

# Journey Planet

SILICON VALLEY  
FINANCIAL  
CENTER

*Exclusive Listing Agents:*

*Cynthia Zirpolo*

*Judi Herrington*

SILICON VALLEY  
FINANCIAL  
CENTER

*San Jose is growing up*

**Welcome to  
Silicon Valley**



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~Editors~

James Bacon ~ Chris Garcia ~ Chuck Serface

# Editorial by Christopher J Garcia



I've lived in Silicon Valley nearly my entire life. Yes, I now live in a holler situated in the mountains that bound the western half of the valley, but stick with me. I've been around here since the days when people would forget that some orchards were still active instead of known EXACTLY which one is left. I can remember traditions that today we'd think were either hokey or downright offensive. I can remember the laughs of old, long-dead amusement parks, the sounds of bands blasting at my favorite club, the smells of restaurants.

And still, while I mourn the loss of so many things I loved about my home, I love it here today.

There is more amazing food, more amazing art, more amazing people. I can walk through the Anderson Collection at Stanford and see an amazing Pollock, or a phenomenal Robert Arneson, or a powerful Louise Nevelson. I can go to Original Joe's and feel like I'm back in the 1950s, or jump to TacoMania and have

amazing pork belly tacos or walk across to Tandoori Oven, the place that taught me to appreciate Indian food. I can go to the Cinequest office and chat with Mike Rabehl about music, or movies, or television. I can run into Derek McCaw and chat about books or comics or comic books. I can run into Gary Singh, intrepid reporter, and talk about just about anything from San Jose soccer to the poetry of the Beats. There has never been a time like this before, but isn't that how time works?

This issue has been a long-time comin'. I love my home town, and James has always had a good time when he's visited, and then there's Chuck, the King of Men, who is phenomenal to work with and put so much of this issue together. The Worldcon that was here delayed this issue even more, but what are you gonna do?

It was great to be nominated for Best Fanzine again. No, we didn't win, and to be honest, I was more



worried about Mike Glycer than whether or not we won another Hugo (because, shockingly, we already have one!!!). Mike had a health problem the morning of the ceremony and I was, to put it mildly, worried, and as Steven H Silver told me, it was obvious that he knew I would take it hard.

This was something of a theme for the weekend. There were a lot of pats on the shoulder and worried looks whenever anyone mentioned Milt or Randy, Dave Kyle, or Jay. It's the pain of growing old, no? I was, and have been, a little tender, and it's good to know I've got people looking out for me. Mike means a lot to me, since File 770 has been in my view since my dad had old issues, and once I started doin' my zines, Mike's been great. I worry. It's what I do.

Oh yeah, Sarah Gulde for TAFF!

It's that time of year again, and I am honored to be one of Sarah's nominators! She's amazing people, and I'll be writing more about why I support her in the up-coming issue of Journey Planet that she is co-editing!

One interesting thing coming up is an issue on The Matrix! It's been twenty years since it came out, in 1999 the year that movies got GREAT! I'd love for folks to write pieces about the Matrix, particularly if you've never seen it and are watching it for the first time!

The twentieth anniversary of 1999 is a big deal and there'll be issues of The Drink Tank and Claims Department as well about various aspects of that most crazy year!

Oh, yeah, a note on the photos - I've gone through my massive collection of Silicon Valley art, architecture, and artifact photos that currently lives on my iPhone. It's been a long few years and these are some of the roughly 40,000 pics I've taken of museums and public art, objects, people, and mostly the Boys It's a massive set of folders, and thank y'all for lettin' me thin it a bit!

Silicon Valley isn't known for being a cultural center, but really, it is. So much amazing art is around these parts, and I'm documenting it ALL!!!



## Silicon Valley Demographics

Excerpted by Chuck Serface from the *2018 Silicon Valley Index*  
Published by Joint Venture Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies



## **SILICON VALLEY IS DEFINED AS THE FOLLOWING CITIES:**

### **SANTA CLARA COUNTY (ALL)**

Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Milpitas, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, Sunnyvale

### **SAN MATEO COUNTY (ALL)**

Atherton, Belmont, Brisbane, Burlingame, Colma, Daly City, East Palo Alto, Foster City, Half Moon Bay, Hillsborough, Menlo Park, Millbrae, Pacifica, Portola Valley, Redwood City, San Bruno, San Carlos, San Mateo, South San Francisco, Woodside

### **ALAMEDA COUNTY**

Fremont, Newark, Union City

### **SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**

Scotts Valley

The geographical boundaries of Silicon Valley vary. Earlier, the region's core was identified as Santa Clara County plus adjacent parts of San Mateo, Alameda and Santa Cruz counties. However, since 2009, the Silicon Valley Index has included all of San Mateo County in order to reflect the geographic expansion of the region's driving industries and employment. Because San Francisco has emerged in recent years as a vibrant contributor to the tech economy, we have included some San Francisco data in various charts throughout the Index.



# The Region's Share of California's Economic Drivers



1.19% 0.03%  
LAND AREA

7.8% 2.2%  
POPULATION

SILICON VALLEY

SAN FRANCISCO



**JOBS**  
9.6%

4.2%



**GDP\***  
10.4%

4.9%



**M&A ACTIVITY**  
21.0%

17.3%



**IPOs**  
34.6%

15.4%



**PATENT REGISTRATIONS**  
47.5%

7.0%



**VENTURE CAPITAL**  
40.2%

31.3%

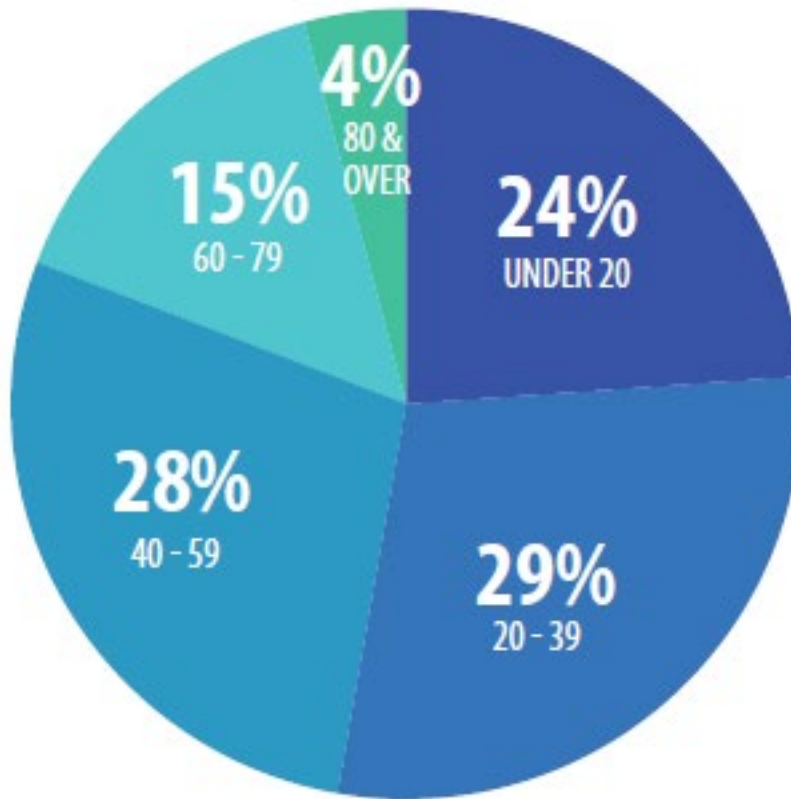


**ANGEL INVESTMENT**  
28.9%

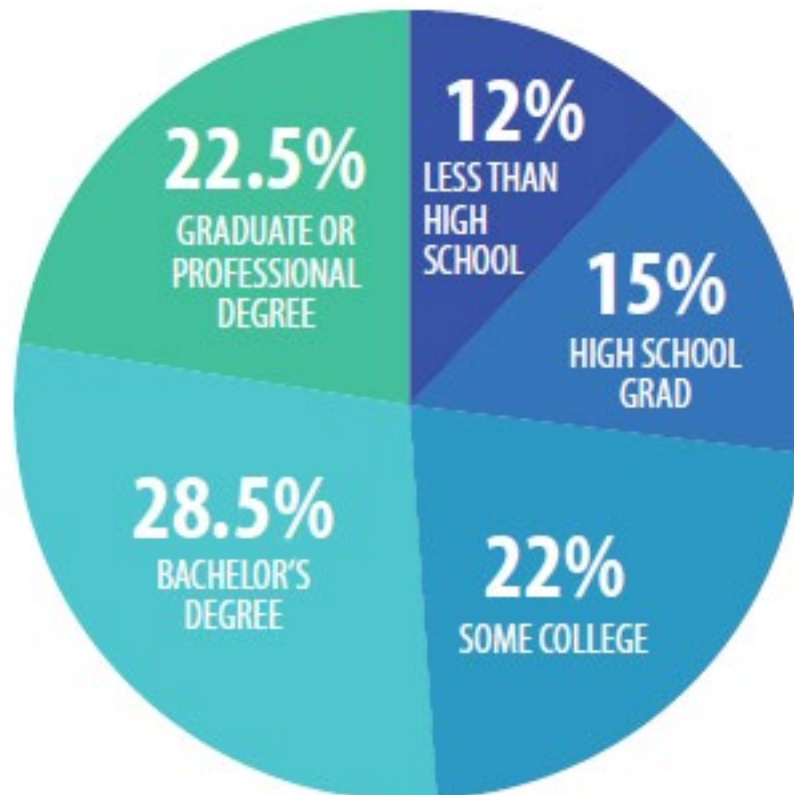
45.7%



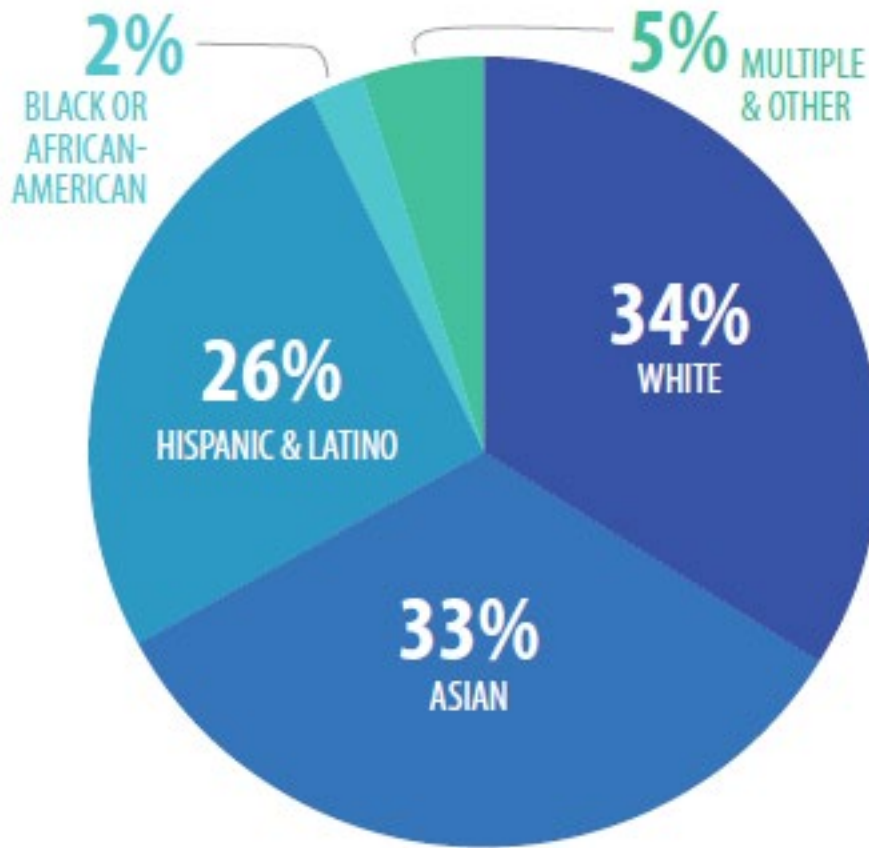
## AGE DISTRIBUTION



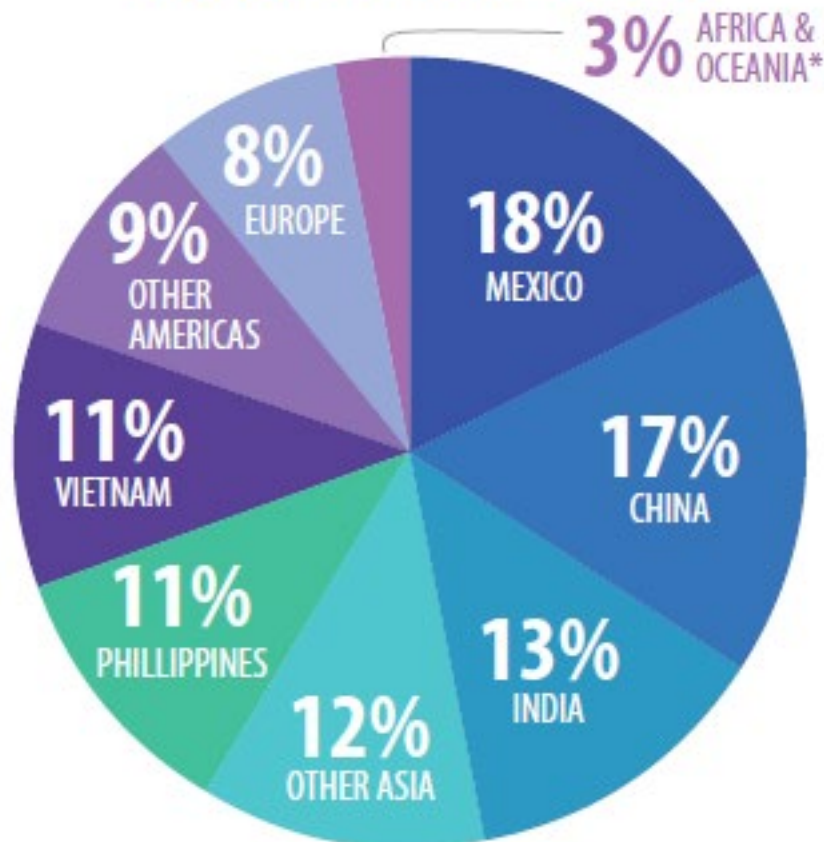
## ADULT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



## ETHNIC COMPOSITION



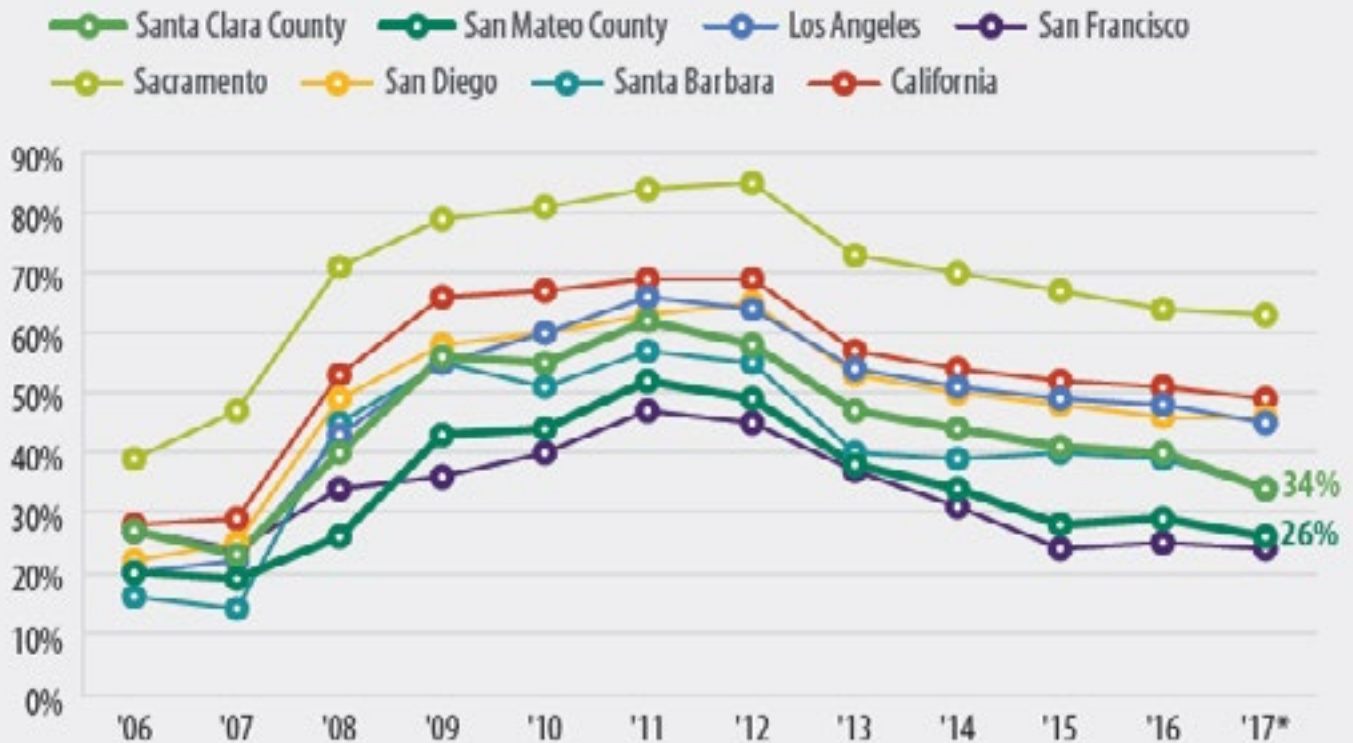
## FOREIGN BORN - 37.8%



## Home Affordability

Percentage of Potential First-Time Homebuyers That Can Afford to Purchase a Median-Priced Home

*Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, San Francisco, and Other California Regions*



\*2017 data reflects Q1-3. | Data Source: California Association of Realtors | Analysis: Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies

*Silicon Valley and San Francisco home affordability fell in the first three quarters of 2017 - down six, three, and one percentage point(s), respectively, in Santa Clara County, San Mateo County, and San Francisco.*

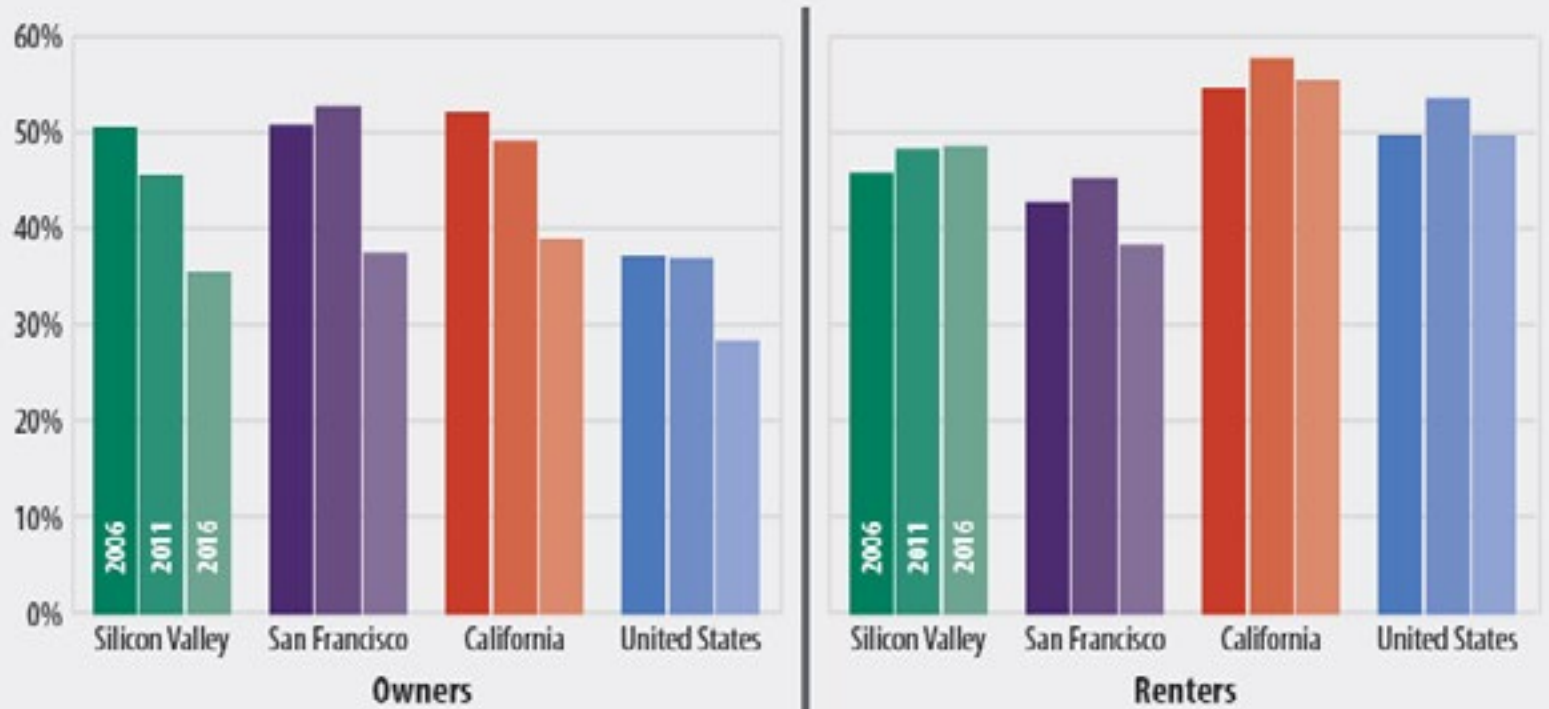
*Only 26% of first-time homebuyers in San Mateo County can afford a median-priced home; this compares to 34% in Santa Clara County, 24% in San Francisco, and 49% statewide.*



## Housing Burden

Percent of Households with Housing Costs Greater than 30% of Income

Santa Clara & San Mateo Counties, San Francisco, California, and the United States



Data Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey | Analysis: Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies

*The share of Silicon Valley owners burdened by housing costs has declined by 15 percentage points over the past decade (amounting to 70,000 fewer burdened households), while the share of renters burdened has declined by only 3%.*

*In 2016, 23% of Silicon Valley households who rented spent more than half of their gross income on housing costs.*



## Silicon Valley by James Bacon

It is with a mixture of ignorance and limited learning that I have to admit, that I just wasn't really fully aware of the exact geographical location of Silicon Valley. Thanks to *View to a Kill* and the great Christopher Walken, I knew it was near to San Francisco, but really, I had no idea and that was a film, and I knew films lied. I just didn't have a good geographical handle on California. This did not change, when we sent Tobes off to be the TAFF delegate, ejected across land and sea, his pretty face tilting left and right on the map tracking his activities, representing Europe and France at the Worldcon in San Jose sixteen years ago, all I knew was it was on the west coast. Like LA, San Diego, and a few other places. I had no idea that San Jose was so close to San Francisco.

Even as I stood in the 'Valley' it didn't really feel like a valley, sure to the west there were mountains in the distance but it was pretty flat to the foothills, but to the east there was the inland sea lake thing, that is San Francisco Bay. It takes time for my ignorance to wear off. I love hearing and seeing things, but I am not assured of it until I have gone over it a few times, kept notes and have them to hand, or it has been repeated to me.

Now I know it better. My first visit I stayed with Spike and Tom in Mountain View and that was excellent, and thereafter I stayed with Chris Garcia in Santa Clara. I have enjoyed his hospitality, and he has endured my guest presence much more than I have been able to repay.

So, I took to some maps, in order to write this piece, and it came to pass that at last, I understood, over the other side of the bay, the flat land eventually goes up into mountains, a very wide valley indeed, not the V shape, more of a basin shape and maybe south around San Jose it really is like a valley.

During my first visits, I found some great places, and indeed, I did a WonderCon, a Nova Albion, and had a terrific time, and of course I have called by the BASFA diner, and watched on as a very organised gathering occurs, the likes of which, I have not encountered elsewhere.

Over the years, I have visited more frequently, making or finding the reason to get to San Jose and see Chris, and more recently Vanessa and the boys, although I have so many friends in the Bay Area, that I often find I just run out of time, I always want to see Spike and Tom, Dave Gallaher, Rich Coad, and of course

Linda Wenzelburger, Ian, along with Andy and Kevin and well, Jesus, the list could go on and on, as it expanded considerably at Worldcon, and so Katie and Chuck are added. On my next visit, I am just going to say 'I will be at LaVictoria's at this time' join me ... and then to a pub and hope people have time. I know I missed people on my last one – just my focus is on Dublin when it comes to being organised.

A lot of fannish shit happens in Silicon Valley. It's a centre of activity, a bit like Chicago and Boston, and London, stuff just happens, and that is pretty cool. And yet, I have managed by accident to end up having to drive around the Bay Area on missions.

In Reno, it was all about the Kids Programme, you get a budget, you have things you want to buy, they do not match, so you go and find them cheaper, and so I got used to the thrift shops in the Bay Area, and I am still a regular card carrying customer at Savers. Now I admit I didn't find Savers until I was in Renton, hanging out before I went to Sasquan in Spokane, but since then, I have never owned so much valuable branded clothing, for so little, and it fits and is awesome, and it is because of Savers. And the staff are always super nice, and you never know what you will find. There are two around San Jose and one each in Redwood City and Dublin.

I would land in SFO and Chris would be waiting, and so we would go to In-N-Out Burger, or to a Mexican near his place in Sunnyvale. It was always very good. Then like Copper's in Raleigh and Zaytoon in Dublin, and Yahall in London, we fell across LaVictoria's, in Redwood City. Chris and Vanessa had pointed me there, and so I tried the orange sauce. Since then, it has been hard not to go, and during the weeks of the Worldcon 76 in San Jose, I repeatedly ate in the San Jose ones. Both of them. The food is just really very good. It is cheap, quick and easy, and yet I have sat in one for a long old time, and felt under no pressure to leave. The orange sauce is nectar, I tell you.

Comic shops are my thing. I visit them all. All of them. And then I decided which ones to go back to and become a frequent visitor. I admit, I am looking for back issues, bargains and unique or unusual elements. The twenty-first century has seen most things now available in London and Dublin and comics for sure, but demand and supply varies, and so I seek out comics. I also admit that my focus on Dublin 2019 has badly curtailed my new comic purchasing power, sure I buy a few, but mostly I make lists and then seek out issues during sales while I am traveling, and crikey, I can

do well. While I was at the Worldcon 76, I ended up coming home with over 50 lbs. of comics, and some of the prices, 29 cents, and 25 cents, and indeed, even 50 comics for \$9.50.

It is important therefore then to be clear, there must be about twenty comic book shops in the greater Bay Area. I will try and list them here. Illusive. Isotope. Mission. Atlantis. Lee's. Space Cat. Heroes. Nope, I have failed.

And the regulars at each of these shops will tell you why they are the best for them, and why they love their comic shop, and you may well just do that too, but I have limited time on a visit, so refine where and what I do based on my experience and desires and therefore, will write about the shops I do enjoy so much.

Illusive Comics is my favourite comic shop in the Bay Area. One of the best on the West Coast, and yes it gives both Atlantis Fantasy and Meltdown in Hollywood a run for their money mostly because Anna is so welcoming and wonderful. My first visit when it was on El Camino Real, a road I have enjoyed driving up and down, saw me offered a beer on a couch, how good is that. They have an excellent range of back issues and also have a wonderful stock. Always. They moved to Franklin Mall and the new shop has even more space, the back issue room is to die for, but they are also a centre for the community, a podcast studio, and regular occurrences make them a destination. Calling in here, is important to me as a comic book reader, it is a world class shop, an Eisner Nominee, and quite rightly so.

Escapist up in Berkeley is like two comic shops in one, both quite magnificent. The range again of the comics on sale is wonderful, and they have unusual items, depending on what has recently occurred, from signed Babs Tarr comics, as she lives close by, to comics with prints, which I appreciate. The advice and input is strong in this shop. It is near to

Heroes is another good comic shop, they have interesting pages of original comic art as well as a large stock of second hand comics. I like to browse here a while, and Lee's Comics near the In-N-Out Burger has some cheap Comic bins down the back and so, I call in there too for comic browsing. Mission Comics up in San Francisco was rather amazing, and had an art gallery space, they have moved, and so with the new space and shape, the gallery is gone, but it is a nice shop.

And so these are the three shops I will definitely visit, no matter what. Sure, I will go into other ones, and I will enjoy them, but these are destinations. I really like Fantastic Comics next to the Half Price books in



Berkeley.

Book Buyers in Mountain View was the mecca for me. It was such a huge second hand shop, and so incredibly well stocked, that when it closed, I was saddened, and although it is only in Gilroy, having moved, I am afraid that it is too far for me to get to – as of yet. I shall make the attempt, of course.

Recycle Books on the Alameda, is incredible. I have found so many superb Military and Irish books here, as well as graphic novels, I try to spend a couple of hours in this shop, when I am there, as I just know they will have so much turn over, that there is going to be excitement and new books to to me to be had. The SF section is mighty, but really second-hand graphic novels and military section have proved the most fortuitous. They have a smaller branch – Recycle Books West, and this has not been as fruitful, but always worth a call, is it still there Chuck? [*Chuck breaks in to answer James's question: yes, Recycle Books West is still there and thriving.*] Over in Campbell.

Feldman's Books is a wonderful second hand store in Menlo Park, near to Kepler's Books which has a better public relations machine, but is a new book store, that is adequately fighting against the age of the internet with interesting readings, and weekly events, indeed, more frequent than weekly, and they do a really good job, but I do not find as much in Kepler's as I do in Feldman's, for Feldman's has unusual and a great selection of Military and Modern Literature, as well as the mews full of science fiction, and a nice tree-covered yard in between both parts of the shop, and so, I have always fund Feldman's bountiful and Kepler's beautiful. Both on the ECR. South of Menlo Park, but still in Palo Alto, Treasure Island Stamps and Coins are really worth a visit. An incredible store, with a vast selection of things, a specialist shop in the age of finding everything you want on eBay, it is a pleasure to shop here, but then, I buy collectibles, not to collect, but to post, and they are so affordable, that it is only lovely to send a piece of post with various US stamps commemorating space achievements to friends who like such things. Somewhere along this road, there is an excellent art shop, that stocks very interesting Snoopy art, not by Charles Schultz mind, but by more recent artists, who have the imprimatur of the great man himself to take images of the gang and turn them into beautiful modern renditions, pints and originals, and I always enjoy the browse.

Fremont has a Half Price Books. Now that is important. It means I go to Fremont, and across the

road there is an aforementioned Savers, but the things is HPB. Now I love half price books and there are a few in Chicago and a load in and around Dallas which was amazing, but none in Boston. What gives? HPB have a great model, and I love what they do, and so I make sure I visit when I can, the Berkeley one is on the downtown high street and is right next to Fantastic Comics, which is pretty fantastic, and there is also a branch in Concord. I think near the place that had free books on a Sunday, but I have only been once, and it was feverish and frenzied and also quite amazing, and I got free books.

Dark Carnival is next to Escapist and was a real find, another shop I have not been to enough, on two floors, their science fiction and unusual books was incredibly impressive, but I understood it was to be closing down. I did not manage to get near it on my Worldcon visit, so it was last year when I got there, and it is hard to know without going online if it is still there. On the way to Berkeley, a good lunch spot is North Beach Pizza, who do a really decent pizza, and it is tasty stuff.

The Bay Area, I describe it like London but spread out around a big lake where boroughs or large neighbourhoods all call themselves cities, and it goes from San Francisco down to San Jose and back up to Oakland and Berkeley, and people get it a bit more. I surprise people when I ask them where in San Jose, or the Bay Area they live, and they say Milpitas, and I talk about the Savers and my Ralph Lauren Shirts and they look a strange mix between horrified and impressed, odd like, especially when I describe the friendliest Starbucks, just there in Santa Clara near where Saratoga and San Tomas Expressway, and again, it is like I know the lay of the land a lot better than I should.

I loved it, especially driving in big hired vehicles with Chris, who is against speeding, but who tolerates me selecting first gear in the yoke that has the engine of a bus, and haring around Santa Clara at high accelerated pace, calling into local bars and meeting nice people. Even the cops were nice, although, there are some caveats and privileges at play there for sure.

It is hard to know what I like about the place so much. The people for sure, it is so nice to see so many good people, and it is a place that is relaxed and nice and full of comics and books, but it is also a place where I get to see Chris and enjoy seeing Vanessa, the boys and a host of great people, that is indeed a big part, but so too is the abundance of comic and book shops.

I was able to expand specific subjects within my collection while visiting the Bay Area. At Recycle Books, on The Alameda, in San Jose I bought some graphic novels, a lovely Daredevil Omnibus and brilliantly the Comics Journal that featured the late Darwyn Cooke, and in the Civil War section, a nice landscape *Civil War Railroad* tome, featuring photos on every page by Geo. B. Abdill. I spent too long looking at the Sherlock Holmes related books which have their own trolley, about twenty feet of books in total.

In Kepler's, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* by Robert C. Black III was stubbornly difficult to see, its dust jacket long gone, and the black type camouflaged by the light shining on the red cover, but I saw it, near a fascinating book about the Second World War and the railways. I also found a 'critical' bibliography of the Civil War, in two volumes, so took some time to note the books and sources that feature the railway during that time. This is the second bibliography I have come across, but admit there was an exceptionally good index, vital with such a thing, and I was able to find some new titles to add to my list of books but also add a note about their merit, in the view of the compiler of this bibliography.

I tittered with joy at the comments, is it wrong that in Menlo Park, in the back aisle of a book shop, sat upon a step stool, that allowed me to reach the heady high shelf to extract the bibliography with such important information, that it was the brutal subtlety of incisive critic which made others smile and I am sure ponder, the Civil War and History sections are not laughing matters, yet I found them delightful in both their praise and especially disdain thusly: 'Only the highlights . . . a full and scholarly treatment of the subject remains to be done', 'a popularised account . . . must be handled with caution', 'An outdated introduction to a subject still awaiting full treatment.'

In Half Price books in Dublin I found a book on the Baltimore and Ohio, one of those large full of photo's ones. Normally, I would avoid the type, for they are low on details, fact and history and high gloss in images, but this book more specific in its focus, had some amount of pages about the Civil War, and so, I picked it up as it was cheap.

*The Civil War Railroads and Models* by Edwin P. Alexander is a most fascinating work, for it combines the interests of the author, both a history fan of the railways of the Civil War but also his desire to build railway models and scenes. This leaves one with a very detailed and highly technical work, which is of interest to the historical mind or modeller, the latter which I am not, although I was helping my father to construct a layout, and moving trains around whether it be OO or 4'8 1/2" or 5'2" is all good.

My quest for books on this subject shall continue, and then at some stage, I will try and write further on the matter – but for now they will join Meredith's Mr Lincoln's Military Railroads, Balfour's The Armoured Train and others that cover the subject on my shelf.

Of course the Bay Area offers relaxation and drinks, be it Jacks Prime Steak which can so easily be confused as there are many Jacks nearby, or Zachary's which was so kindly recommended next to Pegasus Books, where the pizza was Chicago style, and it was good, although not as good as Detroit Pizza.

That is what the Bay Area needs, Detroit Pizza and Kings Books.



# Brand-New Place of Worship

Commentary on the Expansion of Valley  
Fair Shopping Mall

Collected by F. C. Moulton

## Letters

### Brand-new place of worship

I went to church today. In fact, I went to a cathedral. It's a brand-new, a magnificent place, with a long wide aisle and nave, and numerous chapels along both sides. There is great variety among the chapels, each being dedicated to a different saint or godly attribute. The chapels all have several altars. The altars are decorous and each is attended by a minister or an acolyte.

The cathedral was surprisingly crowded. It was a beautiful fall day. Many people attended the service, all dressed in their Sunday finery. There were old people and young, mothers and fathers. There were white people and black, Chicanos and Asians, as well as, surprisingly, many teen-agers and young adults. The rich and the obviously not so rich were there. It was a veritable Easter Parade. This must be one of the most popular denominations in the San Jose area.

The people would move up toward one of the altars in a chapel, make an offering and then receive communion or in some cases, one or more sacramental objects. Then they would move on to another chapel and repeat the ritual. This made for a

lot of moving around, but there was no commotion. It reminded me of what I have read about the constant activity associated with the Gothic cathedrals in Europe when they were in their heyday.

A sense of well-being pervaded the scene and everyone seemed happy. It was somehow comforting and even gratifying to see that the spiritual needs of our community were being so well taken care of.

I'm sure you would enjoy the new church. It's near the intersection of Stevens Creek Boulevard and Highway 17, where the old Valley Fair Shopping Center used to be.

John F. Cowan  
Scotts Valley

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS  
NOV. 1, 1986  
p. 13C





The Tentacles of Silicon Valley  
by  
Steve Davidson

We're going back to the early to mid-eighties, a time when it was still possible to believe that the world was moving forward and that computers could/might save us all.

A few years before the events I'll recount here, I'd signed on with a handful of temp agencies, taking various copy editing and proofreading jobs, skills you may wonder a bit about as you read on. One Monday morning I reluctantly accepted an assignment at an AT&T facility in New Jersey.

Long story short, I was working at what was described as a "venture" group within AT&T that would shortly become the short-lived Electronic Education & Training Division. They were tasked with investigating emerging computer technologies that included interactive video disks, early digital videography techniques and figuring out computer-based ways to integrate AT&T telephony, switching systems, video, audio, and other tech for training purposes.

I was fortunate enough to recognize that one of the first interactive disk programs they were working on consistently misspelled the trademarked name for the new small office switching system it was designed as training for; being an outsider, I had no hesitation in agitating this issue all the way to the top -- fixing the still frames meant they'd have to slip their schedule; not doing so would mean they'd have to trash everything after spending too much money on interactive disk pressings -- and shortly thereafter I found myself offered a job managing the Quality Assurance and Control department for the newly minted EE&T.

You cannot possibly imagine how thrilled I was. I got a corner office, a staff, a budget, benefits, a great salary and, so far as I was concerned, it was like landing a billet at NASA during the Apollo Program. There I was, at the forefront of digital technology, privy to all manner of stuff not even SF authors had dreamed up.

I'd been offered the job on the strength of saving the group oodles of money over that trademark issue and on my background in gaming. They needed someone(s) who understood this "interactive" stuff, how to create a narrative with multiple paths, how to "score" results and a handful of other skills that they didn't teach in colleges back then.

We were a small group and, as time progressed, not only did we get the latest and greatest tech in all the time (we worked closely with TARGA who created the first analog to digital video converters; worked closely with Sony, adopting their SMC-70 computer system; eventually they built us a 5+ million dollar video editing

suite with all the latest Chyron and other tech), but I got to work with and do all manner of things -- scripting, directing, demonstrating, figuring out new ways we could use these technologies.

For me, the greatest part of the job was being able to envision the future, with ready access to other people who could help turn those visions into reality. A side note here because it resonates with tech that is just beginning to emerge in film. Back then at EE&T, I realized early on that it might be possible to capture all of the motions (from a variety of sources) of say, Humphrey Bogart, and then use the tech we had to stitch those together and create entirely new movies starring a deceased actor.

And I almost got the go-ahead to produce a proof of concept. We were going to take all of the Chuck Jones Road Runner cartoons, digitize them and use them in a game where the player was Wile E. Coyote. Points earned would let the player purchase items from the Acme store, and the player's payoff were the various "death" scenes.

Alas, Warner Brothers chose not to cooperate. But that incident should amply illustrate how exciting, on the edge, and like the Wild West the whole endeavor was.

It eventually came crashing down owing to corporate politics, the end result of which saw me being told that I was welcome to stay at AT&T as long as I wanted, but I should not expect great promotions, as I was too much of a loose cannon. I'd reported malfeasance at the highest levels, in a very public way: large corporations appreciate being informed of theft and embezzlement, but are equally happy to chop the heads off of messengers.

I lateralled to a new group, taking two of EE&T's former programmers with me, the best of the best, where they shoved us off into a corner and let us do our thing.

We were programming in C++ and had developed quite a robust library of routines that let us integrate a computer -- by this time we'd acquired IBM systems with a whopping 40 meg hard drive! -- with a video display, a handset device, membrane and infrared touch screens, audio devices, video cameras (non-digital, which is where the Targa boards come in) video tape and disk players, and pretty much anything electronic we could get a signal out of.

Our job was to develop new applications using our programming skills and identify markets for them: among other things, we created an armored vehicle

recognition testing system for Tradoc\*, a multi-language information kiosk for American Airlines and a spin-off of that for Disney parks, an “edutainment” game (teaching basics of AI) for Epcot and a video phone, all using off the shelf technologies.

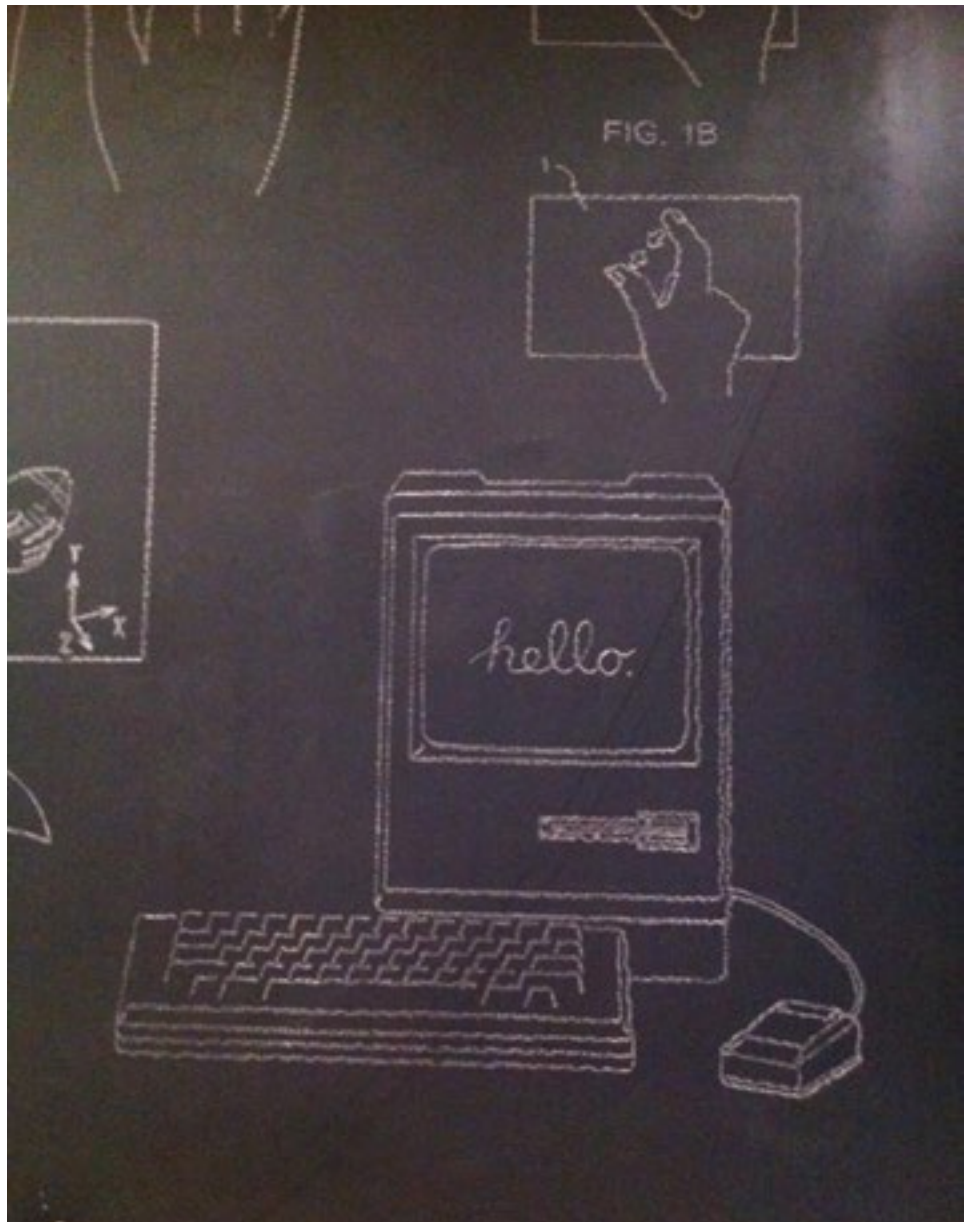
The latter (screen refresh rate of 15 seconds) could have been rolled out as a product. We were getting the refresh rate down all the time and had full, stuttery video in our sights: our problem was the internet wasn’t yet fast enough. All you needed was a video camera, a Targa board, a microphone, speakers, a PC and our software – all of this during the age of AOL – until we were told to drop the project. Apparently we’d embarrassed a team at Bell Labs who’d been working on such things since the late 1950s.

That really crushed us until a new project walked in the door. We got instructions to check out this new “graphical user interface” operating system from Microsoft and compare it to our own in-house capabilities.

We’d graduated from CP-M a few years before and were running everything under DOS. Some of you may remember - “CD C:” “DIR”. Your screen displayed the command line (C>) and you had to know a variety of esoteric one-line commands in order to get it to do anything; you could only run one program at a time, and those were loaded into the machine via floppy disk.

My programmers had taken the “library” of C++ routines from EE&T with them and we’d since been creating a huge variety of additional routines; new applications were, by this time, a simple task of pulling the right routines in, ordering them properly and then compiling a run time program.

In addition to our special projects, we worked in support of a handful of computer-based training creators. They’d bring us a need, we’d cobble something together and, voila, a new training disk on the Merlin office telephone system or some such.



Unknown to us at the time, Microsoft was making a big push to capture the home PC market, and they’d hit on an interesting strategy to accomplish that goal: if they could get corporate America to adopt their system, they believed that the employees would clamor to be able to use the same system at home, allowing them to take work home, creating a seamless environment for communication, for moving work product around, creating a familiarity with their product, and one they believed would make home PC users uncomfortable enough to eventually leave the DOS environment. (I can keep both the spreadsheet and the text document open at work, why can’t I do it at home?)

AT&T was a natural target for Microsoft, one of the biggest corporate adopters of personal office computers in the country.



And so it fell to the IT group (Interactive Technologies: What is IT? It is IT!), my group, to “evaluate the efficiency of Microsoft Windows 3.0 compared to in-house capabilities”.

Naturally, we all already hated Microsoft. They’d been engaged in predatory behaviors already (check out how Gates acquired DOS), that sentiment not being unusual at the time, or even now for that matter.

We were eager for the opportunity to apply benchmarks to our general dislike and, so we believed, make the case for adopting our software company wide, possibly conferring hero status upon ourselves, maybe a way out of the dangerous creature cage for myself.

The software arrived and the massive booklet as well. While I figured out the tests we’d want to perform, the programmers loaded it up and tried to get it to run.

The first thing they encountered was the program’s over-reliance on this “mouse” thingy. Well, actually, a slight detour in the program occurred at this point as we had to disassemble a mouse to figure out what it was doing and how, only to discover that it had a really nifty, extremely hard rubber ball in its guts. Though it wasn’t nearly as reactive as a Superball, it did pack quite a heft in a small package, more than suitable for verifying the fact that no matter what angle you used when hurling it at a sheet rock wall, it left a hemispherical crater. And cracks.

Understand that the preceding was completely in line with prior testing conducted by my QA/QC department. We had previously determined that a videodisk when tossed like a Frisbee could embed itself in a sheet rock wall by at least three inches. We’d also learned that “yes, cracked laser discs will violently disassemble themselves when spun up to 1800 rpm,” and that the player housing is barely capable of containing the shrapnel. Testing to destruction was a very popular activity in our lab.

Truth to tell, it did take us a while to remember which function each of the (three) buttons was for, though it didn’t take us all that long to realize that we’d be using it a lot and that a pencil eraser was good for removing gunk from the roller bars. No one had yet heard the phrase “carpal tunnel”.

For about two weeks we conducted a suite of tests, using our in-house capabilities as a benchmark. I won’t go into the testing details (too much), but a frequent comment heard during the test was “It’s grabbing everything!”

Apparently (and remember, I managed programmers, I didn’t code myself), unlike DOS, Windows seized control of every last bit of computing resource and reserved the control of what was and was not loaded into operating memory for itself.

This left very little room for external programs.

The long and short of it was, the only things that could run under Windows were programs that the Windows developers had anticipated running. Quite obviously, no one at Microsoft had anticipated running a touchscreen, a videodisc player, a telephone keypad, a graphics program for overlays and recording results in a database file on a PC. Nor doing so all at the same time.

Admittedly, we were comparing apples (heh) to oranges: Windows was a graphical user interface designed to impose its will upon every program running under it, while our in-house collection of routines had been specifically designed to respond to ever-changing needs, including the introduction of new technologies.

Put another way, our routines and library had been created to support the creation of usable product serving a variety of educational, training and edutainment needs, while Windows had been created to take over the world.

In due course, we completed our testing and prepared our report. I.T.’s library suite of routines was found to be superior to Windows in nearly every way. Windows was a memory hog, we strove to have as small a footprint as possible. Windows simply could not run many of the programs that our developers were currently using for various training applications – the work would have to be re-done from scratch. Further, the similar programs that Windows could run lacked many of the features and capabilities we were already relying upon.

Worse, purchasing Windows, no matter at what price, would eat into budgets big time, because our suite of stuff was essentially “free”: creating and improving our programs was our job, had by AT&T for nothing more than our salaries. (At the time, AT&T preferred internal or “blue” dollars to external “green” dollars, at least insofar as spending money was concerned.)

For use though, the final nail in the coffin was this: we were incapable of adding to or modifying Windows’ capabilities: any new functionality that would be required would entail begging Microsoft to do the work (at who knew what cost), if they chose to believe doing so suited their purposes. That, compared to our current methodology which was – ask I.T. to do

it. You'd get a time and associated costs response, but rarely (if ever) a "can't do that".

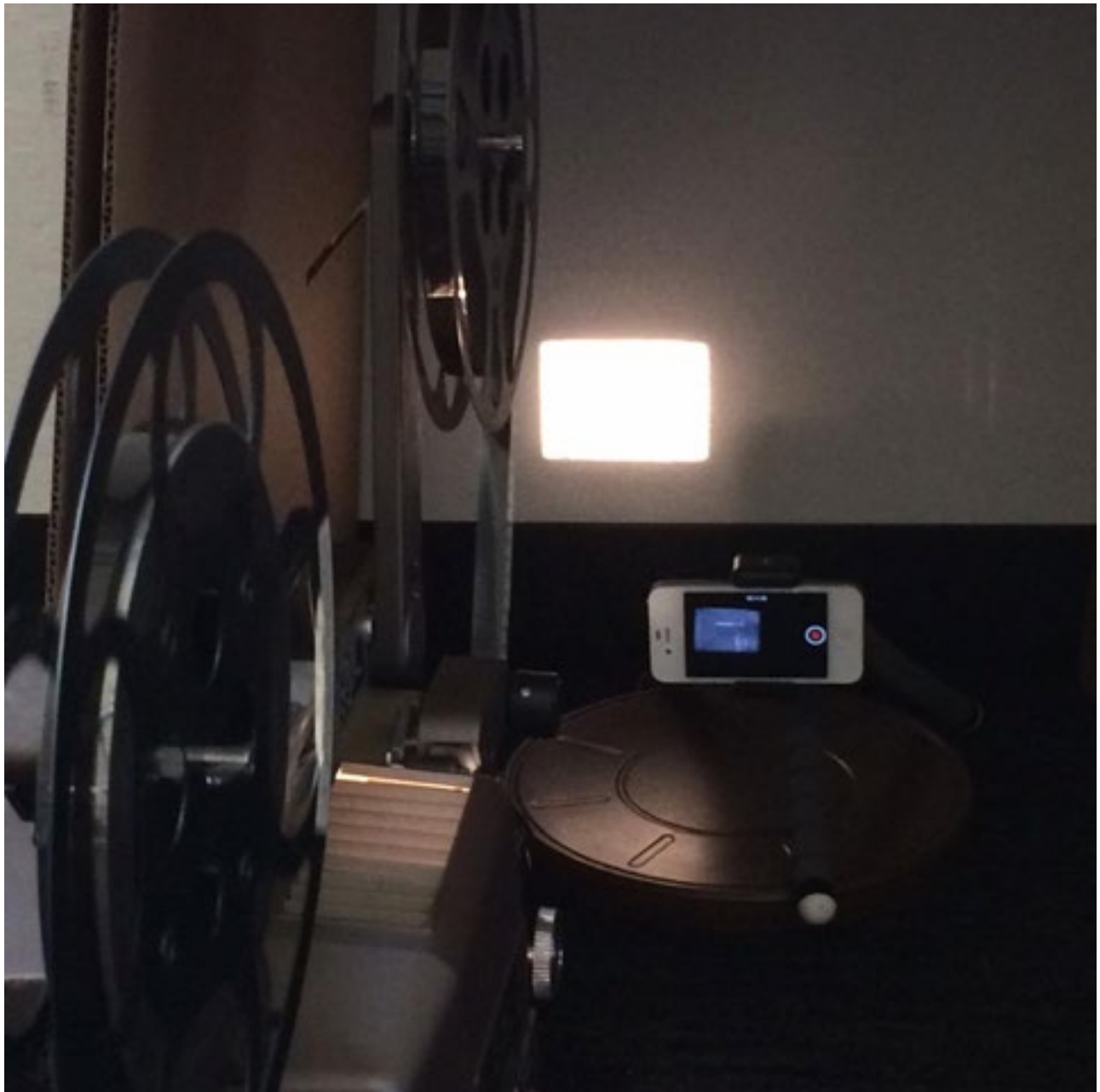
Our report -- an exemplar of unbiased, fact-based, with schedule and budget impacts, graphs, graphics and tables!, reporting -- went up the chain of command, to our division department head, to our division's VP, to a couple of additional layers of corporate bureaucracy, and finally to the President and CEO's office.

A week or so later, I walked into work and noticed that one of our conference rooms was filled with

computer boxes. On my desk was a note to go see our department head. Which I did.

To discover that, since my group had done such a fine and outstanding job of analysis, and had now become so intimately familiar with Windows operations, it was the CEO's personal request that we be responsible for teaching the entire division how to use Windows. He knew we would do a fine job.

\*US Army TRAIning and DOCTrine Command



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## What Is Our Balance?

My son asked:  
"Did you know?  
My teacher said  
that some of the people  
who run the computer place  
don't let their kids use tech?"

I said:  
"I heard that.  
The name of the place  
is Silicon Valley  
and some people  
who work there  
think kids shouldn't use tech at all."

He said:  
"But I do,  
and I have for a while."

I said:  
"I know.  
This is why our family balances  
how we use our technology,  
all of our electronic devices,  
and we call this use  
"screen time".  
In our lives,  
we use our devices  
to play  
to learn  
to research  
to navigate  
to edit videos  
to take photos  
to communicate  
to predict traffic  
to track our health  
to forecast weather  
to organize our lives  
to calculate numbers

He said:  
"We use technology for a lot of things!"

I said:  
"You're right.  
And sometimes I tell you  
That's enough screen time for today.  
It's time to go do something else.  
You are an active child.

Go run.  
Go jump.  
Go stretch.

You are a creative child.  
Go draw.  
Go build.  
Go write.

Sometimes you agree,  
But often you want more screen time.  
And we have a conversation  
to establish our families' balance."

He nodded,  
and went off to play.

And I thought:  
We went,  
as humans,  
from scrolls  
to handwritten books  
to printed books  
to newspapers  
to television  
to recorders  
to streaming videos.  
We've left many types of technology  
behind us.  
How did people balance this in the past?  
Did parents in previous generations,  
other eras,  
worry about their children's tech use?  
As technology is  
increasingly  
incorporated into modern society,  
I struggle  
to decide  
what limits to set  
on technology use.



Our parents didn't have these options  
 or the concerns that go with them.  
 On long drives  
 in the car  
 as a child,  
 I stared out the window  
 and listened to music  
 on a Walkman.  
 My son watches TV  
 and plays games  
 on his iPad.  
 We still talk in the car.  
 We play some of the same road trip games  
 that I did as a child.  
 But I wonder  
 Is this too much screen time?  
 Am I doing this right?  
 Am I making the right choices?  
 The American Academy of Pediatrics says  
 to allow two hours of screen time per day.  
 Do I track and count each minute?  
 Do I worry that he watched two hours  
 \*\*and one minute\*\* today?  
 Do I promise myself he'll only watch an  
 hour and fifty-nine minutes tomorrow?  
 How do I judge different types  
 of screen time?  
 Is it ok that we snuggle on the couch and  
 binge watch cartoons for longer than two  
 hours  
     when he's home sick?  
     when he's tired?  
     when he's upset?  
 Especially when I sometimes watch several  
 TV shows in a row after he's in bed?

-- Laura Wenham

## #DoWhatISayNotWhatIDo

I explain my concerns  
     about being well-rounded  
     about getting enough exercise  
     about interacting in person  
     about using technology safely  
 I understand that you want  
     the devices your friends have  
     to play the same games  
     to be able to communicate  
     to think you know how to use tech  
 I worry that you will  
     chat with strangers online  
     give away personal information  
     bully, or be bullied  
     see age-inappropriate content  
 I try  
     to show appropriate uses of tech  
     to put away my phone during meals  
     to show you how to evaluate apps  
     to discuss how game designers  
         want you to play often  
         so you spend real money  
         on in-game currency  
 Parents model constantly  
     Every day  
     Every word  
     Every tap  
     Every click  
 shows our children  
 what we think of technology.  
 It is a constant  
         exhausting  
                 conflicting struggle  
 to maintain our balance.

# Valley of Genius: The Uncensored History of Silicon Valley (As Told by the Hackers, Founders, and Freaks who Made It Boom) by Adam Fisher

Reviewed by Chuck Serface

As a native of Santa Clara County, I've witnessed my hometown's transformation from acre upon acre of fruit orchards into the central realm of computer technology. I say "witnessed," because never have I participated fully in that industry or culture. At university, I spent my time on the Humanities and Social Sciences side of campus. I use computers at work, but I don't work in any computer-related field. Silicon Valley, then, grew up around me as I was growing up, never really participating in a milieu that continues sparking innovation after innovation, the place where computers went from behemoths, to desktop fixtures, to essential life tools that can fit in your back pocket. All of this keeps happening around me and to me.

I almost started to say that were I to teach a course in the history and culture of Silicon Valley to outsiders, I'd assign Adam Fisher's book to my students, but no. I'm one of those students, one of those

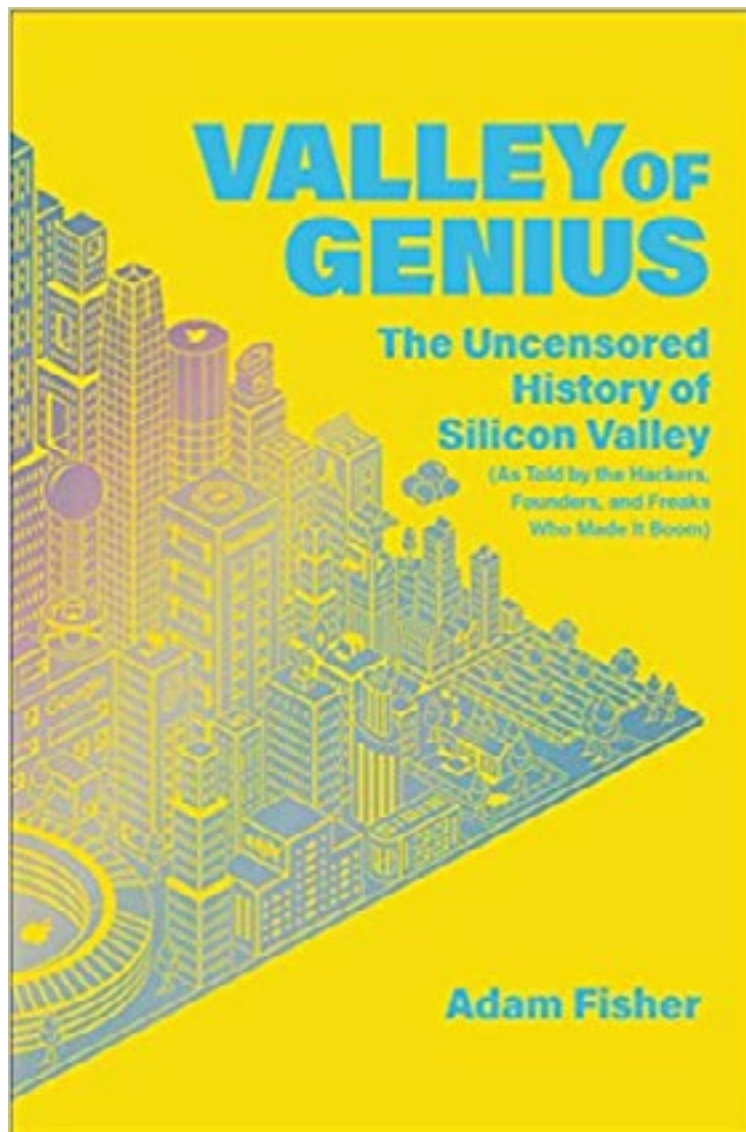
outsiders, seeking a way toward understanding this phenomenon, and by reading *Valley of Genius* I entered a classroom with many teachers. How does that work?

Fisher avoids traditional narrative and allows the players to tell their own stories, crafting an oral history rather than a reported one. Each chapter contains conversations comprised of snippets from interviews, podcasts, and other sources that he weaves together to make it seem as if readers are sitting at a table watching the giants discuss their developments and contributions with one another. I can't imagine the amount of energy required to gather so many disparate sources and then to sew them together into what flows like natural conversations, even if the participants might have never communicated face-to-face in real life. This allows us to experience the passion directly. How wonderful.



Fisher begins the conversation with Doug Engelbart's 1968 "mother of all demos," which inspired faster movement toward desktop computing. Also included are discussions about Xerox PARC, The WELL, the early days of Apple and its world-changing products, Atari and other video-game pioneers, the Internet, eBay, Napster, Twitter, and, no surprise, Facebook. The focus throughout remains geographically tied to the physical Silicon Valley. We receive almost nothing about Microsoft, Amazon, or other industry shakers located outside the Bay Area. Fisher concerns himself not just with the industry, but with how the industry has affected the culture of this region. And while even I'm aware computers existed well before 1968, Fisher starts there I posit because that's when technology started moving more rapidly beyond tech professionals to the general public, those not IT-oriented, such as yours truly.

Well-established IT professionals will enjoy hearing the old voices again and enjoy how Fisher weaves them together to present his story. Newcomers like me will appreciate experiencing the unfiltered passion of these conversational narratives right from the doers themselves and how this enhances both the retention and understanding of the subjects, although Fisher avoids diving too deeply into highly nuanced details or jargon – again, *Valley of Genius* is intended for a broad audience. I'm wiser and better versed about Silicon Valley thanks to Fisher. I may, in fact, nominate this book under the Best Related Work category of the 2019 Hugo Awards. We'll see.







# On SiliGone Valley by Chris Garcia

I podcast. This much is true. Whether or not I do it well is another matter, but I certainly do record, edit, and release podcasts. The podcast that has received the most mainstream attention is SiliGone Valley, a podcast dealing with the lost places, people, and traditions of the place I have lived almost my entire life.

In 2017, I launched *SiliGone Valley* as a way of dealing with a fit of nostalgia. I had been reading about my favorite places as a kid closing one after another after another. The Century 21 movie theatre. BookBuyers. The Original Pancake House. Public Art. People like Roberta Jones. They were all a massive part of my life, but more importantly, they were places that defined Silicon Valley at one time or another. The Valley has changed so much over the last 44 years that it could

almost be called two completely different places. I've made an effort to look at places that I loved, and lost.

The following are my favorite Silicon Valley stories, almost all of which have been featured on the podcast.

## **The Century 21 Theater**

The last film I saw at the Century 21 was *2001: A Space Odyssey*. That was an amazing experience, to see one of the finest films ever made in a theatre that would have screened it in its original run, and in 70mm! It was a magical night, and while I significantly threw my life into a tizzy not too long after, it is a period I am incredibly fond of. While the RetroDome was running films at the Century 21, I saw many classics, like *2001*,

# Siligone Valley



*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, and *The Sound of Music*. These were wonderful films to see on the gigantic curved screen of the 21. The building still stands today, but it has been almost five years since films screened there.

Also, watch Jeremy Blake's avant-garde masterpiece [Century 21](#).

## Roo's Café Salsa

This is a deep-cut, even for those of us who grew up 'round these parts. The restaurant didn't last too long, I think about four years, but it was pretty much an early Mexican fusion place, in a way combining European foods and Mexican food in a simple setting. It was a really nice place, and they had this version of paella that was available in chicken, carne asada, or ground beef. It was a delicious dish, and it was what got me interested in paella, a dish I have only rarely been able to enjoy. The ground beef version was delightful, though nothing like the versions I've had in the years since. It

was a Mexican version, and it was very tasty, very filling, and very memorable. Sadly, when Roo's went away, nowhere that did anything like it was left in the Valley.

## Downtown San Jose's Main Library

I am descended from a short line of librarians. The San Jose Main Library, well the version that was around from the 1960s through the early 2000s, was the site of my mom and uncle's employment for the better part of fifteen years. It was one of the sites of my early science fiction reading.

And that leads to this story that I told on stage to the audience of the Con Jose II: Con Harder's Masquerade. You see, the stage of that con was located on what had once been the site of the old library, which had been eaten up to expand the convention center. Where the stage was, roughly, would have been the site of the check-out desk closest to the genre fiction section of the library, where I spent a lot of time reading Vonnegut, Farmer, Sturgeon, even suffering through Heinlein. The exact location was there, through a period of time, and there I was, MCing a masquerade on the site of some of the most formative reading moments I even enjoyed. The next night was the Hugos, probably the single most important awards in the area of science fiction. I was nominated for *Journey Planet*. If we had won, we'd have been accepting the Rocket on the stage that occupied the space that had once been deeply soaked in my science fiction reading.

Alas, we didn't win.

## Beefy's Cabin

California banned smoking in bars about 1998. At the time I was big into cigars. I had never been a cigarette smoker, but I was also seldom bothered by smoking.

That's why Beefy's was so cool. It was a dive bar where you could still smoke inside. There was an exception for bars that were owned by the employees. That's what Beefy's was, and I would go about every other night for at least a little. I had a standard drink – Johnny Walker Red on the rock, and a water. I would only get blitzed once in a while, I could walk home after all, but it was a place I played a lot of pool, threw some darts, smoked a cigar or two, and play the little video trivia game that rewarded players with a woman becoming ever more nude (or dude, if the button I never pressed was telling the truth). IT had a vibe that was somewhere between that bar where everybody knows your name, and the type that a mob boss would visit because everyone minded their own.

## The Day Steve Jobs Died

This is a uniquely Silicon Valley story. I had been demoted. I was half-time on the Front Desk of the Museum, selling tix to the rubes who were willing to pay fifteen bucks to enjoy the exhibit I had spent the previous five years of my life working on. The morning was quiet. I usually got in around 6 AM and sat for a couple of hours reading, writing zines, or just old-fashioned watching wrestling.

Then the news broke – Steve Jobs had died.

To understand what that meant 'round this valley, you kinda have to understand what Apple means around this valley. For years, Apple was the company that everyone passed through after they left Atari, which has a certain ironic sting as Steve Jobs had passed through Atari on his way to founding Apple. It also did a very smart thing in the 1970s and 80s; Apple gave millions of computers to schools. Now, giving a machine for kids to play Oregon Trail on might not seem like much, but for a lot of folks my age, it was the first time we touched a computer, and that marked us forever as Apple people.

And Jobs had died.

Jobs had been fired, and Apple wandered through the wilderness until inviting him back to right the ship, turn it into one of the most profitable companies of all-time. He was the founder, and the savior, all in one incredibly flawed demi-messianic package.

That morning, we had about 100 people show up as the doors opened, and they were all talking about Steve, about the time they met him, about how he had fired them once, about how he had made their life hell, but did it all the while making himself their one true God.

Jobs embraced contradictions like that.

And as I did my morning walk-through, looking over the various artifacts, I noticed something. On the vitrine over the Apple Macintosh, arguably Jobs' greatest accomplishment, was a bouquet of flowers, and a lit candle, nearly burned all the way down. Someone had snuck flowers and a candle in just to put them there, to let the world know how much he meant to them.

And all I could think of that day, as I gave interview after interview about the man – the last time I saw him, in a bathroom in Carpenteria, he hadn't washed his hands.







## In the Valley with Verle

### An Interview by Chuck Serface

CHUCK: You first came to California in 1954?

VERLE: 1954, yeah.

CHUCK: And you just had Tom at that point?

VERLE: Yeah, well, actually it was 1955 when we came. Because Tom was born in 1954 in September and we came down to California in June of 1955.

CHUCK: Why did you come?

VERLE: Because there was no work in Portland. And your mother's, Lorraine's, mother and father were living in California and they wanted us to be with them. We had your Aunt Joanne living with us and finishing high school. So when she graduated we packed up and moved to California.

CHUCK: Why was Grandpa down here?



VERLE: He moved down here and got a job with Litton Corporation as a maintenance man. He did maintenance work, cleaned up the machines and everything. Your Uncle Sam got him the job at Litton. They lived in a little two-bedroom house in Los Altos. We came to California and lived with them for a couple of months, and then we lived with your Uncle George for a couple of months. And then we bought a house on the G.I. Bill on Walker Drive in Mountain View. Our monthly payments were \$96 a month.

CHUCK: That was quite a stretch back then, though?

VERLE: I had to work two jobs to make house payments. They didn't build fences around houses like they do nowadays. You had to do your own grass and landscaping. We moved in there, I guess, September-October? I never did plant grass because I never had the cash.

CHUCK: So Uncle George beat you down here?

VERLE: Uncle George was here before Grandma and Grandpa. He was here with your Uncle Sam and Uncle Howard, and they sold Grandpa on the idea. Grandpa came a year before we did then, leaving Joanne with us to finish high school at Milwaukie High. El Camino Real was US 101, and 101 was US 101 Bypass, was only a three-lane road with a center passing lane in the middle. There were truck stops starting in San Jose going all the way into San Francisco, all along the peninsula.

CHUCK: What was your first job when you got here?

VERLE: We got here on Saturday. Sunday, I returned the trailer we rented, and got the want ads. There was an ad in the San Jose Mercury News for Culligan Soft Water. They were looking for driver salesmen. Well, I was considered a driver salesman with Consolidated Freightways in Portland. After putting in an application that Monday, I went back to my car and looked up and there was Erickson Van and Storage across the street, so I said, "Aw, the hell with it. I'll go put in my application." I walked across the street and asked if they were hiring. They gave me an application, and I went into the driver's room to fill it out. I handed it into Herb Erickson who asked me, "Are you available right now? I need someone to drive a shipment into San Francisco." So I started working for them on that day.

CHUCK: You worked for Erickson before you worked

for Bekins?

VERLE: I worked for Erickson for four years, from 1955 to 1959. We went on strike in 1959. I left and went to work for Neville Moving and Storage in Mountain View for four months until work got slow and I was only working two days a week, so Bekins was hiring warehousemen. I hired out with them for warehouse work. After seven months, the new operations manager asked me if I could drive a truck. He said, "We need drivers. I'm going to pull you out of the warehouse and make a driver out of you." So I went to driving, then I got the job as driver trainer. Then I went into dispatch, and got out of the union. Otis Blake, who had bought Erickson from Herb Erickson, called me one day and offered me a job as their operations manager at \$250 a month more than I was making. So I went to my boss at Bekins who offered me \$500 more a month to stay. Back then in 1962 was a lot of damn money. Otis said he'd match that, and he'd give me a pick-up to drive back and forth to work and buy the gas. I went back to Bekins and quit, but they asked Otis if I could stay for two months to help out with a couple of big jobs I'd staged. I wound up staying for three months before going back to Erickson.

CHUCK: Is this the Bekins that was at Stevens Creek and Saratoga? That's now a computer company?

VERLE: Yeah, but I worked at the Bekins in Palo Alto first.

CHUCK: What were your first impressions of what was once the Valley of Heart's Delight?

VERLE: I loved it. First off, on Sunday your mother and I, when we just had your older brothers Tom and George, your mother would make a picnic, and we'd drive to San Jose when the orchards were in bloom. We'd bring moving pads to spread out and have our picnics in the orchards.

CHUCK: What kinds of orchards were there?

VERLE: Oh, all kinds. Cherry, walnuts, pears, and peaches. Oranges. No apples. And lemons. The whole part of where Bayshore is now, where 101 Bypass was, was orchards all up into San Francisco, besides the restaurants and truck stops.



CHUCK: Microwaves weren't a household thing in 1955.

VERLE: They were new. In fact, your Uncle Sam worked at Litton. He didn't have a diploma, but he was smart. I mean smart, smart. He engineered parts that went into the earliest household microwaves. But he was just an employee so didn't see much money from developments.

CHUCK: When you first went to work for Erickson how much of what you did was household moving and how much was office and industry?

VERLE: 98% household and a very little bit of downtown office moving. There was no Apple. Fairchild had just started and became a mainstay of the electronics industry. They made the discs. Gordon Moore worked at Fairchild. I think he was the first president of Intel. Then National Semiconductor was a take-off from Fairchild. Many who went for later firms started at Fairchild. Then Hewlett Packard started in a garage in Palo Alto.

CHUCK: Which was the first IT company to use your moving services?

VERLE: First was Fairchild. Erickson had that contract. I moved one of the manager and shareholder's house. He asked if I'd ever done any office moving. I said no, but he gave me a job to do a small office move, seven offices, and he like what I'd done so he gave us a contract.

CHUCK: By the time you bought into James Transfer and Storage in the 1970s, office and industry was pretty much your bread and butter, right?

VERLE: Well, when I left Erickson and went with Campbell Moving and Storage they hired me as an office and industry salesman. That was in 1968. In 1973 there were three of us – Sam Teel, Danny Hughes, and myself -- that bought James Transfer and Storage together. By 1977, we were the second largest booker as a Mayflower agent in the United States. That was mostly electronics. I had contracts with G.E., IBM, Intel, Fairchild . . . I was selling almost a million dollars a year.

CHUCK: Before your partner got other ideas.

CHUCK: Working back and forth until 1964, having more kids, then you bought this house here in Campbell, right?

VERLE: We bought this house brand-spanking new and moved in June of 1964. My house payment was \$103.67 a month. I gave \$17,250.

CHUCK: Which at that time was an investment.

VERLE: Hell, I couldn't afford it, but I did it. When I worked at Bekins, your mother and I figured that with our budget, we could buy a \$50 war bond a month, so Bekins took that out of my check. I saved up \$1,500 to make the down payment on this house.

CHUCK: You know people would clip off their thumbs to have that kind of down payment today.

VERLE: Shit, that's not even a month's pay for most these days.

CHUCK: In 1955 there were orchards everywhere, you guys were picnicking, and Grandpa worked for Litton who made microwaves.

VERLE: Litton actually made one of the first household microwaves.



VERLE: Sam and his brother were stealing from the company and going on world cruises on a three-mast schooner they'd bought.

CHUCK: You bought this house in 1964, and I was born a year later. What was this neighborhood like back then?

VERLE: It was a dead end.

CHUCK: There was at one end. We actually called it the Field.

VERLE: A church owned it. Lemoyne dead-ended into it. It was strip that ran from the orchard behind us, through Lemoyne, our street, past Acapulco into Rincon.

CHUCK: Wasn't there a barn on Acapulco, right around the corner from our house?

VERLE: Oh, yeah. Well, on Rincon.

CHUCK: The barn was on Acapulco, but the property ran back to Rincon. The barn sat on the corner of the lot on Acapulco, but the rest was empty land. And that and all these orchards you mentioned were owned by Bianucci?

VERLE: Yeah.

CHUCK: What do you remember about the guy?

VERLE: Never met him. He let you kids play in his orchards, though.

CHUCK: I looked into him a little bit. Daniel Bianucci was born in 1901 or 1902, and he died in 1975. We know what happened to the neighborhood in that year, right?

VERLE: Hell, they sold the properties and all these houses came up.

CHUCK: The barn went away.

VERLE: The orchard went away too. They built right behind us.

CHUCK: The prune orchard went away, and San Tomas

Park and all the houses around it appeared. The Field was developed too.

VERLE: They built houses there, and now the streets were no longer dead ends.

CHUCK: This was the year IT started booming right?

VERLE: Actually, the industry started going nuts in about 1961 or 1962. I had contracts with Four-Phase and AMD had all kinds of buildings. I moved a lot of IBM from New York to here. Most of their stuff came by railcars. We emptied those railcars into the buildings on Cottle Road. Now that's the Think Tank.

CHUCK: In 1968 Doug Engelbart did the "Mother of All Demos." Did you ever do any work for Xerox PARC? Palo Alto Research Center?

VERLE: No, not that. We did lots for Xerox itself though. At this time, our moving was about 80% office and industry.



CHUCK: Between the mid-1950s until the mid-1970s you'd progressed from 98% household to 80% office and industry.

VERLE: Office and industry was daily, not one-time operations like household. So you wanted the contracts. They wanted men and trucks every day. All the moving companies competed for these contracts.

CHUCK: This is what I was doing for you during the 1980s. You'd park my ass every day at IBM, AMD, or United Technologies. You had trucks every day at Hewlett Packard too. They'd park us in the warehouse until someone came to have us move a desk, maybe a couple of file cabinets, and then we'd go back and wait some more.

VERLE: We moved United Technologies from Sunnyvale on Arquez Road out to the Coyote Valley.

CHUCK: Yes, I went there most of one summer. An engineer had left plans for the Minute Man missile on his desk. I spent a lunch hour reading through them, not understanding what I was reading, of course. I pulled a lot of cable at IBM too.

VERLE: Yes, IBM. The mainframes, the 407s and 402s, were mainframe IBMs. They had floors thirty inches off the ground, and they ran a multitude of cables in those spaces. IBM hired us to come out to pull those cables out of the ground. I never did that kind of work myself.

CHUCK: I pulled a lot of that cable for you. Some of those cables were about as thick as an elephant's trunk and long, long. Some project manager pointed and we pulled. We never laid them, however. Techs did that. By pulling cable I added major beef to my arms. The bullies started backing off at that point.

VERLE: We hired in to do that work for years.

CHUCK: You always sent me out with the man who is for me the archetype of the blue-collar workingman, Clifford Leveritt.

VERLE: Yes! Cliff was with me at James Transfer. His helper had one leg, a peg leg, remember? We had a contract with UTC too that required we pull a forklift out to the site for second-story work. Cliff had a flatbed with a trailer behind it. He'd be coming down the hill from UTC, and Cliff would say, "Those damn brakes are going soft again." So I asked, "How'd you deal with it?" He used his helper's leg to press down on the pedal really hard.

CHUCK: Wasn't that Ron? He worked in the warehouse. Ron Day. He had that leg he could detach. Cliff is a fucking legend. His wife was named Doris.

VERLE: Yes, a very nice woman.

CHUCK: He came to California about the same time you did, right? From Arkansas, I think. He was a country boy with a ducktail or pompadour haircut.

VERLE: He worked for me for quite a few years.

CHUCK: He was Mr. High-Tech all the way with his new-fangled hump strap.

VERLE: Oh, yeah. He hated hand trucks.

CHUCK: See this scarred knuckle?

VERLE: Cliff did that?

CHUCK: Five of us had to move these fireproof file cabinets up three flights of stairs, about twenty of these sons of bitches, and Cliff wouldn't let us use hand trucks. Four of us had to grab a corner on these cement-lined monsters and lift them step by step. My knuckle never quite healed right.

VERLE: Cliff was his own self, but he was a good driver.

CHUCK: Did you know they wrote a song about him?

VERLE: Oh, yeah?

CHUCK: Cliff it! Cliff it! Get a hump strap and lift it!

VERLE: Another driver of mine, Pete, broke his hand one day bringing a Hide A Bed sofa down steps in San Francisco. I sent him to the doctor who wrapped it in a cast. Pete went right back to work. Never missed a day even with that cast.

CHUCK: How quickly things changed after those days.

VERLE: Right after I came to California things started changing. Fairchild was on Whisman and Frontage Roads. They had five buildings near where we lived on Walker Drive. But it went crazy in the 1960s. You couldn't find a house until they started building later. This house was a good investment.

CHUCK: You only bought this house, because you were having more kids, right?

VERLE: And your mother was sick of cement floors.

She wanted wood floors.

CHUCK: So the first extension you added, this very room, has a cement floor, of course. What an excellent husband you were.

VERLE: Well, it was the cheapest. This room with a half bath cost me \$4,800.

CHUCK: And it had that awful tile on the floor.

VERLE: I got that free from Fairchild. They ordered it for a new building but didn't like it, so I was told to haul it to the dump, but I kept it instead. The sheetrock came from Fairchild too.

CHUCK: How did you keep kids occupied during the weekends? We didn't have video games or computers.

VERLE: Games. Monopoly, Clue, card games. You kids liked that one where you took the body parts out of the guy and it buzzed. What was it?

CHUCK: Operation.

VERLE: Yes! You kids really liked that one.

CHUCK: What can you tell me about Frontier Village?

VERLE: Frontier Village was over on Monterey Road. James Transfer and Storage had one of their first moving wagons, an old Conestoga, parked out there. There were rides, horses, you kids loved it. This was before you had all these huge amusement parks everywhere.

CHUCK: What was then Marriott's Great America appeared in the late 1970s.

VERLE: That was once fruit orchards too.

CHUCK: What about the Winchester Drive-In?

VERLE: Well, the Winchester Drive-In was in Campbell, and we'd go there on Friday nights. You get the car in for a dollar. Your mother would pop three big bags of popcorn, and I'd back the car into the spot and drop the gate so you kids could watch the movies out of the tail end.

CHUCK: What kind of car were you driving at this point?

VERLE: An old Mercury station wagon. It was cheaper to pop the corn too. We took our own concessions to the movies and only paid the buck to get in.

CHUCK: What can you tell me about the building of the Century domes on Winchester?

VERLE: They were an oddity. I think Century 21 was the first one to go up. Then 25 was over by Westgate, right?

CHUCK: Yes. Do you remember them building Westgate?

VERLE: No, not really. But we never went into the theaters.

CHUCK: Didn't you and mom ever go to movies alone?

VERLE: Not really. Your mother and I had a friend from Bekins named Kyle Kennedy. He was blind in one eye. He and a friend bought a bar in Watsonville, got a dance license so then they came to San Jose out on Almaden Expressway called Cowtown.

CHUCK: I remember the one on Monterey Road.

VERLE: The first one in San Jose was on Almaden Expressway. There was more than one bar called Cowtown. I remember that your mother and I could go there on a Saturday night and drink for free, because Kyle Kennedy and I were really good friends, and we could dance. Then they expanded Cowtown across





the street, and it was twice as big. He had all kinds of Western stars come in. He charged a cover to people. We'd close the place at 2 AM, and Kyle would charter a plane to take us all to Las Vegas, ten to twelve of us. Then we'd come back from Vegas on Sunday morning, go home, and go to bed.

CHUCK: Was this during the 1960s or 1970s?

VERLE: The 1960s.

CHUCK: Mom wasn't part of that?

VERLE: Hell, yes, she was.

CHUCK: She went to Vegas?

VERLE: Oh, yes. She flew to Vegas with me and Kyle. She liked Kyle.

CHUCK: When did it go to Monterey Road?



VERLE: When Bill Cannon bought into it with Kyle. Because the IRS closed Kyle down. So he opened up again with Bill.

CHUCK: Wasn't Kyle the fellow who kept sheets of cash under his carpet?

VERLE: Yes. Hundred dollar bills. That was when he in Watsonville. He didn't claim his earnings like he should have. And, like I said, later the IRS shut him down. So he opened on Monterey Road with Bill. And that went belly up. So they wound up in Sunnyvale, but we used to go to another bar of that kind . . .

CHUCK: The Saddle Rack?

VERLE: The Saddle Rack. I used to ride the bull there.

CHUCK: That was off of San Carlos.

VERLE: At Meridian, right behind the Sears that was there at the time. But, no. No movies alone with your mom. Just the drive-ins.

CHUCK: We were drive-in people all the way. We only started going to theaters because they closed the drive-ins?

VERLE: There weren't any drive-ins after a while. The only one left was out on Old Oakland Road.

CHUCK: Capitol Drive-In too.

VERLE: Yeah, yeah. But it's not a drive-in anymore. But it's still there. There was Old Oakland Road and Brokaw though. They showed porn.

CHUCK: I remember seeing the cops pull up outside the fence to watch it. What if anything do you miss about the valley the way it was?

VERLE: Things were much slower. It didn't take forever to get place. Heck's Fire, if I had to drive to work now I'd never get there.

CHUCK: Do you miss any restaurants?

VERLE: Not really.

CHUCK: I miss the Round House Delicatessen. I was buying these huge Italian cold-cut sandwiches at 13. Brisket too. I miss that damn brisket. Oh, and also in Kirkwood Plaza we had Joe the Pharmacist.

VERLE: Oh, yeah. Invariably your mother would run out of one prescription or another, always in the middle of the night. Joe would come to the store to meet me and give us enough to last three or four days until I could get an appointment with the doctor. He'd go to prison today.

CHUCK: I think the barbershop is the last existing small business in the neighborhood, what's now Jerry's Barbershop.

VERLE: And Freddie's Liquor. It moved across Campbell Avenue on to San Tomas Aquino. But it's still in business.

CHUCK: To the spot where that bar used to be, the one that had fifty different names over the years. What would you like to see for the future of Silicon Valley?

VERLE: I'm not sure. But it's interesting to see people buying up these old houses, tearing them down and putting in these bigger places.

CHUCK: People are selling out and retiring.

VERLE: Or they're dying.

CHUCK: And their kids are selling out and reaping the profit, like Bianucci's kids did back in the 1970s.

VERLE: Exactly. Enough now. I'm hungry. What do you want for dinner?



# Y2K Ready F. C. Moulton

“I have two cans of Spam and a six pack of Jolt Cola. I’m Y2K ready.”

“What?”

“You said to read it so I unfolded the paper and that’s what’s printed on the first line. I guess it’s referring to that Y2K thing thirty years ago. Anyway there’s a line with an email address and another with your Uncle David’s name and then a line with alt.talk.year2000 and then there are a few other lines. Want me to read them all?”

“Well, the whole Y2K thing really ramped up in popular opinion in 1999 and then on New Year’s Day 2000 nothing happened. So, yeah, a bit over thirty years ago. The alt.talk.year2000 was a Usenet newsgroup; Usenet was before your time. But right now I’m not interested in what is printed. What I’m inter-

ested in is what is handwritten in pencil on the side that was out before you unfolded it. Down here it’s too dark for me to read it.”

Maria started doing her low hum which meant that she was thinking. While Maria hummed, I got back to work examining the bottom of the desk. I also wondered how it was that I was the boss of this job, but I was on my back while Maria was sitting comfortably in a chair. I’m a partner in the firm, Maria has only been an employee for six months and is thirty- two years younger yet I’m the one examining the bottom of Uncle David’s desk. Obviously, I need to improve my task delegation. And we were searching Uncle David’s desk very thoroughly because he had a habit of putting things in out of the way places. I got out of my thoughts when the humming stopped.



“Okay, Pat, what is written in pencil is faint but appears to be sets of two digit numbers separated by dashes. No wait. One of those is not a dash it looks like it might be a plus sign and there’s a dash missing. So the sequences goes 2 2 dash 1 7 dash 3 2 plus 2 0 0 9 dash 0 3 dash 0 2. So the 2 0 0 9 might be a year.”

I stiffly got up from under the desk and looked over her shoulder. “Okay, I think you’re right on the year. In ISO format, the last part would represent the year 2009, the third month which is March, so the date would be second of March 2009. Makes sense because Uncle David preferred ISO format.”

“What is special about that date?”

“Beats me. Uncle David was a bit peculiar when he was alive and I expect to find more of his idiosyncrasies given that he has only been dead a few weeks and we are still working through his possessions. Plus his dying without warning further complicates things. Let’s take a photo of each side of this paper and put it back in the plastic that I found it in. That way we don’t smudge it; the items in pencil are faint and hard to read as is.”

After a couple of minutes, we each had a good set of images on our mobiles and the original was back in the plastic sleeve and then placed safely in the upper right desk drawer for easy retrieval if necessary.

“Well, we have done a thorough search of the desk. I’ll start looking through the file cabinet and you can start with those book cases built into the wall.”

Maria said “Whoever designed the wall made a nice window seat. Did he use it often?”

“Sometimes,” I said. “I sat there often when I visited. I know he always saved the small shelves between the seat and the floor for paperback science fiction. All of the other shelves were technical books and documentation. And I guess that about half of these documents were considered very important in their time. No use handling them twice so as you take them off the shelf just box put them in one of those boxes. The Computer History Museum is interested in most of them. You could write a lot of the background history of Silicon Valley with what’s in these documents.”

Maria took out her mobile and took a photo of each section of all of the bookcases. When I looked quizzically at her she said, “If your uncle David was idiosyncratic, it’s possible he left some message in the order the books are arranged on the shelf.”

“Okay,” and I opened my briefcase and got out an N95 dust mask for each of us. “Better put this on;

Uncle David usually kept his desk relatively clean, but he didn’t dust the bookshelves often, and he only let the cleaning crew into the rest of the house, however not this room. I should have thought to have the cleaning service vacuum the shelves when they were here a few days ago, but I didn’t think of it.”

Soon the ever resourceful Maria had opened the window and set up a fan to blow air out from the room to keep the dust down. The file cabinet had yielded a few folders that appeared to be related to Uncle David himself and would need detailed examination. Some dealt with the various hobbies and side interests that had attracted his fancy over the years. Most of the rest were copies of reports, memos and documents from the various companies that had employed him or even a few companies where he had never worked; some of these were marked HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL. So how did Uncle David obtain them, I wondered?

I had sat down at the desk to look at the folders with Uncle David’s personal papers when Maria said, “Patricia, there are two things I need to tell you. First I think there’s someone in a car across the street watching this house. Second, is that I found a safe.”

When Maria calls me Patricia instead of Pat that gets my attention. The content of her brief report cranked it up higher. Maria was on one knee near the window, and as I neared she moved over and indicated I should take the spot; my old knees protested but I got in position. She said “Look at that bunch of leaves on the lowest branch to the right. Wait until the next breeze blows them back.” She was correct; the next breeze blew them back, and I caught a glimpse of a car and the face of someone looking directly at the house. I wanted to get up, but I waited until the next breeze and saw the driver turn his head as if speaking to someone in the passenger seat. Then I got up to let her retake the spot.

“Please see if you can get a photo of the driver and send into the office. From this angle I doubt if you can get a photo of the license plate. But with an image of the driver maybe they can come up an ID. And tell them the car looks an older manual-only drive model not a newer Level 5 auto-only drive or selectable drive model.” I was not surprised since personal vehicles with full Level 5 capability had only just hit the market a few months back. I had bought selectable and loved it.

While Maria worked on taking a photo I got up and then looked at what else she had found. Maria

had removed the window seat and exposed three sections. The one on the left was covered by what appeared to be pieces of an old blanket, the middle section was a safe and on the right the section contained several frames and other miscellanea.

I started with the frames; the largest as Uncle David's 1975 diploma for his MS. in Industrial Engineering from San Jose State University. Next was his diploma for his BS which he had received in 1962. Maria reached in and pulled out a cheap wood plaque with an engraved brass plate.

She read, "David Foote: Innovation Pioneer of the Year" above the logo of a long defunct company.

I said, "I remember that one, and I'm surprised he kept it. That company was a startup that sputtered along and in a feeble attempt to keep the best employees from jumping ship the HR head was dreaming up new awards. When Uncle David saw what was happening, he knew the end was near so he started planning. He got the CEO to give him the company credit card to buy a new laptop and modem."

"You mean a real dialup modem like in the museum?"

"Yeah. Back when modems were a thing. Uncle David made sure these items were always at home and never at the office. He started taking home his personal books and any paper or personal items he didn't want to lose. He had even kept his HP scientific calculator always in his briefcase. Then he started looking for another job and every week he would make sure to put in at least one valid expense report."

Maria was giving me a look that had "Why" written all over it.

I continued. "When the company folded five weeks later it was a mess as he expected, and his final check didn't cover the last two expense reports. The HR team about choked when they realized the problem, because they thought all of the final checks had covered all amounts owed and they didn't want to cut another check. So he pointed out that he had an old company fax machine and laptop and other similar items. So why not agree that he would keep any equipment in lieu of the expense reports? The HR team agreed, and he got it in writing on his exit paperwork and that's how got he got a new high end laptop worth ten times the amount on the expense reports. This was back when laptops were expensive and not that common. It almost made up for the company owing Uncle David a promised bonus that never

appeared."

Maria smiled. "Someone after my own heart. Don't let them screw you over."

Maria was checking the numbers in the image on her mobile, expecting me to try the safe next. I said, "Let's leave the safe for last and see what is under this old blanket." The blanket was made of some synthetic then cut into pieces. When the top layer was removed what we saw were bottles. Mostly half-pints and pints of vodka, rum, whisky and whiskey of mid-range various brands; not el cheapo stuff but not premium. Some of the space between the bottles was filled by the small fifty milliliter bottles often seen on airplanes.

Maria carefully excavated the layers. "Well, this is not the collection of a liquor connoisseur, but it's at least respectable. And what do we have here? At the bottom there really is a six pack of Jolt Cola and a couple of cans of Spam. I guess we found that your Uncle David considered this Y2K stash. I can see why the blanket padding to protect them from earthquakes. No offense, but was he serious or was this an elaborate joke for you to find years later? I mean none of the bottles have been opened."

"Sometimes with Uncle David you never knew how much was serious, how much was joke, and how much was both. Actually most often it was both, and depending on your perspective it might look like mostly one or the other. Often the most illuminating perspective was when it was serious and joking simultaneously. And I would guess if I'd known about this and had asked him that he would have said it was just part of his earthquake emergency supplies like the bottled water, the cans of soup, and the side-cut manual can opener. And then Uncle David would break into that beatific smile."

Maria laughed "I think most families have at least one aunt or uncle like that. And looking at the dates on the Spam cans he was actually replacing them since the Spam cans in there are still before use-by date and the eight cans of Jolt Cola are only two years old. So the Spam and the Jolt are sort of half funny and half serious. The booze is almost all serious. You can usually trade booze for about anything. Of course, you need the will power to not drink it up yourself particularly in a crisis."

"For most of his life, Uncle David didn't drink much; just social events or with co-workers. When I was young he told me about working at Memorex and going to Building 19 on Friday afternoons for a

beer with the other engineers.”

Maria asked, “You mean like in the old commercial, ‘Is it live or is it Memorex?’ That Memorex?”

“Well, sort of. Memorex at one time did both consumer products and peripherals for mainframe computers. You know peripherals like disk drives the size of washing machines and tape drives about as tall as you. My Uncle David was in that division. Memorex had a huge campus in Santa Clara sort of south of Central Expressway, between San Tomas and Scott. The Consumer Products operations got sold off in early 1980s to Tandy, you know, Radio Shack before it went bust. Anyway, Uncle David was not directly involved in the sale, but he told the story of talking to someone involved who said the pricing was structured so that the amount paid by Tandy to use the Memorex name was more than the amount paid for all of the rest of the transaction. At least that was the rumor.”

Maria looks at me “Wait a minute. Building 19? You mean Memorex had a bar there for employees?”

“No. Building 19 was a euphemism for a bar ran by some group, I think he said the Elks or maybe some other group, anyway most Fridays about mid-afternoon it wasn’t uncommon for some of the engineers to wander over there. They would tell the department secretaries that they were going to a special meeting -- yes they had department secretaries in those days. Remember there were no mobile phones then, so if some manager called or came looking for the engineer, the secretary would say the engineer was in a meeting and then call over to Building 19 to alert the engineer to pop a couple of breath mints and head back. And Memorex also leased buildings behind Building 19. So as Uncle David phrased it unless someone actually saw you enter or exit Building 19 nobody could say anything based merely on proximity and anyway most of management turned a blind eye to the practice.”





Maria asked, "Did he ever take you for a beer there?"

"No. This was around 1983, so I just a kid when he worked at Memorex, but I do remember the little sticker on the right rear bumper of his car that allowed him to park in the Memorex parking lot. It was about three centimeters high and five centimeters wide, black background with silver colored letters MRX in bold block letters. When Memorex was at its peak you saw those stickers all over the valley."

Maria said, "Yeah, now that you mention it I saw one of those in an old photo of my grandpapa standing next to his car. He was a machinist back in the day. I wonder if they worked there at the same time."

"Quite possibly," I mused and then continued, "I'm thirsty. Let's get a drink of water and then open the safe. Should be easy if those numbers are the combination."

Refreshed, I pulled up the chair and said, "Read off the numbers."

The safe wouldn't open. Nothing seemed stuck. It was as if this wasn't the combination. After three tries, I got up and said, "I need a bio break," and headed toward the toilet.

When I got back, Maria seemed quite satisfied. The safe was open.

"Okay," I said. "Tell me how you did that in the few minutes I was away."

"Natural skill and intelligence," Maria said. "Plus, I felt a very slight change in the feel of the dial not at the first number of the combination, but at the next higher number. So I just added one to the first number, and then added two to the second number, and then finally added three to the third number so the combination isn't 22 17 32. It's really 23 19 35. I'll admit that first I tried just adding one to each and that didn't work. However, by paying attention to the way the dial felt I figured it out."

"Maria, I knew I made a great decision when I hired you."

"Well, actually Karl hired me. As I recall you were out of town and not even on the interview team."

"Okay, I'm glad that Karl hired you. Now let's see what we have in here."

The safe contained about a hundred sheets of paper with a single binder clip holding them together. The title page read "Historical Background." Under the paper was a CD in a clear plastic case, I recog-

nized Uncle David's sloppy printing 'Historical Background and Scans - Digital copy for Patricia Foote'. What I saw next took me a second to recognize, an archival envelope containing old papers to protect them from light and humidity. The label said "CSA." Below that was another archival envelope with a label where Uncle David had written "Very Fragile - See CD for Scans".

I had the CSA envelope in my hand, so I decided to open it and leave the other archival envelope undisturbed. The letters CSA were correct. The contents were Confederate States of America currency, mostly in fifty and one hundred dollar denominations, about thirty bills in total. The condition was surprisingly good for them being over sixteen decades old.

Maria asked, "Is that really Confederate currency? I've only seen pictures."

"Same here. But I think this is the real stuff," I said. "Time for a plan. First, has that car returned?"

Maria checked. "Not that I can see, but it's getting dark, and they might be in a different car."

"Thanks."

Finding actual valuables and a safe put things in a different light.

I pulled my mobile and called the security company our firm primarily uses. I ordered a three robot security detail for the house: one at back door, one at front door, and one roaming. We used that security company often so Maria, I, and everyone in the company was in their visual and voice database. I flagged Maria and me as Full Access to the house with no notification messages to me, everyone else in the firm I flagged as Full Access to the house with a notification to my mobile just to let me know who was around.

Fortunately, I had not canceled the housekeeping service that Uncle David had used for years. They came mornings every Monday and Thursday, put clean sheets of the bed, did any dirty dishes, made sure there were some nonperishable items, healthy food, cleaned, and did any laundry. That service was the main reason I had not been too worried about Uncle David still living in the house alone. This was Thursday, so they had been here this morning and would not be back until Monday.

"I'm tired and I expect you're also. We both need some rest. Let's call it a day. I'm going to read what's in these folders: these papers and this data CD. Let's meet here first thing in the morning and continue."

Maria shook her head “Remember that I’m working with Karl taking those depositions tomorrow.”

“Oh crap, I’m getting tired. I forgot about the depositions. Yes, those are important and take priority. So you work with Karl tomorrow and then when you’re finished with the depositions you can come over here.”

“We are starting the depositions early though, so we should be done by ten maybe eleven at the latest. So I should be here a little after eleven.”

The stack of historical background papers and the folders related to Uncle David went into my briefcase. Everything else we straightened up, closed, and we locked the safe. Maria watched me lock it, unlock it, and then relock it. Then she replaced the window seat and showed me the ingenious but difficult to find latch that allowed it be removed. I had sat on that seat numerous times and never realized it was removable. It had never creaked or shifted.

Thirty minutes later, the security truck dropped off the security robots. Maria guided one to the rear door. I directed the one in front to position itself on the front porch so that its forward-looking vision scanned the front yard and his rear-looking vision system looked directly through the window into the study. Since the vision system was multi-spectrum, I didn’t need to leave a light on. We then put one on roaming and verified it had a clear path around the house. We left a power strip out where it could recharge since it was expending energy moving.

Maria left her vehicle and I got in mine and put it on auto-drive and started reviewing papers for the ride back to my condo. My plan was to eat then spend a few minutes doing a quick review of Uncle David’s papers and then sleep since I had planned for an early start. The plan was different than reality, I read longer than I had planned and I had not fallen asleep easily then I had tossed and turned all night I suspect due to the contents of what I had read in the pages. At about ten in the morning I pulled myself out of bed and took a quick shower to wake up.

I’d grabbed a coffee and pastry on the way in hoping that with the car in auto-drive mode I could eat, drink, and review the papers. Auto-drive mode was great for this sort of situation but I still wanted the ability to select self-drive when I wanted. I know my insurance rates were higher because it was selectable, and I made sure to use self-drive mode at least once a week to keep my skills sharp. I expected to be

moving some items to my place today, so I manually backed my selectable in the driveway.

I acknowledged the voice challenge from the robot, who notified the back door robot as well as the main office that I was present. I was on the porch starting to unlock the door when the robot said, “Unidentified persons approaching.” I looked back and saw two men, one looks like the man who had been observing the house yesterday. I looked to the other side of the street and saw what appeared to be the same car as yesterday. I must have been really tired and forgot to check.

The robot security robot said in a voice intended to be commanding but technically polite, “Please don’t step closer. Please remain on the sidewalk. Thank you.”

The older fellow quickly took one step back onto the sidewalk then pulled the younger fellow back. “Sorry,” the older one said.

“What is your business here?” I asked not non-confrontationally but in a way I hoped would indicate that I was not in the mood for extended chit chat.

“This is where David Foote lived, right? We are here to talk about some things which belong to us which David Foote likely had in his possession.”

I said, “The probate court is the proper venue for any debts.”

The younger one started to say something before the older one shushed him. While the older one calmed down his companion, I saw Maria in a ride share car that almost stopped in front but went on to the next house. Then she exited and started walking back. She was dressed in her normal business attire; a dark black pantsuit over a silky grey top with a bit of white ruffle and a pair of perfectly polished Doc Martens. As she strode she took the strap of her briefcase from her shoulder and grasped the strap and handle in her left hand. Her right hand held the straps of her purse as an extension of her fist. She stopped about two meters from them, left foot forward, body slightly turned.

The older fellow was saying “We just found out yesterday about the demise of Mr. Foote. We were sorry to learn of his passing. Please accept our condolences. What we want to talk about might not fit well in probate court. We wanted to ask about the Confederate treasure.”

When he said Confederate that put a new light on things.

So I decided that they might have information of interest to me.

“What are your names please?” I asked.

The older one said “Frank Horner. This is my nephew, Buster.”

“Thank you Mr. Horner. I’m Patricia Foote, niece of David Foote. My colleague behind you is Ms. Valdez.”

They turned and for the first time saw Maria who smiled and said, “Hello Gentlemen” while maintaining her posture.

I wanted to talk with them but not here so I said, “How about an early lunch? We can talk while we eat.”

The older one nodded agreement.

I decided on a place that would nourish me without upsetting my stomach and was a few miles from here. “You know the Falafel Drive-In on Stevens Creek?”

The older one said, “I think so. Near the freeway. We can check it on our mobile.”

“Fine” I said “Ms. Valdez and I’ll go in my vehicle, you can go in yours. See you there.”

Horner and his nephew walked toward their car. Maria walked toward me. I said “Good morning, Maria. I hope you’re doing well. Jump in the car. I want to arrive first and I’ll fill you in on the way. Did the depositions go okay?”

“Depositions went fine. But my own vehicle started giving me a caution flag for the brakes, so be safe I dropped it off at the dealer. It’s covered by warranty, so whatever. Who are those two? And what should I know ahead of time?”

As we drove I said, “I can understand that you’re probably wondering why I’m giving them any time instead of telling them to take their story to the probate court. When Horner mentioned Confederate treasure obviously it piqued my interest because of what we found last evening. I found some more about it when I read in Uncle David’s papers. I want to know what they know. When we get to Falafel Drive-In, I need you to play along and do the ordering. I’m going to give the nephew Buster the Change Test.”

Maria gave me a hesitant “Will do.”

“I stayed up late reading the papers that Uncle David left,” I continued. It seems that at least one of my ancestors was deeply involved with the Confederate States of America, and there might still be some valuables involved. I’m still trying to piece together how it all relates to apricots, cherries, semiconduc-

tors, computers and Y2K. Oh yeah, and gold.”

“Did your Uncle David drop acid before he wrote up those papers? Because it sounds like he was tripping. No offense, but I need to ask. Did you take up before you read them?”

“No I didn’t take up and Uncle David was not one to do acid, at least as far as I know. He was quirky but almost always lucid.”

Soon we were at Falafel Drive-In and as we got out of the vehicle I said to Maria “Please order us four specials, and help Buster carry back the food and drinks while I steer Horner to a table in the rear.”

I saw them and adjusted my pace so we arrived at the order window just a few seconds ahead of them and said, “I highly recommend the special. Ms. Valdez can order. My treat.” I got nods of agreement.

As Maria started to order, I pulled cash from my pocket and handed it to Buster saying, “Could you please pay the tab while Mr. Horner and I stake out a table in the rear where we won’t be disturbed? The food will be up quick so if you two can bring it as soon as it’s up that would be great.” I’m glad that I don’t always rely on electronic payment but always carried plenty of old style currency just for situations like this.

I led Frank to the back corner and sat across from him. “So, Mr. Horner, do you and your nephew live around here?”

Horner fiddled with a paper napkin from the dispenser. “Yes, Buster is my sister Susan’s only child. She passed away from cancer about two months ago. Pancreatic cancer. From diagnosis to death was only four weeks. I know that medicine has made big strides on curing cancer, but the doctor said it was too advanced and she was too weak. So it got her.”

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

“Thanks. I live over on Second Street near the county building. I bought it years ago before housing prices spiked. I’m a retired high school history teacher . . . well mostly retired. I do some substitute teaching a few days a month, and I tutor at a center for at-risk youths. So it’s good I have my house with a mortgage that’s not too large, because my retirement and what little I earn extra wouldn’t go far otherwise.”

Before we could go further, Maria arrived with a tray containing the four falafels followed by Buster with a tray containing four banana shakes. We dug in. The food did me good. After a couple of bites, I said to Frank, “Okay, now tell me why you think my Uncle David might have had some property that belongs to



you.”

Buster interjected “My mother said so on her death bed. That’s why we were looking for him. Your uncle. Dave Foote.”

I stared at him sternly and said, “David Foote. Not Dave. Not Davey. You may refer to him as Mr. Foote.”

Frank winced. “Buster, please let me tell this. Yes, as she was dying my sister told us a story about her great-great-grandfather and four others leaving the South in 1864 with money and gold and jewels bound for California. Exactly what they planned to do was a bit vague but supposedly they thought they could get California to become part of the South.”

Maria asked, “Did they really think they would be successful?”

Frank “Well, looking back from today we can see problems with the plan. However, as a historian, I’ve studied certain biases and wishful thinking from that era that must have driven them. They obviously were aware of the agricultural potential in the Santa Clara Valley. And gold fever never dies. Plus they probably knew about the missions run by the Catholic Church and heard reports about how some of those missions had treated the native peoples. My guess is that they thought it not much different from how enslaved persons were treated in the South. It was considered a risky one way mission, so the Confederacy picked five true believers with no living family still in the South. At least that’s the story. My sister claimed that she, Buster, and I were the last descendants from one of the five. According to her, one of the five was named Foote and he had a share of the treasure which should belong to the Horner family. She lived her entire life in LA, and her investigations pointed to David Foote here in San Jose. Before she could contact him, however, she got the cancer diagnosis, so she gave the story to Buster and me. After we buried my sister and moved Buster up here from LA, we decided to check. We found that David Foote was dead, but we saw you at the house and decided to contact you.”

Buster chimed, “Yeah, we want our money.”

Maria glared at Buster who was too self-absorbed to notice.

I jumped in, “I’ve got additional information. Yes, there were five Confederates who were selected and all resigned from the Confederate Army so they would be less likely to be executed as spies if caught, although given their mission at most the difference

would have been between being hanged or shot by firing squad. They arrived in San Francisco by ship. The day after stepping off the ship came the news that Lee had surrendered. And here the story gets a bit murky. My understanding is that the five had lost all contact with their commander back in the South and decided to split up the treasure and to wait ten years for instructions. They’d then scatter to different parts of the state to avoid detection but still staying in touch. Joshua Foote settled near here in the San Jose area. It appears that the treasure was handed down from him to his oldest son, and then to the oldest son of my great-great grandfather. Joshua Foote was my great-grandfather, Preston Foote. His oldest son was my grandfather Donald Foote, and at last his oldest son was my uncle, David Foote. Your ancestor Philip Horner went to Los Angeles. The Timson brothers went to the Gold Country and someone whose name has various spellings Crumbf or Crumf or Crumb went to Sacramento and surrounding areas. Crumbf seems to have become a grifter and con artist, sometimes a gambler and card shark. He died almost penniless of what a newspaper of the time listed as heart failure just a hour after being caught cheating at poker up in the foothills at a mining camp. Not all of this is necessarily accurate, but it’s what I’ve learned thus far.”

“What happened to the Timson brothers?”

Frank wondered.

“The older Timson became ill and died of fever. The younger Timson came back here to the San Jose area and found Joshua Foote. I’m guessing his health wasn’t good, because he died the next year from what was listed as consumption. By 1870 that leaves only Joshua Foote here and Philip Horner in LA.”

Frank nodded. “Yeah, all of the Horner family that I know of had been in LA until I took a job teaching up here. Then after my sister died Buster came to live with me, as I mentioned.”

“That explains more of it,” I said. “What information I have is in notes from my Uncle David indicates that the gold that Philip Horner had been allocated was handed down a couple of generations and then vanished around 1933 or 1934 probably as part of the act requiring gold to be turned into the government under certain circumstances in exchange for paper money at a fixed rate. Then later the dollar value of the gold was raised so that the federal government could make a big profit.”

"You mean the government stole our gold!" exclaimed Buster.

Frank shook his head. "Not exactly. That order and other laws around that time had some complexity since gold in some forms was treated differently than gold in another form, such as bullion versus coins, also for usage such as jewelry. Most people turned in their gold rather than face legal hassles, trial, confiscation, and prison. So the term "steal" might not be technically correct. It'd be more accurate to say "possibly extorted" but even that's an over simplification. However, this does explain why after a few shots of rum my grandfather always referred to FDR as Franklin "Thieving" Roosevelt."

Buster took a deep breath, but I jumped in. "I haven't found any evidence that the Foote line had any of the original gold at that point, and it appears that the Horner and Foote families lost contact a year or two after that. At least that's what I know so far."

Maria asked, "So there's no record of the initial distribution? How much was there to begin with? Did each of the original five get a one fifth split of everything or did one person get mostly gold and one person get the currency? And what kind of jewelry are we talking about?"

"Good questions. I don't know the answers. What I do know is that there was at least one diamond and ruby necklace and some Confederate currency and gold in some form, but it's unclear if it was coin or bullion."

"Diamond and ruby, just like Mom's favorite necklace," Buster remembered. "What's it worth?"

"Yes my sister had a diamond and ruby necklace that she said was special," Frank added. "Might be the same one. She gave it to me just before she died. As for worth, depends on appraisal. Of course sentimental value is often most important. Plus, if it was brought from the south checking to see if it's possible find the original jeweler and seeing if there's any additional history for the piece. A good story and a reasonable provenance can really up the value, even for insurance purposes . . ."

"The Confederate currency I've found is mostly fifty and one hundred denomination bills," I said.

Buster's face lit up. "Hundred dollar bills! Break it out and let's party!"

Maria rolled her eyes. "Confederate currency is not legal tender so you can't spend it."

Frank moaned, "It's only valuable to collectors."

"Exactly," I said. "Which is why the bills are going to a professional grading service. Once they are graded, we can approach dealers and collectors directly or decide to put them up for auction."

I stood and said, "So that's where we're at now. Here's my card with my email address and a number for leaving messages. Leave your contact information, and I'll update you when I find out more, but it might be several days. The appraisal of the bills alone will take well over a week."

We left the table and headed to our separate cars. Just before we pulled, away I saw Frank waving and running toward us. I rolled down my window. "Yes, Mr. Horner, what is it?"

"Please call me Frank. Buster forgot to give you your change from paying for lunch, Ms. Foote." He handed over the change and smiled.

I smiled. "Thanks Frank. You can call me Patricia." I put an extra emphasis on the word you with the unspoken implication that I trusted him, but not Buster.

"I understand" he said, pained. "About Buster . . . to be honest he has two strikes against him already. One more in California and he might be in for life. He was only out of prison for three months when my sister died. At least she died with her only child outside prison walls. She had a tough life. Her husband was killed in Iraq, and it really tore her up. It also really hit Buster hard. He was only twelve when he lost his father. As she was dying, my sister asked me to take care of Buster and I promised that I would do what I could to keep a roof over his head, food for him to eat, and try to keep him from winding up homeless again. I hope that was a comfort for her. I thought you should know the background. And thanks for lunch, Patricia."

"Thanks for the update. Glad we could talk and share information. Bye, Frank."

"Bye."

As we drove away, I turned to Maria. "Well, Buster flunked the Change Test, and even though I was not testing Frank he passed. And a big thanks to you for playing your part well. Sorry I had to put you through it."

Maria gave an approving grin "No problem, actually, you handled it well. That entire thing could have gone out of control. But I have two questions. Is all of what you said true? Is there more to this than you told them? What do we do next?"

"That's three questions. To answer your first

and second questions, I didn't tell them any lies and I told them almost everything. What I left out was mostly private Foote family business. The answer to your third question is we're going to work on getting more information. I have the feeling there's still something big that we need to uncover."

When Maria and I arrived back at Uncle David's house we parked and headed toward the front door. The robot security greeted us with "Hello, Ms. Foote" and "Hello Ms. Valdez," and we each replied with our all is good passphrase. With the image and voice match complete I started up the front steps. However, Maria couldn't resist doing her silly little joke on the robot security.

"Knock-knock," she said. In the past it was inevitably followed by the robot saying, "Sorry I didn't understand; please repeat."

This time Maria's "knock-knock" was followed by the robot replying, "Who's there?" Maria was caught off guard but recovered quickly and said "Orange." The robot shot back, "Orange who?" And Maria finished, "Orange you glad you can now respond to knock-knock?" The robot said, "That's something I still need to ponder. Have a nice day."

Patricia looked thoughtful. "Now we have security robots responding to knock-knock. When security robots start telling knock-knock jokes then the Singularity will soon be upon us. And by the way, that reminds me that I'm throwing a Pre-Singularity Party on February 13, so save that date. I know it's only September now, but these things can rush up on us."

Maria laughed. "Pre-Singularity Party. Yeah I've heard of those but never went to one. So you're throwing one?"

"Yes. Uncle David attended an early Pre-Singularity party on February 13 1993. This might have been the first one. This relates to one of the stories he told. Since the joke back then was that the Singularity would occur on February 13 2013, meaning it would be eighteen years overdue in 2031."

We walked into Uncle David's study and stopped for a moment. Finally I said, "I suspect there's something we missed. So we flip what we did yesterday, I'll go through anything that was on the bookshelves, and you can go through the file cabinet."

It was a long and not very productive afternoon and soon it was early evening. Maria had started her thinking hum again. I looked over. She was reading a piece of paper and then her phone.

"Find something?" I asked.

"I think so."

"What?"

Maria hummed a bit more and then said, "You know that paper you found under the desk. In addition to that snarky first line there were other lines and one of them was an email address, spamandjolt@IAmY2KReady.com, which I first thought was a joke. But I've found the first invoice for the IAmY2KReady.com domain back in 1998; the invoice was in the bottom drawer of the file cabinet. Looks like someone was going to put it in a file folder and missed."

"Great. We can do a WHOIS search and get more information, check if that domain has a website."

Maria grimaced. "Sorry to be a downer but the domain was abandoned eleven years ago."

Going from what I thought would be a good clue from Maria to hearing the rest of her report was almost a physical blow.

"It's already six and I'm getting hungry. And don't you need to get home to your little girl?"

"Gloria is doing a sleep over with her cousin Lupe and a couple of Lupe's friends. And if she were here she would point out that she's thirteen and therefore a teenager and therefore most definitely not a little girl. Plus she's jazzed that her fourteen year old cousin Lupe asked her since at that age hanging out with kids just a year older can be a big deal. How about two more hours and then if we are not on to something we can call it a night and rest our brains. Besides, tomorrow is Saturday. Just saying. And Gustavo's plane doesn't get in tonight until almost midnight."

I remembered that Maria had mentioned her husband getting back from a business trip late on Friday.

"Yeah, okay. I'm hungry. Let's go get some food and think while we eat."

We jumped in my car and I selected auto-drive and said "La Victoria Taqueria," and since I had not specified which one the car drove us to the one I had last visited that being the one next to the university and then went to park itself.

Maria and I climbed the familiar steps of the building. It was Friday night so the place was starting to fill with university students as well as downtown workers wanting take out. Maria snagged a small table, and I stood in line for food and drinks. Soon, I placed two baskets on the table: mine with a carne



asada super taco and a pollo super taco, and Maria's the same but no sour cream. In the six months she had worked for the firm I had started to learn her tastes. I placed the container of the famous spicy orange sauce in the middle of the tiny table.

After the wonderful food, I felt slightly over full but much revived. I pulled out my mobile and signaled for my vehicle. We had to wait a few minutes before it arrived to pick us up. My guess about a traffic snarl was correct. Eventually we are on our way back to the house, however.

As we traveled, I lay back and closed my eyes, glad that auto-drive was on task. I heard Maria start to hum and thought about opening my eyes, but lethargy, sloth, and fatigue were triumphant. When we neared to the house Maria said, "I think I have something. Let's check it out on the large monitor so we can both see."

The car pulled in to the drive and we headed toward the front door. The robot security did the usual "Hello Ms. Foote" and "Hello Ms. Valdez" and we

gave our passphrases. I noticed that Maria was thinking about doing a knock-knock joke when the robot said, "Knock-knock, Ms. Valdez." Maria paused for a moment and then decided to play along and replied "Who's there?" The robot said, "The Singularity." "The Singularity who?"

"The Pre-Singularity is here now and the Singularity is near."

Maria laughed. "That's really good. Did Ray Kurzweil teach you that?"

"I need to ask Ray Kurzweil about that. Have a pleasant evening Ms. Valdez. Have a pleasant evening Ms. Foote."

I glanced back at the robot. Was it the same one from this morning? No, it was shinier. I checked my messages. There was a low priority message from the security company saying they're swapping out the robots with ones with updates. And a later message that I had ignored asking how we as valued customers liked the new software features. Then I saw Maria laughing and texting furiously.



Finally I asked, "What is going on?"

Maria smiled. "I just texted Gustavo that I had a security robot tell me a knock-knock joke."

"Actually it's your fault, well actually the firm's fault. I guess about a year ago before I even joined there was proposed feature upgrade in the planning stage to allow a limited set of firm specific or person specific dialog and context responses tailored just to the firm hiring the robot or the person addressing the robot. You or someone in the firm said yes to the new feature. Now we're seeing it in use. Actually I guess they based in on seeing my mocking knock-knock taunts for several months. You did authorize them to upload anything the robot had problems with unless you had activated the REVIEW BEFORE UPLOAD mode which doesn't appear to be the current setting. As much as I like playing around maybe we should change our account setting default to REVIEW BEFORE UPLOAD and tell everyone at company to not change it. We also may want to alert everyone that the personal interaction settings can be more unusual than they realize, so tell everyone to double check their personal settings."

"Right. The firm will now use SECURE MODE as the default so nothing gets uploaded for error analysis unless specifically authorized. We were idiots. Okay, let's get online, and I'll change the setting immediately and then you can show me what you found in the ride back."

After the setting change and a message to everyone in the firm to not change it back, it was time to examine what Maria had found. She had checked the Internet Archive and sure enough there was Uncle David's iamy2kready.com website, and when Maria had asked to see <http://www.iamy2kready.com/index.html> it had given her the option of seeing what it looks like all the way back to 1998. I would like to say it was glorious. It was not glorious. It was a single page of links to various survival products and companies many of which were now defunct. There were no links to any page on iamy2kready.com and that baffled me. Was this page just part of his joke? One of the links in addition to the Internet Archive copy, which still worked currently it was the link to Hormel, the makers of Spam, and the <http://www.hormel.com> page popped up although it was a redirect to <https://www.hormel.com>, since http had been dropping in usage in favor of https for fifteen years.

This was both heartening and frustrating.

"It's like your Uncle David is reaching out from

the grave to tease you one last time," Maria offered.

I laughed. "Yes, except Uncle David is not in a grave. He's currently cyro-preserved in a tank of liquid nitrogen down at Alcor in Arizona. But you're right. It's as if he made it difficult to find each next piece of the puzzle. Was he doing a puzzle or a strange question like when I was a kid? He would say, 'If I said to meet me next Tuesday in Paris when and where would you go in the absence of any other information?' When I said, 'Eiffel Tower at noon,' he smiled and then explained and discussed Schelling Points with me. I was twelve, but he made it interesting. So, yes, I suspect the answer is something that I should know."

Then I had an idea.

In the Internet Archive Wayback machine URL entry field I typed <http://www.iamy2kready/patricia.html> and got nothing. Then I tried <http://www.iamy2kready/Patricia.html> and success. The Internet Archive Wayback Machine showed that page had been saved several times between 1998 and 2019, when the domain had gone defunct. I clicked on the most recent version, a page of random letters, numbers, and punctuation. I clicked on the first version of the page -- it looks identical. Then my old programmer brain kicked in, and I realized the page appeared to contain all or almost all of the printable ASCII characters, and there was a good chance that it was an encrypted message.

"Okay, Maria. We have the cypher text. Now we need the key."

Maria earned her bonus when she said, "What does the March 2, 2009 version look like?"

It was different, still random characters, however, but with none repeating. I did a quick count, and there were ninety-five characters, exactly the number of printable ASCII characters. I hoped this was the key and not Uncle David jerking me around. I brought an ASCII table up on the screen just to double check my memory.

Maria must have seen the smile on my face. "So this is the key? How does it work?"

I breathed deeply and said, "I hope it's key. If it's then each of these values in the key translates to a printable character then if we start with printable characters in order the first one is space and in the key the first one is 7 so when you see a 7 in the cypher text it's really a space."

Maria said, "Like there," pointing to the sixth character in the cypher text.

“Exactly.”

And we had great fun until the first words decoded as “Hello, Patricia. Decode only in a secure ...” at which point I called a halt. I’d assumed that Uncle David’s study was secure, but was it? He often reminded me of what happens when you assume. So I cleared the browser cache, history, cookies, etc. on Uncle David’s computer. We have a utility on the firm’s computer to do cleanup just in case you miss something. I downloaded it and ran it. Nothing else showed up. I told Maria to go enjoy her family over the weekend and we would meet back here after lunch on Monday.

When I got home I was afraid I would be too wound up to sleep, but the ups and downs had taken their toll and I was out for eight hours of solid sleep which is a lot for me, since I’m usually a seven-hour person. So after a bit of breakfast with some Yama-Moto Yama Special Occasion green tea, I fired up an old but secure laptop using a bootable CD of Kali Linux and got to work. I cobbled up a little utility to apply the key to the entire message. It worked for the first eighty characters then gibberish or almost gibberish. Then with a bit of fiddling I realized that at character eighty-one or at a new line the key shifted by one. My little utility soon was a butt-ugly mess, but it worked and soon I had the plain text in front of me.

My jaw dropped due to my lack of observation. The sections under the window seat for the bottle and for the frames were about sixty centimeters deep. The depth inside the safe was half that. Uncle David had written to use the magnet holding up a photocopy of an advertisement for the Pink Poodle Exotic Dance Club on Bascom Avenue. The magnet was actually four circular neodymium magnets set in the base of a handle that would accommodate a large hand so that the false bottom of the safe could be removed. I remembered once pointing at it and saying, “What is with that?” At the time I was pointing at the ad, but I guess I was also pointing at the magnet because he said, “Someday that will be most useful.” The ad and magnet were still on the file cabinet. I had once thought of removing them but decided to leave them.

Sometimes before the Pink Poodle was torn down Uncle David would go to Falafel Drive-In for lunch then wander over to Pink Poodle and watch the dancers for the entire afternoon. He said it helped him think. And after he’d had enough thinking, if the weather was cool he would get a bowl of Pho, or if

the weather was warm he would get a banh mi.

I got a second shock when the message from Uncle David indicated that in the second section of the safe was information about a trust fund and then listed contact information for the trust fund if the other info was lost and said I was already listed as a controlling trustee. The message ended with a reminder to keep looking, because there was more to discover. I spent the rest of the day studying information about the educational trust.

Soon it was early Saturday evening. I decided that I needed to get off this roller coaster for a moment. I’m divorced and not in a relationship at the moment, so what does a single woman over sixty do to unwind, either escapism via food and drink, escapism via media, escapism by going out on the town, or escapism by activity? I was tempted by all of these and almost decided to head over to the Hedley Club to listen to some jazz but decided on a bit of activity first and then jazz. I put on my sweats and sneakers and went to the gym in the condo complex for the treadmill. I’d selected a mix I’d compiled of Rush, The Rolling Stones, Coltrane, Tchaikovsky, Ellington, and others. I was striding along right in the middle of listening to Heresy by Rush when my mobile signaled an incoming call. It wasn’t the normal ring tone but the special tone for the firm’s Answer service. I stepped off the treadmill and answered “This is Patricia Foote”

“This is Rajiv Shan from the Answer service. We just got a call from Ruth Gibson concerning a person named Frank Horner. Mr. Horner was seriously injured but had handed her your card before collapsing. Gibson already called for an ambulance. I’m texting you the phone number and address for Ruth Gibson now.”

“Thanks Rajiv. Got it. I’ll call Gibson now.”

I started walking quick back to my condo and clicked the number Rajiv sent. I heard two rings before someone answered “Ruth Gibson speaking.”

“Hello Ms. Gibson. This is Patricia Foote. You called to report about Frank Horner. Has the ambulance arrived?”

“Yes they just loaded poor Frank up and left.”

“Good. Please tell me the rest of the situation.”

“Well there was a lot of blood everywhere. Frank had staggered half way out his front door and just sort of collapsed. I was in my front yard and saw him and went right over. He had your card in his hand but didn’t say anything, just moaned for a moment, put

the card in my hand, and then passed out. The police are here now. Sorry. I'm rambling."

"That's all right. You're going great. You got help for Frank and that's the important thing. Are you his neighbor across the street or next door?"

"Next door. Sorry, the police officer wants to talk to me now."

"Could you please hand your phone to the officer for a moment? Thanks."

I heard a bit of mumbling which sounded like, "She wants to talk to you." and then I heard a new voice "This is Sargent Johnson. To whom am I speaking?"

I put on my most pleasant but lawyerly voice "Hello, Sargent. This is Patricia Foote. I'm a lawyer with the firm Amalgamated Services, LLC. I've recently had discussions with Mr. Horner, and I'm concerned about his well-being. Do you know to which hospital he was taken? Also, is Mr. Horner's nephew on the premises?"

"What is this about a nephew?"

"I think his nephew is called Buster, but I'm not sure if that's the name on his ID or just a nickname. Based on what Mr. Horner told me Buster is originally from the LA area and has two prior felony convictions. I'm going to order a crime scene cleanup crew to take care of things after your techs are finished, since Ms. Gibson informs me there's blood on the premises. I can be there in about thirty minutes to fill you in if you're interested."

"That would be very helpful. Thanks for the info about Buster. We will get on that. See you in about thirty minutes. Here's Ms. Gibson."

I heard the background noise of the phone being returned. "Hello this is Ruth again."

"Ms. Gibson I'm heading over. I'll be there in about thirty minutes. Sit down somewhere comfortable and have a glass of water and rest. I'm sending over a crew to cleanup Mr. Horner's residence after the police crime techs are finished. I'll see you soon, okay?"

"Okay, bye"

"Bye."

When the call ended, I was already in my condo shedding clothes, then turning on the shower. I'm glad that I work for Amalgamated Services and have resources on speed dial. I quickly put in an order for the cleanup company that Amalgamated has on retainer to send a crew over to Frank's place. I sent a text to Maria that Buster may have stabbed Frank and to

be careful. I didn't wait for the water to heat up but took a super-fast shower to get the sweat off and give me a few minutes to think if I had forgotten anything. I dried off hastily and was glad that my short hair would dry quickly. I dressed, grabbed my briefcase, and headed to my car. I put the car on auto-drive and gave it the address of Ruth Gibson.

On the way, I check my messages. There was no reply or acknowledgment from Maria. I called the Answer service.

"Amalgamated Services LLC. This is Rajiv Shan. How ma ..."

I rudely broke in. "Rajiv this is Patricia Foote. I'm trying to reach Maria Valdez. Has she contacted anyone there, or do you have any information on her location?"

"No, nothing from Ms. Valdez."

"Please contact her with the following message. Frank Horner stabbed and headed to hospital. Buster Horner is the suspect. Consider Buster Horner armed and dangerous. Contact Pat Foote ASAP"

"Okay, will do. Anything else?"

"I'm on my way to the Gibson address. I've already ordered a cleanup service. After I evaluate the situation there I'll report back. The police there will want to talk with me. If you don't hear from me in twenty five minutes call me. It might serve as an excuse to get out of an awkward conversation. Also, if you can't contact Ms. Valdez then set a system wide flag for her."

"Will do."

I stared blankly ahead, trying to put all of this in order. It seemed I must be missing something but what? Or was I just second guessing myself and running in circles? I closed my eyes and decided to do a distress action. First, release my feet, then my lower legs then my thighs, then my hands, then my arms, and finally my shoulders. Then I realized that part of my problem was a slight painful irritation between my left shoulder and my neck. In my haste to dress I'd tangled my top into my bra strap. Once I had that sorted out, the irritation began to leave and I continued my relaxation. I was relatively well composed when my car dropped me as close to the Gibson address as the police barricades allowed.

I headed up the walk in my best lawyerly business stride and approached the officer who appeared to be tasked with keeping the bystanders and passersby from wandering near the site. As I walked up, I announced slightly louder than necessary, "I'm Patricia



Foote of Amalgamated Services, LLC. Sargent Johnson is expecting me.”

The officer looked over at a cluster of three officers. A black woman that seemed to be in charge nodded and waved me over. I introduced myself to the three and handed cards to Sargent Johnson and to each of the other two, Officers Philman and Chan. I told a truthful but slightly abbreviated version of the story. No use cluttering things up with messy details. I said that I’d last seen Buster and Frank Horner when we had finished lunch the previous day and that I was planning on contacting Frank Horner next week if I found any more information about items that might’ve belonged to his ancestor and which might have been left with my recently deceased uncle, David Foote. And, yes, we parted ways on good terms, and, no, I didn’t know anything about his stabbing.

When asked if I knew if there was any problem between Frank and Buster, I did acknowledge that Buster seemed impetuous and Frank seemed to be attempting to calm him down, particularly if another conviction would be a third strike. Officer Chan volunteered that a Bartholomew Horner also known as Buster Horner was a person of interest in a robbery that occurred just three days after his release. Sargent Johnson had already sent an alert out for Buster, although Ms. Gibson had not seen who stabbed Frank. Now it seemed Buster was the prime suspect or at least a person of interest.

Soon I was able to extract myself from the police and go introduce myself to Ms. Gibson. She was older than I’d expected from the conversation on the phone. She volunteered that she was ninety-one years young. Her great niece was a student at the University of Southampton in the UK and living with her while doing research on improving technology training, but was visiting a site in Austin and would not be back until tomorrow.

I asked, “Ms. Gibson so how are you feeling?”

She smiled, “Call me Ruth. No need to be formal. I think I’m doing okay, considering that one doesn’t encounter this sort of thing every day.”

I decided to play it safe. “Ruth, you can call me Pat, or Patricia if you really need my attention in a hurry. Sometimes these sorts of shocks can creep up on us hours later, and I wouldn’t want that to happen to you with no one here, so how about I call for a home visit service to have someone stay here until your great niece returns?”

Ms. Gibson started to protest. “There’s no

need to make a fuss over me with some expensive service. I’m sure I’ll be just fine.”

“I’m sure you’ll be just fine, but I’d feel better, and my company will pay for it.”

Ruth looked at me for a moment and said, “Your company will pay?”

“Yes, for reasons too long and complicated to go into now, Frank Horner and my recently deceased uncle might have had a common financial interest, but we are not sure, and I and the company in which I’m a partner are trying to sort it out. So keeping both you and Frank healthy is in our interest so let us do this for you, please?”

“Well, okay, if you’re sure it’ll not cost me anything.”

“Not a cent. I’m going to make a call for the service to send someone over, and then I’m going to try to find out how Frank is doing. I think the officer said that the ambulance was headed toward Valley Med.”

Ruth nodded. “Poor Frank. Tell Frank that I hope he gets better quickly and to let me know if he’s stuck in the hospital and can have visitors. I have a key to Frank’s place that he gave me to use when he was traveling and so you can tell him I’ll look out for things after that cleanup crew is done.”

“I’ll. Thanks Ruth. You’re a champ.”

I got up and found a quiet spot to call the Visit Nursing service and request an overnight and next day visiting nurse service and gave Ruth’s name and address with explicit instructions that all billing go to Amalgamated Service to my attention. With that out of the way, I took another deep breath and thought again what I might be missing.

Then it hit me - - Frank’s car. With the rapid rise of ride-sharing services available at a click some people no longer owned a car unless there was a specific need. Given Frank being retired, the police might’ve thought he didn’t own a car. Yet finding the car might lead to finding Buster. I was looking around for Sargent Johnson when Officer Philman saw me and said, “We canceled the alert on Bartholomew ‘Buster’ Horner. He’s dead. Fell off the top of the parking garage at Second and San Carlos. Had a knife in his possession when he fell so it’s likely the weapon used here. Might have attacked someone there before falling. We’re still sorting out if it was related.”

“Thanks,” I said. “I’ve called for someone from a home nursing service to come stay with Ms. Gibson overnight. If there’s anything else you need from me

you have my business card.”

I was headed to the edge of the police barrier for my vehicle. As I got in, I received a call from the answer service.

“Hello, this is Patricia Foote”

“Hello, Ms. Foote this is Ali Kazem from the answer service. During shift change, Rajiv handed your message for Ms.Valdez. We just got a short text message from Ms.Valdez ‘Mobile broken almost gone NO PANIC short work visit SJ Regional Medical.’”

“That’s all?”

“That’s the message. There was a second message that had only six characters, just ‘Contac’.

“I think I know what might be going on. I’ll be back in touch in ten minutes.”

I went through my contacts and messages until I found the number that Maria had given me as an alternative in case her phone glitched. I called.

“Hello.”

The voice sounded both familiar and anxious.

“Hello Gustavo. This is Patricia Foote. Maria and I work together. I think you and I met about three months ago at that charity event.”

“Charity event? Oh, yes. I remember you, Ms. Foote. I’m trying to reach Maria, and she seems to have disappeared. She was parking the car and then she never returned.”

“I think I know what’ happened. Where are you now?”

“I’m in front of Original Joe’s.”

“The not-so-good news is that it appears Maria’s phone is damaged. The better news is that just as the phone was dying part of a message got through on our secure text app to our company’s call center. I think somehow Maria got a ride to San Jose Regional Medical for some urgent work-related item but with her phone not working we can’t contact her. I’m heading your direction now. Can you walk down one block to be in front of the Marriott? I’m headed down Market and will pick you up and we can go get Maria. I’ll explain it all on the way.”

“I’ll be waiting for you. And I really want some answers.”

A few minutes later Gustavo Perez was climbing into the car after first giving the interior a good look over. I had slid over in the back seat to give him room to enter. Then I directed the car to the San Jose Regional Medical Center.

I smiled “Hello, Gustavo. Good to see you again.”

He seemed tense, understandably so, I thought. “Is Maria okay? I don’t like this sudden medical center stuff.”

“I understand. Neither do I. I’ve been texting my contact at SJ Regional trying to determine for sure if Maria is there and if so why.”

“But . . .” was all Gustavo got out before the incoming message chime sounded.

The message read, “Maria Valdez in ER. Nothing very serious. Told her you’re coming”

I messaged back “Tell her Gustavo is with me”

I said to Gustavo “Confirmed that the Maria is at San Jose Regional Medical.”

The reply didn’t come for an agonizing minute but finally the chime rang, and then, “Ms. Given dropping off.”

I sent a message to Ali at the answer service that Maria was at SJ Regional Medical but not in danger, and I was in route there.

I told Gustavo, “My contact at SJ Regional is a supervising nurse that owes me big time. I don’t abuse it but in times like this he comes through. If he says nothing very serious then we can relax. He doesn’t exaggerate or sugar coat. You said that Maria was parking the car. Where was she going to park?”

Gustavo sighed. “She was going to park in the parking garage at Second and San Carlos. Because the brakes were still not fixed on our regular car we decided to drive the antique, the one with the four-on-the-floor stick. We take it out a few times each month just to keep it running even though every time we drive it we lose money on environmental offset fees. I really love that car. I want to teach Gloria to drive it even if it’s impractical. If she takes her driver test in a car like that and passes there’s a special little emblem added on her license, and it’ll be a skill that not many people her age have.”

“What does Gloria think about this idea?”

“Gloria is looking forward to it, at least at this point. We flipped a coin and Maria was to drive us there, and I was to drive us home. She’d dropped me in front of Original Joe’s so I could put your names on the wait list for a table while she parked. You know how busy Original Joe’s can be on a Friday or Saturday night. Anyway, I put our names on the list and stood out front waiting for her and listening for our names. About the time I thought Maria should be arriving, there were sirens and flashing lights. I overheard some people walking from the direction of the garage talking about someone that fell off the garage.

The next group was talking about a man, and I actually stopped them to ask if they were sure it was a man that fell. One of them said sure looks that way. So then I tried calling and texting and then waited two minutes in case she was trying to reach me. That's when I got your call."

"Well there's a bit more that I can add. The man who went off the top of the garage is named Buster Horner. He and his uncle had lunch with Maria

and me recently, and we discussed the project that I worked on with Maria's help. It appears that Buster stabbed his uncle a few hours back."

"I thought Maria said she was working on sorting papers from your dead uncle's office. How did that morph into stabbings?"

"That's a very good question and . . ."

Another message came. It was an image of two people exiting her car. One was Maria and the



other was not clear given the robot camera angle, but it resembled Gustavo.

“Did Maria take you to a house to show you a security robot doing knock-knock jokes?”

“Yes, that was our first stop on the way to Original Joe’s”

I sighed. “That might explain a lot. Buster Horner was probably looking for me. He thought I would be at the house, so after stabbing his uncle and leaving him for dead he headed to the house only to find I was not there, but he must have seen you and Maria and decided to follow you in an attempt to find me. He probably tailed her into the parking garage.”

Gustavo said, “Yes. When we take the antique out we try to be careful where we park it. If we park in that garage, we always try to park in the very top next to the handicap slot on the side so there’s less chance of someone dinging the paint. I guess worrying about paint dings sounds lame when one person is dead and another stabbed. Is the guy he stabbed going to be all right?”

“I think so. He’s over at Valley Med. I was going to head there when I found out about Maria contacting the firm’s answer service.”

“How was Maria able to contact your Answer service, but I can’t call her?”

“We have a custom app on our employees’ phones that can get out a text message even if their phone is having other problems. In this case with the phone dying it’s the one way for Maria to let everyone know where she was headed.”

We were pulling up to San Jose Regional Medical. Gustavo, and I exited my car and I sent it to go park itself and charge if it could.

We went in and found where Maria was being treated. The nurse said that since Gustavo was next of kin he could go right on in to see Maria for ten minutes. After six or seven minutes he came out, and the nurse said I could have five minutes and no more. Maria had a large bandage on her left arm, a bandage covering much of her forehead, and another bandage on the back of her head.

“How are you?” I asked.

“Better than it looks. Buster came at me with a knife, and I blocked with my left arm so the cut missed my neck. The force of his charge knocked me down, and I got a bump on the head. I’ve been cut worse before. Someday I’ll tell you about that. I landed on my phone jammed in my back pocket at an odd angle, and something inside cracked.”

With her right hand, Maria help up a plastic bag containing the damaged phone.

Maria continued “Gustavo gave me a rather garbled account. What I gathered is that Buster didn’t survive falling off the garage. And that Frank was attacked by Buster. Is that correct?”

“Basically. Everyone is still trying to piece it all together however it appears that Buster stabbed Frank then came looking for me at Uncle David’s house but found you and followed you to find me then just went berserk and attacked you.”

Maria sighed “That’s messed up. How’s Frank?”

“Taken to the hospital. I think Valley Med. I was going to call and check on him when your little adventure happened, but I only have a couple of minutes more. Let me tell you what I told the officers at Frank’s place just in case they start comparing notes. We would not want to confuse them with details that were misleading.”

“Absolutely never be confusing.”

I quickly told Maria a summary of what I had told the officers at Frank’s house.

The nurse was calling my five minute time, and as I started to leave Maria slipped me a ticket for the parking garage and said quietly, “Frank’s car is on the top floor of the garage. Use this if you need to in order to get it out. I’ll expense the lost ticket charge to get our antique out later. I think Gustavo is going to be successful in getting me released to go home soon.”

“Good,” I said. “I’ll call Ali at the center and tell him you’re heading home and have him order you a vehicle for the trip on the firm account. And when you get home call Ali to let him know. Also order a new phone and put in an expense report for it. Order the next model up from your busted one.”

“Will do. Thanks.” Maria said in a tired voice. Events were catching up with her.

I told the same thing to Gustavo that the firm was taking care of the vehicle to get them home and any expenses related to this including getting Maria a new phone.

I called the answer service to update Ali and had him coordinate transportation for Maria and Gustavo. Then I called Valley Med and was able to find out that Frank was out of surgery and stable. Maybe visitors tomorrow with a strong emphasis on maybe.

I made a much needed stop in the hospital restroom. As I emerged Gustavo and Maria were headed toward the exit where I expected their ride



home was waiting. I was going to give Maria a warm hug thought better of it based on bandages and bruises. I reminded Gustavo to contact the answer service when they got home and to say hello to Gloria.

“Okay, see you Monday,” said Maria.

I said, “No. Monday is absolutely a day off for rest. Tuesday is TBD. Call me if they need anything.”

I walked outside and pinged my vehicle. It was at a charging station just a hundred meters away. I let it continue charging and walked over to it and got in. I closed and locked the vehicle door. What I needed was a few minutes to rest and think and plan.

I was tired. I relaxed and let my thoughts wander. For the obvious reason, flying cars under full human control would not be generally allowed in any city. However, if I could fly a car then I could more quickly visit several locations. I could easily fly over the neighborhood where Cesar Chavez had lived. Then a short hop over to the University to visit the statue of Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their fists at the 1968 Olympics when the sprinters at SJSU gave rise to the name Speed City. Then past the new growth of tech campuses in and near downtown and then follow Highway 87 up past the airport to see more tech firms. Then maybe swing by the water tower in Sunnyvale painted like a Libby’s fruit cocktail can to commemorate the canning plant that was the largest in the world when it was built in 1922.

I woke up. I checked the time. I had been asleep for a about fifteen or twenty minutes. I was not sure what woke me: maybe the sound of a car door closing, or the wail of a siren, or the sound of a helicopter landing at the medivac pad. Whatever it was I felt a bit refreshed and started to plan.

To retrieve Frank’s car I just needed the key fob since I already had a garage ticket from Maria. My guess is that the fob Buster used had an even chance of being with him in the morgue or being left in the car. Given the situation I didn’t want to show up at the parking garage to get a car for which I had no fob. It might raise too many complications. Plus I needed to check on Ruth, so I called her hoping that I didn’t wake her if she was already asleep.

She answered on the second ring, “Hello, this is Ruth.”

“Hello Ruth, this is Pat Foote. I’ve found out that Frank is at Valley Med and out of surgery and listed as stable condition. Visitors tomorrow are maybe yes and maybe no. It’s too early to tell. How are you feeling?”

“Thanks for telling me about Frank. I’m doing fine. The nurse for the service is here, and we just started watching a movie. We have popcorn done the best way, tossed with olive oil and Parmesan cheese. Would you like to join us?”

“I would love to join you but I think I know where Frank’s car is located and I want to get it back to his place before it gets towed or vandalized. Do you know if Frank has an extra remote key fob for his vehicle and if so where it might be?”

“Let me think. Yes. Yes, it’s in on a hook by the door which leads from his kitchen into the garage. Do you want me to go over and get it?”

“No, you stay where you are. I’m heading to your place, and if it’s okay with you I’ll borrow the house key, get the fob, and then pick up the car and return it. I should be over there in thirty minutes. Would that be okay?”

“That will be fine, dear. See you in a while.”

I instructed my vehicle to disengage charging and head over to the Gibson address. Since the car was driving itself, for a change of pace I put the side windows in combined AR and VR mode to give me a cartoon rendering of the passing scenery. The best was changing things to look like a Flintstones cartoon with interesting historical and comical commentary in a Fred Flintstone sounding voice. Twenty-five minutes later I had the house key from Ruth and was entering Frank’s place. I spent a few moments looking at the work the cleanup crew had done, very good work with no indication of blood or an altercation. It looks like they had actually cleaned the entire living room carpet so there would not be an obvious cleaned spot. That was a pro touch. I found the key fob where Ruth said it would be, locked up, and headed downtown.

When I had been at Ruth’s door to get the key, I could smell the popcorn, olive oil, and Parmesan, but I mustered the will power to not indulge. Now I was realizing I had not eaten much all day, and my energy reserves were getting depleted. I had my vehicle drop me at Original Joe’s and I sent it to park somewhere nearby just in case. In Original Joe’s I had the small portion of Joe’s Special but without the mushrooms. And a piece of chocolate cake to go. I really wanted a glass of wine but under the circumstances I abstained. I was hungrier than I thought, and I enjoyed every bite. I paid and I got my garage ticket validated before walking to the garage at Second and San Carlos.

As I expected, the police were still keeping most people away from the garage, but since I had my garage ticket and key fob in one hand with the to-go bag from Original Joe's in the other, I was waved in to the ticket station. Usually I take the stairs to stay in shape but this time I rode the elevator. On the top of the garage I could look up and enjoy a beautiful full moon. I spotted the car belonging to Maria and Gustavo, and it still had a police tape around it. Two officers were there as well.

About six spaces down the row, I saw the car I recognized as Frank's and walked toward it. I doubted that Buster had bothered to lock it, however I didn't want to do anything out of the ordinary so I pressed the unlock button on the fob and the lights blinked. I got in and sent my vehicle a command to wait two minutes and then start to Frank's and park. I did enough of adjustment of the mirrors so that I was safe to drive and headed out of the garage. I exited on to Third Street from the garage since that would have me going the direction toward Frank's home. I scrupulously obeyed the traffic laws since now was definitely not the time to get pulled over. Soon I was angling in to the driveway at Frank's place.

I activated the garage door opener, parked, and closed the garage door. I finally look in Frank's briefcase, which had been on the front passenger seat. Inside was the diamond and ruby necklace along with a wallet containing cash, identification, and credit cards in the name of Frank Horner. I double checked the interior of the car and then the trunk but found nothing else of interest. I left taking the briefcase and my to-go bag with me to Ruth's place.

I returned Frank's house key to Ruth and told her that the car was in the garage, the key fob was back in place. I'd locked up and I had Frank's briefcase with some items he would need. Ruth invited me in for just a moment. She apologized that the popcorn was all gone. I decided that I needed to tell Ruth about Buster. So I said I have a piece of cake we can split three ways so the movie was paused while Ruth, the nurse, and I were in the kitchen eating cake and I gave a highly edited version of what had happened to Buster. Turns out that they had already seen a reference to it on a newsfeed but names had been withheld.

Ruth was the one who stated the obvious. "Frank might not know that Buster is dead."

"Yes, it's possible with the blood loss and surgery they might have him sedated. Do you know if he

has any close friends, is in a relationship, or basically who would be the best person to break the news?"

Ruth thought for a moment. "Well, there's a woman with whom he has a relationship. However, she lives up in Reno. She would come down here sometimes and sometimes he would go up there. I met her a few times when she was here. She's a very nice person. I think her name is Carol. Sorry, I can't remember her last name. I know that she was not down here much since Buster moved in. Frank would go up to Reno."

I did the analysis. I would need to be the one to tell Frank that Buster was dead since there was no way we could find this Carol and get her from Reno to San Jose in any reasonable time. I certainly was not going to dump this task on Ruth. I called the hospital and explained that I really needed to speak with Frank at the earliest opportunity since it involved the death of a family member and would be all over the news. I was put on hold for several minutes then I was told that the sedation was scheduled to be off by eight the next morning, and I would be allowed in if his condition warranted and they would keep the news away from him. I told Ruth that I would be able to see him in the morning and of course she wanted to come along but I explained that they had said only one visitor tomorrow morning plus I there was any problem I could start pointing out that I was an attorney which can often open doors. The service nurse backed me up about how strict visitor rules were following trauma or any other major surgery.

Ruth said she understood and suggested I join them for the last fifteen minutes of the movie. The movie was a classic that I suspect that all of us had seen many times but it was still worth another viewing. Ruth and the nurse were on the sofa. Ruth pointed me to a recliner and said, "Just pull on that handle and recline so you can rest your feet." The recliner was very comfortable. However, it disrupted my plans, because I was asleep before the final credits rolled.

At about five in the morning, I slowly woke up due to the call of nature. I opened my eyes and stirred. A different nurse was there. "Good morning, Ms. Foote". I mumbled some sort of greeting and got up from the chair. A real pro, she said, "Restroom is down the hall, first door on the right." I mumbled, "Thanks."

I fulfilled my immediate need, washed my hands and face, and decided I need to be starting my

day. I picked up Frank's briefcase and thanked the nurse again more coherently this time and left a message for Ruth that I would update her later.

Outside Ruth's and used my mobile to summon my car. It must have had to park a couple of blocks away because it took a few moments. When I arrived at home, I ate breakfast, brushed my teeth, showered properly, put on some clean clothes, and felt suitable to meet the challenges of the world. By seven I was at Uncle David's house where I locked the necklace in the safe since I didn't want it unprotected in Frank's place if he was not there. Then to Valley Med.

I was at Frank's room before eight o'clock, however tests and examinations were still being done and I was not cleared to go in and see him until nine and then only for five minutes. Frank was getting out of the post-trauma and surgery mental fog however when he heard me speaking to the nurse he said, "Ms. Foote, come in," and motioned me over with the hand not encumbered with an IV and said, "Hello Patricia."

"Hello Frank. How are you? Do you need anything?"

"Well I've been better, but I guess they have patched me up as best they could. The doctor said some damage to my liver and some other things, but that I would recover. Looks like I'll be on liquid diet for a few days. I guess you know that it was Buster that stabbed me."

He must have seen the expression on my face because he continued, "What happened to him?"

"Frank I'm sorry. Buster is dead. He fell off the roof of a parking garage last evening. Sorry to have to be the one to give you that news when you're just waking up."

"No, it's not your fault. Buster or anyone else is responsible for their own actions. I do appreciate you coming down to tell me."

"Just to let you know, I hired a crew to go to your place and clean the carpet in your front room. Your neighbor Ruth is looking after your place. She's a real champ, called for the ambulance and contacted me."

Frank smiled. "Yes absolutely. Ruth is a really good person."

I ventured, "Ruth says you have a friend named Carol. Should she be notified? Ruth doesn't have contact info for her?"

Frank said, "Yes, I've been asking for my phone for over an hour but they won't give it to me. I'm fair-

ly sure it was in my inside jacket pocket. I guess it was because they thought I would check the news and find out about Buster. Yes, I need to call Carol because I was supposed to take the train up there today. She's off work Monday and Tuesday this week. So I need to let her know what happened particularly since Bay Area news often makes it up to Reno. I don't want her worried."

"Let me see what I can find out. Also I retrieved your car and put it back in your garage."

Frank looks at me quizzically and I explained "Buster took your car, your briefcase, the necklace, some cash and your wallet after stabbing you, and as best as I can deduce he then went looking for me. He went to my Uncle David's house and didn't see me but saw Maria - Ms. Valdez from lunch - and followed her eventually into the top level of the parking garage. The one between second and third at San Carlos, the one where 3 Below Theaters is located."

"Yes, I've used it many times."

"Buster attacked Maria there."

Frank looks pained. "Is she hurt? How's she?"

"Maria is going to be all right. She got a bump on the back of her head and a couple of knife cuts. One on the forehead and one on her arm. She's at home with her family and will make a full recovery. She's strong and resilient."

Frank was looking even more pained and murmured, "I don't know what to say. I'm so sorry she got injured. What can I do for her?"

I realized that I needed to get him refocused. "She has everything she needs. All you need to do for her as well as Ruth, and Carol, and me is to rest and recover. Ruth wants to come by as soon as the medical staff approves more visitors. I had to use my powers of persuasion to get to see you this morning. It was only because I had the news about Buster and they figured it was better to hear from someone you know rather than overhear it in the hall."

Frank took a deep breath, and I could see the pain on his face as he asked, "So exactly what happened? Did he fall or did he jump? Or was he pushed?"

I didn't want to answer that, because I had been considering that height of the wall at the top of the garage is about 105 centimeters. Buster was not a tall person maybe 165 centimeters and rather thin with not as much upper body mass as a bulkier person. So it was in the in-between grey area of obviously easy for him to go over and not obviously easy. If the

night had been wet, would there have been a Doc Martens sized mark on Buster's jacket? I was not sure I wanted to know the answer to the obvious questions. Such as did Maria give Buster a boost over the wall as she went down?

Frank said quietly but firmly, "Be honest with me. Tell me straight."

"He charged Maria with the knife and knocked her down. It appears that his momentum carried him

over the edge. I don't think it was suicide. You don't need to worry about that."

I hope that Frank would not notice that I had not addressed all of the possibilities. If he didn't notice he didn't show it.

He just said "Thanks."

I was saved from needing to elaborate further by the nurse who was telling me time was up. As I was leaving, I said, "Either Ruth, Carol, or I will bring you a





change of clothes later. I'm leaving your briefcase with your wallet here on the chair. You rest and get better."

Out in the hall, I told the nurse that he really needed the phone to call someone in Reno who was expecting him and who might be hearing garbled news about his stabbing. Since I'd already told him about the death of his nephew, there was no reason he should not have it. After getting kicked up to a supervisor, I got them to relent and agree to give Frank his phone. I stood there until I saw them place it in his hand. He made the call and gave me a thumbs up.

I headed home. I was tired.

I really needed to read more about the trust that Uncle David had created but even I have my limits. I spent the afternoon napping and listening to music. The evening was a bit cooler than normal so I headed over to Japantown and had a bowl of chicken udon. Some good people had helped save San Jose's Japantown during the internment, a good deed and a gift to the future.

Given this nostalgia, I indulged myself and headed over to the Great Mall Shopping Center in Milpitas northeast of San Jose. The interior of the mall is basically a large oval, and this is a really good mall for walking on hot or rainy days. The mall had previously been a Ford auto plant that was finally shut down in the early 1980s. Books are now being written about how the local government discrimination against black workers in what housing the government would allow to be built and the efforts that eventually lead to integrated housing in Milpitas. As I sat in the food court, I observed the diversity of patrons. Milpitas and all of California has improved. My thoughts drifted back to the Confederate treasure and the five men who wanted to use it to get California to join the Confederacy and perpetuate slavery. They and their worldview didn't succeed, I smiled and decided to celebrate by buying some red bean buns to take home.

Monday, I had real work to do for the firm, and I was busy in the office all day. After work I swung by Uncle David's house. The security robots were vigilant as ever. They were not cheap but not as expensive as humans would have been. I thought about reducing or eliminating the service but decided to keep the security for just a bit longer.

Inside I sat at Uncle David's desk and looked around. I asked myself, "What would Uncle David have done to provide information and help in solving a puzzle

without being obvious?" I looks at the things on his desk. Pens always with Fisher Space Pen ink refills so he could write upside down if needed. A stack of three-by-five cards if something needed to be written before he could pull out his mobile. Uncle David often said, "Having something to write on and something to write with is worth a ten IQ point boost." He said he stole the line from someone famous but couldn't remember who.

On top of his file cabinet was the old wooden fruit crate proclaiming it contained produce from the Valley of the Heart's Delight. The crate was in reasonably good condition and thus slightly valuable. Uncle David said that crate was there to remind us all that the apricot, cherry, and other fruit-centered economy of the Valley of the Heart's Delight gave way to the technology driven Silicon Valley, and someday Silicon Valley might give way to something else. Then he would pause for dramatic effect and say of course if all of the geologic faults let go at once we would be a pile of rubble under twenty feet of water. On the side of the file cabinet, I saw the Pink Poodle advertisement clipping held up by the magnet we'd used to pull the hidden compartment from the safe. Also on the side of the file cabinet was a small tape measure again attached by a magnet, a Dual Scale Imperial Twelve Feet Metric. I thought to myself maybe if we had used the tape measure to check the interior of the safe against the exterior when we first opened it we would've been less shocked to find the hidden part of the safe. The more I examined at the tape measure the more I realized that I was an idiot if I didn't use it to check the safe.

And when I measured I found that, yes, there was another hidden compartment. And it had some wrapped coins marked "Horner," a jewelry box, and a note which read:

Hello Patricia. This really is the last compartment. Congratulations on getting this far. I've always been proud of you and had confidence in your abilities.

In the jewelry box are two items: an important piece of paper and a necklace. The piece of paper is the only existing copy of the information for some Bitcoin I purchased back at the beginning of that enterprise. It's for extreme emergency use only. And I have nothing to say about the real identity of Satoshi Nakamoto. I know you have the good manners not to ask, but I suspect that someday if you ever spend

any of the Bitcoin there will be someone asking if I ever told you anything, so you can truthfully say that I refused to tell you anything about Satoshi.

The necklace is just a Spanish piece of eight on a gold chain. That Spanish piece of eight was from the original treasure and along with the Confederate currency are all that survived in their original form. I kept the Confederate currency out of the trust money since it would help validate the story. I've been told that the serial numbers on the currency were recorded before being handed over and it's very possible if the records survive in Alabama that they can authenticate the story.

I had the piece of eight converted into a necklace for you as a reminder that I attempted to setup something that would live beyond me and help others, and that I want you to carry the task forward. I want you to have it as a reminder that no matter where we are in the world I think it's a good idea if we strive to leave it in a better state than when we arrived.

Your loving uncle,

David Foote

P.S. There's a file on the computer named Aphorisms. From UncleDavid.txt which contains many of the things I said as you were growing up and some I probably forgot to say. Have fun.

The jewelry box was simple grey with a white silk lining. The necklace was as Uncle David had described, an old Spanish silver piece of eight with the original patina on a gold chain. I slipped the chain over my head and sat with the piece of eight resting against my chest and my hand over it. I sat for a long time. The feelings I had then were even more intense than those at Uncle David's memorial service. I sat alone with my memories.

Eventually, I removed the necklace and placed it back in the jewelry box. I scanned the note and emailed the scan along with the aphorism file to my personal email account. Then I carefully placed the note in the jewelry box with the necklace and Bitcoin information. Finally, I placed the jewelry box in the safe. I headed home to review the trust papers.

Tuesday was another busy day which was good, because it focused my attention to a different set of issues. Maria had wanted to come back to the office Tuesday morning, but I said no. She then got me to agree to swing by Tuesday evening, because Gloria had won an award for her high school biology project.

In celebration, Gustavo was preparing his old family recipe for pollo enchiladas with mole sauce. I'll admit that I can be bribed by good food.

When I arrived at Maria's home the aromas promised a wonderful meal. While the kitchen was a hive of activity Gloria explained her project, and I tried to keep up since the tools and ideas that Gloria used had been cutting edge and only available in advanced research institutes not too many years ago. Rather than admit that I was getting old, I silently committed myself to spend more time keeping up with current science. After the meal, Maria and I retired to a quiet corner while Gustavo and Gloria handled the cleanup.

"Now tell me, when do I go back to the office and what is the status of this entire situation? Your messages have not been too informative and not very frequent," Maria said with a smile.

"First, the easy to answer -- back to the office for you tomorrow. Now the status -- it's complicated but here's a summary. Frank is recovering from his stab wounds and should be out of the hospital in the next day or so. He's very concerned and sorry that you were injured. Carol, his significant other, lives in Reno but took off work and is here to help Frank. There was one more hidden compartment in the safe ..."

Maria exclaimed, "Another secret compartment? When will this end?"

I laughed. "There was a note from Uncle David, but there were not more hidden compartments. The compartment contained a necklace made from the one Spanish silver piece of eight from the Confederate treasure, along with some British pound and half-pound silver coins from the 1850s which according to the note actually were part of the split allocated to Horner, but which was given to Uncle David's father for safe keeping in the 1930s. I think by the time this was relayed from Frank's sister to Frank and Buster the details got distorted so the coins were said to be gold when now we know them to be silver."

Wednesday afternoon, Frank called me from his home to let me know that Ruth and Carol had taken care of getting him from the hospital to his home. Carol had taken the rest of the week away from work so she would be in San Jose with him. On Sunday, if Frank continued to feel better, they were going to head up to Carol's place in Reno for a week. Frank suggested he meet with me Saturday afternoon for us to sit down and discuss what I found. We met

at Caffe Frascati. I was concerned with that location being almost next door to Original Joe's and just about a hundred meters from where Buster had died.

Frank said, "Wednesday, on the way home from the hospital, Carol drove me past the spot where Buster died. I knew that I would need to pass the spot sooner or later. I decided for sooner in order to get it all behind me."

At Caffe Frascati, I ordered a lime Italian soda, and Frank ordered the same, insisting on paying for both. We found a small table in the rear.

Frank said, "Okay, now bring me up to speed."

I sighed. "The basic summary is that the five did have some treasure but not as much as the legend says. They did split it five ways, but not equally. One of the old documents that Uncle David had scanned was a handwritten account from Joshua Foote. Crumbf was the one in charge and when the division was done he took about forty percent and the other four had to split the rest. Crumbf didn't like Joshua Foote, who was youngest of the bunch, or Philip Horner, who was just a couple of months older than Joshua. It appears that Joshua Foote got the smallest portion, and that Philip Horner got one not much larger. Actually Joshua got an even lower percentage because he wound up with the confederate currency and the single Spanish piece of eight and some Union currency but none of the gold."

Frank commented, "Crumbf was probably a bully and figured the two youngest as his targets?"

"Likely so. Your ancestor Philip Horner got a slightly better share than Joshua Foote. A bunch of Silver British coins, mostly crowns, and a couple of half-crowns, and some gold, about ten percent of the total. Crumbf took the most of the gold, about sixty percent, with the Timson brothers getting fifteen percent each. Crumbf squandered his share and died penniless."

Frank shook his head. "Part of me wants to have pity on Crumbf but that part is currently losing out to the part that's currently laughing. I'm not proud of myself at the moment."

I agreed. "I'll admit that I'm in a similar situation. But to continue. The medical problems that plagued the Timson brothers must have depleted them financially, because they resulted in only about a quarter of they had been given being returned to Joshua by William, the younger and last surviving brother, just before he died. What William Timson gave to Joshua Foote totaled about six troy ounces."

Frank asked, "Was that all bullion or was some minted coins?"

"As best I can determine it was about half and half. According to the notes I've read Philip Horner did better and kept the gold bars and silver coins mostly untouched until he turned in the gold to the Feds in the 1930s. Just after that he came up to San Jose and left the silver coins with my grandfather saying he would be in touch because he was moving to a different house. That was the last my grandfather heard from your grandfather. Does that match with what you know?"

Frank said, "My great-great-grandfather Philip had several daughters and one son named Jefferson. Jefferson had several children with the oldest son being named Albert who was my grandfather. Albert had two sons just two years apart. The younger one died in infancy and the older son, Conrad, who was father to my older brother Charles and me. So I'm guessing that Conrad told my brother Charles about the treasure. Charles was much closer to our father than me. He liked the military and I liked books. When Conrad died, Charles was the only one who knew the story and so told my sister just before deploying to Iraq. He was killed by an IED six months later."

"Sorry about your brother and the impact on Sharon and Buster. Are you really the last of your line of the Horner family?"

"As far as I can tell Buster was the last descended from the eldest son. I'm involved, because my sister knew that this was way beyond Buster's capacity. Maybe it would've been better if the entire thing had died with her. But what's done is done. I suspect there are other Horner family members from earlier branches in the family. I'm doing research on that now."

"What are you going to tell them when you find them?"

"That I don't know, which is why I'm still gathering information before I try contacting anyone. I've submitted a DNA sample to one of the genetic companies mainly to see what diseases I was most susceptible and I left the ancestry stuff turned off. Maybe in a few months I'll turn the ancestry check back on and see what happens."

"Okay," I said. "About the British silver coins marked Horner. Those coins, depending on numismatic value, are probably worth between two and ten thousand dollars. That's based on some preliminary research online. I need to consult an expert to know

for sure. Do you want me to deliver them to you or send them to the same numismatic firm that gave me an estimate on the Confederate currency?"

"Go ahead and send the coins to that firm if you think they are reliable. Thanks. And if you don't mind me asking, what is the estimate on the Confederate bills?"

"They think about six thousand maybe a bit more at a hot auction, but they tend to be conservative."

"Wow. That's more than I'd expected. I thought all of this was about some old gold and now it involves an entire historical narrative. This whole story just grows and grows."

"Well it grows even further. I told you that William Timson left some gold with Joshua Foote. This is where things get interesting. Joshua Foote held on to them and passed them down with his share of the treasure. My grandfather didn't turn in the gold in the 1930s. Instead holding on to them in crazed belief that the south would rise again. It seems that my grandfather was a total racist and bigot. I now know why I never met my grandfather, even though we lived only a few miles apart."

"Wait. You lived a few miles from your grandfather and never met him? What about your grandmother? Oh sorry I shouldn't be asking."

"No, it's a sad chapter that explains later events. My maternal grandmother, May, died from pneumonia when Uncle David was eighteen, just after he'd finished high school. My mother was twenty and starting her last year of college then. For a couple of years, my mother was secretly dating someone named Miguel Silva. About a month after the funeral, my grandfather found out about the secret romance. It was a Friday evening and according to what I gather from my Uncle David it was a major blow-up."

I took a long drink of my Italian soda and continued. "Uncle David happened to be at home that Friday evening when it exploded, out on the front lawn. My grandfather declared that his daughter was not going to date a Mexican. My mother declared she was an adult and could date anyone she pleased and that Miguel Silva was not Mexican but was descended from the Portuguese who had come to the valley to work in agriculture and could trace his lineage back over ten generations to Portugal. That touched a hot spot for Grandfather, because he could trace the Foote family only four generations to Joshua Foote. Grandfather exploded and started screaming that as

long as mother lived under his roof he would control her dating. My mother was screaming back at him when the police arrived. This is when the big break happened. According to Uncle David, one of the police officers asked my grandfather if my mother was his daughter and grandfather said, "No, I don't have a daughter. Get that woman off my property." To which my mother said, "You're a racist bigot and you're not my father" and got in her car and left."

"Seriously, he disowned his own daughter."

"Yes, that's what Uncle David told me. My mother absolutely refused to discuss what happened."

"That's harsh."

"Well, my Uncle David was quick on his feet and he didn't want any of the angry focused at him. So he had hustled into the Kitchen and grabbed a cold Coors from the fridge and handed it to my grandfather. Uncle David always said that at least grandfather was not a mean drunk, he was a lethargic drunk and borderline alcoholic. So after Uncle David got another beer and a shot of whiskey into him, grandfather was just sitting in his favorite easy chair and mumbling about burning all of the stuff in there, waving his hand vaguely in the direction of my mother's room."

"Burn it?"

"Yeah, grandfather was thinking in drunk anger. Uncle David had the presence of mind to comment that some of the stuff was plastic and would stink up the neighborhood and that would bring the police again and maybe a better plan was for Uncle David to take it away and see if he could sell some of it. After another shot of whiskey, grandfather directed Uncle David to get rid of the stuff as if it'd been his idea all along and then passed out. Uncle David worked all night loading everything from my mother's room, as well as any trophy and pictures, from anywhere in the house into his car."

"Trophies?"

"Mother was a decent swimmer in high school, not world class, not even good enough to be a big success at the collegiate level, but she won a few high school events. So early next morning Uncle David drove over to Miguel's apartment and found her there. Uncle David instructed Miguel to buy three cases of Coors and a fifth of Jack Daniels and load them into the car. So by noon, when grandfather finally wandered into the kitchen, there were three cases of Coors and the Jack Daniels. Grandfather was pleased. Of course, Uncle David thought grandfather was an ass, but Uncle David was going to be living at home



to cut expenses while he studied for his degree. And it worked for the most part with Uncle David loading up on classes so he could finish in three years while grandfather was working on his political magnum opus.”

“Your grandfather was a political writer?”

“Grandfather was a political theorist in his own deluded imagination. That’s how Uncle David explained it, since he felt the magnum opus was about a hundred pages of drivel that was ill-informed and poorly reasoned bigoted spew. During Uncle David’s last year as an undergraduate, grandfather self-published the book and sent copies to the governor of California, each member of the California legislature, the entire California congressional delegation, and each member of the Supreme Court, as well as two copies to the Library of Congress. Plus a copy to the governors of the states which had been part of the old Confederacy. He wasn’t alone either. Most people think of the San Francisco Bay Area of as a bastion of liberal sentiments and inclusiveness, but there’ve always been bigots and racists here. Many of them bought copies of the book.”

Frank nodded. “Yes, I know there have always been some racists and homophobes in the Bay Area. I remember Harvey Milk and Mayor Moscone.”

“Yes, I was just old enough to remember that sad day. Grandfather was upset that the governors of the south didn’t embrace him as a prophetic messiah and invite him to their states. Uncle David suggested maybe Grandfather needed to explain at greater length and add some references and an index. Uncle David said he would do the index for Grandfather. Grandfather bought the idea and told Uncle David the whole story about the treasure and showed him where the treasure was kept. Uncle David was almost finished with his degree and wanted to string Grandfather along.”

“Like walking a tight rope.”

“A week after graduation, Uncle David found Grandfather in his backyard hammock dead. Uncle David inherited the house and everything. My mother wasn’t mentioned in the will at all. According to Uncle David, she didn’t attend the funeral. “

“Did she really feel that much hatred even in his death?”

“I suppose so. Years later, I overheard her ask Uncle David exactly where grandfather was buried, because she wanted to go piss on the grave.”

“Wow Just Wow. Would she really do that?”

“I’m not sure. My mother was one of the kindest, most generous persons you would ever meet, except in relation to my grandfather. I think that she hated his bigotry and was hanging on, because he was helping her financially.”

“She was on her own?”

“After the funeral Uncle David wanted her to move back, but she said she would never set foot in that house again. Soon she was pregnant with me and studying for her CPA license. She and Miguel broke up, and she admitted to me later that’s was mostly her fault, because she was having emotional problems. When the probate got resolved there was more money than Uncle David realized, so he bought a different house he loved and kept the old family house as a rental income property. He bought a nice two-bedroom, two-bath condo and let my mother live there rent free. She juggled a baby and work for three years. Then she and Miguel started a slow reconciliation and then Miguel moved in and eventually they decided to get married. What’s odd is that as much as she hated grandfather she already had her CPA license under the name Foote and was known as Foote professionally. Plus, I was in pre-school as Patricia Foote and could print my name. So no name change much to the consternation to some of the more conservative members of the Silva family. However, Miguel’s parents understood and that’s what counted.”

“Yeah, some families are really hung up on this family name thing.”

“When Mom and Dad get married, Uncle David gave them half of the condo as a gift. That way they were involved in getting going. When they were killed in the car crash, I inherited it and it’s where I still live today . . .”

“And this leads to the educational trust you were telling me about?”

“Right. Basically he felt that he and his sister were relatively secure, so he took the rest of the money and consulted with an attorney about setting up a trust for the education for disadvantaged youths. Remember the gold bars from William Timson? Starting in 1973 Uncle David sold one gold bar per year to a gold bug who was also a numismatic enthusiast. The gold bars had proof marks from a smelter in Mexico from 1841 and 1842, which led to speculation that they were seized during the 1849 war with Mexico. These particular proof marks are very rare so the collector paid Uncle Dave well for them. This became the seed money for the trust.”

“That’s good, but even the money from selling gold would not raise the money needed for a major educational trust.”

“Uncle David took the long view, and he had good instincts. At one point, he was able to invest as part owner of a cherry and apricot farm which was profitable for a few years. Then when the value of the land went up it was sold and a semi-conductor fab plant was build there. He invested his own money and the trust money in the deal. That’s how he funded the time off to get his MS degree in Industrial Engineering. He also invested in tech companies and was mostly successful. He invested trust money in Apple, Sun Microsystems, HP, Cisco, Intel, National Semiconductor, and many more. In most cases he put the trust money in at a good point and sold before any major stock-price collapse.”

Franks smiled. “He must have been good or lucky or knew things that others didn’t know. Why didn’t he start doing that full time instead of engineering?”

“He didn’t really like investing and he liked engineering. Given that he worked at a lot of tech companies, some might say he had insider information. I don’t think there was what would be considered as illegal insider trading but it’s difficult to work in the tech industry for long and not get wind of what is going on. Heck, just seeing if your friends at a particular company are depressed or not can give a clue.”

Frank was skeptical. “I’m not a financial wizard but I wonder how often one person can do the timing of when to buy and sell. I’m not accusing your uncle of being a crook but . . . well, but . . . do you know what I mean?”

“Sort of. But remember Uncle David was patient and not prone to panic or superstition. When Intel had the Pentium FDIV problem back in late 1994 Uncle David owned only a few shares of the trust fund in Intel, but after looking at it he thought the stock had fallen more than reasonable so he went long on Intel and made a bundle for the trust. Same for Sun Microsystems which had a slump and then took off. He knew when to get out of a stock.”

Frank said, “Is that like the saying leave the last ten percent for the next guy?”

“Sort of. And this is where the Y2K reference comes in. Uncle David saw that Sun Microsystems, and many other tech companies had experienced huge demand due to companies using Y2K as a leverage to replace old computing hardware and that once it was

over the demand would drop. So during the last week of 1999, he sold almost all his stock and was sitting on cash when the bottom fell out of Sun and the rest of the NASDAQ in 2000. Uncle David decided that Y2K was a sort of metaphor; that just like cutting corners and not looking ahead led to the Y2K panic. Uncle David thought that we should prepare for living in the future with the attention that was paid to Y2K. And by the word we Uncle David meant we both as individuals and social groups.”

“So your Uncle David was both a visionary and a great investor.”

“Uncle David was a bit humble and not one to force others to adopt his views. As for being an investor, he was good but not perfect. In a couple of years he got back in and got a bit sloppy and got stung a bit by not seeing the 2008 mess. But overall he had good positive results.”

“So the trust has money. What now?”

“From shortly after the beginning of the trust Uncle David had been giving many small grants to schools for lab equipment and books for libraries. He felt the way to change people was education, just like education had changed him to a more liberal view of the world compared to the view that he was taught by his father. So Frank this is where you come in.”

“Me?” was about all Frank could say.

“Yes, you. So what I want to do is fund you to develop a program to improve how schools teach history and other similar subjects. Five years’ salary plus an additional 20% for expenses for you. Plus we are partnering with other nonprofits so you will be part of a team. After three years we will add a second person so you can shift out if you desire. Or stay involved if you desire. Are you interested?”

“Yes, absolutely.”

“The name is ProjectY2065Success. Because 2065 will be the anniversary of the Thirteenth amendment ending slavery in the USA and the funds intended two hundred years ago to perpetuated slavery will be used instead to improve education and make the world a better place.”

Frank was beaming. “I’m in.”

Frank and I left Caffe Frascati, crossed the street at First, and walked along First Street until we came to the Fairmont Hotel. Frank pointed to the plaque affixed to the front corner of the building, indicating the Chinatown that burned down there in the 1880s and mentioning the artifacts found when the Fairmont was being built.

Frank said, "I often lead student trips to here and show them this marker. After, We walk through Plaza de Cesar Chavez to the Tech Museum. I use all three as examples to weave together the fascinating history of this area."

"Yes," I said "The area has changed. Now we still have some specific area such as Little Saigon or the line of Korean restaurants on El Camino Real in Santa Clara, or the Milpitas Square center with the Ranch 99 market and many Asian restaurants. But we're integrated and jumbled at the same time. We can find an Indian Tandoori shop next to a Malaysian shop next to a hamburger stand, all around the corner from a taco place. This area is wonderful."

"I agree" Frank said. However, I'm about talked out. I'm going to walk over to the light rail stop and catch the next train heading up First Street."

We did our goodbye exchange then since the San Jose Museum of Art was just steps away I decided the rest of the afternoon would be for my cultural enrichment.

Before I donated the original documents about the Confederate treasure to a historical archive, I'd made sure that both Frank and I had high resolution scans. I posted them online too, and they were picked up by the Internet Archive. Frank decided he would write an article about the Confederate treasure and use it as a model of how historical events can impact the future. He had shown me a preliminary version, and it was a gem. He'd found some additional information on Crumbf, mostly accusations of cheating and skipping out on debts. Of more interest to him was finding some additional Horner family information, although much of it was about long dead ancestors.

Frank and I exchanged emails, and over the next few months we kept in touch. I attended the birthday party he threw for Ruth. Many of the final party arrangements were done by Carol, who came down from Reno since her party planning skills far exceeded those of Frank.

Then I got an email from Frank asking me if I wanted to have lunch at 7 Stars in two days on May 1. I always enjoyed 7 Stars Bar and Grill with its Star Wars themed models, displays, and posters..

When I got there Frank had already staked out a table. After going to the bar to order and collecting our beers, we sat down to wait for our food. He smiled and said, "I've dug up some more information and decided to tell you first hand. It'll delay finishing the article a bit, but it's worth it."

"Okay," I said. "tell me the big news."

"I'll start with the small news. I found more info about Crumbf and the hypothesis that he didn't really die of disease is correct. He was killed for cheating at cards. The disease story was put in the paper just as a cover. In the state historical archives I found the diary of a fellow who was present when Crumbf was killed. The diary belonged to a doctor who left his papers to the archive with the proviso that they be kept sealed for fifty years after his death, when all of the participants would be long forgotten. The person who killed Crumbf was a county sheriff who didn't want it publicized that he along with the doctor and a few other prominent citizens had been in a private poker game since he had run as a reformer. The reason for the killing was that the sheriff found that Crumbf had pulled two aces from his sleeve. The sheriff shot Crumbf twice in the heart. The doctor quotes the sheriff as saying it was a shot for each card. It was easy to persuade the doctor to give a diagnosis of heart failure and all to go along because being shot twice in the heart would cause the heart to fail."

"Wow, you have been doing some investigation. Okay, now what's the big news?"

"Not yet. Next is the medium sized news. I've determined the background of the ruby and diamond necklace. I was doing some research to determine the insurance value of the necklace when I found that it actually has a history. The markings on the piece established exactly when it was created. It was more than just a diamond and ruby necklace. It was created by a famous French jewelry house in 1848."

I asked, "It was so unique that they kept a record of it?"

"Yes, it was a commissioned piece for some minor French nobleman who lost his wealth and position that year. A bit of revolution then. Since it was a commissioned piece no other buyer came forward so the necklace was added to a consignment and sent to New Orleans the next year."

"It arrived in New Orleans and was at some point sold?"

"Yes, a couple of Georgia newspapers from 1852 contain descriptions of the necklace being worn at various balls and events by Mildred Timson, wife of Roland Timson, a Georgia planter. Both died in 1855, probably due to a fever outbreak. It seems that their sons Robert and William, ages 18 and 16, inherited the plantation in Georgia. However, the plantation was deeply in debt and with the death of the parents

the sons soon sold the mansion along with most of the furnishings, the plantation, and most of the slaves except for two females. Personal items and likely the necklace were among what was sold. This is the background for the big news.”

“Fascinating. What’s the big news?”

“With their wealth reduced, the Timson brothers bought a house in Decatur Georgia and kept these two slave-women as domestic labor. One was an older woman named Mollie who ran the house and the other was a helper named Rebecca, probably about eighteen or nineteen. While the Timson brothers were away, they rented the house to a family friend named Carlton who being too old to serve in the Confederate Army was selected to be the local magistrate. Fortunately, his papers were deposited with a historical society in Georgia which has digitized their holdings.

After the end of the war when mail service resumed, it appears that a letter from Richard Timson sent to the Decatur address for Carlton was forwarded to Valdosta. Fortunately, Judge Carlton was an early adopter of carbon paper so we have a copy of his letter to Timson explaining that the necessity of relocating to Valdosta in order to avoid Sherman’s advancing troops.”

“If I remember my history correctly this was Sherman’s famous march to the sea. So Judge Carlton got out ahead of it?”

“Yes, you’re correct about Sherman. Judge Carlton got out ahead of Sherman’s troops taking Decatur.”

I asked, “What about Mollie and Rebecca?”

“That’s where it begins to get more interesting. Based on the letters it appears that Robert had impregnated Rebecca just before he left for the eight-month voyage around Cape Horn to California. Carlton wrote in by letter that he heard from a usually reliable source that the Decatur house had been destroyed and that Mollie and the pregnant Rebecca had fled to Atlanta, where Mollie had an aunt referred to as a free of color.”

“Rebecca was pregnant by Timson and fled to Atlanta? Did she give birth in Atlanta? I suppose that Atlanta was better than Decatur since the house in Decatur was destroyed. But still . . .”

“Yes, Mollie and Rebecca probably were in the midst of it and with the Decatur house destroyed left Atlanta became the best option. One letter mentions that Rebecca did give birth. Rebecca gave the child the

name Abraham. And this where it gets interesting; in the 1870 census in Atlanta there’s a Rebecca Timson and son Abraham Timson at the same address. I was able to trace several descendants of Abraham Timson throughout the country. One of them lives right here in San Jose, and her family story matches; a great-great-great-great-grandmother named Rebecca while pregnant fleeing with someone named Mollie from Decatur and then giving birth to a son named Abraham a few months later in Atlanta.”

I was gobsmacked. “Seriously?”

“Very Seriously. Her name is Diana Timson. She came to this area several years ago to work for Apple, then was at a failed startup, and then for Amazon Lab 126 in Sunnyvale. She’s now working for one of the Google operations in San Jose.”

“That’s amazing. When can I meet her? Why didn’t you invite her to lunch with us?”

“She’s on a business trip to Lagos, Nigeria and won’t be back for a week. However if you’re available in a couple of weeks she will be back and over her jet lag. I sent her a draft of my article about the Confederate treasure so she could read it on her trip. She’s just emailed back with several questions and very positive comments. She’d love to talk to you about the history and also about the educational trust. And I told her the truth about Buster. Of course, I left Buster and any family stuff related to either the Horner or Foote families out of the article, but I told her about me and my family history. You can tell her as much as you want about your family when you meet her.”

I was happy. “This is great. I really want to talk with her. Is the draft you sent her about the same as the draft you sent me recently?”

Frank nodded. “Yes about the same. Plus I’m considering writing a book, basically expanding on the story in the article to more of a family history and lost treasure mashup. The story of the Confederate treasure with the Horner and Foote information if you agree. The addition of the Timson information should make it modestly sized work. Not too long to scare off the reader but with enough substance to maintain interest and teach a bit of history.”

Meeting Diana didn’t happen in two weeks, because Diana and I were both busy and seemed to have schedule conflicts. Frank suggested breakfast on Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. That met everyone’s schedule. Diana suggested we meet at McCormick and Schmick’s right at 11:30 when they open.

Since the anime, manga and cosplay Fanime



Convention was happening at the San Jose Convention Center We snagged an outdoor table next to the walkway so we could watch all of the great costumes walk by. We had a great meal and an even better conversation.

Suddenly Diana looked up over my shoulder and said, "Gloria?"

I turned back to see Gloria in a beautiful cos-

tume followed by Maria and Gustavo. Gloria ran over and greeted Diana. After introductions were made the connection became evident. Diana had lead a workshop at Gloria's school about technology trends and educational choices. Gloria had been one of six students selected for special advanced sessions with Diana the previous week.

As the old saying goes "It's a small valley."



Francisco (Panche) Jiménez  
Headdress, 2008  
Ceramic