BROOKHAVEN BULLETIN
Special Edition August 26, 1986
BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY

Confessions of an (Almost) Non-Smoker

This was a first step. I had never gone to a smoker's withdrawal clinic of any sort, but it was going to be on site, so why not give it a try. My previous attempts at giving up the weed had been solo efforts and were spectacularly unsuccessful.

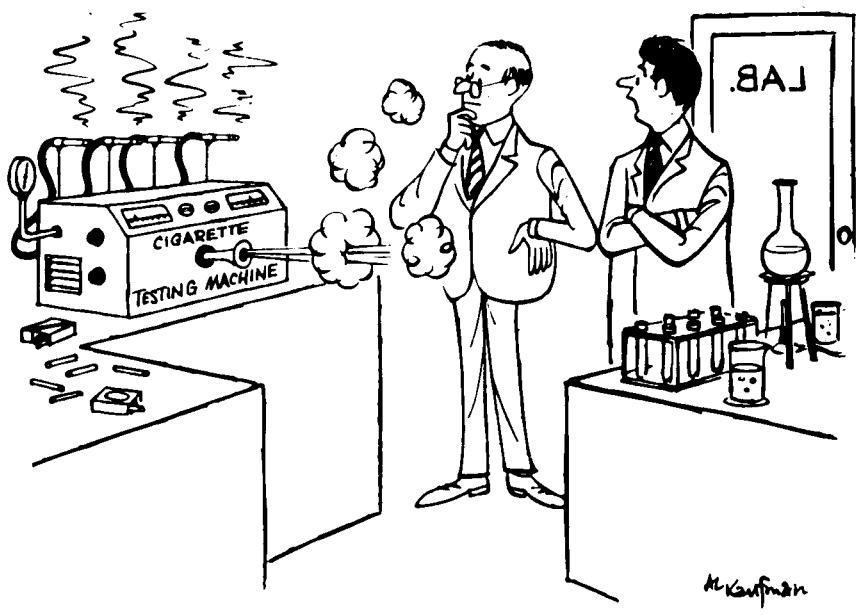
In those earlier tries, I would abstain for about two days, then bum cigarettes from people in other offices, meanwhile maintaining the fiction in my own office that I had quit. At home, I smoked in the bathroom with the fond hope that my children would think I had quit. They said, "Mom, who do you think you're kidding?" as the smoke curled out from under the bathroom door.

My son, then ten years old, would help me get groceries and, as he brought them into the house, would hide the cigarettes, which the packer always seemed to put on top, right in plain view. Then I would undertake a fruitless search for the cigarettes, trying to remain cool and not scream at my darling son, "Where in gawd's name did you put my cigarettes?"

Eventually, in desperation, I would fix him with a steely eye and say, "Okay, John, where are they?" and he would look crestfallen and hand them to me.

Then, the waves of guilt. You creep, Bernice, you are so self-indulgent that you can't give up this stinking habit even if it hurts your own children! However, the self-laceration only resulted in my buying another carton of cigarettes and then another, and on I ploughed through millions of miles of stubs.

The children showed their disapproval for a long time, but eventually gave up. They were resigned that I was determined to go on, come hell or high water. And they were right. I did make an effort in that I cut down to the lowest tar and nicotine brand on the market, but it seemed to me that my consumption increased, and, eventually, I found myself puffing away on an easy two packs a day.



"WE FINISHED ALL THE TESTS WEEKS AGO, BUT IT JUST WON'T QUIT!"

But I was getting tired of it, and it was a monkey on my back. Even so, I would probably have continued on my merry way had not the Lab decided to sponsor a smoking withdrawal workshop. It was billed as educational, not aggressive. In short, nobody was going to back you into a corner and grab your smokes.

At the first meeting, everyone was somewhat exhilarated and made jocular remarks about getting a gold-plated pacifier. But much to our surprise, the workshop leader indicated that it would be a good idea to try and quit that very afternoon.

We had expected that motion would come much later. My personal reaction was vicious resentment. I had been tricked! I looked on the world with a cold eye, and it would have given me great pleasure to kick children and small dogs, the smaller, the better. However, I made it until 6 p.m. and decided to reward myself by having a cigarette when I got home. It was irrational, but what the hell.

Day 2, I brought cigarettes with me, but didn't smoke them. Found I could get through the day without being bitchy or mean. It was difficult to write without a cigarette — the little devils seem to go with writing — good for the concentration. Again I did not smoke all day, but lit up happily when I got home.

The first weekend was a partial failure, or a partial success, depending on how you looked at it. I smoked, but not as much as on previous weekends.

And so it goes. This is not an exciting success story, but it's an okay story. Things are looking pretty good. It's about a 75% cutback now, and I might even get to 100% in the future. I no longer bring cigarettes to work and find I don't think of them that much anymore.

During the six-session workshop, a sense of camaraderie developed among the participants, a feeling of shared travail. They talked about their problems and why they continued to smoke. They talked about their successes and ways they had devised of kicking the habit. One man carried around a color photo of a healthy lung and one destroyed by emphysema. One look at the picture kept his hand out of the cigarette pack.

Reliable statistics are hard to come by in such workshops. Of the class of 40, in this first non-smoking clinic, Dr. Judith Katsin, head of the Employee Assistance Program, says that about 30% quit entirely, which was double the number expected. But everybody gave it a good try and, if nothing else, became aware that perhaps it *was* possible to quit. And who knows, maybe next time around . . .

— Bernice Petersen
December 11, 1981

A Trip Through the Technical Wilderness

Feeling sure that there must be something in the raft of publications BNL puts out that would be comprehensible to a foursquare layman, I leafed through some BNL publication lists. Most of the titles are, apparently, in English, but on the order of "$10^x \times 40q$ and Its Effect on Schmegegi in the Old Corral at Elevated Temperatures."

However, there were some that seemed to have possibilities, to wit, "Search for Heavy Triplets in Cosmic Rays." A possible science fiction thriller, even though it does seem a weird place to be looking for three fat kids.

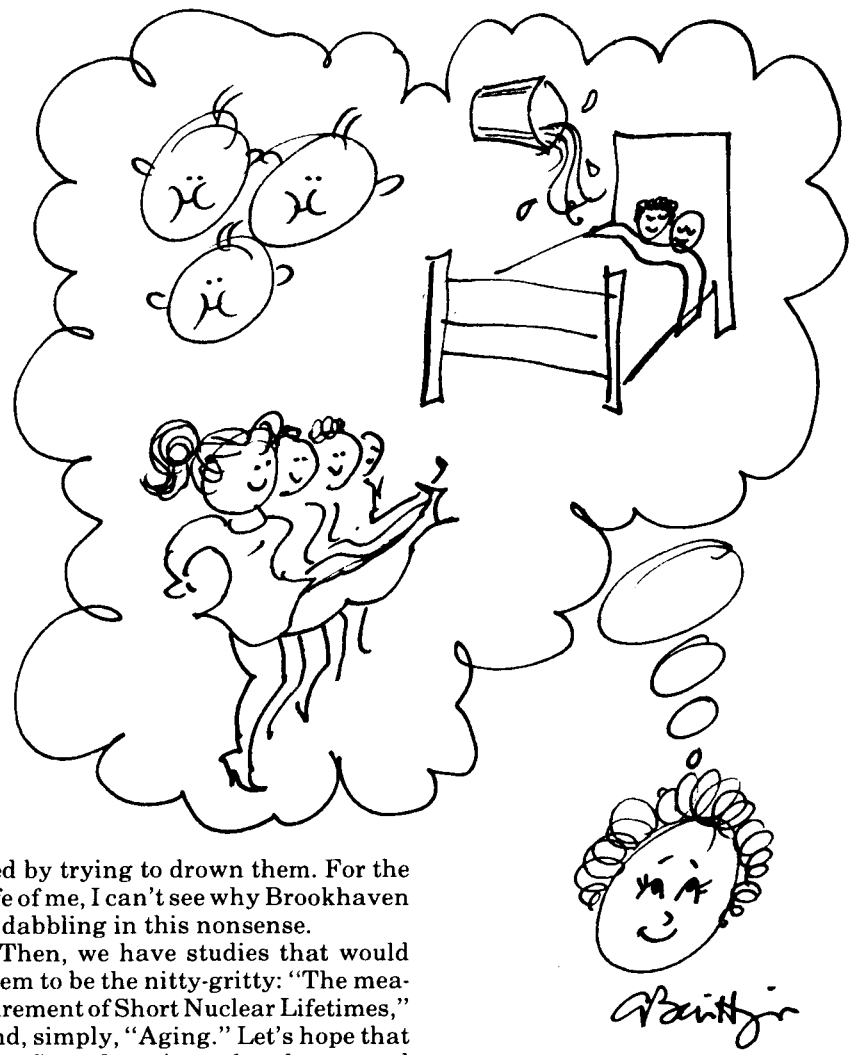
"Fast Kickers" — a sharp, punchy expose of the chorus line at the Copacabana, maybe?

I can only assume that the author of "Get the Lead Out" got fed up and fired off an exhortation to his fellow scientists to stop goofing off. After all, scientists are only human, you know.

I suppose it was inevitable that the present-day moral laxity would seep down to Brookhaven. In the index, I found "Knight Shift in Dirty Superconducting Aluminum Films," immediately followed by "Vanishing Knight Shift in Dirty Superconducting Aluminum Films." Now, if we assume that Knight is a typographical error (or a cover-up) for "night," then we learn that the night shift had been down in the basement making dirty pictures, were found out and immediately sacked, hence the "vanishing." I am surprised that the Administration allowed these titles to be listed in the Annual Report.

Sociological studies seem to have found a niche at the Laboratory. How about "On the Number of Pairings Among Classes of Like Objects" and "The Overlapping Group Method." The former probably deals with the age-old question of marrying within your class, or what happens if you don't, or something. The latter, obviously, is about this new-fangled sensitivity training approach, where everybody lies around kissing and hugging and crying and God knows what all in an attempt to get themselves loosened up. I'll bet it was a gas working on that research project.

Some titles don't seem as straightforward. For instance, "Controlled Removal of Spheres From a Geometrically Ordered Packed Bed by Surface Fluidization." At first glance, this doesn't mean much, but if you really think about it, it would seem to be about how to get two people out of bed by trying to drown them. For the life of me, I can't see why Brookhaven is dabbling in this nonsense.

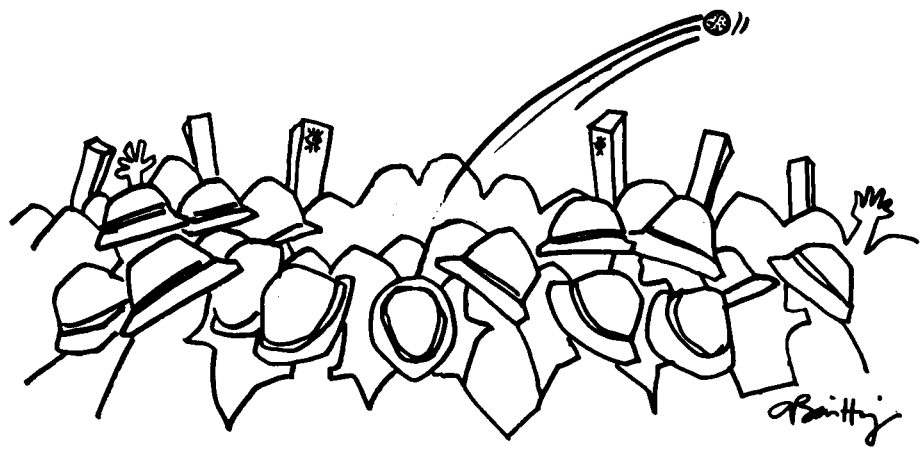


Then, we have studies that would seem to be the nitty-gritty: "The measurement of Short Nuclear Lifetimes," and, simply, "Aging." Let's hope that the first doesn't make the second obsolete.

— Bernice Petersen
December 17, 1970

The Best of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...

A Sunday Golfer at the U.S. Open



It was going to be too hot, it was going to rain, the crowds, ugh. Better to watch it on television and let the golf diehards deal with the hassle of being there.

Then the feeling — maybe you're going to miss out on something. When was the last time a U.S. Open was held on Long Island? In 1896, that's when. And when would the next one be held? Long after you're gone, lady. So let's give it a try.

By the time I got myself into gear, tickets for the last two days of the tournament were sold out, but I managed to get two tickets for Friday.

O.K. Now how are you going to get there without suffering a nervous breakdown. Drive? Good luck, kiddo. Everybody was predicting gigantic traffic jams. You could imagine your old car wheezing as it crawled along and your own anxiety level rising as you watched the car's temperature gauge move up. You'd be lucky if you ever arrived in time to see anything.

Then you heard the L.I.R.R. was sending out special trains from the city and at the last minute they decided to make a stop at Patchogue. Problem solved.

So, on Friday, the 13th, nattily attired and shod in the running shoes you could walk to Canada in, off you went. It was cool and cloudy, and everyone carried umbrellas. You congratulated yourself that you had not chosen Thursday as the day to go to the Open. That day's weather had made everyone blanch. But the forecast for today promised better things to come, even if it was Friday the 13th. And, anyway, though you didn't dare say it out loud, in case the gods could hear you, Friday the 13th had always been a good luck day for you.

On the station platform, everyone was quietly milling around. Golfers, generally, are not raucous types. Seats were guaranteed on this train, but somebody next to me muttered, "Yea, well, there are 30 seats in each car. They probably sold 30 sitting and 30 standing." But such was not the case.

My companion and I seated ourselves next to a friendly looking man who had the intent, self-contained look of a dedicated golfer. It turned out he was, and I asked him: "Any predictions?"

He said, "Well, I'd like Lee Trevino, or Cal Peete but I understand he's hurting."

I said, "I don't want Nicklaus to win again."

And he said, "Neither do I, he's had his time." Heresy. Not Jack's fault, just that he seems to be getting the deification treatment from the media.

At Southampton College station where we disembarked, Suffolk County had built an overpass to enable pedestrians to get to the other side where the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club is situated. The steps were steep and not enclosed, and I clung grimly to the hand rail, desperately trying not to look down, but it was hard because they were "see-through" steps. But no turning back now.

On the other side, a low-key carnival atmosphere greeted us. Green and white striped tents, some in which you could purchase golf paraphernalia; some housed the press, in others sat official scorers and the many officials needed to run such an event. Tents where you could buy hot dogs and hamburgers, soda and beer, at somewhat elevated prices. Port-a-potties and trash cans dotted the course. TV cameras hung from cranes and towers, and men shouldered mini-cameras as they followed the players.

Right off the bat, we more or less bumped into the 10th hole and who was there — Fuzzy Zoeller and Hubie Green. Wow! It was star time. There they were in the flesh: Zoeller tossing off his asides to the crowd, and that Green is one handsome fella. Much better looking than on TV; in fact, most of them are much better looking than on TV. They move to the tee, and their powerful drives whoosh past our ears.

Scheduled to come after them in a few minutes are Larry Nelson, John Mahaffey and — Jack Nicklaus. Well, you may not want him to win, but you're not going to walk away. The crowd is quiet: It's like waiting for the curtain to go up at the theater. Then a path is cleared, and in walk the players: Nelson and Mahaffey first, to a trickle of applause, and then the Golden Bear to an ovation. It must be hard on all of them, I thought. For Nicklaus, who must preserve his concentration through all of this hoopla on every hole, and for the players paired with him, who might as well be invisible.

They move on, and so do we to explore some of this lovely, challenging course. As everyone now knows, Shinnecock Indians helped construct it in 1891, and it is still carefully tended by some of their kin. The course flows with the land. No gimmicks. It is undulating and the rough looks rough. The closely cut fairways are better than the greens on the courses I frequent. Looking down the rolling length of the 9th and 18th holes from their respective tees, I shudder to think what my score would be if I were out there.

Off the fairways, you walk through the clover and marsh roses, the wild blueberry and bayberry, and, of course, the Long Island scrub pine is everywhere.

The clubhouse is rambling and somewhat weatherbeaten, wonderfully understated. It's the kind of a club, we hear, that if you have to ask what the fees are, you really don't belong there.

On Friday, the crowd was quiet, courteous, orderly and knowledgeable. I heard nothing but golf spoken all day. A few had purchased those cardboard periscopes. I happened to get behind one just as a favorite golfer holed out — up periscope. Curses.

(Fashion note: the sun hat to wear this season is a pith helmet, made of what appears to be a light beige straw.)

So how do you get to the U.S. Open? Practice, man, practice. We look behind a fence, and there are the biggest names in golf out on the practice tee. They were there before they went on, and they were back when they finished their game. They never stop.

We park ourselves on the ground close to the green on the 3rd hole and watch as David Graham, Hale Irwin and Tom Watson and their caddies walk silently up the fairway to the green. The quiet is broken only by the sound of a small plane overheard, which is towing a banner reading "Sue, Happy Anniversary, I Love You, Walt."

Looking back at the approaching players, I am struck by what a lonely procession it seems. They are looking straight ahead. You get caught up in their concentration, and it is jarring to hear a shout go up from another hole as a player sinks a long one. Watson looks at his ball. He has a bad lie. I think, maybe he'll pull off one of his impossible shots. No, not this time, and he gives his rueful grin.

And so it goes throughout the day. We see more biggies, Cal Peete, the Great White Shark (Greg Norman), the Walrus (Craig Stadler), Tom Kite and so on. We miss Lee Trevino. We also see many of the lesser knowns: I have a soft spot in my heart for a fella who shot 30 over par for the two days. My kind of guy.

One of the great things about these matches is that it's never over until the last shot of the last day. On Thursday, it was Tway, on Friday it was Norman, on Saturday, it was Norman again, and on Sunday, Ray Floyd won it.

I'm glad I went. Watching the last two days of the tournament on TV was vastly more exciting to me for having seen these well-known names as the men they are, not just the filmed golf idols of before. When they say you are seeing something "live" on TV, you really aren't. The only way you can do that is to be there.

— Bernice Petersen
June 20, 1986

Women's Lib Strikes at Men of Science

The publishers of the *American Men of Science* have succumbed to the inevitable, and the 12th edition of this biographical directory bears the title *American Men and Women of Science.* They have added a subtitle, presumably for the blockheads who couldn't possibly make the connection, *Formerly American Men of Science.*

Now, if they were formerly men, how are they, all of a sudden, men and women? How'd they get away with it all these years and how did it come to light? But we shall probably never know. It will remain one of the mysteries of science.

In these impoverished days when science needs money and the volumes were going to be retired anyway, I should think the publishers could have come up with a more provocative title which would have made scientists a swinging group. Look what a little publicity has done for Professor Kissinger.

After all, what does the title reveal? Only that these people are American, male and female, and of science. With this new edition, they could have walloped in with *American Science Goes Co-ed*, or *He and She in U.S. Laboratories.*

The present administration would probably have showered money on scientific research had the volumes been titled *The All-American Team in Science: Includes Both the Theoretical and Experimental Leagues.* Sporty.

A good all-purpose title which could be used indefinitely simply by inserting the appropriate year would be *American Scientists Revisited — 1972.* Or possibly, *Minds Over Matter in the U.S.*

The patriotic theme always goes over big. For instance, *Scientific Researchers for Uncle Sam.* Or how about *The Stars and Stripes of Science*?

To be more dignified, they could have tried the slightly pompous *Illustrious Personages in American Scientific Research*, or *Names to be Reckoned With in U.S. Science.* After all, these guys and gals are not the bottle washers in the laboratories — they are the guiding lights, the ones who have "arrived."

To please the State Department and to help cement China-U.S. harmony, they could have used *American Scientists in the Year of the Rat.*

The slick magazine style would be *The Jet Set of American Scientific Research*, and/or *The "With-It" Investigators of American Science.*

To borrow from a well-known business manual, a Horatio Alger slant would give us *Americans Forging Ahead in Science.*

The show-biz approach could generate **Stars of the Scientific Theatre** printed in phosphorescent ink on a brilliant paper, or, à la Variety, *Socko Names in U.S. Sci-Biz.*

This is just a sampling of possible titles geared to the 70's and public relations techniques. Who knows? With a piquant title and some rewriting of the biographies, we could have a best seller.

— Bernice Petersen
February 17, 1972

The Best of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...T

Reporter's Notebook:

Keep Your Eye on the Ball

BROOKHAVEN BULLETIN

Published weekly
for the employees of
BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY

BERNICE PETERSEN, Editor
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If you are not a golfer, you probably think of the game as a tedious round of lugging a bag of clubs and hitting a dimpled little ball up and down, apparently with the goal of putting the ball in various holes around the course. Or, you may have watched the pros on the tube, and, the way they play it, the game looks easy.

Well, believe me, it's enough to make you weep. Golf can either develop your character, or ruin it. The game is a constant test of your mental health, stamina and coordination. One day you're playing well and feeling on top of the world, the next day you're so bad, you wish you'd never been born. You can never conquer the game no matter how expert you get, but once you're hooked, you'll never give it up.

The game is played on a course divided into 18 holes. From a distance, it appears to be a pleasant, grassy terrain with trees, little lakes and what look like sandy little beaches. A tranquil spot.

Not so. The place is a minefield. With good reason, the little lakes are known as water hazards, and the little beaches as sand traps, or bunkers. Golf-course architects spend their lives gleefully plotting how they can spot trees, water and sand so that you will not be able to get the ball in the cup without a humiliating score.

Grass is cut different lengths. Fairways are lanes down the middle of the course, and the grass is cut evenly like a carpet. But, naturally, they can't leave it like that. Growing alongside the fairways is taller grass, know as the rough. And it is rough because the ball likes to sit in there and defy your efforts to get it out.

Don't tell me balls are inanimate objects. They are perverse little devils who like to roll when they should stop, have a penchant for long grass and delight in embedding themselves in sand.

At the end of every hole is a closely shaven green, and on it is a cup designated by a long pole with a flag on it, known as the pin. When you reach it, you putt your ball into the cup. So what's the problem?

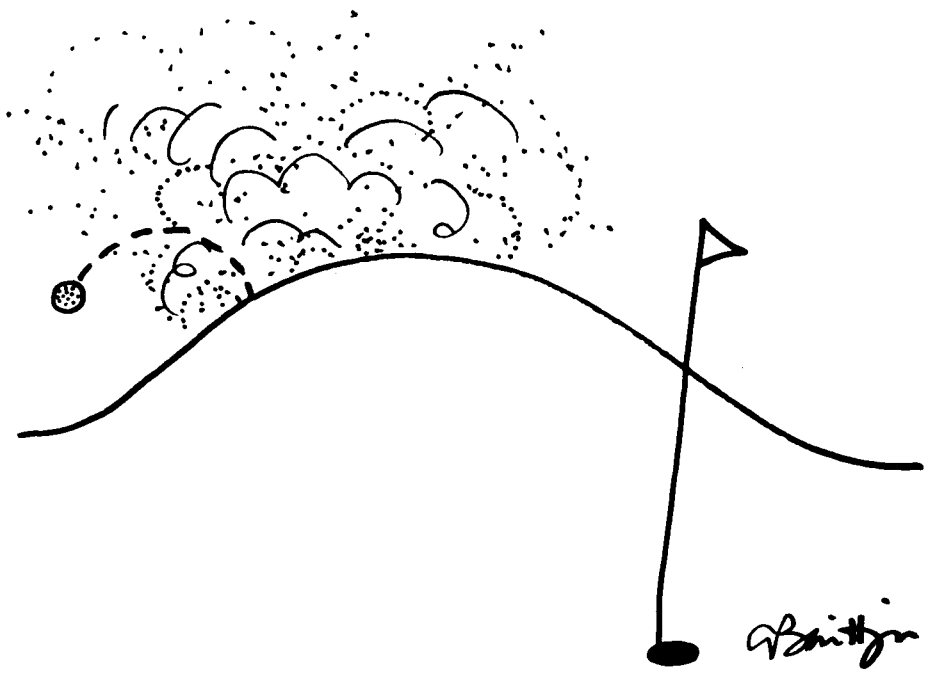
The problem is that this smooth surface cunningly conceals little hills and valleys, which take your ball away from its destination, and some sinister force rolls the ball past the cup, instead of into it. It's heartbreaking.

Contrary to most games, in golf, the lowest score is the best score. You are supposed to get around in as few strokes as possible. With most hackers, adding up the score can be a humbling experience, and a well-bred opponent will not yell out, "Hey? What did you say your score was?"

Speaking of scores, three words are heard most often in golf: par, birdie, bogey. Par means the number of strokes considered necessary to complete a hole in expert play. Birdie is one stroke less than par and cause of jubilation. Bogey is one stroke more than par and, with many players, still cause for jubilation. In fact, most of us never see a birdie, seldom par, and even bogeys aren't too frequent. Our scores tend to be on the high side.

Loss of ego is something golfers must learn to contend with and cover up with a casual shrug. Particularly on the first tee. That's where everyone is standing around waiting for you to hit the ball and secretly hoping that you'll botch it.

Another test of one's cool is when your ball lands in the bunker right under the lip. You take your stance, determined to blast the ball out — and it rolls back down. You whack at it again — and it digs deeper into the sand. Sweat appears on the forehead, and anxiety is short-circuiting your concentration. You take another go at it — and it rolls back down. You want to cry. But nothing lasts forever, and with the next try, you're out. So what if you sculled it across the green and down the hill!



Local golf clubs have a quaint custom of turning on the sprinklers about 6 p.m. So Brookhaven Golf Association members, who play their matches after work, have an additional obstacle to face. Your ball insists on landing right next to the sprinkler head, so it becomes a contest between you and the sprinkler. Can you drive it out of there before the sprinkler comes around and drenches you? Tune in next week.

So, if golf is nine-tenths frustration and puts a severe strain on your ego, why do so many people doggedly head for the golf course week after week? Because, now and then ball and club come together the way they are supposed to, and the ball soars sweet and straight. Often enough to keep you going, the ball doesn't roll around the cup, but drops with a satisfying plop right into it. Your score is such that you don't need to blush. It's enough to make you jump for joy. You've succeeded in coordinating head, heart and skill, and, next week, you're going to go out and do it again.

— Bernice Petersen
June 14, 1985

A Secretary Is . . . . . .

N.Y. Times, March 6, 1972 —
The State Department has opened a diplomatic campaign within its own walls to raise the status of secretaries and persuade their bosses not to regard them as housekeepers, office wives, or "gofers."

Once upon a time, a secretary was a "confidant, one entrusted with secrets, the understanding of mysteries, or the like," and, of course, he was male, but Webster's new International Dictionary (1956) now lists this definition as obsolete. Then, in order of importance, we have the secretary of a corporation, an officer of state such as the Secretary of State, War, etc. Then we come to that definition most commonly linked with the word secretary today, "one who writes, esp. that dictated by another. *Amanuensis.*" The only thing after that is a "desk, sometimes known as a secretary."

If we go to Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1970) — which is somewhat like going from The New York Times to the Daily News — the second definition on their list is "one employed to handle correspondence and manage routine and detail work for a superior."

Now, to get all the definitions out of the way, the National Secretaries Association (International) says a secretary "shall be defined as an executive assistant who possesses a mastery of skills, who demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who exercises initiative and judgement, and who makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority."

They are short and tall, bright and dumb, young and aging. They have developed a "stenographer's spread" or are endowed with an eye-boggling shape. They encompass all the human characteristics, and, for some years, they have been lumped into one category, namely, "secretaries." They are now mostly female. According to the Bureau of Labor, there are three times as many women as men employed in a clerical capacity.

All of a sudden, there is a drive to upgrade this person who has labored under many labels over the years, "the office wife," "Tillie the toiler," and just plain, "the girl." Whether she is fresh out of business school or has been handling an office for many years, she still comes at the tail end of the hierarchy.

There is a growing catalog of complaints in the field, and the murmur of the crowd can be heard at the gates.

With the advent of typewriters, men must have decided that this was a hell of a boring way to earn a living, and, as the little woman was then striving to get out of the kitchen, she was allowed to take over this chore. Though, of course, even this innocent way of becoming independent was tantamount to becoming a scarlet woman.

The job of secretary is very often just considered a way station, a place to keep a young girl occupied until she can nab a man and retire from the scene. If marital bliss does not come her way, or if other circumstances decree that she keep on working, she rarely goes on to any other classification — once a secretary, always a secretary — no matter what competence she may have exhibited.

A secretary can be a wide-eyed graduate starting out in the typing pool or the right hand of a President. The great majority fall in the "good and faithful servant" category. They are usually responsible to one man, and sometimes to one woman, known as the "boss."

In these circumstances, she can thrive or founder, depending on a combination of her own ability and the personality of the boss. In the course of her career, she may shuttle from boss to boss, always in the name of advancement, and a chameleon-like quality becomes an asset. In addition, an ability to keep her mouth shut and her eyes open is indispensable.

Though good legs never hurt any woman, some women even like to use their brains and will do so, if given an opportunity. Secretaries tend to be looked at askance if they venture so far afield. There are differing degrees of ability in any occupation, and secretaries are no exception. Many women, though capable of really assisting the boss, are used as typists only, a means of getting information down on paper quickly and in a readable form. Though flying fingers tend to keep the hands slim, they don't exercise the brain.

The secretary in many offices is considered part of the typewriter. They are both inanimate objects, except when she is called upon to run for coffee or perform other little housewifely chores.

If it is acknowledged that she has a life outside the office, it is never supposed to come into conflict with anything going on from 8:30 to 5. Emergencies are permitted, but rather grudgingly. Men may come and men may go, but women stay put.

If she acts with some authority, she is "bossy" and "throwing her weight around." She must always tread the fine line of being knowledgeable about the work involved, but acting as a ventriloquist, speaking not for herself, but for another. Many people insist on going to the boss, even though the secretary can take care of the problem. There seems to be a built-in anxiety about taking a secretary's word for anything.

However, no matter how it turns out, it is comforting to know that the National Secretaries Association now has under construction in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a retirement center for elderly and needy secretaries. If all else fails, she can always sun herself in that nice, dry climate and know that NSA, if not heaven, will protect the working girl.

— Bernice Petersen
March 16, 1972

st of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...The Best

Wanted

Used Champagne Bottles

"Will the gentleman who stole my wallet please return it before I find you or I will break your neck." This ad never saw the light of day because the editor deemed it too inflammatory.

Another ad in the same vein, but more gently phrased, did make it: "Lost — Rochester Group's refrig. (Such as it is). Last seen in west side test beam area, no questions asked."

Though the majority of classified ads appearing in the Brookhaven Bulletin are straightforward ads of people either waiting to sell or acquire something, some odd ones do appear. One eyebrow raiser that did manage to make one issue was: "Men or teenaged boys to audition for on-site filming of Portnoy's Complaint. Contact Movie Committee."

Whatever could the person who placed this ad have had in mind: "Wanted — wooden tub, for loan or sale, lg. enough to hold a man."

There are creative types who make things out of practically nothing:

Wanted: "Used champagne bottles, we're making our own"; "Yellow & blue plastic tops from coffee cans"; "Old dolls, preferably Bisque"; "Turkey feathers"; "Lead melting pot for molding bullets."

Then there's the slug-a-bed who was selling an "exerciser — used once."

What were the stories behind these ads: "Dyeable shoes, dk. green peau de soie, med. high heels, sling back, worn 1/2 evening" and "Boy Scout Leader's uniform — excel. cond., worn only four hours." Apparently, for differing reasons, one-half evening was all they could take.

"Beige otter jacket — pastel mink collar, casual style, excel. cond. Wife anti-vivisectionist." Picture husband waiting in happy anticipation for dear wife to open Christmas present and her cry of anguish when she sees it. Maybe he could have used the "14' Snake whip — excel. cond., show her who's boss."

Here's a collector's item: "Bible — King James version, gilt-edged, illustrated by Michelangelo, brand-new."

And we have the people who are giving away our natural resources: "Free — sand pile (75 cubic yards) located in Brookhaven, you haul." (That's a lot of sand, baby.) "Beautiful bumblebee hive — w/bees, free for the taking." (You haul or me haul?) "Free for the taking — horse manure in 50 lb. bags." (Sure.)

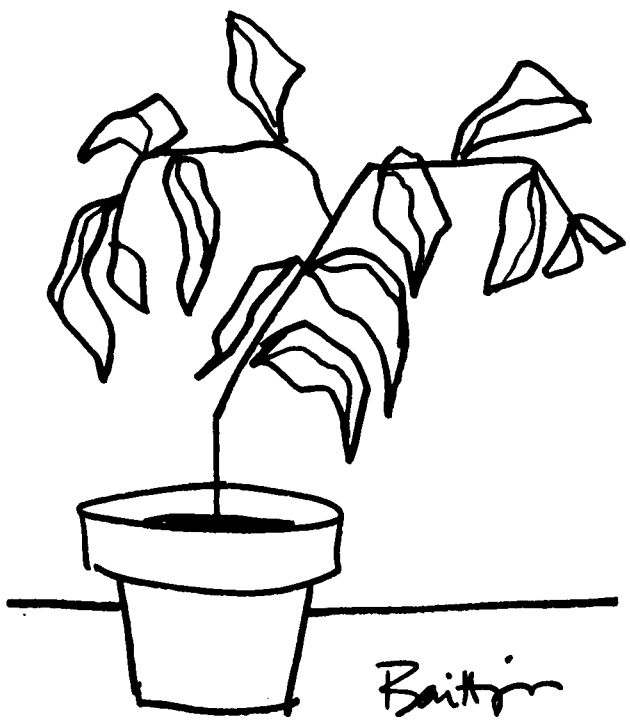
And who counted the branches on the "Christmas tree — 6-1/2' alum, w/stand, 201 branches"?

Fathers were happy to see the following and probably insisted that Momma needed help that summer: "Two Parisian college girls would like to be mother's helpers during month of August, very dependable & willing to work." And along the same lines, "Wanted — girls interested in playing volleyball and other indoor sports."

No classified ads are complete without the "personals" — "Wanted — Back in the Cafeteria, lovely blonde with the beautiful smile, back to greet the men; her name was Michele. Lonely group in AGS." (One of those Parisian college girls, I bet.)

This was just a random sampling taken over the past year. I am sure if we were to go all the way back we would come up with some lulus. Did you know, for instance, someone once tried to sell the Cosmotron?

— Bernice Petersen
January 22, 1970



For Better or Worse . . .

Big oaks from little acorns grow, and gangly, scrawny, fungus-ridden, indefatigable plants from an avocado nut.

It all started a few years back when an erstwhile member of the Office of Scientific Personnel (OSP) decided to beautify the premises. The always precarious state of the budget precluded buying new furniture or anything of that nature, and there was a feeling in the office that any improvement should be homemade, or "creative."

An avocado nut, left from somebody's lunch, was placed in a glass of water, as is usual, and thereafter regularly checked for roots, which, as is also usual, appeared on schedule. Then it was transferred to a homemade pot (fired by the erstwhile member's son) and surrounded by earth surreptitiously dug up from the front of Building 460. Glad cries from all hands greeted the arrival of the first green sprouts.

It grew and grew and grew and also separated and started another stalk, which grew and grew. As with sibling rivalry, the second stalk apparently needed to outdo the first and grew higher. All this growing was accompanied by big fights in the office as to who the hell's turn it was to water the plant.

Time passed. The erstwhile member went elsewhere in the Laboratory, but still claimed ownership, as she brought it "to birth." The rest of us were caretaker parents and under pain of death to keep the damned thing healthy.

She needn't have worried. Nothing will destroy it. It has been unwatered, overwatered, cursed, moved into the sunlight, out of the sunlight — and still it keeps putting out new green leaves.

It still resides in its homemade pot, which it outgrew a long time ago. It has been a repository for cigar butts, paper clips and coffee, and Christmas bulbs have hung from its branches.

The plant caught a blight of some sort, and most of its leaves curled up with dark, ugly splotches and hung in dismal disarray. With the *laissez-faire* attitude of OSP, the plant stayed in its corner in that state for about a year or more, with comments from passers-by like "hmmmm, what is it?" The erstwhile member has, of course, kept up a running commentary over the years on the lack of green thumbs in OSP, or alternatively, the heartless, uncaring attitude of its present inhabitants towards her "child."

A present employee, fired up after months of staring at those disfigured leaves, finally got up enough guts to hack them off, hoping the plant would expire gracefully.

But, oh no! Bright new leaves have appeared, it is growing and growing, and we may have a jack-in-the-beanstalk-type growth in OSP. We won't need rockets. We may someday climb to the stars on it.

In the meantime, enjoy the avocado fruit and throw out the pits. Get a plant from Biology, or consult your local florist.

— Bernice Petersen
April 4, 1975

It's Blatantly Unofficial

And the winner is ... Bernice Petersen, who, blatantly unofficially, holds the most blatantly unofficial BNL records. To wit, these blatant and unofficial submissions:

Putting the farthest distance between herself and the source upon hearing the din of a vacuum cleaner. — *Anne S. Baittinger*

Always addressing her staff by the interchangeable names of Tootsie Bell, Dearie and Kiddo. — *Anita Cohen*

The most swear words per column inch of edited copy. — *Marsha Belford*

Making the largest number of insulting statements about the Deputy Director —and still surviving. — *Martin Blume*

The largest number of buttered hard rolls consumed on Thursday mornings, in 1986. (The same record held for 1985, only substitute buttered corn muffins.) — *Mona S. Rowe*

The greatest success at turning copyboys (and girls) into creative writers. — *Howard Rubin*

The largest number of cigarettes not smoked from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the largest number of cigarettes smoked from 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. — *Anita Cohen*

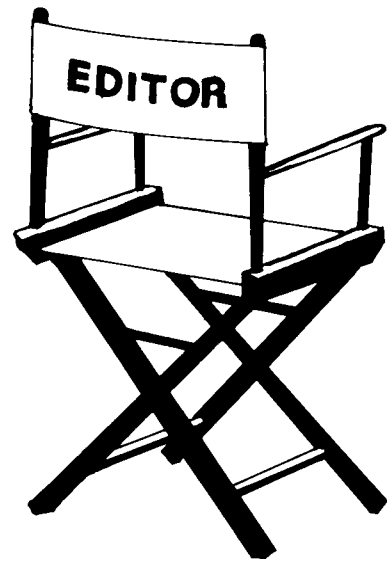
The most technology-anxious science editor who is no longer computer-anxious. — *Marsha Belford*

The largest number of unsuccessful attempts to get the parking area increased behind Bldg. 134. — *Anne S. Baittinger*

Having a car parked the longest time in a yellow-lined, 20-minute parking area. Eight-hour record. — *Janet Sillas*

Axing the largest number of inappropriate headlines drummed up by her staff and making the most threats to use the "best" in a feature called "The Heads That Rolled." — *Mona S. Rowe*

The most chocolate candy bars smuggled into an office. (And the most candy bars shared with co-workers.) — *Janet Sillas*



of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...The Best of Bernice...The Best