

AWARE ONES OF THE TREASURE COAST

BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

"We are Progressive Humanists
We are the Soul of the Coffee House
We are Love and Laughter"

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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

INTRODUCTION

Bert Mautz

The following pages share the creativity and thinking of Aware Ones' members. By way of reminder the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast is a minimally structured gathering of fiercely independent folks, who when together can talk about anything, sharing views and opinions. The strand of like mindedness that ties us together, however loosely, is secular humanism. We are nothing if not rational, and critical thinkers.

We are a migrating specie. Half of our membership flees the Florida summer. We who somehow cope better with afternoon thunderstorms and over-night heat and humidity, lock ourselves away behind sealed windows in air-conditioned homes not unlike December, January, and February in Ohio or New Jersey. E-mail keeps us close and sharing.

Still the conversations are undiminished, unstoppable. You like to talk, listen, ask, listen, and talk some more the Sunday morning coffee gathering gets to be a weekly highlight. Good people of rich experiences, interesting perspectives, and pretty good coffee and baked goods, I particularly like the cranberry scones.

Hope the following is worth your taking the time to read and consider. In Stuart, Florida? Please join us.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, Stuart, 10 a.m.'ish, outside when weather is tolerable, i.e., no snow.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 p.m.; May 4 & 18; June 1, 15 & 29.

Events

Monthly Potlucks

May 24, Wednesday, Joanna and Amar. Directions will follow by e-mail.

June potluck had not been confirmed at the time of newsletter publication

MEMBER NEWS

From Marilyn Graton:

Stretch and I will go to New Jersey before Mothers' Day.

Kids will visit,

Granddaughter Sophie will have bat mitzvah.

Then to spend a month in Rockland, Maine.

Back to NJ.

Always try to be in Florida early November.

Will miss the group of like-minded folks down here.

Nothing remotely the same up north.

From Sandra Burkhart:

Rick inherited fourteen acres of useless hilly wooded land undermined with abandoned coal mines, in SE Ohio. The other siblings said, "You take the land, we'll take the money" and did so. Much to our delight!

Last summer we hand-carved a level path into a steep hillside at the most remote corner of our land, a place Rick's father had owned but never set foot on. We sprinkled grass seed on our eight-foot wide cart path and grinned like idiots when it sprang up Easter green. We hope the grass will hold the dirt from eroding during spring floods.

We stacked all fallen branches, always available in a woods, along the bottom side of our road to help support it. Chipmunks promptly moved in, much to the delight of Hagar and Capt. Jack.

Rose of Sharon is a very old-fashioned plant scorned by many. But it is also prolific and needs little care. So, when the two Roses of Sharon by our front door produced their usual thousand foot-high seedlings last summer, I transplanted them all over our land, including up in the woods along our new path. I can't wait to see if they took!

The land includes a 600-foot pond with a dam at the bottom, then drains into Atwood Lake, the seven-mile long recreation lake across the road from our land. Someone stocked our pond with blue gills and black bass and catfish sixty years ago. These fish have been caught and released so often that they think a hook is just a serving device for worms. The grandkids are pleased and always catch lots of fish. However, Rick gave them the choice of cleaning and eating their catch, or of releasing it. It took one time at the cleaning station to get them all to decide to release instead of eating their catch.

Please feel free to visit us at Camp Burkhart!

AOTC Membership Milestone:

The AOTC now has its own bank account. \$425 in member contributions has constituted our first deposit. This covers our expenses associated with the account and webpage maintenance leaving a working balance of \$364.64. Any thoughts on the use of these funds should be brought up at Sunday Coffee.

COMMENTARY

"The time has come," the Walrus said, "To talk of many things..."

The Smile

Ed Zillioux

Among the many things I like about women, there is one that receives little attention or, at least, recognition. Yet it is clearly one of the defining characteristics that separate the genders (obviously I'm not referring to grammatical noun cases, nor sexual awareness, stimulation or gratification). I'm talking about *THE SMILE!* That which emphatically separates males from females. (What? You didn't notice? Well, then, I'm here to enlighten you. From a man's perspective, of course.)

Say you're on a street taking a walk in an unfamiliar neighborhood. A woman approaches you from the opposite direction. You catch her eye. In the flash of that split second you are greeted with a big smile! And then, though gone, it lingers as a warm feeling in your gut. Same street, a man approaches you from the opposite direction. If there is any acknowledgment at all, it might take the form of, "Hi buddy, how ya doin'?" No waiting for an answer. No smile. It seems, in most cases, men can't afford to smile at other men.

This pattern repeats itself in almost every venue. Take CNN, for example. Almost endless panels of "experts" telling you about what you have just listened to on their "Breaking News" segments. For balance, the program organizers recruit both partisan viewpoints, and both men and women on each side. One-by-one the participants are introduced: "And here we have Judy Baxter (big smile)"; "Next to Judy we have Mark Knowitall (dead serious, maybe a nod)"... "And over here we have Trump supporters, Mary Bimbo (big smile) and Frank Dorkster (vacant stare)." And on it goes. It's almost invariable. If a man does slip up with a bit of a grin, it's more like an embarrassment. Not to pick on CNN, you can see this repeated on any talk show, any channel.

So what's this all about? - you might ask. Well, I'm not a psychologist, but here's my unsolicited (and unabashed) analysis. The average man is taught from childhood that if he's going to make anything of himself, he has to be competitive, either physically or mentally, and sometimes both, with every other bloody boy/man on the planet. Be on your guard. Expect to be

challenged. (True, this is beginning to change but there are unmistakable holdovers: the smile; the frown.) The more recent advent of the female boss only seems to reinforce the need to show you're in charge (of whatever). Or maybe it's the need to distinguish yourself from your female coworker. Guys really have a lot of pressure, a whole history to live up to. Thus, competing now with women really ramps it up. It's all very confusing.

It's tough for women too. Take the female boss, say the head of a department. She has to answer, typically or at least often, to a male vice-president. The VP may have several department heads to manage, to see that they toe to the corporate line. Say they meet in the board room, the VP and several Heads, a couple of them women. When he calls on his female charges, he is greeted by *THE SMILE*! If this doesn't disarm him, he's likely to feel threatened. In which case, the next reorg may well find the woman transferred to a titular position with no real responsibility from which the only solution is her resignation. She, of course, is given a face-saving "we hate to see you go" party, but it changes nothing except the VP feels secure again.

But wait! The same scenario can play out quite differently if the woman is the sharper of the two protagonists. In which case, it may end up with the VP being the one who is downsized with his adversary taking over his position.

So the moral of this story, guys, is that you'd better learn to smile more. If we can't beat 'em, join 'em. Trust me, it'll be more fun that way.

As Reported by the Christian News Network:

WASHINGTON — The United States Army has announced that it will now recognize humanism under its list of religious preferences for military personnel.

Contributed by Stretch Graton

THE WAY WE WERE

The Wall

Ed Zillioux

I started jogging back in 1967 with a few of my co-staffers during lunch break at our new but still poorly equipped lab housed in a rented Butler building in West Kingston, Rhode Island. Still, it was a step up from the borrowed classroom in the chemistry department at the University of Rhode Island where an eclectic bunch of new recruits were gathered during the summer of 1966 with nothing but the promise of getting in on the ground floor of what was to be a series of new regional laboratories for the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration (which later became the Federal Water Quality Administration and, later still, the Environmental Protection Agency).

But, getting back to my story, there was a limited choice of lunch-hour activities during our first few months of operation. Playing horseshoes was the first organized activity; then, since we were adjacent to a railroad track, there were several folks that walked the rails every lunch hour in search of discarded glass insulators, which had just begun to be coveted by collectors; then there were those of us who decided to start jogging along the little-traveled road that passed our building, jogging was just beginning to be the pastime du jour of intellectuals and other elites; and finally, there were those who used their lunch hours to catch up on the latest literature published in their particular field. As I had not reached the level of devotion to join the latter option, and, despite the fact that I enjoyed tossing horseshoes, there were a couple of aces that dominated every game so I soon gave that a miss, and since I wasn't interested in scrounging around in the brambles that bordered the railroad tracks, the choice for me boiled down to jogging.

None of us were runners before, so we started with modest goals. Based on a measured distance of about a tenth of a mile between utility poles, we gradually increased our distance by one utility pole every week or so, and soon were running a round distance of about four miles.

I actually did run a bit in the past. In my freshman year in high school I tried out for the track team. We ran the 100-yard dash and the 220 and I was surprised to find that I had some talent there. Also in the high jump, broad jump, discus and shot put. Good enough to make the team for the next season. But that was when my dad's employer moved to a new location

and paid our moving expenses so Dad could come with them, all of which meant a new school for me. Which, of course, did not have a track team so my one chance at becoming a jock evaporated. And that experience was sixteen years earlier, so likely of little relevance to our little group of joggers in 1967.

Anyway, to get back to my story, I kept jogging with the same group over the next three years and continued to improve both in distance and speed, even though I had yet to buy my first pair of real running shoes. This all changed when I visited a fellow plankton biologist at the University of Miami's marine Lab and he recruited me to come down and join their staff. Since I had long before got sand in my shoes, as they say, I jumped at the opportunity. Miami's Institute of Marine Science was at that time in the process of changing its name to the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, or RSMAS, in response to a major contribution from the Rosenstiels. Yes, you too can have your name on a leading institution if you're rich enough.

After settling in, I soon discovered there was a multi-institutional runners group that met every lunch hour at the Tropical Atlantic Biological Lab, a government lab across the street. Our running course circumnavigated Virginia Key where both labs were located. These guys (yes, unfortunately, all guys) were more advanced in running parlance than the rag-tag bunch I started with in Rhode Island. I was soon outfitted in proper running shorts and the first \$60 pair of running shoes I ever owned.

About that time my daughter, Geanine, became involved in running through her coach in junior high school. He regularly brought his gym class to run in local meets. After begging her mother and me to attend one of those meets I soon found myself in a trap. Her entire class descended on me to get me to enter one of the running events. I said I couldn't because I didn't have my running shoes. The whole gaggle of young girls started laughing when Geanine told me, "Yes you do, I put them in the back of the car." Well, how could I argue with a gaggle of young girls? I took first place in that race, beating out a couple of guys who were older than me seemed in bad shape. But there was something about winning that first blue ribbon that switched on a competitive spark in me.

About six years after returning to Florida, I got another offer I couldn't refuse from a consulting firm in Coral Gables to head up a new environmental study in the East Glades. They had contacted me while I was still at RSMAS to help put together the proposal that won the contract for them. In pulling together the field team needed to carry out the study, I found that three were avid joggers and one, Jon, was a real runner with several marathons to his credit. There was a story about him that's worth repeating. Jon was also a cyclist. One day when he briefly left his bike

outside a convenience store, he saw a thief jump on it and start to ride away. Well, Jon took off running after him and just didn't give up. Every time the thief looked around there was Jon on his tail. After numerous blocks of this and unable to shake his pursuer, the thief finally just gave up, dropped the bike and ran away.

I started running a lot with Jon, but, at first, no great distances. When I confided in him that I would like to try running a marathon, he warned me about hitting the wall if I increased my distance too quickly. "Hitting the wall?" I exclaimed, "What does that mean?" Well, Jon was a taciturn sort and I never did get an answer that satisfied me.

Nevertheless, I started training for the big run by myself every evening after getting home from the lab. As you probably know, a marathon is 26.2 miles long. In western countries, it was originally an even 26 miles, supposedly mimicking the distance run by the courier Philippides, when he carried the news of victory over the Persian army at the battle of Marathon, to the waiting rulers of Athens, then promptly collapsed and died. Anyway, the story goes that when it was first run during the Victorian era in England, the queen decreed that it must end directly in front of her reviewing stand which necessitated stretching it out another 2 tenths of a mile, and so it remained at 26.2 miles ever after (I later cursed the good queen over every inch of that final 2 tenths of a mile.)

Anyway, getting back to my story, I worked myself up to where I was able to run ten miles at a stretch. But the Miamithon (i.e. the original Miami marathon before the Orange Bowl Marathon eclipsed it, with way better funding and promotion) was scheduled just a few months down the road, so to speak. By this time, I figured I should be training at 20 miles if I was going to be ready for the big one. But, in an abundance of caution, I decided to map out a distance of "only" 18 miles. This took me from Cutler Ridge, where I was living at the time, up Old Cutler Road, past the Deering Estate, and into South Miami. I arranged to be met at the 18-mile mark by a couple of my running buddies.

So the evening of my first ever 18-mile run came. I had loaded up on carbohydrates and caffeine (all of which was later debunked as a preparation strategy for a long run) and I was ready to go. I got through the first 10 miles, but everything ahead was new ground. Since I had never run further than ten miles before, I thought the slowing down I experienced was just a psychological thing so I forced myself to pick up the pace. At the 13-mile mark my running started to get a bit erratic. I wanted to lie down to rest but it was not a good area to stop so I pushed on. At 15 miles there was no push left.

I found myself in total collapse. My muscles were starved for glycose and my blood glucose had tanked. I didn't know this at the time, of course;

all I knew was that I was in deep do-do. Despite my carrying a water vessel, I felt the pangs of dehydration and was on the verge of vomiting. The water container slipped out of my hand and I didn't have the strength to pick it up. I barely staggered to the next intersection when one thought came through to my addled brain. I had a friend who lived just two blocks west of where I was standing, well, sort of. Despite the fact that I hadn't been in touch with him for almost a year, I knew Mark would take care of me and give me a place to collapse until I became whole again. Mark was a bachelor and he frequently had lady friends over but I put these complications out of what was left of my brain, not to mention the fact that he just might not be home. He had given me succor once before when I split from my first wife and needed a place to land.

So I turned up the side street and limped forward. My brain had a target now but my legs were limp appendages of pain and I didn't know if my soul would sustain me. So this was it. This was "THE WALL" dammit, and I sure as hell had hit it. Why didn't Jon warn me instead of just mentioning it? Why did he just leave me hanging? Was he setting me up for some kind of perverse initiation? For some reason I thought of Philippiades collapsing and dying at the end of his 26-mile run to Athens. That just may have been the first recorded incident of "hitting the wall." Am I dying...?

I heard the growl before I saw him. I was passing the second house on the right when this large Doberman lunged toward me untethered and bent, I thought, on tearing me apart. Now I had been running long enough that I had several strategies for handling a big angry dog. One was to take a defensive position and scream back at the dog as loud and aggressive as the dog could bark. Then back slowly away until I exited from the dog's territory so's he'd figure he had won the match. Once I tried just ignoring the dog, that time a German Shepard, but he bit me anyway and I ran the rest of the way home with blood streaming down my leg. Fortunately that was way before I had to be on blood thinners. Then there was the time I was running with Jon and our friend Steve when three big dogs took after us, all barking viciously in unison. I was ready to go into my confrontational stance when I realized that Jon and Steve were running like hell in the opposite direction. Having been left with no choice, I sprinted off after them. That's when I found out that humans can actually outrun dogs.

But back again to my story. With that Doberman bearing down on me, none of my previous strategies were even remotely possible and all I could do was look at this beautiful animal, saliva dripping from his jaws, and whimper. This actually turned out to be a good strategy. The Dobbie was totally confused. He stopped, tilted his head to one side and tried to figure out what went wrong – I should have been running for my life but I wasn't cooperating. Taking advantage of the moment, I sank the rest of the way into the swale grass and rested. The Dobbie soon lost interest and walked

away. Apparently, I was no fun at all. When I felt I could continue I rose to my knees, then struggled to my feet and stumbled the rest of the distance to Mark's house.

It was sheer luck that he was there and not otherwise occupied. He opened the door, took one look at me, and said, "What the hell?"

I said, "I'll tell you tomorrow, if you let me crash for the night." He just steered me to my old room, still unoccupied, where I slept until late the next morning without a thought or concern about my buddies, who had waited an extra hour for me to show up at the appointed 18-mile mark. But they were all right, none of us were all that reliable back then.

The next day, after Mark fixed me one of his huge breakfasts that he was locally famous for, and my brain started working again, I was already mapping out a more sensible training schedule. I would go back to my 10-mile run and then increase by just one mile every second day – after 20 days I would be up to running 20 miles. I would run that distance once or twice each week, interspersed with 10-mile runs, right up to two days before the marathon and then rest the day before the big race.

I pulled it off and managed to finish my first marathon. One other piece of advice that all first-time marathoners are given, was "start slow, and then slow down some more."

After finishing the Miamithon, I immediately registered for the first running of the Orange Bowl Marathon, which was scheduled for just one month later. Freed of the "start slow" advice, I shaved a half-hour off my time, and I never hit that wall again.

ARTICLES

Poignant Day: End of Boating Season

Sandra Burkhart

Today we took the sails off OutRageous, our 38-foot Benetueu sailboat. This is not a simple task, tugging a fifty-foot long triangle of heavy canvass off the boat, NOT dropping it into the water, then folding this huge thing into a four foot by two foot mound and wedging it into its bag. Then doing it again with the other sail. Then tying off all the reefing lines, storing the blocks and battens.

But when you haul the sail, you remember when the wind hauled it, pulling us on to Antigua or St. Kitts, where the palm trees and sandy shores and kind people welcomed us and shared their tranquil paradises with us. Where there was no schedule, only pleasure at every day's gift of adventure and new people and places.

Then Rick removed all the boat navigation instruments. And we remembered being guided around storms by Herb on Ham Radio out in the Atlantic when we were sailing from Bermuda to the Virgin Islands. Look at a map: this is a long sail! And my pride when Herb said just endure the storm, and Rick decided instead to sail 90 minutes northwest, in the "wrong" direction, into sunshine, blue skies, and good sailing. I was so proud of him!

We removed the vinyl window panels of the dodger, the little canvas hut which protects the entry into the boat. As I cleaned the Windows I remembered sewing in the replacement vinyl and being proud that I did it right and they looked so clear and new. And the delight in finding the 100-year-old Singer Sewing Machine we bought in rural OH which could sew through a quarter inch of leather, and hence could mend sails, sew Windows, whatever we needed for OutRageous.

We brought all the interior cushions inside our house, to prevent mildew over the summer. And I remembered once coming home from visiting my mother, and Rick handing me 21 yards of fabric and saying excitedly "We're going to reupholster the boat interior!" WE did! All nineteen cushions.

I have loved sharing with Rick the joys and the work of sailing OutRageous. It's a little sad to close her down for the season. But we know she will be waiting here at our dock, calling gently to us when we return in the fall. Who knows where we may sail to next??

And I know every sailor among us resonates with this feeling and remembers the thrill and joy of racing through the water, silent except for the rush of our wake, letting nature pull us to beauty and joy in new places.

The Drip

Dan Vignau

It started with a small drip. After a few days, I decided to turn off the water to that sink. When I turned the valve, a real leak began.

The first thing I thought of doing was to turn off the water to the house. There is a valve I had just redone when my main water line popped. My dog, Rascal, and I went out and closed the valve; next, we went to the docks for a beer and a walk.

When I returned to the house, the bathroom floor was soaked. I placed three large towels on the floor and went to bed. The next morning, I changed the towels and threw the others in the washer. Next, I went for a cortisone shot in my knee. It always makes me yell, "Oh God, or whatever!" Yes, that is my new phrase, which I hope will morph into just, "Whatever." Besides, when I say, "Oh Shit," it does not literally mean that.

Returning home, I tried to turn a second valve on my back porch next to the drippy bathroom. When the valve did not want to move, I decided to turn off the water at the street. After a good deal of digging to find it, I turned it to stop the leak in my house.

After disassembling the faucets as much as possible, it was apparent that it had to come apart from the bottom. A seven-dollar plumber's wrench from Harbor Freight would not grab the nut under the sink, so I returned it and bought a \$17 one from Lowes. It was obvious why the first one failed to help: it had rounded edges and could not grasp the thin nut. Of course, the second wrench did not work either, but it did entertain me for some time before I finally gave up. Replacing the inlet hose from the wall to the sink did help; next, more towels in the washer, and then turning the water back on seemed the thing to do. As I re-entered the house, it sounded like a locker room after an athletic event, with showers' going full steam. In the

bathroom, there was a huge stream of water coming from the 12-foot ceiling. Spackling tape was fluttering on the ceiling and the room was totally flooded.

I ran back to the valve at the street and forced it shut. The bathroom was a disaster, with six vanity lights blown off their bases, water and glass everywhere, and electrical sizzling sounds coming from the stubs of the bulbs and from the flooded Ground Fault Interrupter bathroom outlet. Grabbing more towels, I mopped the water and put the wet mess in a garbage bag, then dragged it to the garage next to the washer, which was now supposed to be cleaning the latest load of towels.

But it wasn't! It was not on at all. The first thing I checked was the circuit breakers, and none was blown, not even the ones to the flooded bathroom, which was still sizzling.

Next, I ran an extension cord to the washer, but to no avail; next I tried my shop light on the washer's outlet. Voila! It worked. That was bad news. Something had shorted out my washer. What could be wrong with the washer? It was running before I shut off the water to the house.

DOH!

It was filling with water and was not full. If I turn the water back on, it might just work, and of course it did.

By now, it was too late to buy parts, so I went to bed and dozed off to the local classical station.

In the morning, I went to the store and bought what my incident had shown me I needed. The waterfall from my ceiling had happened because the slugs had blown out of my mostly disassembled faucets. Peering into them with the shop light, I saw some removable rubber plugs, which I learned are called seats. After a few more trips to the store, I got brave enough to remove them.

Carrying a knob with me, but only after losing the other one around the house somewhere, I began looking for the second one. I am still looking.

Since I was doing plumbing, I decided to fix every small issue, totally ignoring the bathroom faucets until I hopefully find the missing knob/valve.

Since the water was on again, I had my first shower in three days. All of the water was soaked up, and all of my towels but one were in the garage so I walked barefoot into the evil bathroom to gather my shaving things, etc. for a shower across the house. Yipes, there is glass all over the floor. Crap, I'm bleeding and glass is in my feet. The sink is still full of broken bulbs. Why

did I walk in there barefoot? I should have realized that all the glass did not fall conveniently into the basin.

After picking the glass from my feet, I finally showered. It felt awesome. Since my hair has gotten long from procrastination, I went back to the other bathroom and turned on my hair dryer. It sounded muffled, as if I had water in my ears. I placed the device on my head and water began to pour out all over my head. The dryer crackled with electrical noises and was flung from my hands. So much for Chinese GFI circuits. Both the wall outlet and the power wart for the dryer had them, and neither of them protected me.

Today, I renewed my search for the missing knob. It is still lost. Nothing has been fixed except the leaks in the bathroom, and the sink is still full of broken glass. It is time for another shower. I hope to survive and get to the writers' group.

Tomorrow, I'll fix the plumbing. I really will.

Damn, I wish I had an idea what I did with my pot.

LETTERS

Dan Vignau, Stuart
Published, 13 April 2017
Stuart News

In response to Jerry Figari's (March 31) letter, defending his (March 15) letter claiming the Republican party as the party of civil rights, and the opposite opinion by Anthony Lelia (March 23), there are actually some facts to consider. While it is true that a larger percentage of Republicans voted for various civil rights bills than did Democrats, these raw figures are terribly misleading.

63% of House Democrats voted for the Civil Rights of 1963, compared to 80% Republican House members, a 17 point difference, versus 69% of Democratic Senators versus 82% of Republican Senators, a 13 point difference; however, this difference pales when compared to votes by region rather than by party.

Of the 313 northern (Former Union) state House members, 90% voted for the act, with only 8% of former Confederate state House members voting for the act, an 82 point spread. In the Senate, it was 92% Union voters versus 5% Confederate voters. an 87 point spread. Political party affiliation was relatively inconsequential compared to regional interests.

We have a Rule by Bullies in Congress. Whoever is in power rams their agenda into law. We have no representation for interests that are not funded by corporate money. Instead of solving problems, we fund special interests. This would be much harder to do with neither party having anywhere near a majority in Congress.

Rather than spending huge sums of money to teach us to demonize "The Other Party", campaigns would necessarily be forced to state exactly what they hope to achieve.

For now, we need to quit pretending that either the Republicans or the Democrats are the enemy. The current people in power want to keep us divided along party lines, etc. so that we don't consider who the real enemy is.

The real enemy is the two-party system.

POETRY

So Much for Hell

By Gloria Cosgrove

Heaven for me would have to be
a sunny summer picnic.

Purgatory, were there ever to be
such a place, I'd have to visualize
as a damp, dark chilly cellar.

But the high-energy cost
of keeping hell fires burning
immolates for certain the possibility
of perpetual damnation.

COMEDIC CORNER

The Best Blooper I Ever Made

Gloria Cosgrove

I was playing the part of a lovable, sometimes confused little old lady in the Fort Lauderdale Players production of an Agatha Christie play. She - the character that is, not Agatha Christie - dislikes and distrusts a maid who works in the house, and in this one scene I was supposed to burst out onto the stage from the kitchen to accuse the maid of stealing a coffee mug. Well, I burst out right on cue, but then I heard the following word come bursting out of my mouth.

"She stole one of our coffee mugs. There were five of them and now there are only six." The audience roared, and I just carried on. Nothing else I could do. After the performance, the director came looking for me.

"I know, I know," I told him, "It just came out of my mouth, couldn't stop it. But the audience loved it, and it was in character." I didn't add that I thought it was a great line and we should continue to use it, and I'll never know for sure if he believed I didn't do it on purpose. He did however, seriously inform me that we could not change the script. Someone later wrote, "5 minus 1 equals six" on the backstage bulletin board.
