



### “The Rip Van Winkle Club”

William R. Stuyvesant unhappily lived with his domineering wife Gertrude in a magnificent Tarrytown, New York manor house situated on a palisade overlooking the majestic *Hudson River*. William often confidentially compared Gertrude (to male associates) to Dame Van Winkle, Rip Van Winkle’s shrew of a wife who lambasted, browbeat and belittled the poor lethargic farmer every day from dawn until midnight. That is where the comparison between Gertrude Stuyvesant and Dame Van Winkle ends. William R. Stuyvesant was filthy rich and neither he nor Gertrude had to work another day in their lives to maintain their expensive tastes, selfish hobbies and extravagant lifestyles.

William Stuyvesant, just like legendary Rip Van Winkle, claimed that Peter Stuyvesant, an early Dutch governor of New Netherland (later New Amsterdam, and now New York) was one of his paternal ancestors. William had inherited a considerable fortune from his father, a shrewd shopping center and real estate developer in the New York City metropolitan area. The fortunate beneficiary was lucky enough to parlay most of his inheritance in the stock market’s high technology “bull rally” in the 1990s into a fantastic financial bonanza. But William’s prosperity, his mansion and the spectacular view of the *Hudson River* constituted meager consolation when equated with Gertrude Stuyvesant’s petulant hostile disposition. William believed that he was on the brink of a nervous breakdown.

“Gertrude is much-too-demanding. She’s never happy until she’s made me feel inferior by nagging, embarrassing and berating me day and night, oftentimes in front of others,” William divulged to Harry Jenkins, one of his business partners over the telephone. “And while she’s been spending time out in Los Angeles shopping like there’s no tomorrow on *Rodeo Drive*, I’ve taken the liberty of purchasing a nice home up above Hudson on the river. It’s a little more than an hour’s drive from Tarrytown Harry, and I plan to use my new dwelling as a retreat for myself and some new friends I intend to make.”

“Oh really,” William’s partner and business consultant doubtfully said, “and how do you intend to acquire these new friends? Make sure you don’t get involved with riffraff and swindlers! They’re a dime a dozen nowadays. You might be putting your reputation in jeopardy so my advice is to be careful!” Harry Jenkins warned.

“Don’t worry!” William R. Stuyvesant assured his apprehensive business contact. “Harry, I’ll think of something to sift out the dirt from the gold.”

William Stuyvesant was quite familiar with the stellar works of author Washington Irving and had often visited the literary giant's unique mansion *Sunnyside* located just below Tarrytown on the *Hudson's* eastern bank. The remarkable home, positioned just south of the *Tappan Zee Bridge* has been converted into a museum and is now open to the general public. Along with being an authority on Washington Irving's (1783-1859) mansion as well as on *his* biography, the multimillionaire also memorized virtually every passage in the author's works *The Alhambra*, *Knickerbocker's History of New York* and finally *The Sketch Book*, which contained Irving's most popular tales, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*.

"You really love the *Catskill Mountains*, don't you Bill?" the building/construction partner asked Stuyvesant over the phone. "My wife and I go up there all the time and stay at several plush resorts that we frequent. The *Catskills* are a great getaway in either summer or winter. We used to faithfully go to Grossingers and now we occasionally vacation at Villa Roma."

"Sure do love the *Catskills*," Stuyvesant quickly acknowledged and agreed, "and next to Ichabod Crane, Rip Van Winkle has to be my favorite Washington Irving character. I think it all started when I read as a young boy about Rip leaving his village with his faithful dog Wolf to escape the tirades of wicked Dame Van Winkle. The poor henpecked fellow ascended *Thunder Mountain (Mt. Dunderberg)* to seek peaceful sanctuary from his scornful wife."

"Is that why you've bought that place up above Hudson on the river?" the voice on the other end of the telephone line asked. "Do you compare in your mind Gertrude Stuyvesant with Dame Van Winkle?" Harry Jenkins mildly interrogated. "You better not let Gertrude find *that* little secret out. She'll have you wallowing in bankruptcy in no time."

"Yes Harry, as a matter of fact I believe I did buy that property for that particular reason," Will Stuyvesant readily admitted. "Gertrude's temper tantrums are probably even worse than any that old Rip had to contend with from *his* overbearing Dame Van Winkle. I hope to find refuge and asylum from my matrimonial misery, and I want to bond and commiserate with other wealthy men that have egomaniac-type wives out to fleece their husbands of their hard-earned fortunes. Say Harry," William paused and then continued, "do you know what term Washington Irving coined for public consumption?"

"No, I haven't the slightest idea! What?" Harry's voice politely asked.

"The almighty dollar! Ha, ha, ha!" William Stuyvesant loudly laughed over the phone. "Those other rich fellows are guaranteed to empathize with my plight because they'll be in the exact same predicament as I am: rich, despondent, abused and perpetually badgered!"

"Okay Willy, good luck," Harry Jenkins offered. "Let me know how your social experiment works out with your new friends. Gotta' go!" Click.

'Poor Rip Van Winkle had the right idea,' William pensively thought while rubbing his chin. 'Even though *he* was poor, the *poor* fool needed to escape constant verbal abuse. I can send Gertrude to California and around the world, and despite my great fortune,' Stuyvesant imagined, 'the witch of a woman still perpetually berates and haunts me over the telephone. I definitely need isolation from her relentless antagonism. Yesterday the witch called me from Palm Springs and was shopping up a storm on Palm Canyon Drive. Tomorrow she'll be ten miles south in Palm Desert and hitting all of the ritzy stores on El Paseo!'

Then William R. Stuyvesant's mind was struck by a sudden inspiration. "That's what I'll do," he instantly decided. "I'll run a conspicuous ad in the business sections of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. I just want to see what kind of tangible results my lure will yield."

The unhappy tycoon sat at his computer desk, went to his Microsoft Windows program and composed the following quarter of a page advertisement:

### ATTENTION

Eligibility for admission to the prestigious *Rip Van Winkle Club* is now open. Candidates must be of Dutch heritage, must have a domineering, demanding and out-of-control wife, and must also show proof of annual net income of over a half million dollars. Benefits include male bonding and many lucrative business investment opportunities. All interested parties should submit documentation (*IRS* annual tax statement and a bona fide copy of birth certificate) to:

William R. Stuyvesant  
P. O. Box 1783  
Tarrytown, New York 10591

A full week passed without any meaningful responses to William Stuyvesant's unusual solicitation for qualified men to join the newly formed *Rip Van Winkle Club*. After ten days had elapsed from the publication of the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* ads, the disappointed real estate developer thought that his "different idea" to form a social club of disparate and desperate wealthy male Dutch socialites had been both frivolous and futile. 'Perhaps I was a little too optimistic and naïve?' the multimillionaire thought.

But on the thirteenth day, applications began arriving at P.O. Box 1783, Tarrytown, New York, 10591. Twenty-four interested men sent in letters of introduction along with duplicate annual tax returns to validate minimum \$500,000.00 net income along with accompanying copies of birth certificates to confirm authentic Dutch ancestry and heritage.

William was elated by the favorable response to his announcement. He immediately hired the services of a reputable private detective agency to investigate into the backgrounds and careers of all two-dozen applicants. After finding fault with some of the male applicants for either being a mere joint partner in the half million-dollar net income specification or for having only one parent of pure Dutch ancestry, the final list had diminished down to the following twelve lucky individuals:

Arnold Tromp                      Stockbroker, Company Vice President  
Hans Duncan                      Appliance and TV Chain Store Owner  
Charles Andersen                      Insurance Adjuster, Business Owner  
Salavatore Von Velardi      Corporate Executive, Import-Export Firm  
Andrew Kondrack: Builder/Contractor  
Peter Van Brocklin: Law Firm Senior Partner  
Jack Zeeman: Dentist, Investor  
James Erickson: Author of Bestsellers, College Professor  
Jesse Frank: Medical Doctor  
Richard DeVries: Newspaper Publisher  
Anthony Bosche: Accountant for *Fortune 500* Companies  
Sam Vander Waals: Owner: Three Automobile Dealerships

'What an excellent list of fine distinguished entrepreneurial Dutch businessmen!' William thought and relished as he evaluated his final roster of names that had qualified for the newly amalgamated *Rip Van Winkle Club*. 'It's a wonderful cross-section of American free enterprise where honorable men of Dutch ancestry will exchange stock tips and share business investment opportunities while commiserating with one another the common bond of being continually badgered by bossy and dominant wives,' Stuyvesant thought and smiled. 'Gertrude's jet won't be flying home from *L.A.* until Sunday night. I'll have just enough time to schedule a cordial *Rip Van Winkle Club* get-together at my place for next Saturday afternoon. Then after *we* get acquainted, we'll have a small motorcade up to Hudson on the river and I'll show my kindred friends the newly renovated *RVW* club lodge, which will be available to any troubled member whenever *his* obnoxious wife starts to officially agitate and aggravate him.'

At six p.m. on Saturday the newly selected members of the *Rip Van Winkle Club* assembled at the Tarrytown palisades castle of William R. Stuyvesant. It was an interesting mix of unique personalities, but everyone shared one common denominator: *his* wife was a shrew who would incessantly browbeat her successful husband into "chopped liver."

"Will, are you sure thirteen is a lucky number?" joked Andrew Kondrack, the real estate developer's new acquaintance. "I always had a weird phobia about the number thirteen! Not that I'm basically superstitious or anything."

"Thirteen sure *is* lucky, Andy," William answered after closely studying the building contractor's name tag. "Just remember Mr. Andrew Kondrack how lucky the original thirteen colonies were to the birth of the United States of America. Thirteen might actually be the luckiest number in the universe for all we know!"

Everyone overhearing their genial host's remark laughed lustily after its utterance. Instant camaraderie abounded, and soon the phenomenon known as "male bonding" set in as the thirteen new *Rip Van Winkle Club* friends having common Dutch genealogies, incomes and interests discussed random subjects like polo, golf, tennis, business, world travel, but most importantly, their despicable leeching wives.

"My old lady Helen possibly makes Dame Van Winkle look like a novitiate nun," Richard DeVries, the flamboyant and effervescent newspaper mogul indicated to William and to Andrew Kondrack. "She's enough of a spitfire to make the Devil wish he was a blessed celibate saint! Helen's tongue must weigh more than three pounds, no exaggeration!"

"My spouse is so abominably nasty that our neighbor's three Doberman pinscher attack dogs are super afraid of her!" an eavesdropping Hans Duncan added to the conviviality. "She makes *mean* seem like *kind*! Once during *Halloween* trick or treat night my wife scared two adults dressed like Dracula and Frankenstein right out of our neighborhood, and that's no hyperbole, either!"

"Will," Salvatore Von Velardi butted in as things quieted-down around the semi-circular bar, "when are we victims heading up to the *Catskills*? I need a little mountaintop rest and relaxation right this minute so I hope we don't accidentally wind-up in the *Adirondacks*. I can't wait to see your glorious lodge up above Hudson! And judging by the elegance of this splendid mansion Will, I'll bet your little hideaway is pretty damned spectacular."

"After the third round of drinks have been imbibed," Will Stuyvesant promised his new wealthy friends, "we'll then all be on the same attitude adjustment wavelength and ready to begin *our* much-needed northern expedition. I'll lead the caravan with my sports utility vehicle," the host cheerfully volunteered and pontificated, "and I noticed that three of you men have 4-Wheel-Drive *SUVs* too. Use your four-wheel drive shift when we leave the paved road and have to climb up some steep terrain to arrive at my rustic sanctuary, or should I say *our* rustic sanctuary," Stuyvesant corrected himself. "It's thoroughly removed from all semblances of the hectic big city concrete jungle civilization!"

The now-liberated men all boisterously cheered William R. Stuyvesant's exaggerated bravado, and after the third round of mixed drinks had been swiftly gulped down by the jolly millionaires (assembled around the mansion's custom-made mahogany bar), the entourage was ready to embark on the first unprecedented weekend adventure of the newly formed *Rip Van Winkle Club*.

Quite soon the contingent of amiable half-intoxicated men left William's palatial residence and clambered into their respective vehicles. Four *SUVs* formed an impromptu mini-vacation caravan and William R. Stuyvesant led the jovial members in a military-type convoy north on *Highway 9*, which parallels the noble and serene *Hudson River*.

The small *SUV* fleet soon zoomed by *Sleepy Hollow High School* on the right-hand-side and shortly later down the busy road the autos' passed by Ossining, the infamous home of *Sing Sing State Prison*. Buildings belonging to *West Point Military Academy* were soon seen on the opposite shore of the stately river, and as the cavalcade of *SUVs* meandered around rocky embankments northward in the direction of downtown Poughkeepsie, the highway inclines then became steeper and the picturesque landscape more rugged. All of the natural beauty brought out the "pioneering instinct" of the men sitting in William Stuyvesant's vehicle.

"Ah, communion with nature!" Will said to Jack Zeeman, his loquacious and very grateful front seat passenger. "Henry David Thoreau would certainly enjoy this impressive mountain excursion we're now conducting. Too bad the loner was a poor guy and wouldn't be ineligible for membership into our club if that *Walden Pond* fellow were still alive."

"Yes, I'm sure *he* would *Thoreau*ly be thrilled by it!" Jack Zeeman imaginatively returned. "But I'm sure we'll certainly enjoy some Transcendentalism without old Henry's presence."

"Then Jack, you prefer this *Catskills*' outing to listening to your tempestuous wife ranting and raving all the time?" Will deliberately inquired to get a reaction out of Zeeman. "We'll have to have a contest to see whose wife is more vicious! But I must admit that yours sounds hard to beat."

"The Rip Van Winkle Club sure beats Martha chewing me out about returning home late from night *Yankees* baseball games," Jack Zeeman merrily replied. "Martha's *barbs* are more painful than barbed wire!"

Backseat riders Charles Andersen and Jesse Frank found Jack Zeeman's marital impressions extremely hilarious as they boisterously laughed in response to the all-too-true declaration by the henpecked dentist "riding shotgun" up front with Will Stuyvesant.

“Maybe your wife scolds you because she’s an avid *Mets*’ fan!” Jesse Frank amusingly suggested to Jack Zeeman. “There might be some hidden baseball vindictiveness there! Maybe Jack, Martha owns stock in the *Mets*’ franchise without you even knowing about it. Ha, ha, ha!”

“Or maybe Martha is hard of hearing,” offered Charlie Andersen, “because I know for a fact that people with severe hearing problems tend to yell when speaking to others so that they can then hear themselves talking! And that’s no joking either! I’m bet Jack that your ferocious wife Martha has some sort of wicked hearing disability. Ha, ha, ha!”

“I don’t think so!” the blithe-spirited Jack Zeeman chortled from the front seat. “If George Washington’s Martha was anything like Martha Zeeman is, then the great *Revolutionary War* General would have become a *Tory* and jumped over to the *British* side just to get away from his wife’s flagrant diatribe. Old George would’ve been a turncoat for the redcoats!”

“If that’s the case,” William laughed as he rounded a sharp curve in the road, “then Benedict Arnold must’ve had an overbearing savage wife very similar to your Martha!” Stuyvesant gleefully exclaimed to Jack Zeeman. Wild cackling and guffawing coming from the back seat resulted from Stuyvesant’s sarcastic but acutely humorous comment.

The short procession of *SUVs* proceeded with *their* small expedition up *Route 9* and at late twilight passed through Hyde Park, rapidly buzzing by the historic and picturesque home of the revered Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the mansion/museum now converted into a popular national shrine. After driving past the magnificent Hudson River *Vanderbilt Mansion* situated on the left, the four-vehicle caravan continued on its itinerary heading north, the drivers’ next destination being Rhinebeck, a town rich in tradition dating back to the early colonial era.

“I understand that good old George Washington once slept at the *Rhinebeck Inn*,” William informed his still giddy and amused passengers, “and it’s really a pretty neat place to spend the night, even with *your* opinionated wife Jack! Maybe Gorge Washington’s Martha is still in there,” William joked to Jack Zeeman, much to everyone’s delight.

“If Washington had slept at all these places that claim he had slumbered in their beds,” Charles Andersen cynically volleyed from the rear, “then Washington would’ve slept his way right through the entire *Revolutionary War* just like poor exploited Rip Van Winkle had done.”

“I guess that the signers of the *Declaration of Independence* put their money on Washington to be our nation’s top general because they figured he’d be a real *sleepy!*” Jesse Frank obnoxiously hollered and punned from the backseat.

“You three guys are really a lot of fun!” William admitted as he stopped for a red traffic signal. “I’m glad you all decided to get away from your nasty marital mates and get together for leisurely weekends up at my place in the *Catskills*. So far, you fellas’ have been a real pleasure to be with,” Stuyvesant commended his jolly passengers. “We all need to unwind from our daily stressful schedules and also need to evade our savage wives’ negative bullying and intimidation.”

Finally, the four vehicles followed *Route 9* into the somnolent town of Hudson, where the highway converted into Fairview Avenue, which the caravan stayed on until the appearance of Rod and Gun Road on the left. After several miles of asphalt surface, William held his hand out of the opened driver-side window, signaling to the three trailing *SUVs* to enter four-wheel drive and then take a stone and gravel road up to *his* secluded mountain retreat lording over the dignified placid *Hudson River*.

“You know,” William said to his alert and jovial companions in a philosophical tone of voice, “I can just picture poor Rip Van Winkle ascending these steep precipices on a cloudy fall day with his hunting dog Wolf just to achieve some much-needed requiem from Dame Van Winkle’s relentless tyranny. We all know poor Rip Van Winkle’s burden all-too-well from local folklore! In fact, Washington Irving aptly described Rip’s unenviable plight as ‘petticoat tyranny!’ Ha, ha, ha!”

“Make sure our first toast at the lodge is dedicated to the fond memory of Rip Van Winkle,” Jack Zeeman recommended to his merry colleagues. “All in favor say ‘aye!’”

“Aye!” his three merry cohorts bellowed in raucous-but-sincere unanimity.

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The good-natured men spent the night engaged in serious entertainment and whimsical amusement. They played cards, chess, checkers and dominoes. They drank expensive whiskeys, imported beer and vintage wines. After eating a late catered supper featuring fried chicken, baked ham and basted turkey, the new fraternity members of the *Rip Van Winkle Club* reminisced about past steamy romances and about exotic tropical vacations in Hawaii, the Caribbean and along the French Riviera. Will was elated that the members were all compatible, sharing and building a new-found camaraderie.

Next the club members conversed about the simple joys identified with the biological processes known as eating and drinking, and finally the topic of conversation centered upon the very unfortunate marital predicament of the newly organized club's special namesake, Rip Van Winkle.

"Rip drank the delicious Holland gin obtained from an enchanted barrel at Henry Hudson's wild mountain party," Will nostalgically recollected (and reminded his new-found friends) from the Washington Irving legend, "and the powerful substance put our favorite reveler to sleep for twenty long years. That's not such a bad sentence when you're married to an overbearing shrew like Dame Van Winkle, who sounds almost as treacherous as Jack Zeeman's toxic wife Martha."

"That twenty-year sleep was more of a blessing than a curse," Andrew Kondrack steadfastly maintained. "Old Rip didn't have to confront or listen to his belligerent wife's ugly outbursts for two whole decades."

"Yes, most definitely a truism," Peter Van Brocklin chimed in, "but poor Rip lost twenty valuable years off his life where he could've enjoyed many satisfying draughts of ale at Nicholas Vedder's tavern. The impoverished Dutch farmer returned to his village twenty years later not recognizing a single inhabitant in the entire place."

"I really feel badly for the exploited gent, even if he was only a fictitious character," Anthony Bosche amiably qualified and contributed to the discussion. "First of all, we all sleep eight hours a day, so that means we really only consciously live around fifty years instead of the customary seventy-five-year average that biology textbooks and encyclopedias inaccurately state. One third of our lives is spent snoring in bed!"

"I see where you're getting at Tony," interrupted William R. Stuyvesant. "Rip Van Winkle was callously cheated another twenty years by Henry Hudson's cruel sleeping spell, so in effect, Rip was an old man at only thirty years of age. What a lousy bummer no matter how one studies it!"

After cleaning up the extensive waste the sumptuous feast had generated, the euphoric men strolled out to the four *SUVs* and removed their suitcases to lug into spacious "the RVW Lodge." Soon the sportive gentlemen all retired to their assigned quarters, satisfied and content, waiting for a morning of adventure following a restful night's slumber.

The next morning, dark clouds shrouded the distant mountain peaks, making that particular extension of the great *Appalachian* chain appear clad in a dull blue and purple-hued haze. Peter Van Brocklin, Salvatore Von Velardi and Andrew Kondrack were early risers that could have taught the area Hudson roosters a lesson or two in "dawn punctuality." The three new acquaintances were casually standing on the back-patio deck of William R. Stuyvesant's "backwoods retreat" and were admiring the scenic tranquility of the passive *Hudson River* down in the valley while contemplating and discussing the awesome *Catskill Mountains*. William R. Stuyvesant exited the expansive converted ranch-home-to-lodge overlooking the *Hudson* and soon joined his rejuvenated guests. The sightseers were carrying three pair of binoculars with a fourth very expensive pair being strapped around Will's neck.

"Here, use these peepers to survey the pristine beauty that surrounds us!" Will suggested as he handed his high-tech' high-powered binoculars to the three men casually stationed on the wooden platform deck. The four spectators took turns peering into the new ultra-modern magnifiers and with their elbows casually resting on a sturdy black wrought iron railing, the men gazed out at the wondrous environmental splendors all around them. Suddenly something highly irregular had been spotted.

"Hey guys," Andrew Kondrack observed and said in a mellow-but-serious tone of voice, "there seems to be some kind of ancient ship anchored out near that rock formation down there to our right. Can you guys see it?"

All four pair of binoculars instantly focused on Andrew Kondrack's rather curious sighting. William R. Stuyvesant, a student of Dutch antiquity, immediately recognized the identity of the object in question.

"Well I'll be a chimpanzee's first cousin!" Will emphatically marveled and exclaimed. "That ship down there in the river is a replica of *Henry Hudson's* prized vessel, the *Half Moon*. Has anyone read any recent newspaper

articles about a model of the *Half Moon* visiting this area of New York north of Hudson? That's what that ship has to be, a replica!"

None of the men recollected reading any such journalism, so Will anxiously suggested that the *Rip Van Winkle Club* membership hop into the four *SUVs* and take a narrow side trail down the scenic mountainside to further investigate the strange ship anchored near the *Hudson's* shore.

The men inside the house were summoned from their shaving in front of vanity mirrors, from the breakfast table and from their beds, and in a matter of five hectic minutes, all thirteen adventurous souls scrambled outside the lodge and hopped into the vehicles. Will led the way in his silver *Ford Expedition* down the steep sloping trail to the vicinity where the mysterious ship had dropped anchor in the historic river.

Upon reaching a plateau overlooking the "facsimile *Half Moon*," the four *SUVs* halted one after the other in military parade fashion and the thirteen intrigued occupants got out in a hurry to satisfy their heightened curiosity about the handsome ship of yore and its crew. Much to their astonishment, three little men, each no more than four and a half foot tall, were climbing up an embankment and slowly approaching the men's location from below.

Each of the tiny grizzled-bearded men was dressed in the antique Dutch fashion that was emblematic of late seventeenth century haberdashery. Their extraordinary attire was comprised of cloth' jerkins, and below the short coats the cute but sour-faced fellows wore several pairs of baggy breeches that were handsomely ornamented with rows of buttons lined down each side. Each diminutive "midget Dutchman" (as Will Stuyvesant had labeled them) had been toting on *his* shoulder a small barrel, more of a cask than a barrel, and each fellow appeared quite encumbered by *his* object's weight. The little gents seemed preoccupied with their strenuous labor and were unperturbed by the sudden appearance and confrontation of the thirteen tall men recently arrived from the Rip Van Winkle Lodge.

"Hey little guys," Will Stuyvesant affably greeted, "let us help you carry your barrels up the mountain. We're just brimming with energy."

"This must be some kind of re-enactment of the *Rip Van Winkle* tale," Salvatore Von Velardi conjectured and articulated to all within hearing distance. "But if this experience is true and not a mass hallucination, then these tiny men will eventually lead us to Henry Hudson and his *Half Moon* crew?"

Just then a loud rumble of thunder rolled through the distant mountains, and the noise was succeeded by additional low growling peals to the northwest.

"Legend says that that's Henry Hudson and his crew of little men playing a friendly game of ninepins up in the *Catskills*," Peter Van Brocklin related to anyone and everyone willing to listen. "If I'm not mistaken, these little men will take us to *their* leader just like they had done with Rip Van Winkle."

The thirteen visitors assisted the three wee individuals with *their* indigenous labor, thus alleviating much of *their* struggle and toil. About five hundred feet up a narrow rocky footpath, the head small Dutchman dressed in ancient garb solemnly uttered to a solid rock façade, "In Henry Hudson's great name, open a shortcut to *our* destination's game."

Amazingly, the dense rock façade slowly swung open as if it was a lightweight door on hinges. A long dark tunnel was immediately exposed and soon the sixteen human forms took turns lugging the three liquor casks further into the dark hollow, which extended a thousand feet or so into the base of the mountain ridge.

A dull light was visible at the tunnel's other end, and upon exiting the dark cavity, the sixteen trekkers instantly perceived a beautiful ravine with rolling mounds and lush green grassy meadows. Luxurious sunshine radiated down on the splendid dell, and at least fifty other little men dressed in the same-style sixteenth century ancient Dutch costumes were idly standing around and engaging in small talk. But oddly, each tiny gent had a very melancholy expression on his face.

"Why are they all so sad looking?" Andrew Kondrack whispered to Will Stuyvesant after the two millionaires lowered their heavy cask onto a wooden platform that had been tacitly designated by one of the austere-looking diminutive fellows. "To use one of Jack London's favorite words, they all look 'lugubrious'."

"According to legend," Will speculated and whispered, "these little men are immortal. They are unchanging in age as time advances onward. Because they're all immortal," Will Stuyvesant continued his incredible explanation, "they're bored with their mortal existence and quite unhappy having to live forever. They've seen everything once too often and are not at all enamored with the monotony of life's repetitious events."

“And check out those other mischievous little imps partying over there,” Jack Zeeman indicated to his companions with his right hand. “They’re playing a game of bowling on the green and simulating the sound of thunder echoing through the mountains when the ball strikes the pins.”

“Ninepins, not bowling,” Will aptly corrected. “That game we’re watching is often referred to as duckpins!”

Henry Hudson dispatched one of his chief wee English-speaking crew-members to the area of the thirteen spellbound twenty-first century Americans, and after a polite introduction, Heinrich addressed his former helpers.

“Thank you for assisting us in transporting the Holland gin to our big party,” Heinrich began his impromptu speech. “As you gentlemen might know, every twenty years the crew of the *Half Moon* returns to the *Hudson River Valley* to review and celebrate our past explorations and expeditions. It’s quite a treat for us despite our customary sad-looking countenances.”

“Have you ever heard of a fellow named Rip Van Winkle?” Jack Zeeman nervously asked Heinrich.

“That’s confidential information I’m not at liberty to discuss,” Heinrich diplomatically answered.

“Well then, how come there’re three barrels of Holland gin and not just one?” Will politely asked the peculiar-looking neurotic-sounding little fellow. “Are you intending to have a bigger party than usual this afternoon?”

“Well kind Sir,” Heinrich defensively replied, “I strongly suggest that you listen attentively. The gin from each of the barrels will produce a different effect. One barrel’s contents will have no effect on the drinker of its gin, one of the barrels will age the drinker twenty years, and a chug from the third random barrel will make the lucky drinker twenty years younger.”

“Wow!” Hans Duncan (the wealthy appliance distributor) amply exclaimed. “It’s sort of like a casino gamble on the wheel game with numbers one to three rotating around,” Hans accurately interpreted. “If I choose correctly and can tack twenty years onto my life and simultaneously become two decades younger in the meantime,” Hans hypothesized and declared, “then it’s worth the gamble to be able to outlive my nasty wife.”

“And even if *you* choose to drink from the wrong cask,” Charlie Andersen guessed and explained, “then *you* still might choose the barrel that’ll have no effect at all and still enjoy a cool refreshing mug of Holland gin. That’s now reduced to a fifty-fifty chance.”

“But fellas,” Will Stuyvesant cautioned his new-found comrades, “if someone selects the wrong barrel out of the three, then that person will be doomed to losing twenty years off his already pathetic life and will wake up an old man ready for the cemetery. Is that gambol worth the gamble?”

“Do you mean to say that *you* actually believe all this idiotic nonsense?” Arnold Tromp criticized. “This is the most preposterous hoax I’ve ever witnessed. It *is* in my fairly astute estimation and educated opinion that this farce is absolutely beyond a shadow of a doubt a silly college fraternity-type initiation prank of the greatest magnitude!”

“Then you Sir wouldn’t hesitate to prove *me* wrong by taking the first sample,” Heinrich offered Arnold Tromp as the gallery of fifty little men in attendance laughed exceedingly at their foreman’s intelligent challenge to *his* dubious guest. “Would you care to sample a sip Mr. Arnold Tromp?”

“Well, I’ll have to think about it and reconsider my options,” Arnold Tromp uneasily conceded. “This is indeed a most difficult choice we’re being pressured into making. Hey! How did *you* know my name?”

Again, the fifty or so little dwarfs roared out in laughter as the sound of a small rolling ball smashed against a triangular formation of duckpins on the ravine’s lush green.

“I’ll bet a cool thousand dollars with any of you that this decision Henry Hudson is presenting us with is for real,” William R. Stuyvesant boldly offered the other twelve astonished members of the *Rip Van Winkle Club*. “Who’s got the guts to put *his* money where his mouth is?”

All of the twelve other “party crashers” presumed and believed that the entire scenario was a “clever theatrical trick” that had been brilliantly contrived, paid for, sponsored and orchestrated by their illustrious host, William R. Stuyvesant of Tarrytown, New York. Salvatore Von Velardi was the first bold fellow to wager a thousand dollars, believing that Will would graciously reimburse him after the completion of “the chicanery.” The other eleven meanderers all gave *their* pledge that they would pay William R. Stuyvesant a thousand dollars each should “the deception” indeed turn out to be a “functioning aberration.”

William was nominated to choose first, so Stuyvesant drank a cup of Holland gin from barrel number three. Arnold Tromp, Salvatore Von Velardi, Peter Van Brocklin, James Erickson, Jesse Frank and Sam Vander Waals

all were given empty mugs that were quickly filled and the “guinea pigs” eagerly quaffed down their draughts drawn from barrel number two.

The remaining six thoroughly entertained wealthy gentlemen all lustily drank down Holland gin from the cask labeled in plain English “Number One.”

Will Stuyvesant began feeling dizzy, first losing his balance with wobbly knees and then acting irrational with planets, stars and galaxies spinning around inside his head. The intoxicated multimillionaire staggered and tottered about, clumsily and awkwardly gyrating from side to side as if he were a defective spinning top. The organizer of the *Rip Van Winkle Club's Catskill Mountain* excursion trudged off, walking between and around several jagged crags, gradually disappearing over the horizon as he cautiously attempted descending the rugged ridge while still under the influence of the very potent Holland gin.

Will Stuyvesant's twelve skeptical and traitorous apostles also staggered around like a bevy of soused alcoholics, desperately searching for a soft spot on the velvet-green-grass to take much-needed naps. Each man's fate was determined by the numbered cask from which *he* had selected a draught to drink.

Hans Duncan, Charles Andersen, Andrew Kondrack, Jack Zeeman, Richard DeVries and Anthony Boshe all unfortunately drank the Holland gin from barrel “Number One.” Each man was destined to sleep in the mystical *Catskill Mountains* for twenty-years and thusly validating himself' as a true disciple of the inimitable Rip Van Winkle and also demonstrating that *he* was a dedicated member of the *Rip Van Winkle Club*. Upon waking up, Richard DeVries, the youngest of the first cask group would be age seventy-one in the year 2022, and Andrew Kondrack, the eldest among the ill-fated half dozen imbibers would be ninety-two upon awakening from his unanticipated slumber two decades later.

As for the visitors that partook of the second cask, Arnold Tromp, Salvatore Von Velardi, Peter Van Brocklin, James Erickson, Jesse Frank and Sam Vander Waals, all were miraculously rejuvenated with twenty years fantastically shaved off their ages. However, the sly and clever dwarf' Heinrick had not disclosed to the vain and gullible men that they would be assigned as cabin boys to perform myriad duties and drudgery-assignments on the good ship *Half Moon*. And regrettably, the six hapless victims of youth revisited were all now permanently destined to have futures laden with misery as servants of the no-nonsense taskmaster Henry Hudson and his disconsolate and temperamental crew of fickle little seventeenth century Dutch men.

As for William R. Stuyvesant, the foundering founder of the notorious *Rip Van Winkle Club*, his fate was not a benign one, either. The multimillionaire awoke (without aging) just before dawn on Sunday morning and found himself' lying on soggy turf between a termite-infested hollowed-out fallen oak tree and a clump of mountain sticker bushes and accompanying briars.

William immediately recollected his misadventure the day before with the irascible little ghostly Dutchmen in the very outlandish *Catskill Mountain* amphitheater-like ravine. The victim felt arthritis in his wrists and elbows and rheumatism in his back's lumbar area. Will's initial instinct was to feel for a long, shaggy gray beard', which would be evidence that he had been betrayed by Henry Hudson and *his* naughty crew and that *he* had indeed slept for twenty years just like his legendary mentor, Rip Van Winkle. Stuyvesant was glad to note that no lengthy grizzled beard had grown from his face and the befuddled man was never so happy to feel his whiskers' bristles.

‘I wonder what happened to the others?’ William meditated as he feebly rose to his feet and then brushed some skittering insects and loose dirt from his light-blue denim jeans and from his navy-blue sweatshirt. ‘I hope I can find my way out of this forsaken place and back to my *SUV*. Thank God I had only slept for one night!’

The addled fellow's head was still groggy from the potent alcohol he had consumed the prior morning, so Will' prudently shuffled down the ridge and soon recognized the verdant ravine where the games of *ninpins* had been played. ‘This is also where I had made the mistake of taking the first sample of Holland gin from the third cask,’ he regretted with a degree of guilt. ‘This is like a nightmare revisited.’

Being distracted by his own vain thoughts, William accidentally stumbled over a log, fell onto the ground and then tumbled forward several hundred feet down a slope to the footpath that led to the dark tunnel shortcut that channeled through the base of the mountain. ‘I think I know where I'm at now!’ he remembered.

After Stuyvesant had rolled down to the base of the ravine, much to his consternation the tunnel exit was not observable, so Will recalled the rhyming language uttered by diminutive Heinrick at the long, hollow dank rock corridor's other end. ‘In Henry Hudson's great name, open a shortcut to *my* destination's game!’ Stuyvesant shouted with his hands cupped over his mouth, his voice echoing throughout the ravine and resounding through the surrounding mountain precipices.

The rock façade slowly creaked open like a squeaky door with rusty hinges, revealing the same fabulous tunnel shortcut that the three dwarfs had led the loyal members of the *Rip Van Winkle Club* through the morning before. ‘This tunnel is like a magical umbilical cord connecting the material world with a bizarre fantasy world,’ Will’s dazed mind thought and concluded. ‘Now all I have to do is walk the thousand feet, get inside my *SUV* and drive back to civilization. I almost want to see and hear Gertrude again!’ the disoriented explorer insanely imagined.

The secret tunnel was just as damp and dreary as it had been the day before, and upon entering the outside world dimmed by a dark cloudy overcast sky on the opposite end, the rock façade soon mechanically squealed shut much to Will Stuyvesant’s awe and bewilderment. Then the solid rock door banged against the mountain base with a thud, quite effectively concealing its secret access to the secluded magical ravine.

Still stunned and mildly confused from his weird ordeal, William Stuyvesant cautiously descended the final three hundred feet down a ridge, the route leading to the aforementioned mountain trail where the four all-terrain vehicles had been neatly parked in a row the morning before. ‘I must take it slow, for if I plunge down this last incline from this height,’ Will assessed, ‘then I’ll risk breaking an arm, a leg or both. If I survive this arcane misadventure, no one’s ever going to believe my sensational tale! And all four *SUVs* are still parked down there!’

With careful diligence, the man’s aching legs finally carried his weary body down the remaining part of the ridge closest to his trusty four-wheel drive vehicle. The sky was still partially dark with the new day’s sun ready to perform its daily resurrection on the black and pink eastern horizon.

Arriving at his *Ford Expedition*, Will frantically fumbled in his jeans’ pockets for his keys but then he remembered that in his rush to make contact with Heinrick and *his* two dwarfish associates, Stuyvesant had inadvertently left the starting device in the *SUV*’s ignition. ‘Thank God it’s still there,’ Will thought as he opened the driver-side door and gingerly entered his beloved vehicle. ‘Now to get out of here!’

The reliable *Expedition*’s motor whined and then started and next Will methodically backed the vehicle up and swiftly turned the *SUV* around with his hood pointed in the direction of downtown Hudson. ‘I should report the whole insane incident to the police,’ Stuyvesant logically considered, ‘but the cops would never believe me in a million years and accuse me of being delusional. The only thing I have going for me is my credibility and my track record of being a multimillionaire along with the fact that twelve highly successful businessmen will soon be reported missing to the authorities. I feel that I’m responsible for all of these extraordinary things happening!’

William had an inclination to turn on the specially installed *Bose* radio system to listen to the news but before he could honor his next impulse, the man’s eyes instantly beheld a dark foreboding spectral image remaining stationary three hundred feet ahead. An ominous frightening figure sitting atop an enormous black horse stood directly in *his* path.

‘Oh my God!’ Will’s mind immediately recognized and feared. ‘It’s the fabled *Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow*! What utter craziness! How could a fictitious character from one eerie legend suddenly enter into the enactment of another? How horrendous! This torture is too surreal to be real! Not even Gertrude would wish such a cursed punishment on me!’

Will sat petrified like a contemporary Ichabod Crane in the front driver’s seat of his dependable *Ford Expedition*, believing that *he* could outrace the formidable ruthless *Headless Horseman* once *he* could safely make it to a paved highway. The driver slowly inched forward, waiting for the right opportunity to gun the silver *SUV* onto a side gravel and stone winding road that paralleled the majestic *Hudson River*.

Showing marvelous timing and dexterity, Stuyvesant, out of his dire need for self-preservation, quickly rotated the steering wheel to the right and soon his vehicle was speeding down the mountain ridge trail with the jet-black horse and its tenacious executioner closing the gap between William and the rider’s speedy stallion. Stuyvesant had never before been so alarmed, so desperate, so endangered and so panic-stricken in all his life.

Will’s reliable speedometer registered fifty miles an hour as he maneuvered around precarious curves and up and down treacherous terrain that would not ordinarily accommodate such high speed, but much to *his* trepidation, the well-conditioned horse remained close behind. Fortunately, a mile stretch of straightaway was dead ahead for Will, so Stuyvesant again mashed his foot down on the accelerator, with the dependable *SUV* rapidly attaining a speed of eighty miles per hour. Still, the fleet galloping black steed was easily able to keep pace with the great instant velocity achieved by the silver *Ford Expedition*.

‘This is impossible!’ Will fearfully thought. ‘Not even a gazelle or a cheetah could run this fast! This horrible anomaly is contrary to reason! It goes against both nature and science!’

The fantastic wildly snorting black steed with its determined headless rider in the saddle then incredibly pulled alongside the terrified *SUV* driver. A totally hysterical and delirious Will Stuyvesant took a brief glimpse at the shocking apparition, which suddenly removed a handgun from a concealed pocket inside its ghostly apparel and then aimed and fired the lethal weapon at the *SUV*’s front wheel.

The bullets from the devastating blasts punctured the *Expedition*’s left front tire. Will Stuyvesant abruptly lost control of the speeding all-terrain vehicle. The SUV swerved to the right and then skidded off of the already dangerous stone and gravel road, careened down a ridge of smooth weather-worn rocks and then violently plummeted into the formerly tranquil *Hudson River*. Both William Reynolds Stuyvesant’s life and the short-lived *Rip Van Winkle Club* had been fatefully and simultaneously erased from the face of the Earth.

Much to the shock of Hudson River Valley aristocrats, after Will Stuyvesant’s corpse had been recovered from the cold river, his lengthy obituary appeared three days later in various New York City and Tarrytown newspapers. Accolades abounded in the various print media articles. William Reynolds Stuyvesant was described and praised as a “generous community-minded philanthropist” who will be deeply missed by his affectionate wife Gertrude Stuyvesant, who tearfully eulogized her husband during his somber church funeral service and then completely out of character, the normally stoic woman later cried incessantly at her husband’s solemn burial.

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### **The Psychic Dimension: Part Two by Jay Dubya**

The thirty-four novellas presented in *The Psychic Dimension; Part II* are works of pure fiction.

The stories’ themes deal with various types of psychic and paranormal experiences. Any character resemblance to anyone living on Planet Earth is positively coincidental. In addition, any fictional setting scenario is also coincidental.

*The Psychic Dimension, Part II* is author Jay Dubya’s 45th published hardcover/paperback book. Other story collections by this prolific author are *The Psychic Dimension; The FBI Inspector; First Person Stories; Modern Mythology; Prime-Time Crime Time; UFO: Utterly Fantastic Occurrences; Snake Eyes and Boxcars; Snake Eyes and Boxcars, Part II; Time Travel Tales; Suite 16; One Baker’s Dozen; Two Baker’s Dozen; RAM: Random Articles and Manuscripts; Pieces of Eight; Pieces of Eight, Part II; Pieces of Eight, Part III; Pieces of Eight, Part IV; Nine New Novellas; Nine New Novellas, Part II; Nine New Novellas, Part III; and Nine New Novellas, Part IV.*

**Cold Coffee/BMGN 5 Star Review:** *The Psychic Dimension (Part Two)* is a group of very well written short stories that deal with fictional psychic and paranormal experiences.

Each story is independent from each other which makes this the perfect book to carry with you to read on the go. I find short story the hardest books to review because the content is broad.

I am going to attempt to share a tidbit from each story in order to show you the unique quality of each complex story lines. With each story comes an internal struggle where there are decisions to made and consequences. Each one of these stories could be their own book in their own rights.

The thirty-four novellas presented in *The Psychic Dimension; Part II* are works of pure fiction. The stories’ themes deal with paranormal and psychic experiences.

Let me share a synopsis of the novellas in this book. I enjoyed reading them all, but some of my favorites are: "The Attic Television", "The Music Portal", "The Rip Van Winkle Club", "Like Clockwork" and "A Photo Finish". Let the author know your favorite selections once you are finished reading.

**Multiple Choice:** Some quizzes are design to test one's memory, others are of a competitor nature, while some have a hidden message. Intro to the short story: "As veteran Agents Salvatore Velardi, Arthur Orsi and Dan Blachford entered Philadelphia FBI headquarters at 600 Arch Street, the three black-suited government detectives had been casually discussing the amusing notion that their distinguished boss Chief Inspector Joe Giraldo was indeed one hundred percent psychic. But as the chatty trio would soon discover, the astonishing and confounding "Multiple Choice Case" would become a perplexing development that would virtually confirm their speculative suspicions about their boss's seemingly uncanny paranormal abilities."

**The Attic Television:** Some antiques bring us joy, others bring back memories, but could an attic TV bring back history right before our eyes? Intro to the short story: "John P. Walker was a self-confirmed recluse. He shied away from having close friends, thinking that they would be more interested in his prolific Merrill Lynch Cash Management Account than in the distrustful man's true companionship. There were hundreds of acquaintances in his computer e-mail address book, but his dependable friends could be counted twice on a thumb-less hand. 'A secret is only a secret when it belongs to me,' the slightly paranoid man reckoned. 'As soon as it is shared with one other person it's a secret in jeopardy.'"

**The Timeless Sports Car:** Sometimes we wish for frivolous things, other times we wish for extravagant things, and then there are times when we wish for the impossible. Intro to the short story: "Henry Johnson was very content with his station in life. The man was a successful lawyer in his hometown of Hammonton, New Jersey and was looking forward to early retirement. Johnson had married his high school sweetheart Lois and the couple had three grown sons, Howard, Harry and Hugh. 'Howard is now ready to take over the family law firm,' Henry Johnson thought as he stepped out onto the Bellevue Avenue/Horton Street pavement from his Attorney Office, 'and Harry is a prominent doctor at Jefferson University Hospital in Philly. And young Hugh is a prominent real estate developer in Saddle Brook up in North Jersey. What more could a 59-year-old man wish for?'"

**Parallel Developments:** Twins typically have a unique psych super power that the rest of us with siblings didn't inherit. Frank and Fred Davies will stretch the limits of parallel developments. Intro to the short story: "Twin brothers Frank and Fred Davies were 1981 graduates of Hammonton High School, North Liberty Street, Hammonton, New Jersey 08037. From their early youth the twins were complete opposites both in demeanor and in physical prowess. Fred Davies was always an extrovert and a competitive athlete while his twin facsimile Frank had a shy personality genuinely punctuated with humility and modesty. In June of 1987 Fred graduated from Philadelphia's Temple University with a law degree and Frank evolved out of New Brunswick's Rutgers University with a master's degree in biology research. In the fall of 1991 during a dual ceremony Frank and Fred ironically married twin sisters Lois and Eleanor Cataldi of Bridgeton, a large town situated twenty-four miles southwest of Hammonton."

**Window of Opportunity:** They say that opportunity only knocks once, but I dare say it is more often if we live with an open mind to the possibilities. Intro to the short story: "The May Installation Meeting assigning new officers for the Hammonton, New Jersey Lions Club had just adjourned and afterwards, two recently appointed minor functionaries were discussing their basic roles with an elderly club member in the upstairs bar of Rocco's Town House on North Third Street. The all-too-garrulous District 16-C Governor had already departed the premises and Lontamer Mitchell Spencer, Tailtwister Michael Giberson and feeble Past President Julius Stetson were standing at the tavern's bar casually engaged in a genial conversation over their after-meeting cocktails.

"It's good to see new blood coming into the club and accepting active roles," eighty-two-year-old Julius Stetson praised the local Lions Club's two new energized recruits. "I was a charter member of the club way back in 1963," Julius informed his respectful listeners before sipping his cold Southern Comfort on the rocks,

“and we had only a dozen members when John F. Kennedy was the country’s President, mostly businessmen owning stores and properties up on Route 30.”

**The Music Portal:** One’s occupation doesn’t always coincide with one’s aptitudes, abilities and creative side. Intro to the short story: “Up until four months ago I had regarded my very ordinary life as being a dismal failure. My mediocre occupation ever since I was fresh out of high school has been that of a dissatisfied shoe salesman at Brock Shoes Outlet in Berlin, New Jersey. For thirty-one miserable years I would loyally commute each working day from my French Street home in nearby Hammonton, a flourishing agricultural community located twelve miles east of Berlin and also conveniently situated midway between vacation destination Atlantic City and bustling Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the distances being thirty miles in either direction from my house to the East Coast gambling Mecca and to Benjamin Franklin’s City of Brotherly Love.

**Soldier of Misfortune:** Soldiers endure physical, emotional and mental fatigue on and off the battle field so the rest of us can enjoy the freedoms their service provides. Intro to the short story: “Dr. Angelo DeMarco had recently retired as the head psychiatrist at New Jersey’s Ancora State Hospital so that he could devote his full time to expanding his private practice, which was located inside a second-floor office suite at the southeast corner of 2nd Street and Bellevue Avenue, Hammonton, New Jersey. The psych’ physician was perusing a letter received from Noreen Pearson, the wife of a twenty-five-year-old Army Corporal, and the distraught enlisted soldier had been complaining to his spouse of severe migraine headaches, of terrible repetitious nightmares, and also the afflicted young serviceman was often heard uttering “indiscernible gibberish” during his erratic nightly sleeps.”

**The Rip Van Winkle Club:** Who ever said marriage is work, was not joking. Couples can live in denial, disillusionment and even delusion. It is important that we are careful for what we wish for. Intro to the short story: “William R. Stuyvesant unhappily lived with his domineering wife Gertrude in a magnificent Tarrytown, New York manor house situated on a palisade overlooking the majestic Hudson River. William often confidentially compared Gertrude (to male associates) to Dame Van Winkle, Rip Van Winkle’s shrew of a wife who lambasted, browbeat and belittled the poor lethargic farmer every day from dawn until midnight. That is where the comparison between Gertrude Stuyvesant and Dame Van Winkle ends. William R. Stuyvesant was filthy rich and neither he nor Gertrude had to work another day in their lives to maintain their expensive tastes, selfish hobbies and extravagant lifestyles.”

**Fantasy Book Land:** Vacation is a time of renewal and relaxation. Although some turn out better than others. Intro to the short story: “Frank and Betsy Lanier were glad that the busy and hectic summer season was over at their well-established sixty-year-old South Jersey family business going by the all-too-familiar trade name of Fantasy Book Land. Finally, it was time for the couple to enjoy a well-deserved and relaxing fall hiatus, a getaway Columbus Day weekend. In South Jersey, the deciduous tree leaves were resplendently beginning to transform into their autumnal hues and to the needed-to-be-rejuvenated Laniers, a much-anticipated tour bus trip up to New Hampshire’s White Mountains represented a most welcome departure from the continuous daily grind of adult responsibility. “I’m glad we’re again going with Ralph’s Bus Tours up to New England,” Betsy said to Frank as the husband pulled his black Mercedes into the Cape May Senior Citizens’ Tour Bus Terminal parking lot. “The change in scenery will be most appreciated. We’ll be able to forget our identities and duties for the next four days and be just two ordinary anonymous vacationers seeking asylum from grueling drudgery and accountability.”

**Superstitions:** Superstitions can be used as a tool to guide, avoid pitfalls or just amuse us. Intro to the short story: “Real estate broker James Brewster was elated, not because he had just completed reading Dale Carnegie’s best-selling book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* for the fifth time, but because in March of 2009 the wheeler-dealer had shrewdly purchased a three-year-old beachfront three-story home (with an elevator servicing each suite) on the Boardwalk and 16th Street in Ocean City, New Jersey for the ridiculously-low sum of 1.5 million dollars, acquiring the residence as a vacation home but more importantly, owning and leveraging the dwelling principally as a seasonal investment-return rental property.

'I didn't even need Dale Carnegie's sound advice to negotiate this handsome bargain!' Brewster joyfully reasoned. Being a born-opportunist, the risk-taking entrepreneur wanted to take full advantage of the in-progress economic recession and then in three years, capitalize on the presumed 2.25 million-dollar value of the three-year-old beach home should the country's money cash-flow scenario improve back to normal."

**Trestles, Overpasses & Blue Skies:** A change of scenery may be good for the soul but it can come with its own peculiarities. Intro to the short story: "Inspector Ned Carson sat at his office desk on the third floor of Philadelphia's Race Street "Round House," casually watching vehicular traffic flowing in both directions across the Ben Franklin Bridge connecting Pennsylvania with New Jersey, the span being a mile-long distance across the historic Delaware River. Carson's reverie was instantly broken when his office partner Detective Timothy Ransom entered the room carrying two fresh cups of coffee and then respectfully handed one of the steaming Styrofoam containers to his thirty-year-veteran colleague.

"Tim, every March right before spring arrives on the calendar, I get the strong urge to get out of the congested city and use a week of my treasured vacation time to go either hunting or fishing with you," Inspector Ned Carson mused and said. "But I gotta' confess that our good wives have been quite understanding in allowing us to participate in some valued male bonding at suburban bars, and Jenny trusts me when I'm away from town at a distant convention with you for a week or so."

**The Evil Force:** Conventional wisdom regarding the forces of good and evil might not extend beyond our Galaxy. Intro to the short story: "I, Colonel Cliff Dawson am accurately recording this incredible account into my personal electronic journal and not into the official ship's log for reasons that will obviously be self-explanatory later on in this narrative. Captain Jeremy Parker and I have been on a courageous ten-year space mission exploring outer space and methodically charting our landmark discoveries for the International World Coalition. Our well-publicized mission was described in the world's media as "an awesome enterprise" and quite basically, I've always been attracted to the prospect of being one of the first 'daring humans' to find intelligent human-like life thriving elsewhere in the nearby Milky Way Galaxy. Our lengthy expedition started out from Earth in the year 2534 A.D. and it is now, according to our ship's reliable instrument panel May 5th of 2542. The Newton III is now ready to lift off and leave the planet that Captain Parker and I have labeled EL-741, which is an Earth-Like sphere rotating around a Sun-Like star that my cohort and I have named Mater Seven."

**Rapid Crystals:** Technically from any age, is only as good as the inventor, installer and the user. Intro to the short story: "Harry DeLareto sat erect upon his black leather swivel chair behind his desk in his walnut-paneled Elwood, New Jersey insurance office. The broker was preoccupied making a ten percent depreciation adjustment to the 'inflated claim' submitted by the Nesco Volunteer Fire Department that had recently and ironically burned to the ground in a raging inferno.

On Harry's desk were random additional claims from Mrs. Rhonda Leonetti of Atsion, who had just been involved in an automobile accident, Arthur Noto of Hamilton Township, who had recently collided his motorboat with a Mullica River marina dock and another one from Jennifer Friel, a Sweetwater resident who had experienced severe flooding into her house when the normally tranquil Mullica River had overflowed its banks during a torrential three-day downpour. As DeLareto was fumbling through the assorted bureaucratic paperwork that was frustrating his mental health, the gentleman's very capable secretary Nancy Davenport suddenly buzzed his desk from the adjoining room.

"Harry, Mr. And Mrs. David DeLaurentis had to cancel this afternoon's appointment because their son Alfred has crashed his motorbike into a barn on a blueberry farmer's property over in Hammonton and they're now at Atlantic Care Hospital in Pomona. The boy's all right but that'll definitely be another injury insurance claim appearing on your desk within the next few weeks,"

**Dream-On:** Night dreams inhabit our subconscious but their effects can bleed through into our daily lives. Intro to the short story: "Hammonton, New Jersey resident Samuel Charles Dexter was both depressed and despondent. His recent divorce from his ultra-dominant wife Sharon left the man's mind in an emotional state of shambles. Sam's friends at the Vineland, New Jersey plastics manufacturing company where Dexter was

employed as an accountant suggested that the numbers guru should seek professional therapy counseling. One of his fellow co-workers had highly recommended Dr. Adam Neville, a reputable psychiatrist whose practice was at the corner of Landis Avenue and Third Street in downtown Vineland. Samuel Charles Dexter honored his June 7th, 2010 “get acquainted appointment” and was cheerfully escorted into Dr. Neville’s office by Miss Emily Jensen, the psychiatrist’s secretary and bookkeeper.

“Mr. Dexter, you say in your letter of introduction you’ve been having peculiar dreams lately that seem to be compounding your mercurial emotional instability,” Dr. Adam Neville diplomatically commenced his narrative.”

**Ship of Fool:** In some cultures, photography has always associated with the interruption of and thus mirror into our soul. Intro to the short story: “Philip Greco was born and raised in Hammonton, New Jersey but in the 1970s the elderly gentleman absolutely loved vacationing for a full week every August in sun-kissed Ocean City, Maryland. Phil Greco had memorized every commercial retail business in the inlet’s five-block section of the boardwalk starting from South First Street right up to North Division where the Route 50 Bridge over the bay channeled automobile traffic into town. Trimper’s Rides, the Red Apple Treats Stand, Dayton’s Chicken, Marty’s Playland Arcade, Sportland Arcade, Dumser’s Ice Cream, The Purple Moose Saloon, Thrashers French Fries, the Alaska Hot Dog Stand, Dollie’s Popcorn, Bull on the Beach Roast Beef Sandwiches, the Atlantic Hotel, the Glassblowers Shop, Fisher’s Caramel Popcorn, Lombardi’s Tower of Pizza, Dealers Choice Poker Game Arcade, the Candy Kitchen Shop, the Psychedelic Shop, The Sea Shell Emporium, The Dutch Bar, Telescope Beach Pictures and the Courtesy Gift Shop all held dear spots in the visiting South Jersey man’s heart. And during his annual week-long hiatus Greco loyally patronized all of the mentioned popular boardwalk establishments.”

**Stairway to Heaven:** I have often wondered if the details of heaven is in the eye of the beholder. Intro to the short story: “I had suddenly died in my home’s master bedroom’s bathroom while I had been staring into the vanity mirror after finishing shaving. A sudden pain spread from my left arm to my chest and the last thing I remembered as a human being was collapsing upon the brown-tiled floor. There is no doubt in my mind that my body had ceased functioning and that my awareness had slowly exited my form and then transferred into a strange energy-spirit state. I don’t remember any spectacular catharsis when my soul had been ejected from its human shell.

Next, I can remember, I was somehow cognizant of hovering over my lifeless corpse and a moment later my senses were aware of my wife’s delirious screams as she frightfully bent over to touch my neck feeling for a pulse. ‘So much for her being a veteran R.N.,’ my still intact consciousness sarcastically thought. ‘She does really love me after all!’”

**The Better of Two Lives:** We all encounter crossroads in our lives where the choice we make enhance our lives or causes ripples of regret. Intro to the short story: “People make many crucial decisions from several years after exiting their mothers' wombs right up to entering their cemetery tombs. Men and women usually encounter at least a dozen crossroad events in their lifetimes where important choices are made, some good, and perhaps some not so fortuitous as originally planned and hoped for. Major decisions about marriage, who to marry, career choice, real estate acquisitions and investments complement a person’s numerous minor preferences such as which high school sports to play, who to ask to the senior prom, which college to attend, and what kind of house should be purchased. Such a plethora of mental challenges affect millions of Americans daily and continue to reap rewards and consequences throughout their mortal lives.

Richard Henderson was no exception to the law of human choices. The jack-of-all-trades and master of none had always desired to become a successful businessman, be a renowned author, and finally, thrive as a loving husband to a devoted wife who fully believed in emotional reciprocity. Those very noble aspirations represented Henderson’s wishful goals and lofty ambitions, but quite often, obtained results seldom match the sincerity of initial intent. Richard Henderson’s youthful fantasy and excessive idealism rapidly deteriorated into shattered hopes and crushed dreams.”

**Youth Revisited:** As we age, we encounter youth all around us. Stark reminders of distance experiences and a shorter road before us. Intro to the short story. “One August 2001 Monday morning Frederick Richard Barker drove his sky-blue Buick LeSabre east on busy Route 30 to the Blueberry Crossing Shopping Center. The retired Hammonton, New Jersey brick and stone mason was a seventy-year-old health fanatic who was fighting a valiant battle against the onslaught of everyone’s eventual common nemesis, old age. Fred parked his recently washed automobile in a convenient space and then strolled from the asphalt onto the pavement and ambled into the Health Tree Nutrition Store to purchase a re-supply of Vitamin E and a new bottle of potent Multi-Vitamins and Minerals.

“Hi,” Fred politely addressed the preoccupied young girl standing behind the counter presently attending to the needs of a demanding customer. “Where’s Sharon? She usually takes good care of me.”

“Mrs. Bertino is in New York attending a health products trade show,” the conscientious girl answered before ringing-up the fastidious customer’s acquisitions on the cash register. “She’ll be back in town on Wednesday unless my boss begins that Pocono Mountains vacation she’s been talking about.”

**The Hotel Delaware:** Leap Year holds luck for the few and mystery for the masses. Intro to the short story. “Superstitious people believe and attest that strange incidents often occur on February 29 of every Leap Year. I had never placed too much credence in that unscientific claim until Tuesday, February 29, 2004, which unfortunately is a date I will certainly remember forever. Let me fully explain my accursed dilemma so that all will comprehend the true nature of my misery. The courtesy of another person’s sympathy and understanding will be greatly appreciated. I realize that my tale will seem both illogical and incredible to anyone interpreting it, yet I believe I must share its veracity.

A Leap Year has three hundred and sixty-six days on the annual calendar, one more twenty-four-hour interval than that which exists in a normal year. Greenwich, England scientists and concerned astronomers have adjusted the mechanics of the moon and months to interface with the Earth’s revolution around the sun because a quarter of a day is lost each normal year when coordinating those particular solar system relationships. To accurately adjust for the quarter-day time discrepancy in the Earth’s elliptical orbit around the sun, February 29 was created on the post medieval Gregorian Calendar (developed in the 1580s by Pope Gregory), which we still honor today after the old Julian Calendar (developed in 46 B.C. under the reign of Julius Caesar) had been discarded.”

**The Bad Old Days:** Farming takes knowledge, decision and hard work. Some work the fields, cranberry bogs and then there are those who provide the world with fresh blueberries. Intro to the short story. “Last September was very stressful for Hammonton, New Jersey peach and blueberry farmer Richard Jacobs. An irrigation pump caught on fire and the first responder to arrive on the scene was his brother-in-law Charles Garrison. The fireman attempted entering the pit where the pump was situated but the mechanism exploded. Charles Garrison suffered massive burns all over his body and died at a local hospital hours later. The dead man’s family hired an uncompromising high-profile lawyer who immediately sued Richard Jacobs for three million dollars. The plaintiffs easily won the legal case on the grounds that the irrigation pump should have been fenced in so that access to it by the now-deceased Charles Garrison could have been prevented. Richard Jacobs’ insurance covered only half of the exorbitant settlement and to make matters worse, the grower could no longer obtain insurance coverage because of his deteriorating credit and poor financial predicament. The result of the expensive litigation had caused additional friction to surface between the bad-luck farmer and his disconsolate wife.”

**A Grave Undertaking:** Missing person investigations sends shockwaves through any community that has the misfortune of mysterious disappearances. Intro to the short story. “The Hammonton Police Department and the New Jersey State Police were baffled by a wave of a dozen missing persons disappearing from the somnolent South Jersey agricultural community, a town noted for being “The Blueberry Capital of the World.” Chief-of-Police Michael Falcone had summoned Detective Fred Arico and Patrolman Samuel Galletta to his downstairs office in the newly constructed Hammonton Town Hall on the corner of Central Avenue and Vine Street. The recent “missing persons’ phenomenon” had become a popular topic reported and discussed on Philadelphia and Atlantic City television news broadcasts. Chief Falcone felt personally

embarrassed at his department having to solicit outside professional help to engage in solving the complex case currently under investigation.”

**The Steel Pier:** Tourists still flock to the Atlantic City famous Steel Pier in New Jersey. Intro to the short story. “Atlantic City, New Jersey’s famous Steel Pier was the Queen of Resorts premier showplace for entertainment from its original construction in 1898 (as a Quaker repose) through its heyday during and after World War II, leading up to the fabulous “Golden Years” of rock and roll music. In fact, the unique extension into the Atlantic was a favorite destination for vacationers right through the era of popular variety shows that were prevalent during ‘50s and ‘60s pioneering television programming. The revered structure that jugged out over a quarter mile into the ocean had obtained its classic name from the “steel framework” upon which the Pier had been erected. Over the decades many big-name stars had performed live shows at the landmark building including the legendary John Philip Sousa, Frank Sinatra, Benny Goodman, Ed Sullivan, Bing Crosby, Jackie Gleason, Dean Martin, Perry Como and comedian Eddie Cantor.”

**Live Free or Die:** Although the motto of New Hampshire, this story is not there but it is perhaps a story about a soul caught between heaven and hell. Intro to the short story. Frederick Allen Griffith shuffled into Dr. Augustus Pietropaolo’s office at 1237 Paradise Road, Hammonton, New Jersey feeling despondent, sluggish and quite lethargic. Mrs. Elysia Fields, the office receptionist, greeted the new patient and checked his name off her long list. Fred felt a tad insecure in that he was the only person sitting in the large waiting room. The fact that there were no magazines, newspapers or pamphlets on the end tables for him to scrutinize made Griffith feel even more uncomfortable.

“You’re a little early for your scheduled appointment,” Mrs. Fields stated with a forced smile. “Dr. Pietropaolo will be available to analyze your issues shortly. Nobody has problems any more. If I may use the euphemism, everyone who comes here has issues! Anyway, the Dr.’s presently reviewing the records of another eccentric client, or should I say ‘unique patient.’ Now Mr. Griffith,” Mrs. Fields added as she took a glimpse inside Frederick’s confidential folder, “you’re here to discuss your recent four-day bus trip up to New Hampshire, is that correct?”

**Ignorance Is Bliss:** The statement Ignorance is bliss is far removed from reality. Intro to the short story: “Ever since his wife Eleanor had died of Lou Gehrig’s Disease in March of 2006, James Jefferson Gillespie has been extremely despondent and has gone through the motions of everyday life as a pathetic loner. The twenty-eight-year-old chemist thought that a change of scenery would certainly diminish his great melancholy, so he visited his Hammonton, New Jersey Bellevue Avenue travel agent and booked a two-week autumn vacation to Athens, Greece. James felt that he needed some fresh stimuli to regenerate his sagging spirit. A stay at the luxurious Grande Bretagne Hotel, conveniently situated in central Athens, was sure to alleviate Gillespie’s recent chronic introverted disposition.

‘Eleanor’s been gone for nearly two whole years now,’ James sadly reflected on his tragic loss, ‘so perhaps it’s time for me to meet and date someone new! I haven’t had much luck doing that around Hammonton since everyone’ in town knows me or knows about me at the bowling alley, at the restaurants and at the all-too-false singles’ bars. Yes, October seems like a terrific month to be touring the sights of Athens,’ the self-pitying fellow reckoned. ‘Maybe my two-week hiatus in Greece will miraculously alter my lousy success at romance. And Room 610 at the Grande Bretagne Hotel seems to be a good luck omen. My three best bowling game scores added together equal that number!’”

**The Cruisers:** Ship Cruises tend to a tantalizing idea until reality sets in. Intro to the short story. “Frederick and Amy Pearl loved to travel internationally, especially enjoying leisurely sea cruises throughout the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. The residents of 227 Tilton Street, Hammonton, New Jersey preferred taking weeklong ocean and sea voyages to partaking of exotic winter vacations flying to tropical destinations. The medical doctor and his nurse wife believed in working hard and playing hard when not preoccupied with their demanding professions or being busy babysitting their four energetic pre-teen grandchildren, Dan, Karly, Sierra and Lindsey. On December 28th, 2008 the Pearls’ oldest son Joseph, a South Jersey insurance

and real estate agent, drove the general practitioner and his devoted wife to Philadelphia International Airport.

After checking through Terminal C's tight airport security without too much inconvenience, Fred and Amy boarded their American Airlines jet bound for sunny San Juan, Puerto Rico, where a seven-day cruise on the luxurious and well-appointed state-of-the-art liner 'The Winds of Fate had been booked in early May. Six hours later the delighted sea odyssey tourists were sipping delicious pina colodas aboard the ship's top deck and partaking in the standard gala "bon voyage celebration."

**Ice Ages:** Impressionable young minds are the engines that drive our future. Intro to the short story. "In early December of 1975 Jeremy Ingram had been an impressionable seventh grader at the Hammonton Middle School where he was greatly influenced by his effervescent social studies teacher Mr. Charles Galinas. The New Jersey history instructor had mentioned to his usually lethargic fifth period students the amazing story of Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), a German entrepreneur that had become exceptionally wealthy making lucrative business investments in Russia during the Crimean War.

Schliemann had accumulated sufficient expendable wealth to enable the industrious businessman to retire and then energetically pursue his greatest childhood ambition: to prove to the world once and for all that Homer's Iliad and Odyssey had been actual historical events and not mere myths as had been widely believed throughout the Nineteenth Century civilized world. Soon his scientific archeological expeditions confirmed to cynics that Level VII-a in Asia Minor was "the Troy of Priam" (that he had against all odds) discovered."

**Like Clockwork:** A skeptical heart along with a cynical attitude can close the door to the improbable. Intro to the short story. "My spirit has been petrified ever since I had experienced what my senses have perceived as a supernatural phenomenon! My consciousness has never been so paranoid in my entire life as it is right this very minute. After I regain a degree of confidence, I plan to seek professional counseling to help my desperate soul grapple with my current unbearable mental predicament. Let me explain the entire dilemma in detail. I promise to be completely thorough in rendering my accurate description of certain events that seemingly defy scientific explanation.

During my very smooth and comfortable United Airlines cross-country flight from Philadelphia to Los Angeles International Airport, my alert mind could not stop thinking about the one-year anniversary of my twin brother Richard Sullivan's unexpected cardiac arrest death on April 14th, 2008. Richard had been an extremely successful lawyer back in Hammonton, New Jersey and both his devoted wife Karen and myself greatly miss his companionship. Besides my wife Susan, Rich had been my trusted confidante, friend, loyal supporter and expert financial adviser. My only brother's keen insight into evolving stock market trends was uncanny, and his shrewd decisions about often-speculative investments were accurate at least eighty percent of the times he had shared his terrific Wall Street recommendations with me."

**Chiropractic Dreaming:** With the chaos behind, relaxation comes in the form of the invigorating therapeutic aqua-bed. Intro to the short story. "Every calendar year the time period of February to mid-April is very demanding and stressful for middle-aged Harold DeFelice of 763 Fairview Avenue, Hammonton, NJ. The very thorough and efficient Certified Public Accountant had just mailed the last of his clients' 2008 Federal Income Tax returns at the Third Street Post Office on Wednesday morning, April 15th and now it was time to drive his brand new tuscan red Nissan Maxima to his scheduled appointment at Advanced Chiropractic, 425 White Horse Pike, Atco. Harold preferred patronizing Advanced Chiropractic over its Hammonton counterpart because the Atco office had the latest and most modern professional equipment, so in DeFelice's sage estimation, the seven-mile west drive on four-lane Route 30 was indeed well-worth the additional time and effort.

'Most of my five hundred customers really go crazy in the six weeks prior to the April 15th tax deadline,' Harold thought as he passed a tractor-trailer while ascending the Route 30 Ancora Railroad Bridge. 'They persistently call me about deduction trivialities and about every complicated minor change in the tax code as it specifically pertains to them. But now I can relax, get my back and hips adjusted and be pampered by some excellent electrical stimulation, be massaged by the very satisfying roller bed experience and of course babied by my favorite chiropractic indulgence, the invigorating therapeutic aqua-bed.'"

**Animal Music:** Music is all around us and influences in unusual ways. Intro to the short story: “Any fiction writer aptly knows that the absolute ultimate in creativity that the human mind can produce occurs when the dynamic subconscious engages in dreaming and in imagining totally surreal situations during dreadful nightmares. But when ambitious short story and novel authors attempt organizing eccentric tales (that are analogous to capturing fantastic dreams on paper), the writers’ manuscripts almost always fall pathetically short of the authors’ noble aspirations. Unfortunately, most dreams and nightmares are not fully recollected, but if they could be, then there would exist thousands of additional excellent “soul-inspired” works available for readers’ consumption in both World and American literature.”

**Ten Options:** Is the option worth the outcome? Intro to the short story. “Ever since first grade back in 1949 Ken Keller had aspired to be a Major League pitcher. His father Karl had instilled that unrealistic dream in Ken’s head. In 1973 Ken Keller had effectively passed-on the love of baseball in general and of pitching in particular to his son Kyle, who in turn in 2009 had effectively conveyed the “family infatuation with baseball” to his eleven-year-old son Keith. But the sixty-seven-year-old retired plumber Ken Keller had never told his son Kyle or his grandson Keith why he and his deceased dad Karl had a certain fondness for alliteration using the letter K.

In 1974 Ken Keller inherited his small King Lane Hammonton, New Jersey ranch home a month after his father Karl had passed away. In 1977 Ken’s second wife Katherine had also died, leaving the lonely man feeling very disconsolate. But the melancholy widower always kept his well-fertilized lawn properly maintained and Ken was especially proud of the many splendid ewe, rhododendron, rose and hydrangea bushes nestled around his home that were meticulously kept trimmed and looking healthy all summer long. Just the day before Ken had heard an envious neighbor bending the mailman’s ear, “Keller’s mulch right down to the last black bark chip always appears to be in the exact ideal spot where the little chunk had first been placed. That guy’s too much of a perfectionist to suit me!”

**Landscapes and Photographs:** One man’s masterpiece is another man’s craft. Intro to the short story. “On Monday morning September 21st, 2009, the last day of summer, George Rodio had been a bit lucky at Harrah’s Casino in Atlantic City. The Hammonton, New Jersey pharmacy owner had just gotten three sevens on a fifty-cent slot machine and had merrily won three thousand dollars cash. After leaving the gambling establishment’s high-rise parking garage, the perfectly contented slot machine player drove his dark blue Lexus south on Brigantine Boulevard heading towards Route 30, the White Horse Pike. The recipient of the ‘found money’ was thinking about how he was going to merrily dispose of his recent ‘good fortune bonanza.’ ‘It’s a good thing I honored my hunch and drove to Harrah’s to try my luck,’ the happy fellow thought. ‘I’ll call my dependable manager Bill Dawkins after I get home and see if all my help came in to work this morning. But first I’ll stop at that new art gallery in Absecon that features impressive works by aspiring South Jersey artists,’ George instantly decided. ‘If I see a suitable painting that captures my fancy, I’ll purchase the Picasso and hang it above the upright piano in the den and then I’ll move the ancient collage of the nine family photos’ that’s now over the piano from the den to the upstairs computer room’s blank wall. I think that Barbara will be both surprised and thrilled with the new acquisition, if I ever decide to buy it.”

**The Pinelands Theatre:** Theaters will be our time capsules. Intro to the short story. “Originally completed and opened in 1914, Hammonton, New Jersey’s Pinelands Theatre has had a very long and interesting history. At first the structure functioned as an entertainment venue presenting live vaudeville and variety acts to entertain the local public. Twenty years after its pre-WWI inception, out of sheer economic necessity the landmark Pinelands Theatre switched from showing silent films to innovative “talking movies” in 1930, but in later years competition from the much larger and more elegant Rivoli Theater (at the corner of Bellevue Avenue and Third Street) eventually put the town’s first movie house into extinction, forcing the out-of-date building to eventually close its doors in December of 1943, exactly two years after Pearl Harbor. After the Golden Age of Hollywood had passed into posterity, the vacant Second and Vine edifice, located a block east of Bellevue (the town’s main thoroughfare), later became a residence in 1951, but then the structure was gutted and converted into a merchants’ warehouse in 1957, but in the early 1960s Kennedy-

Johnson era, the aged in-need-of-repair skeleton became a convenient storage facility for a Bellevue Avenue department store. Things were looking rather bleak for the once-revered Pinelands Theatre building with the approach of the twenty-first century and its attendant technologies.”

**A Second Chance:** Youth feel invisible with lack of wisdom and self-control. Intro to the short story. “Ever since I became an acne-faced teenager back in the mid-1950s, I have always loved fast automobiles, especially ones with chrome-plated flat-head engines. When my family had lived in Bucks County, Pennsylvania from 1953-‘59, my tough-guy friends and I would often hitchhike to the Langhorne Speedway on Route 1 just above Fairless Hills and pay the dollar grandstand admission we had been diligently saving-up for just to sit in the bleachers and watch exciting motorcycle and stock car races. Then my family moved to Hammonton, New Jersey where my addiction to excessive speed persisted right into my junior and senior high school years. And when I was old enough to drive my father’s ‘55 green and white Chevy, I did surrender to temptation and drag race it on at least a dozen occasions, nearly smashing-up the old jalopy during four separate dangerous racing situations. Because of obstinate pride during those foolish escapades, I never fully comprehended that I had been recklessly putting my own life and the well-being of others in jeopardy.”

**Wolverton Mountain:** What the junior sleuths and seasoned pros might have in common. Intro to the short story. “Veteran Agents Salvatore Velardi, Arthur Orsi and Dan Blachford stepped into FBI Inspector Joe Giraldo's office, loftily situated on the eighth floor of 600 Arch Street, Philadelphia. Each of the conscientious trio was wondering exactly what new investigative matter was of such “urgent and strategic importance,” the precise terminology that their reputable Boss had dramatically characterized their very next challenging government assignment. As usual, “the Chief” was sitting behind his enormous Canadian oak desk and his brown eyes were carefully examining the front-page articles of the Philadelphia Inquirer appearing “above the fold”.

“I’m glad that you three easily distracted-but-ambitious junior sleuths have gotten here on time for your scheduled noon appointment, and I’m personally delighted that you’re not now eating pizza or hoagies down at the crowded Reading Terminal Food Market,” the Boss gruffly greeted his loyal subordinates. “I’m also happy to note in my latest report to Matt Riley that you three remarkable gumshoes had easily solved the rather preposterous “Treasure Map Caper” that had been annoying various local police departments in the Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware tri-state area, which had warranted the indispensable services and intervention of the local FBI. Now Men,” Inspector Giraldo rambled on, “DC headquarters has acknowledged your crucial participation in swiftly solving that particular regional dilemma.”

**Poetic Justice:** “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, isn't it?” Intro to the short story. “Every December 1st, FBI Inspector Joe Giraldo proudly invites his three loyal agents Salvatore Velardi, Arthur Orsi and Daniel Blachford over to Orchard Street and into his cozy downtown Hammonton, New Jersey home to admire his extensive train display and accompanying elaborate village, all spectacularly exhibited on an enormous platform that virtually encompassed the man's entire downstairs “second den.”

“I see that you've added several new buildings to complement your intricate Christmas hometown extravaganza,” Agent Velardi noted and expressed. “I don't remember that dress shop and that yogurt and ice cream parlor on the corner ever being in the village last year. You've managed to re-create a miniature scale model of downtown Hammonton! Quite impressive indeed!”

“Thanks for the rather exaggerated kudos Salvatore!” Inspector Giraldo genially replied. “Ever since I was a curious toddler, I've been infatuated with model trains. This entire project has taken me seven years to complete, and all of the stores and buildings along Bellevue Avenue, Central Avenue, Horton Street along with Second and Third Street I've diligently assembled with my own two hands. The tedious labor was done right here on the premises, with all the items being assiduously built down in my workshop basement.”

**A Photo Finish:** Family secrets divulged. Intro to the short story. “At 8 pm sharp a black 2018 Mercedes luxury S 560 sedan entered the secluded U-shaped asphalt driveway enveloping a well-manicured lawn on East First Road, Hammonton NJ. The recently constructed three-million-dollar brick and stone mansion belonged to local wealthy business mogul James Dante Carlino, who that evening was scheduled to meet with

the arriving prestigious South-Jersey Central Bank President, Thomas Monastra. In response to recent phone exchanges, the visiting financial executive and the resident real estate guru were slated to discuss an imminent shopping center development project planned for erection just outside Somers Point, across the bay from scenic Ocean City, New Jersey.

“Hello Mr. Monastra,” James Carlino warmly greeted. “It’s too bad we couldn’t meet at the Blue Heron Country Club yesterday for a round of golf. But Mother Nature isn’t always cooperative with desired business consultations.”

“Very well put!” the bank official aptly answered. “Egg Harbor Township isn’t exactly located in Southern California where it seldom rains in the early summer. Living on the West Coast does have its climate advantages. I must admit Mr. Carlino, it’s quite a beautiful estate you’ve imaginatively built here, neatly tucked into the Jersey pines.”

The Psychic Dimension, Part II (34 sci-fi/paranormal novellas, 567 pages) is one of author Jay Dubya's 56 published books existing in hardcover, in paperback and in Amazon Kindle, Barnes and Noble Nook and Smashwords ebook formats. The Psychic Dimension, Part II is the companion book to The Psychic Dimension.

**I have had the pleasure of reading The Psychic Dimension Book One and Book Two by Jay Dubya (John Wiessner). I highly recommend this book along with all this author’s books. Author Jay Dubya is a prolific writer with over 59 published works to his credit. He writes short story collections, trilogies, and novels in all the genres. The Psychic Dimension (Part One and Part Two) is a great way to get to know the author’s thought process. Review by Cold Coffee/Book Marketing Global Network.**

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#### **About The Author**

Jay Dubya is author' John Wiessner's pen name. John is a retired New Jersey public school English teacher, having diligently taught the subject for thirty-four years. John lives in Hammonton, New Jersey with wife Joanne and the couple has three grown sons.

Counting London: Lashed, Lacerated, Lamped and Lambasted, along with its companion books Twain: Tattered, Trounced, Tortured and Traumatized, Poe: Pelted, Pounded, Pummeled and Pulverized and O. Henry: Obscenely and Outrageously Obliterated, John has written and published thirty-seven total books. Pieces of Eight, Pieces of Eight, Part II, Pieces of Eight, Part III and Pieces of Eight, Part IV all contain

short stories and novellas that feature science fiction and paranormal plots and themes. Nine New Novellas, Nine New Novellas, Part II, Nine New Novellas, Part III, Nine New Novellas, Part IV, One Baker's Dozen, Two Baker's Dozen, Snake Eyes and Boxcars and Snake Eyes and Boxcars, Part II are short story collections all written in the spirit of the Pieces of Eight series.

Other Jay Dubya adult-oriented fiction are the works Black Leather and Blue Denim, A '50s Novel, and its exciting sequel, The Great Teen Fruit War, A 1960' Novel. Frat Brats, A '60s Novel completes the action/adventure trilogy. Jay Dubya also has produced two irreverent Biblical satires, The Wholly Book of Genesis and The Wholly Book of Exodus. A third satire Ron Coyote, Man of La Mangia is a parody on Miguel Cervantes' classic novel, Don Quixote published in 1605. Thirteen Sick Tasteless Classics, TSTC, Part II, TSTC, Part III and TSTC, Part IV are satirical works that each corrupt thirteen classic stories from American and British literature and from Greek mythology. Fractured Frazzled Folk Fables and Fairy Farces and FFFF & FF, Part II satirize and corrupt famous children's literature stories. Mauled Maimed Mangled Mutilated Mythology is an adult-oriented satirical/parody work that pokes fun at twenty-one famous classical myths. Finally, Shakespeare: Slammed, Smearred, Savaged and Slaughtered and Shakespeare: S, S, S and S. Part II lampoon the famous works of the great playwright.

The author has also penned a young adult fantasy trilogy: Pot of Gold, Enchanta and Space Bugs, Earth Invasion. The Eighteen Story Gingerbread House is a collection of eighteen new children's stories. And last but not least, two Jay Dubya non-fiction works are So Ya' Wanna' Be A Teacher and Random Articles and Manuscripts.

Jay Dubya's books are available in hardcover and paperback formats at Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble.com and Booksamillion.com. Kindle versions are available at Amazon.com. Jay Dubya's e-books are available at Amazon Kindle and at Barnes and Noble Nook.

Jay Dubya (John Wiessner), author of 56 books, gives a biography of his life.

Born in Hammonton, NJ in 1942, John had attended St. Joseph School up to and including Grade 5. After his family moved from Hammonton to Levittown, Pa in 1954, John attended St. Mark School in Bristol, Pa. for Grade 6, St. Michael the Archangel School for Grades 7 and 8 and Immaculate Conception School, Levittown, Pa. for grade 9. Bishop Egan High School, Levittown Pa was John's educational base for Grades 10 and 11, and later in 1960 he graduated from Edgewood Regional High, Tansboro, NJ. John then next attended Glassboro State College, where he was an announcer for the school's baseball games and also read the news and sports over WGLS, GSC's radio station.

John had been primarily an English teacher in the Hammonton Public School System for 34 years, specializing in the instruction of middle school language arts. Mr. Wiessner was quite active in the Hammonton Education Association, serving in the capacities of Vice-President, building representative and finally, teachers' head negotiator for 7 years. During his lengthy teaching career, John had been nominated into "Who's Who Among American Teachers" three times. He also was quite active giving professional workshops at schools around South Jersey on the subjects of creative writing and the use of movie videos to motivate students to organize their classroom theme compositions.

John Wiessner was very active in community service, being a past President of the Hammonton Lions Club, where he also functioned for many years as the club's Tail-Twister, Vice-President and Liontamer. He had been named Hammonton Lion of the Year in 1979 and in 2009 received the prestigious Melvin Jones Fellow Award, the highest honor a Lion can receive from Lions International.

John also was a successful businessman, starting with being a Philadelphia Bulletin newspaper delivery boy for two years in the late 1950s in Levittown, Pennsylvania. After his family moved back to New Jersey in 1959, John worked at his grandparents and his parents' farm markets, Square Deal Farm (now Ron's Gardens in Hammonton) and Pete's Farm Market in Elm, respectively. He later managed his wife's parents' farm market, White Horse Farms (Elm) for three summers.

Also, in a business capacity, for 16 summers starting in 1967 John Wiessner had co-owned Dealers Choice Amusement Arcade on the Ocean City, Maryland boardwalk and also co-owned the New Horizon Tee-Shirt Store for eight summers (1973-'81) on the Rehoboth Beach, Delaware boardwalk. In addition, he was a co-owner of Wheel and Deal Amusement Arcade, Missouri Avenue and Boardwalk, Atlantic City. And then, for 18 summers beginning in 1986, John had been the Field Manager in charge of crew-leaders for Atlantic Blueberry Company (the world's largest cultivated blueberry company), both the Weymouth and Mays Landing Divisions.

After retiring from teaching in 1999, writing under the pen name Jay Dubya (his initials), John Wiessner became an author of 56 books in the genre Action/Adventure Novels, Sci-Fi/Paranormal Story Collections, Adult Satire, Young Adult Fantasy Novels and Non-Fiction Books. His books exist in hardcover, in paperback and in popular Kindle and Nook e-book formats.

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**June 8, 2019**