

Tales of Tenafly

This, from Claudette, carries so much of the heart of Tenafly that it cannot help but move us: "I am imagining you sitting in the warmth of your sun room among lush orchids, Ansel Adams' photographs spread out before you. I bet you pause to gaze at the zinnias blazing with color just outside the window. Perhaps, a Mozart concerto is playing softly.

I am immersed in a dynamic Writing Workshop at the moment and you



are often on my mind. Things are proceeding 'swimmingly" as you used to say, and I am literally bathing in memories. I wanted to share a few with you. Co-cooning me in the wonder of words, you filled my world with magic.

When I was very small, you sang me to sleep with songs of the stars and God, crooned in your native tongue. You introduced vibrantly illustrated

picture books, translating as you went. I remember Kashmir, the boy who clambered onto the moon and traveled the world, visiting far-off lands.

"The words rhyme better in German," you insisted, but it was the sound of your voice that enthralled me. You were a wonderful storyteller, filling my imagination with exploits of yourself as a young boy.

You often recounted the story of the Easter baskets, brimming with goodies prepared for the neighbors by Kunni, your childhood cook. You described how you snuck in to take a bite of an especially appealing chocolate bunny, but then had to nibble each of the other rabbits so that the baskets would be uniform in appearance. You continued in this vein, attempting to make them all perfectly even — until ten Lindt bunnies had somehow disappeared. As an obedient child with a mischievous mind, I loved the fact that you were telling on yourself.

I remember the rousing folk songs we sang on the Nantucket beach around the crackling campfire as the smoke drifted into the salty air. I wore a Peanuts sweat shirt depicting Lucy railing against the world: "I am frustrated and inhibited and nobody understands me." Even the clothes you purchased for me were filled with words.

Summer after summer, I perched on the edge of driftwood benches, crying over the hauntingly lyrical Red River Valley. Clementine made me sob even harder. After the sing-a-long, when the night sky deepened to midnight and the stars appeared, you told ghost stories that invariably made us huddle closer together in delicious fear.



Stephan and daughter Kira also made visits to Claude all the way from Maine on happy occasions. Claudette's boys, Luke and Donovan also visited Tenafty all the way from Colorado.

The Christmas season was also filled with the magic of verse. I remember the towering Christmas tree shimmering with a thousand lit candles. We passionately sang O Tannenbaum and Oh Little Town of Bethlehem as Mom stood nervously by with a bucket of water — just in case. It mattered little that none of us could carry a tune. The songs lulled me with their soulful cadence.

Dad, I bring you a handful of my recollections, knowing the ocean has stolen yours. They were erased by the wave that knocked you off your feet and deprived your brain of oxygen, those years ago. So here I am, bearing the gift of our shared history — paltry tokens of my immense appreciation. Thank you, Dad, for the memories. I love you.”



“I am frequently asked,” Claude tells us, ‘Where do you find such an assortment of people?’ And I am always at a loss to answer. Surely I can

count many so-called normal people among my friends, but Louis Mandel is certainly not one of those.

Louis is a “Depression man.” He grew up in a very poor white Jewish neighborhood in the South Bronx. While he, like many of us, made it big as they say, at heart, he remains a guy from the Depression Era, far removed from today’s upscale, yuppie crowd.

I first met Louis and his wife, Mary, when they moved next door into our upscale neighborhood. He took regular walks with a ferocious-looking German Shepherd dog named Wotan, and to tell the truth, Louis — a towering 6 foot 3 inches — also looked a bit ferocious. As it turned out, however, neither one of them was ferocious. Since I always wore shorts or dungarees around the house and did a lot of gardening, Louis had the impression that I was a gardener employed by the rich man who surely must live in our house. Louis, having a warm, outgoing personality and being interested in people regardless of their race or social status, always stopped and talked to me, and that is how we became friends.



After forty years of ups and downs in our two households, weathering many a crisis together, and always being supportive of one another, we have become very close friends.

Louis, who always says he is “just a dentist,” actually is a famous specialist in salivary gland diseases. He is also an assistant dean and professor at Columbia University Dental School and has all kinds of celebrities calling on him from all over the world. Around home he dresses in an ancient, raggedy sweat shirt and faded, worn corduroy pants and usually wears an old baseball cap. Looking at him I would say that he is the handyman employed by the rich homeowner.

The truth is, while at heart still the Jewish kid on the block from the South Bronx in the thirties, he has an enormous amount of knowledge in all aspects of the medical field, not only salivary gland disease. So much so that in our family we would never dream of making a medical decision without consulting him, and I would never have a medical procedure



done — no matter how good the doctor was — unless it was done at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center where Louis could keep an eye on things.

Several Sundays each month, Louis appears promptly on our doorstep at 9 AM with a couple of bagels in hand. He comes for a cup of coffee and stays an average of two hours while we discuss what is happening in the world and in our lives. We call it The Week in Review.

Aside from discussing current news, we often turn to events that happened many years ago. When asked what he considers the best time of his life, Louis invariably tells of the days when he was a captain in the air-force

stationed in Germany during 1951-1954. Initially, Louis was stationed in Biloxi, Mississippi where he became friendly with a black First lieutenant Noah Calhoun. Noah and Louis would always lunch together in the Officers' Club. One day Louis went alone and some southern officers invited him to join them. They told him it did not look good for Louis to be seen so often with Noah. Louis was certain they knew he was a New York Jew which to some extent they seemed to overlook. Louis's problem with them was solved when he was transferred the following week to Germany.

In Germany he felt he was a big wheel regarded by the post World War II population as an enormously wealthy American with unlimited access to the coveted supplies available in the Post Exchange (PX) on his base. While in Germany, Louis adopted two German children — Dieter 12 years and Renate Schauerer 10 years of age and often brought them gifts and clothing on the PX. He was aided in this activity by the Supply Officer Lieutenant Carl Nelson. Carl and Louis became close friends and to this day they phone each other 2 or 3 times a month. (Carl is in Minnesota).

By the time Louis's stint of duty was over in Germany, Renate was now almost 13 years old, had a crush on him and pleaded, "Please wait for me." Renate is now married with a family of her own and lives in South Carolina. Renate keeps in constant touch with Louis who cherishes her friendship. Dieter Schauerer a retired plumber who had been employed by the State of Hesse, is now choirmaster of a famous German Cohr in Wiesbaden and

often keeps in touch with Louis. In short as Jews would say, ‘Louis is a real mensch.’” His wife Mary would agree.

Lou has his own delightful version of things. “When I think of Claude, there is one incident that I cannot erase from my memory bank. I do believe that it clearly illuminates Claude’s spirit and willingness to accept life as it presents itself.

Claude had coronary by-pass surgery in 1986 at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. Since I work there, I was able to visit him daily. Postoperatively, Claude did not fare well. By the fourth day, he was pretty well convinced that the end was near. “You know,” he said to me, “I have had a great life and I have



been fortunate to be able to experience the many joys of life. Mo-Li has been part of it, and I am thankful for the time that I have had with her.”

My response to him was about what could be expected. “You must be kidding, there are many years ahead for you. Besides, don’t think for a moment that Mo-Li will allow anything to happen to you.”

Of course, I proved to be right. The secret of Claude’s longevity was Mo-Li’s witchcraft. It seems that Claude was suffering postoperatively from a severe drop in his red cell count for unknown reasons. His physicians were baffled, particularly because he was not responding to the blood transfusions that were being administered. Mo-Li sprang into action and concocted a cockamamie brew, the ingredients of which had been stored in a darkened corner of a Chinatown herbalist’s shop. The essential components seemed to glow in the darkness, have a life of their own, and were not to be found in any medical pharmacopoeia. It has a base of some sort of crocodile oil obtained from an uncooperative crocodile.

Method of application? Sneak it into the hospital, dump a naked Claude into a hospital bathtub, and douse him with the substance — or was he supposed to ingest it? Ingest it? I doubt it because Claude was still around, so it must have been a bath application. Regardless, the result spoke for itself: recovery was rapid.

The reprieve gave Claude the opportunity to continue with the menu life offered. Claude is a constant theatregoer and seems to enjoy any production that is performed on a stage. Mary and I have accompanied him on several occasions. Most of the shows have succeeded in making me sleepy — I do not seek meaning between the lines. I want to relax and be entertained. However, Claude and Mary always respond enthusiastically to the play's message, whatever it may be.

Travel? Claude wants to see what the world offers. Many years ago, Mary, the children, and I joined Claude and his family in Italy. We piled into a VW van that he had requisitioned from a friend. Off we went to the Centi Valle. A mountain beckoned and Claude attacked. No one told me that the road was one lane, unpaved, and with hairpin turns such that the back of the van always seemed to be hanging off a precipice. That did it! Claude had my support for further travel, but without me.

Food? Claude is the classic epicurean. He is a gourmet who gets instant gratification from a tasteful meal. I have a problem with a refined palate. Although Mary is in Claude's ballpark, my expectations go no further than a salami sandwich, a pickle and a Coke. I cannot find that kind of sustenance in restaurants frequented by Claude.

Sundays often find Mo-Li and Claude hiking or canoeing. In the past, Mary and I have been asked to go along. Constant refusals on my part have caused Claude to give up on me. My idea of sports is to watch Sunday baseball or football on TV.

Museums? Claude knows them all, especially the art museums. Claude developed a sophisticated taste in art, particularly folk art, which I suspect he inherited from his father. As a rule, I did not join him despite being invited. My

taste ends with the Hirschfeld sketches (Nina) in The New York Times.

Claude's great passion was skiing, no one doubted that he would continue to ski well into his nineties. What could stop him? Bad knee? Get it replaced. Bad heart? Increase the medications and "rev" it up. Bad hip? Get a new one in the off season and be ready for winter skiing in Europe.



Claude had another passion — conversation. Letter writing adds another dimension. Claude has an enormous number of friends and what is most astounding is that he manages to keep in touch with all of them. Fate will not dare to intervene.

An interest in plants represents another of Claude's personae. Available time, if it exists, will find Claude digging in his shrub bed. When I first met him, I thought he was the gardener.

Years passed since Claude's heart surgery. The years were very rich for him because they allowed him to pursue his many varied activities. I expected him to continue along these paths for a long time. He had Mo-Li, who always had that bile of a frog ready for his next medical bout! But that was not to be.

Looking back, I think Claude was at his best when he went berry picking. I suspect that for him the berries represented a metaphor of life. He could choose, pick and discard, pick the best and discard those that did not meet his standards. His soft nature and inherent kindness prevented him from applying this approach to people. I suspect the berries served as human substitutes and they allowed him to vent and express his inner feelings. Important note I rarely if ever saw him discard a berry."



Claude had high praise for Lin McKelvie. "She was very much part of my life when she was my children's teacher at elementary school in Tenafly, N.J. My daughter, Claudette, was part of Lin's experimental class, in which students were encouraged to proceed at their own intellectual level without necessarily participating in the curriculum prescribed by the Board of Education. Claudette admired her teaching and while growing into a teenage girl heavily counted on Lin's support and advice.

As a teacher, Lin was part of a lot of lives. She taught nursery school through high school, she taught learning disabled and gifted students. In retirement, she established and directed the Polaris Foundation — a foundation to fund capable students who are from foster homes, dysfunctional



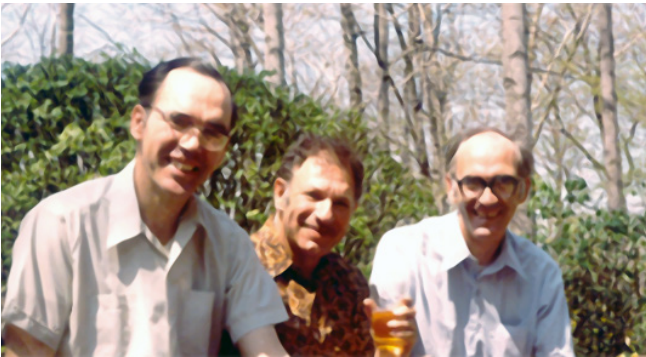
families, the handicapped or young people with criminal records but have straightened out their lives. She is a tutor for Project Lift — working with young people to complete high school certification.”

Lin reciprocated with the compliments. She once wrote Claude, “A love of life, warm and kind humor, generosity, intellectual curiosity and sense of adventure are what come to mind as I think of him. Having been almost a part of his family in years gone by, it is my special wish that as they grow older and wiser, they will see and appreciate the interesting and unique person that they are privileged to call ‘Father’.”



“My name is George McCauley. I was almost asleep when the bell rang. Claude was calling to see my sister in our four floor walk-up. They had met at the folk dances down in the Village that my precocious sister had taken to. My mother descended on him like an avenging angel, driving him down the stairs. I missed much of the sequel because I went off to become a Jesuit in 1948.

It wasn’t until 1955, when I was sent to teach at St. Peter’s College in Jersey City, that I could visit family. By now that included Claude. I’d visit him and Kathleen in Brooklyn Heights and always found him pleasant. My brother (below left with Claude and me) saw more of them and of my mother than I did after



I went off again from 1958 to 1965 to finish my Jesuit studies. I’d hear tales of Claude arriving in the Bronx with a chess set under his arm and Arthur flinching at the inevitable game. The last three of those years had me studying at the University of

Strasbourg and working the American army bases weekends for a little extra money. That’s how I got to see Claude’s family and friends in Lichtenfels. I’ll also never forget the occasional meetings of my mom, Agatha, and his, Mutti. It was like two proud, different worlds coming together and yet finding a deep human bond of similarity despite the differences.

I will always be grateful to Claude for his solicitude for my sister when she was dying in 1970, and later, at the recently built mansion in Tenafly, to be able to watch Stephan and Claudette blossom there and watch Mo-Li unveil her charms and talents in the immensely varied directions she eventually would awe us all with. My sister Mary (above, next page) stoked the ‘blossoming’ by sending tons of toys and presents for birthdays and Christmas year after year. She would hint that all she asked in return from Claude was that he would support her in her retirement!

I enjoyed Claude’s company and friendship immensely — his enthusiasm, his energy (I passed on the hikes, kayaks and skis in favor of golf), his sensitivity to others, his humor and his almost philosophical calm. He never asked me what it was like to be a Jesuit priest but I never took it as a lack of interest. Though once, when panicky about some plastics shipment held up on a dock in Texas, he suggested that I dress up in my Roman collar and speak to the authorities down there in a persuasive — salvific — way.

He was a terrific writer and I was proud to do the layout, design and cover of his magnum opus, *Breaking the Mold*. He had amazing sitzfleisch (what you sit on when you write!) for such an on-the-go man.

I thought we lost him after the Nantucket accident. In the hospital here, he would only speak German, which I then had to translate for the nurses. I remembered the old German saying todessprache, muttersprache (when you’re dying, you always speak your first language.) What followed, however, was a remarkable come-back, owed chiefly to Mo-Li’s devotion and sheer skill over the years.



Cathy Moliski writes to Claude:
“You are always in my heart. ‘The spirit should never grow old’ it is said — and yours is as it was when I first met you. You— storyteller, traveler, one who experiences everything out in the wide-wide world!

When I received your letter requesting a tid-bit or two about “us”, it happened again. “It” refers to the thrill I get at seeing your handwriting — a sort of “Yee-ha! Whoop-dee-do” feeling. It’s been that way for 32 years.



But even more so, the thought of hearing your very juicy European voice always makes me smile! The child in me will always want to get together with the child in you.

You and Mo-Li treated me (I.) like family. Claudette was my best friend. Stephan was my childhood flame. You took me to my first PG movie (Love Story) and took me to China-town for my first Dim sum (and fried chicken or duck feet). You had me to Nantucket where we kids camped on Ester Island with a beached whale..) We also had a chance to sleep in the island's hostel.



You invited me to every major family celebration — a roasted pig thanksgiving, Xmas, Claudette's wedding. I was able to know the Omis (tall and little), Albrect (blue eyes), and Uncle George.

You visited me in Virginia and later came to my wedding. You were there within 12 hours of the birth of my first child, Adam). I was just as excited about seeing you as having the baby. Twelve years and 4 more babies later, I find myself wondering how they can get to hear your stories and see the world through your eyes. If you would take the four-hour drive here (nothing for you!) we could go apple picking and hike a mother-of-five-friendly trail. I was so honored that you wanted me to illustrate any of your journals with my drawings. And so you



will always be in my heart, a part of me. I miss you."

Cathy's husband John (below I.) is equally enthusiastic. "I first heard about Claude even before I was interested in Cathy as a future spouse. During a Bible study, Cathy was relating a story about these wonderful people who have always been there for her and always been a family to

her. How everyone in that group wished to have life-long friends like she had.

I have always loved visiting with you. Cathy is never more happy, alive, and vibrant that when she is with you. You must think she is like that all the time. But it's the effect you have on her.



My greatest contribution to you was being privileged to provide the title of your book ***Breaking the Mold***. I know it

meant something to you because you refer to it so often. To be a small part of your world was a much bigger part of mine.

When we came to visit you a couple years back, you volunteered to be the tour guide to our family to some sights along the Hudson River. What a generous and ambitious undertaking! To my satisfaction, I had the opportunity to experience what Cathy always spoke of — your wit, charm, and youth. You related your fulfillment in life and how you were looking forward to passing on. I asked if you believed in the after life and you said, “No.” After an awkward silence, all I could think of saying was, “Our dearest Claude, the afterlife would not be as much fun without you. Whatever it takes to convince you that we all need you there, we will do.”

But I didn't say anything. It was either my inability to express in words as a dilettante to a master of this life. Or it was an untimely interruption by one of the children. I was unable to finish my thought.

I am finishing it now. We love Claude. Please make it possible for us to share an eternity together. Even that won't be long enough to get to know him, love him, and learn from him the lessons of a happy and fulfilling existence.”



Claude tells us that “Sharon and Steve Enderes are relative newcomers in our life — is it ten years or twelve, but who knows and who cares? What is important is that ever since we met there has been closeness between us that is relatively uncommon when one meets people at the end of one's life. Both Steve and Sharon have an irresistible charm, and it is impossible to get angry at them. Steve, a unique craftsman, has gradually redone our entire house.

Normally he is one or two years behind schedule. In fact, there is no schedule! When we discuss a project, Steve will think about it. He is not prone to compromises and often it may take him months, if not years, to come up with a solution that satisfies him. Inevitably, the result is stunning. Everything has meaning. Everything has a yin and a yang. As in the description below of the side table that he made for us. It's typical of how he thinks and works. A great and unusual person!"

"Dear Claude," Steve writes me, "I figure that if I complete a piece on the first day of a new year, a new century, or a new millennium I am off to a good start and deserve a reevaluation of my notorious reputation (which I detest).



About this table. Subject: The Claude Bamberger Vanguard Table. The elements of this design are meant to reflect many of your qualities.

The curly maple represents the ripple effect you have had on all the people who have met and known you. The cherry wood, which is your favorite, represents substance, beauty and stability. The cube square that holds the top suggests the Bauhaus commitment to function and form. The woven bamboo veneer represents the Bamberger legacy and all that it meant for the people in all the cottages in Lichtenfels and all that that means historically. The light, floating curly maple shelf reflects Mo-Li, whose life in such interesting ways has paralleled and interwoven with yours. And the concept of the Vanguard, of the base and the flat surface launching

forward, this is meant to reflect your great love of life and of adventure and of always pushing forward into each and every tomorrow.

I hope you and Mo-Li will enjoy this table. I put a lot of thought into it and I know that the angles might appear strange at first. Much of the meaning behind the piece can be found in Robert Frost's wonderful poem *Birches*, and in a movie that I saw last year called *The Incredible Lightness of Being*. I have interpreted both of these works with this piece. I thank you for your special friendship — for the inspiration that you and Mo-Li have given me."

Claude adds an after thought. "This is typical Steve Enderes. It is equivalent to a guided tour when visiting a museum as opposed to just looking at the exhibits on your own. Looking at Steve's side table, it appears to be just a beautiful piece of furniture. No one would fathom the details and thoughts that went into its construction, as described and enumerated above.

When I was a child growing up in Lichtenfels, Bavaria, my father had a very odd circle of friends belonging to all social levels. Somehow I have followed in his footsteps. Among these friends was an architect named Erich Dieckmann. He was a designer of furniture for the famous Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany.

Over the years, Erich Dieckmann renovated our entire house, and historically our family became the largest customer of the Bauhaus at the time. To this day, I have a Bauhaus file with pictures of our ultra-modern house in Lichtenfels, which is in a style of architecture still valid today. I have letters between my parents and their Bauhaus-friend Erich discussing the projects of the time. Erich Dieckmann was a frequent guest in our home.

The similarity between the relationship of the Bauhaus Dieckmans to my parents at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, and my relationship to the Enderes family at its end is striking, including those puzzling delays.

By way of example I am including two letters written by my mother in 1928 to Mr. Dieckman:



February 9, 1928

Dear Mr. Dieckmann,

We have not heard from you in a very long time and I would like to know how you are? I always hope you and your wife will visit us one of these days. Last week a gentleman from the Bauhaus stopped by for a visit but as we were not home, he was "received" by Klaus, who no doubt told him more than enough. How is our kitchen order coming along? Could we count on delivery in March? Or will it be later? I am also in need of two simple white chairs. Klaus totally ruined the ones in his room what we need mainly are some "very solid" ones.

-Sincerely, Jetta Bamberger

April 16, 1928

Dear Mr. Dieckmann,

I reply to the letter I received from the Bauhaus, directly to you. The painters are finished with their work and I hope that the kitchen can be installed within the next weeks. I leave it up to you whether your personal presence is required, but I need not mention especially that you are welcome at our home anytime. As to the lamps, perhaps one would be sufficient as the kitchen is not very large. Best would be to install two smaller lamps rather than one big one. My husband must go on a business trip at the end of the month, and he would be glad if the kitchen could be installed before he leaves.

-Best regards, your Jetta Bamberger"



Claude writes, "Laura Kennedy is a very busy top-notch lawyer, married with several children, and we rarely have any news from her. Yet I consider Laura and her husband Peter among our friends. We are certain we could count on them to help if called upon. And that is what friendship is all about. Laura is the daughter of one of our very closest friends, Bob Kantrowitz, who played an important role throughout our lives until his sudden and unexpected death at the age of fifty-five. As I reminisce about my life, I realize that the Kantrowitz family has left an indelible print on our hearts. In what follows, Laura aptly describes the relationship as seen from the vantage point of a seven-year-old girl."

"I have known Claude my whole life. He was a close friend of my parents. From my earliest childhood days, I remember listening to stories

about their canoe trips and bike trips. I remember when they went folk dancing together.

Then came the Nantucket days. Sometimes we stayed with Claude and Mo-Li in their beautiful home overlooking the moors. Sometimes we stayed in one of the Taylor Cottages. Always, we shared wonderful dinners and breakfasts together on the deck. The smell, and taste, of those fresh,



hot fruit pies and breads are imprinted on my memory. Claude was always thoroughly entertaining. Whether he was recounting the latest about Madaket Millie or some other colorful character in his broad spectrum of friends and acquaintances, he would engage the crowd in laughter.

During those relaxed, summer days, Claude was full of energy and ideas. He was the one who would rally us all to go clamming, biking or swimming. I am grateful to Claude for those memories I cherish. After my parents died years ago, I continued to enjoy Claude's warm friendship. We met for the occasional dinner in New York City, where we exchanged stories about the joys of skiing and the (not so joyful) aches and pains of growing older, especially as it affects the lower back. For nearly a half century, I have known Claude always to face life with vigor and enthusiasm and never really to let age get in the way. For that, Claude continues to be a great inspiration to me."



“Mr. Dieckmann, of Bauhaus fame, died during the war,” Claude remembers, “leaving behind a wife and two daughters. After the war the family contacted me to ask whether I could sponsor the immigration to the United States of the two daughters, for whom there seemed to be no future in Germany. I provided the necessary papers, and the daughters arrived. We meet Bettina and her husband, Ray, who live in Colorado, regularly for ski vacations.”

Bettina remembers it even more sharply: “Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if Claude hadn’t sponsored me to immigrate into America. Stay in Germany and marry that doctor who begged me to stay in Wurzburg, my last working town? Instead, I followed dutifully a Berliner youth friend’s promises of a golden future in the U. S., but I needed a sponsor since this fellow still lived in Canada on his way from Australia to the U. S., so Claude, played a big role in my fate, which turned quite different than dreamed.

After my adventurous friend turned out to be an unsteady disappointment in every way, I sought my freedom from this five-year marriage. Starting all over in this new country (too proud to return home!)



and feeling really down, I found Claude always helpful with advice. Over the years, he gave me lots of fatherly guidance, especially when it came to business-like problems.

Life turned rosier when I married Ray, who got me hooked on skiing. Our friendship really grew closer when Claude joined us often in the Colorado mountains. “You became our idol in technique on the slopes,” she told him, regardless of all kinds of artificial joints in your body. Maybe the grease of the salami and cheese you always carry lubricates those hinges to make you schuss down so gracefully. Despite bagels, smoked lox, and the many sinful goodies you love so much, you’ve made it this far with no dents in

your mind (besides the few in the body!). We hope to hold out as well as you so we can treasure your gracious friendship”



Steffie Schmidt-Burgk was born on March 28, 1940. She is not married and has no children — but she has an unofficially adopted grandson and his mother.

“Claude,” she writes, “from 1960-1961, I was in the USA in your family where I worked as a ‘mother’s helper’. Claudette was 2 years old and Stephan was just born. I felt very much at home, being part of your family and had many new experiences in the USA. After I left you, I worked another six months for a family with five children in Berkeley, CA. And, after that I toured America and Mexico with nine other international students. After that I went back to Munich to complete my education.

Because I liked to travel, I signed up to teach in a school in South Africa for 1964-65. This was a very interesting experience, although I could not stand the Apartheid policy of the Government and therefore left before termination of my contract — to settle down in Munich, my place of birth.



There I worked as a teacher in a school for handicapped children — a work which gave me a lot of joy. Since 1997 I am retired. My hobbies are travel, cycling, swimming — everything, as you can see, which has to do with nature.”



Brigitta was another au pair to Claude’s family. She returned to Germany and had a family of her own, her husband and three stunning daughters. With family to care for she didn’t have much time, especially when her aged

mother who lived alone in Bavaria has a stroke that paralyzed her left side. Brigitta brought her up to Schleswig to live with her. Her mother recovered



fairly well, but had problems swallowing, so she needed watching.

Her husband retired and got very serious about doing some fitness training every day. Most of the time she joined him, doing 10 to 20 km per day on roller blades. Once her husband went to Gorka at the Polish border by bicycle together with some friends. It took them about 10 days to get there — a daily average of about 100 km per day. She says, “Thank God I stayed at home!”

Her eldest daughter, Jessica, married Matt Beaumont, an American MIT grad with a specialty in aero space engineering. They live near to Stuttgart, and Jessica works as an architect. Larissa studies medicine in Goettingen and is specializing in neo-natology. Saskia she calls ‘our little one’ (“though she’s taller than me,” Brigitta will add) studied languages, even Latin, in gymnasium.” Brigitte did not think her ‘the busiest student’ though she considers her outstandingly intelligent.

To sustain her nostalgic ties to Tenafly, Brigitta (center) sent wonderful pictures of her children (Jessica l. and Larissa r.) to Claude and Moli. And last but not least ... of Saskia.



“Rita and Alex Kauders,” Claude tells us, “came into our circle of friends relatively late. Once a person reaches a certain age it is hard to make real

new friends. Children, grandchildren, and old friends take enough of your time to preempt new, meaningful relationships. It is a bit different with the Kauders. An enormously active couple, they are forever on the go, morning to night. You can see them canoeing early in the morning, in the afternoon they'll take in a movie, then on to a sunset sail in their 30-foot yacht, moored at City Island on Long Island Sound. After that they may go to a restaurant with live entertainment and dance until midnight. For them, that is an average day in the life of a septuagenarian couple.

However, what we like most about Alex and Rita — quite aside from the fact that we enjoy joining them in some of their activities — is their total lack of pretense and hypocrisy. Most people we know make excuses and allowances when it comes to relationships between spouses, children, and sensitive issues in general. Rarely do we find a parent who comes right out and admits that their child is not always the greatest, their grandchildren sometimes less than adorable, and their world not perfect.

Not so Alex — he comes right out and says exactly how he feels about a given situation. There is a German saying: He does not cover his mouth with a leaf, possibly a reference to Adam covering up what is obvious. But for us, Alex taking a stand on any subject and calling a spade a spade is most refreshing and so is his and Rita's company.

Rita recalls, "My most vivid memory of Claude was his entry into our early morning self-styled "ladies' exclusively" aerobics group (Rita is at his left). We had previously managed to discourage any man who attempted to join this elite group. We did not enjoy having male participants. They were big, hard to see around, somewhat clumsy, and unwittingly always in the wrong spot. Claude refused to be intimidated by our silent disapproval; and after a while, we admired his determination, and he was fully and affectionately accepted."



My other story, I once told you, was when I learned that he was European, that he was an ardent skier and hiker — all of the things Alexi and I love to do — so I asked him whether he would like to meet for a cup of coffee to talk. He looked at me — a nebbish (Jewish word for pathetic) 70- year-old at the time — and said, “Well, you know I’m married.”

Claude chuckled when he heard that. “Well, here it is several years later and I and still am in the ladies’ aerobic class, still as clumsy as ever, and still equally as persistent. Rita and Alex have become part of our circle, and we always hope that their being so enormously active will not prevent them from seeing us every so often.”



It was a twist of fate. Mo-Li brought her aching back to orthopaedic surgeon Vincent Giudice who cured her. (Mo-Li would later credit him with getting her to move Claude from Boston to Columbia Presbyterian after ‘the accident’.) He in turn was impressed by her keen, erudite mind, so he and his wife Emily got together with Mo-Li and Claude socially.



“What a wonderful relationship followed,” they wrote. “We heard wonderful stories about Claude’s fascinating life and heritage along with Mo-Li’s astonishing life experiences. We always looked forward with great pleasure to hearing more stories. Their interest in people in all walks of life and their sense of humor made each evening spent together fly by incredibly fast.”

Their relationship was all the more rare in that their sports were different. Emily was New York City tennis champion at age 19. Vincent was U.S. Physician golf champion for four years. And both were mad for dancing.



Carving birds came quite naturally to Matt Cormons. He had always been keenly interested in nature and spent many hours of his childhood in the overgrown lots adjoining his home in New York's East Harlem. It was there that he began to learn about plants and animals (mainly insects). With reading and trips to many of the city's parks (which had a surprising variety of insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds and plants) and zoos, he was well on his way to becoming a fine naturalist. His interests led to a bachelor's degree in animal behavior from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Matt had never felt settled in the city and believed that one day he'd leave; it wasn't about to happen soon. After graduating from CCNY he worked for five years at the American Museum of Natural History as a teacher and lecturer, and later as a technical illustrator and field assistant (resulting in two new Venezuelan insect species named after him). After graduate school he taught middle school science at a private school in New York City, followed by twelve years as the director of the Tenafly Nature Center, an environmental education center in a suburb across the Hudson from New York. It was there he got to know Claude and Mo-Li

Finally, in 1985, at the age of 44 (and against the advice of their less venturesome friends, neighbors and family) Matt, his wonderful, always supportive wife Grace, and their two young sons decided to leave New Jersey for their dream of living a more self-sufficient life-style away from the intense pace of the city and suburbs.



That April they moved to a 43-acre farm on Virginia's Eastern Shore and since then have been living very full, independent, satisfying and busy lives. Their two sons, schooled at home by Matt and Grace, are graduates of the University of Virginia and are also pursuing independent life-styles.

For several years Matt assisted Grace in her long term study



of the endangered Roseate Tern, taking time off each spring from the farm and his carving to trap and band terns in the Azores. The resulting data on the species' movements has been published in one of the leading ornithological journals.

Matt's carving, which fits well into this life-style, provides a large part of the family

income, but over the years has been supplemented in various ways, including a family farm and nature camp for children, leading nature walks at nearby Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge, writing nature articles, reviewing nature manuscripts, growing organic produce for market, selling livestock and hay, and teaching adult education and English as a Second Language courses. Recently Matt has been heavily involved with photography, writing copy, illustrating, sharing ideas and acting as a facilitator for an innovative and very successful family literacy program initiated by Grace. Matt has also written a children's novel about an operatic starling that has yet to be published.

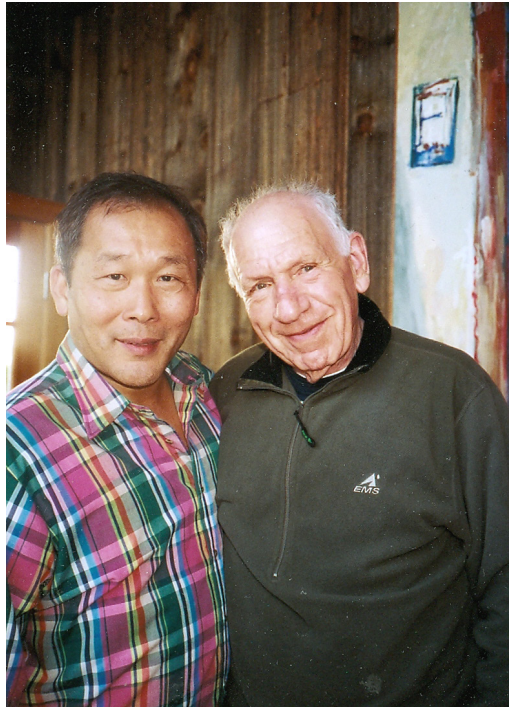
But then something happened. "Along with my interest in nature, I had a talent for drawing. However, my parents discouraged me from pursuing a career in art. Nor did my father, a highly skilled cabinetmaker who emigrated from Italy as a young man, want me to follow in his footsteps. They hoped I would have an easier life with a good-paying job.

But things were about to change. "A year before moving to Virginia, I had met a decoy carver on the Eastern Shore and decided to carve decoys for a living. Even though I had never carved anything before, I knew I could do it. I took a decoy carving course with a local carver and since then have carved about a hundred bird species and have gone well beyond decoys.

I had finally found my niche — applying my artistic talent to wood — to my late parents’ ultimate delight.”



As long as I live, I will never forget our close friend Chin Manasmontri! He falls into the category of one of the most unforgettable characters I have come across in my life. He is just about the most enterprising individual I have ever met, constantly teetering between riches and poverty roller-coaster style, as he is forever tempted by wild get-rich-quick schemes. He always comes to us for advice, never listens to it, and then gets into trouble.



For instance he got an invitation to make half a million dollars just for changing several million dollars from a Nigerian “businessman” into Thai Bahs. All he had to do was fly to Geneva, Switzerland, wait in a designated hotel, get a suitcase full of cash, take it to a designated bank, and exchange it. Easy, all arranged, no risk and a rich reward for this favor.

Our advice was to simply forget about this — either he makes a fruitless trip to Switzerland or he collects the money and gets murdered

in the process. He went to Switzerland anyway, waited in the hotel three days — no one (luckily for him) showed up — and flew home again with \$2,000 less in his pocket.

We first met Chin on Nantucket in 1971 when he was assisting the manager of a boutique that specialized in Asian imports. Mo-Li, who had a little import business she called “A Touch of Malaysia,” which sold Nepalese novelties to resort boutiques, approached Bert, the owner, and landed a small order.

Years later when Chin became a real friend he confessed that he had advised Bert not to show too much interest lest the price went up. “Asians are that way,” he had told the owner.

Chin’s main source of income at the time was working as a Chinese houseboy for one of the society ladies — a Broadway producer, in fact the type of profligate society figure who populated the Nantucket scene in those days. Having a Chinese houseboy was a symbol of supreme prestige. Chin regaled us with unbelievable stories of what was going on in the haute monde. His employer required being undressed when she came home drunk in the wee hours of the morning. Chin had to dye her white brassieres to pink and was told by a jealous gardener to weed a patch of poison ivy (unknown in Thailand, Chin’s native country) with dire results. At a party where singer Crystal Gayle was a guest, the hostess’s pet dog ripped off her strapless dress. (Chin thought the dog was trained to do that.)

Eventually, Chin started giving Chinese cooking lessons to the society clientele he had met during his houseboy career (He knew nothing about Chinese cooking.) Later he branched out into the restaurant business and made his wealthy students do all the chopping and other preparatory work in their afternoon class for the specials he had scheduled to serve that night.

Later he became an expert in weaving the famous Nantucket Lightship baskets — an ancient mariner’s art — and managed to get some write ups in books and magazines as one of the oldest and most famous basket makers on Nantucket. He bought and sold real estate, started an upholstery business, and operated his own boutique. Everyone on Nantucket knew Chin, most loved him, but some of the jealous old-timers hated him for his popularity and success.”

Chin expressed a similar joy in Claude: “As I think back over all the twenty-eight of friendship we’ve shared, the impression I hold foremost in my mind is your tireless energy and love of life. I cannot remember you ever giving up on anything, and that tenacity is a valuable lesson to all of us. You told me that this summer you have begun to feel that your health was turning against you, yet I remember you going on a skiing holiday with

a very sore hip and never complaining once. I know you will find that the best of times are yet to come.

Claude, in many ways you have become like a father to me, not because of our age difference but rather for your vitality and the inspiration with which you grace your friends. I remember during the recession you helped me unselfishly and without hesitation, and that help allowed me to weather the storm. You never turned away from me and you never turned me down. With that said, perhaps the most sincere compliment I can bestow on you is that you have come to behave very much like an Asian — always, always there for a friend.

Your only friend on Nantucket!, Chin Manasmontri”