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A COUNTRY CHURCH near Sugar Grove, Illinois.



Alice, and Laurel, to whom I'd reported as an underclassman. Back then, they'd seemed very sophisticated and cultured because they were older than me—although, of course, they were only high school juniors and seniors at the time. Still, I've viewed them as mentors ever since.

A former classmate surprised me with a 1968 *Echo* issue showcasing what, through the lens of time, is my most memorable assignment—photographing *Star Trek's* Leonard Nimoy at the peak of his fame, when he appeared locally. "I remember assigning you that," said Laurel. The faded newsprint revived memories of "Mr. Spock's" face emerging from the red-lighted developer tray in my dad's basement darkroom.

Unusual for a high school newspaper adviser, Mr. S had championed incisive reporting and an independent voice on important issues of the day, often resulting in conflicts with the school administration. One example regarded an intolerant teacher who often berated students sporting then-popular boots, long hair, and bell-bottoms. I remember him boasting in class one morning, "Did you all see me in today's *Echo*?" The article was about teachers serving jury duty, and quoted him saying that his trial was one of "a young punk. We all knew he was guilty but we had to give him a fair trial anyway." Everyone grasped the self-incriminating implications, except the man himself.

Among luminary alumni speakers were *Echo* editorial page editor Jeff Jarvis, now a nationally known publisher, editor,

'ECHO' OF THE PAST

TEN HOURS HOME

Good times notwithstanding, Jean and I were more than ready to head home following eight days of traveling. The daylong journey from Aurora, Illinois, to Flagstaff, Arizona, appeared daunting, however, especially against headwinds. If necessary we'd stay over with our friend Bruce in Santa Fe, just two hours from home.

A country church appeared in our windshield after takeoff this morning, but how much closer could we get to heaven than these sparkling Sunday skies? Yes, there was weather through Illinois and Missouri, but we dodged it easily enough. Initially we faced a 10-knot headwind. I'll take that westbound, anytime. But gradually it grew to 20 knots, and then 30. Changing altitudes didn't help. This gave us plenty of time to discuss the week's travels.

This journey had its origins two years ago, when Howard Spanogle, longtime faculty advisor to the *Echo* high school newspaper where I once served as photography editor, proposed a reunion. At first this seemed like overkill—there were only a handful of *Echo* staffers at a given time. However, "Mr. S" had been adviser for 26 years, so there would be many attendees beyond my immediate circle. Jean hesitated to go until my closest *Echo* friends talked their spouses into attend-

ing. After all, who are we these decades later without them?

Flying east is a trek, so en route we'd capitalized on the *Flying Carpet's* flexibility to visit friends and family. The circuitous journey had delivered us to four Midwestern states, culminating in the previous day's reunion.

Surrounded by a sea of tulips at Cantigny Park west of Chicago, I reunited with my old friends Linda, Judy, Ray, and Bill. Tracing everyone's careers and meeting their partners was a joy after so many years. Said Linda after a few hours together, "It's so great to meet Jean. She is more than a breath of fresh air. She's a whole sky of it!"

I also delighted in reconnecting with my former editors Marva, Kathy, Marcia,

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and columnist, and Dan Tani, photography editor a few years after me who became an astronaut renowned for space photography.

Many attendees knew that Jean and I fly, but nonetheless there was a degree of celebrity in showing up 1,500 miles from home in a small airplane. Kathy's husband, John, had once taken flying lessons, and discussing our trip rekindled his interest in finishing up.

Five hours after takeoff from Chicago, no amount of reminiscing could keep Jean and me occupied. "I can't believe we're only halfway home," she said when we finally touched down at Dodge City Regional Airport in Kansas to refuel.

A hundred miles beyond Dodge City, the headwinds finally let up. However, legions of thunderstorms guarded New Mexico. Happily, none chose to block our passage through the mountains. This entire journey had proven a classic example of the notion, *If you stay on the ground whenever distant weather threatens, you'll never fly anywhere.*

Invariably on these long trips, we check our watches approaching Santa Fe and conclude, "We're only two hours from home. Let's continue and sleep in our own bed." Albuquerque Center sealed that decision by steering us 20 miles south around a gargantuan thunderhead crowning the old Spanish capital.

The thunderstorms ended near the Arizona line, and from there the San Francisco Peaks beckoned us the final 100 miles home. We touched down in Flagstaff 24 flight hours after departing there, our minds' eyes brimming with faces, events, and the topography of more than half a continent. That's a lot of flying in just nine days, but once in the Midwest, individual legs to visit all our friends had ranged from just 30 to 90 minutes.

Sure, flying 10 hours home feels like forever—until the next morning, when you relive the adventures of such a journey. Then you're ready to take off again. 🧐

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