Neal Gray: A Life
In His Own Words and Pictures

A Life Well and Fully Lived
1924-2009
Part III: Neal, Renaissance Man

Compiled from Neal Gray’s Emails, 2009
By Sandra Waddock

Neal Gray’s Last Years

January 2, 2006

Back on the River Again--Yipee

Dear Angels, Friends and Kayakers:
Today I was out in the canoe on an 11.6-foot tide, flat calm, and the camera chose that momentous occasion to seize up. There was so much to photograph and I was halfway to Cohasset when it died.

The reflections were amazing. I'm starting to believe what an old-timer told me once. He said that reflections before a storm are the best. Today that was true. Saw two separate "Sun Dogs". Was able to photograph the first one before the camera died.

Went all the way to the bridge, but didn't get there in time to go into the haabaa. Was not alone on the water as the guy who rows facing forward was out as was the guy in the sit-on kayak. He's the one who paddles so fast, I had to warn him about the rule of "No Wake". That rule is hogwash. It is ice that damages the marsh way more than boats leaving a wake.

Swung by Peter Tolman's house as I could paddle right up to his driveway, but no one answered my shout. He's probably hibernating.

The houses down by the bridge were reflected in the water and reminded me of JVOI's Holland trip and that little fishing village with all the colorful store fronts (Volendam ?). Maybe our own Porto Fino (sp?) view like the one in Italy. The geese scattered on occasion on my approach and I saw one tiny little sea bird or duck that was black and white that passed close to me. Picked up trash as usual, but spent most of my time admiring the winter scene.

Lunch, tea and a piece of "Heaven" (Barb's Brownie) bought back my strength so I could bring in wood for the stove. Am now hunkered down for the next snow event, but hope I can get to Mystic Chorale tomorrow night for their first Gospel rehearsal.

See some of you on Wednesday night for the signing of "I Need You". OK?

Love; Neal
January 30, 2006

It was cold and raw, but there was not much wind and tide was 11.6 feet and who could resist sliding the old canoe into the water for a January 29th paddle around the neighborhood.

Dear Angel and Friend:

That was today when I got home from church. One look at the water covered marsh and I didn't bother to change. Grabbed my camera, life vest, paddles and mittens and loped on the down the path and dragged the canoe into the water. Once on the water, I looked to my left and my neighbor doctors Jim and Lynne were out in their kayaks along with one of their daughters. Jim was talking to Richard? (the man who rows facing forward). I paddled over to say hello (you never know when you might need your next-door ER). Lynne is a GP doctor who has helped me on several occasions when I needed advise for a common or un-common malady. Her daughter is in a camera club at school and was currently doing portraits (I thought I heard a camera clicking while we talked).

Temperature in the 40's wasn't too bad as long as you kept paddling. After visiting was over, I paddled over to say hello to Bob Scott across the marsh. His view is now partly blocked by the Monster house walkway on the marsh. He said there was open house there today, but no one was there - not even the real estate person's car. At 1.8 million for a house on a main street with much lower priced houses on either side and Bob's shack (nifty inside) next door.......we're hoping it'll never sell. It started at 2.1 million. Bob's dog "B'osn" (abbb. of Boatswain's Mate) wanted more than anything else to jump down into the canoe and go for a ride. But I was four or more feet below him and he thought he'd better not.

Took seveal photos. Learned from a previous outing to keep cameras warm so took two; just in case. On the way around the marsh at this time of year, I also pickup plastic trash - part of the Gulf* Association's pledge. People are being more careful lately as there was not much out there. A couple of plastic bottles made into bailers, a plastic tray, empty potato chip bag and an old Bud can. Though the clouds looked threatening, the calm of the wind and just being on the water made the effort worth it. I don't quite have confidence yet in kayaking in water this cold. That's why I take the canoe. Also the canoe, even full of water, will support 250 pounds.

"Gulf Assoc. is made up of people who live on the marsh and river who want to preserve its beauty. We also take water samples and process them at Cohasset High School to check on where pollution might be coming from. One of the members had a summer party for all of us this summer and it is hoped it will become an annual event. Angel Julie and I arrived as requested (by water) in my double kayak, the "Trinidad Tangerine".

Near the the end of today's paddle, I went up to the public launching ramp on Gannett Road going against the outgoing tide then had a speedy trip back. Didn't have the urge to go to Cohasset Haabaa as I started too late to get into the haabaa. Maybe tomorrow. When I got back, I moved both of my kayaks and the canoe to higher ground in case the Nor-easter came close and gave us a storm surge. Tuesday's tide is 11.9 feet! - one of the highest of the year. With a storm this could easily exceed 14 feet and raise hell on the waterfront.

Have you heard what has happened to house insurance rates on the Cape? If you live within 2 miles of the water (and that covers a lot of the Cape) your house insurance is like $13,000 per year!!! OUCH!

I have been without the use of my woodstove for several days and am using fireplace. No where as helpful as the woodstove, but the stove pipe needs replacing. Got the flue cleaned on Friday and hope to finish the stovepipe tomorrow. I keep the house at 60F, so the fireplace is the place
to read, contemplate the flames, doze off, wake up in a panic not knowing what time it is, etc.

Am in the middle of the "Da Vince Code" having just finished "1776". Both are great reads. Others underway are "Treehouses of the World" and "Historys of Christmas Hymns", "The 14th Lot" (a history of Scituate Haabaa), "The First Salute" and "Batavia's Graveyard". If I wasn't so busy singing, I might get some of these finished. Maybe next year. Hah-hah!

Well, the rain has ended so I went out and got more wood for the fireplace. Nice night to curl up with my fake bear skin "All I can Bear" and study the flames and put away one of Maria's Root Beers.

Do you inlanders still have any snow? None here, but hopes are high for Tuesday. "Course my Angels in Hawai'i, Wendy, Susie, Cynthia and Suzzalah have forgotten what that stuff is.

Love; Neal
February 2, 2006

Did the tide today want us to abandon our arms & legs and return to the sea?

Dear Angel and Friend:

Oh, the joy of a life by the sea!

I haven't seen a tide this high since the '78 blizzard. I'm glad I moved my canoe and kayaks to higher ground. Took some photos. Do you have any idea how to hold and umbrella over your head and a Nikon camera at the same time in a stiff breeze?

The lawn at my neighbor's was flooded back to and around my original kayak storing area. However, I think they would have been OK. The canoe, however, would have probably flipped and floated away from its area if I hadn't moved it.

At the harbor, the debris line (seaweed, driftwood, old cans, plastic junk) stopped in front of the movie theatre; indicating the Harbor Master's house was surrounded as was the Coast Guard building, most of the Cole Parkway (large parking lot) was also under water. Mill Wharf Restaurant was also an island for a while. Everybody who works in the area had to move their cars to higher ground.

There was a medical emergency at TK O'Malley's - don't know what it was. Stopped at the bookstore to see if the spooky event would repeat itself. It happened on a Tuesday at about 2:30 PM. It didn't. Yacht club did not have any damage.

At the Gannett Road canoe and kayak launching place way past high tide, the water was still coming in and trying to fit under the Gannett Road bridge. Took photo. Would estimate the water was about three inches from coming over the road. Didn't check the Cohasset end of Border Street. It usually gets covered on a 12-foot tide and today, with the storm, the tide was probably 13 to 14 feet.

When I came home from Mystic Chorale at 11:00 PM tonight the marsh still had water on top of it. Hope it isn't too windy tomorrow. I'll try to go out in the canoe.

I was wondering - do you think we should start losing our arms and legs in preparation for returning to the sea from whence we came? Just a thought.

Driving to and from Arlington tonight was not bad, but I did get salted a couple of times by the trucks coming the other way on local streets.

See you Joyful Voices tomorrow night at Friendly's for a ride. Where is Friendly's?

February 9, 2006

Is It Real? How Could It Be?

Dearest Angel Babette:

You know when the new moon and full moon come, we get extra high tides. In the winter, I usually go out in the canoe. If I go in the kayak, I usually get my feet wet. Thirty-three degree water is not exactly what I'd like to step into. If everything should go wrong as it did at the landing in First Herring Brook when Angel Barb and I went out to the Spit, I would be sitting there freezing
my arse in that water. No way!

Anyway, it was after the storm and it was flat calm, cold, but beautiful. What else to do, but go for a paddle. Met the man who rows looking forward. We chatted about the nice weather. I took a photo of his rig as it is quite expensive and I'll probably never get one. It was be good exercise though as you can row with just your feet, just your hands or both.

Now I took to paddling along the edge of the upland on top of the marsh. Here I was, paddling along, enjoying the extra high tide; when suddenly, there in front of me was an **Elephant**! or was it a **Hippopotamus**!!! Should I head into the woods to escape this **humongous** beast? It looked so real! Yet, as I studied it, it appeared to be sleeping. Even though the water was so cold, it appeared to be sound asleep. Was this some unknown species that could survive in New England's winter? An ancient pre-historic beast; perhaps a relative of the dinosaurs?

Using my "Silent Paddling" technique, I cautiously crept up to it. Once alongside, it did not appear to be breathing. Had it died in the cold water? Was I the discoverer of this mammoth beast? How would prove of its existence? Oh yeah, with a photo. Here it is. You have to go "full screen" to get the magnitude of this thing.

Then when I saw it was apparently dead, I gave it whack with my trusty paddle.

Alas, there was no blubber on this beast - it was not only frozen solid; it was stone!
Bah, humbug!

All my Love; Neal

February 17, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

The wind was fairly light and the temperature...ah the temperature in the 60's, the sun was out, there was a gigantic X (kiss) made of two jet contrails in the sky, I just had to drag the canoe down to the marsh and take a paddle.

Over to say hello to Angel Ann who took the attached photo to prove I was out and about. I have a photo of her and her dog Bos'n in my film camera. As usual, it was hard to keep Bos'n from jumping in the canoe to say hello and go for a ride. He gave me a few licks as I leaned over to hold the canoe against the edge of the marsh.

The wind couldn't make up its mind where it wanted to blow from. Sometimes it was southwest; sometimes south and sometimes southeast. All were a little cool, but the day! I have a sunburn on my face. It will be great to look back on this day when Saturday and 20 degrees comes howling in.

Went in the various little pools and inlets on the marsh to pick up summer's leftover beer cans and plastic trash. However, today the marsh seemed particularly stark and bare. I guess the winds and snow from last weekend blew all the loose stuff into the woods.

So here we are getting ready for one more half day of warmth before Nanuck of the North comes whistling back in.

Hope all is well in your neck of the woods and pavement.

Love; Neal
April 5, 2006

Just So You Know...

Dear Angel and Friend:

Just a note to alert you to a new set of wheels I bought today.

WHAM!

SHIT! NOW WHAT DO I DO? SOMETHING ??? HAS JUST FALLEN DOWN THE FIREPLACE CHIMNEY AND HIT THE DAMPER AND IS STILL ALIVE (IT'S MAKING ODD NOISES). MUST BE A SQUIRREL OR SOMETHING BIGGER???????????????

GOD, I HOPE SANTA DIDN'T COME EARLY! FIRE DEPARTMENT? I MEAN IT'S 2:30AM! PONDER, PONDER, PONDER??? THOUGHT I HEARD THE ANIMAL SOUND FOR "OH SHIT"

Well, I'll wait and listen for a bit. All's quiet at the moment. Is it squirrel mating season? Do they have sex in the middle of the night? Maybe he/she got carried away and lost their collective balance. This is not a joke! I mean you're right at your climax and WHAM!, you fall a chimney. Some wake-up call.

The last time it was a squirrel and we (Amanda and I coaxed him over to a window with nuts - expensive nuts! I don't have any nuts in the house (outside on myself, that is). I am certainly not going to let him have my croissants! Hmmm, I wonder if he'd like a hot crossed bun? Maybe he's climbed back out.

Anyway to return to the news, I took an Aleve for the sciatica and the results are fairly good. Pain is down a lot.

In having my car greased and oiled today, my long-time mechanic (15 or more years) said "This car is costing you too much money, you should get something else". Out in Peter's lot was a white 2002 Subaru Impreza Outback Sport Wagon and the rest is history. This car is beautiful and comfortable. I had to get a loan for some of the cost.

Now Angels can travel in style!

Well, I'll close and go call the fire department and see what they say.

Love; Neal

Dear Angel and Friend:

The fire department was not very coherent tonight. I think he was supressing laughter.

He was of absolutely no help.

So, I call the Animal Control Officer in the morning and see what she suggests.

I have fastened a shock cord (bungee strap) in such a way as to make lifting the damper a very difficult job from the inside (I hope).
Whoa! Suppose it's a skunk? Raccoon? One with Rabies? We might have to call out the National Guard. From the noise of impact with the damper it must be something larger than a bird. Well, I guess a deer wouldn't fit and ground hogs don't leave the ground do they? Hmm... one of Santa's elfs would fit if he was real skinny. Do they have small burglars? I wonder if it speaks English? Naw, it couldn't be human, There'as a big flagstone on top to keep the rain off. He'd have to remove that. Well, I heard a noise a while back of just moving about.

Good thing it didn't fall down the woodstove chimney flu; he'd be pretty well-done by now.

How far do flying fish fly?

More news to follow tomorrow.

Love; Neal
April 17, 2006

Easter might as well be called Yeaster for all the goodies we put away

Dear Angels and Friends:

An Angel has asked me to identify my folksy letters in the "Subject" line.

Thus, the three *** at the beginning of the "Subject" line. OK?

My day and the various ramifications of being an Episcopalian.

The sciatic nerve was no pain at all on Saturday. It was like I never had a problem. This morning it acted up as I didn't get my full 8 hours of sleep. So I had to go into the choir area before the service started and couldn't come in with the procession. We were 16 members and a trumpeter plus our director, Angel Jean. We sang Handel's Hallelujah Chorus before the Gospel was read and later the Sanctus from Faure's Requiem. These were in addition to our Offertory anthem. We sang two hymns during Communion in place of an anthem, because the church was so full.

A new twitch was done by our new minister. He went up the main aisle before the service started and lightly misting everyone (including the choir) with water thrown from what looked like a feather duster. When he had the children come forward, he asked the kids why he did this. I whispered to my choir mate, Steve, that it was to keep the dust down! Outside of that, I haven't a clue, but imagine it something like purifying the congregation. Dirty bunch of Episcopalians that we are.

My daughter's husband Joe is not a normal church-goer. She gets him out on Christmas and at Easter if she's lucky. She was afraid he might implode as a result of being misted with water.

We had two baptisms - both during the 9:00 AM service to a packed house. Altogether there were three services, but the choir does not sing the first service at 8:00 AM. Between the 9 AM service and the 11 AM service, the choir and service members (ministers, acolytes, readers and lay people) traditionally have breakfast. For us singers, it is a time to re-generate ourselves for the next full-length service. As it was such a beautiful day, we seemed to sing better than if it had been raining.

After church, I went to my co-author Kathie Lee's house. I had bought a loaf of Irish bread and no one had taken a piece; so I took it to Kathie. We had tea and the Irish bread which was delicious. She's having Easter dinner tomorrow because one of her son's had to work in a local restaurant today.

Then I went to my daughter's and she and Joe were sitting out on their deck with their outdoor wood stove thing going... can't remember what its name is. They were burning some of the Irish peat that I'd given them some time ago. Dinner at her house was delicious! Let's see; a ham roast with pineapple dressing, delmonico potatoes, candied carrots, asparagus, and rolls. They, and Melissa, their daughter, who is of age, had wine

Dessert was to be a long way off as everyone was chock full.

After setting a spell and my daughter and Joe were dozing, I drove to Weymouth to see my brother Pres. He is still in the rehabilitation center and will probably stay there the rest of his life as he can no longer go to the bathroom by himself. This was the stipulation that he had to meet to go home.
He looks so thin and weak compared to only a short time ago and he either has another bout with pneumonia going or a cold as he spent a lot of time coughing. We talked a lot. I have to raise my voice as he doesn't hear well. He keeps remembering things about our childhood. Some things I have no recollection of. But then, he's 8 years older than me. Right now he's 89! In August if he makes it, he'll be 90. Half-brother Bill made it to 92 when he fell off a ladder 3-stories up while taking off a storm window!!! They think he was stung by a wasp.

No 3-stories up for me!

Back at my daughter's for Strawberry Shortcake and some chocolate candy. I had taken the "unheard" of step of giving up candy for Lent. Did it just to prove to myself that I could. Now I can't find where I hid the m & m's! AAAAGH!

Home to doze for an hour and then up here on the deck to look at e-mails from you-all.

Love; Neal
May 5, 2006

Walk for Music Highlights and All

Dear Angels and Friends:

For those of you outside of Boston, the city had on it's most beautiful clothing today. The Walk for Music couldn't have planned the weather any better. A light easterly to keep it cool enough for walking, yet a bright sun to tell us that summer's not far off. The blossoming trees along our way and our singing (Joyful Voices sings its way around) made everything all the more beautiful. President RL Smith brought his backpack sound system so we could sing to our music.

The Walk takes place in a park area of Boson called the Fens. A sluggish stream called the Muddy River is on its final mile or so before it joins the Charles River. It is a part of Frederick Olmstead's "Emerald Necklace" that goes in and around Boston with a green swarth. Our route starts over on the Fenway Park side if the Fens winds along that side for a ways then crosses to the other side of the river to go past the Museum of Fine Arts. As we get close to the split in Park Drive, it again crosses the stream and we head back to where we started.

Before we get there however, the path passes though a series of "Victory Gardens" (I believe they were rented by the city to residents during World War 2 to raise vegetables). People now grow veggies somewhere I guess, but most have been made over into special flower gardens by their...hmm, I can't owners....rentors. Each one with a different layout. There were traditional New England gardens, English Cottage gardens, Oriental gardens and a lot who were in-process for the summer. I'll have to check with Dave D. our Chief Gardener for what he saw during our walk.

This old buzzard was fighting off the remnants of his sciatic nerve problem and discovered a couple of new places that need attention from my chiropractor. After the first half-mile the pain became less and the singing and walking much more enjoyable. Since last year, when I was accused of walking too fast, we had Angel Annette and Angel Jackie take over that duty so I could flit about as the joy dictated. At one point I roamed far ahead to photograph our oncoming choir. An impressive sight. We chose to wear our black casual Joyful Voices shirts. Everyone else was either in their free T-shirts or a motley collection of early summer wear. I did see one group with Viking-type helmets on.

James Early, our Director, walked with us and insisted he was not a walker and singer. Yet, I distinctly heard his melodious baritone on several occasions. And I also wish to point out that all three members of the Bad-Knees-Bears; Angel Barb, Angel Mary Jo and myself participated today. Next year, we should shoot for 100% participation. Right?

At one point near the end of the Walk, the group ahead of us stopped to sing a song. This, of course, held up the whole gang behind us. Then they went on and a short time later were doing some yells or whoops - pig calls? I'm not sure. To lend some creditability to these, I did a Tarzan Yell without thinking of who was close by. I hope our bass, Phil (of New Orleans - Common Ground fame), gets his hearing back real soon.

We are still accepting donations to Joyful Voices of Inspiration if you feel so inclined. Every cent of your donation is deductible and every cent goes right to Joyful Voices to defray our yearly operating costs. I believe all of you know my snail mail address,

Hope your day was just as Great!

Love; Neal
May 2, 2006

Oh Where Oh Where Has My Little Skunk Gone…

Dear Angel and Friend:

Interesting news of the day.

Last night, I was too pooped from the Walk for Music to get the wood stove going and so I had the oil heat on. At one point during the evening, a tremendous skunk smell permeated the house. Like you'd pulled down the shade and there it was. Had he fallen down the chimney? Got in the cellar? Stood at the front door and plastered the area with his nectar? I was too tired to look further and went to bed. In the AM, things had lightened up on the smell situation and I had some extra time given to work at the club; so I went to work without much thought about the skunk.

This afternoon before going to choir, I looked at my crawl space windows and all were OK, Checked the fireplace damper for any extra weight on it. Got down in the heater room and checked everything there. No smell in there. Walked around the back to check the last window and noticed some fuzz on the grass. Hmmm. This is not fuzz, it is skunk skin and fur!!! Bum-pa-bum-bum! It appears that the skunk put up a valient fight and lost. You can't lose that much skin and survive.

On coming home tonight there was no smell outside in the light rain, but there was a slight odor in the house only because I haven't had time to air out the house today.

Kenny the Steward at the yacht club is having similar problems at his house. He lives over near my friend Leo's house. Leo says his house is the skunk capitol of the world. I'll have to send my coyote (one who has a very poor sense of smell) or whatever it was over to his house. He says it is mating time and everybody is having problems.

Further, I called my daughter to alert her to the skunk's demise and she said: "Don't go into North Scituate!" I said: "Why? Are the skunks staging a "Day Without Immigrants" protest?" "No," she said; "A water main just broke in three places and the center is afloat!"

Well, for me about to take a shower, I can think of only one thing. Get your friggin feet moving up the stairs before they turn the water off!!!. Yep, got in the shower and afterwards put a lot of water in the tub to flush the toilet with if needed.

All looked normal on coming home from choir, except a big patch of dirt in one spot instead of what was blacktop. Old water mains are every town's Sword of Damocles.

Hope the skunks haven't spread outside of Scituate to your neck of the woods.

Has anyone investigated whether inhaling skunk odor is good or bad for your health? Just think, there may be a serious market here for some enterprising young man who has no sense of smell. I do know that Chanel No. 5 uses a eensy-weensy bit of skunk oil in its formula - yes, they do. Boy, I can see the lot of you going to www.snopes.com now.

Love; Neal
May 3, 2006

The Gulf Where Neal Lives

Dear Angel and Friend:

For you who haven't been to my home, here's an aerial photo taken by my friend The Amazed Dutchman on his return from The Netherlands. On the right end of the photo where two large streams come together, there is a inlet shaped like a half circle. At the upper inner part of this half circle is a ditch a little wider than the others. At the inner end is where I keep my kayaks and canoe.

Just straight up from the inner end of that ditch is the roof of my house. The smaller ditches were dug years ago to drain the marsh and retard the mosquito growing areas.

On the left end of the photo, part of the airplane hides the entrance to Cohasset harbor and where the tide rushes through and restricts entry except when the tide turns.

Joyful Kayakers can see a lot of where we paddled last fall when the tide covered the marsh. Whitehead, where we paddled under a private bridge leading to an estate is at the top of the photo under the subject title (PICT) Our launching area is hidden by the airplane's nacelle. It doesn't look like it here, but the marsh is turning green.

Spring is here, let's kayak!

Love; Neal

(Sorry, this picture was too big to copy here)
May 31, 2006
At Chris Farrow-Noble’s—Report on the 82nd

Dear Friend & Angel:

How does one say “perfect” in more than one word?

The Friends, Angels, new Friends, Host and Hostess, even my Daughter and many of the Casserole Gals and All the Others who bought such wondrous foods and played my favorite songs. Many Angel shirts were worn although they were not required.

I must apologize for giving my camera to Casserole Gal Maureen. Some of you may had trouble going home from so many flashes, but I'll have a lasting memory of our get-together.

You know, some potlucks have dishes that don't quite make it. Well, that didn't happen here. ZOWEE! I could have used a couple more stomachs (doesn't a cow have more than one? I wonder what she does with the extras?). My daughter's extra casserole and my favorite candied sweet potatoes. Scallop casserole, Spinach pie casserole, another chicken casserole, Dad's Bean's casserole and Lord I didn't get all the other names like I should have, but there were some wonderful ones. Salads were not wanting either In particular, the Spinach leaf one didn't last long.

I do feel sorry for Casserole Gal Beryl who is allergic to chocolate as all the desserts were wonderful chocolate. Yum, yum. Casserole Gal Barb who couldn't come as it was a wild night at her school with the kids Art Show opening (she teaches art to kids K to 6), sent Brownies Beyond Belief. Angel and hostess Chris had a DEElicious chocolate cake and candles that did want to go out. I also imbibed in a chocolate cupcake along the way.

Attached is a photo by Angel Kathy of me trying not to set my beard on fire, but blow out the few candles. Thank goodness you didn't do an actual 82!

Ben, Glenn, Chris N. and Dan Duryea made up the male contingent and I missed a few of our other regulars who couldn't make it, but they sent word to Chris F. The ladies, however, made up for it. Also, Cachet, our home-grown music ensemble, with Angel Sandra W as their leader, did some great old familiar songs; ones that even my non-singing (?) Casseroles got going on. Angel Kathy sang my favorite "Mingulay". Angel Elaine was well equipped with her ukulele and harmonica although we didn't get a chance to do "Ashokan Farewell". Maybe next Wednesday at Dorothy's house. Dorothy and myself sang our favorite French song of a lost love that truely applies to both of us. Casserole Gal Sandra N. came a bit late, but a piece from her Casserole filled the last little niche I had left.

Dan Duryea gave me a copy of his first CD. He said he didn't think it was going to go to the top of the charts even if he was giving them away. Casserole Gal Maureen brought a guest book for people to sign - if you missed it, I'll try to bring it next week to Casserole Gal Dorothy's potluck. Casserole Gal Katie gave me some joke things that most of you didn't get to see, but I'm sure I'll find a use for the bubble something (don't know if it's for the bath or blowing bubbles).

I'm sorry I had to leave kind of early, but my sciatic nerve got going pretty bad (that's when I left the singing circle to sit on the stairs) and I didn't think you wanted me to start cussing in the middle of someone's song. When it gives you a shot, cussing is about all you can do. You never know which way to turn to relieve the pain. You just wish you had remembered to bring an extra couple of Aleve's.
Here at the house, many cards have arrived and several e-mail cards as well. Casserole Gal Beryl's husband Jim made me a beautiful dish from a piece of wood from my Mimosa tree that fell two years ago. I'll try to remember to bring it to serve M & M's in next Wednesday.

Supper tonight (June 1st) for me was after St. Luke's choir practice and consisted entirely of Spinach Pie made by Casserole Gal Beth's husband Paul. Oh yes, we did have a few pieces of Barb's BBB at St. Luke's after practice.

I have probably left out some important details like the puddy cat who couldn't come in because Ben is allergic to cats, but I talked and petted him/her a bit outside.

Our timing was good on getting to Chris'. I think, and believe me, I did not go fast (not with all those Casseroles and likewise Gals in the car) that we made phenomenal time through Harvard Square. I'm sure God saw me coming and arranged all the lights so they were green at the right instant. It was a trip to remember. From the bridge at the Charles to Northwest of Harvard Square could not have exceeded 4 minutes - it was weird.

Thank you for a truly wonderful birthday party.

Love, Neal
June 4, 2006
Once Again the Rain Came Down

Dear Angel and Friend:

The rain is helping my sciatic nerve feel worse, but I'm bolstered by the work I'm doing at the club. Setting up jigs on the drill press to drill 12 trophy bases; turn them over and counterbore hole clearances for the screw head. With a jig set up, I don't have to measure each plaque. Just put it in place against the jig and drill the hole.

Each hole requires a different jig and, of course, when I turned them over the new drill was longer than the old one, so I had to change the whole set up. They'll be done tomorrow.

The other day, before the rains came, I was on my way over to the photo place and noted the car ahead, coming to a stop in the middle of nowhere. Well, what can this be? Slowly, ever so slowly, something appeared to be crossing in front of the car. Yes, something is there.

What? A bemused turkey? Mother duck and her little ones? A child's ball? Ahhh, can it be, yes it is, a snapper. A BIG SNAPPER. Don't aggravate him. He can take a good-sized bite out of your tire - course it would probably blow him quite a ways.

Talk about nonchalant. He was taking his good old time; looking around like he owned the whole road. I mean this guy's shell is easily over a foot and a half long. He'd probably survive even if someone did run over him. After the car ahead left, no one was behind me so I stayed until he got all the way across so I could warn any on-coming cars of his presence.

Mother Nature is always is showing us other things; we just have to be aware.

Later, I was mowing my lawn for the first time, I surprised a baby rabbit who scambled fro one clump of flowers to another to escape the noise of this terrible machine.

All my lovely blue Ajuga has finished its annual display and my dogwood is also dropping its petals. Now it is the daisies who are coming out, while the buttercaps are continuing. The Star of Bethlehems are gone as well. May flowers are long gone. It's so nice to have these flowers that come along by themselves. I had nothing to with their spreading around my lawn.

The rhododendron is out and I drool over some of my neighbor's plant that are giants alongside mine. I purchased it at the local 5 and 10 many years ago. My daughter was a teenager (she's now in her 40s) and working there and said: "Dad, they're on sale. You ought to get one." It didn't bloom the next year, or the next, or the next, or the next..... I fed it all the goodies I could provide - wood ashes, evergreen fertilizer, mulch. Did it bloom?

Hah! As a member of the Scituate Harbor Investigation Team (we don't do an acronym for this group) I checked with my local expert at the club. She said; "Give it time." Yeah sure.

Suddenly, after my daughter divorced the @#$%&! that she married the first time. The plant started to have an inkling that it had decided to bloom - did she and her green-thumb second husband come over and give it some special potion? Who knows?

Anyway, now it blossoms.

Maybe not with the profusion of my neighbor's plant, but, "give it time."

Love; Neal
June 6, 2006
D-Day 62 Years Ago

Dear Angel and Friend:

The rain is helping my sciatic nerve feel worse, but I'm bolstered by the work I'm doing at the club. Setting up jigs on the drill press to drill 12 trophy bases; turn them over and counterbore hole clearances for the screw head. With a jig set up, I don't have to measure each plaque. Just put it in place against the jig and drill the hole.

Each hole requires a different jig and, of course, when I turned them over the new drill was longer than the old one, so I had to change the whole set up. They'll be done tomorrow.

The other day, before the rains came, I was on my way over to the photo place and noted the car ahead, coming to a stop in the middle of nowhere. Well, what can this be? Slowly, ever so slowly, something appeared to be crossing in front of the car. Yes, something is there.

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Maybe not with the profusion of my neighbor's plant, but, "give it time."

Love; Neal
June 7, 2006
Dear Angel and Friend:

Well, we made it kids. The world didn't end yesterday, but today I had my doubts.

I also had the distinct feeling the my car would magically change into a boat every few seconds. With the advent of safer, more water resistant electronics, we plow into water on the road with great abandon. On Route 128 ("America's Technology Highway" a slogan from the 1970's), I really thought I was floating in one large puddle and only my forward motion got me to the other end.

I went to Wayland to view and photograph some kindergarten and grammer school art at Loker Elementary School. Their art teacher is Angel Barb who gets enchanting results from her students. When you enter the lobby of the school after floating out there on rain soaked highways, you feel you have suddenly gone underwater as a myriad of beautiful sparkling 3-foot fish swim over your head. Each one different, each one delightful.

Down an aisle, there are all manner of birds, horses, and other animals made out of wire, paper, feathers, etc. overhead. The walls have works by all different grades up to fifth grade. Underwater scenes in a shallow shadow box setup are plentiful. They give the feeling of depth to the painting.

One series consisted of three dimensional paintings of houses; maybe their own house; yet possibly something they have dreamed up. Small houses, big estates, one house made to look like a trash can; a couple of fortresses; several had swimming pools; one had a roof sundeck. The minds of these kids are open with no holds barred.

A series of kindergarten works were on black paper folded in half while wet and then with further details added. There were hanging figures of family groups with figures about 3 inches high surrounded by things specific to their family. Glitter seemed to be used alot, but always restained and not overdone.

I'm amazed at the riot of imagination Barb has gotten from these children.

They'll miss her as she's moving to the middle school next year.

Congratulations Barb!

Love, Neal
July 4, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

I watched the Esplanade fantasy again on TV always wishing I had taken the "T" in to see it again in person. TV can not capture the sounds of fireworks. Years ago...let's see, was it after 1812? Yes it was. We went into Boston twice with canoes and launched them in the Charles River. Once from the (MDC) State Police station alongside the river and the other time from the Science Museum wharf (there were no signs saying we couldn't park there) We had a ball that time.

A rental commuter boat came there to pick up the governor/mayor and his party. The gov. thought we were some high mucky-mucks. Plus, I knew the captain of the commuter boat and that also impressed the governor. I don't remember who was governor. Might have been Dukakis - no - can't remember.

I think that was the year they advertised that the largest aerial shell ever to be sent up was going to be used. Well, of course, it exploded on the deck of the fireworks barge before it got into the air. Large fireballs (about the size of a tennis balls, but looked like soccer balls) came flying through the assembled viewing craft bouncing off the hulls of bigger boats. They were eye-level to us in our canoes. People were screaming, things were exploding all around us. My brother was calmly swatting them like baseballs with his paddle. If he swatted one to me, I'd swat it back! It seemed to go on for several seconds. However, the fireworks barge didn't explode and after a few minutes while everyone went WHEW!, the show resumed.

Tonight's fireworks show was beautifully orchestrated. The Pops show itself was too long. The Boston Pops Gospel Choir did not perform and since we (Boston) originated this extravaganza, they sure as #@&%$ should remember that Gospel is thriving.

Who'sy (who just had his throat operated on) should've been home resting his voice.

AND RENES KING (one of the NEC Millenium Choir Directors and she helps out Dennis ((BCC)) once in a while) SANG "AMAZING GRACE" and a Civil Rights Era song. She was awesome!

Love, Neal
July 6, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

Yes, the Big July Fourth of 2006 is gone; half the summer is gone. I used to think that the July Fourth was the beginning of summer. Not so. Days are getting shorter. First thing you know it will be Labor Day and the birds (even ones without wings) will start heading South. But look at all the fun we've had so far this "summer": Rain, floods, windstorms, rain, snow (didn't it snow in April or May?), rain, thunder storms, did I mention rain? We don't get all that fun in the winter.

Yet, last winter we got cheated on snow, so God is trying to make up for it by giving us some rain. I wonder if our local towns will have local water use restrictions like we usually do?

I heard tonight on the TV that gas is going up again. Think I'll see if I can fix my bicycle - the yacht club is only four miles away. I ought to be able to do that in an hour or an hour and a half. Look at the great cardio-vascular exercise I'll be getting. I'll be too tired to work! Shaw's Market is only two miles away.

With all the Gospel choirs I sing in, I wonder if they can start at-home rehearsals via the internet; you know, like conference calls. Maybe we can do it with our fancy cell phones.

Today at the club, it was back to the usual "Drop your kids off from your Mercedes, Lexus, or whatever SUV and let the yacht club Day Care Center mind them for the day." Yes, we run a tight ship here. Swim lessons in the morning while the pool water is still cold from the overnight. Then sailing lessons when the wind gets up to 25-30 MPH, and after that some tennis lessons.

If you're a bored kid or unbelievably not registered for one of these (you have do them all to get in on the participation awards at the end of the summer), you can play some kind of ball game on the lawn with a tennis ball, a racket for a bat, trees for bases. If you get a hit, they don't throw the ball to a person on a base to get you out; they throw the ball as hard as they can at you!

Also, during the day, the old clubhouse is off-limits to kids. They have to use the toilets in the pool area or the Activities Bldg. This leads to boys running the men's room showers in the Act. Bldg. at full hot to get the whole place full of steam (all this done with a great amount of screaming, yelling and laughing). Then we go in (toilet plungers in hand as they've usually put a tennis ball in the hopper), and throw everyone out. Too bad we can't use paintball guns or tear gas.

My work and supply closet also stores all the soda for our two Coke machines. This means when no one is nearby, my door must be locked. There are also high powered cleaning chemicals in my area (known locally as "Gray Area") and, of course, these must be kept away from the kids lest they have the materials for a bomb. I don't know what you use to make a bomb, but I'm sure my workshop has the needed stuff.

For instance, Instant Bowl Cleaner has Phosphoric Acid in it and we also use that to clean rust spots of our concrete decks. Did you know that most cola drinks including Pepsi and Coca-Cola have Phosphoric Acid in them? That's what gives your tongue that tingling feeling - it's burning (hurting) your tongue and eating the hell out of your teeth as well. But drink up; think of all the people who make this "tasty" stuff and if you don't drink it, you'll put them all out of work.

Today also was a clock hunt. We have clocks outside all over the place so no one can be late for whatever they have to do next. I guess other clubs need clocks too, as they are in short supply in the Scituate area. Satuit Hardware has none, Joseph's Hardware had one (small, but usable in out Snack Shack Kitchen). I took their large one and used it outside.
Cohasset Hardware (also known as Tiffany's Hardware due to their prices) had a nice one and I got it for $25.00 (usually these are like $10.00). So for the present, all clock needs are taken care of until a tennis ball or other missile wipes one out.

Flowers: There are flower urns (too big to be called pots) throughout the club areas. The ones on the office end of the Act. Bldg. are my responsibility. I usually plant them with Gazainas (called Gazinnas this summer in one place). They withstand heat and cold and produce flowers all summer. They are white with purple, purple with white, and yellow. In some pots, I've backed them up with Celosia Wheat whose blossoms are sort of purple-white. Don't know much about those.

My flower knowledge is very limited, but my weed knowledge is extensive. Thus, Mrs. Michaud, the chairwoman of the beautiful front garden, allows me to weed as I see fit. They put in sword grass a many years ago and we are still trying to get rid of it. Wild sweet-pea also is a pain. Mrs Michaud does like Queen Ann's Lace which she calls "Roadsidia"

And so it goes.

Love; Neal
July 6, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

Today at ye old SHYC Day Care Center was a little different. I got to plant geraniums and other stuff for my entire four hours. These were left over from table decorations used at the big dance last weekend.

It was my choice as to where to locate them. Those of you who went to my party at SHYC two years ago know we have a very pretty front garden between the clubhouse and the haabaa. Anyway, much as I wanted to put them in waist high containers, the club has yet to find a place for such things. So me and my bad knees looked for spots the didn't have something already there.

Art training says to plant things in groups of three or five, etc.; you know, the "magic numbers" thing. "Magic numbers" are those numbers that can only be divided by themselves. For flowers, three and five is the usual thing unless you're planting "a host of golden daffodils" (from a poem, I think). (When you get this old, things spring into your mind and you have no idea where in hell they come from.)

Having located several suitable sights, I began digging. The yacht club in all its majesty, puts down mulch every year, so the first fifty feet down are mulch. You rarely located a place where there is soil (read: dirt). I guess that's OK as I found worms, spiders, cut-worms, broken glass, paper clips, gutter pieces and other unrelated items there - all doing well and waiting, I suppose, for archeologists to find them eons from now. I wonder if I have to fill out form covering these digs?

Then, I was reminded of that song "Cecilia, I'm down on my knees begging you please to come home." But I'm digging and planting and getting slowly eaten by the "no-see-ums". They seem to like the garden as it is moist and a great place to hang out and chew on unsuspecting flower planters.

One spot the was begging for some flowers, but was also the outflow for the gutter downspouts. Sooo, if I could divert this water flow, I could stick in a five pots of geraniums. This is one of those times when one job leads to another job, leads to another job, etc. To change the water flow I had to dig a pit for gravel for one downspout and go to the hardware store for a couple of elbows to further facilitate this diversion. That led to removing a lot of mulch, paper clips, hair pins, nails and things. That done, I fitted elbows and flat stones under elbows to complete the diversion process. NOW I could plant the five pots of geraniums.

Knees, sciatica and bug bites were now taking their collective toll. I decided it was time to have a break. "Oh yes, Neal, have a break. After that, could you put away the five cases of plastic trash bags the UPS delivered, clean up the mess in the dining room where the flowers were, put the dirty tablecloth in the laundry, water the other flowers in the urns (note what I said about "urns" and "pots" yesterday)?" "Certainly, Nancy, I'll get right to it."

But first I had to finish the flower planting. Then take care of the Boss' requests. Then I thought I should paint the elbows to match their parent downspouts. Boss; "Oh, Neal, do you have a small paintbrush fot the Sailing Instructors to use?"

"Certainly, Nancy, I'll get right to it."

To the Sailing Instructor; "What is the use of the brush?" Instructor; "A small one, to apply fiberglass resin." Me; "OK, a throwaway one?" Inst.; "Yes, fine."
Eventually, it was time to go home via the photo place for Pops photo pick up. Boss; Oh, Neal, while you're out that way could you go to Office Max and get a new cheap phone for the Activities Building?" Me; "Certainly, Nancy, I'll get right to it."

At Office Max, I asked the clerk for a cheap phone, one like the one I held in my hand, but not as cheap as two cans and a length of string. He took me right to them. They had one left - $24.95.

Back at the club, it was now one of those rare evenings - calm, high tide, me too tired to go kayaking and too tired to go home. Ordered a pizza from Satuit Tavern (they are the best). Sat out on the end of the walkway (in the old geezers resting spot) overlooking the haabaa and enjoying talk with Joe Noble the Thursday nightwatchman. Thought about taking a trip on the launch, but there were no calls for him.

Remembered an evening years ago when riding in the launch we dropped a man off at a boat and he said to come back in twenty minutes. Well, we had other passengers and trips to make and after twenty minutes or so we went back to pick up the man who came on deck zipping up his pants. A young woman was visible in the cabin. It was then that I noticed the name of the boat. It was the "Quickie"

Love, Neal
July 7, 2006

Dear Angels, Friends and Crew:

The ship is on an even keel, wherever we are in God's book. Our sails are set. The weather is great. Tomorrow the NEC Millenium Gospel Choir sings in the Tabernacle in Oak Bluffs on Maatha's Vineyard (there is no "r" in Maatha is there?)

Planted the Ivy today. Got more clocks. What's this thing with clocks? Don't you people come to the club to relax? Leave the cell phone and worries at home. Days like today are forever.

"Neal!" Me; "Yes Bernice?" (My straw boss Angel Bernice has just returned from a trip to Italy) "We don't have a clock in the Committee Room" Me; "I noticed that. Where'd it go?" Bernice; "I don't know, but we need one in there. And the one in the Act. Bldg. does not work either." Me; "I checked it, it is right twice a day." Bernice; "No smart remarks; get a clock for that room." Me; "OK"

As you know, from previous reports, I've cleaned out the local supply of clocks and the hardware store have two on backorder. In my late afternoon travels to Pembroke's Christmas Tree Shop (none), Hanover's Pool and Patio Supply (none), Sylvester's Hardware in Hanover (none) and finally my old friend Office Max in Hanover had just what I needed - one medium and one large clock. WHEW! At least Bernice's worries will be assuaged.

Well, today's main chore was to water all the Urns (read: in places, pots) throughout the property. I had never counted all these things. I was afraid they might run into the hundreds. I've lost count at 20, and that doesn't include window boxes. So, wanting to do a thorough job, I got out my trusty Miracle-Grow hose "thingy". You put water-soluble Miracle-Grow in the bowl and attach it to a hose. Somehow it mixes the right amount of fertilizer into the water to make the flowers want to jump right up and say "Howdy".

The high-class urns on the clubhouse patio got even later by overflowing onto the cement patio with something that resembled a dog's favorite place to relieve himself. How it changed my green spray into brown/yellow I'll never know.

The yacht club has many outdoor spigots - hose connections; 3 around the clubhouse, two outside the Act. Bldg., one at the ramp leading to the pool, one at the pool control room, one at the snack shack, and one out by the Steward's workshop. They're like Dunkin Donuts except they only have water. You never have to go far for water at SHYC.

"It's GOOD!"

In watering the Urns on the patio, the hose had three minute leaks that managed to wet my shorts in places where one might wonder about my senility or need to buy Depends. Thus, the next job was to cut off the bad section of hose and install a new "male" fitting. I do not intend to go into the why's of "male" and "female" hose fittings at this time. That done, I put away today's UPS delivery (was there one?) and left on my clock hunt (see above).

Hope you have a life-uplifting Saturday. Will let you know about the Vineyard later.

Love, Neal
July 9, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

Today I spent most of the day sleeping. I know you were out at the beach, mowing the lawn, baking a cake, or some other productive activity.

Me? I slept.

BUT, every couple of hours, I'd get up or roll over to see what time it was and WHAM! I'd get a leg cramp. I don't know if you have ever gotten a leg cramp. They are not a lot of fun. Their only benefit is that I get a chance to exercise my knowledge of cuss words. And since most of my leg cramps last 15 or 20 minutes, there is quite a lot of repartition. Praying at critical times also helps.

Now the cause of all these cramps, came from not consuming enough water during Saturday. The trip to Maatha's Vinyaad, the bus getting lost beforehand, walking to our singing site, inadequate intake of water during the day, and the energy expended during the concert eventually took their toll. Wait'll you're 82!

I did try to inject a vast amount of water on arrival back in Scituate, but I think it would have been better to take water in more frequent increments during the day.

These interruptions in my normal sleeping caused an extended sleeping time. I arose finally at 1:00 PM and of course, that is way too late to get anything constructive done.

So I watched the World Cup Soccer finals, the golf thing afterwards. It was too bad that Tiger Woods lost to the Italians, but he can't win them all. (Hah-hah)

Since our bus driver wanted a look at Falmouth and points East, we missed the boat that arrives at Oak Bluffs. So our boat came into Vineyaad Haven and we needed a bus to take us to Oak Bluffs. This is public transportation on the Vineyaad. We were bunched up with tourists at the bus stop, yet needed to get all our people onto one bus so they wouldn't get lost.

I sang a few bars of "Summertime" in soprano and the crowd dissolved quite rapidly.

The concert on Maatha's Vineyaad was great and we had a very appreciative audience. The people of the Campground Association put together a wonderful supper for us. We'd love to come back next year.

I would suggest two things: 1) Steve (Hawkesworth) spend his money on a navigation system for the bus driver (not on polo shirts). 2) The ferry company provide a better way of us getting off the island: i.e. Traffic on returning to Vineyaad Haven from Oak Bluffs was very heavy and it looked like we'd miss the boat. Steve got off and ran to the ferry to have them hold the boat for us. Only His Eminence, Norris Welch, missed the boat out of 40-odd singers.

We had fun on the bus trips and the boat trips as well as singing God's praises at the concert. In visiting the shops during the afternoon, we all talked up our concert to whoever we met. I recall singing a little of "Total Praise" in a shop where I bought a set of earrings for my daughter. Someone noted later that one of our listeners during the afternoon was in the front row at the concert.
The Tabernacle is a church/concert hall, open on all sides (a little like the Shed at Tanglewood only real old (1879)). The framework is iron in the old fashioned tracery style with stained-glass windows all around up high. The covering of the iron is wood and shingles.

Steve Hawkesworth deserves a lot of praise for keeping us "chickens" out of the ice cream parlors in the afternoon (no milk or milk products before singing) and into the right places at the right time.

And so it is.

Love,  Neal
July 31, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

I'm back from my whirlwind trip to PA saying goodbye to Deb and seeing other old friends.

I hope you've been staying out of the hot sun whereever you are. The Yacht club is usually blessed with a breeze. Sunday it was from the Southeast and kept us nice and cool all day. Today, was mostly from the Southwest, but sufficiently strong to give some cooling.

I do not look forward to Tuesday and Wednesday when the mid- to upper-nineties are expected. Got to keep hydrated.

To those who'd like to kayak down here, Sunday the 13th of August looks best. Big tide! I'm afraid the Joyful Kayakers (JVOI) will be in Brazil at that date.

The Great North River Race is on Saturday the 12th and I'm considering entering that in my kayak. I've done the race by joined canoes (Catacanoe System), single canoe, and in my 11-1/2 foot dinghy. Now only the kayak double and kayak single remain to be used. It is a fairly long race; 8-1/2 miles plus another mile to the pull-out place. It is run on the incoming tide (thank goodness), or I'd never make it at all. There's a class for seniors, but none for octogenarians. I think I'll enter a protest. After all, them 65-year olds ain't hardly old at all.

I think did mention about a first that occurred at the club a week or so ago. We have a big saltwater pool and the kids put a whole lot of crabs in it. Next thing you know they be planting seaweed in it. I have done my usual Tarzan Yell almost every day at the club and now the girls at Maria's Subshop request it when no one is in the shop.

Got a new battery for the TVR and can now take short jaunts about the countryside. Need a special hose as a part of the radiator system and will order that and some other essentials to keep Princess Di (after Princess Elizabeth) going. There's a place in Canada that carries TVR parts.

Ok kids, I'm off to beddy-bye for my beauty? sleep.

Love, Neal
August 2, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

Today, my brother Pres was 90!!!  Kinda makes ya think, don't it?

His most famous remark of the night; "How'd I get to live this long?"  My reply; "It was all those damn birthdays."

He also said correctly that no one in the family had ever lived that long before him. Our father lived to 80, but his father (our grandfather) died at 35!!!

He's in a rehabilitation center/nursing facility. They brought him into the common room in a upholstered wheel chair where we could spend some time together. All his relatives - his son and grandson; me; my daughter and her husband and their three children. His other son is a pilot for one of the airlines and couldn't make it.

Cake, ice cream, balloons, a care basket of goodies for later and flowers. I tried to bring a big TV, but the facility said that would not be OK. It is an old one at the club and I got the OK to give it to charity. So I'll take it to a homeless shelter in Quincy.

Thought you'd like to know that when he was little, he shook hands with General Pershing. Who was General Pershing? That's your assignment for the night.

Love, Neal
Dear Angel and Friend:

The Amazed and I might say "Crazed" Dutchman has taught me how to move my digital photos onto the front on an e-mail. Thus saving all that gobbledygook of an attachment.

I'll have the nurses get after that mustache.

Love; Neal
September 27, 2006
I’m Back But…

Dear Angel and Friend:

I'm back from an all too short trip to the "auld sod". However, a nasty cold hit me the morning of departure home, the flight was late leaving Shannon, we're placed in a "holding" pattern over Boston (actually we were dodging a humungous thunderstorm, but they didn't tell us that - one look out the right side of the airplane (my side) would have told you that); and finally on the ground at 6:00 PM. Baggage pick-up 1/2 an hour and home by 7:30 PM.

Much too late, even if I was healthy to go to the BCC sing on Cape Cod.

Bought various cold fighters and went to bed.

Am up today, staggering about, and washing all clothing; looking fondly at my marsh, wondering when the tide is high and realizing I could never pull myself out of the kayak at this stage of life.

Sorry I missed BCC and Joyful Voices, but I should be OK by next week.

Hope all of you are OK

Ireland was its' magical, wondrous self as expected, but even more so because of tour guide, Angel Karmel. I have learned many important things from this Angel; first of which is do not pick up a comb lying on the ground. This cold is probably the result.

Overnight in Limerick. At lunch a restaurant in that city we found a waitress who's husband was from Southie and my daughter knew his dad. After dinner in the hotel, went to Dolan's, a real Irish pub. After several bitter lemons for me and wines for my daughter walked back to the hotel. Winds from the ex-hurricane pushed us along.

The Cliffs of Moor are still there, but are being dressed up for tourists with a full-blown, interactive, tourist center. Right now, everything is a mess; you can't get up to the remains of the castle that we got to before. From there on though things were much better.

Lunch in Galway and on across the center of Ireland to Dublin for two nights. Hotel is directly on the river Liffey and what was on the river but a full-rigged-ship, the Jean Connolly. I couldn't get on board, but a couple of other boats were there and one was a mega-yacht and probably owned by people attending the Ryder's Cup.

Second night there, we went to Oliver St. John Gogarty's Irish Pub for drinks and carrying-on; more bitter lemons and dinner up the street later. Lunch that day was at an Italian restaurant in the Temple Bar area where the lasagna was fantastic! Stopped at Knobs and Knockers to see if there was anything of interest, but there wasn't. Visited St. Patrick's Cathedral again. Got a good tour of the city on the tour bus. Didn't get over to see if the "Underground" was still there.

On the way to Killarney, stopped at Kilkenny to try to find another ring like I got the last time we were there. Much dashing around, but it is not available there any longer. Lunch at a place named Ryan's (a relation to Tom?) in a small town somewhere; then stopped at Blarney. As I have already kissed the stone, I am empowered (according to Angel Karmel) to pass it on to my female tour members, but none took up the opportunity (DRAT!).

From our base in Killarney we toured the Ring of Kerry on one day with a jaunting cart ride at the end of the day. You know, it rains off and on most days and if it is only a little bit Karmel says it is a :soft" day. Most days have been "soft" ones. That night we went to a pub out in the boondocks
for a real Irish pub experience. There was music and a singer and some tall tales told. We were encouraged to enter in to the singing with song sheets - who needs songs sheets? Anyway, I soon found me-self singing solos. How can this be?

Afterwards, our bus would not start. A Mecedes substitute bus came that was too small - so a few had to stand for the trip back. We sang all the bay back to the hotel where they had saved dinner for us. We continued our songs in the hotel bar.

The next morning was Dingle peninsula trip - the most beautiful of all of Ireland although the Ring of Kerry is a very close second. Lunch in Dingle where we finally found some St. Brigit crosses made from straw. Good lunch and on across the Shannon River by ferry (same one) to Innis for our last night at a tourist "thing" - supposedly a Ceilidhe, but really a dinner and a show of Irish music and dancing without audience participation.

So here I are, recuperating from the curse of picking up a comb.

Love; Neal

September 29, 2006 Dear Angel and Friend:

Further notes on the wonders of the trip.

As those who went on the GHIC trip a few years ago will recall, the shades of green are truly amazing! And the intensity of some greens makes you wonder how God could ever do this. But the "soft" days we experienced do just that. It gives everything lots of rain.

Although, in Killarney and other places, we did see a lot of flooding from the remains of the hurricane. Our jaunting car trip in the National Park in Killarney led through one path that was flooded for about 100 feet wide although the path was only about a foot deep. Our horse, "Rocket" shied at the start and was not a happy camper when his driver forced him on across. However, "Tom" pulling the group behind us, plunged right in splashing along with apparent glee.

On the days we went to the Ring of Kerry and the Dingle Peninsula, rainbows were in abundance - even saw two horizontal ones! Don't know how they form, but both were seen against a mountain background. Also saw one that can only be described as a curved "V" like two rainbows emanating both left and right from one spot - weird.

On Dingle, there are the ancient "beehive" stone buildings the early settlers lived in. The one I went in had planks overhead that must have been an "upstairs" bedroom - hah-hah.

At the beach where "Ryan's Daughter" was filmed, there were beautiful long wide waves coming in. They looked to be five to six footers. Just right for surfing. Scenery on both Ring of Kerry and Dingle Peninsula made you want to sell everything and move over there. But, deciding which place to move to would drive you batty - there are so many that were just perfect. And clouds of clouds, beautiful clouds casting their spell on the waters and fields.

Tried to remember which church we sang in in Kilkenny - there are several to choose from. Didn't have much time there to go exploring. Same for Galway which was also a lunch stop.

The pubs we went to were great! Dolan's in Limerick and Oliver St. John Gogarty's in Dublin and the one in the boondocks where we were entertained in what they called a "Shantie". It has no relation to the sailor's "Shanty". Had lunch in a couple of others along the way. Yes, M. Ryan's (somewhere), the Blue Bull Cafe (somewhere) and Harrington's in Dingle.
In Dublin, primarily, we found the crossing-walk lights to be very helpful. Since cars are coming from right to left you must look to your right first. Cars also go like the hammers of hell; so you have to depend on the walk lights for your life. Boston "jaywaking" is very dangerous. If you're not on a walk light signal - WATCH OUT!

Saw a Ferrari in Dublin, but our bus driver didn't want keep up with him. Didn't see one TVR. There are lot's of little cars of makes we never get in the US. Many developments here and there that are so repetitious you wonder how you can get home at night especially if you've had a few Guinnesses (one or two "n"s?).

Well, I'll have to see if I can put some photos out for you; I took eight rolls and a lot of digitals as well.

Love; Neal
October 8, 2006

Hi there, interested bystanders:

After a tough night with an ear ache, I had to sleep in and miss church; but the rest helped me feel much better.

I had a kayak party and only one person came - me, but what a day!!!

Out into Cohasset Haabaa - saw an old lobsterman sculling his little dinghy back to the town float, took his photo on a long zoom. When I got to him, I said; "I hope you were smiling." He said; "Don't think I was." But he added; "Great day, isn't it?" I agreed.

The tide makes a twice-a-day surge through under the bridge bringing a zillion gallons of water into our marsh. To sit still there is an awesome feeling. It is only for a few moments and then the tide turns. Ever so slowly at first to become a raging torrent in an hour. Took lots of photos.

Nature was at its best although colors have a way to go. Neighbors were out in force. I encountered a lady from the Cohasset side over against the grass not moving. Came over to see if she was OK and found her reading the Sunday paper.

She said; "If I was home I'd be listening to my husbnd complain about how the Patriots were handling the game." Here I'm listening to opera on my I-pod and enjoying one of God's gifts - today. We got talking and I mentioned my non-existant party of Joyful Kayakers from one of my choirs. She was interested in Gospel and we have a nice visit.

About that time my next door neighbors arrived and I introduced them. He is giving a presentation at the Gulf River Association meeting on October 18th about his cross-country bike ride that he did with his daughter this year. He was rowing a Lowell-made dory. Lowell's Boat Yard in ??? Amesbury ??? or nearby is a very famous place. I was there years ago with my half-brother.

I also swung by to see my friend Peter Tolman who was busily cutting down the invasive stuff that looks like Pampus grass. A lot of people say it is interfering with their view of the marsh. This plant was non-existant a few years ago in this area.

Picked up trash as usual. New system on my float to help me get out of my kayak was only partially successful. The 2 X 4 isn't high enough, but the cleat and the rope to hold the kayak in place was a big help. I guess I need an A-frame sort of thing that I can reach up and grab and then swing myself up and in under it. Hmmm - a battery powered lifting thing would be great.

The next full moon is in early November and I'm praying for some Indian Summer days about that time. It's the next chance for the Joyful Kayakers.

Enjoy tomorrow; it may be the last warm one for a while.

Love, Neal
Kayaking
October 10, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

As Dave D. sang; "Oh, what a beautiful day on the salt marsh." That it was.

Full of the rewards that only God and nature can provide "And a little help from my friends."

We launched around 11:00 AM from the Driftway in Scituate and headed out to the Spit. Now for those of you who are unfamiliar with this term, the Spit is a stretch of low sand dunes accessible only by water unless you want a looonng walk on a beach. It is the North side of the entrance to the North & South Rivers and in the summer can be a zoo of anchored small boats who want to get away from it all without going out to sea.

The entrance is also a dangerous place at certain times of tide change. Ahh, but the Spit is a haven and today we got there before the crowd. On the way out Dave spotted a sandy place along the route (which is the First Herring Brook, but now 200 yards wide) and said; "Is that a good place for a picnic?" I said; "Dave, that will be under water shortly." And we couldn't find it on the way back as we were paddling over the all the grass.

Dave, Nan and CB had brought the promised picnic and after our 40-minute paddle, the latter part being in wave and wake tossed seas, it sure tasted good. We were around the corner from the majority of the boaters with a light wind and calm water.

After lunch we walked around to the rough side of the Spit looking at what had been tossed ashore by King Neptune and his ocean. A couple of skipping rocks were found, and a couple of keeper rocks were also found, Today's age of plastic was here and there amongst the seaweed. Then we came apon a tragedy, a Monarch batterfly had washed ashore. How had it come to grief? Did it just tire of its long migration? Did it inadvertantly hit a boat or a person (one flew in front of Dave on the way back in)? Did a seagull wound it?

Along the way, we came to a sand bar populated by a whole flock of gulls. They didn't seem to be doing much, but enjoying the view and letting the incoming tide wash over their legs. However, as the bar became covered with water, many blowholes appeared in the sand as though the sea clams/quohogs were (if you'll pardon the expression) breaking wind. One spot blubbled furiously for over a minute.

Then back to our kayaks noting in some spots the tufts of marsh grass that made a circular depressions in the sand as the wind changed direction. On relaunching and headind back into Frist Herring Brook, all channel markers (tall sticks at the edge of the marsh) were just barely in view and most completely out of sight due to the 12-foot tide. In my dumb-luck planning, I managed to have us running in with the tide and the strong SW breeze was not the problem I thought it might be.

Dave and the rest of the crew agreed I could go over to the condos where my friend Dolores lives at James Landing. The condos are a little upstream from our launching spot. On nearing the units and not sure which one was Dolores', I started bellowing; "DOLORES!" a couple of times. This aroused most of the condo area dogs and residents. One resident on the first floor came out to point at Dolores' unit which was on the second floor. At about that moment. Dolores herself appeared and I made proper introductions. We had a short visit and then we took a look at the adjacent marina.
We thought we'd try to go further up the brook beyond the marina. On searching here and there, someone suddenly said; "Is that a Great Blue Heron?". Well, of course it was and I had my mouth going instead of my camera. We had a close encounter of the best kind.

Time was getting short and as everywhere was flooded we couldn't locate the upstream part of the brook. I did manage to find the old railway bed that was two inches shallower than my kayak would travel over. I got off easily.

Back at the launching area many boats and kayaks were coming and going, but we got in OK and Dave and CB acted as my "lift tickets". I was pretty arm weary.

We loaded kayaks and I showed Dave where Route 123 was and it would take them out to the Route 3.

I couldn't go home and just stack firewood. No, dagnab it, the tide was still high in my marsh and I went back in for a short paddle. Once on the water, I realized how arm weary I was; so I paddled over to Bob's to say hello and went in a couple of small creaks at a slow and relaxed pace. On the way home I felt like taking a nap, but was worried I'd try to roll over inside the kayak and that would be it. The kayak would do its own rollover thing.

Got back to the home float and hung around enjoying the sun, eventually took a nap in the house.

Thanks Dave, Nan and CB for an awesome day.

Love, Neal
**October 19, 2006**

Dear Children:

Yes, I know some of you are not children anymore, but you're my children. Oh, maybe not in the total sense of it all, but you know us old guy's minds get to wondering and I thought it would be kind of nice to have you all (like J.S. Bach) as my children. Didn't he have 27 or so???

I remember the night Brother Dennis (our BCC director and half my age) called us "Children...."

Anyway, today as I travelled my favorite country road, River Street, that runs from Norwell Center over to Hanover Four Corners, I realized Mother Nature had this street at its peak for color. You never see the river from River Street, but you do cross over Second Herring Brook and Third Herring Brook. They both run into the North River that River Street sort of parallels.

Dave Dusenbury, my expert in these autumn leaf matters tells me the Tupelo tree starts things off. It is the first to go and it gets a lovely shade of red and is often gone before the other trees get the word: "Hey you guys, time to drop everything!"

The Maples today were magnificent! This street is full of traditional New England homes - you know Capes, Brick-end Colonials, Garrisons, Nantucket Farmhouses, Queen Anne's, the works! They've got their pumpkins out, their ghosts and goblins hanging from the trees. Not every house is a candidate for Better Homes and Gardens, and it is not a formal as Main St., Hingham, but kids (oops, children), you'd love it.

To cap off the day, Boston Community Choir sang in Memorial Church in Haavaad Yaad with SANS and an all HIV-positive choir from So. Africa. When the whole gang got singing en mass it was an awesome sensation. **WE**, so many of us from so many places, religions, colors, ages, etc. singing as ONE VOICE! It was a very moving experience.

Good night and love, Neal

**October 20, 2006**

Dear Angel and Friend (none of you liked Children?):

Tonight.........well, let's give you some background here so this story arrives in proper perspective.

I live on one acre (1.06 acres to be exact). My neighbor's houses are between 200 and 300 feet from my house. So we aren't looking down each other's neck. Between our houses are some lawns (in my case - weeds and Adjuga - a ground cover) and trees, bushes, and briers that sort of come under the title of **woods**. There is 300 feet between my house and the road and that unused area is also mostly woods.

Now this really isn't out in the sticks, but up the road ("a piece") there is a large what you would call a gentleman's farm, except the gentleman is long gone. Leave it to say they have 100 or so acres of woods and fields. My son-in-law does work for them and often in the very early hours of the morning when he is going to work, he will see foxes and deer on the open fields.

When Joyful Voices went to Holland a couple of years back, my daughter was taking care my house. One day she arrived, entered the house, and on my deck out back was a family of foxes frolicking like there was no one around.

That leads to my musical notes of tonight. Yes, a "Doe, a deer, a female deer,..." was surprised right on the "lawn" where we unload visiting kayaks. Only about 30 feet in front of my car. WHEEEUUUU! I don't know who was more startled. Then coming home from St. Luke's Choir...
rehearsal there were TWO! I didn't get a close look at the second one to see if it was a buck as it went into the woods quickly.

You know, if you've never seen one up close, they're pretty good sized. Wood Chucks, Skunks, Muskrats and Squirrels are smaller than us, but a deer? they're kind of substantial critters. I hope they run everytime I come out for wood once the wood stove is going. I don't think I'd like to get too close and offend one of them.

Hope you're enjoying our late summer. Gonna' be windy tomorrow evening. So drive carefully.

Love, Neal

October 26, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

The kayak must have come from a very intelligent mind in God's world. It puts you right in tune with you need to see in this beautiful land.

You would think that after all these years of paddling my canoe and now my kayak, that I'd be bored each time I venture out on the water. Hardly.

Every trip brings new things to observe, experience and enjoy. On my kayak trip in my marsh on Tuesday an unusual thing happened. I was blissfully paddling along noticing the great autumn colors when suddenly a Great Blue Heron took off only 20 feet away. These birds always seem to surprise me and I never seem to have my camera ready.

That day, however, my little point and shoot camera was in the hospital getting a light leak fixed and I didn't think I should risk my big $$ Nikon out there.

I watched in fascination as this giant bird took wing (all six-foot wingspan of him), neck folding back to flying position, legs stretched out behind. What an effort this must be for him. Then my attention went to other views.

In a little while I saw him again - sort of keeping an eye on me. Following me??? I headed up a small creek off of Bound Brook and there he was flying nearby! Was it because my kayak was blue?

Then he landed in the tall grass way ahead of me. When I got near the spot (200 feet), but could only get occasional glimpses of him, he was watching me. Was this his nest, I wondered? I thought I'd better not get too close if it was.

So I turned around and started back out to the wide part of the river again - and here he comes. Not close, mind you, but landed in a spot where he could watch where I was going.

Weird.

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Certain puffs of wind can push your kayak sideways with apparent little effort while you struggle to keep away from the edge of the marsh. Along with this wind there were places on the water where there was no wind. Long bands 20-30 feet wide - flat calm. On either side the wind is blowing. Weird.

I went down to my favorite spot near the elephant/rhinoceros rock where I would love to build my dream house (barn) and picked up bottles and cans discarded by careless boaters or thrown from
cars crossing the bridge in Cohasset. These are carried in on the tide for me to pick up on my travels.

One day, years ago, I saw a women's handbag in the water. Hoping that there was not a hand holding on to it underwater, I gingerly picked it up. Whew! No, my hand was the only hand holding the bag. No cash in the bag, but everything else; credit cards, license, powder, keys, all the things women put in their bag.

So on returning to the shore, I called the name on the license. The woman was delighted to hear from me. She had left it inside her house next to her front door when she got home the previous day. Someone came to the door, smashed the glass next to the door, reached in took the bag and left before she or her husband could see who it was.

The thieves, apparently, took out the money and as their car passed over the bridge in Cohasset they threw the bag out. It landed in the river on an incoming tide and the rest is history.

Every day has a story of its own. Be sure to look around you to see it.

Love, Neal
October 29, 2006

Dear Angels and Friends:

I found a postcard in my local news store showing "The Spit."

It is the white area coming in from the right side of the photo. It looks like it was taken at or near low tide as all the sand banks offshore (the former location of The Spit) are quite visible.

The stream coming in from the left is not the South River which is out of view further to the left.

Some years ago, my brother owned a house on Central Ave. in Humarock and his back yard had frontage on the South River. I'm not sure if this stream shown on the card is part of the route my nephew and I took one windy day, but we sailed my brother's Hobie Cat at about 20 MPH through all these little streams with me on the bow giving hand-signal direction and my nephew at the tiller.

It was high tide and the creaks chosen were just barely wide enough for the Hobie Cat's twin hulls. Flying along at what seemed an incredible speed in such a confined area, my mind would question whether the next turn would put us into the bank with mast-snapping force and we'd be thrown head over heels into the water or stuck upside-down in the mud.

People started yelling at us to slow down and we yelled back; "How?" There is a sailing term called "Luff" that would have been useful, but my sailing skills were limited to sailing my canoe (source of other exciting "excursions"). So on we went. It was a hair-raising, exhilarating, wild and wooly excursion. Unfortunately, not recorded on film, but firmly etched in my mind's memory bank. My brother wouldn't let me use the Hobie after that.

Love, Neal
November 11, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

I'm practicing reading the newspaper sideways. You never know when you might be called on to do so.
You guys with Blackberrys or whatever they're called, here's some old-time entertainment!. Kathie's dog Milo has dropped off as no food is being served.

Love, Neal
November 17, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

I'm on a train. First class. But the train is under water. Big water. I'm under the English Channel in the Chunnel. It is a whole lot easier than swimming the channel. I'm going from France to England to sing in Canterbury Cathedral!

I'll be singing with the Berkshire Choral Festival at their Annual Canterbury Week. We rehearse morning and evening all week in Shirley Hall which is within the walls (precinct) of the cathedral. The cathedral is like a city inside the city of Canterbury. We also eat in the dining room and sleep in dormitories used in the winter by the King's School students.

The place reeks with age. One building called Walpole House was damaged during World War 2 and repairs were made using odds and ends of older stuff and newer stuff. Whatever they could lay their hands on. You can see these various pieces on the outside.

We are to sing Beethoven's Mass in C and an evening mass by Charpentier. Big stuff. Moving stuff. Choir size is around 180 voices. Our director is David Flood, Organist and Director of the Canterbury Cathedral Choirs. He is a patient man with lots of charisma. You try to do your best every time you open your mouth.

We have section leaders and the tenor section leader is a Welshman, Gareth Roberts, who has a magnificent voice. He teaches us a lot about our voice; how to breathe, controlling the breath, sound quality and to sing from our groin (he's a little worried as to how to express this to our women tenors).

In the afternoons we can take organized tours to close-by places of interest. Leeds Castle, Dover Castle, the Cliffs of Dover, and this year a tour of Kent. The Kent tour is a wonderful tour to see the beauty of this section of England. I have a friend, Frank, a fellow tenor, who lives in England and has his car with him, so there are further private tours on my list.

After rehearsal at night (9:30 PM), a large group goes out through the Mint Yard Gate to the Jolly Sailor's Pub. Both staff and singers gather to have their favorite brew. Since I can't have alcohol, I always order a bitter lemon. It's like lemonade with a kick to it. Quite often singing breaks out amongst the gang and one night I found myself singing love songs to an Angel-to-be named Thelma from Italy. She's an English woman who married an Italian who had since passed away. It was a magical night.

Another night on hurrying back to the gate (closes at 11:00 PM and there's always a mad 200-yard dash from the pub to the gate), it was too nice to go to bed, so three of us, Bobbin, myself and a choir director from Texas, laid out on the lawn on the common (called Green Court). We watched the stars, passing satellites and an occasional shooting star. The guard came by once and checked us with his flashlight. We finally decided we'd never make breakfast if we didn't get to bed. So we bid each other goodnight. On entering my room (I had requested a private room), I found I had lain on an ant hill!!! Off with all clothes! Run to take a quick shower and shake out all the ants. Thank Goodness none had gotten in my bed!

On a couple of afternoons, Angel Bobbin and her friend Angel Susannah and myself partake of Frank's generosity and we go to some places not on the regular tours. On one afternoon we went to Margate on the coast where Charles Dickens lived. On Friday when our choir director thought we could have the morning rehearsal off as we were "ready," we went to the beautiful fairy-tale Scotney Castle. On the way we stopped in a small town and a local restaurant and had the Farmer's Platter. This was a meal and a half. A big mound of veggies, mushrooms, meats, cheeses, fruits, the works. Deeelicious!
On to Scotney. We park in a lot and wonder where the castle as there is none in sight. Then, we notice a sign with an arrow pointing towards a path. The path is sloping gently down hill and we enter a tunnel of a grape arbor over our heads. When we emerge, there it is below us! It's as though we've gone back centuries and maybe King Arthur is there waiting for us.

Beautiful shrubs, flowers and lawns escort us on our way down to the castle. There's a moat with water lilies in it and Monet's painting comes to mind. There are paths leading every which way and we must explore them all. Part of the castle is in ruins which adds to its beauty. Seems the present owner wanted some old stones for his new mansion and took part of the castle apart to get them. Part of the castle inside with its period furnishings can be explored.

A castle to be long remembered.

That night after dress rehearsal, Angel Susannah is invited by the choir director to play the organ in the cathedral !!! as she is a well-known organist on the West Coast of the USA. Bobbin, a fellow tenor and myself "escort" Susannah (we horn in on the event).

Inside the cathedral only a minimum of lights are on. Mysterious and beautiful!

Canterbury Cathedral is BIG! It is hard to explain to you HOW big. There's the huge general seating area, stairs where we sang a few years back, a center tower area, a choir area, to one side of that, the place where Becket got cut down, steps to the high alter (where we will stand when we sing on Saturday evening), and behind the high alter, Becket's memorial (a single candle about a foot high on a short stand) To one side of this is the Black Knight's memorial tomb.

Anyway, the tenor and I sit in the choir area as Susannah and Bobbin go up the circular stone stairs to the bridge that separates the tower from the choir. The organ is there - what?, 30 feet up, maybe more. Susannah plays beautifully. She starts into "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent." I love it! I'm singing! Wow! A solo in Canterbury Cathedral!

No flash photos are allowed. I climb the circular stairs for a photo of Susannah at the keyboard and risk one flash. A memorable photo of good times past.

The concert with orchestra goes well and we have a party afterwards in meeting area under Shirley hall. At this time it is tradition to roast the conductor, but since we are in England, it is not as harsh as some of the ones I've been to in Sheffield, MA. Then, there are our sad good byes as we will catch our various flights out in the morning.

So for those of you who opt to sing classical religious works, this is the place to go. But remember, Gospel singing reaches the people much easier with the message of His greatness that few cannot understand.

Love, Neal
December 14, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

Let's see, up at 9:00 AM; fix the wood stove fire; dress warm due for today's work; get breakfast; off to post office to mail a tape to a choir member; then over to the yacht club to pick up Frank my co-worker for our job at the new storage space for club records.

Assemble shelving. Find one set has a post missing - will have to make one.

Back to club and write various info. for boss, Angel Nancy such as need for two more storage racks and missing leg.

Turn around during my train of thoughts to look out the window and see one fishing boat headed out into the rough seas while another is coming in.

On the boat coming in there is obviously unwanted fish parts being thrown overboard. There must be a zillion gulls circling the boat. Why they don't collide is an amazing thing. Do they have assigned routes that they fly every time? During this maylay there is a constant screaming amongst the gulls as they try to get in the best position to drive to the water when a piece is thrown away. When a discarded fish part hits the water the quickest, most senior, or nastiest gull seems to get there first. That explains why he is the fattest.

Eventually the cleaning of fish slows and the gulls lose interest in circling the boat, and go off to other interests. There is a last couple of tossed pieces and a few come rushing back, but the feed is over and the day settles down to a light drizzle and a raw wind.

I punch out on the time clock; take Frank to his house so he can get his lunch and I head home to my house for lunch, fix the wood stove fire, and a nap.

The nasty old alarm tells me it's time for my shower and to dress for tonight's concert at MFA. Driving my fellow choir members in heavy traffic requires my total concentration and they talk among themselves. I've driven this route how many times? A couple of hundred? Maybe more like several thousand in my lifetime of driving in the rush hour. Each trip is new with its own set of circumstances. Each has its good spots and bad spots - polite drivers and ....well, others.

At the MFA we assemble and say our hello's and have our sound check and then a light meal. Prayers follow and then line up and WE'RE ON!

Gospel singing, if you haven't had the joy is remarkable. The audience's applause, the togetherness of our voices, the music, the message...ZOWEE! It takes me quite a while to come down from the high that I get once I get home.

But here we are, home again and telling you of my day and singing Gospel.

Love, Neal
December 21, 2006

Dear Angels and Friends:

Today was a day of contrasts or was it?

I started out the day feeding the wood stove as usual so the house would stay warm, even though I was going to be gone most of the day. My daughter came to wrap presents as my house is sort of a Santa’s “ready” room. Once she takes her stuff away, I must do my wrapping.

At the postoffice I had a package and it was heavy. So I took it home before going to work to see what marvelous thing had come via snail mail. On opening the box I found two big bags of golf balls. They were on sale at one of my favorite catalog places and I had ordered them for my grandson and my son-in-law who are into golf. I figured they could whack these hither and yon and not worry about retrieving them.

Also in another package was the antlers and red nose that now adorn my Subaru. I really need some cheap sleigh bells to complete the Christmas decor of my vehicle.

Well, off to work and while I'm there, admire the beauty of the harbor. No time to waste however, as I must clock in and head to the storage area with the leg I made for the shelves. I guess I mentioned that one unit arrived minus one leg. Then back to the club to work on putting the name plates on the trophies for this past season. One had to be disassembled to cut 1/8-inch off the bolt as it was too long and was scratching the shelf. This trophy had a statue on top, then the top of a small presentation cup, then the presentation cup itself, then a small piece of marble, then a long wooden plinth with the winner's names on it, then another small piece of marble, then a larger piece of marble. Got all that in your mind?

All of this is held together by this one long, long bolt. I felt I was in the old days trying to assemble my child's Christmas present and I had lost the directions. Wheehoo!

Well, all ended well.

Time to go home and ready myself to visit Angel Karen and her triplets. Karen and her husband and the triplets celebrate Hanukah. For me it is a learning experience and a fun time with the children and old friends.

The kids have grown by leaps and bounds since I last saw them - what - a year ago? We have those delicious potato cakes for part of our meal and play the traditional game of (memory is a terrible thing to lose...and mine just went). It is like a top that you spin with your fingers and how it lands determines whether you win or lose money out of your holdings. Dradle? Anyway, we had fun and the menorah was lit with the traditional song about the miracles of old and new Hanukahs. The two girls showed me their dancing although the boy was too busy watching his DVD to show me that he too could dance.

Back home again to read the cards that have come in today's mail. Those of you who send letters with your card gives me great pleasure to see what you've been up to this past year. Old friend Stan wrote about boats in the Connecticut River (including his) on Thanksgiving weekend; lighted and decorated for Christmas! He must be mad!

Lastly, one card in particular, had an Irish Blessing (remember: a bearnacht) or rather it is a prayer. Anyway, it has simplicity and truth in it:

An Irish Prayer
May the peace of Christ rest in your heart,
the joy of Christ shine in your eyes,
and the light of Christ brighten your path.

~~~~~~~~~~

Love, Neal

December 28, 2006

Dear Angel and Friend:

The day started fairly well. I'd had a nightmare and was glad to wake up. Before leaving the house for my sonogram of my heart area. I thought I'd best empty the ashes from the wood stove as they were getting pretty full. In the process, I lost one of the little screens that cover the vent holes into the ashes. No problem. Just cut another piece of copper screen. Spilled ashes here and there - hot ones! Got the spray bottle going to put them out before they got off the stone floor onto the linoleum. Still, no problem.

Little did I realize the way the day was going!

Off to the doctor's a little late, but, no problem. At the postoffice meet my daughter who says I'm approved for Massachusetts Prescription Advantage Program - Great!

Whoops - in the rain forest or just before, I've caught someone on the phone, has just got a seeding ticket, or just got their licence and has never driven this road before - 20 MPH or so all the way to Route 53. Well, I shouldn't complain, "it takes all kinds to make a world" (quote often used by my father). So I'm five+, minutes late at the doctor's.

No problem - they didn't even mention it.

I'm tested and out of there in 35 minutes. The very learned technician Jeanie says there's thickening in one of my heart valves, but the doctor will give me all the facts.

On the way home, I notice there's a phone call from the place that does our trophy engraving. Once I note who's calling, I put down the phone as I don't like to drive and listen on the phone. I stop at their place and pick up the things that are done, but the rest won't be ready until next Wednesday. No problem.

At my garage, I make a date for greasing and oil change for the all-important First Night commute. My mechanic, when informed of my heart murmur and the sonogram says; "You had scarlet fever real bad when you were young?" I said; "Yes." He said; "That's what caused your heart murmur." Who said auto mechanics don't know anything?

Look for King's Jewelers in Cohasset to make my new Angel-supplied watch fit better.

At my driveway, there's a giant hole where my son-in-law has just fixed a water leak a week or so ago. This hole has dual tire treads leading out of it. BIG PROBLEM! The driver moved the warning red cone or didn't see it and backed right into the fixed and still soft spot.

I rarely go ballistic, but today was my day! I was on the phone to the oil company and the boss came and looked it over and filled the hole. The soil was very soft and spongy. Water started showing up and I figured they had reopened the leak. Called my son-in-law who also came with back hoe and work force. They've decided to wait until morning to see if it is ground
water a new leak. We have a lot of trouble in this area with a very high "water table" (ground water).

While all this is going on, I am on high stress as I haven't been able to get to work all day.

Decide it is too late to go to the club; so I work on new setup for firewood storage areas of the wood that has been waiting to be cut and split. The guy is due this week. The old racks are kind of seedy and look crummy. They are now all ready for the new wood. It was a good way to work off my anger over the oil truck driver's goof.

Looking back, was today a day when Mercury was in retrograde? (According to astrologers, Mercury in retrograde is a period of hours or days when everything seems to go wrong.) How did your day go? Was it a good day, a so-so day, or a bad day?

Now, I got the wood stove going, the deck where the computer is, is toasty, I've got the balsam candles lighted and it smells like the Christmas tree just came in the door. My decaf tea is hot and delicious; I'm listening to us singing Gospel at Mystic last year; and all's right with the world!

Goodnight.

Love, Neal
January 1, 2007
Dear Angel and Friend

We only sang one set tonight at St. Paul's Cathedral on Tremont St. in downtown Boston.

But first, let's go back a day.

Saturday we rehearsed at St. Francis deSales (sp?) Church our normal rehearsal place. One night out of all the times we rehearsed there it was warm. The rest of the rehearsals were done usually with our coats on the whole time. We are a hardy bunch! We voted the previous week to have a get together after Saturday's rehearsal instead of after our First Night sing.

So while Norris (who was not singing) was preparing our get-together, we rehearsed in the mostly unheated sanctuary. Bro. Dennis went over our soloists and pointed out that we couldn't do "Heaven" as Sharon Molden was sick and we had no back-up person for that song. So we rehearsed all the numbers that needed work and went in for our excellent get together that Norris had set up.

At this juncture, several people including Bro. Dennis, Austin deBeshe and Ann Early (new member) talked Sandra into trying to do the solo for "Heaven". She went back in the sanctuary with Bro. Dennis to take a crack at it and shortly returned saying she was going to try to do it. Learn a solo in one night and a day? She did very good. She wasn't happy with herself, but most of us thought she did great!

Well, another aspect of this momentous occasion. Dennis said he couldn't park anwhere near the concert place and could some of us come early to St. Francis deSales and we'd form a moving, moving team; each of us would take a piece of equipment, go to the T station (Ruggles - Orange line) and we'd get the equipment there that way.

Since we were bringing Sandra to St Francis anyway for a last minute rehearsal of her song, we'd join the moving, moving team. Katie had a snare drum and so did Sandra. I had a music stand. Someone pulled Bro. Dennis new keyboard which had wheels at one end. Others took big drums, amplifiers, mixers, mics, whatever. We all got on one Orange line car. The people in that car wondering who we were bring our equipment into town on the T.

A short walk from Downtown Crossing and we were there. The usual hub-bub of assembling stuff, sound check, highjinks, photos by me during warmup and finally down into the bowels of the church for Dennis' pep talk and our prayers. This was so far underground, I could hear the subway running just under our feet!!! Gave me the willies! Then we lined up and someone said; "Neal GO! I was to lead the choir up through the labyrinth of stairs to the sanctuary? "God", I said; "Don't let me lead them into a closet" As we came in, there was a momentary pause, and then the audience realized it was the choir and not another technician coming on stage. The applause was deafening! The place was packed!!!

Margaret Carsley, ML Langfried, Mabrey, Carle Thornehill, Grandfather and other known figures were on their feet yelling and applauding. Olivia, Bro Dennis wife, was in the front row. I had thanked her earlier in the evening as being our Rock for the choir.

This was to be a wonderful concert. We knew before we started. We were prepared! We were on top of our cause, our music, our spirit! We loved each other and we loved the audience and from their applause, they loved us! It was one of those magical nights that makes singing Gospel so exhilarating!

We opened with "Total Praise" and along the way sang Charles Floyd's "Lord's Prayer" from his "Hosanna" oratorio. Most people, if they've heard the Lord's Prayer set to music, only know the familiar one (John Hay?); so this beautiful arrangement was very warmly received. Sandra
did "Heaven" Laura sang. Kim Childs (also sings at Mystic) sang, Austin led "Rejoice", Georgiary conducted several songs, and we did "Be Like Him" from three years ago. Others like Nicole, Thornton, Austin, Kim, Dorine, Laverne! and others participated in songs requiring a quartet or small group such as in couple of new songs: "Ooo Child" and "Heaven Help Us All" I've probably left a couple of songs out, but at the end Norris conducted "O Happy Day" Oh yes, our orchestra!!! Dennis, Bob Wycoff, Dennis' two children, one on sax and the other on drums and our guitar player did "I Feel Good" in memory of ? Brown (my brain is fried!)

Thornton gave Sandra, Katie and me a ride back to St. Francis and I got up close and personal with Dennis' keyboard in the backseat as it wouldn't fit in the trunk. Well, Sandra was in the back seat too and a lot of the remarks that circulated as we started off were not to be repeated in mixed company.

After the moving, moving team arrived from the T with the rest of the equipment, we did our Happy New Years and goodbys. Sandra, Katie and me, the chauffeur, started home, but we thought we'd get a bite to eat and stopped at the "Harp and Bard Pub" on Dot Ave. The waitress was evidently due at a party and gave us our check early so she could leave, but the meal was excellent.

Why was this night so different than the last several years? I think that singing only one set helped, but another thing was that we were in a cathedral, a church and it was packed. Also, we were close to the audience. At Hynes, we were 75 feet away from the audience!

Anyway, the BCC kids knew their stuff and we and the audience had a wonderful time!

I got the girls home, but didn't make it to Scituate before Midnight; so the cannon did not announce the new year this year.

Love, .Neal
IMPORTANT - An Experience - Yesterday, January 30, 2007

Dear Angel and Friend:

Yesterday my Angel.........I can't use "cleaning lady" for an Angel. OK, my Angel "housekeeper" came for her monthly cleanup of the mess I make of my house.

She had gone upstairs while I did my monthly cleaning of my Brita water filter jar. It gets green mold in the bottom since it sits on a stainless steel sink counter and somehow the light refracts with the plastic to enhance mold growth.

ANYWAY, while working away at this jar with sponge, spatula, dish cloth, plenty of water. and rehearsing an African song that got stuck in me brain; I happened to notice (out the corner of my eye) that Angel Susan had come up behind me and was getting a paper towel or something off the counter behind me. She didn't say anything as I guess she didn't want to interrupt me, and I didn't want to interrupt her train of thought either.

When she came downstairs some minutes later, I said; "What did you come down for a few minutes ago?" She said; "I didn't come down a few minutes ago. I've been upstairs for 20 minutes."

!!!!!

I knew I saw someone! I remember what she was wearing, and come to think of it, it was not what Susan was wearing. The woman I saw was wearing a rust and white shirt (almost like a light jacket) and dark skirt or slacks. I did not see her face as she was facing the counter behind me, but she had dark hair.

She was taller than my wife and moved faster than my mother-in-law. (My mother-in-law had died in this house.) So that was a possibility.

Who was this woman???

If any of my taller Angels has had a near-death experience, it could have been her, but outside of that, I don't have a clue.

I have had, in my doting years (so much better than saying "older" years), paranormal experiences as those of you who have read my book on ghosts will know. However, all of those had a relationship to a known event or person. For example, the coworker at Stone & Webster, the Civil War soldier in Gettysburg, the woman at the Baptist church in Newton, etc.

I should also say, and this is a common thing, that I did not feel uncomfortable or threatened at the time. As I said, I thought in was Angel Susan, my housekeeper. It was only afterwards that I realized it was someone else (who had gone beyond or was close to going beyond).

As the kitchen is at the end of the house away from the wood stove it was quite cool and I did not notice any change in the temperature of the air. This often happens when a ghost appears, as I think the can only materialize by taking the heat (energy) from the surrounding air.

I often see one or another of my cats who have passed away, but usually only half of him or her. At Kathie's, my co-author's house one day, her dog who had passed away (the one before Milo), rubbed against my leg. There was absolutely no other explanation. Her house does have unseen occupants and that story is also in our book.
Last night, before going to sleep, I said prayers for this unknown person. Perhaps she came for help.

Any ideas?

Love, Neal
February 25, 2007

Mystic Chorale was its usual wonderful mountain of voices - 224 of them all stacked up on risers at Tremont Temple. Carolina Chacin was my co-worker and she came on short notice as my first person quit at the last minute.

As usual Carolina and I knew most of the songs - some from Pops' "God and God Alone" and Millennium's "Psalm 8" by Smallwood (this was sung by the Twelfth Baptist Church Gospel ensemble). There two of the ones Mystic did last year; "Are you ready for a Miracle" and the Gospel version of "Swing Low Sweet Chariot." From Joyful Voices' known songs came "High in All the Earth" and "Everything That Hath Breath". Of course, there was "Total Praise". Carolina and I were on our feet much of the time singin' and clappin'.

There was a sing-a-long Gospel medley. Lot's of fun, but perhaps the most moving was a song called "I'm Available" which neither of us knew. Beautiful sustained chords sung as "Ahhh" by each voice part, coming and going in volume and pitch. Ohh, just magnificent!

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Well the discount garage was full and the other garage closes its doors that are handy to the temple and you have to walk around to Park Plaza Entrance No. 2. Well, of course, this was quite disorienting as I only knew where I was from the other entrance. So I got on the elevator went down to the garage and the utilized the Subaru locator. The key button.

I pushed the button, heard a familiar beep, beep; walked towards that direction came to a blank wall after a bit. Pushed the button again.........nothing. Hmmmm. Walked back a ways, pushed the button, beep, beep - walked towards the sound. Got to where it should be and pushed the button again - beep, beep.....ABOVE me. I'm on the wrong floor! Walk up a handy ramp, push the button again, BEEP, BEEP....ahhh there you are 100 feet ahead.

Got to the ticket booth and asked the cashier if he heard me locating my car - did he ever! He and I had a good laugh. I told him I was wandering around on the wrong floor.

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Well, the ocean was kind of mixed today, but there was an interesting phenomena at the mouth of the harbor. The water appeared to be made out of sand. I was distinctly sand colored! Ken (the club Steward) and I talked it over and it was my thought that as the tide receded last night, it was cold enough to freeze the beach sand on the Northwest side of the harbor which is a nice beach. Then when the tide came back in, with the strong Northwest wind blowing, it blew this frozen sand out onto the water and being that it contained a lot of ice, it floated. When it reached the channel area it was sort of pushed back by the current of the incoming tide and collected in large mass probably 1000 feet long by 300-400 feet wide. An interesting sight.

On other occasions, in the winter, I have seen the harbor as blue as the water in the tropics - that beautiful cerulean blue you usually only see in the islands.

Congratulations to Johathon Singleton and the Mystic Chorale - they've done it again!

Thanks Mystic, ushering was a blast!

Love, Neal
March 8, 2007

Some Days Are Ones You Remember
Dear Angel and Friend:

Today was one of those days.

The wind let up and although it was almost as cold it did not feel as cold. I worked in the clubhouse at the yacht club most of the day and we kept an eye out to sea to try to catch a glimpse of the JFK aircraft carrier as she left Boston. But we missed seeing her.

I did want to mention "cat's paws" in regard to yesterday. Many of you landlubbers may not be familiar with these wonderful things. When a puff of wind comes across the water it makes a little wave pattern all its own (the cat's paw). Small ones are about 50 or so feet wide and if you're sailing a small boat and are not prepared for them they can tip you over.
On hot summer days when out on the water and it is almost flat calm you're dying to see one of these coming. This is especially true if you're trying to get back into the haabaa at dusk and don't want to start an engine (or worse, don't have an engine).

Well, yesterday when the wind was holding 35 MPH or so, and you had to run to another building to get a tool or whatever, the cat's paws were not very welcome visitors. Some of the so-called windbreaker jackets are not worth a damn in that kind of wind.

Ahh, but today, lovely day! Not many cat's paws and a bright sun.

After work, dash home shower and dress to go to the haabaa (there are no "r"s in haabaa) to meet Angel Ann and husband Bill to have dinner and attend a Ceilidhe at the book store. This was a special one to drum up business in the dark lion days of March. I don't how much business came in, but we had a wonderful dinner (thanks Bill) and some fun singing our old favorites.

Angel Beverly sang us a song about our (Scituate's) legendary Army of Two, and there was a request for the "Pig Song". The room was a bit confining for certain sound effects; so next time we'll supply towels. Steve brought his old fashioned "Dancin' Woody" which kind of defies description in this short note. But suffice it to say it is a wooden figure with moving arms and legs who is held with a stick in his back and dances on a long shingle. John had his dulcimer, Bonnie her auto harp, Steve his guitar, and Howard his guitar and mandolin. Of course, our mistress of ceremonies Kathie had her accordion. The rest of us enjoyed singing all the songs including "Bertha's Mussels", a lot of Irish songs and ballads, old standards, the usual funny songs - Dolores had some altered lyrics that brought down the house.

It was one of those nights.

Our small town quiet impressed Angel Ann who came down from bustling suburbia.

After a quick visit to Gray's mausoleum, I took Ann and Bill out to Route 3 via "short cut", past "Itchy's on the Square," through the "rain forest", and out to the strip malls of Queen Anne's corner. As you may or may not know, Queen Anne ran that kind of place way, way back. Hingham did it damnedest to get the name changed, but to no avail. "Queen Anne, did you ever think your house of ill repute would carry its name all these centuries?"

Love, Neal
March 17, 2007

Got Snow or Moss?

Dear Angel and Friend.

We are having a snow event here in jolly old New England. Although here in Scituate (south of Boston) it has turned to heavy rain.

Ran my snow blower and cleared the lower driveway and turning area before the rain chased me indoors. We had about 4 or so inches of snow. You people north and west got clobbered I've heard. I hadn't run my snow blower for two years. Bless the man who invented the electric starter for this monster machine.

Looks like the yacht club's St. Paddy's Day dance is going to be in good shape tomorrow night. And Scituate's parade should be OK on Sunday. They don't call Scituate the "Irish Riviera" in jest.

Some years back, Scituate was the capital of the Irish Mossing industry. What is Irish Moss you say? Hmmm - it's a form of sea weed; it comes primarily in three colors and at one time, these were separated while being dried, depending on their future use. It is used in medicines, in food starch, in perfumes, and way back, as house insulation!

It looks a little like...umm...parsley. It grows on rocks off the shore and is harvested with long handled rakes at low tide. Men and boys go out in dories and skiffs to collect the moss. A net is suspended across the gunnels of the boat and the moss is collected in the net.

When they return to shore, a truck with a small crane, winch and scale lifts out the net and weighs it to determine how much to pay the man in that boat. Years ago, each man had a section of the beach and he landed on the beach; brought his moss up in large wooden tubs or a net to a canvas spread out on the beach and dried it right on the beach. Some dried it right on the sand. There was a price for wet, dried on canvas and dried on sand. Of course, "wet" was very low as opposed to "dry".

I also see it in my health food store as a powder - I'll have to see what they use it for. Maybe it is a cure for the Colly-Wobbles. What is the Colly-Wabbles you say?

Another time for that.

Love, Neal
April 5, 2007
The Starbucks Coffee turkey has taken flight to a bizarre location

Dear Angel and Friend:

Since I last wrote to you about our aggressive turkey who chases people out on Route 3-A in Cohasset, many things have happened. Starbucks put up a sign warning customers of the turkey's bad manners and behavior.

Well then, down the road about a quarter mile is the Scituate Rod and Gun Club. Why would any intelligent (hmmm - then again, I don't think turkeys have a clue about anything) or even dumb bird go to a gun club? The rod and gun club is usually empty except on weekends when local hunters go to practice their skeet shooting.

During this empty period our Starbucks turkey arrived to look into mating as it is mating season and “in the spring a young turkey's mind wanders to thoughts of love” or something like that. Anyway, on this particular weekend, the rod and gun club was having its annual game feed auction as a part of the Ducks Unlimited Organization. There was no shooting that day and the turkeys (a whole bunch) were strutting around and a Tom (male) turkey was doing his thing - displaying to various and sundry females in the group.

It appeared the females didn't give a hoot for this guy as there was someone special in the bunch who made all other turkeys pale by comparison.......it was a peacock!!!

Now you gotta' know when a peacock struts his stuff everyone (turkeys included) takes notice. The females thought this guy had been to New Orleans and was on steroids.

The tom was a bit upset, but the peacock was bigger than him and the tom thought the peacock was an alien from outer space and stayed clear of him.

I'll be following this story closely to see if we have any cross breeding here and what shall we call these birds? Hopefully, they'll be smarter, but knowing peacocks a little from my trip to England's Leed's Castle where they wander through the lunch area, I doubt it.

They are scavengers much like seagulls and not afraid of humans.

To be continued.

Love, Neal
April 6, 2007
On the Use of Front Doors

Dear Angel and Friend:

There were many varied answers to the use of front doors, but I think I screwed up as usual.

It was not about YOUR front door and whether you or your friends and guests used it.

What I was trying point out was that many houses today are either built so the front door is a waste or that it has become a waste because of the automobile.

Beautiful capes, colonials, ranches, and many modern houses are entered at the breezeway, the patio, the back door; because it is next to the driveway and that's where you and guests park. I, personally, am not against it, but I'm sorry to see front doors on houses not being used. It is not a question of friends or Jehovah Witnesses. It’s a question of esthetics.

Houses, to some extent, are living entities [boy, this guy is really over the edge!] They’re thinking; "I wish people would stop coming in my ear (nose, xxx). I have this nice mouth with all my teeth in place and they come my ear" Well, I guess it isn't that bad, and kitchens are friendly and homey; plus you get to know what's for dinner.

It's just that I see these lovely houses and the front door doesn't even have a path to it anymore.

There's a beautiful Victorian house on the way to where my brother is staying and it has a fantastic front door, a porch with chairs on it and a nice picket fence out front. Perfect? There's no gate in the fence and the cars are parked at the side next to the back door. BAH-HUMBUG!

Maybe I'm prejudice, because you have to walk all the around *my* house to get to the back door. But you know, some people do it. *Course that's where the deck and the view are and that's the drawing card, not my 1950's kitchen.

Plus, I guess my door bell is kind of intimidating. Nobody ever rings it. It's a bell and is next to the front door - ring it!!! It won't hurt you. I know, it's a big bell, but that's what makes it easy for me to hear inside the house. The neighbors all know you are here as well. It was war surplus and I couldn't resist it. It weighs 76 pounds - that's why it's bolted to structural members in the wall of the house. *Ring it!!!* For some momentous occasions, it often gets rung several times. New Years, Red Sox winning the World Series, calling Kayakers who are late getting back for the pot-luck supper. Recently a UPS driver rang it and was so frightened, he was half way up the drive by the time I got to the door to thank him.

Well, that's it for tonight folks.

Love, Neal
April 9, 2007, Easter

Dear Angel and Friend:

We had the usual hectic Easter AM this morning - arrive at 8:15 AM and rehearse in parish hall so our voices won't carry into the Sanctuary where the 8:00 o'clock service was underway. Then, we sang the 9:00 o'clock service, had breakfast in the parish hall between then and the 11:00 o'clock service which was the "smells and bells" service complete with a baptism.

However, we did not do the "Holy Pretzel" for either service. Maybe this is losing its popularity. Angel Jean, our director, was her usual unpreturbed self and she brought two masters candidates from NEC to bolster up our alto and soprano sections. I she figures the basses and tenors are beyond help. I taped the pertinent anthems to see where I screwed up. I didn't have to listen long.

After church, I went to a fellow worker's house to take a family photograph for him as all his children and their children had come from far and wide for Easter. His house overlooks Scituate light and his house is mentioned in my book. It's the one where he smells the former owner's cigar and cigarettes every so often.

Then a call on my co-author as she is fluent in Irish Gaelic and I needed a name on a map translated. That taken care of ....oh, and inbetween each task, I'd run home to feed my wood stove as it is a cold day. .....I was off to my daughter's for her Easter soiree.

She loves holidays and always cooks for an army and today, we had 10 and I read the Grace from my Grace book. Had to pick one that was moderate in message, so as to not upset the non-church goers. You know, if you pick a "Hell Fire and Damnation" one, the food is not going to taste as good and my daughter would be on my case when the guests left. Hah-hah! Just kidding.

As a matter of fact, I don't think there are any "Hell Fire and Damnation" Graces. After all, we're thanking God for our lives, family, friends, and food, etc.

Well, another week of singing is upon me and I must get my "beauty?" sleep. I ate so well, I'm not sure I can make it up the stairs, but that's where the bed is.

Love, Neal
April 15, 2007
Dear Angel and Friend:

At church this AM, it was raining, but nothing special. The wind was hardly noticable. The trees moved ever so slightly; even the highest ones, which usually catch the stronger winds, It was cold, yes; temperature near, or slightly below 40 F. Raw, would describe it exactly.

After church I visited the supermarket to get cold cereal and watched the "storm surge" of shoppers binge buying. If we lose power for a while, perhaps the frozen foods would last a while outside unless you had the forethought to buy a generator to run your frig.

Then, on the way home, checked No. Scituate beach for a personal view of conditions. Sunday drivers were out in force; even stopping to look at the ocean. To my eye, trained over generations of ocean watching, there was not much to see. Yes, it was windy and raining, but no big waves were heading toward shore. All in all, kind of a let down. Well, it is early, give Ol' Neptune a chance to get his Irish up (if that's what it takes). I headed home to my barn to stoke the wood stove. Its warmth led to a nap of embarrassing length. Lunch was somewhere in the middle. I did notice the trees starting to move and the rain becoming steady.

Caught a weather update on the TV and heard the forecaster mention the word "fetch." I've talked about this word before, but the forecaster left out a very important part of "fetch." Fetch is a combination of factors. First, the direction of the wind (NE in our case). Second, the strength (velocity, MPH) of the wind. Third, the amount of open area (ocean) the wind travels over before it reaches you (me, whoever). Fourth (what the forecaster left out), the amount of time this wind blows over that area.

Just watch out the next time you throw a stick and tell the dog to "Fetch".

Around supper time, I checked the rain and found it still not too heavy and decide to refill the fireplace (wood storage) as later it might be raining the so-called "Cats and Dogs." Puddles were getting of good size in the driveway and I was glad I brought in wood when I did.

High tides right now are getting higher each tide on up to Thursday when we'll have that 12.2 tide I mentioned earlier. Even now though, they are in the 11-foot area and that will be enough along with the storm surge to do some damage - it depends on the fetch!

My house is sheltered somewhat by the hill leading up to the street, my neighbor's house which is some forty feet higher than mine (although 300 feet away), and by tall trees towards the northeast from my house. So I sit here, hearing the rain beating down, hoping all our fishermen are safe in port and wondering how my friends who are but yards from the ocean are doing.

Kind of glad I'm not running the marathon, though I probably wouldn't make it to the starting line (judging from where the neophyes are lined up). They must run more than the standard marathon. There should be a separate finish line to acknowledge their distance run.

Hope you are in good fettle, ready to do battle with the day ahead. Oh, you lucky ones in warmer parts of the world. However, my prayers go out to those in the areas where the tornados struck.

Further reports tomorrow.

Love, Neal
April 16, 2007  Nor’easter
Hi it's me again.

View is looking towards Fourth Cliff (left background) with Marshfield Hills behind that.

Third Cliff is hidden behind Second Cliff.  As this was taken, the sun started to feel its way through the clouds.

Love, Neal

April 17, 2007
Dear Angels and Friends:

Just when I thought it was over, the weatherman says the storm is reforming off the coast and it'll be back tomorrow.  Winds last night veered towards the southeast so the South Shore got off a little lighter than was first thought.

Around 12:00 Midnight last night the house received a gust I estimate at 55-60 MPH.  From over 50 years in this house, I kind of know when the wind gets to a certain velocity.  There's a distinct moaning sound and if it's a gust, the house sort of flinches - gives one short shake.

Well, this morning's inspection turned up a yard full of small 1/2 inch size broken brances.  No serious damage around my house.  The private road opposite my driveway was constructed so all the rain water drains onto Border Street.  This is a plague for those who are down hill on the street.  The town built a drainage ditch on the edge of the road that handles most rain storms.  Not this time!  Just down from my neighbor across the street, the ditch overflowed and washed rocks and dirt all the way down the street to where it crosses the road and drains into the marsh.

The tide came up in my neighbor's yard on the west side of me.  That's where I normally keep my kayaks.  His are on tall saw horses and suffered no damage and my canoe was high enough up so it did not float.
I drove along with most of my townspeople who are wave watchers down to Glades Road to view the waves at high tide. The end of Gannett Road was blocked off so we had to take an alternate route. Ahh, the majesty of those big rollers and crashing surf. People would run to the edge of the road closest to the ocean, snap a photo and run back before the next wave came up over the road. I made no effort to go to the end of Glades Road as that was blocked off as well and Bailey's Causeway looked too deep to drive through. So I went back over Glades Road headed the opposite way and found one spot where the wind was not blowing the waves towards the car. Took photos without getting out of the car.

Yacht club was OK and went out on Second and First Cliff for more photos. Came home and spent much time trying download my photos to e-mails. Think I've got it now.

And so it goes - further updates to follow.

Love, Neal

April 19, 2007

Dear Angel and Friend:

When I was young (not younger...young), it seemed we got 3-day nor'easters quite often. People expected them in the fall, winter and spring. No problem. Then everyone started building and living on the edge of some water, river, stream or ocean. When there was a storm, they panicked. Hey, guys, the water isn't always nice and calm. Live it or leave it!

I'd like to mention a couple of things about ocean storms. On Glades Road where some of my photos were taken, the road is 20 or so feet above the normal high tide and there is a concrete seawall that runs north on the road till you get into the tiny village of Minot.

Anyway, when a large wave hits this wall, there is an unforgettable sound or boooooom and the ground shakes! Why? It's only water!
I remember when my folks lived on Surfside Road (south of Glades Road) where the road was behind the houses and the houses were only 10-15 feet above the normal high tide. That booooom against the seawall could wake you up at night, but after two or three, you fell asleep again. Guests used to ask; "How can you sleep with all that noise?"

The other thing I want to mention is "spume". Spume is similar to foam, but oh, so different. Foam is usually white and sort of pretty in it's own way. You usually see it by itself, but sometime it occurs with spume. Now, spume is sort of beige to light brown in color. I guess it forms when sea water is intensely disturbed/agitated. Maybe also mixed with God know what from the ocean floor. It is heavier than foam. It is impossible to remove from your clothing. Years later, you will tell a friend; "Oh, that spot? That's from spume that I got on my coat in the Nor'easter of April 2007. Can't seem to wash or bleach it out." Yep, that's spume.

Today, over near Ken Crowell's house (yacht club steward), I drove over/through 6 inches of sand/ocean to view this large patch of spume. Some lovely baseball-sized pieces of foam was dancing about in the air as if mocking the spume that just laid there looking nasty. I wanted to get out to take a photo, but the rain would have gotten to my camera and I didn't have the forethought to bring my late sister's waterproof Nikon.

Someday, I'll dress in a full set of oilskins (those yellow things are now plastic), put on my half boots, load the waterproof Nikon and get down and dirty with spume. Then you'll see it for what it is - Ol' Neptune's idea that puts dog doo-doo to shame.

Well, friends, warmth is a'comin'. Have patience.

Love, Neal
May 29, 2007
What Did You Do In the War, Daddy?

Dear Angel and Friend:

Thank you so much for your kind thoughts and remembrances of what Memorial Day means to many of us. I know many of those veterans have blocked out the terrible things they saw. War is never pretty.

I find myself very lucky to have survived unharmed. I was only in great danger twice (that I was aware of, wait maybe three, no four); once on the ship somewhere in warm waters off Africa when a torpedo passed down our port side about 25 feet away, once in Casablanca when an Arab tried to knife me, once on the flight deck (a really scary couple of moments), and once in the middle of the North Atlantic in a surface battle with a submarine.

Why would our skipper put the stern of our aircraft carrier in close proximity to a surfaced sub? We had firepower! I forgot what our escorts had in caliber size, but ours was at least 2 inches larger; like 5-inch verses 3-inch.

The sub was battling a separate destroyer squadron on one side and our escorts on the other side. He was pretty busy. Plus, the ocean swells were such he couldn't fire a torpedo with any chance of accuracy (those inside the sub were being tossed around like ping-pong balls); just as we couldn't launch aircraft for the same reason. The swells were at least 40-feet and mixed (by "mixed" I mean the they were coming from different directions). This also interfered with the accuracy of our gunfire.

We saved 28 out of 86-odd crewmen from the sub when it went down. Some of the rest resisted rescue by firing hand guns at our rescuers (it is not easy to reach down to save a person when he shooting at you). Others were probably badly injured inside the sub.

Outside of that, the size of the swells will always stay in my mind. In my battle position alongside the flight deck, I noted that when our ship was in the troth between swells, I could not see the horizon. The flight deck is 50+ feet above the water!

Love, Neal
June 18, 2007  
Back on the Water Again

Dear Angel and Friend:

The kayak seemed just a mite heavier this year, but then it was the first time I'd picked it up in quite a while.

I was so anxious to get on the water, I had to drag it out a long ways on the marsh as there wasn't enough water in my neighbor's ditch to float the kayak. The water was about a foot and a half below the top of the marsh. Plus, it's a good thing that the marsh grass has a tenacious grip of its soil. Getting this old hulk in a tipping kayak is not a pretty sight!

However, I made it without getting wet, but it was a close thing. Due to the hot sun, I wore my white broad brimmed hat to avoid getting any sunstroke. As I started out, there was a fairly strong Southwest wind and I thought I'd swing be my friend's house across the marsh while I worked up my paddling strokes. I was rusty.

When I emerged from his stream (Stepping Stone Brook) the wind had died and appeared to be swinging into the Southeast. This is common at this time of the year because as the land heats, the cool ocean air flows towards the land.

So I gamely started towards the bridge at Cohasset Haabaa; not being sure I could make on my first time out this summer. I caught up with a family in kayaks whose children were struggling as the their life jackets did not fit well. I think they removed them after a while.

There was not enough water to use "the shortcut" and I left it as an option for my return trip.

As I headed North on the wide expanse of the Gulf after passing the entrance of Bound Brook I noticed a long flat calm area in the middle. On the West side the wind was Southwest; then the calm area which was about 50-80 feet wide, and on the other side the wind was Southeast. Where does the wind go in the flat calm in the middle? How does it suddenly stop? Does it go up? What about the wind coming behind the wind that disappears? Do it know it's going to have to also disappear?

Will have to ask Mike Wankum (weatherman on Ch 5) who lives here in Scituate.

I got to the bridge and there were other kayakers milling about. Some had attempted to get into Cohasset Haabaa, but the current was still too strong.

The kids were into the "Rite of Passage" thing. Jumping off the bridge is what you have to do in these parts when you become bold enough. Two girls in itsy-bitsy bikinis jumped holding hands. The water was cold. There were many cries of "OMG!" when they came to the surface after a jump.

I noticed the current didn't appear too strong on the left side of the bridge and was able to get through to the shack that's a part of the boat yard and out of the current. However, further progress would have to wait as the current was still too strong. Two other kayakers with furious strokes, got out into the haabaa and in another five minutes, I made it out myself. A few photos of this and that and I coasted back to the bridge on the last of the incoming tide.

Under the bridge the tide went flat and I made photos of some splashes of kids jumping off the bridge. Then I started home remembering that there was a possibility of a thumper and the western sky did not look happy.
I was successful in getting through "the short cut" although I had to pull myself along using the
grasses at the far end. The wind had now gone back to strong Southwest and I had an easy
paddle home.

It was time for two big glasses of water and a short nap.

Love, Neal

July 3, 2007
Dear Angel and Friend:

Out on the water by kayak today. Down to the bridge in time for a paddle through and caught up
with two other kayaks - the red and white one had a voice that was familiar. Well, I'll be! It was
Walter from the West End. Walter sounds not like any other local voice.

It's sort of a drawl that you'd recognize anywhere. Well, Walter and his friend appeared to be
headed out to Minot's Light and I was not. so I bid him goodbye and paddled briefly around the
area close to the bridge.

Some kids showed up to jump off the bridge and find out how cold the water was, but that didn't
deter them; they jumped again. I sat in the shade under a building for a while watching them and
taking a couple of photos and drinking some water. Then I drifted back under the bridge into the
Gulf on the last of the incoming tide. In a ways, got talking with two women, one of whom had her
daughter with her. The daughter decided on a jump in and she also discovered the cold water.
Mother also went in. As they had sit-ons, it was fairly easy to get back on to their craft.

I paddled leisurely back inland and at one point stopped paddling to "watch a hawk making lazy
circles in the sky"

Further inland after photographing some geese I saw the women in the sit-ons take a wrong turn
at Mrs. Bleakey's into a dead end, but they were too far away to hear me.

Later, and further inland I went to the far bank to investigate a bright red and white object on the
edge of the marsh grass. Turned out to be a large cooler with the name Leahy on it and their
phone number. Now a large cooler and a small sit-in kayak are not very compatible. But I was
not too far from home and thought I could hold it at 45 degrees sort of between my knees.

I noticed the sit-ons with the ladies coming and paddled over to see if they knew the Leahy's.
They did and they took the cooler to return to the Leahy's later this afternoon.

Paddled over to say hello to Bos'n and Angel Ann in Stepping Stone Creek and Bos'n and the
cocker spaniel she's caring for wanted to jump right in my kayak.

Then home only to find the water was down too far to get to my float; so I had to exit the kayak
onto the marsh grass - always a hair-raising experience "fraught with dire consequences." The
black muck on the bottom would be great makeup if you wanted to play the part of "Creature from
the Deep." Smells weird too!

After putting the kayak up on its saw horses, I got aboard my new riding lawn mower (it's one of
them z-turn ones) and did some more of my lawn. Got into an area near my blueberry bushes
that I hadn't cut in two years. Young sassafras trees were enroaching and the mower knocked
them down and chewed them up. Saw my peach tree was beginning to bear fruit that local deer
usually get to before I do.
Ran out of gas in the middle of the blueberry bushes and had to hike a ways to get gas from my wood shed. Went over to my neighbor's where I keep my kayak. It's a big wide area and I did a top speed test of the mower. It must go at least 15-20 miles an hour straight ahead, but turns at zero radius at 100 miles an hour - it's scary! I think I need a seat belt.

Afterwards, I brushed off all kings of bugs and brush and went into the house for a Boost! and a couple of glasses of water. Relaxed until dinner at my daughter's - so much for my day off. Next day off is Saturday when Millennium Choir goes to Martha's Vineyard to sing in the Tabernacle.

Keep singing.

Love, Neal

August 3, 2007
Dear Angels and Friends:

Due to the busy, busy, busy days of this summer, I've postponed my cataract surgery until after the club closes in November.

Heritage Days in Scituate Haabaa is this weekend and tomorrow night is the Luminaria. On that beautiful night, the entire coast of Scituate is lighted using 1-gallon plastic milk cartons, filled with a little sand and a tea light candle. These are placed no further than 6 feet apart by volunteers up and down all of Scituate's coast. Even the inside of the haabaa is done.

It is a magnificent sight. It exemplifies what neighbors can do together when motivated.

Other people go out in their boats to view the sight.

I, of course will be working that afternoon, but will go back to the club to view the sight from the end of the walkway.

Monday is the start of our annual Junior Sailing Regatta and I'm working 2 PM until 8 PM to clean up after the splash party at the pool for young people from our club and the visiting youngsters.

On these hot, hot days, the flower gardens at the club have to have their watering done to keep them looking nice. That's my job! Better than collecting trash.

Also I do one Tarzan Yell everyday for the kids. Keeps the voice in shape! Hah-hah.

Hoping you're confinement in artificially cooled rooms tomorrow doesn't adversely affect your appreciation of Mother Nature's gift of summer.

Love, Neal

September 4, 2007
Dear Angel and Friend:

Labor Day - a day of contrasts. For some, a day of grieving over a holiday accident, a death in war overseas, loss of two brave firefighters, floods, crime, etc.

For others a day of great joy for many reasons; a wedding in Newport, a birth, a homecoming, saving of a life, etc.
For most of us it is a traditional day with traditional things done as we have for many years. Family gatherings, games to attend or participate in, concerts, cookouts, or projects worked on.

On a couple of my traditional Labor Days, I would seriously screw up something. It involved cutting down a tree.

The first time on a Labor Day, the tree fell the wrong way and removed the electric service from the corner of the house. Called the power company, Brockton Edison, they came and put things back together on Labor Day.

The next year also on Labor Day, having learned my lesson, I cut a big tree halfway up the hill away from the house by 150 feet. Just as it was about to fall, I noticed it starting to pinch the saw and I whipped the saw out of the cut. It fell 1/2 inch, and stayed there! The next little breeze could blow it over onto the power lines which were only a few feet away on one side. Or it could come down on the car and perhaps kill me or my wife.

Called Brockton Edison. He came, went up in his bucket and put a line on the tree. He and I then went up in the woods away from the power lines and pulled in over.

The third year on Labor Day morning, Brockton Edison called and advised me not to cut any trees that day as their duty man was out sick.

Love, Neal

September 11, 2007
Dear Angel and Friend:

Perhaps Barbara G. should read this in the afternoon. Love, Neal

Freedom . . .

This past week I was on a four and a half hour, non-stop flight from Seattle, Washington, to Atlanta, Georgia. In all my years of traveling, I have learned that each time a plane has the opportunity to stop, there is potential for unexpected challenges. Flight delays, weather and airline crews can create unanticipated challenges on any trip. Therefore, I always try to fly non-stop between my destinations.

About an hour into this particular flight, the Captain's voice rang over the intercom. He asked if there was a physician or nurse on the plane. If so, he asked them to identify themselves by ringing the flight attendant call button beside their seat. I listened carefully but heard no one ring their bell. I immediately began to wonder what was happening.

In a few minutes the Captain informed us that there was a medical emergency on board and asked again if there was a physician or nurse on the plane. If so, he asked them to identify themselves by ringing the flight attendant call button beside their seat. I listened carefully but heard no one ring their bell. I immediately began to wonder what was happening.

About half an hour later, we landed at Denver International Airport and the medical crew immediately came on board. However, everything took longer than had previously been expected. An elderly gentleman, about 85 years old, had suddenly taken ill. It was not clear whether he had experienced a stroke or heart attack. Even after the gentleman was carried off of the plane, we still sat there for quite a while. The original "short" stop turned into about an hour
and a half.

When we finally pushed back from the gate and were in the air, the pilot apologized profusely for the unavoidable delay. He said that since the stop had taken longer than expected, those passengers who needed to make connections in Atlanta would miss their flights but would automatically be booked on the next flight out. You could almost hear the moans and groans throughout the airplane of everyone who was being inconvenienced by the unexpected stop.

Then the pilot did one of the classiest things I have personally ever seen or heard anyone do. He spoke into the intercom and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I thought you might be interested in one bit of information. The elderly gentleman who was taken off the plane was a Marine in WW II. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and it was signed by President Harry Truman in 1945." The pilot went on to say, "I realize that we have all been inconvenienced today. However, in light of the fact that this gentleman was a war hero and was inconvenienced for four years of his life in order that we might experience the freedoms that we enjoy today, I thought you all should know that." Immediately the airplane was filled with applause. Everyone was cheering and so pleased to know that the gentleman had been cared for in a way that was fitting and appropriate.

As we continued to fly, I thought to myself, "Isn't that interesting? We were concerned that we were inconvenienced for a couple of hours and yet, this gentleman's entire life was interrupted and inconvenienced for over four years while he went and fought in a war to protect the freedoms and values that we love and hold dear in this country today." I breathed a prayer for the gentleman and blessed him for all he had done to help us understand what freedom is all about.
November 1, 2007

Odd Things

Dear Angel and Friend:

In Satuit Hardware the other day, I overheard Angel Sue, the manager, telling a rather ancient customer (older than me) about woodpeckers. He evidently was having a problem with one or more. Sue specifically noted that in the spring, woodpeckers didn't a peck about drilling holes in your house. They are only out seeking a mate (i.e. "In spring a young woodpecker's fancy turns to...well, you know). BUT, in the fall, if you hear a woodpecker pecking around or in your woodwork...THEN you have a problem.

As she recounted this to me, she also noted that bird seed is going up in price. I asked if it was because of the drought? She said maybe, but the big reason was the eateries and manufacturers of foods are switching to sunflower seeds for their oil as it is free of trans fat.

And now for something completely different. I am the dubious recipient of a new MBTA SYSTEM layout. It covers every bus, trolley, train, pogo stick route in the entire metropolitan area. "Charlie" (on the MTA) would love it. One thing became very apparent to me as I scanned the 700 or so routes taken by all manner of conveyances.....!!!!!!.....there are no routes ending in 13 !!!!!! There is no 13 bus route, no 113 bus or train route no 213 trolley route, etc. Why is this? Is it like there is no 13th floor in some builds? Yes, if the building is only 12 stories high, of course there's no 13th floor. However, if it is 20 stories high, is there a thirteenth floor???

For me, 13 is a very lucky number. I had my appendix out at 3:00 AM on Friday the 13th that saved my life when I was 13 years old.

There are 13 stripes in the US flag. In the US Great Seal there are 13 arrows, 13 leaves, 13 stars signifying the 13 original colonies. Come on MBTA, let's have some bus route numbered thirteen!

For a final observation I note that someone or something in a seagull's evolution taught him/her to dig up a clam or crab or mussel and fly up in the air and then drop it on a hard surface to split it open and get the goodies inside. Who and when did gull numerumo discover this advanced bit of knowledge. Besides that, they don't do it when the yacht club parking lot is full of cars. This is probably as the crustacean is hard to find between cars, or doesn't break on a open convertible's leather seats, or it fails through the open sun roof and gets lost. No, they wait until the parking lot is empty. Hmmmm.

That's all folks........

Love, Neal
**December 7, 2007**

**An Essay About my Evergreens**

Dear Angel and Friend:

This is an essay about evergreens and I write this as my beautiful hemlock is dying of a blight.

My hemlock was the second tree I transplanted when I moved to "God's little acre" here in North Scituate. It was barely two feet tall, but I recognized it and thought how nice it would be to have it up close to my deck and hear the wind blowing through it on a warm summer's evening.

Well, I dug it up, put it in the wheelbarrow and moved it up close to where the deck would be built. As it grew, it was a resting place and playground for many birds and squirrels. In winter, the Cardinal stood out clearly in its branches as he stood watch while his mate was at the bird feeder. One day a strong wind knocked down a tall, but spindly maple tree nearby and I lost a couple of nice big branches from the hemlock.

Much later before a gathering of people from a folk song group, Angel Dorothy W. came and we spent an hour and a half cutting briers and other climbing ivy off of the tree so it would look perfect when we had dinner and songs out on the deck.

This fall I had a chance to have a specialist look at it as it seemed to be loosing needles. He pinched off a piece of a branch and showed me the blight, grayish-white spots that were devouring my beloved hemlock.

Ahh, but there are other evergreens to mention.

The first tree I transplanted was a holly and several locals said you couldn't transplant a holly. Of course, it became a challenge. I dug a four-foot diameter hole around it, got it onto a tarp (too heavy to pick up) and dragged it out of the woods. This three-foot high holly was not the red-berry producer, but who knew? I moved it to a spot outside my front door so I could see it every time I left the house. I diligently watered it every day that first year. It seemed to be doing OK. Later, after I was sure it would survive, I put some deep blue Lobilia underneath it as the ground was quite bare there. The holly doesn't like anything underneath it and I found out the hard way. Now my little "you can't transplant a Holly tree" tree is almost 25 feet tall, has had its lower branches cut so I can pass underneath it on my way to go kayaking and looks beautiful.

Next, the tree from New Hampshire. My friend Peter T's grandma had a place up there near Mt. Whiteface and I admired the evergreens there. She said; "Dig one up and take it with you" and I did. It's up about 35-feet now and also has had its lower branches cut so we can drive cars with kayaks and boats down to my neighbor's land for launching.

The pine tree from a roof: When out of work at one point, I worked for a friend of my brother's who was a carpenter. "Deck-a-day Dooley" was the nickname my brother tagged him with. One of our jobs was to replace a roof of a garage and shed. It had become home to a variety of growing plants and trees. I saved a couple of the pine trees and they like living in the ground a whole lot better and are doing well.

The arborvitae's from the industrial park in Burlington: The building next to RCA (where I worked) had been sold and new plantings were being put in as the old ones were in poor shape. I asked the firm doing the planting if I might have a couple of the arborvitae's. He said sure and helped to load them in my wagon.

They're doing OK too. The new plantings included tulips in the spring and as soon as the blossoms went by they were dug up and thrown away!!! I rushed over and took home a couple hundred, dried them and stored 'em for the next year.
"Ten trees for $1.00" or was it $10.00? I don't recall, but they are doing well too; especially the Red Bud who makes a beautiful show in the spring.

Wedding trees - you know the favors you get in ice cream cones about three to six inches tall (long?) that are given in memory of the day. Hmmm, I've got two blue spruces and a plain one so far. One of the blue spruces is now twenty-five feet and magnificent. It is too tall to decorate at Christmas anymore and the last time we did it (from a 12-foot stepladder), it blew fuses left and right as I had too many strings on one extension cord. Had to run two main extension cords to have everything on. The lights in the house would blink when we plugged it in.

Cedars of Scituate (don't know if they're related to the ones in Lebanon). Anyway, they are very prolific in this neck of the woods. They keep trying to come up in the lawn and just about everywhere else. When I first moved in, they were my Christmas tree of choice. I'd get my sled (Yes, my sled; still have it. You never know when you might go sliding) and put my baby daughter on it if she wanted; take the dog Cleo along and we'd go across the street in the woods to find a cedar tree. The owner said I could cut whatever I wanted.

One time I saw a quail holding firm quite close to the path we were taking, so I distracted the dog until we were well past the spot. She was guarding her nest until the last possible moment.

We have Myrtle and Boston Ivy in great profusion brought here from an estate of a friend in Cohasset and another friend whose house borders the edge of a graveyard in Scituate.

Let's see, one tree native to this land, a very handsome 60-foot pine was twisted off fifteen feet above the ground in a passing tornado during Hurricane Bob. I traced the path of the twister by looking at the trees that were twisted off. It traveled at that height for over a mile; never touching down on the ground.

As mentioned above, the land had it own collection of evergreens and numerous other deciduous trees as well. Pines, cedar's, a holly up near the road, and a red berry holly down in a lovely spot near the marsh. Several of my animals are there in my pet graveyard.

So there is the chronicle of my evergreens. Not so many as to be the dominant trees, but having come from many places to be an interesting group.

Neal, the Johnny Evergreen on Border Street
December 10, 2007

Time for Another Rambling Email

Dear Angel and Friend:

Scituate, like most towns, has a Council on Aging and a Senior Center. Perhaps ours has something more.

Our director, instead of calling our newsletter the Geezer Gazette or some other nom de plume, gave it a wonderful name; "Seasoned Living." That's us, people who have led seasoned lives.

With that out of the way, let me quote the opening of her latest editorial: "As I dove over the North River today, there was a prism-like rainbow playing off the "Entering Scituate" sign. Now in my ninth year of commuting here, I have never crossed at that precise moment that the sun cast such a radiant reflection of color on metal. It was brilliant, and not only caught my eye, but caught my heart,

"The North River vista is, in my view, the most beautiful, tranquil scene in the world. As one Scituate friend proclaims, Scituate is "Gods Country" and so perhaps its entry is God's finest canvas. No matter the weather, the issues, the day's agenda, the North River crossing always comforted me with its natural beauty."

I know many of you probably feel the same way about your town while many say they don't care one way or the other. Why is it like this in Scituate? I grew up in Brookline and we summered in Scituate. When I married, Scituate was to be my home. I'm so fortunate to have a little acre here.

But to get back to the North River. Scientists say that the marsh builds up one foot every 300 years. Thus, when the Vikings were wandering up and down our coast, the North River had no marshes and was probably a broad estuary with mud flats. This applies to my marsh as well.

The first American-built ship to sail around the world, the "Columbia" was built on the North River. Also from North River shipyards was the ship the "Lady Washington" that accompanied Columbia as far as the Columbia River. Ahh, yes, Captain Robert Gray (no relation) named the Columbia River after his ship and Columbus. The Lady Washington stayed in the West Coast area trading in furs between there and Hawai'i. The Columbia and Captain Gray continued on around the world.

The North River was the birthplace to over one thousand ships of 100 tons or more burden. Today, signs along the roads and the river give locations of where the shipyards stood. It was only after the river silted up and ships got too big to sail down the river that shipbuilding slowed and eventually died out. In the latter stages "camels" were used to haul large vessels to deep water. They were like floatation bags on either side of the ship that lifted the vessel up some and allowed her to get down the river.

There were no tug boats of course, and the ships were pulled along the marsh by horses and long lines. The marsh was covered in places by a "corduroy" road make out of small logs laid and tied together on the marsh. Plus, the horses wore a special shoe like a snowshoe to keep them from sinking in the marsh where there was no corduroy road. There is a visible section of this corduroy road sticking out of the bank up near what is now called Blueberry Island.

I understand that the mouth of the North River has changed twice. At first it entered the ocean between Third and Fourth Cliff, but that was in a time long before we can date. During the colonial/shipbuilding era, it entered the ocean at the southern end of Humarock and that's where
Scituate’s town line was drawn. As a result of the Great Storm of 1898 (also called the “Portland Gale” as that is when that ship was lost), the North River cut what is now its present outlet back again between Third and Fourth Cliffs. The road and houses between Third Cliff and Fourth Cliff were washed away.

A "pirate" ship *supposedly* was wrecked off the present entrance long ago and occasionally a gold piece is found glistening on the said. The northern side of this entrance is called the Spit (see photo) and used by boaters in the summer for picnics and swimming.

My brother lived for a time on the ocean front at Third Cliff and it was a great place for surfing when surf was up. One of my epic canoe trips on a Labor Day when I wasn't cutting trees that fell on my electric wires was to sail my sailing canoe down my marsh into Cohasset Harbor, out into the ocean and down the coast to my brother's. Had lunch there and sailed back home. It was interesting to note the wind was a favorable Northwest on the way down and shifted to a favorable Southeast for the trip home.

Who says God isn't my co-pilot?

Hope you enjoyed the trip.

Love, Neal

![North River photo]

The Spit is the white area in the photo
December 20, 2007

Dear Angel and Friend:

Well, you probably knew it was coming. Your knee, back, left thumb or whatever started to ache. The incoming low pressure does it. When I first moved to Scituate, my family doctor, Dr. Blanchard, said pain finds its way to the weakest point in your body. So I was limping around (sore knee) forgetting those fateful words until tonight.

I saw a pickup truck last Monday night with a surfboard in the back and he was headed towards Nantasket Beach. There's an area near the Red Parrot Restaurant where they have spotlights on the ocean. Maybe he was planning to surf there. Oh yes, surfers were full wet or dry suits in the winter. My niece on Maui always wants me to send photos of our winter surfers to her so she can show them to her warm water surfing friends out there.

After rehearsal on Monday, I go over to Anthan's, the Greek pastry place in Brookline to get some DEElicious cookies that have apricot preserves in the center. When I leave, I take a one way that leads back to the road I come on so I don't have to make a U-turn. Coming down this short street, two cars were pulling out of snow drifts ahead of me. At the bottom where I turn left, the first car turned right. The second car, the one just ahead of me signaled left....paused....signaled right.....paused....signaled left....paused.... signaled right....paused. I was about to get out and ask them if they needed help, when suddenly they "took the bit in their teeth" as it were, and turned right!

This morning the clouds thickened. The sky above the ocean had an unusual dull yucky yellowish tinge to it. At one point it blended with the ocean surface so it was difficult to tell where the horizon line was.

You knew it was going to be a "Mercury in retrograde" (everything that can go wrong - does) kind of day. My son-in-law who brought my grandson over to help stack firewood got stuck on the way out when he left. He started slipping halfway up my hill and slid sideways off the driveway. Every time we shoveled him out, he'd slide further off the road. Just when it looks hopeless, St. Brigit or one of my helping Spiritual Angels put her foot down and up he went. WHEW!

All this was due to the temperature climbing above freezing. When it was frozen, there were still places where one could get a grip and not get stuck. UPS dropped off a package at my neighbor's the other day as he was afraid to come down the driveway. When did this idiotic practice begin? You know my neighbor could have been in Florida and the package would sit there all winter and I'd never know what happened to it.

It looks like Old Man Winter is making up for last year this year. My snow blower is going to get a workout for sure. I have a set of coveralls, similar to your child's snow bunny suit, that I wear when I'm out with the snow blower. It is insulated and marvelous in the cold weather. If the temperature is in the upper twenties, I usually get a sauna treatment with it on, but if it's in the teens, it's fine.

My church choir is on Old Man Winter's bad side. Every day in the last couple of weeks when we want to rehearse or sing in church, he sends us a big snow storm. Tonight, we did manage to fit one in before he knew it and it only rained a little. I hope he doesn't hit us tomorrow night for our regular rehearsal time.

I hope the 50 degrees promised for Sunday will clean off my driveway and UPS can make it down the hill on Monday as several things have not arrived.

Good luck to those of you north of Boston. I hear you're picking up some snow tomorrow.
Merry Christmas if I don't get back to you before then.

Love, Neal  P.S. If you want an authentic New England cookie (read: energy booster) used by fishermen when out in their dories catching cod, you just make up a batch of Joe Froggers:

**JOE FROGGERS**

This recipe was the original property of "Uncle Joe" a seafarer and captain who lived in Marblehead, Mass. on the edge of a salt pond. The recipe is hundreds of years old and was passed on by his daughter. She was the only other person who knew this recipe.

For: 2 Dozen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1/2</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>cup</td>
<td>shortening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>cups</td>
<td>sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>tbl.</td>
<td>salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>cups</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>cup</td>
<td>rum (light or dark)(preferably dark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>teas.</td>
<td>baking soda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>cups</td>
<td>dark molasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1/2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>cups</td>
<td>flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>tbl.</td>
<td>ginger (ground)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>teas.</td>
<td>clove (&quot;&quot;&quot;&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>teas.</td>
<td>nutmeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>teas.</td>
<td>all spice</td>
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</tbody>
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Combine shortening and sugar until light. Combine the salt and water and mix with rum [Ed. Note: It looks like the salt, water and rum are mixed separately from the shortening and sugar mixture.] To the salt, water and rum, add baking soda mixed with molasses. Sift flour with the ginger, clove nutmeg and all spice together separately. Now, add the rum mixture alternately with the flour mixture to the creamed shortening and sugar mixture. Stir well between additions. Dough sticky. Chill overnight. In morning, flour hands, flour pastry board and rolling pin. Roll dough out to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut with a large cutter or use a 5 or 6-inch brandy snifter. Shape each cookie in a slight mound. Bake at 375 degrees F. for 12-15 minutes or until done [Ed. Note: How do you know when it's done?] Try not to eat all at once.

Fishermen kept several of these in their pockets inside their oilskins (foul weather gear) These hearty cookies gave the fishermen the energy they needed when fishing for several hours in dories launched from fishing schooners on the Grand Banks off the New England Coast. They are similar to Hermit cookies in consistency, but tastier, especially with the rum!

Send me one.

Love, Neal
December 31, 2007
Dear Angel & Friend:

Here is an interim step to burning wood. The cart, bought from Angel Sue at the Satuit Hardware store in the Haabaa, is used to move the wood from its outside storage into the wood shed. The shed is only 15 feet from my front door as opposed to 100 feet from its outside storage. The plank flat on the ground nearest the camera, is where the first row of firewood was at the start of the winter. As you can see, I’m moving wood from the sixth row at present. I should say, however, that only about a cord and a half to two cords have been burned so far.

The first two rows held a total of a full cord. The other rows, being shorter in length, only hold about a third of a cord per row.

Happy New Year!

Love, Neal
March 9, 2008
Active Elders—The Interview

Dear Angel and Friend:

Now I know you're all busting with curiosity about my Interview with the author from New Yawk. The author works for the New York Times and is preparing a book about active elders (Geezers)(oops, the "G" word). She presently has several books in print.

We met at Exit 14 as usual, so I could bring her in through "the rain forest" and today it lived up to it's name. She came with a friend from Cambridge where she is staying this weekend.

Through what must have seemed to her a ride that went on and on, we eventually got to No. Scituate center. As luck would have it, it was now raining the proverbial cats and dogs. I got worried that the trip from their car to the house in the deluge would have a negative affect on our interview.

You are all going to be Doubting Tomas', but I seriously asked God at that time if He could lighten up on the rain when I got to my house. I still sit here (right now!) in awe of the power of prayer! At my driveway, the rain lightened to a very light rain, didn't stop, but almost!!! I had a feeling when I made the prayer, but didn't recognize it as He was actually listening. Being at this impressionable age and somewhat a "sensative" to things I know nothing of, He continues to blindside me.

The interview itself was from a prepared list of questions that she asks all those she's interviewed, but she was very personal (great eyes) ("eyes are the gateway to a woman's soul") and we had a long wonderful open conversation. There is so much of your life you wish to give; so the story will correctly reflect what you are. Yet, so little time. One question I do recall was what did I think my longevity was due to? I told her it was all the memorizing required in singing Gospel. She said there was some scientific information confirming that thought. I was somewhat uncomfortable with all the photos being taken of me. I guess it helps her to "reconstruct me" when she starts to write. For me, that much attention is unnerving.

I think she enjoyed Gray's "mausoleum" and the player piano and a visit to the yacht Club to meet Ken, the steward and Nancy, my boss. I'm glad she taped the interview, 'cause I can't remember everything. Maybe I can get a copy.

On her leaving she said I was the most unusual person she's met. I tried to remember what Mortimer Snerd (one of Edgar Bergen's ((ventriloquist)) dummies) said about himself: "I'm a rarity." But, all men my age who are active, aren't they rarities? We may be few, but are a growing number in the US.

I got paid for the interview. $1.00 and she, of course, joins the ranks of Neal's Angels. It isn't everyday you get interviewed by the New York Times! WHEEOO!

Love, Neal P.S. Come back Ashton, there's more to tell.

March 10, 2008
Dear Angel and Friend:

My interviewer, Ashton Applewhite has asked me to correct one statement in my first e-mail. She does not work for the New York Times, but is a self-employed writer and journalist. For more information on her project, see www.sowhenareyougoingtoretire.com
I would suggest that Allen L get ahold of her if he is working, but I'm not sure about that. I'd also have Leo H. do it, but Leo isn't 80 until late May. The same for my friend Frank at the yacht club who is also ONLY 79. Hah-hah!

Please........about the compliments, I'm having trouble getting my hat on.

I'm reminded of my garage mechanic's statement about that kind of thing when he spoke of my Volvo P1800 sports car: "Vee build dem de vay vee build dem, 'cause vee don't know no better." We do in life what we know to do, 'cause vee don't know no better.

In her reply, she asked that I not spend the buck (she paid me) all in one place. In reality, I gave it to a choir member for the offertory at our sing today as he found himself stuck with no change. An investment? Absolutely!

Some of you have replied already. Angel Kathy (there are several) said: "Congratulations! I can't wait to read about you (and learn the TRUTH!)" Angel Kathleen said: "I hope you will forward the results to your Angels!" Angel Dorothy said: "How wonderful, Neal!...I also firmly believe in the power of prayer and I also think your longevity stems from a positive attitude, singing (excellent exercise for the lungs), and the memorization of the musical lyrics. So all this is your 15 minutes of fame, eh?" And Allen L. (a member of Gen. Chennault's Flying Tigers and my high school chum) wrote: "Great news, Neal....you "active elder, you"! ....and God stopped the downpour!!"

In other news, I note they (TV News) are telling us we have drugs in our drinking water. I hope there's no Viagra - my low blood pressure can't handle that stuff. A little sleeping pill in the H2O would be OK for those nights when something special is coming the next day and I'm so hopped up, I can't sleep. They say it originally comes from us as medicine our systems didn't use and ....is sent out the other end. In my neighborhood, I think we should include the animals as well. Skunks, muskrats, groundhogs, squirrels, turkeys (the bird ones), field mice, etc. I think they are contributors to our state of the earth......or is this perhaps too much information?

Today, Joyful Voices sang at the St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Roxbury for their annual Women's Recognition service. My normal car, the Subaru, decided it didn't like the newly installed parts and went back to its bucking and stalling routine. So I returned home and got out the TVR. It hadn't been to Boston for quite some time. The heater, as usual, smelled "electrical" after a while and was shut off and the rest of the trip into and out of the city was cool and GLORIOUS! This car has acceleration (of course), but it also has awesome brakes for those other drivers who suddenly do something weird.

Well, kids (oops, I know you're an adult, but I'm your senior by a few years), it's getting late or early depending on how you look at it. Hope your day was filled with joy and your cellar wasn't flooded. For those outside the Boston area, we had a lot of rain.

Love. Neal
May 13, 2008
This Coming Week

Dear Angel & Friend:

I hope all you Mothers were treated to someone else doing the cooking on Sunday; provided, of course, that those persons knew how to cook. Plus, that the other half got you a new diamond as your old one was dirty!

I don't know about where the warmth went, but I was cutting firewood Sunday afternoon to carry me through this week.

May, and I'm still burning wood!!!

Yes, the marsh in spring is as pretty as ever. The other day when I was out in the kayak, the trees were doing their early leafing-out and smelled wonderful.

My 2009 calendar of 24 photos of Scituate Light is almost ready for printing. Cost of Bay State printing is somewhat high and I may look around for a regular print shop to do it.

I don't know what the blue flags are for, but on my side of the marsh they marked the wetlands area. In this photo, they are quite a ways out on this little stream. Might have to do with a property line.
Seven swans swimming and feeding

Went out to Scituate light area on Saturday as a good sea was running and first noticed the strong odor of seaweed being chewed up by the surf. Took me back to my younger days when I used to walk the beach during storms looking for goodies washed in. Used to prize those glass globes used by Portuguese fishermen to float the top edge of their nets. See them in the stores now and they are pricey!

While I was at the light, thought I might ask Jerry (SHYC electrician) if I could take a photo from his deck. It is one story up and has an unobstructed view of the light. Jerry and wife, Diane, took me up to the deck on the living room and bedroom level which is two stories up. Took quite a while to get a good shot and used almost a whole roll of film. Here's one taken on digital camera.

If you can, zoom in and it's not too bad. Hard to see when to shoot with digital, due to the delay between pressing the button and the actual click of the shutter. Plus, the viewing screen is not
very good with the sun on it. I jammed myself against the house with the camera facing the light and watched the waves over the top of the camera and tried to guess when a good wave was coming towards the beacon on the end of the breakwater.

I think the film photos ones will be better. Will try to send one of them later.

Too windy to kayak today or tomorrow, but I keep hoping.

Love, Neal
June 17, 2008  
A Photo of the Old Geezer at the Pops  

Dear Angel and Friend:  

Angel Mary Jo got this one of me at the reception after Pops on May 31st.
Dear Angel and Friend:

Lot's of action in the skies today, but my main job was fixing a leak in the yacht club's front garden (the one facing the haabaa) underground watering system. Have to lie in damp mulch and fit in patching connector. Anyway, got rained on and made a mad dash for the office before the big stuff came - hail and all.

At the end of the day, I had to put a plastic wrap on the seat of my car so as not to transfer the dirt to my upholstery.

Photos of the day/clouds not too impressive.

Thought you'd like to see the "Old Man of the Glades" because at low tide he wears a beard and looks a lot like Abe Lincoln.
Then again, the kayaks brightened up the rainy scene:

Love, Neal
How Am I Doing?

Dear Angel and Friend:

Went cruisin' in the TVR, but local friends were off somewhere.

On the way home I thought I'd drive along Glades Road. Glades Road is in what is known as the "Irish Riviera" part of Scituate. Another name for it is "Beyond the Lights." Years ago, all the Irish politicians had houses here and Glades Road was oceanfront and the creme de la creme. There used to be a large hotel called The Cliff Hotel that fronted on the ocean. Somerset Maugham (sp?) stayed there during WWII and wrote one of his books while there. The hotel burned years ago when my daughter was around ten. Anyway, there wasn't room for more than about 8 to 10 houses on this stretch of land and then the road went into the tiny village of Minot named after Minot light that is out in the ocean close by. Minot also has a post office and in the old days several lovely guesthouses. Those have been replaced by expensive condos.

Continuing on Glades Road north of the village, was a large group of multi-bedroom typical summer homes; now all raised to keep them from being washed away in Nor'easters. The seawall here has been also raised and rip-rap placed in front of it to cut down on the ferocity of winter waves. There are houses behind these houses and many have been improved and winterized.

Just before the end of the public part of Glades Road is a rock formation on the ocean side called "The Old Man"
called Pulpit Rock) and loaded on barges brought alongside (on the ocean)! Also, there's a spring near there that the Native Americans must have enjoyed for years.

Tonight, I thought I'd drive to the **end** of Glades Road. Then I thought I'd drive the Private Road and call on the Adams' people (Family? Hah-hah) at the northern end and ask their permission to use the story of the lighthouse keeper ghost that appeared in their private publication "The Glades Book".

On arrival at the end, some children were playing in the circle where one of several large houses stand. I stopped and asked if an adult was nearby that I could speak to. An older woman came down to see "Who the Hell was driving into their private enclave!" At least that was the look in her eye. Of course, the TVR is a singular machine and generates a certain "presence" regardless of where it goes. She became quite formal and mentioned they don't often get a car of such magnitude to drive all the way in on such a rough road (with speed bumps no less). I asked my question about the book stating several facts to show that I had read the book (the author, an Adams person, died of cancer prior to publication, and other information that I knew).

She realized I was serious and set off to find someone in authority with the firm statement for me to *Stay there!* Maybe I should have said; "Arf, arf!"

During the time she was gone, I photographed a **hotel** leaving Boston - might have been the Prudential Tower (see below) Minot's Light is at left.

Then a bare-chested man arrived, half grown beard, not like the Adams person I had in mind (if his great, great grandfather could see him, he'd probably wonder if he **was** an Adams). Anyway, I explained my mission and after some small talk, he grasped the meaning of my request and gave me verbal permission to use the story as long as I gave credit. I assured him I would do so.

The ride back out that long, rough road to civilization was with great pleasure as I'd longed to get that permission for our ghost book's coming revision.

Love, Neal  

P.S. For an aerial view see: [http://maps.google.com/maps?q=Minot,+MA&ie=UTF8&ll=42.251663,-70.769033&spn=0.006623,0.009656&t=h&z=16](http://maps.google.com/maps?q=Minot,+MA&ie=UTF8&ll=42.251663,-70.769033&spn=0.006623,0.009656&t=h&z=16). The white-ish square is tennis courts. There was a military 5-story tower built in the woods in WWII to watch for any enemy activity.
July 23, 2008
Dear Angel and Friend:

I have received the "Official" word. It was sent on blood red paper (I suppose that's to hide any stray blood stains).

The doctor has been changed to a Dr. Robert P. Driscoll. Why, I don't know.

The PRE-TEST is scheduled for August 8, 2008 at 10:30 AM - I don't know if it is related to the opening of the Olympics.

The OPERATION is scheduled for August 12, 2008 at 12:50 PM - I wonder if it is before or after the doctor's lunch - not that it matters. A time for prayers, because I'll be out like a light.

My straw-boss, Angel Sue H., had a similar cancer operation and said they may keep me overnight.

The POST-OP is scheduled for August 22, 2008 at 2:30 PM.

Love, Neal
August 6, 2008
Leiden, The Netherlands

Dear Angel and Friend:

First, I should note that my friend, Dr. Jeremy Bangs is director of the Pilgrim museum here in Leiden. This city is where the pilgrim's stayed for 11-years before going to Plymouth. Jeremy has some excellent photographs of the city. See: http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~netlapm/Page01.htm John Adams was ambassador to The Netherlands and stayed in Leiden

In one of the Jeremy's photo tours is the Hooglandsekerk church. In February every year, there is a huge singing weekend when as many as 5000 singers and 1000 orchestra members get together in that church to perform Handel's Messiah and other classical works. They rehearse during the day and perform in the evening. Having been inside the church, I would say there's room for everyone.

Next, Leiden is much cleaner and safer than Amsterdam. A single old geezer like me can wander just about anywhere in Leiden with no trouble. The railroad system can whisk you anywhere. Jeremy and I went to the ticket agent and he gave me all tickets, transfers and info I needed to get to Leydstad where the reproduction ship the "Batavia" was berthed. In the train station in Amsterdam there was a train track change given in Dutch (which, of course, I did not understand), but a nice woman noticed me (the tourist) and came and told me (in English). Everyone understands/speaks English except the very old people.

Leiden has a marvelous botanical garden plus a museum of various models of ships, trains and other industrial machines. A canal tour is far less crowded and more personal than in Amsterdam.

The upper photo shows one of the major rivers (New Rhine ?) in the center of town. On the left is a restaurant and I'm sure that on entering, we were partly below water level. An interesting place and good food. Note the launch coming under the bridge and the one tied up alongside the canal. These are beautiful, finely crafted boats and you see them quite often as people use them instead of cars. Cars are parked along the edges of canals and occasionally one will topple in when the driver gets too close to the edge.
The lower photo shows what was a vegetable garden when the Pilgrims lived there.

Love, Neal
August 9, 2008
Dear Angel and Friend:

My "Pretest" today was quick, about 1-1/2 hours, as I had had the blood work done a week ago as well as an EKG.

I had to talk to a nurse and the anesthesiologist and answer a mess of questions. My daughter, Mimi, came with me and helped filling out the forms. Then she left for work.

Tuesday the 12th is the date for my operation. Any and all prayers are welcome on that day.

Will try to send some more travel photos this weekend.
In the meantime, here's a couple from our trip to France. First a giant old grape press in France with Angel Deb showing how big it is. Second, the arteests stand out in a street at one of our early lunch stops and using our hands, frame the scene so the photographer (me) can take the perfect photo. I'm the one with the bow legs. Hah-hah!
August 16, 2008
Dear Angel and Friend:

It seems Comcast, Yahoo, and Msn have gotten together to reduce BCC mailings. So I'll send this out as regular mail. Have they got something against cancer patients? It it communicated on e-mails? Phooey!

Anyway, Tuesday Morning I and my daughter arrived at the So. Shore Hospital at the ungodly hour of 7:30 AM. I'm usually in the middle of my nightly snooze at that hour. They efficiently handed me through various procedures. A Nice Dr, Boone (no relation to Daniel) inserted an IV in my wrist having been unsuccessful in my arm (I told him my blood vessels were hiding).

Then a Dr Jackson injected me with radio-active fluid (he said it would only feel like a bee sting...ya sure!) After a while Technician Bob took some photos of my shoulder area while I'm part-way into a machine that looks like it is used to crush iron ore. The shoulder is where the lymph nodes that could be infected with my cancer are located.

Then we hung around some more and all this time (from like 7:35 AM I'm on a gurney (bed with wheels and rolling IV thing-a-ma-bob) time flies when you're having fun, but my daughter got things rolling again and I endup in a room with the doctor and a couple of others who slipped an Oxygen ? mask on me and I no sooner asked what it was and I was Gonzo.

I woke up in Recovery Room and soon found that I was shaking like a leaf and wasn't cold. Something went haywire in my coming out of anesthesia and my blood pressure going down fast. Wheeled quickly into the next room where they got things under control and decided to keep me overnight.

A wait for a while for them to find me a room and a move to a nicer (they said) bed. A restless night with people checking me every 15 minutes and taking blood pressure. Had some Ginger Ale and knew it was not Canada Dry as it gave me a stomach ache. As that subsided, got some saltines with jelly on them (only thing they had at 4:00 AM). Remember, I had not eaten since before midnight on Monday night and it was now Wednesday morning. MMM-GOOD!

Breakfast was some really good scrambled eggs and a blueberry muffin and some small sips of OJ (too much citric acid for me in the AM) and water. Arm is painless until my surgeon young Dr. Forio (maybe I'll learn to spell it some day) came in with his best morning "How's the patient" smile and pokes me in the arm right where he had made a nine-inch incision in my arm.

"OUCH!!!" I said. "Oops, is that the arm I operated on?" I wasn't feeling all that great and remembering that he might have a scalpel on him, I decided not to retaliate. I said there was not much pain there until he poked me, but the main area of pain was in my shoulder. He countered with; "Gee, I only made a little hole in there." I knew from my straw-boss that that area would be where the most pain was as the doctor has to go in past muscles and nerves to get to the lymph nodes. I told him of my prior knowledge of this and he agreed.

He said if things looked OK by afternoon, I could go home. I came down to approval by a physical therapist that would be my release factor. She read my chart, saw 84 and figured she had an old man on her hands. We did not get on well. I told her of my choirs in Boston, my driving into town, that I still worked, etc. I think she thought I was lying as she made me walk up and down the corridor several times with A CANE! Remember, I haven't been out of bed for two days, have suffered a near-death experience, and am supposed to walk like a normal person. I felt like telling her what she could do...well, best not to go there.

I needed OUT!
I finally agreed to use the cane, not to go upstairs (no e-mails) and not to drive for a day or so. She signed me up with the visiting nurse physical therapist. I was delivered to my daughter's SUV in a wheelchair and now came a challenge. Her passenger seat must have been 4 or 5 feet up or so it seemed. Getting in with two females who were not sure where to grab me took careful evaluation. I finally went in back end first using the upper grab handle and my good arm and hand.

"Home Dearie home, it's home I long to be..." a truer folk song was never written.

On Thursday, I cancelled the visiting home nurse therapist! Small triumph. Wonderful daughter Mimi came and she changed dressings and we noted some bleeding (she called it seeping and probably caused by his poke he gave me). Was frightened by what I saw on my arm - nine inches long with zig-zag stitches holding it all together. Wheeeooo! Watched Olympics, slept, ate some, slept some more. Spent the evening writing you-all and made an improper key stroke and have started over.

Today, much that same, Still sore, but improving constantly. Daughter Mimi came again and changed dressings and she checked with surgeon about seeping and found it to be normal, but keep it covered until seeping stopped to prevent infection.

One parting note. At the hospital on Wednesday morning they gave me a vitamin and a Perosec (pain killer). This stuff stops you up, but gave me GAS! One time, I though the Queen Mary 2's fog horn was going full blast. Have stuck with Tylanol ever since.

Love, Neal

August 23, 2008
Dear Angel and Friend:

Yesterday (Friday, 22nd), stitches came out and pathology report said; "No tumor found in lymph nodes and no residual invasive melanoma in left fore arm."

Cancer is GONE! YIPPEE!!!

Love, Neal
October 30, 2008

Dear Angel and Friend:

Now that is not a very significant event for many of you, but I hadn't sewed on a button since I was in the U.S. Navy. After the war, my mother sewed on any buttons that needed replacing and after my marriage, Amanda, my wife, took care of that duty.

Yes, it is a simple thing to do. Shouldn't take more than five minutes.

Well, I knew where my bride placed those things; thread, needles and buttons and I got them out of their drawer where they'd been resting lo' these many years.

With my diminished close-up eyesight, I wondered how I would find the pointy-end of the needle without stabbing myself.......OUCH! Too late. Now...ahh, beige thread, just what I needed. Hope it isn't rotted.

Since my left hand shakes and my right does not, shall I hold the thread in my left or my right hand to put the thread through the eye of the needle? After several minutes I find neither way works. I put the eye of the needle hanging out over the edge of my table and use my right hand to put the thread through it.

Good thinkin'.

The next operation is to tie a knot in the end of the doubled thread so it won't come through the pants. I'm thinking...I'm a knot expert, I'll tie a Figure 8 knot and that is larger than an Overhand knot and will be more secure. Now I've got the same shaky hand trying to work with the non-shaky hand problem; plus I can't see the damn thread. Well, an Overhand knot is easier; I'll stick with that. I finally get part done.

The easy part now is to stick the needle through from the back and put the button on the front. OK? OUCH! Where did these little red spots come from? Ohh, it's my blood! Along the way, the pinched nerve in my left wrist puts my hand to sleep; so I have to put all aside and wait until my hand wakes up. About that time, the surgery area on my forearm wants a massage. A few more back and forth sewings with the needle and thread and OUCH I'll be done. Now, I find I haven't left enough thread to tie a knot to finish....Hmmm I'll stick it together with some Duco glue. It'll last through washing.

And, yes, it only took 30 minutes to sew on that button. Maybe 35.

Love, Neal
December 16, 2008
Dear Angel Sandra:

The USPS has forced me to e-mail my Christmas message to you this year. In brief:

1. I made it through another year with your help and your e-mails.
2. A melanoma cancer operation made me cancer-free (at the moment).
3. My daughter and her husband made it through a tough winter last year; Two in college and one to go.
4. My grandkids are getting to be adults.
5. Singing at Pops on my birthday this past year, conductor Charles Floyd acknowledged me and I was surprised and humbled by all the attention. What's all the excitement about? I'm only in my middle 80's
6. The yacht club still finds work for me and I love my job!
7. My eyes still show me the beauty of nature and my kayak and camera still are put to use.
8. Getting older gives one the ability to recount every minute detail of one's life.
9. I've produced a calendar for 2009 with 24 of my photos of Scituate Light on it. Yes, there are more than one photo per month and two extra pages. No, not two extra months.
10. I've become a "sensitive." That is, I can sometimes see into the future. Thus, I hope God allows me to see the Mega-Millions number soon. I've got big plans for the money.

Oh, and here's what friend Don Creed saw in his viewfinder this past summer when we sang in the Tabernacle in Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard.
Merry Christmas

Love, Neal
December 25, 2008, Christmas at Midnight or Later

Dear Angel and Friend:

I've just finished Midnight Service and downloaded a couple of photos: Got it before the candles in the aisle were lit.

Our augmented choir - had some "ringers" (no, not bell ringers) in it (22).

Thanks for your wishes and MERRY CHRISTMAS to you and your family

Love, Neal
January 4, 2009

Beloved Scituate

I thought you'd also be interested in this little bit of history about my Situate

One of the oldest or THE oldest house in Scituate belonged to a family named Mann. On and on it came down through the years, always owned by a descendent of the original Mann. Finally, around 1910, the then current Mr. Mann bought automobile. It was a wonderful thing! He could turn the crank and be off to the market or to visit friends. Then one day, in his mail box, was a letter from an official group calling themselves the Registry of Motor Vehicles. This notice told him he had to register his car with the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, pay a tax on using it, and get a license plate to prove that he had done so.

Mr. Mann was upset!

He was so upset, he parked the car out in the yard and never used it again.

The Mann House eventually became the property of the Scituate Historical Society because of its age. When the house is open to the public three or four times a year, one may still see Mr Mann's car out in the yard - however, it now has a rather large tree going up through the middle of it.

Lighthouse Rd, Scituate Harbor, MA:

This road leads to Scituate's famous light. Houses and summer and year-round and are closely packed on both sides of the road. They have maybe five or ten feet between the house and the road. Out back, the ones that face the harbor, have 20 or 25 feet of lawn or cement deck and then the rip-rap that protects them from the harbor water.

Like this:

Let's move in on this photo:
That animal near the red bucket is a fox and mom and six kits are here and there.

Locals are getting tired of all the extra traffic and photographers. They're also worried about their pets.

Mom was probably out foraging one night when suddenly her time came. No getting back to her den; wherever that might have been.

Two doors over, two kits play on a cement deck:

Thank God we don't live in elephant country

Love, Neal
January 1, 2006

Shipworms and Strippers

Dear Angel and Friend:

Angel Kathy Moore sent me an e-mail about shipworms saying they are born male, but when they mature they become female. Well, that's a "fine kettle of fish" (a line from Gilbert & Sullivan). Just who do the ex-males have sex with? Do they find young males to copulate with? As I mentioned last night in my article about this holiday that people are fostering on us as the new year; this is one of the issues we should address. Who knows, the idea might catch on with humans (maybe it already has) and then where will we be?

I'm not very familiar with shipworms as they are usually inside the wood of a boat's hull and you don't get to see them. You only find out after your boat sinks!

When we pull our floats each year in the fall at the yacht club, they are festooned (covered on the bottom) with many kinds of sea life: snails, young mussels, starfish, crabs (both hard shell ((mottled orange shell)) and soft shell ((mottled dark green shell))). But the most common and ghastly looking things, are what we call (if you'll pardon the vernacular) snots. Because, unfortunately, that's what they look like. They're about 1-1/2 to 2 inches in size. They have a technical name and I'm not sure what that is, but the Club Steward said he saw an article where these things are obliterating other sea life and they don't know how to stop them.

One of the kindly things I've seen our workers do, is to pick up crabs and carry them back to the ocean before they get stepped on, grabbed by a seagull, or crushed by the forklift truck. With all the activity in the yard during this time, it's nice to see someone remembering the "less fortunate" of creatures. Starfish are not so lucky unless they are of good size. Then they get saved; not from dying, but for drying!

Beautiful outside today; especially when viewed from inside next to the wood stove.

Angel Barb and her husband when to a show in Maynard for New Year's. I wish I had been there. It must have been a riot!!! I remember years ago, ...oh, a thousand years ago, Carol Plaice and her husband John and me and Amanda went to the Old Howard in what was then Scolley Square in Boston. The Old Howard was a strip-tease theatre. We went on New Year's Eve and had a box seat that was level with the stage. You could step out of it and be on the stage.

Well, a stripper came over to the box and tried to get one of us out onto the stage to dance with her. Luckily, Amanda got a firm grip on me and I was safe, but John was not so lucky. He was about halfway out of the box onto the stage when suddenly, Carol jumped up, and started beating the stripper with her handbag. Of course, the full house audience was roaring with laughter. The stripper made a hasty retreat.

After that, any time she even came close to our box, Carol was up and ready to give another whack with the bag.

On New Year's, the show was always quite sedate and none of the girls gave us the "Full Monty". Cops were always plentiful there not only to watch the show, but to make sure there was not any full nudity. Plus, fight's in the audience were frequent as strippers would throw garments out into the audience and possession of the garments often led to fisticuffs.

Ahh, those were the days. How many of you have ever been to the Old Howard?
Not very many, I think. Scolley Square has been replaced by the Government Center and Boston’s City Hall. While the openness is nice and City Hall an interesting modern design, would I like to go back to those days?? I don't think so. Pickpockets were a menace and it was a seedy part of Boston; now it is a showplace.

Best wishes for the next 365 days or so.

Love; Neal
February 9, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

Tonight, I recalled my mother-in-law's boyfriend Bob P. (her husband had died a few years after Amanda and I had married. Slim and healthy. He was always challenging me to do push-ups. He could do 25 with no problem and at 90, quite an accomplishment!

He lived into his 100th year and around that in time getting some pills for some ailment, they gave him the wrong stuff. He became disoriented while driving and hit a bridge abutment. It didn't kill him, but his life went down hill after that. What a shame.

Bob worked for the telephone company out West in the early days While in some small town with a dirt road main street, he was coming back to his hotel from a local restaurant he was held up at knife point under a railroad bridge. He pulled out, instead of his wallet, a pocket derringer and shot the man.

He didn't kill him and he found out the next day he'd shot the town's favorite drunk who did his hold-up routine to get money for booze. Well, people in town got pretty upset about this stranger who shot their loveable old drunk; so Bob holed up in his hotel and had his meals brought to his room saying he'd become very sick. After a couple of days he got out of town on the midnight stage.

True story.

Love, Neal
March 30, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

You want an illustrious character? Ethyl Baker-Smith-Mayo-Putnam (I might have forgotten a couple) was your gal. She was an artist. She studied art in France and traveled the Continent. She had her own studio in Provincetown for many years. She sat outside on sunny weekend days painting miniatures in oils. If you wanted to buy one, you paid for it, but had to back in an hour "after the paint dried." You know darn well that oils don't dry in an hour. She'd go back in the studio and get one she'd done of the same subject during the previous week. She also did watercolors the same way.

Her house in Orleans was an authentic Half-Cape. The cellar had a dirt floor. The second floor was mostly an open attic although it had a proper stairway, but contained her bed and bureau. Her refrigerator was a window shelf on the North side of the chimney that was always cool next the chimney. The toilet, ...er outhouse was in an ell off the back of the house with a separate warm weather one down near the end of her land.

She was the first woman in Orleans to have a driver's license and was postmistress of Orleans as well. In her daily rounds with the mail, she delivered groceries if someone called the post office and asked her to pick up something for them. As you can see from her name, she married a few times. The last one, I don't know if it was Putnam or not, had prize roosters who would compete each morning for the best awakening call. This was not her idea of a honeymoon event and said to her husband that he had to get rid of his roosters. He, of course, not realizing her determination said; "Not gettin' rid of my roosters." So she got the marriage annulled and moved back to her own house that day!

She had a horse n' buggy and an old horse named Ned. Ned would shy [stop] at anything in the road that was not dirt (not many paved roads in those days). A piece of paper would get him stock still. Grandma did a lot of coaxing and eventually get him to walk around the offending object. One day, coming back from church, Ned came up short and grandma almost was thrown from her seat. Nothing she could say would get Ned to go. She got down to go have a gentle talk "up close and personal" with Ned. Then she looked to see what made Ned stop so quick. There in the dirt was a Spanish gold doubloon!
I often wondered where that gold piece went. She probably had to spend it eventually.

At one of our sports car rallies that ended in Orleans, we had Grandma as a guest of honor at dinner. Afterwards, there was dancing and when they played a polka or a jig, Grandma could out-dance us all! An amazing woman.

Grandma lived to be just over 100! Her daughter, my mother-in-law, swears she saw grandma's soul go out the window the afternoon she died.

Hope you enjoyed my story.

Love,
Neal
**March 22, 2009**

Dear Angel and Friend:

From my neighbor and life-long friend Peter who lives on the Gulf River (where it is a wide area before the bridge) in Cohasset:

"I do recall waking several times that night, as I often do, but I remember hearing something and thinking that the railroad may have been sending down a work train or some such."  Peter

From Mike Iacono at Blue Hill Observatory, a reference to Wikipedia and their graph to help in determine the strength of Quakes:

The following describes the typical effects of earthquakes of various magnitudes near the epicenter. This table should be taken with extreme caution, since intensity and thus ground effects depend not only on the magnitude, but also on the distance to the epicenter, the depth of the earthquake’s focus beneath the epicenter, and geological conditions (certain terrains can amplify seismic signals).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Richter Magnitudes</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Earthquake Effects</th>
<th>Frequency of Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2.0</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Microearthquakes, not felt.</td>
<td>About 8,000 per day (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0-2.9</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>Generally not felt, but recorded.</td>
<td>About 1,000 per day (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0-3.9</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>Often felt, but rarely causes damage.</td>
<td>49,000 per year (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0-4.9</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Noticeable shaking of indoor items, rattling noises. Significant damage unlikely.</td>
<td>6,200 per year (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0-5.9</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Can cause major damage to poorly constructed buildings over small regions. At most slight damage to well-designed buildings.</td>
<td>800 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0-6.9</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Can be destructive in areas up to about 160 kilometres (100 mi) across in populated areas.</td>
<td>120 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0-7.9</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Can cause serious damage over larger areas.</td>
<td>18 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0-8.9</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>Can cause serious damage in areas several hundred miles across.</td>
<td>1 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0-9.9</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>Devastating in areas several thousand miles across.</td>
<td>1 per 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.0+</td>
<td>Epic</td>
<td>Never recorded; see below for equivalent seismic energy yield.</td>
<td>Extreme (Unknown)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this graph, I guess Scituate's quake was about 2.2 on the Richter Scale, probably a little less.
From my niece on Maui: You may have heard about that volcano building off Tonga, it started erupting on the bottom of the ocean on Thursday. It's a long shot literally, but maybe some configuration of the earth's crust caused a ripple effect?

From the USGS, there is also a CIIM (Consumer Internet Intensity Method) way of measuring quakes. Ours would all under II (Roman Numeral Two).

Love,
Neal

Dear Angel and Friend:

Replies are still coming in from you, but no others were aware of the quake.

Today I made out an official report of the episode to the US Geological Service - Earthquake Hazards Program.

As my list of e-mail friends in Scituate is small compared to the number of residents, I might put a note in the local paper asking if anyone felt the quake.

Love,
Neal
March 22, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

Today I visited Leo Harrington at Evans Park in Newton Corner, MA for his art exhibit and met several old friends and Angels.

There were two of me there:

Photo by Barb Ryan who came with husband Tom and new dog Ranger (who stayed in their car). We met Ranger outside though.

Barb and Leo

On the way home I stopped and saw Angel Peggy's beautiful pastels at the Hingham Library (I wish she had more than three there).
Took a nostalgic trip up Turkey Hill in Hingham. I did get out of the car for these photos. The cattle must be a special herd as the front and back are black with a wide white part in the middle (like they ran out of black paint). Here is a horizontal and a vertical view of the same scene - take your pick. Which do you like the best?
And the vertical:

There is a more "up close and personal" feeling to the vertical one. They were taken from the same distance away, but I zoomed in for the vertical one.

Hope your day met with your expectations. Mine did.

Love, Neal
April 9, 2009

I'm preparing a new calendar for 2010. It might or might not be all Scituate at the moment.

In Scituate we have a rare gem. It is a full-size reproduction of a tower in Germany. It is named after the man who had it built, Mr. Thomas A. Lawson. He built it to hide a water tank the town needed to have just off his property. It is visible far out at sea.
On one side is a separate small tower attached to the main tower. It contains a 110-step circular stairway leading up to a 10-bell carillon at the top.

For years, The local historical society president Mrs. Kathleen Laidlaw used to climb those stairs to play "Auld Lang Syne" on New Year's Eve. This area recently had the bells and supports restore. The bells are played by pushing down levers that actuate the bell mechanism. A physical effort is required to play them.
So you can imagine my surprise the other day when I saw this peeking out at me:

All around the tower are little slit windows for archers (in Germany) to fire arrows at attackers. So where does this light come from? There used to be a water tank inside, but it has been carefully disassembled and removed.

Ahhh...There is a slit window on the opposite side aligned just right with the sun and it shows through in this window!

No mystery now.

Love, Neal
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No mystery now.

Love, Neal
April 14, 2009

Dear Angels and Friends:

As many of you know, I've had the "colly-wabbles" of late. Actually it is not the infamous "colly-wabbles," but just a collection of colds and odds and ends. The last was supposed to be a case of infectious conjunctivitis, However on Saturday afternoon, I felt this "fla-BUB" in my chest. After so many false alarms, I'm thinking -"Gas again!"

Well, it wasn't gas and it didn't go a way. So Sunday evening, I called my next door neighbor, Angel Dr. Lynne and could she make a house call. Down she came right away equipped the stethoscope and listened to my ticker for quite a while and said I had delayed heart beat. The heart makes a beat, but not a strong-enough one; so the heart then does a big beat to make up for the weak one. Got it? Further, it is quite common. Does not hurt, and is acquired from too much stimulus (Attn: you coffee drinkers!) and/or stress (singing two services on Easter probably did it).

I'm sure it wasn't Obamas' stimulus as I'd already gotten that which was $ 0•13 a week.

Today, I saw my regular doctor (he was quite surprised as I usually only see him once a year and I saw him just last week) and had an EKG done just for good measure. He said I had PAV and/or PVC or both. It is the same thing that Angel Dr. Lynne said I had but now I have a name for it.

It is mostly just annoying like when I first got tintinities (sp?) years ago, but you just get used to it. The frequency of mine ranges from one every five seconds (which was only twice) to one every three to five minutes and only when I'm sitting reading or trying to get to sleep. If it gets too frequent, they prescribe a beta- or football-blocker to stop them.

So carry on, but watch that stress and coffee.

Love, Neal
April 14, 2009

Dear Angels and Friends:

Yes it's gone!!! One session at Joyful Voices and I'm healed. WOW!

Got home and the fla-Bubs never happened again.

Thanks and Love, Neal
May 24, 2009
Man Alive, I’m 85

Dear Angel and Friend:

Where do I start?

I start, of course, with my daughter, who jumps in makes a party real. Her husband Joe made awesome meatballs.

All of you brought your specialty in food. Whoever said Pot-luck was a dangerous thing to have. I have yet to have a pot-luck that wasn’t a success. Those...........well, I can’t name them all, but you know who you are.

Then there was the effort by the SHYC staff this morning. The room was set up for tomorrow night's 200+ people for SHYC Opening Night Dinner and Dance and suddenly, "Wala," now Neal’s party.

Continuing, it was all of you contributing your musical talents that the non-singers enjoyed so much; Joan Handy (London's favorite singer-dancer) surprise performance; Estelle Adler (our Torch Singer) up to her usual quality of song; Leo Harrington with his "Danny Boy" and "How are things in Glocamora;"
The Something Else Band (John, Steve, Howard and Bonnie) singing songs of yesteryear; Joyful Voices and some retired JVOI favorites as well (Gisele, Barbara, Emmie, Mary Jo, Allison, Marcy, Sarah) singing some Gospel conducted by Carolina Chacin;

Dorothy Weitzman for her suggestion for me to sing "Oh No, John"; Kathy Moore singing my old favorite "Mingulay"; Beverly Briggs Westerfield's song about an active old geezer; Emmie Homonoff's parody on a Beatles song; and the leader of the whole musical shebang my buddy, Kathie Lee. If you think I have spirit, look up to Kathie. I can't even pick up her accordion, never mind play it!

We did entertain an idea of bringing my player piano, but the cost of getting it out of the house put the kibosh on that (we have to move the wood stove among other things).

I must apologize for not being more active with my camera, but I was having too much fun.

Even though the rest of you didn't get into the circle, now you know how it works so be prepared in about 5 years.

You knew you weren't to bring gifts and the ones who saw something that Neal just had to have, made wonderful choices. Marcy, Sarah and Richard gave me a compass, but it is a Chinese puzzle to open; the ghost stories, Bert and I CD, the Angel for my garden, and the things from Maria's.....Oh, that reminds me.....After you all left, I went out to First Cliff to return a plate Pat Michaud had forgotten. In the middle of the road out there was a policeman. I'm wondering...."What did I do now/" So I stopped and said; "Officer, how come you're here in the middle of the road?" He said; "Are you going to the party?" while carefully looking at the case of "beer" on my front seat. I said; "Thanks, no, I'm just coming from a party and am returning a dish to Mrs. Michaud a coupe of doors down". He said "OK", but I noticed in my rearview mirror, he was watching to see if I did any weaving with my car as I left.

On leaving Mrs Michaud's house, I, of course, came back up to the cop and gave him a Maria's Root Beer. We both agreed it was the BEST of all root beers and I guess he was relieved to find it wasn't booze.

One one wonderful last word. Amongst the well-chosen cards was one from my boss, Nancy. On the front was a photo of a beautiful redwood forest with some heartwarming words about how "they stand tall and proud, year after year, century after century; their majestic beauty never
failing to take one’s breath away”. This kind of thing gets one all puffed up and you wonder how you can compare yourself to such magnificent words or trees.

Inside it said:

Are you ready for this?

OK.

It said:

"Thank you for planting them!"

Sunset wasn't too bad either:

Love, Neal
May 24, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend

On the corner of Border, Spring and Summer Streets is this yearly memorial to our fallen veterans of the Iraq War. In the foreground is the permanent Veterans Memorial with the flags of the fifty states surrounding it. On the embankment behind is a flag for each person killed in the Iraq War.

Yes, it takes your breath away......all those lives..... just gone..................

Photos taken by Steve Campbell, Manager of the Cohasset Resort Hotel with my camera (I wasn't allowed on the roof).
May 24, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

Now, I know many of you did not see it, but Jim Denker, my friend for 50 or so years, can make pieces of wood look like God was guiding his hand. A while back, I gave him a chunk (a log, if you will) from my Mimosa tree that fell down in a wind storm and got these back. The one on the right is from my Mimosa tree. These are so smooth, a fly could slip and break its leg on them.
This time the challenge was greater. The piece of wood looked like it was best suited for kindling than for sculpture. If you touched it in any one of several places, you got a splinter. Jim cleaned it up without altering it's inherent beauty.

See, my much needed bookend.: OK, OK you guys may not see the handiwork of God here, but come to Gray's mausoleum and take a look at what a photo can't do. Incidentally, the table is a Japanese cooking table my sister got when her husband was stationed in Japan during the Korean War.

Love, Neal
HOUSE ON THE ROCK

This is some house!

Clingstone, an unusual, 103-year-old mansion in Rhode Island’s Narragansett Bay, survives through the love and hard work of family and friends.

Henry Wood, the owner, runs the house like a camp: all skilled workers welcome. The Jamestown Boatyard hauls the family's boats and floating dock and stores them each winter in return for a week's use of the house in the summer.
Mr. Wood, a 79-year-old Boston architect, bought the house with his ex-wife Joan in 1961 for $3,600. It had been empty for two decades.
Clingstone had been built by a distant cousin, J.S. Lovering Wharton. Mr. Wharton worked with an artist, William Trost Richards, to create a house of picture windows with 23 rooms on three stories radiating off a vast central hall.
The total cost of the construction, which was completed in 1905, was $36,982.99
An early sketch of the house. Mr. Wood is as proud as any parent of his house, and keeps a fat scrapbook of photographs and newspaper clippings that document its best moments. Many of the historic photos he has were provided by the company that insured the house for its original owners.
The Newport Bridge is visible from the windows of the Ping-Pong room, to the left of the fireplace.
The house is maintained by an ingenious method: the Clingstone work weekend. Held every year around Memorial Day, it brings 70 or so friends and Clingstone lovers together to tackle jobs like washing all 65 of the windows. Anne Tait, who is married to Mr. Wood's son Dan, refinished the kitchen floor on one of her first work weekends.
There are 10 bedrooms at Clingstone, all with indecently beautiful views
The dining room table seats 14. Refinishing the chairs is a task on the list for a future work weekend.
Sign by the ladder that leads to the roof reads: No entry after three drinks or 86 years of age. "It used to say 80 but we had a guy on a work weekend who was 84, so I changed it," said Mr. Wood, ever the realist. It would have been a shame to curtail the activities of a willing volunteer.
NO ENTRY AFTER
THREE DRINKS OR
86 YEARS OF AGE
July 5, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

Usually I'm at the club on the Fourth of July picking up trash and other holiday duties. However, I fulfilled my 20 hours at the yacht yesterday, so I had today to sleep late and be lazy. On waking, I watched tennis and their weird scoring method (15, 30, 40, love, deuce, set point, etc.). Plus, kids in blue scampering back and forth across the "court" retrieving balls that missed their mark.

During the day, I did manage to stay out of trouble. No felling trees that fell the wrong way and ripped the electric service off the side of the house, or other things that I've done on previous holidays when I had time on my hands. I did manage to find a rock with my self-propelled mower, but it continued to mow and I got most of the lawn done before I said "Enough!"

I watched the "Rebels and the Redcoats" (about our long fight for independence) on Channel 44 and then the golf (there's always one drive or putt that's spectacular).

After a nap, I caught the news on TV and noted that none of the eight fatalities (this weekend) had been caused by an elderly driver. There seemed to be an awful lot of hoopla over the Pops show; so I watched the Pops for a while. When I went to get my cooled-down turkey pie dinner, I noticed someone across the marsh was setting off some fireworks, so I got out the cannon to give them a few blasts; being careful, of course, to turn off my hearing aid on the side closest to the cannon. Another neighbor over there flashed his outside lights to let me know he could hear them.

Shucks, my friend Jim in the West End, 3 or 4 miles away can hear the cannon when I alert him to listen.

Then I worked on a photo scrapbook for Joyful Voices until the big fireworks extravaganza in Boston came on the TV. Now I'm up on the deck answering e-mails and typing titles for the scrapbook pages.

Hope your day was full of fun in the sun or spending time with your family and other traditional things.

Love, Neal
July 14, 2009

Dear Angels and Friends:

Gull waiting for a handout from passengers on the ferry

The Martha's Vineyard Millennium performance went off like it always does. We're scared stiff we hadn't had enough rehearsals (only 2), yet all went well. Our soloists were great! Donnell Patterson (one our directors) was late and we were afraid we were going to have to improvise, but he arrived in the nick of time.
The outside of the Tabernacle

As we had to board the bus as soon as possible after the performance, I didn't get a chance to see if any friends/Angels had made it to the performance. As it was, the bus driver missed the turn for the boat and I had to direct him back to it and we missed it again! So we went around the block again. Got it that time.

Mernie Clifden was my driver from her house in So Weymouth and we didn't get the usual parking lot on St. Botolph St.; so we parked in the school yard. When we approached Boston the rain started and I realized I had forgotten my raincoat. Oh well. I had my sweatshirt on and Mernie had the hood up on her jacket and we made it to her car not thoroughly soaked, but close to it.

Then, it started to rain as though we were in a hurricane!!! Mernie did an excellent job getting to her house. By then, it was around Midnight.

I thought I'd now have a pleasant 25-minute drive home, but I was wrong. When I turned from Route 53 onto Grove St. in Norwell for my shortcut trip to Scituate, it started to HAIL! I don't mean a light sort of hail it was coming down like snow in a blizzard! It continued to hail until I got to Route 3-A in Scituate. What is normally a 15-minute drive took 30 minutes as I rarely went over 15 miles an hour. I was afraid the hail would break the windshield.

It hailed so long and hard, I was driving in slush most of the way. I have never had such an experience like that before. My hood did get one dent from a larger-sized piece of hail, but it was mostly pea to marble sized hail that I encountered.

So dear Angels and Friends, I'm home and have recuperated and am back to work.

Hope to see you sometime this summer.

I'm hoping to have kayaking on my Gulf River on the Weekend of July 25-25, so keep that in mind.

Love and hugs, Neal
August 6, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend.

I have been incognito for the last several days as it was SHYC’s Annual Junior Regatta. This year greatly enlarged by the addition of US Sailing (org.) and (US) Olympic Trials. I’ve forgotten the number of boats/kids, but 385 sticks in my mind. Add to that, parents, mostly kind, understanding and patient, concerned for their child’s success, BUT highly thankful to us (members/staff) for our labors on their behalf.

For this event, I always arrive at dawn as it is special, quiet time. All is still, even the harbor water itself is bracing itself for the onslaught; awaiting the rising of the sun; the heat of the day; the boats; the flags; the participants. In two hours it will be a nut house.
It was a time filled with wonder. How in Hell are we going to launch 230-odd boats all at once for the “Harbor Start” (announced, of course, by a cannon). The Optimist and Pram classes were kept on our floats. The Laser-class were in our back parking lot and launched from our “beach”. Then, wonderful cooperation from the town allowed all the 420-class boats (about 100 of them with a crew of two) to use the main town launching area. To even my practiced eye, it looked like bedlam times an X factor. An artistic view of Bedlam.

This is duplicated to the left as well: Note, launching from a trailer is not the approved method. The approved method is with a “dolly” (an aluminum frame with two small rubber tires and a T handle at the bow end). Two or three boats at a time come down the ramp with the boat’s crew holding it back. Once in the water they jump in and our staff hauls the dolly back up the ramp as more come down
Over in the float area, the Optimist and Pram classes (one child per boat) were at first, still and quiet:

Then it too, awakes to the thrill of the day:
And they're off!!! "Harbor Start" is always exciting as they try to work their way through moored boats and get out to the ocean and freedom!

It is still fairly calm and getting out to the ocean is a chore.

Some are towed by their coaches. Photo taken from a friend's house fourth-floor window. Note, a fleet of Opti's are to the right of the light keeper's house. There are three main racing areas; one for the 420's and Lasers, one for the youngest Opti sailors (appropriately called the Green Fleet), and the last for other Optis and Prams.
These scenes are duplicated on Tuesday, but the wind is somewhat better. All the fleets stay out all day and lunch is served by the race committee “lunch boats” that bring out cardboard lunch boxes. Safety is always a concern and the “on the water” race committee has several doctors spread throughout the fleets. The entire race committee is equipped with Marine radios, as is the on-shore committee to handle any problem. The US Coast Guard has a base in Scituate Harbor and they, along with the Scituate’s Harbormaster, monitor all communications. One harbormaster boat is usually out with the fleets, should help be needed.

Anxious mothers watch their children from Scituate Light. One fleet is barely visible in the morning haze:
The grand fleet of 420's makes an impressive sight as they return from their races.
Well, you imagine that this old geezer is pretty pooped after getting up at 5:00 two days in a row (I'm usually going to bed at 5:00 AM); so I've been recuperating.

In addition, Monday night, my co-author Angel Kathie Lee and myself were interviewed on WATD ("We're At The Dump") radio about our book "Raising Scituate's Spirits" I do recall one question asked of me: "What is the difference between a spirit and a ghost" I replied; "I thought a spirit was something you drank." It sounded good at the time.

Life goes on, and this weekend the moon is full and maybe I can get out in my kayak for some quiet R & R.

Love, Neal
August 8, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

Tonight an Angel of long standing wrote and remarked about the beautiful day.

I wrote back to tell her of my day.

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Yes, the day was spectacular.

In the evening, my co-author and myself did a talk about our book "Raising Scituate's Spirits" outdoors to a large gathering at the book store. Then we drove around Lighthouse Point to see the results of Scituate's Annual Luminaria.

During Scituate's Luminaria our entire coastline is lighted with empty one gallon plastic milk jugs (each 3 to 4 feet apart) filled with sand a tea light candle. During this day, large teams of people go about with milk jugs to places where no houses are present (our open beaches, etc.) and when darkness comes, they light the candles. Where there are houses on the waterfront, the owners do their section of frontage. It's a beautiful sight. Airplanes fly over to see it. People go out in their boats to view the lights. Now most of the harbor front is lighted as well. People are out walking everywhere and a wonderful feeling of peace fills the air.

Too bad the world doesn't see this and realize that good feelings to neighbors could solve a lot of things. When you look at Earth from space - we are so small - why not work together - our lives are short - do something to help, not hurt.

Love, Neal
August 9, 2009

Dear Angel & Friend:

Today had many interesting vignettes:

A neighbor's cat was ever so patient waiting for the chipmunk to come out of the flower garden and looked at me as if to say; "Shhhhhh, I'm hunting." I don't know the end of the story as I grew tired of watching and went over to a house and barn of a person who came to the book store last night. She mentioned to my co-author and myself that there was an old cemetery in the woods behind their property.

An old, overgrown dirt road lead in from the paved road to this family plot for Merritts and Litchfields (old Scituate family names)
Amongst the old stones were several veterans. Mostly from the Civil War or earlier.
The man who moved my barn to its present location was a Merritt and was always a little tipsy. So now I know it runs in his family.
The barn at Fresh Meadow Farm has a surprise inside that partly open door:

Luckily it's made of plastic foam
When I went kayaking, I caught the tide just right and was able to get into Cohasset Haabaa for a few minutes and saw this lobsterman sculling his skiff out to his boat.

Than back under the bridge to head home.
The best photo of the day was this egret.

Hope you enjoyed the trip.

Love, Neal
September 3, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

Once a year those of the staff who have been at the club a long time or are in a supervisory position, are invited to dine in the club’s dining room courtesy of the caterer.

Tonight was our night. Not only that, we were allowed to sit at the Commodore’s table which has the best view.

Also, every Wednesday during the summer, there are sailboats races beginning at 6:00 PM. There was enough wind at the end of the races to allow the boats to sail back into the harbor (often, the wind dies and they have to motor back).

Combine this with the full moon and it was a beautiful sight.

Thought you'd like to see it.
September 7, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

Last Friday night I stayed at the club to wait for the moon rise. It came up out of some thick haze and was so dim the camera initially didn't pick it up.

But then, there it was!
During this series, I took 28 photos - digital allows you to blip the bad ones off.
Took a final shot through the windshield of my TVR:

Love, Neal
September 13, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend:

At 9:06 AM I awoke. This is not my usual time to wake up when I've gone to sleep at 2:45 AM.

I'm hurting. It's my jaw and the pain moves to include my neck and then right behind my right ear and up onto my head. Then shortly after it goes down my right shoulder into my triceps (back of my biceps).

I'm not only hurting, I'm scared.

Classic symptoms - right?

I call my doctor's office. Talk to a nurse. She puts me on hold. Another nurse talks to me about symptoms and I want to talk to my doctor. I never get the doctor on the phone. I'm getting pretty angry, but not dumb.

I call 911 and get the ambulance to come.

They come, efficient as ever. Get an IV going, Take an EKG before we even leave my driveway. They call South Shore Hospital and discuss my symptoms. The hospital is chock full, but are ready for me when I get there.

I come in on the ambulance bed, and wheeled into emergency receiving area. Seems there are at least six people looking at me. One takes vital info and another has me sign papers allowing them to work on me.

I'm wheeled into Emer. Room Side Aisle B Loc. 5 which is up against a nurse's station. They move me onto a hospital bed (germy?). I talk briefly to Dr. Flynn about my symptoms. Within a few minutes, I'm off with Transportation Assistant Pat to have a CAT Scan. Bed is of course on wheels, and my IV comes with us. There are blue lights flashing all over the place and she tells me there a fire alarm going off, but it is a false alarm. It has shut down certain doors (presumably to keep the fire from spreading); so we have to take a circuitous route to the CAT Scan area. Pat maneuvers the bed with daring precision. Cat Scan Specialist Bernice (a nice Italian gal) knows her job and does it quickly. Then back to my spot at No. 5. An older woman (there aren't many older than me, but this woman fits the bill) has taken up the spot ahead of me in No.6. She asks my nurse Julie is she can have this and that and something to eat and why isn't there a TV for her to look at and so on. After each request, Julie rolls her eyes at me and I give the signal the the old gal is nuts and we exchange smiles.

Dr. Flynn comes by again and says he's waiting for the specialist to look at my CAT Scan and we discuss my symptoms in detail including my inability to talk to my doctor. I tell him the joke about Mrs. Smith (the 90 year old) and intercourse. He says something
about my upbeat attitude and I tell him I'm an optimist. He goes to check on what was
done at my last visit to the hospital this past spring.

You know, in my spot, I'm watching all the comings and goings of others. One old
woman in a cubicle across from me has her worried husband with her and I find out she
fell and they have her on a back board. Eventually several hospital aide men and women
come to move her as gently as possible onto a special bed and take her up to a room.
Further down, two guys come with head caps on. Julie says these guys are from Surgery
and they wheel someone else away to be operated on. Time flies by.

Eventually, I get word that the CAT Scan is normal. Dr. Flynn comes by and leaves a
note saying to release the "Optimist" (me)
and tell him he has had an unusual Migraine headache. What is more unusual is that I've
never had a migraine headache! I'm to take Tylanol when I get home and before bed.

All's fine and dandy. I still have some pain, but I haven't got a ride home. I start calling
numbers. My daughter is in NY for a wedding. All three grandchildren are at work. The
club Steward doesn't answer his phone, nor does Angel Maureen his wife. Finally, I call
my boss Angel Nancy and WA-LA, she is nearby at BJ's (a store) and will pick me up in
a half hour. Great!

I wait outside under the entrance as it is raining and I prefer to wait out here instead of
inside with all those sick people. A woman comes out to ask if I'm OK. I assure her I'm
fine and ask if she's a hospital employee. "No" she says; "I came out for a smoke." She
wants to talk so I'm careful to stay upwind of her and ask her why she is at the
Emergency Ward. She says she hurt her hand, but isn't sure how it happened as she was
at a party. My guess is that there was a fight, and being Irish, she tried to help somehow.

Well, Nancy and her sister Susan came and brought me home to end a long day.

Pain is now all gone, but when you get older, every little twinge makes you wonder if this
is the time for you to go.

Not yet, I guess.

Thank you, Lord.

Love, Neal
Monday, February 23, 2009

The Bucket List. Place an X by all the things you've done and remove the X from the ones you have not, then send it to your friends (including me).

Things you have done during your lifetime: (I've one to original list)
(x) Gone on a blind date
(x) Skipped school
(x) Watched someone die
(x) Been to Canada
() Been to Mexico
(x) Been to Florida
(x) Been to Hawaii
(x) Been to Europe (UK, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France)
(x) Been on a plane
(x) Been on a helicopter
(x) Been lost
(x) Gone to Washington, DC
(x) Swam in oceans (2 - A & P)
() Swam with Stingrays
() Cried yourself to sleep
(x) Played cops and robbers
() Recently colored with crayon
(x) Sang Karaoke
(x) Paid for a meal with coins only
() Been to the top of the St. Louis Arch
(x) Done something you told yourself you wouldn't
() Made prank phone calls
() Been down Bourbon Street in New Orleans
(x) Laughed until some kind of beverage came out of your nose (not recently ;> )
(x) Caught a snowflake on your tongue
(x) Danced in the rain (France)
(x) Written a letter to Santa Claus
(x) Been kissed under the mistletoe (the good old days)
(x) Watched the sunrise with someone
(x) Blown bubbles
(x) Gone ice-skating
(x) Gone to the movies
(x) Been deep sea fishing
() Driven across the United States (only by train and plane)
() Been in a hot air balloon (been full of hot air)
() Been sky diving (if at first you don't succeed, be sure your will is up to date)
(?) Been whitewater rafting (white-water canoeing, yes)
() Gone snowmobiling
(?) Lived in more than one country (does being on an aircraft carrier in the Atlantic qualify?)
(x) Lived in more than one state
(x) Lay down outside at night, admiring stars & listening to crickets (Canterbuey, UK and Scituate)
(x) Seen a falling star and made a wish
() Enjoyed the beauty of Old Faithful Geyser
() Seen the Grand Canyon
(x) Seen the Statue of Liberty
() Gone to the top of Seattle Space Needle
(x) Been on a cruise (Several with US Navy)
() Been to Stonehenge
(x) Traveled by train (specials were the Chunnel from Paris to Folkstone, UK and Boston, MA to Los Angeles **and back**)
(?) Traveled by or ridden a motorcycle (motor-bike in Bermuda)
(x) Been horse back riding (and thrown by said animal)
() Ridden on a San Francisco cable car
(x) Been to Disneyland or Disney World (California)
(x) Been to the Crystal Cathedral in CA (2)
(x) Truly believe in the power of prayer
(?) Been in a rain forest (only the one is Scituate)
(x) Seen whales in the ocean (touched one)
() Been to Niagara Falls
() Ridden on an elephant
() Swam with dolphins
() Been to the Olympics
() Walked on the Great Wall of China
() Saw and heard a glacier calf
() Been parasailing
(x) Been water-skiing
(x) Been snow-skiing
(?) Been to Westminster Abbey (sung in Canterbury Cathedral, UK ((3)) Rochester Cathedral, UK, Galway Cathedral, Ireland and several castles in UK
(?) Been to the Louvre (went to the one across the river with Monet's paintings in it)
(?) Swam in the Mediterranean (does wading in the North Sea count?)
(x) Been to a Major League Baseball game (played Taps at a Boston Braves game honoring veterans c.1938)
() Been to a National Football League game.
(x) Sung in a choir other than a church choir. (classical ((incl. reg. mass)), semi-classical, Gospel, & Ceididhe

What else do you want to know?

Love, Neal
Neal’s Musical Repertoire at 85

July 23, 2009

Dear Angel and Friend

After 85 years, you pick quite a few songs

Songs I know completely or can be looked at in Rise Up Singing or FSSGB addition

Sea Songs

Eddystone Light
Erie Canal
Venezuela
In the Town of Dublin City
Shenandoah
Hullaballu Belay
Mingulay
Anchors Aweigh

Sea Chanties (work songs)

Way, Haul Away
Cape Cod Girls
Drunken Sailor
Whiskey Johnnie
Constitution & the Guirere (sp?)
Rio Grande

Folk Songs

The Rose
The Drummer and the Cross-eyed Cook
Go Tell Aunt Rhodie
There was an old woman all skin and bones
Where ya Goin’ my Honey, My Lamb (My Good Old Man)
The Bells of Norwich, let the winter come and go.
The Great Storm is Over
I have a Dream
Scarlet Ribbons
Simple Gifts
Summertime (Porgy & Bess)

Irish Songs

Galway Shawl
Four Green Fields
Fields of Athenry
The Minstrel Boy
I woke me up this morning and I heard a joyful song

Love Songs
Perhaps Love
Annie's song
Love Changes Everything
On the Day I was Born (Finian's Rainbow)
Old Devil Moon (I look at you and suddenly....)
Temptation
Begin the Beguine
For You
Ashokan Farewell
Somewhere in Time
Strange Dear (So in Love)
I Take my Pen in Hand, Emily (Airborne Symphony)
Love Nest (title song)

Gospel/Spirituals

I Need You to Survive
Nicodemus
Rain Down
Steal Away
Amazing Grace
God and God Alone (in process)

Also dozens of Gospel pieces for chorus
from 13 years of singing Gospel in as many as 5 choirs

Religious

Chariots of Fire
The Lord's Prayer (Albert Hay Mallotte)
Battle Hymn of the Republic
Heal Our Land

Familiar Sheet Music - Classical/Religious

Elijah - Mendishon (sp?) (3 different venues)
Messiah - Handel (numerous)
Stabat Mater - Dvorak
Creation - Haydn
Kingdom - Elgar
Russian Opera Choruses (part in Russian) - various composers
Magnificat - Bach
Requiems - Faure, Brahms (in German), Mozart.
Masses - Beethoven in C, Midnight Mass (Charpentier ((sp?)�,)
Dona Nobis Pacem - R. Vaughan Williams/Whitman

and others

Humorous

Old Sow Song
Barnacle Bill
If I were as high
Whatever you say
Oh, No, John
If you can't tell the world she's a good little girl
The Rhyme of the Chivalrous shark
He's a Lumberjack and He's OK

Western Songs

I Ride an Old Paint
Riders in the Sky
Streets of Laredo

Odd Bits

Gilbert & Sullivan (Pirates of Penzance, Yeomen of the Guard, Trial by Jury)
Abe Lincoln (Lincoln Portrait - Aaron Copeland)
Thomas Jefferson (Testament of Freedom)
A thousand & One Nights (Camel & Dancing Girls)

Old standards - God Bless America, Where or When, This Land is My Land, Dancing in the Dark,
Swing Low Sweet Chariot, On the Road to Mandalay, Home on the Range, etc. too numerous to list

What more need be said? We love you, Neal.

Let the music live on.

‘Angel’ Sandra Waddock
September 28, 2009