste near oil cans or into clippings under cutting table number two on the Greene Street side of the eighth floor, basically open space except for an enclosed dressing room and toilets along the western wall. There were seven long wooden cutting tables, each approximately forty inches high, with boards surrounding the legs of each table to create a large scrap bin underneath, allowing cutters to sweep the highly flammable cotton scraps directly into a handy container. Over the tables on small metal hooks dangled hundreds of equally flammable tissue paper patterns edged in steel. In the northeast corner of that eighth floor loft, an elevator operator sat with his doors open, waiting for the first load of off-duty workers. He tried to fight the fire himself and, in that moment, the flames exploded, according to Bernstein’s later testimony. Bernstein surmised that the March wind, gusting down Greene Street, was forcing its way up the elevator shaft and through the open doors, feeding the growing blaze. Panic set in within seconds as this veritable fire bomb exploded out of control, threatening one hundred eighty people with mass incineration.

At this point, a tragic failure of communication sealed the fate of many workers upstairs on the ninth floor. Eighth-floor employee Dinah Lipschitz attempted to use a sort of telefax machine to alert the tenth floor with a handwritten message which was transferred by wire. After two minutes of no response, she grabbed the phone and rang the tenth floor switchboard. A typist filling in for the absent operator finally answered, and on hearing the word “Fire” dropped the phone to alert Max Blanck in his office, leaving Lipschitz hanging—uncertain that the alarm had registered. More importantly, she had no way to warn the ninth floor directly because the Triangle’s phone system routed all calls through the switchboard on the tenth floor. Down below on the street people gathered to watch the smoke billowing from the eighth floor. When one bystander observed a bolt of cloth flying out of a window and striking the pavement, he remarked that Harris was trying to save his best material. As people moved closer,

out flew another bolt. It was then that they realized that it was not bolts of cloth, but bodies plummeting to the pavement below.

By the time New York City Engine Company #72 arrived from its Twelfth Street station five blocks away, they had trouble maneuvering their hose wagon into position since they didn’t want to grind the six already limp bodies lying in the street. Bodies were still falling. Distraught fire fighters pulled out a life net and attempted to catch one girl, but three more threw themselves from windows immediately after the first. All four bounced out, hitting the concrete. Policemen and firemen held a horse blanket and tried to catch the next hurling body. The blanket split in two and the body hit the pavement—dead. The Fire Chief observed that when many of them came down entwined with one another, it was impossible to catch them.

On the eighth floor, Bernstein made a final but futile effort to fight the fire as the workers tried to escape. On each floor, a fire hose folded into an iron bracket in the stairwell with a valve beside it to activate water flow from a tank on the roof. Bernstein and another employee dragged out the hose and activated the valve. As Bernstein later testified, “no pressure, no water.”³

On the ninth floor, a hundred forty-six employees, mostly young women, would die. Those acting quickly made it through the Greene Street stairs, climbing onto a rickety fire escape before it completely collapsed, or squeezing into the small Washington Place elevators before they stopped running, where two elevator operators were credited with making evacuation trips to all three floors, rescuing more than one hundred fifty people. The last trip to the ninth floor presented a brutal scene, according to elevator operator Joseph Zito’s trial testimony. The elevator, crammed to the gills with workers, descended only to have a number of girls grab the cable or jump into the shaft itself landing on the roof of the compartment as it made its final descent. Zito testified that, as he was making his last descent, he heard bodies hitting the top of the car; blood was dripping on him and coins bouncing through the shaft. Many women tried the ninth floor door to the Washington Place

stairwell, but found it locked. Firemen would later say they found as many as nineteen bodies melted against the locked door, and an additional twenty-five huddled in death in a cloakroom trying to escape the flames. As many as sixty workers jumped from the 9th floor windows overlooking Washington Place. A reporter who happened to be on the scene wrote: "The first ten bodies fell with such force that at least one crashed through the glass bricks of a basement skylight set in the sidewalk. The first ten shocked me, but when I looked up and realized there were scores of young women in the same window, I braced myself for what was coming."⁴ At first he was impressed by the grace with which the early jumpers came down, but then noticed that when two young women jumped together, they tore the life net—like a dog jumping through a paper hoop. The fire was under control in just eighteen minutes, as police scanned the building's exterior and water-soaked bodies on the sidewalk for signs of life. As night approached, firemen lowered some fifty bodies out the windows by means of block-and-tackle to the waiting police below, and all night ambulances transported the victims to a temporary morgue on a covered pier at the foot of East Twenty-Sixth Street. Police sent to Blackwell's Island for a supply of coffins from the carpenter's shop of Metropolitan Hospital to augment the few provided by the morgue.

Sad Aftermath and Heritage of Reform

The Triangle Fire claimed altogether one hundred forty-six people, all but twenty-three women, representing more than half of the ninth floor workers. Even today, there is not even a reliable list of the dead. The news reporter counted fifty-four who had leaped or fallen to the sidewalks, and trial testimony reported another nineteen who had plunged down the elevator shaft as well as two dozen who fell from the fire escape. As tens of thousands of friends and relatives attempted to access the temporary morgue, a temporary police station had to be opened at the pier with forty policemen to assist the horrified mourners with the task of identifying the badly burned victims from clues in their jewelry. By week's end, all but seven had been

identified. Union leaders arranged a funeral procession later estimated at 350,000 that wound through the heart of Manhattan honoring the Triangle victims.

It is often true that out of tragedy comes the impetus and inspiration for change. After much finger-pointing about building inspections and government oversight, much of the blame was ultimately directed at the Shirtwaist Kings, Blanck and Harris, in seclusion and unavailable for comment. It was becoming abundantly clear to the Tammany Hall and Albany politicians, however, that people were now asserting themselves at every turn—at the polls, at strikes and labor rallies, and in massive crowds participating in the funeral march for the Triangle dead. Men in high places decided that the Triangle fire was the right vehicle, and the perfect moment in time, to recast New York's Democratic Party. On June 30, 1911, New York Governor Dix signed a law creating the Factory Investigating Commission, with powers unprecedented in New York history, marking a shocking change in the direction of city and state politics. The Commission quickly expanded its jurisdiction out from New York City to include forty-five other cities in the state, producing reams of testimony and investigative material. By 1913, Tammany politicians in Albany had pushed through some twenty-five bills that radically reformed the labor law of the nation's largest state. Automatic sprinklers were required in high-rise buildings, fire drills were mandatory in large shops, and doors had to be unlocked and had to swing outward. To enforce these laws, the Factory Commission pushed through a complete reorganization of the State Department of Labor. Many of the politicians who cut their teeth in this extraordinary effort at reform in New York State later associated themselves with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal initiatives.

Two weeks after the fire, a grand jury indicted Blanck and Harris on six counts of manslaughter stemming from just two of the many deaths in their factory. One count alleged they violated a New York municipal law against locked doors in a factory facility, thus causing the death of a sewing machine operator named Margaret Schwartz. A second count made

the same allegations concerning the death of another operator, Rose Grasso. Prosecutors limited the indictments to those two deaths because the penalty was the same no matter how many counts were proven. The typical punishment for conviction on a manslaughter charge was twenty years. The trial of Blanck and Harris began on December 4, 1911, in the courtroom of Judge Thomas Crain. The two factory owners were defended by a giant of the New York legal establishment, forty-one-year-old Max D. Steuer. The prosecution team, headed by Assistant District Attorney Charles Bostwick, produced over a hundred witnesses, many of them young Triangle employees, while Steuer introduced half that number. The defense finally rested its case three weeks later. On December 27, after deliberating for just under two hours, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, inviting the assessment that a profound tragedy had culminated in a judicial travesty. Nevertheless, the Triangle Fire left a heritage of labor reforms that benefit workers a century later.

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2. "Transcript of the Criminal Trial against the [Triangle] Factory's Owners," Kheel Center for Labor Management Archives, Cornell University ILR School, www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire [accessed October 9, 2009].
3. *Ibid.*
4. William Shepherd, "Eyewitness at the Triangle," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 27, 1911, quoted in Leon Stein, ed., *Out of the Sweatshop: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy* (New York: Quadrangle, 1977), 188-193.

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Call to Annual Business Meeting and Torch Convention—Portsmouth, VA—June 21-24, 2012

Thursday, June 21: 3:00pm Officers' Exchange; 4:00pm Business Session I; 5:30pm Dinner & Torch Paper #1

Friday, June 22: 8:00am Membership Development; 8:45am Business Session II; 10:00am Torch Paper #2; 11:15am lunch & Tours; 5:00pm harbor tour on stern wheeler Carrie B. with music, dinner and Silver Awards

Saturday, June 23: 8:15am Membership Development; 9:00am Torch Foundation Membership Meeting; 10:00am Torch Paper #3; 11:15am lunch & Tours; 6:00pm Banquet, Gold Awards, Paxton Paper (black tie optional)

Sunday, June 24: 7:30am Breakfast; 8:00am Interfaith Session; 9:00am Torch Paper #4; 10:30am Business Session III

2012 Convention Speakers

Thursday, June 21 – Torch Paper #1

Human Evolution: A Decade That Changed the Narrative of Our Past. – Dean Burgess, AB Kenyon College and MLS University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the retired Director of the Portsmouth Public Library and is an actor/director, a published novelist, an historian, and the long-time Secretary of the Portsmouth Torch Club.

Friday, June 22 – Torch Paper #2

Meandering To The Beat Of A Different Drummer: Some Words About Classical Music. – Rabbi Arthur Z. Steinberg is a graduate of the University of Maryland (Social Psychology), and was ordained at the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. He served as a part-time classical music announcer on WHRO-FM, the Fine Arts Public Radio station in Hampton Roads, for eleven years. He is an active member of the Portsmouth Torch Club.

Saturday AM, June 23 – Torch Paper #3

The Early History of Norfolk and Portsmouth. – Robert B. Hitchings is the Head of the Sargent History Room at the Norfolk Public Library. His undergraduate degree in history is from Virginia Wesleyan. He has studied history at Emanuel College Cambridge and at Westminster Brooke College Oxford. He is a seventh generation Norfolk resident.

Saturday PM, June 23 – Torch Paper #4

The winner of the *The Paxton Award* for the best paper submitted to the TORCH magazine this past year will present that paper at the Paxton Award Banquet.

Sunday, June 24 – Torch Paper #5

Art—Where Does It Come From? – Betsy Rivers Kennedy earned her BA from Virginia Tech and did graduate work in art at the University of Houston and at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. A published calligrapher, she was Founding President of the Houston Calligraphy Guild and President for 15 years of the Artists' Association at the D' Art Center in Norfolk. She has taught for many years at the International Calligraphy Conference and maintains an active studio in Norfolk as an artist and calligrapher. She is an active member of the South Hampton Roads Torch Club and is married to fellow Torch member Jack Kennedy.

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From the northwest (64, 664, 164)

Williamsburg, Jamestown, the Yorktown battlefield, plantations on the James River, Mariners' Museum in Newport News, NASA Air and Space Museum in Hampton.

From the southwest (10, 17, 164)

Chippokes Plantation, Bacon's Castle (17th century), charming Smithfield (where the hams come from), St. Luke's Church (from the 1600s) and views of the port of Hampton Roads.

From the south (ferry to 12, 168, 464)

Ocracoke Island, Hatteras lighthouse, Outer Banks (national seashore), Lost Colony (outdoor drama at Manteo), Wright Brothers museum at Kill Devil Hills (home of the first powered flight), Intracoastal Waterway.

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Reflections

*The mind of a bigot is
like the pupil of an eye.*

*The more light you
pour on it, the more
it will contract.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes,
The Common Law, 1881
