

Harry Briley

Memoir Status - Mine

I discovered my mother kept all my report cards (gulp!). My elementary teachers commented that I was not likely to succeed in life (much less get into the next grade) since I was so inattentive, needed constant reminders to work, daydreaming, easily distractible, and had to be told six times within 30 minutes to stay in my seat. They all noted that I did quite well whenever I decided to do the work.

This continued up through the eighth grade. My parents must have tired of hearing every quarter about my wandering mind and unfocused behavior. I read of no anti-social problems. I liked the teachers and they liked me. However, my slow methodical work, constant dawdling, and zoning out during instruction time fully perplexed my teachers and parents. I scattered those embarrassing notes throughout my two school-days chapters (2 and 3). I uncovered more papers about Anne (kept by her mother) to expand our college chapters (4a and 4b). See: brileyh.weebly.com/walk-with-me.html

Memoir Status – Jack Rittenhouse

A retired teacher in Constantine, Michigan sought Jack's memoir for her town's historical binder. His *Life in Mid-West Twenties* chapter describes his experiences in Constantine 1921-22. She offered background materials, which led me to their historical society for supporting details and photos.

In November, I completed editing two more of his chapters: *Bookman in London/Paris 1977* (about the antiquarian book trade) and *Bookman in Spain 1989* (his final vacation).

I received an 84-page transcript from David Farmer of a rambling interview in 1989 when he visited Jack's collection of rare southwest Americana. He had over \$200,000 of such books on 15 shelves in his basement. Jack died in 1991 and this rare interview captured his important book-trade secrets. Many excerpts filled memoir gaps or motivated me to edit chapters (in the works) about his decade at UNM Press and later as an antiquarian bookseller. See: brileyh.weebly.com/rittenhouse-memoir.html



Newsletter 2020

Commodore 64

Two Commodore aficionados (David Youd and David Knapp, both known at LLNL) welcomed my entire collection of purchased software, many books, and a few odd components from forty years ago. Members in their on-line retro community have already put these ancient C64 items to use.

Instead going to landfill, children from the 1980s now repair old C64 hardware. They copy old 8-bit diskettes to an archival format that let a modern Windows PC run games using a C64 emulator! It is like the DOSBox tool for running early 16-bit PC software under Windows 10. David Youd hopes to load the novice Briley Software products from 1980 into that public archive. I cautioned them that the software was rudimentary back in 1979 due to the 8000-character memory PETs. Computer-historian buffs actively save those 40-year-old early products before they are lost forever. I was astounded.

See: archive.org and c64.com

With their encouragement, I next shipped a fully tested C64 to my son James and his four children. It included two dozen tested cartridge games given to me decades ago by my brother-in-law Dennis Blair. My rare C64 video cable with RCA jacks enabled James to use a large flat-TV as the monitor. Those old C64 games never looked so good!



Redeployed C64 (J.Briley 8/2020)

Harry Briley

Faith

I converted (VHS tape to YouTube) my 1998 talk at LLNL about faith observations during two work trips to Moscow. That 21-year-old videotape was on the death track of all old technology (akin to 5" floppy disk drives, which I still have for my C64).

That slideshow talk was better than I recalled.

See: brileyh.weebly.com/newsletters.html

In 1998, Del Barber gave me her newly authored ***Survivors Guide to Grief*** pamphlet. In 2020, I edited and expanded it into an 8-page PDF file.

See: brileyh.weebly.com/livermore-ministries.html

Given the quarantine, I re-offered my ***Biblical Greek for Beginners*** course but on-line. I had technical advice (and several attendees) from Miller Baptist Church over in Marin County. Their pastor/author Kent and Katie Philpott interviewed me for their community TV in 2019. My class videos improved with a studio microphone and more lighting. To access this Biblical Greek playlist, full syllabus, and class slideshow, see: brileyh.weebly.com/greek-hebrew.html

Community Roles

I won an open 2021 seat on the Republican Central Committee for Alameda County in the March Primary with just 4550 votes, just under 10% of the votes cast. I was surprised to win first time out. I felt like the barking dog chasing a squirrel and having caught it, not quite knowing what to make of it. They seated me early in a vacated district seat in May instead of waiting until January.

In October, I "walked precincts" in neighborhoods near me for the first time, which seemed way outside my introverted comfort zone. However, the quarantine meant I could only leave an election card under doormats and not knock on doors. Even so, most who caught me in person (masked at six feet) felt positive. Three homes wanted to hug me!

All year, I gave technical support for the Livermore Heritage Guild (major rebuild of web, PC updates), Tri-Valley Republicans (web), and recently our Republican Central Committee (web).



Newsletter 2020

Elbow Crash

My pretending to be 16 resulted in a broken elbow on 3/1/2020. The AWANA teens played ultimate tag (a version of "banana tag") on the gym half-court. Rules: *"Everyone is 'it' and tries to tag the others. Once tagged, she sits in place and keeps track of who tagged her. She gets up when the teen who tagged her has himself been tagged. If two people tag each other at the same time, they do rock paper scissors and the loser sits down."* It visually reminds me of a nuclear chain reaction model.

I ran full tilt at a faster smaller swerving target, swooped my arm to tag, missed, and the unchecked centrifugal force spiraled me hard upon my right elbow. It drove the keys on my belt well into my right hip for a nasty bruise running down my thigh. It felt as if an invisible force threw me harder than mere twisting mechanics of angular momentum. Both my doctor and surgeon now require me to act my age. This relegates me to cheering from the sidelines (whenever the quarantine ends).



The surgeon reassembled the elbow with two four-inch pins and surgical wire. This matches a fracture Anne had in 1997 tripping on a lifted section of sidewalk. She needed a 3-inch plate and six screws, with a second surgery to remove the hardware.

I had difficulty operating left-handed. Immediately after, the country went into Coronavirus quarantine.

Harry Briley

This quarantine meant no physical therapy after a month in a splint cast. Livermore Heritage Guild and Trinity Church members drove me around in the early days of recovery when much needed.

The surgeon later examined my elbow via a post-cast Zoom appointment. Ever so slowly, I regained some range of motion. I could not drive or do physical labor. It was not until May that I could even touch my face, make a partial fist, or type on the keyboard with that arm.

Today, I can easily drive, type, lift 30 pounds, reach behind my head, and make a half-fist. My arm will not hang straight because of the injury. Of course, when I whack that elbow, I know all about it.

Photo from the past



I hunted for this specific newspaper 8x10 glossy for a strings festival in 1/1963 for fifty years, giving it up as lost or discarded. It turned up this year in my mother's archives with my report cards. Yay Mom!

Why did I choose the lamppost image for this year?
E-mail me your best-proposed explanation.



Newsletter 2020

Most Enjoyed Books for 2020

The Origins of Things – Jack Meinhardt, Editor (2002, BAS) – Sixteen fun historical romps describing concepts I assumed always existed.

The Copper Scroll and Search for the Temple Treasure – Hershel Shanks (2007) – A fast highly readable contentious history of the Copper Scroll treasure list found in 1952. Two fun chapters describe the multi-decade excavation of mysterious steep tunnels of stairs at Hyrcania of only a few feet, then 90 feet, then 180 feet, then 300 feet, and then a split into two tunnels, still going steeply down. It was not a mine. There are four tunnels, each solely a staircase without rooms or purpose.

Lane County Kid's Book: Stories to 1900 – Cheryl Wallin (1982) – Aimed at third-graders, I enjoyed the capsule summaries for this Oregon area where I grew up (Florence, Mapleton, Lorane, Eugene) with fun extracts from teenage pioneer journals.

Civil War Curiosities – Webb Garrison (1994, 281p) – The author collected odd data that missed being 'important enough'. The book is addictive until raw carnage data sinks in by the last 50 pages. Antiquated methods against new technology yielded 7000 Union men dead or maimed in 8 minutes in the Cold Harbor battle (or 15 hits every second). Emancipation was anathema to Union generals and even by Lincoln during the first two years. It later became a war measure against the South. Northern slaves were not freed. From his election, the South hated President Lincoln as much as the Left hated President Trump. The North was not gracious either, treating him as an uncouth backwards ape.

California and the Civil War - Richard Hurley (2017, 175p) - This highly readable tourist book explores politics and personalities due to the physical isolation of California. We almost became our own country. Our morals were barely out of the Stone Age. Example 1: We fought over limited resources (gold, land, water) across tribal lines: Indians vs Indians, northerner vs southerner, Whites vs Indians, Mexicans vs Whites, Indians vs Mexicans, and Mormons vs US Army. California

Harry Briley



soldiers killed Indian raiders (over land, food, and water). A key person (regardless of side) could be both a bright light and ruthless. It helped that I knew some about pre-war Western US history and southwestern Indians. Example 2: California was to become a slave State! Southern Democrats owned L.A. and Northern Democrats owned S.F. Bay. Lincoln got only 40% of the California vote. Given the imminent war, northern Democrats (pro-slavery but pro-Union, who did not like slaves competing with them in gold mining) joined with the brand new Republican party to vote for the Union. After the war, this marriage of convenience broke up. The pro-slavery Democrats (both Northern and Southern) retook the entire State government.

Casa Loma – Bill Freeman (1999) – Tourist book covers most famous castle-like mansion in Canada. Sir Henry was a wheeler-dealer rags-to-riches-to-rags story in which he furnished only a third of the interior until his shady finances collapsed in 1923. Toronto took the bankrupted \$3.5 million (\$100M in 1999 dollars) mansion for only \$27,000 in back taxes. It became an abandoned nuisance until volunteers rescued it in 1937. Yet, this amazing mansion seemed a pittance compared to much larger governmental and university buildings. I felt its story best demonstrated why we see enormous buildings mostly built upon the backs of taxpayers.

The Tree Army – Stan Cohen (1980, 1993, 2005 reprint) – This photo history of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), 1933-1942 gives a significant summary. In the frozen economy, President Roosevelt created military-run training for 3 MILLION unskilled men age 18-25 in over 4500 camps. It cost \$3 BILLION (\$300B in 2019 dollars). This averaged \$1000 per man for infrastructure and their labor (12 cents an hour, not a living wage of course). They enlisted for six-month terms for up to two years. Of their \$30/month income, the CCC sent \$25 to their family. They focused on soil conservation, forestry, and roadbuilding. For the last two years, the CCC became more like army construction battalions. It still took WWII to retrain our nation for handle non-agricultural work and unfreeze the economy.

Newsletter 2020

Enemy on Island: Issue in Doubt – Stan Cohen (1983, 2009 reprint) – This photo history covers the fall of Wake Island the same month as the Pearl Harbor attack in WWII. We built up this small useless waterless exposed coral atoll to defend access to Hawaii. Japan bombed it back to sand and shipped 1200 prisoners to China (nearly all were civilian workers). Japan repaired the runway with 98 civilian prisoners as heavy equipment operators (whom they later executed). We bombed it back to sand and later rebuilt the whole atoll to refuel transoceanic flights through 1970. Half the book follows the civilian prisoners during their 3.5-year plight as slave labor in China finally arriving to work in Japan's coalmines. Battle maps, sobering photos, and hidden prison pencil sketches.

Climate Change Conflict – Jake Hebert (2019, ICR) – The author argues mostly from Bible fiat. I more valued his points about raw data, sunspot activity, and long-age bias of computer models. Proponents say carbon dioxide affects the upper atmosphere, which affects ice caps. Herbert thus correctly avoids conflating lower atmosphere urban smog (industrial nitrous oxide and sulfur) as affecting climate change. I hoped to see smog mentioned as clear evidence of poor stewardship and localized pollution. The alarmist “hockey stick” graph (Mann, 1998) shows a 0.5 Celsius spike in global temperature since 1900. Data errors corrected in 2003 now show the planet as much warmer in the 1400's (when such warming had no link to industrial activity) and colder than the 1900 data in the late 1600's. That is, the post-1900 data, while warm, easily fits inside the cyclical range.

Orthodoxy – G.K. Chesterton (1908, 2007 Reprint) – I put off this print version for a decade but so thoroughly enjoyed it as an audio book. With dry British wit, he explains how he as a recalcitrant agnostic came to adopt Christianity. Every college student should read it. However, those who most need to read it are predisposed to evade just such a temptation. He amazed me even in the instances where I disagreed with his logic. I think I would have enjoyed meeting him in person.