

"War does not determine who is right. It determines who is left." ~ Bertrand Russell

On Rail and Road

My darling wife and I are about to embark on a five-week adventure starting on a trans-Canadian train and then down the East Coast by car during the **Autumn Leaf-Peepers Festival**, visiting our many friends and relatives and culminating in a theatre trip to Manhattan and a Peterson family wedding in Massachusetts, before returning home in late October.

We will be taking the premium four-day **Trans Canada Train Journey** between Vancouver and Toronto, showcasing the country's changing landscapes consisting of tranquil lakes, dense forests, expanses of grasslands, verdant river valleys, the majestic Canadian Rockies, and all meals and booze included, eh? We'll then visit Montreal and Quebec which I've not seen since 1953, before renting a car in Halifax and motoring down the coast.

You can follow our adventures on Facebook, and if you're an East-Coast friend, relation or school-mate, be prepared for an email to set up a visit soon...

TRAINING DAZE

A Rockies start to a five-week trek by track and turnpike.

"Never look down on anyone unless you are helping them up." ~ Phil's Phunny Phacts

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I am also delighted to announce that I have been invited to join the cast of a brilliant new play in January of 2017, and here's the official release:

The late **Garry Marshall's** Falcon Theater kickstarts 2017 with a world premiere, presenting **Laugh Then Think's**



production of ***For Piano and Harpo***, written by and starring **Dan Castellaneta**, with **Deb Lacusta, Gail Mathius, Phil Proctor, Paul Sand** and **Jonathan Stark**, directed by **Stefan Novinski**.

Oscar Levant, *left*, the brilliant, witty, pill-popping concert pianist, wakes up to find himself in the Psych Ward of Mt. Sinai Hospital. His past

collides with his present, as he grapples with his demons to save his marriage and his sanity. It's a nightmarish and sometimes hilarious journey, from addiction to redemption, as he verbally jousts with **Jack Paar**, is haunted by the genius of **George Gershwin**, and moves in with his only friend, **Harpo Marx**.

Previews February 1-9, opens Friday, Feb. 10 and runs through Sunday, March 5.

*"Laugh at your problems, everybody else does."
~ Phil's Phunny Phacts*

OUT OF THE MOUTHS

The teacher gave her fifth grade class an assignment: Get their parents to tell them a story with a moral at the end of it. The next day, the kids came back and, one by one, began to tell their stories.

Susie said "We live on a farm. and I was collecting eggs from the hen house one day. I gathered the eggs and put them in my basket and set off running toward the house. While running I tripped over a rock and smashed all of the eggs."

"So what's the moral of the story Susie?" asked the teacher. "Don't put all of your eggs in one basket," said Susie.

Next it was Billy's turn. "We also live on a farm," said Billy. "We have incubators to help our eggs hatch. One night there was a thunderstorm and lightning knocked out the power to the incubators."

"So what's the moral of that story Billy?" asked the teacher. "Don't count your chickens before they hatch," said Billy.

The teacher turned to Janie. "Janie, do you have a story to share?"

THROUGHOUT THE 'PLANET,' CLICKING
BOLD, DARK RED TYPE
OPENS A RELATED INTERNET LINK.

"Yes ma'am. My daddy told me a story about my Mommy. She was a Marine pilot in Desert Storm, and her plane got hit. She had to bail out over enemy territory, and all she had was a flask of whiskey, a pistol, and a survival knife.

"She drank the whiskey on the way down so the bottle wouldn't break, and then her parachute landed her right in the middle of 20 Iraqi troops. She shot 15 of them with the pistol, until she ran out of bullets, killed four more with the knife, till the blade broke, and then she killed the last Iraqi with her bare hands."

"Good Heavens," said the horrified teacher. "What did your Daddy tell you was the moral to that story?"

"He said, don't mess with Mommy when she's been drinking."

*"My mother never realized the irony in calling me
a son-of-a-bitch." ~ Phil's Phunny Phacts*

CHECK THIS OUT

There are important questions to be answered about LGBT bathroom legislation allowing transgenders to use a restroom of the gender they "identify" with.

Will public restrooms be required to have a Genital Inspection Station posted at the entrance to all public restrooms? Who will pay these Pecker Checkers – the people using the restroom, or the entity that owns the restroom? And how much money will a Pecker Checker be paid? Do we pay a Pecker Checker by the number of peckers checked? What does the Pecker Checker do when he checks for a pecker and finds a pecker missing? How many peckers can a Pecker Checker check when a Pecker Checker checks all peckers?

And what the Hell has this country come to, when the U.S. Department of Labor has to create a job description for

■ **CONTINUED**

Politically Correct Restroom Service Inspectors?

Coming soon – a new sign on restroom doors: “If you gotta pee...we gotta see!”

“The Second Amendment allows for a well-regulated militia. What we have is not a well-regulated militia. It’s a 21-year-old with a backpack.”
~ U.T. Professor **Lisa Moore**

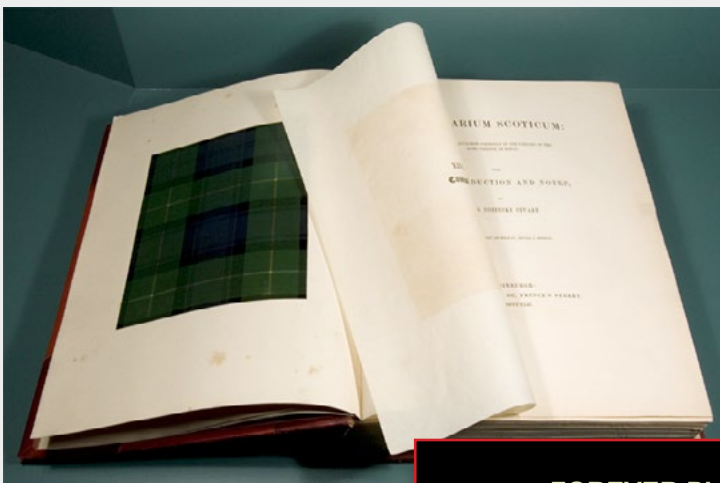
CLAN THIS BE TRUE

Ben Macintyre writes in the *L.A. Times* that the taxonomy of Scottish tartans is a “magnificent scam” and MacDougals and Stewarts brought up to believe that their family plaid has an ancient lineage are sadly deluded.

The story of clan-specific tartans was actually “cooked up” in Southern England by a pair of “enterprising gay Victorian *fashionistas*” posing as brothers and popularized by a German prince.

For hundreds of years in Scotland, people wore whichever tartan they fancied, but in 1842, the Allens published ***Vestiarium Scoticum*** listing the official tartans, supposedly based on a 16th-century manuscript – actually created out of “whole cloth.”

Queen Victoria’s German husband, Prince Albert went mad for it, and he produced a gray and red plaid for Balmoral Castle, allowing sartorial snobs to create tartans at an astonishing rate, “investing them with tribal and symbolic meaning and complicated clan lineage, most of it totally bogus.”



And what’s worse, my “Boomers on a Bench” partner, **Jamie Alcroft**, who has always prided himself on his Scottish heritage, recently discovered that he’s actually Irish, thanks to his beloved kids providing him his genetic DNA history on his birthday. Thanks, kids. And all of you, beware – you can’t handle the truth!

FOREVER PLAID
Tartans by the book.

“Sex is not the answer. Sex is the question.
Yes, is the answer. ~ **Phil’s Phunny Phacts**



DARKNESS AT NOON

A woman takes a lover home during the day while her husband is at work when her 9-year-old son comes home unexpectedly, sees them and hides in the bedroom closet to watch. Alas, the woman’s husband also comes home early, and she puts her lover in the closet, not realizing that her little boy is in there already.

The little boy says, “Dark in here.” The man says, “Yes, it is.” Boy: “I have a baseball.” Man: “That’s nice.” Boy: “Want to buy it?” Man: “No, thanks.” Boy: “My dad’s outside.” Man: “OK -- How much?” Boy: “\$250”

A few weeks later it happens again, and the boy and the lover are in the closet together.

Boy: “Dark in here.” Man: “Yes, it is.” Boy: “I have a baseball glove. The lover, remembering the last time, asks the boy, “How much?” The boy says, “\$750.” The man says, “Sold.”

A few days later, his dad says to the boy, “Grab your glove, let’s go outside and have a game of catch.” The boy says, “I can’t, I sold my baseball and my glove.” So dad asks, “How much did you sell them for?” And the boy answers, “\$1,000.”

“That’s terrible to overcharge your friends like that!” shouts his outraged dad. “That’s way more than those things cost. You’re going to church and confess.”

■ **CONTINUED**

So dad puts the little boy in the confessional booth and closes the door. The boy says, "Dark in here."

The priest says, "Don't start that crap again; you're in my closet now."

"You spend the first two years teaching children how to walk and talk and the next 16 telling them to sit down and shut up." ~ **Phil's Phunny Phacts**

FORWARD INTO THE PAST

I was born before television, penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, contact lenses, Frisbees, the pill and the atom bomb.

There were no credit cards, laser beams or ball-point pens, and we had not yet invented pantyhose, air conditioners, dishwashers, or clothes dryers. Our clothes were hung out to dry on lines in the fresh air, and space travel was only in Flash Gordon serials.

In my day, "grass" was mowed, "coke" was a cold drink, "pot" was something in which your mother cooked and "rock music" was your grandma's lullaby. "Aids" were helpers in the Principal's office, "chip" meant a piece of wood, "hardware" was found in a hardware store and "software" wasn't even a word.

I was born in 1940. Do the math.

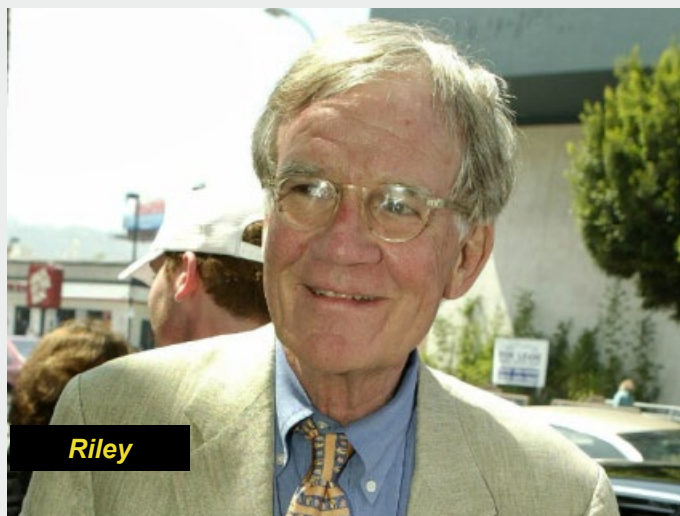
"We live in a society where pizza gets to your house faster than the police." ~ **Phil's Phunny Phacts**

AND THE LIST GOES ON

Each month, the longer I wait to get the next Planet into orbit, the more obits I have to write, as more friends and colleagues check out to check out the afterlife. Talk about a "deadline."

It started this time with Cleveland-born **Jack Riley**, a veteran of "The Bob Newhart Show" and many classic **Mel Brooks** films who also voiced **Stu Pickles** on "Rugrats" for more than 140 episodes and several films, where I had the great joy to work regularly with him. His wife, **Ginger Lawrence**, acknowledged that he finally succumbed to pneumonia at a well-lived 80 years of age after being debilitated for many years.

At his funny, heart-warming tribute he was memorialized by **Bob Newhart**, **Mel Brooks** and **Mary** and **Fred Willard**, with other family members, caretakers and friends, for his enormous generosity, his love of Jazz (he played piano) and his enduring wit. After Brooks spotted him in a Broadway production of **Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children**, starring Brooks' future wife, **Anne Bancroft**, he



Riley

went on to have a wonderful and long-lasting career.

Jack's other big-screen credits include *Boogie Nights*, *A Dangerous Woman*, *The World's Greatest Lover*, *Gleaming the Cube* and the camp-horror classic *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. Among his many TV appearances are "The Red Skelton Show" (where he worked with **Buster Keaton**), "Barney Miller," "Diff'rent Strokes," "Night Court," "St. Elsewhere," "Coach," "Married with Children," "Seinfeld," "Friends," "That 70's Show," "Baywatch" and "Son of the Beach."

"Jack Riley was so generous, he had his own homeless person." ~ **Mel Brooks**



Kaplan

Then we lost Brooklyn-born **Marvin Kaplan** at 89, discovered when **Katharine Hepburn** saw him in a classical theater production (!) of a play by **Moliere**, making his film debut in 1949's *Adam's Rib* starring Hepburn and **Spencer Tracy**.

Known for his sarcastic and deadpan delivery, Marvin was featured in a variety of films, TV shows and animated series throughout his 60-plus year career, including "I Dream of Jeannie," "Love, American Style," "Petticoat Junction," "Gidget" and "My Three Sons." He did voiceover work for animated shows including

■ **CONTINUED**

“Wait Til Your Father Gets Home,” “Johnny Bravo” and “The Smurfs” – where I first met him.

In recent years, I got to work with Marvin, who was often in a wheelchair, as part of **Peggy Webber**’s California Artists Radio Theatre as an actor and performer in his own musicals.

When he moved on, he was actually editing a new original film. What a guy! **KAPLAN OBITUARY**



And then there’s beloved comic actor **Gene Wilder**, exiting from complications of Alzheimer’s at 83, best known for roles in the trail-blazing **Mel Brooks** satires *The Producers*, *Young Frankenstein*, and *Blazing Saddles*, as well as the children’s film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* and a series of films partnered with another unique genius, **Richard Pryor** (one of which I saw in Norway with subtitles!). Because he loved the “show” but hated the “business,” he may not have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but he surely has one in the Heavens.

And finally, to eccentric and brilliant talk-show innovator, **John McLaughlin**, we say a hearty “Bye-bye!”

“Some cause happiness wherever they go. Others whenever they go.” ~ **Phil’s Phunny Phacts**

DEAD ON

Physics teacher **Dave Cosiglio** on Quora explains what happens to your atoms after you die:

“If you are burned, your soft tissues are consumed by oxygen and mostly turned into carbon dioxide, water, and some nitrogen and sulfur oxides. And even if you are

buried, the long term destination for those chemicals is the biosphere. You become food for other organisms.

“Even your bones decay, albeit much more slowly. The calcium and phosphorus in bones will be incorporated into plants. Someday the plants will be consumed by animals. Those animals will eventually die, be consumed, and cycle through the biosphere over and over again. Eventually, tiny bits of you will end up in your great grandchildren’s corn flakes or pork chop. You really WILL live on - in the life on this planet with the exception of radioactive elements.

“You don’t have many, but a few of your elements will decay into other elements before entering the biosphere. Radioactive potassium will turn into calcium. Tiny amounts of thorium and uranium will eventually become lead. With most of this decay, the new elements formed stay here on earth. But with that last set, helium is formed. Earth’s gravity isn’t strong enough to hold helium, and so tiny bits of what once was you will float off into space.

“Some will be captured by the sun and Jupiter. A little will escape the solar system and drift off to the stars. Your atoms have an exciting life after yours is over!”

“Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit.
Wisdom is not putting a tomato in a fruit salad.”
~ **Phil’s Phunny Phacts**

THE GUIDES

Nick Oliva, Stephen Allen Green, Kenneth Wilhite, Jr., Alan Meyerson, Jamie Alcroft, Hayley Kyoko, M.C. Gwynne, Greg Benson, Joan Allemand, and to our two wonderful, hard-working business assistants, **Betsey Brubaker-Strom** and **Sue Bruzzese**.

“I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn’t work that way; so I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness.”
~ **Phil’s Phunny Phacts**

PLANETCLICK

CLICK WORDS TO OPEN

THE RIDES

WOOF

XOXO

NEXT

MEDIOCRE

BLACK BLADE

COCK

GOING UP

“Sometimes a useful delusion is better than a useless truth.” ~ **Colson Whitehead**, “The Underground Railroad”

BOOMERS • BEARWHIZ BEER • FIRESITE

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