

ENCORE'S

CLASS ACT

September, October, November 2018

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SUMMER GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

As a boy growing up in Illinois and suffering through those hot humid summer days and nights my ears perked up when I heard my mother say, "Young man, its about time for you to put on your thinking cap!" I wasn't sure what a 'thinking cap' was as the only 'cap' I owned was my red baseball cap (I was a Cardinal). But with those words I knew that summer fun was about over and that school and fall classes would be starting soon. And with summer drawing to a close here, Encore classes cannot be far behind. RetaLindstrom and the curriculum committee are busy putting together a great lineup of fall classes.

I am happy to report two ENCORE members taking new important roles in the organization. Ellen Silverman has assumed her job as ENCORE secretary and is already admirably filling that role. She replaces Lorri Bradley who was the last secretary. Thank you Lorri and Ellen. As you read this edition of Class Act you can thank Jean Hooge who is taking over as Class Act editor from Aletha Westerberg (and proofreader husband, Bob). Thanks also to Jean, Aletha and Bob.

Before I close, pals be aware of important upcoming dates:

- * Conference on Extraordinary Living - Saturday, September 8. This year's conference will feature a more compact morning program with a free lunch (yes, there still are free lunches).
- * Oktoberfest Trip - Thursday, September 13
- * Dues payment ASAP after you receive your invoice
- * Holiday Party - Friday, December 1

So 2018-2019 ENCORE members, it's about time to find and dust off your thinking caps. Fall classes begin October 1 and paraphrasing a line from that old Joe Cocker /Tom Jones tune with ENCORE classes, "You can leave your cap on!" Dave Zunkel



Philadelphia Lawyer vs. Toilet Paper

Copyright 2018 by Erhard Gross

My wife and I owned and operated a B&B in Astoria for close to 10 years. We had wonderful experiences but also at least one of consternation, discord and dispute. The latter was sharply influenced by a roll of toilet paper.

The main attraction our B&B offered was a terrific view. From fishing vessels to Coast Guard cutters to freighters and Cruise ships, all could be observed from our house at the top of the ridge.

This view extended from Cape Disappointment, the Megler Bridge to Tongue Point. On clear days one could even see Mount Rainier 160 miles distant. Many of our guests judged our view to be world class. Several said that if they had this view from their living room, they'd never have to go anywhere else.

It was a late-summer weekend; we were booked full. Most of our guests had checked in and left for sightseeing or early dinners in town. The last guests to arrive were two ladies. They had booked into our large two-room suite with private bath, private entrance and private deck. Its large picture window and deck overlooked the Columbia River. The suite rented for \$90 per day. The ladies had reserved the suite with their credit card. As usual we showed the guests the entire premises, after which they disappeared into their suite.

We were stunned when one of the two ladies came to our living room about an hour and a half later and said that the suite was not acceptable and she wanted her money back. She contended that our place was not as described. Since she had not asked my wife or me on the phone for a description, I asked who had described it.

She replied: "Another local B&B."

"What is the name of that B&B?" I asked.

"I don't remember."

"How did they describe our place?" I asked.

"It's supposed to be in a forest setting, surrounded by trees. I want my money back."

We knew that she was lying because none of the local B&Bs fit that description, and all local B&B owners knew our place.

"Also," she added angrily, "we are not willing to look at a garage all weekend."

The ladies' suite was located above our garage, but the only way you could see the garage was if you went to the guest parking area below the house. I repeated that we would not give their money back. This caused her to retort: "I'm from Philadelphia and studied law at Harvard. I'm not going to let you get away with this."

As soon as the ladies left, we checked their suite. One of the beds was mussed up. However, the decisive factor was the roll of toilet paper on the dispenser. We always put on all rolls with a pointed end coming over top and forward in such a way that anything printed on the paper could be read right side up. This pointed end was removed. For us that fact constituted indisputable evidence that at least one of the ladies had used the toilet.

The role of the roll of toilet paper in the rejection of the angry lady's dispute by the credit card company was decisive. On the strength of our details, and the fact that she had a record of repeatedly disputing bills, the credit card company rejected the ladies' appeal. That decision might have kept the issue from being propelled into the annals of American jurisprudence under the title Toilet Tissue Issue.

Trip to Berlin by Jean McGonigle

It is early May we are embarked on a European adventure to spend a few weeks with our daughter, Gretchen, son-in-law, Julien, and six year old grandson, Guillaume. Gretchen and Julien have begun new university professorships in Berlin this past January. Guillaume is in a French school having left Quebec where his first language is French. Julien is from France. My husband, Michael, and I agree that we want our first week together staying in a hotel in Mitte, the former center of what was the eastern Soviet sector, behind the Wall before its collapse in 1989. We can recover from jet lag while doing our personalized walking tours of post war Berlin. My mother encouraged me to learn from German history, and life under Hitler. She taught me that humans have within them the choice to find greatness by giving

back the gifts they received. They also have the choice to create horror through personal violation of others.

We arrive at our hotel bleary eyed (it is nine hours later here than in Astoria). We are met by a chatty Concierge. He lugs our suitcases onto his carrier with ease and guides us to a glass elevator while we view an enormous aquarium located in the hotel Atrium, enroute to the fifth floor. It appears that Capitalism has found its way to Mitte! Our room is small with every modern convenience: our assistant informs us that we will need our plastic room key to activate our light switches. The bathroom supports a shiny deep water tub. The drapes are pulled back and we are truly stunned by the view of the Berlin Cathedral with not one but five copper domes in early stages of restoration. Sculptured full figured angels, soldiers of Christ greet us from their portals. They face us at eye level! This is a magnificent Baroque, Calvinist cathedral built in 1750. Below us is the glistening Spree River, pronounced SPRAY. We will take an afternoon cruise with our family tomorrow. But FIRST, lights out for a twelve hour snooze.

Second Day in Berlin

We descend to a breakfast bar, still jet lagged but with a huge appetite. Here we arrive five minutes before closing at 10:25 am European time. The largest array of food greets us – one bar of meats and cheeses, one of cereals and fruits and yet another of breads, croissants, cooked eggs (scrambled or soft boiled), smoked salmon and sausage links. A spacious dining area with a terrace provide a tranquil repast. Our son-in-law and grandson meet us in the hotel lobby (our daughter is working) and we walk a cobblestone river-path to meet our open air riverboat. The views of historic buildings, many in post war restoration phases, mixed with bold modern structures are fascinating. Berlin was bombed heavily by the Allied forces and civilian casualties in the city are thought to have numbered over 100,000. Our tour guide is speaking in German. I prefer to look rather than use the English audio earphones. We pass the Reichstag government (Congress) building complex and the Humboldt Forum, the university complex where our daughter is teaching. Broad leafed trees are in full blossom. High above the river our grandson spots a tight rope walker demonstrating his skills by walking backwards on a narrow fence. A fall would send him plummeting hundreds of feet into the river. This fact escapes none of our fellow passengers on the boat.

Later we walk through a street market, view outdoor tango dancing and hear a college choir singing acapella in a street tunnel. Guess we aren't in Kansas anymore.

Day # 3

Whew! Michael and I sign up for a four hour post WWII walking tour. Our guide, Lucien, speaks beautiful English. Five and a half hours later, after a highly emotional journey, one sore hip and visits to the Palace of Tears, where families painfully parted to the west or east sectors in the earlier days of the Berlin Wall, we arrive at the Wall itself. We hear the remarkable story of its collapse in November 1989, after crowds of protestors storm it. We hear of tense, conflicting speeches from Soviet leaders and West German leaders. We hear of the 100 plus who, in earlier years, tried to scale it and didn't make it. Their pictures hang in a section near the Wall.

Here ends our first few days of our three week stay in this amazing city.

Across the street towers this Memorial church built in 1895. It was bombed in WWII and became a "landmark of the western part of a divided Berlin." Elders and officials decided to

leave the remains of the ruined church in place with its fractured sanctuary and ruptured steeple left open to the sky. Bells still remain and toll at intervals and a small museum is set up inside what remains of the sanctuary. Stages of the life of the building, many church and community activities, its construction and destruction, are memorialized here. Some of the lovely 19th century ceiling all layered in mosaics remains, with a few religious relics on display. This is a powerful experience designed to remind one of the devastation the war wrought. The church has been designated as a World Heritage site. A new oddly designed church greets me next door to the historic one. The post modern exterior suggests a giant concrete stop sign in three dimensions, layered in (approximate) six inch squares of some unknown material. I read that many architectural designs were submitted in the 1960s before this plan was selected. Fortunately my negative impression is altered as I enter the contemporary sanctuary. Here there is practically no religious ornamentation. The mysterious miniature square structures I viewed from the outside of the building are actually thousands of pale, sea blue stained glass opaque "windows" streaked with threads of yellows and oranges. The effect is so quieting and expansive I feel as if it is dawn in a spring meadow. One astounding aspect of this sanctuary defines it as a religious space. High above the alter is a massive gold plated Christ, a Wise Ancient, or a Bodhisattva (all seem appropriate images to me). This statue extends huge hands in a gesture suggesting compassion and forgiveness. A choir loft hosts a grand organ and orchestra space. Vivaldi's Four Seasons will be performed here tonight by the Berlin Orchestra at a bargain price for the public to enjoy.

We spend 45 minutes wandering an unfamiliar neighborhood after leaving our Bundesplatz metro stop that had many out going doors and where we inevitably pass through the wrong exit enroute home. Despite being thoroughly lost we are aided by three Berliners, lots of pointing and our map. Eventually we stumble into a beautiful park that we joyfully recognize as the one we took our grandson to earlier this week. We are soon home, mightily tired and enjoying a glass of chilled Riesling.

FROM THE EDITOR: First, many thanks to Aletha for being editor so long and so perfectly. I cannot live up to the legacy she left without a lot of help from you. I am very open to any suggestions on how "Class Act" can be improved.

I feel the more contributions we get from our readers the more meaningful to each it will become. So send in your articles, notices, jokes, pictures, class and event reviews or whatever you want to see here. How about some book reviews? Even one sentence can be sent in. If you go out to get the paper in the morning and you enjoy that soft breeze on your face and that delicious fresh smell – write your thoughts down and send it in.

The theme (or an idea to stimulate some writing) will be "First Date" for the December 1, 2018 (deadline November 7) Class Act Newsletter. Until this becomes second nature to me I would so much appreciate getting the articles really early. As soon as the previous edition is published is not too early to start submitting things. Thank you! *Jean Hooge*

JULY LUNCH BUNCH



Submitted by Gerrie Penny

Nineteen hungry ENCORE members met at Buoy Beer restaurant for the July Lunch Bunch on a beautiful sunny day. We ate in the Tap Room so we could all sit at the same table. Unfortunately we didn't have a river view but we were so busy catching up with one another, we hardly missed it. People kept coming in so we gathered more chairs and snuggled up close to one another to fit. Food was delicious, as all plates were emptied with lots of take home boxes in our hands as we left.

Members there were: Karen Elder, John Rider, Jim and Kathleen Hudson, Sue Zerangue, Elaine Horsak, Carl and Jean Dominey, Judith Schlecter, Marjie Spence, Ellen Norris, Bernie Thomas, Cecilia and Doug Balcomb, Kit Ketcham, Frank Spence, Bob and Aletha Westerberg, & Gerrie Penny. It's great to see members coming to our lunches. It truly is a great time to just sit with friends and enjoy good food. Hope to see everyone at our September Lunch Bunch, location to be announced later.

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Here are some pictures from the 2018 ENCORE General Membership Meeting on June 1. It was a great meeting and the strawberry shortcake was fantastic!



The Ripoff Artist Copyright 2018 by Erhard Gross

The fall of 2017 was the second time my wife and I, with another couple, vacationed at Condominiums Pilar, San Carlos, Sonora, Mexico. We love the area and its friendly people. In addition to the nice condo, the location features sunshine, beautiful mountains, access to locally harvested seafood and a beautiful ocean beach with warm water and lots of seashells. The town also has several dentists who cater to the flocks of "snowbirds" – Americans and Canadians -- who winter there. All four of us availed ourselves of the attractively priced dental services available from Dr. M. who was recommended to us by Pilar's office.

All four of us were pleased to meet this man, a seemingly pleasant, middle-aged athletic, good looking fellow who seemed congenial and spoke pretty good English. His assistant, Cecilia, likewise, was attractive and friendly. Both instilled confidence. His clinic seemed a shoestring operation. It had one treatment room with one dental chair. It was as small as the waiting room. Both were on a lower level with a separate entry but attached to the house. Since the office had no restroom, one had to use the toilet in Dr. M's residence, where a reception committee of five yapping dogs lay in wait. We had no reason to doubt that 98% of his patients were Americans.

However, I must raise a caution flag. Dr. M.'s modus operandi is as follows: At one's first appointment, he might find a certain amount of dental work necessary. The patient agrees and prepays for the service. M. starts the procedure, leaving it in a state of semi-completion that guarantees the patient's return. The patient has prepaid for the first service and suddenly the dentist identifies additional "necessary" work, prepayable, of course. The patient is now between a rock and a hard place: Will the dentist finish the first procedure if the patient disagrees about the second? This happened to three out of four members of my group. Dr. M. quoted another Astoria acquaintance \$150 for three fillings but then convinced her that she should have three crowns instead. After all, he said, crowns are more durable, and the cost of \$1500, which she paid, was therefore more prudent.

Here are the specifics of my personal experience with Dr. M.: After X-rays and initial evaluation, he said I needed two bridges. Total cost, prepayable, was \$3,231.10. At the end of the second visit he said that I also needed crowns on all six of my upper front teeth, and a crown on one premolar. Totally numb from 12 shots of Novocaine in three hours, I could barely think. That's when he made his move. I literally had no time for making an informed decision. This time he put \$2,326.45 on my credit card.

Toward evening, as the Novocaine was wearing off and my head started clearing, I developed misgivings. I frankly began to doubt whether Dr. M. would finish the initial procedures if I remonstrated. Before I got on his dental chair during my next appointment, I told him that I had decided against the second set of procedures and wanted my money back. He refused with the assertion that he had already taken impressions and ordered my crowns from the lab. He did give me the choice to have the remaining work done in 2018. At my age (82), that did not seem much of an option. Would he or I even be there next year?

To my question how he, with 30 years of dental experience, could have missed the fractured premolar and the need for crowns on my incisors during his initial evaluation of my dental health, he had no answer. At that state of completion, he had me over a barrel. If I went ahead and disputed his charges with my credit card company, what were the chances that he would complete the first set of procedures, and what about the second set? Both were started but not even half completed.

None of us had any written evidence that a patient could proffer in the event follow-up work was required. All any of us had were credit card receipts. I began to smell a rat. In preparation for filing of our annual income tax, our friends and we asked him for itemized statements on all his work. Our requests were answered with repeated excuses but a promise that he would email the statements to us. As of this writing, four months have passed without the statements in the mail.

In my case he also did not provide the teeth guard that was included in the package deal. For the latter, he had not even taken impressions. He had scheduled my last appointment for late afternoon of our last day in Mexico and, as was his want, he disappeared before the completion of the day's work. His assistant had to finish the job. My wife and I drove back to his office at 3:30 to give him a chance to take the impressions. His clinic's door was wide open, lights still on but I could not make contact. I left a note with the request that he take my impressions first thing the next morning. Again, he did not respond.

Once back in Astoria, my wife went to her Astoria dentist for scheduled prophylaxis. She reported that he told her that the dental work Dr. M. had performed on her was substandard and needed correcting because of the danger of gum disease. The quality of the work done on her would be the basis of a law suit in Oregon (To this day, she is unable to chew food on the bite wing where he installed two crowns). The estimated cost of correcting the work: \$2,600.

Becoming suspicious of the quality of the dental work Dr. M. had performed on me, I contacted my credit card company in order to provisionally dispute my second bill. Bank of America told me to dispute both bills, and to buttress my case, get a professional evaluation of Dr. M.'s work. I went to the first Astoria dentist where I could get an appointment. After X-rays and intraoral color photography, my dentist found: "It is highly unlikely that this result would meet any standards of the American Dental Association. A conservative estimate to bring Mr. Gross' teeth up to a functioning and hygienic standard would be approximately \$17,065.00."

I am not asserting that Dr. M. is incapable of doing competent dental work or that he charges too much. I question his strategy for getting his hands into a person's wallet. As for my case, I'm not sure whether he did such a poor job in order to get even with a patient who questioned his professional competency and ethics. After all, he used the same two-step strategy on our travel companions.

If the unsuspecting snowbird finds himself violated by a dentist of Dr. M.'s ilk, and has paid with a credit card, he can dispute the charge(s) on the basis of unworkmanlike performance or even fraud. However, to be successful, the cardholder needs sound documentation. Documentation requires dates and times and the type of work performed at those appointments. Most important is the professional assessment by your hometown dentist and an itemized statement enumerating how much it would cost to repair the damages. Also make sure that the credit card you want to use does not preclude disputing a charge incurred in a foreign country, or whether the card has a distance limitation (mine had 50 miles from our residence to the location where the card was used). Never pay with cash, personal check or debit card.

More than five months after Dr. M. performed his procedures on me, I still can't chew without pain. My left bitewing does not make contact at all. My dental health, I had two broken molars, is far worse than it was prior to Dr. M.'s procedures.

NOTICE

When you attend an ENCORE class or event, you will be entering a place where photography, video and audio recordings may occur.

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Next "Class Act" deadline is Wednesday November 7, 2018