

Chapter 13. My Views on Religion

I have left religion among the last of the topics that are covered because I have always, over the years, tried to understand what my personal feelings really meant. There has always been a dichotomy between my desire to understand and my sense that the real understanding that I crave will never come. The only church that I have attended with any regularity has been the Methodist and specifically, now the United Methodist Church (since 1968, when it was formed with the merging with the Evangelical United Brethren Church). This was the church of my Grandmother Hunter with whom I probably attended church for the first time. My Grandfather and Grandmother Brill were Members of the Shiloh Methodist Church of Lehew, WV, but are buried at the Timber Ridge Church of Christ.

I profess to be a Christian. My definition of a Christian may conflict with others but, certainly its basis is the aspiration to live a life that embodies the teachings of Jesus Christ. As one of the great moral leaders of history, the life of Jesus as recorded in the Bible exemplifies how someone should strive to live if they can accept the burdens that complete altruism imposes on them. Certainly, I have failed too often to declare a success, but feel that my effort should count for something. I truly believe as it says in Matthew; “In all things, do to others what you would have them do to you.” This mirrors Confucius saying 6 centuries earlier: “What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others.”

Although we were not brought up by our parents to be regular church attendees, JoAnn and I determined that it was important for our family to be part of a church family. We joined the Epworth Methodist Church in Glenshaw, PA and were baptized with Carol and Jon Jr. as a family on 11/1/1964. After that, one of our first jobs always, after moving into a new home with our family, was to find our church home. In addition to Epworth Methodist Church, we have also belonged to Faith United Methodist Church in Lancaster, NY; St. Paul’s Methodist Church in Allison Park, PA; First United Methodist Church of Media, PA; United Methodist Church of West Chester, PA; and Green Trails Methodist Church of Chesterfield, MO. During our early years of raising our family, JoAnn and I were mostly involved with youth programs at the church such as scouting and Sunday School. Later, we took on other roles such in counseling and administration. Our most satisfying years were spent as high school youth counselors.

In the years after our children had all left our daily care, some issues came up in our fellowship with Green Trails Methodist Church and we decided to find another church home. Unfortunately, this did not happen, and we lapsed as steady church goers. One of the lame excuses that I contrived for myself was that I was always drawn into saying things in church atmosphere that I did not 100% believe. I now have come to believe that most folks have some doubts, but few people of conservative leanings allow themselves to express this confusion openly. I count myself in this cohort.

First, I will tell you what I do believe:

I contemplate an unfathomably large universe which evolved some 14 billion earth years ago consisting of an uncountable number of blackholes, stars, planets, satellites, and lesser debris, and which may be one of several or many universes.

I marvel at the intricacy of the physical properties and phenomena that allows all of this to happen.

I'm dumbstruck by the chemistry that contrived the first single-celled being on our planet and triggered an explosion of life over the billions of years that led to today's human being.

I am in awe of the complexity of the human brain and have doubts that we will ever fully understand how something that small and requiring so little power - that simply "evolved" - could control the many processes that go on in our bodies every second.

It's almost impossible to fathom the power of nature that surrounds us just on this small part of the universe that we call Earth.

Man has reached a point where he can create an unimaginable force by manipulating the internal forces of certain elements, but Nature has, in recent history, exceeded those forces of nuclear energy by 10,000 times in the explosion of the Krakatoa Volcano in 1883.

But I think I would have had the same thoughts about all these issues 100 years ago when Einstein's theory of relativity was a brand-new postulate and Hubble had not yet observed that galaxies – (which, by the way, had only recently been discovered) – were moving exceedingly quickly away from us; a discovery that led to our ability to calculate the age of the universe.

My views on organized religion.

1. I cannot imagine that all the above events just happened out of nothing. That feeling was expressed far more eloquently by Maria Mitchell, who is the earliest credentialed female astronomer. She said, "every formula which expresses a law of nature is a hymn of praise to God." There are many creation stories that prehistoric peoples used to try to understand the "miracles" that are all around us. There have been thousands of religions put forward to coalesce the desire to define and explain the reasons for the good *and bad* that is found in all human communities. There have been many prophets and apostles over the centuries who wrestled with the evils and inequities that have pestered the human condition. Over half of the world's population adheres to religions springing from the Abrahamic tradition - of this about 60% are Christian. Although I do not recognize the many paranormal events that my religion proposes as proven occurrences, I cannot disprove any of them by the sheer press of logic.
C. S. Lewis, A British writer and lay theologian, said what I have thought for a long time: "It is Christ Himself, not the Bible, who is the true word of God. The Bible, read in the right spirit and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to Him. We must not use the Bible as a sort of encyclopedia out of which texts can be taken for use as weapons."
2. There is a reason that the teachings of one man have, over 2000 years, reached the hearts of over 2 billion currently living human beings and that is, in one word "love". The most important teaching of Jesus Christ is the Golden Rule. Even if most of the appurtenances of the Methodist theology that I have practiced are simply artifices made up to provide a comforting view of the unknown, the benefits I and my family have accrued from engaging in the communal aspects and educational experience of this faith have been fulfilling and satisfying.

3. I believe there is a power in positive thinking. Our brain is so complex that it is almost impossible to rule out many forms of extrasensory perception. I, myself, have the belief that the body and brain's ability to maintain our health and well-being are **far superior** to our current reliance of artificial palliation. To that reasoning, for the last 50 years, I have discontinued the use of over-the-counter palliative remedies that simply mask symptoms. As my body has aged, unfortunately, I have been unable to exert the same control on some of the failing devices in my personal physical ecosystem. This might not be because my beliefs are faulty but might be because I have not explored all the other avenues to natural control of physical and mental health.
4. I believe that we can accomplish more by acting collectively. Belonging to one faith among the dozens of major beliefs, even if that faith represents a third of the world population, doesn't entitle me to hold the delusion that it makes me a better person than those who espouse other beliefs. Certainly, holding to a certain doctrine among hundreds or perhaps thousands of others doesn't set me apart. The simple fact is that nothing anyone else does or believes changes what I am, so there is no reason for me to pass any judgement. Even if the religion that I choose to engage in is not judged by some to be the "true" one, the actions taken in concert with others that have similar foundational understanding are beneficial to the true purpose of a religion.
5. I believe that goodness is its own reward. I know that is true because of the feeling that you get within when you have acted in a truly altruistic manner towards another person.
6. I believe that "God" is a Power not a person; a power for good that seeks to overcome the entirely natural desire in animals of all kinds to act in self-serving ways. Isn't it obvious that the natural inclination of all animals is self-preservation and from that comes other forms of self-interest.

Now to pass on what I don't believe.

1. There is no Supreme Being that looks like me, is as vengeful as me, writes as stupidly as I do, and likes playing games as much as I do. I believe there must be Supreme Being; but I don't think we have a clue about describing it (sic). Why would something that had control over at least the one vast universe that we have experienced, be as limited in any perspective as are homo sapiens? If that Supreme Being moves throughout the vast distances of its domain, then we have no terms in the science of quantum mechanics to describe such an entity. In the Bible, Isaiah 55:8 says: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD."
Soren Kierkegaard is widely considered the father of existential philosophy. His work touched not only philosophy, but also theology, psychology, literary criticism, and fiction. He also came up with two concepts that are commonplace to today's philosophical thinking: One is "subjectivity," the idea that we all perceive the world — and "truth" — differently; and the other is the "leap of faith," that faith is not possible without doubt. One must doubt the existence of God to have faith in the existence of God. Belief without doubt is just credulity. The powers attributed to God,

omnipotence and omniscience have been the subject of debate for centuries probably because the definitions fluctuate. For instance: could God create a stone so large that God cannot lift it? It *seems* that if God is genuinely omnipotent, we cannot answer either “Yes” or “No” to this question.

Benedict Spinoza, a philosopher who influenced other philosophers like Goethe and Hegel, said “The highest activity a human being can attain is learning for understanding, because to understand is to be free.” He asserted that everything in the universe was made from the same divine substance, possessing infinite characteristics. He defined God and the laws of nature as one and the same, a part of this infinite substance. For this he was excommunicated.

Why do we have to have an understanding or a description for God? Why do we need to put words in its mouth, thoughts in its brain, and state that we recognize its actions without proof?

Isn't it enough that we can doubt that all the miracles that we know about this universe and the universal laws that govern everything that happens could be in place without a governing hand of some sort, of which we may never know the real identity or nature?

2. I do not believe in the standard descriptions of Heaven and Hell. I do not need the reward or punishment of either of these to guide me that it is better to be good than evil. **It is rewarding enough** to see other people be happy, well-lived, and content as the result of your well-intentioned actions. It is not **gratifying** to feel that you have left others down by baser actions. What we do know about God's kingdom is that we are all made up of atoms that will eventually separate. So, if we get together in the afterlife, it will have to be in here-to-fore undiscovered ectoplasm. I am not ruling that out, but I am not counting on it. If your main purpose for being good and doing good is to earn a place in Heaven, you have probably missed the boat.

I am sure that the basic reason that Mother Teresa spent her life serving others was the satisfaction she got on earth not the hope for rewards in an after-life. The following is her prayer for love:

Mother Teresa's Prayer

The fruit of silence is prayer.

The fruit of prayer is faith.

The fruit of faith is love.

The fruit of love is service.

The fruit of service is peace.

3. I do not believe that there was divine intervention in the writing of the Bible or any other religious manifesto. We know enough about the history of most of the books in the Bible, Torah, Talmud, Book of Mormon, etc., which were all written separately, to understand that they are built of mostly historical documents with an emphasis on religion as it occurred and was practiced over millennia. That is understandable since those who selected the stories, letters, poetry, and genealogy were mostly religious scholars. There is a way to argue that the Bible is the word passed down from God. You would have to make the case that God was merely speaking in the vernacular of

- a time when slavery, misogyny, tribalism, xenophobia, and vengeance were simply facts of life and treated as natural social interaction. God's word would have to describe how the earth and human beings were formed in terms that could be understood at the time; they had to include magic and mystery because that was what would interest the readers in that subdued social climate. But why is it necessary to believe such a stultifying position. If the teachings of Jesus are valid, we 21st century Christians should not need magic and miracles to justify those truths.
4. The main argument against abortion is its religious implications. The crux of the issue is that many people think that human life is sacred because we were made in "His Image." It seems to me that this assertion is a sign of mankind's hubris. We obviously are not anything like the Supreme Being that created our universe. If "He" meant for us to be hallowed organisms, why is our mode of reproduction so haphazard that close to 50% of all fertilized human eggs are aborted spontaneously, because the body recognizes that they are defective. And why was the human body so poorly designed that **most of our daily efforts** are spent on trying to remediate all the shortcomings that are built in to our physical and mental beings.
If a fetus in utero is actually a person at some point early after conception, shouldn't it receive all the rights of personhood in our country? What about citizenship, due process, child support, child tax credit, insurance against miscarriage and freedom from incarceration? Shouldn't that person be named, get a social security number, and be counted in the census? These questions are as absurd as the laws that have been enacted that try to criminalize abortion by conferring "personhood" on an unborn fetus. When will we get to laws that control a white males' ability to get a vasectomy?
In crossing the line that was drawn to separate Church and State, most "Evangelicals" follow the Catholic Church and many Pentecostal and other religions in dealing with gender identity. I can only say that I believe that the great majority of those who truly identify as LGBTQ+, are almost certainly born that way. Although we have much to learn about how the brain determines this characteristic, it is indisputable that there is a difference. If we "normal people" were created by God, so were they.
 5. I also think that if you don't disagree about any of your own church's teachings that you have basically "drank the Kool-Aid". Those teachings were, without a doubt in my mind, devised by men who were fallible and were based on their life understandings that came from a much less enlightened perspective.

Blaise Pascal wrote a series of notes and fragments about his thoughts on religion, but he never completed the book. The notes were found after his death and published as *Pensées (Thoughts, 1669)*. In that book, he describes his famous wager, arguing that if God does not exist, the skeptic loses nothing by believing in him; but if God does exist, the skeptic gains eternal life by believing in him. He also argued that it is the heart that experiences God and not reason.

"The world through wisdom did not know God: There is a constant tendency to think that the smartest and wisest humans will know the most about God. But God cannot be found through human wisdom, but only through the *message of the cross*. The pursuit of human wisdom may bring an earthly contentment or happiness (though this is rare), but, in itself, it can never bring the true knowledge of the true God.

i. It is significant that often the most educated people have the least regard for God. This is not always the case; some of the most brilliant men of history have been Christians (such as Isaac Newton). But largely, the “smarter” one sees himself, the less regard he has for God. Human “wisdom” is constantly rejecting God and opposing Him, and ultimately showing itself foolish and perishing in doing so.

ii. One day, students in one of Albert Einstein’s classes were saying they had decided that there was no God. Einstein asked them how much of all the knowledge in the world they had amongst themselves collectively, as a class. The students discussed it for a while and decided they had 5% of all human knowledge amongst themselves. Einstein thought that their estimate was a little generous, but he replied: “Is it possible that God exists in the 95% that you don’t know?” “

The above 3 paragraphs by David Guzik in Enduring Word

I was brought up as a Methodist and find that religion as valid and satisfying as any other that I have had contact with. That division of Protestantism was founded by John Wesley, born in Epworth, England on June 28, 1703. Wesley attended Oxford where he was one of the founders of the “Holy Club,” a religious study group that was derisively called the “Methodists” because of their emphasis on methodical study. He believed that Christians could be made “perfect in love” when their actions arose out of a desire to please God **and to promote the welfare of the less fortunate**. He wrote “I observed ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment.’ It is not only ‘the first and great’ command, but all the commandments in one. ‘Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise,’ they are all comprised in this one word, *love*.”

"By 1850, the Methodist Church held more members than any other Christian denomination in the United States. A convert needed only to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and everyone’s personal savior. Methodists believed that all other questions about Christianity were up for discussion. Methodists have established more colleges, hospitals, child-care facilities, and retirement homes than any other denomination. A 19th-century Methodist preacher named William Booth noticed that his lower-class converts were often turned away from respectable churches, so he founded the Salvation Army to reach the poor and needy. Methodists also started Goodwill Industries in 1902. There are over 70 hospitals in the United States that are associated with the Methodist Church.

"John Wesley's Rule" does a fair job of summing up his life:

“Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as you ever can.”

Jimmy Carter, our 39th president, is quoted as saying about his own life: “I have one life and one chance to make it count for something. I’m free to choose that something. ... My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.”

John Wesley’s brother Charles published more than 4,400 hymns during his lifetime and left behind several thousand more. His hymns include “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” and “Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown.” “Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown” is often considered Wesley’s masterpiece. In contemporary hymnals the word *mercies* is substituted for *bowels*. Wesley wrote:

*'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me!
I hear thy whisper in my heart.
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
Pure Universal Love thou art.
To me, to all, thy bowels move —
Thy nature, and thy name, is Love.*

I know that there is a possibility that I could be wrong about God’s hand in our everyday life, but I still must say that the only personal involvement of a supernatural being that I have been able to detect is the feeling that I have that the condition of love is in the makeup of every human and how that love is expressed is the only qualifying factor that should concern religions across the spiritual spectrum. The major moral topic in the news over the last 60 or more years has been how terribly some among us have treated and are continuing to treat fellow human beings who may be of a different religion, race, ethnic group, sex, or sexual proclivity. And for those who profess to have religious beliefs, most religions teach that we are created in all our physical, mental, and moral attributes by God.

Chapter 14. Empty Nest Years

After Charles joined the army in 1987, JoAnn and I were alone for the first time in 30 years. In February 1986, we had purchased our first timeshare property in Winter Park, CO. As part of the deal, we were given a paid trip to Abaco Island in the Bahamas. In addition to our Bahamas trip, we were given a week in Hawaii. We went to Hawaii in April 1987, and stayed one week on Waikiki and toured the island of Oahu; we took side trips to the “Big Island” and Maui, and later spent one week on Kauai. We purchased a timeshare with Pahio at Ka’eo Kai while we were staying at that resort on Kauai. This began our love affair with Kauai which caused us to return many times over the next 3+ decades – spending over 2-1/2 years in Hawaii.



Arrival at Honolulu Airport

At a Luau on Oahu



View from the Royal Lahaina Resort on Maui

Royal Lahaina Resort

Dear Mom & Dad,
 Just thought I would let you know we are having a great time. We have finished our time on Oahu & visited Hawaii & are now on Maui. This is by far the prettiest island so far. flowers & trees everywhere. Of course this is an old island. We saw the eruption on Hawaii from far away would have gotten much closer but the closed the road the day before we went there. We did spend all day there and saw miles & miles of volcanic rock & cct. nothing grows in it for at least 150 years. so one side of the island is the type while the other side is better "a little"

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Today we flew in here early we left Oahu at 5:30 AM. We rented a car and drove about 150-200 miles around the island. beautiful main forest here. It's called the island of valleys so the road was really winding. & and beautiful valley at every turn. Water falls ~~green~~ green. so 60 feet high. I know this is awful writing but I'm so tired we have been up so early every day. Tomorrow we fly to Kauai we will be there till next Friday. Tomorrow PM we are going to see a crater. and a Banion tree that covers an acre of land. It is a weird tree. It grows up & then limbs grow down & into the ground and they just keep doing that

Royal Lahaina Resort

So it gets bigger & bigger. no sea shells here to speak of. Boy this hotel is about the fanciest place we have stayed at. We have a beautiful room right on the Ocean front a balcony over looking it. We have been sitting there listening to the waves hit the beach. It is so loud really coming in. some waves are 4-5 feet high I bet. Well I'll close for now. I'm tired so I'll write later Hope all is well. We heard we had 18 inches of snow. We get lots of news from back there over here. They love to hear about snow. They figure more people will come spend money

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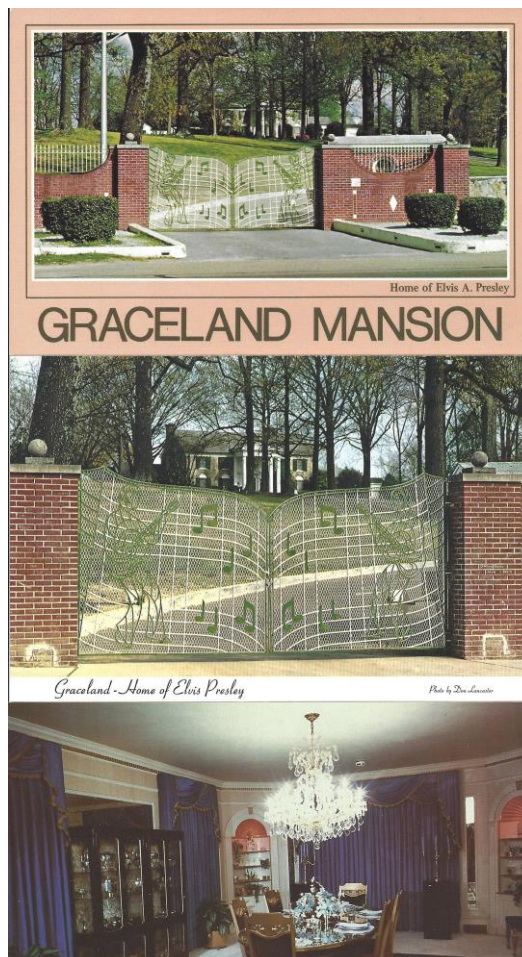
Love
 Jon & JoAnn

Letter sent by JoAnn to her mom and dad Apr 6, 1987

As you can see, in those days we dressed up for trips, even wearing a tie; and places like Hawaii made a big deal of the arrival process. For this trip we purchased a package deal through American Express to see all the sights on Oahu including the Pearl Harbor Memorial, a trip to the North Shore for a luau, and a day at the Polynesian Cultural Center. One of the highlights was the “Punch Bowl” volcano cone with the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. It was there that we saw the grave of Ernie Pyle, a famous war correspondent in WWII. He was killed in action on Okinawa in 1945. Our package also included a side trip to the “Big Island” with an overnight stay and a tour of the island.

We also had a side trip to Maui with a two-night stay, a drive on the Hana Highway and a drive up to Mount Haleakala. We had a problem with our rental car when we prepared to leave from the top of the mountain to go to the airport. Our car had a vapor-lock and wouldn't start. There were no telephone services at the top at that time and I needed to check our flight time, so I asked another tourist for a ride down to the next stop. I hadn't been there very long when JoAnn drove up. She had finally got it started. On Kauai, we stayed at Pahio at Ka 'Eo Kai in Princeville which impressed us so much that we purchased a timeshare week and made it our home on Kauai for the next several years.

Later, in 1987, we traveled to Memphis on a business trip and spent a day at Graceland, the Elvis Presley home and museum.



1988 was a very busy year at Graybar. We began the installation of our newly designed business computer system. Initially, we had many problems and spent a lot of time putting out fires and training personnel of the St. Louis District. My assignments were mostly in Peoria, IL and Davenport, IA. I think that we may have had to cancel our vacations that year. JoAnn spent time with me on several of my business trips.

On August 10, President Reagan signed a measure from congress that granted reparations to Japanese Americans who were forcibly held in internment camps at the beginning of WWII. Approximately 80,000 received \$20,000 checks. About 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese heritage (of which over 75,000 were U.S. citizens) were held mostly for 3 years or more.

On 9/21/1988, Jonathan Paul Wolff was born in Downingtown, PA and we traveled to Philadelphia to see him. Later, at Christmas, Carol and her family came to St Louis to visit. We saw all of them again in West Virginia in July of 1989.

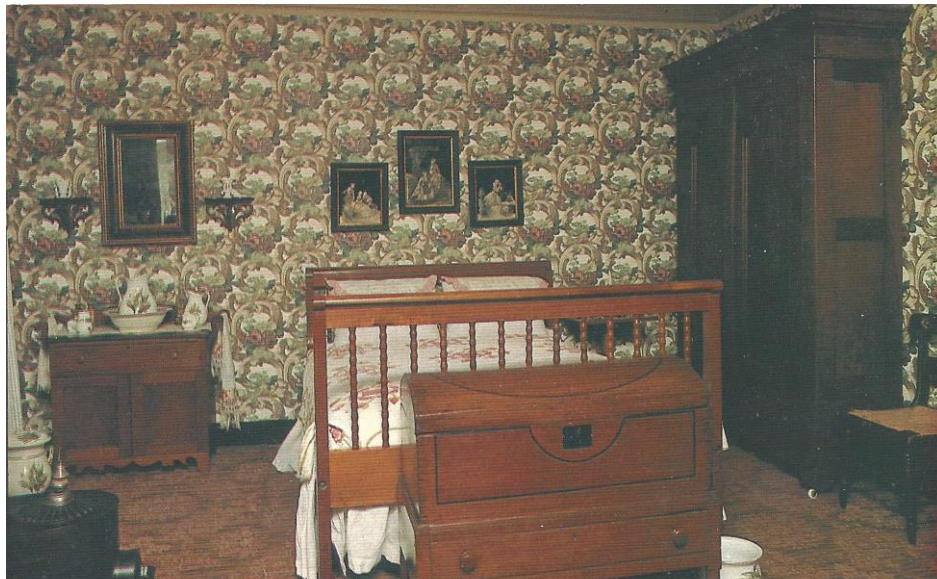


Jonathan Paul Wolff with his brother, great grandmother, grandmother, and mother.

Jon Jr. visited us in the summer of 1989, and we drove up to Hannibal, MO to see the Mark Twain exhibits.

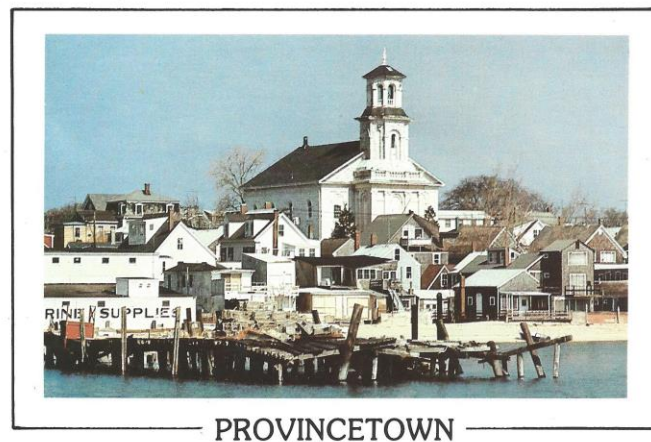
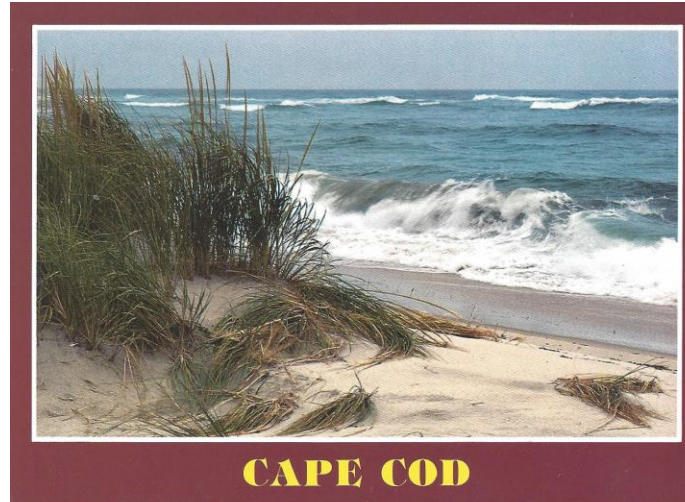


We also took him to Springfield, IL to see the Abraham Lincoln home and museum, and to the Daniel Boone home in Defiance, MO.



Mary Lincoln's Bedroom

That year we spent a week at Lawrence Welk resort in Escondido CA. We later drove to Philadelphia to see Carol and her two boys and invited them to spend a week at Cape Cod with us and Jon Jr.; we stayed at a resort in Mashpee MA. The big treat for us was two days of whale watching on a tour boat.



In November, we made a trip to Flagstaff, AZ where we purchased a third timeshare at Fairfield Flagstaff. On November 7, 1989, L. Douglas Wilder was elected governor of Virginia; the first black governor in U.S. history.

From 1988 to 1991 were busy years for our department at Graybar – we were in the middle of implementing our new computer business system across the country. This involved our department going to every one of our 18 districts as it was converted and each of the team spending at least a week at one of the 205 locations. During this time JoAnn accompanied me on many of my business trips. Among the branches that I had business trips to or that I helped to convert were: Peoria, IL; Davenport, IA; Wilmington, DE; Texas Instruments, TX; Boston Telecom, MA; Boston, MA; Rochester, NY; Greensburg, PA; Orlando, FL; Miami International, FL; Miami, FL; Nashville, TN; Memphis, TN; Grand Rapids, MI; Henderson, NV; Los Angeles, CA; Minneapolis, MN; San Francisco, CA; Olathe, KS; Atlanta, GA; Youngstown, OH; Dallas TX; Louisville, KY; Richmond, VA; Philadelphia, PA; Houston, TX; and Las Vegas, NV. (JoAnn was with me on the ones that are underlined).

Interestingly, during this rush of activity for Graybar, in 1990 the first internet search engine was developed to access by text input websites on a database. It was called “Archive” which was changed to “Archie” and led eventually to Yahoo, Bing, and Google.

After his discharge from active duty in 1989, Charles returned to St. Louis and enrolled in a community college. On August 18, 1990, Charles married Christina Petry in an outdoor ceremony at her mother's home in St. Louis. Chuck's brothers were in the wedding party along with his friend Steve. Also in attendance was his sister, Carol, and Aunt Mary Bess Rains. It was probably a good thing that Charles had left the army because in that same month Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq, invaded Kuwait and we became involved in the "First Gulf War".



That summer, JoAnn accompanied me to San Francisco for the conversion of that district. She did a lot of sightseeing around there while I worked. The next week we drove to Lake Tahoe for a week's stay. While there we visited Yosemite National Park and saw many Giant Sequoias and Redwoods. We also visited Donner Pass where the infamous group migrating to California referred to as the "Donner Party" spent the winter of 1846-47 because of the height of the mountains and the snow. They eventually ran out of food and 39 of 87 died. Some in the party engaged in cannibalism on those who died.

The conversions of all Graybar districts were completed in November 1990. Our company felt this was a historic milestone for Graybar but that we were at the very earliest stages of cultural change in the way that most large companies do business. With electronic invoicing and fund transfers, computer to computer order entry, additional zone inventories, and the ease of locating materials across the country, we have begun a new chapter in our ability to service our customers' needs. We could provide customers with reports of our service levels, track the number of orders received, shipped, and delivered on time as well as the number of shipments made on orders, the number of back orders, and returned goods. Our customers would be able to enter their own orders online, either manually through the internet or electronically computer to computer.

J O N R .
B R I L L



Jon R. Brill,
Senior
Business
Systems
Specialist at
the MIS

Center, 35 years of service on March 26. Jon joined Graybar Youngstown in 1956 as a Warehouseman, progressing to Office Sales in 1957. He transferred to Pittsburgh in 1964 as Office Salesman, later becoming Warehouse Superintendent.

Jon was appointed Branch Operating Manager at Buffalo in 1968. He returned to Pittsburgh in 1974 as District Supervisor of Training. The following year he transferred to Philadelphia as Assistant to the District Operating Manager. In 1984 Jon joined the General Department at the MIS Center as a Senior System Design Analyst. He was appointed Senior Business Systems Specialist in 1990.

In March 1991, I celebrated my 35th anniversary with Graybar and, in July, was promoted to Manager Business Systems Planning and Development. I was now manager of the department that I had been in for almost 7 years, supervising the people that I had worked alongside of during this busy period. There is much more in the chapter on my Career about this time.

In August 1991, John Daly won the PGA golf championship. He was a last-minute qualifier for the tournament and could hit the ball a mile, so everybody started talking about him when he played well and got to the lead. Watching that tournament on TV turned JoAnn and I on to the

possibility that we might play golf ourselves. Over the next few years, we did begin to play golf occasionally when we went to a golf resort. We took a trip to Phoenix, Flagstaff, Grand Canyon, Sedona, and Las Vegas in June.

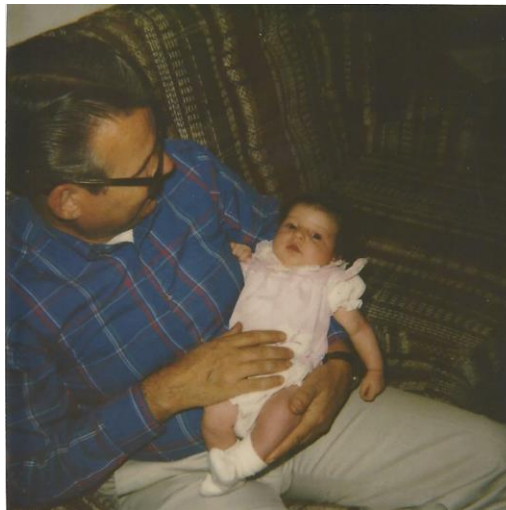
About a week after we came back from our western trip, JoAnn went back to West Virginia to help care for her dad as she had been doing most of the year. She was there over three weeks, during which time her dad died 7/22/91. I drove back to the funeral. Frank Lee Exline was buried at the Jefferson Shoales Cemetery on Old Field Fork.

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Although Frank Exline was JoAnn's stepfather, she always felt that he was her real father and treated him as such. He once told her that he was sorry that he did not adopt her.

On August 6, the first website on the "World Wide Web" was established by Tim Berners-Lee for the "European Organization for Nuclear Research" (CERN); since then, almost 2 billion websites have been created on the internet and in 2024 there were over a billion active websites.

Hope Elizabeth Brill was born 8/29/1991 in St. Louis. Not long after this Charles decided to study architecture at the University of Kansas.



Hope Elizabeth Brill with Grandpa

We went back to West Virginia in October when my sister Nancy was found to have terminal colon cancer. I returned to St. Louis after about a week, JoAnn stayed with Nancy until she died on November 4, and I returned from St. Louis for her funeral. JoAnn returned to West Virginia to stay with her mother for a couple of weeks in late November and December. For the next four years, JoAnn returned to West Virginia numerous times each year to take care of her mother whose health and well-being deteriorated, but her mother was determined to stay at her home on Old Field Fork.

In December 1991, the U.S.S.R., our Cold War adversary for the last 45 years officially broke up after a failed coup trying to preserve the autocratic government that preceded that of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the eighth and last leader of the Soviet Union.

We took a business trip to Miami in March 1992. While there, we stayed at Don Shula's Motel and Golf Club. They had lights on the golf course so we could play after I was done working for the day. We went from there over to Fort Myers to see Antoinette, and up to Arcadia to see JoAnn's Aunt Mary and Uncle Ben at their winter home. JoAnn spent a couple of weeks in West Virginia with her mother in April. I had a business trip to Dallas TX in May. We drove to Indian Peaks Resort at Winter Park, CO in June and visited Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak.

JoAnn spent a week with her mother in early August. The next week we went to our first golf tournament, the PGA which was played at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis. I got John Daly, who had won this tournament the year before, to autograph a PGA Championship cap for me. On September 11, hurricane Iniki struck Kauai, with winds of 140 miles per hour. Overall, the hurricane did over \$3 billion damages in Hawaii and was the third costliest storm to hit the United States up to that time. Seven people were killed and over 6000 homes damaged or destroyed. We stayed a week at Fairfield Bay, Arkansas in September 1992 and drove to West Virginia in November.

The Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission approved AmeriFlora '92, a global exhibition of horticulture, as a commemorative event for Columbus. The exhibition took place in Columbus, Ohio in 1992, cost around \$100 million in production, and hosted 5.5 million attendees. However, attendance was significantly less than anticipated and AmeriFlora experienced a financial loss. Among other things, the event was hindered by a Native American boycott regarding the celebratory nature of the exposition. ^{Wikipedia}

I went to Allentown, PA and Philadelphia, in January 1993 on business. On February 5, the "Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993" was signed into law. This act gave workers the right to take unpaid time off to care for family illnesses and newly arrived children.

On 2/12/93, Rebecca Suzanne Brill was born, and JoAnn and I drove to Lawrence, KS to see her and Hope.



In February, we went to West Virginia and on from there to Myrtle Beach SC. In March, Intel Corp. introduced the Pentium computer chip which further contributed to Moore's Law, a statement originating in the 1960s that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit would double every two years, increasing computer power and lowering computer costs. A computer chip that contained 2000 transistors that cost \$1000 in 1970, \$500 in 1972, \$250 in 1974, 97¢ in 1990 and less than \$.02 today. A personal computer in 1990 that cost \$3000, would now cost about \$5 to produce.

On April 17, 1993, a guilty verdict in a Federal Court was handed down on two of the police officers accused in the beating of Rodney King during a routine traffic stop for driving while intoxicated. The news of an acquittal in their first state court trial resulted in 6 days of rioting in Los Angeles and 54 people being killed.

In May, we drove to West Virginia, Youngstown, OH and Pittsburgh, PA where I attended the 40th anniversary of my high school graduation. In May, we found out that Kenneth had married Karen Engelmeyer. From April until October, the mid-west and particularly St. Louis suffered a flood that caused the Mississippi River to rise to levels not seen in hundreds of years. We were miles from the river, but a nearby lake and other waterways rose high above their normal banks and closed roads, parks, and golf courses.

In June 1993, we left on a planned a trip to Europe. We scheduled two days in London; a week at a timeshare near Stratford-on-Avon; a drive to the continent for a night's stay in Paris; a drive to a timeshare in Austria. After a week driving around Austria and Germany, we would retrace our steps to London, with a stop in Paris. When we arrived in London, I found out that the rental car would cost twice as much to drive on the continent plus the cost to ferry it across the channel – so I decided to change our plans. Instead, we would take the train from London to a channel crossing and railroad through Paris to Lucerne, Switzerland where we would pick up a rental car to drive to Austria. Since the train ride covered two days, we had to cancel the hotel in Paris.

Thinking back on this, I often wonder how I accomplished all the changes that we made on this trip. Just planning the trip and making all the arrangements must have been difficult but getting half of those plans changed in a foreign country before the wide usage of smart cell phones and the internet that we have today would be demanding.

We stayed overnight in London for sight-seeing the next day. The following day, we drove to Walton Hall, Wellsbourne, Warwickshire where we stayed at a reconstructed 16th century manor house converted to a timeshare resort. It was close to Stratford and Oxford both of which we took day trips to, as well as going back to London on the train for a tour of the city by double decker bus. We also visited Blenheim Palace and other historic sites. After a week there, we took the channel ferry and railroad from London to Paris.

When we arrived in Paris, we found out – with help from another tourist - that our train to Lucerne did not leave from that station but from a station a short distance away. I went outside to check on transportation and was told by a cab driver it would be the equivalent of \$50 (\$100 today). Since I thought we were being taken, I went back in to see about other transportation. Eventually we found out from another English-speaking traveler that we could take the

Underground. However, finding the correct platform in the subway was another story. Again, we had to find another English-speaking traveler to help as railway personnel seemed to be uninterested in getting us help.

When our subway train arrived at the other station, we took our bags, which were all that we could handle and went out to the platform. There were several men in blue uniforms that we showed our tickets to for help in finding our rail car. Again, we needed an English-speaking traveler who was in the same car to help us. This was a sleeper car with six passengers in each compartment. The beds were on three levels. We had trouble with a French woman who did not want there to be any air coming in from the window during a very hot late June. A woman, who spoke English and French, stood up for us. I don't think that anybody got any sleep that night. After all the trouble that we had with the French in just a few hours that we were in the country, we decided not to stay in Paris on our way back to London.

On arriving in Lucerne, Switzerland, we picked up a rental car and drove to Kössen, Austria and stayed at a timeshare called the Kaiser Hof Hotel. It was a suite hotel converted to timeshare units. It was probably the smallest time-share unit that we have ever had. We took a side-trips into Munich, Germany and to the Krimml Waterfalls (Krimmler Wasser Falle in German) the highest in Austria.



Krimml Waterfalls

We were pretty much out in the country and the houses were neat and decorated with flower boxes and painted beautifully. The scenery was beautiful. On one of our excursions, we saw people paragliding off mountains. We also visited Salzburg, Austria to see Mozart's birthplace and stopped in Innsbruck on our way back to Lucerne, Switzerland where we stayed two nights before heading back to Paris and London.

This trip was much less eventful than our trip there – although we did make an awkward start. We were packed and ready to go very early, when I learned that I had locked the keys in the car. I could speak enough German to explain our situation to the police after I walked about a mile into town. They indicated that they understood and that a locksmith was close by. I was picked up on my way back to the hotel by the locksmith who had already opened the car. I think this cost me about \$12 and only a 2-hour delay.

My niece Susan Webster and Pete Moss, her husband came to St. Louis for the Fourth of July celebration. They visited with us, and we spent the day with them downtown. In August, I made business trips to Atlanta, GA and Miami, FL. Later with JoAnn, Jon Jr., and Chuck and Christina we visited Meramec Caverns, about an hour away from St. Louis. JoAnn drove to West Virginia in September for three weeks with her mother.

We went to Kauai for two weeks in January 1994; purchased a second timeshare from Pahio at Ka'eo Kai (our fourth overall). Many of the resorts on Kauai were still being rebuilt from hurricane Iniki in 1992, but Ka'eo Kai did not show any signs of what had happened a year and a half before. JoAnn and I took a business trip to Miami and a side trip to Key West, FL in February, and a business trip to Las Vegas for a meeting in May. We drove to a golf resort at Fairfield Glade, TN in May and went on from there to Berkeley Springs and Weston, WV. JoAnn returned for the funeral of her Uncle John Donahue, who died on June 5. I went on business trips to Miami, FL and Tucson, AZ in July and Louisville, KY in August.



Jon Jr. married Shannon Mottola October 22, 1994

We flew to Philadelphia for 3 days for the ceremony and reception of Jon and Shannon's wedding in Wayne PA. We went on from there to Graybar in Philadelphia, and Parsippany NJ on business. We drove to West Virginia in November for Thanksgiving with JoAnn's mother.

Emma Colleen Brill was born December 21, 1994, and we drove to Lawrence KS on Christmas Day to see her, Hope and Rebecca.



Emma Colleen Brill with Grandma and Dad

I had a business trip to Los Angeles, CA in January 1995. We went to Kauai for two weeks later in January and purchased a third Hawaiian timeshare at Shearwater on Kauai.



Benjamin Wolff

JoAnn went early in March to be with Carol for the birth of Benjamin Andrew Wolff on March 12, 1995. They lived at 6516 Lancaster Dr., Warrenton, VA. JoAnn stayed for several weeks with Carol as there were problems with the baby having a seizure. While she was in Warrenton, I went on business trips to Miami and Dallas. JoAnn drove to West Virginia in April to be with her mother. While she was gone, I went on a business trip to Parsippany, NJ.

On April 19, the deadliest act of “homegrown terrorism” in U.S. history occurred when a truck-bomb was exploded in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, including 19 children in a daycare center. Those planning and carrying out this plot claimed it was to retaliate against federal government actions in several other terrorist activities years earlier. They were caught and convicted of the crime.

JoAnn made a quick trip to West Virginia in May and then went with me on a business trip to Chicago. I went on another business trip to Chicago in June followed by another one to Dallas in July. The next week, we left for West Virginia to see her mother and on to Williamsburg, VA for a week’s vacation. We came home through Georgia where we stopped to see my sister Mary Bess in Athens GA. They had sold their Burger King franchises and were retiring. The week after we came back, I flew to Richmond on business. I had another business trip to Dallas in August as well as one to New York City.

Lauren Aliece Brill was born 8/17/95, and JoAnn and I flew to West Chester, Pa for a week.



Lauren Brill

In September, to celebrate our 40th anniversary, JoAnn and I went on a cruise to Alaska. We traveled on the Royal Caribbean Sun Viking with her Aunt Mary and Uncle Ben. We flew to Seattle and went by train to Vancouver, BC to board the cruise liner. We had another bad encounter with French speaking people on this trip. We had booked a side trip with JoAnn’s aunt and uncle to see some of the coastline of Alaska by boat. While we waited on our cruise-ship to board the smaller boat, a group of French speaking tourists came in and they were boarded first

to the boat. They took up all the window seats on all sides of the boat instead of staying together. We saw our chance at a window seat and moved to it. The previous occupants came back and expected us to move. The cruise-line got so many complaints about this incident that they refunded ½ of our cost for that side trip.



Greeted by the Captain

In October, we visited Chuck, Chris, Hope, Becca, and Emma in Lawrence, KS. In November, JoAnn and I went on a business trip for a meeting in Las Vegas. While in Las Vegas, we were able to see the implosion of the Landmark Hotel and Casino. That was a 31-story building inspired by the Space Needle in Seattle.



Later in the month JoAnn returned to West Virginia to bring her mother back to Missouri to live with us. Over the next 3 years, JoAnn took care of her mother whose physical and mental health were declining.

In January 1996, I took a business trip to Pittsburgh. In February, JoAnn and I went to Kauai for two weeks. Her mother flew to Virginia to stay with Emaleen. I made a business trip to Akron, OH in March. We drove to West Virginia later in March.

On June 1, 1996, I was asked to take on the new responsibility of Manager, System Application Redesign which I held for the next year and a half. In this position, I acted as a resource of information about the business computer system of the company and as a facilitator for projects dealing with improving the current computer system and replacing elements within that system.

In June, JoAnn, her mother, and I stayed at Fairfield Glade, TN where JoAnn and I golfed. We went on from there to Weston WV to see Emaleen.

Ryan Connor Brill was born July 19, in St. Louis.



Ryan Brill

In July, we took JoAnn's mother up to Hannibal, MO to see Mark Twain's birthplace. We also took her to a casino that was on a riverboat on the Mississippi River. Charles and Chris moved their family into a house in Florissant about a 20–25-minute drive from our house. They lived there until 2003 when they moved to Florida.

In August, the divorce of Prince Charles and Diana became official. This changed the British monarchy forever. Back home in St. Louis, we went to Weston to bring back some of JoAnn's mother's things in a U-Haul. In September, we flew with JoAnn's mother to Phoenix and Flagstaff, AZ, and then to Las Vegas. She wasn't impressed by the Grand Canyon, and only got out of the car once to take a look. We also visited Meteor Crater National Landmark and Hoover Dam.

In October, we flew to Cleveland to attend the 50th anniversary party of JoAnn's Aunt Mary and Uncle Ben. I flew to Fort Myers, FL in December to attend the funeral of my brother-in-law Manuel Arocho. After that, we made sure to visit Antoinette at least once a year.

In February 1997, JoAnn and I went to Kauai for 3 weeks; during which time, we flew to the Big Island for a couple of days. JoAnn's mother flew to Virginia to stay with Emaleen. In April JoAnn went with me on business trips to Nashville, TN and Rochester, NY.

We decided to get a financial advisor and decided to use American Express Financial Services (later changed to Ameriprise). Our new advisor was Paul Davis, who advised us for the next 25 years. He suggested that we have an attorney create a Trust for us as well as Power of Attorney and a Living Will. We did this and have updated everything three times.

On September 5, 1997, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India died. She had spent her adult life not only ministering to but living among the poorest of the poor. In October, we went to Fort Myers, FL to visit Antoinette.

In February 1998, we went to Kauai for 3 weeks with a side trip to the Big Island. In June, the family drove to West Virginia to celebrate JoAnn's mother's 80th birthday at Emaleen's. Many of her friends and family attended the party. From there JoAnn, her mother and I drove to Cape Cod, MA for a week with Jon Jr. and family. Jon had joined a program called R.A.D. (rape aggression defense) which was founded in 1989 and is endorsed by the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA). By 2021 it had trained over 11,000 trainers and over 900,000 women. They were holding their annual training and certification conference in the area, so we were able to visit with them before, during and after the conference.

JoAnn's mother, who had been showing signs of dementia for some time, got up before us one morning and went out for a walk in her night clothes. We were scared out of our wits until we found her nearby. She had done this at home in St. Louis also. We had to find a way to lock the doors so that she could not open them. JoAnn and I drove to Illinois with Charles and his family later in July for the funeral of Roger Rains, the husband of my sister Mary Bess. In October, JoAnn and I flew to Pittsburgh for my 45th high school reunion. Later in October JoAnn, her mother and I flew to Orlando and drove to Lehigh Acres, FL to golf and to see my sister Antoinette.

JoAnn's mother broke her hip on Thanksgiving Day 1998. The doctors could not recommend surgery, so she was confined to her bed. We were advised to have home hospice as her bodily functions were shutting down. She died the day after Christmas. This is the first time in my life when I was in the vicinity when a loved one died. No one was at Edith's bedside when she died.

Our whole family drove to Weston for the funeral which she had arranged before she moved to St. Louis. Her grandchildren and step grandchildren all participated in the service that we all prepared. She was buried New Year's Eve in the Jefferson Shoales Cemetery on Old Field Fork.

In January 1999, I was asked to take on the responsibility of Manager of Year 2000 Compliance and immediately flew to Phoenix for a Year 2000 Seminar. By this time most business, economic and political leaders had recognized that there was a real possibility that many, if not all of the billions of computer devices that had been produced up to that time had a fatal flaw that was unpredictable in that very often the year date was recognized only by 2 digits in order to conserve space and therefore increase the capacity of the device. This was routinely done for all data that was stored to conserve bits of capacity which at that time was very expensive. This meant that in those cases when the last two digits of the current year became 00, the program might think it was 1900. In addition to checking, fixing and testing all computer programs, it was important to arouse the public interest in solving this costly problem. Most large companies were spending hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars on remediation, replacement, and verifying the results of their efforts. In February, JoAnn and I went to Kauai for 4 weeks. As soon as we came back, I flew to Philadelphia on business.

On April 20, the Columbine High School massacre took place when two students shot and killed 12 other students and a teacher and injured 21 others before committing suicide. This seems to be the start of the mass shootings in schools. Prior to this, there were hundreds of cases in our history, but the average number of deaths was only a little over one with the maximum of probably only six. Since then, we have had 33 deaths at Virginia Tech in 2007, 27 at Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012, 17 at Parkland HS in 2017 and 22 at Robb Elementary in 2022 among too many others.

On 4/26/99, Allyson Marie Brill was born in West Chester.



Allyson Brill and Grandma

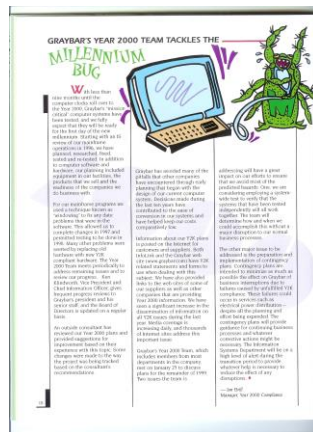
Early in May, I made a business trip to Syracuse, NY. Later, in May, JoAnn and I flew to West Chester to see Allyson. At the end of May, I flew to Akron, OH on business. On June 3, 1999, Holly Corinne Brill was born.



Holly Brill with Grandma, Rebecca, and Hope

In June, I flew to Burlington, NC on business. Later in June, JoAnn and I flew to Las Vegas and went on to Fairfield Flagstaff and Grand Canyon, AZ. In August, I made a business trip to Marietta, GA.

On January 1, 2000, all the time and expense spent on fixing the Y2K bug was justified when very little happened to all the computerized operations that now ran our country and the world. The proof of the problem was borne out when some U.S. spy satellites were not working properly for several days, and two Japanese nuclear power plants had problems for several days.



Y2K article that I wrote for the Graybar Outlook company news magazine.
The enlarged text of this is in chapter 10 on my career.

In 2000, Jon Jr. became Chief of the West Chester Volunteer Fire Department.



On January 30, 2000, the St. Louis Rams defeated the Tennessee Titans in Super Bowl XXXIV. The score was 23-16 and included a pass on the final play that left the Titans “a long yard” short of possibly tying the game and sending it into the first overtime in Super Bowl history. Early in the year 2000, the founders of Wikipedia, Larry Sanger and Jimmy Wales launched their internet product originally called Nupedia.

We flew to Kauai in February 2000 for 3 weeks during which time we made side trips to the Big Island and Molokai. We drove to Branson, MO in April for several days. On May 1, 2000, President Clinton made the Global Positioning System GPS available outside its original military usage. President Reagan had made a similar pronouncement in 1983 stating it was for the common good. At that time, it was a big deal in theory, but in practice the highest-quality signal was still only available to the military. There was a Selective Availability signal designated for civilian use until the change in 2000 which removed the degradation of the signal.

We drove to Fairfield Glade, TN to golf in July. In September, I went on a business trip to Denver. For our 45th anniversary, we took a Caribbean cruise in November that included Puerto Rico and Nassau, Bahamas. In December, JoAnn went with me on a business trip to San Francisco.

On January 6, 2001, Vice President Al Gore presided over the congressional certification of the election of George W. Bush in the tightest presidential election in history. It was decided by the Supreme Court in a 5-4 decision that the recount in Florida was to be stopped before the completion of all the contested results. Bush defeated Gore in the last official count by 537 votes or .009% of the total vote in Florida. This was in a year that the Republican administration in Florida had wiped 173,000 registered voters from the voter rolls. There was no cry from the defeated Democratic candidate that the election was rigged even though he had won the national popular vote by more than 500,000 votes. He conceded one day after the day that states reported their final results even though he was only the third presidential candidate to lose with the most popular votes.

Later in January, we flew to Kauai for 5 weeks, our longest trip to date. I had to fly back to San Francisco for a meeting for several days – leaving JoAnn by herself. Fortunately, we had friends to keep her company. In April, we flew to Orlando for part business, part pleasure. Carol and her family had moved there earlier. In June, I received my final promotion. For the next year, I had the title Manager Special Projects. This meant that I could work on whatever interested me or whatever my boss wanted me to look at. This included investigating what our next computer

system would be. We had been advised that the hardware that our present system was built on could not be upscaled to cover our future needs.

On 9/11/2001, 19 al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four commercial airplanes. Two of the planes were crashed into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center; a third crashed into the Pentagon in Washington DC. On the fourth, which was bound for Washington, D.C., passengers attempted to take control of the plane and it ended up crashing near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Altogether, nearly 3,000 people died — all the passengers and crew on board the planes, many who worked at the World Trade Center or who were in or near the buildings when they collapsed and more than 100 in the Pentagon building. The total also includes hundreds of rescue workers.

It is amazing, how close we came to the possibility of losing some buildings in our nation's capital, probably the White House or Capitol Building, by the plane that was downed in Pennsylvania when some of the passengers rushed the hijackers. If the hijackers hadn't waited so long to take over the plane, who knows what might have happened. Both planes that hit the twin towers crashed within 47 minutes of take-off. The plane that crashed in Shanksville was taken over by the terrorists 46 minutes into the flight by which time some passengers had already got news of the planes crashing into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York.

Forty-five days later, President Bush signed the Patriot Act which was created to deal with international terrorism and gives authorities unprecedented ability to search, seize, detain, or eavesdrop to deal with terrorists in the Homeland. It created a new federal cabinet Department of Homeland Security.

In October, Apple introduced the IPOD which allowed people to download and play songs on a small, lightweight product that would in the next 20 years sell over 450 million. In November, we drove to Branson, MO; at that time, we purchased additional timeshares in Branson to allow all our Fairfield properties as well as our Hawaii properties to be included in the relatively new points system. During the summer, we also made a trip to Lehigh Acres, FL to golf and to visit my sister Antoinette.

We flew to Hawaii in January 2002 for 6 weeks. On June 30, I retired from Graybar Electric Company after 46 years and 3 months. My decision not to retire in August 2000 when I became 65 – a time that I had always assumed would be “it” – turned out to be a magnificent stroke of luck. Financially, it could have been a disaster. I would have received my lump sum pension and probably had a significant portion invested in the stock market which dropped 30% over the 6 months from May to October 2001. As it happened in my own investments, I lost about \$50,000 during that drop. If I had my retirement benefits invested during that time, it would have been several times that amount.

The real benefit of that experience came when I did retire from full time employment in April 2002. Having gone through big drops in the stock market in 1987 and 2001, I was careful about investing my retirement proceeds. From April to October of that year the market dropped about 30% and I lost very little in this downturn on the much larger investment

J O N R .
B R I L L



Manager, special projects at the IS Department on July 1, 2002, after 46 years of service with the company. Jon

began his Graybar career as a warehouseman at Youngstown in 1956. He progressed through various office sales, warehouse supervisory and branch operating positions at Youngstown, Pittsburgh and Buffalo before being appointed assistant to the district operating manager at Philadelphia in 1975. Jon transferred to corporate headquarters as a senior systems design analyst in 1984. He became senior business systems specialist in 1990 and was named manager, business systems planning the following year. He was appointed manager, systems application and redesign in 1996 and became manager, year 2000 compliance in 1998. Jon was promoted to manager, special projects in 2001, his position at retirement.

"My wife and I intend to travel more and play more golf. We suggest that everyone do what they feel is best for their family, and right now this is what's best for ours."

I signed a contract to work as a consultant on the new computer system that Graybar had already started to work on. During the next 2-1/2 years, I averaged about 22 working hours a week. I was able to spend a lot of the time to work from home and even squeeze in an hour or so a day on vacation. I did make one mistake that has cost me financially. I asked Graybar to continue my company provided medical insurance under the COBRA law since I was accustomed to that medical care process. I had the impression that Medicare would be oppressive in its procedures for coverage. I have since found that Medicare is a blessing for the ways that it provides the type of care and the benefits that you desire and can afford. It ended up not only costing me thousands of dollars more during the 2-1/2 years that I worked as a consultant but increased my premiums by 10% into the future which has cost me at least \$3,500 since I retired fully. I found out too late, you **must** take Medicare on retirement or pay the penalty for the rest of your life.

To show how fragile life on earth is, on June 15, 2002, an asteroid about the diameter of a football field flashed by us at a distance of about 75,000 miles. Its impact had it landed would have been similar to one that did land in 1908 in Siberia and leveled about 800 square miles (an area about 1/2 the size of Rhode Island) and would have exceeded any nuclear explosion had it hit someplace on our planet. It still has a very small chance of impacting earth sometime after 2070.

In November 2002, we drove to Orlando, FL to see Carol and her family; we went from there to Lehigh Acres, FL to visit my sister Antoinette and play some golf. We went to Berkeley Springs to visit my brother who was not in good health. In China, the SARS pandemic began and by the next July over 8000 cases were reported worldwide with a mortality rate of about 10%.

In February 2003, we flew to Kauai for 8 weeks (Embassy Resort, Kuhio Shores 302 and 407, Kauai Beach Villas). In May and June, we drove to Berkeley Springs WV to see my brother Buddy who was in the Veterans hospital in Winchester, VA.

In April 2003, the Human Genome Project announced completion of its 14-year search to map the genes in human DNA. Surprisingly, instead of the estimated 100,000 genes it was found that humans had only about 30,000 which was similar to what had been found to be the count for mice. Hannah Elise Brill was born prematurely on 5/25/2003. We spent many trips to the hospital until she was finally able to come home.



Hannah Brill

On August 14, one of the largest, if not the largest power blackouts in North America occurred. The outage, which was much more widespread than the Northeast Blackout of 1965, affected an estimated 55 million people, including 10 million people in southern and central Ontario and 45 million people in eight U.S. states. Electrical power was restored for most of that area within hours, but some were without power for up to two days.

In August, we drove to Jane Lew WV to see Emaleen and Berkeley Springs to see my brother who was in the hospital. We also stopped in Niles, Ohio, and Pittsburgh (my 50th High School graduation anniversary) on this trip. In October, we drove to Fairfield Glade, TN for some golf. From there we drove to West Chester, PA to see Jon Jr. and family. Charles and Chris decided to move their family to Ocala, FL in September. In November, we drove to Orlando for two weeks to see Charles and Carol and their families. Charles began his career with Lockheed Martin in 2004.

In February 2004, we flew to Kauai for 8 weeks, but left on March 6, when I got a call from my niece that my brother had died. We flew home that day and drove to Berkeley Springs for his funeral. Russell Ervin (Bud) Brill Jr. was buried with full military honors for his service in the Army. I had to make several trips to West Virginia to wind up the handling of his estate.

Everything that he had left was divided among his 3 children: Nancy Kathleen, James Creswell, and David Paul.

In June, we travelled to the Poconos in Pennsylvania to spend a week with Jon Jr. and his family at the Villas at Fairway in Bushkill, Pa. In September, JoAnn and I drove to Branson, MO. In October and November, we drove to Orlando and stayed 4 weeks. During this time, we purchased our new home in Winter Garden, FL. We returned to St. Louis and sold our home there in December.

In this transaction, I made a slight miscalculation that I soon regretted. We had already made plans for leaving to Hawaii in January and taking a side trip for two weeks in Australia and New Zealand. I didn't think there was any chance we could sell our house before spring so I cancelled all of our reservations. Since we sold our house to the first people who looked at it, there would not have been a problem. They did not intend to move in until March.

I did not renew my contract with Graybar and December 31, 2004, was my final day of employment of any kind. I created a resume' since I thought I might look for some part-time work when we finally settled in Florida. Grace Noel Brill was born 12/17/2004. We did not see her until we got to Florida in April, 2005



Grace Noel Brill with Grandma

We were now in final retirement.