

the Ken Chronicles

48



The Ken Chronicles

are published quarterly, on or about the first of the months of February, May, August, and November by Ken Bausert.

As the name implies, it's all about me... my life, travels, opinion and philosophy.

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Number 48 - July/August, 2018 - PDF Version

My regular readers will no doubt be aware that this issue is arriving in their mail boxes earlier than usual. That's because I had quite a bit of material I wanted to include PLUS there was an abundance of readers' letters (I thank you all for your thoughtful input) – and, I was having fun putting it together – so it was finished way ahead of schedule. If this trend continues my next issue might go out in an October/November mailing, and then I'll ship the February (#50 !) issue out in January (before we go to Florida).

Not too many zine trades lately; I know a few people have either ceased publication or are taking a break for a while. I've gotten some back issues of old titles to read from Quimby's, in Brooklyn; things like Infiltration and Beer Frame, both from the 1990s – some issues I missed at the time.

I recently met an old friend that I hadn't seen in many years and she told me a story that I thought was just too good not to share with my readers. She graciously wrote it up for me and it's already pasted into #49.

Lots of political turmoil going on in this country as I prepare these notes; I will not bring you down by dwelling on the subject but I am very concerned. The day after Trump was elected, I said that his tenure would set our country back 60 years. Looks like I was wrong – it's more like 100 years! Please vote – vote wisely and encourage others to do likewise – it may be our only chance to save ourselves from the madness.

— Ken

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The Cover Wrap:

The Cape Neddick Light (Nubble Light) in fog, near York, Maine.
(Photo by Ken Bausert, © 2018)

Input & Feedback

Jan. 31, 2018

Hi, Ken,

Foremost, I'm happy to learn your Florida getaway escaped Irma's wrath. Whew.

Back to the beginning and the opening quote, I suspect you search long and hard to find the quote to put readers of the Chronicles in a pondering frenzy. Out of the three nothings, I'm very accomplished at the latter two. It's that first nothing that gets me criticism, I just can not keep my mouth shut.

On the cover, I suspect the crow is from Maine but how did you know the cat was from Connecticut? Was that the same cat (back cover) visiting Florida and appeared in the window of the Palace before it made a seven year trek to Maine to get captured on film once again? So then I began to ponder. . .the crow on the roof, the shade pulled low, the cat staring point blank... could this be a horror issue of the Chronicles in the tradition of Poe with a twist, The Fifty Shades (minus forty-nine shades) of Ken?

(*The cat is our daughter's family cat; I photoshopped it into the window because I needed more impact in the photo. –Ken*)

Oh Lord have mercy, the fabled white oak tree, how sad. It reminds me of my tree from my youth and eventually building my shelter by it, the two of us aging together. Alas, my tree is dying. I was told it needs to be cut down. I refuse. Not one tooth of a chain saw or sharp edge of an axe will scar her magnificent beauty as long as I'm alive. What if she comes down on your house with you in it, I'm asked. I reply, "A fitting end, we'll go out together. Rather poetic." And I'm not all that fond of poetry or poets.

(*I can sympathize with you; I loved my big oak tree and it was in relatively good health so I had no intentions of having it cut down, Unfortunately, Superstorm Sandy took it down ((and, if it had fallen 45-degrees further to the north, it would have probably killed me when it hit our house and the room I was in at the time... watching it fall. –Ken))*

Ah ha, I was right, a twist in the Chronicles. People, Places & Things (that are STILL there!). Wow, apparently Robert Moses was a master builder since Jones Beach is still there after ninety years of numerous storms, hurricanes and erosion.

Oooooo, the tension is building, spooky. The Jones Beach Hotel with poor to terrible ratings from the Trip Advisor. What lurks about in the rooms with small window-mounted air conditioners? Could it be Don Pardo cursing the name of Johnny Gilbert? Will those who take a room for the night be putting themselves in... Jeopardy? Will those in the room be suffering severe cramps after the round trip hike of ten miles to Jones Beach and be unable to escape the room of untold terrors? Will they be force fed take-out chili from Neir's Tavern and then discover an out-of-

order sign taped to the toilet?

Wait, how did a new door get in the horror issue? Oops, it's your latest project. I liked the smooth move to get the mini-van to haul material for your project. There are times you simply amaze me with your projects, devising a part you need to repair something or simply deciding to relocate an entrance way. Hmm, a door would make the room more functional over there. Is the guy in the working apron flexing his muscles on the television in the photo of the new door location symbolic of you? I can do anything.

(See p.12 and my fix for the leaking o-ring on my hot tub. –Ken)

After I was sort of let down to discover that it wasn't the horror issue of the Chronicles I discovered I really enjoyed visiting Jones Beach, Jones Beach Hotel and Neir's Tavern through your words and photos.

Thanks for the fun and informative read, as usual.

As to the Pennsylvania winter, although there have been record breaking snow events, my rolling Pennsylvania hill and shelter is located a couple of miles away from the traditional snow belt. When Erie filled up with five foot of snow in one blast, Waterford maybe three foot, I only had to move about a foot of snow out of my long driveway. Unfortunately, all my errands, supplies, etc. requires me to travel in the snow belt. Fortunately, I suffer with Noah Syndrome (especially in the winter season) and have two each of most food supplies and can wait until the flood, er, snow is cleared.

DB Pedlar, 25727 Cherry Hill Rd., Cambridge Springs, PA 16403

(*DB's letter arrived in New York in February – after we had left for Florida; it was forwarded to me, of course, but my February issue was already finished before I left so it's included in this issue). –Ken*)

4/18/18

Hi, Ken,

I must admit - I blew it. I got your re-up notice the same week I went in to have carpal tunnel surgery on my right hand. That note went into a pile and I promptly forgot all about it. That was the end of November. Along came Christmas, and in January, I had my left hand done. I had known that I would have to have surgery for at least a year, but it just couldn't wait any longer.

Our cat broke her leg in January, and we adopted another dog. In February my son's car gave up the ghost and we had to help him buy another one. He's a poor college student, so we split the cost. I went back to work in March and promptly rear-ended a state trooper my first week back. The next week the transmission went up in our 17 year-old daughter's car. I am not making this stuff up. Oh, yeah, I went to the dentist for my check up/cleaning and was informed that I needed a root canal!

Fast forward to today - 4/18.

The new dog is doing great. She is a 1 year-old female collie who herds us all over the place.

Our son made the dean's list at University of Delaware, and his new (used) car runs great.

The cast is off the cat's leg and she is back to climbing on counters which got her into trouble in the first place.

My truck got fixed and I'm back on the road. The trooper was a good sport, though I got a ticket for eating a banana. (No joke.)

Our mechanic found a used transmission at a reasonable price for our daughter's car so she's back on the road. She also got a 1400 on her PSAT and is taking advanced placement college classes as a junior.

I got the root canal and didn't have a panic attack. I'm not good with dentists, but they have come a long way with root canals.

We have a family vacation to Toronto and the baseball HOF booked for the summer, and my wife and I are going to visit my sister and her family in Charlotte, NC next week, so life is back to good.

While going through some paperwork yesterday, I found your (*renewal*) reminder from back is November. Enough about my life, here's \$10. I wanna start reading the Ken Chronicles again!

Thanks,

John Carlino, 17 W. Saratoga Rd., Milford, DE 19963

(Wow! If you ever think things aren't going smoothly in your own life, you can read John's letter and you'll see everyone's got problems. I sent John the two issues he was missing and am happy to restart his subscription.
-Ken)

5/1 1/18

Hi Ken AKA Wilbur the Snowbird...

From my reading position I thought the LOC AKA Input & Feedback elevated the reading pleasure this issue, I certainly enjoyed them. This could be an Input & Feedback improvement if you think about it. Readers would select reading intelligent comments, observations, experiences you inspired, and meeting new Ken Chronicle fans rather than reading my blather.

Let's go over the Input & Feedback to prove my point.

You gave voice to someone who is struggling with rejection issues and answered him with kind words, commendable.

Someone views me as your friend when all these years I thought you were just putting up with my silliness because, like a nagging illness, I keep showing up in your mailbox, merciful.

Another writer expresses joy you brought to their life as well as dried hot sausage.

You swept the mind of a new reader and she asked for more and you responded in length with delightful information and passion.

You welcomed back a reader with atomic information of where to find his work.

You gave voice to the problems that all of us who drive have with

(Continued on page 20)

People, Places & Things (that aren't there anymore)

WARREN BAUSERT

My cousin, Warren, passed away this past April after cancer found in one lung was operated on yet spread to the rest of his body anyway. It was no surprise to many of us who loved him dearly because, after a heart attack some 25 years ago, he was told by doctors to quit smoking – yet he did not heed their advice.

Warren was five years older than me but he was actually closer to me than my own brothers – partially due to the fact that my brothers were 13 and 15 years older than me. But, age factors aside, Warren and I connected on so many other levels and, after we both married, our families became even closer. We regularly visited each other's homes and often vacationed together; our kids were all close in age and got along extremely well.

One weekend when we stayed overnight at their place, Warren and wife Joan put a movie into the VHS player for the four of us to watch. They made a couple of large bowls of popcorn and we all finished off a bottle of cognac while we were viewing it. That was a memorable evening although – understandably – I can't recall which movie it was.

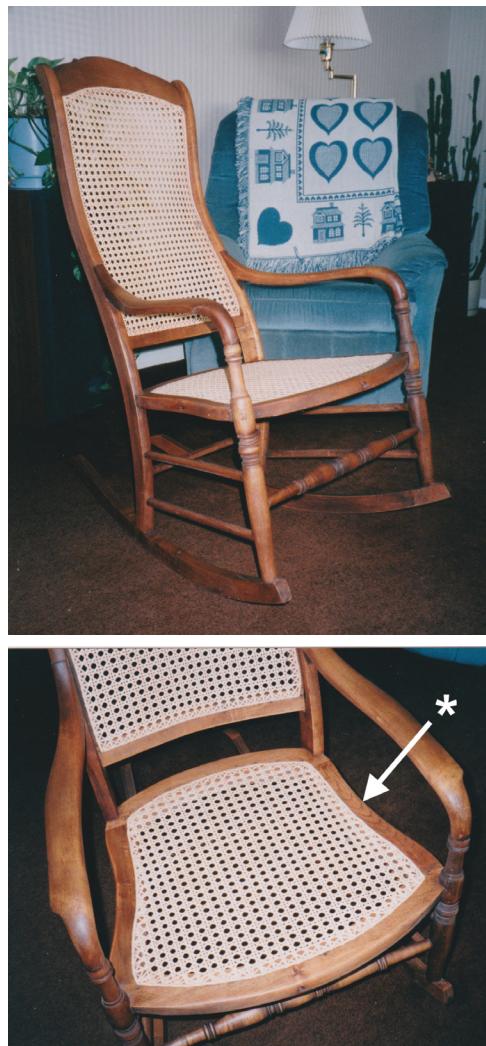


Warren, at my 50th birthday party, in 1993.

After his father had some health-related issues, Warren took over the family chair caning business; they did rush and splint work as well, all utilizing parts of the bamboo plant. And, while it was relatively easy for someone to learn how to weave a splint or rush seat on a chair, it was far more difficult to master the art of hand-caning (most caned chairs you see today are "machine caned," wherein a prewoven piece of cane is placed over a seat and secured by a piece of splint in a groove around the edges). Some basic, inexpensive hand-caned chairs

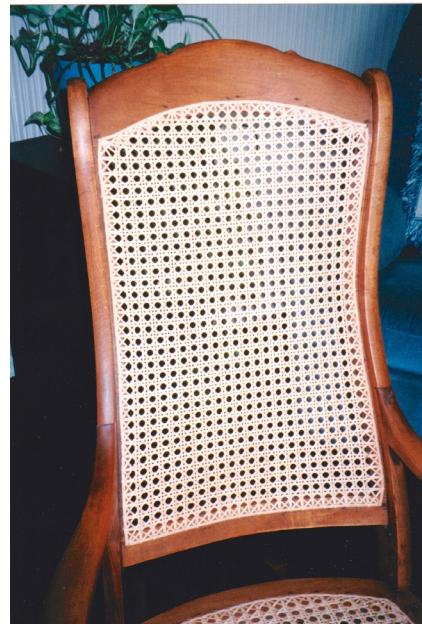
can also be found today from third-world countries where labor is cheap.

Many years ago, Warren's parents had an old farm upstate New York in Bridgewater, near Utica; they used it mainly as a summer vacation getaway where many friends and relatives could often be found visiting. Warren's father (my Uncle Warren) often went to auctions in the area and bought a lot of stuff that he thought could be used in the furniture repair, restoration, or sales end of their business.



One day while up at the farm, I found an old rocking chair in the barn. It was hand-caned, probably from the 1800s, but had a broken piece of wood on one side of the seat area, and the caned seat and back needed to be redone. I really liked the chair and asked my uncle how much I could pay him for it. He not only gave me the chair but included a piece of oak that I could use to repair the broken part. I hand-fabricated that piece of wood (*in photo on left) to fit, and installed it, later drilling the holes that the cane had to be woven through. I then sanded all the old varnish and other finishes that had been applied over the years and sprayed the chair with several coats of hand-rubbed polyurethane. Next, I asked my cousin Warren how much he would charge me to re-cane the seat and back. He agreed to do the work but said, "we'll work out a price later."

The seat on the rocking chair was flat and fairly straightforward to redo; the back of the chair was another story. The back had curvatures to make your back more comfortable when sitting in it – both side to side



and top to bottom. For those reasons, certain lines of cane had to be left loose while weaving them and then, after the other lines were woven to cross them, everything would all tighten up just right to produce the desired results. It was really an art form to be able to calculate in your head how to execute such a fete but Warren was a true craftsman. I'd estimate that he spent seven to ten hours on the job. When the chair was finally finished I was amazed at the outcome; it was beautiful! I asked Warren how much I owed him and, much to my surprise, he said, "It's a gift."

I knew arguing with him over a price was useless so, the next time we got together, I brought him a bottle of one of the finest Cognacs I could find and we enjoyed a drink together. I may not have Warren around to share great times with anymore but I'll always have that rocker and some fine memories.

LOU CURTO'S USED CAR LOT

Growing up in Richmond Hill, New York City's borough of Queens, my friends and I often passed a used car lot on 101st Avenue at 121st Street. But as we got older and acquired our driver's licenses, we came to appreciate the place even more since it was a great source for good, cheap, used cars.

The owner was Louis Curto – but we called him Lou. According to a recent "people search," he was born in 1916, making him about 44 years-old in 1960, when a lot of us needed a car but didn't have much money. Lou always treated us fairly and gave us sweet deals.

After I sold my first car, a customized 1950 Mercury, I had a number of other cool cars. But, every so often, I'd be in between cool cars and just needed something to get around with; that's when I'd pay Lou a visit. I remember one particular day in 1962, walking up and down between the rows of cars, and a red '54 Ford two-door sedan caught my eye. It was missing some chrome trim over the grille and on the sides – and I don't remember the price – but it was cheap, the engine ran well, and the radio worked, so I bought it. I would own numerous cars after that one.

By the time Ro and I got married, a few years later, we had one car but needed a second one so that both of us could get to work. I paid Lou another visit and, coincidentally, picked up a blue '54 Ford similar to the red one I had. Some time after that, I'd heard Lou's son (another Louis) was operating the business with his father.



I found a NYC tax photo of Lou's used car lot online but it was of such poor quality, I couldn't use it here. The above photo is NOT of Lou's lot but of another one I found on the internet that looked *amazingly* like his. It was on a corner, with a residential building behind it, and some stores to the right with apartments above them. In Photoshop, I erased the writing that had been on the original sign in the photo and added new text just the way it looked at Lou's place. That car in the foreground just happens to be a 1954 Ford.



Kathy, a girl friend of mine back in the day, sits on the fender of my red '54 Ford purchased from Lou's car lot. I painted a white racing stripe down the middle of the hood, roof and trunk; the name on the side reads, "POGO." (Yes, it was a "stick" shift!)

Last year I took a trip back to my old stomping grounds and discovered Lou Curto's car lot was gone; a new building had recently been erected in its place, housing retail stores below and apartments above.



A Social Security Death Record lists Lou's passing in April, 1985, at the age of 68, in Richmond Hill (where he lived). He was a good guy and his car lot was a neighborhood fixture for many years.

WLIR - 92.7 FM

On Long Island, back in the 1970s, a radio station emerged that was one of the most progressive rock stations I've ever known. Its rise to prominence was the result of program director Denis McNamara's bold idea to not only allow the DJs freedom to play whatever they wanted but to showcase new and unheard of artists. This era coincided with my musical coming-of-age and I loved the stuff they played.

In the 1980s, McNamara again shifted gears and the station format shifted to New Wave. They became the first station in the country to play The Cure, Billy Idol, U2, The Smiths, and New Order. And, while I was a bit disappointed, the change apparently pleased enough listeners that WLIR's popularity peaked with their "Dare To Be Different" attitude.

Unfortunately, WLIR lost its FCC license in 1987. However, Ellen Goldfarb, one of the station's early listeners, recently decided to pay homage to the venue by producing a documentary on the phenomenon called, *New Wave: Dare To Be Different*. Showtime premiered the film in March, 2018, but – so far – I haven't found it listed so I'm still waiting to check it out myself.

WLIR: gone, but no longer forgotten.

Broken, Worn Out, or Needing Service of Some Kind

THE REFRIGERATOR

After returning from our winter in Florida this past April, we set about getting everything in our house back in order. Even though we have someone watching our house in our absence, I always drain the plumbing and turn off the main water valve to insure against the pipes freezing (and bursting) if the electric/heat goes out during a storm and the temperature drops. All the small appliances and TVs are unplugged to prevent damage from a possible power surge as well, so everything has to be reconnected when we return.

But when we saw something oozing from the freezer, I opened it to find what had been a frozen pizza dough; it apparently thawed, expanded (as pizza dough does as it warms and rises) and popped the plastic bag it was in, seeping out. Since the freezer and refrigerator seemed cold, my first thought was that we had lost electric at some point. But when I asked my neighbor about that, he said it had gone off briefly during a storm but not long enough for anything frozen to have thawed.

Upon closer inspection, we realized that while the refrigerator and freezer *felt* cold enough, they were, indeed, *not* at the required temperature and all the other items in the freezer were soft. Of course, we had to toss a lot of food in the trash, due to possible spoilage and bacteria contamination, and look for a new refrigerator/freezer. Our current one was twenty years old and I certainly wasn't going to spend money trying to fix an appliance that old.

Adding to the urgency of the situation, we were scheduled to drive up to Connecticut in three days for our grandson's Confirmation. After spending a some time at our daughter's place, we would then drive up to Maine for our granddaughter's college graduation; the whole trip was to take about a week and a half.

I immediately searched through dozens of reviews from people who had recently bought new refrigerators and checked various websites for recommendations. Because we wanted a bottom freezer, stainless steel, and required something 33-inches wide and no more than 70 1/2-inches high, our choices were slim.



Luckily, a local appliance store that we've dealt with in the past had a 22-cubic foot Whirlpool model that fit our criteria, had great reviews, and was reasonably priced. Best of all, it was in stock, delivered the next day, and the delivery guys carted away our old one.

THE SANTA FE

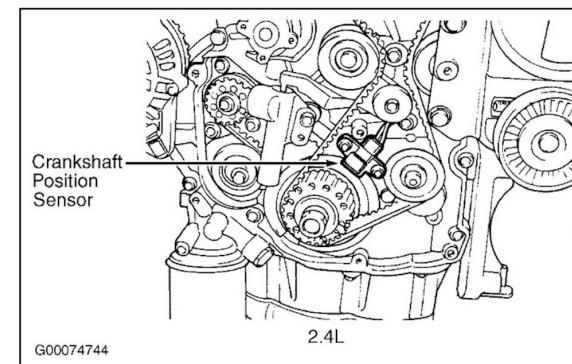
During our recent drive up to Connecticut, I was on the Merritt Parkway getting close to the exit for our daughter's place when a message appeared on my info screen. It said something like, "A problem has been detected in the engine management system. Please bring your car to a dealer as soon as possible to rectify the problem." Immediately after that, I felt the engine losing power and running erratically.

I was able to make it to our exit and, after unloading our luggage at Joanne's house, I looked up the nearest Hyundai dealer. It was only a ten-minute drive away and, this being a Saturday, I was happy to find their service department was open.

When I arrived at the dealer, I explained the situation to the service writer and told him I was planning on driving up to Maine in a couple days; I hoped they could check out the car while I waited. Luckily, they took the car in and looked it over while I hung out in the waiting room eating donuts they provide to their customers. In a short while, I was informed what the problem was.

It seems a gasket for the variable timing cover had developed a slight oil leak which dripped onto the crank sensor (which sends a signal to the engine management computer). When that signal is not clear, the computer malfunctions resulting in the loss of power I experienced. The service advisor said, "I wouldn't say it's a common problem but we *have* seen it before. We have the part in stock and can repair it if you have about an hour." The car is still covered under factory warranty.

Well, I was relieved that they found the problem so quickly and could fix it while I waited. I had another donut and watched *This Old House* on the TV in the waiting room while they took care of the car. Their diagnosis and repair were apparently spot on since I've not had the problem since that day over a month (and a thousand miles) ago.



THE HOT TUB FILTER COVER

When we're planning on being in Florida for the winter I always drain the hot tub and vacuum the water out of the plumbing to prevent any freezing from damaging the system. This year, I didn't reopen the hot tub until after we returned from our trip to Maine toward mid May.

After filling the spa up with water and adding the proper chemicals, I ran the pumps and jets to circulate everything and get it up to the desired temperature. While it was running, however, I noticed a leak from the filter housing cover. After taking the cover off and not seeing anything obviously at fault, I came to the conclusion that the rubber o-ring sealing the cover had gotten old and lost its elasticity (or sealing properties); it was, after all, the original o-ring from when I bought the spa 12 years ago. Where was I going to get an o-ring now? I envisioned myself searching online for the right part and waiting days for it to arrive.

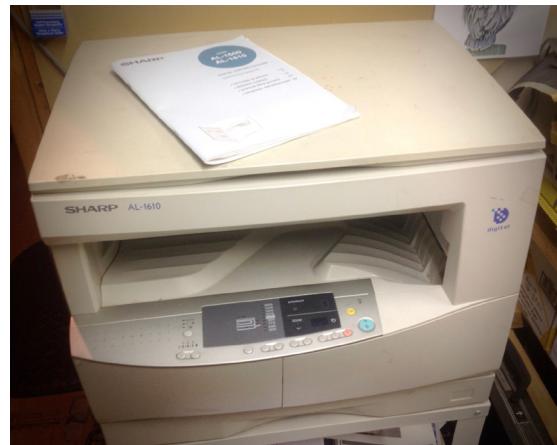


Then I had an idea. The o-ring sits in a groove, about a quarter-inch wide on the filter cover, and seals against the filter housing. On our kitchen counter was a stack of mail that the postman had just delivered and it was held together by a couple of fairly large, 1/4-inch wide, rubber bands. I took one of those rubber bands and

stretched it to fit in the groove where the o-ring sits; then I reinstalled the o-ring. The rubber band's additional thickness, as thin as it was, was enough to create a tighter seal of the o-ring and, after putting everything together, I discovered that the leak had stopped. I'll now keep a stock of those rubber bands on hand for future use.

THE COPY MACHINE

Back in the 1980s, I had a booth in a flea market where I imprinted custom designs on tee-shirts, awards plaques, coffee mugs, and other items. At that time I bought a commercial-grade copy machine. After leaving the flea market, I set up shop in my basement and operated my part-time business from there. Around 1998, the original copy machine died so I bought a Sharp AL1610 b&w digital laser copier. That machine has served me well for twenty years even though I no longer run my imprinting business. It's also the copier I used to print out my Chronicles.



price for the only Sharp cartridge I could find was nearly double what I had previously paid so I broke down and ordered an off-brand.

When the cartridge arrived, it was the wrong one. I called the company I ordered it from and they apologized, looked through their stock, and admitted they didn't have the correct one. "We do have an *original* Sharp cartridge, however; we can let you have that one for only \$25 more."

Well, that was a great price so I immediately jumped on it. A few days later, the package arrived and I opened it. It was well-packed, with the toner cartridge box inside of another, sturdy, box. But what greeted me after opening them both was a horror: all of the toner had somehow come out of the cartridge and spilled into the foil wrapper it was in. I took photos of the mess and called the company I had ordered it from. They couldn't explain what happened but were more than happy to give me a refund. But, they told me, "That was the last toner cartridge we had for your machine."



They said I didn't even have to send the package back, seeing as how it was basically useless in that condition. But now I was back to square one; was it finally time to retire this machine and buy something

In recent years, it's been getting harder to find a replacement toner cartridge for the copier and, if you can find an original Sharp cartridge, the prices have been getting higher; I hesitate to use an off-brand toner cartridge because they're sometimes inferior in quality. Last year, the

new or should I try to find another cartridge?

Well, I learned a long time ago that the toner in these copiers is very toxic and should never be touched. But I had an idea that I wanted to try before giving up. I put on a breathing mask (like I use when I'm sanding joint compound on sheetrock) and plastic gloves, and proceeded to scoop up all the toner that had spilled in the latest package. I then took a cloth and wiped all the excess toner from the surface of the cartridge (and put the cloth in a plastic bag before tossing it in the trash). After I had cleaned up everything, I took a sheet rock knife and neatly cut a one-inch square hole in the top of the cartridge housing above the area that holds the toner. I then used a plastic funnel and poured in all the toner that had spilled out of the cartridge and sealed the hole with (real) duct tape. After installing the cartridge back in the copier, I found it worked perfectly.

All of that happened back in April, 2017 – four issues of my *Chronicles* ago. And, up until my Feb., 2018 issue, everything was working fine. It was when I recently returned from Florida and tried to print my May issue that the warning light came on the copier for the drum; the quality of my copies at that time were starting to streak and I knew something was wrong. The drum was due to be changed and that's normally a pretty expensive item to begin with – I see one advertised online for \$296. Considering the difficulty I had in finding a toner cartridge, I figured the drum was going to be another nightmare and that price is probably double what I paid the last time I replaced it. Even if I bought that drum, I'd still need another toner cartridge in a little while.

All things considered, I figured it was time to say goodbye to the Sharp copier. I printed out my May issue using my ink-jet printer (nice quality but very expensive) and started looking for a monotone laser copier/printer that could replace the Sharp. Although they're not of the same caliber, I *did* find several good choices available from HP, Brother, and Canon. After checking out reviews and specifications, I went with the Canon MF244dw from Best Buy for only \$142... that's less than half the price of a new drum for the Sharp (and who knows if I'll even be able



to find a new toner cartridge next time I need one?)

The Canon machine I bought is relatively cheap because it's an older model – but basically the same as a more expensive MF247dw without the Fax capability (which I don't need). Bottom line: it works well and produces fine copies. Since I no longer run any kind of business, that's all I require.

So, right about now you're probably asking yourself. "What more could go wrong for Ken? Is there anything else that needed repair?"

Yes!

THE PLUMBING IN THE BASEMENT

Because our house was built in 1952, I'm not really surprised when something needs to be repaired. I'm not happy about it but at least it's to be expected. So, while I was installing a new line for the ice-maker (for the refrigerator we bought on page 10) I happened to see a drop of water coming from one of the hot water pipe fittings near the rafters in the basement. Also near that spot was a valve that I knew should be changed as well because it was seized (I was unable to turn it). In addition, the valves feeding the hot and cold lines to the washing machine were ancient so I decided to get a price to fix or replace all these items.

The first guy I called came over, took a look, and quoted me \$390 for everything; I thanked him but said I wanted to get a few more quotes. The next guy I called sent two men over; they took a look and quoted me a price of \$795.

"\$795?" I said, almost in shock.

"Why, does that sound high to you?"

"Yes!"

Well, after explaining to me what had to be done and claiming everything costs more than you think, one guy said, "How about \$595?"

\$200 less only five minutes later? I said I'd think about it.



Another guy I called has a shop that's about a mile from our house. He wanted \$150 just to come over and give me an estimate. I said that was ridiculous and hung up. Five minutes later, he called me back and said they'd come over to look for \$100. I told him to forget about it.

I called the first guy back and told him I'd like him to do the job. He arrived a couple hours later and did the work. For \$390. It doesn't leak anymore and all the new valves work fine.

What I've Been _____ Lately:

READING (Zines – a sample):

Carrie McNinch has been producing a diary comix zine called, **You Don't Get There From Here**, for quite a while now. I only got into it fairly recently after reading other people's reviews of them, but I'm glad I did. This is your traditional perzine, containing snippets from Carrie's life and daily routines, but offered up in comic strip format.

Issue 45 sees Carrie becoming increasingly concerned over her cats' health; she's also lamenting the fact that her own body is letting her down as the pain in her knees makes it harder for her to conduct her usual hikes on nearly trails. She loves her part-time job as nanny for young Lily with whom she has a great relationship. The bulk of this issue covers Carrie's trip to visit friends in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Issue 47 arrived recently and, similar to #45, contains the story of one of Carrie's trips – this time to Japan. She meets up with an old friend and together they visit many interesting places, like a fertility shrine for couples trying to have children. She's particularly happy to find heated toilet seats and beer with 9% alcohol, and attends a naked men festival where the participants share their sake with her.

Another fun trip and zines to share it all with her readers. For your own copies, contact Carrie at cmcninch@gmail.com.

When DB Pedlar isn't writing letters of comment to the Ken Chronicles, he's often producing zines of his own. **Missives, The Lost Art Of Letter Writing** #2 arrived recently and contains the correspondence between DB and other people over the years, pointing out amusing or interesting exchanges. In this issue DB also tries his hand on writing a short story using the song titles and artists' names on a mix CD he listens to for inspiration; quite a novel idea, eh?.

In **The Skunk Journals** #2, DB publishes the results of questions he asked readers in issue #1. Question one asks if you would accept a million dollars if it meant someone you didn't know would have to die. The other question asks whether or not you give money to people begging on the street. There's also a discourse on freedom and the philosophies of various political groups toward that end.

This issue closes out with a poignant look at people helping disadvantaged inner city children. DB considers himself lucky to have been a small part of something much bigger than he had originally expected.

You could write DB a funny letter, asking how you can acquire these publications for your own, and he might just include it in a future issue. He's at 25727 Cherry Hill Rd., Cambridge Springs, PA 16403.

A milestone of sorts was reached a few months ago when Fred Argoff published the 100th issue of his (obviously) long-running zine, **Brooklyn!** The special theme for this edition is "Parks," and – while you might not think there would be many green spaces in the borough – Fred shows us the wide variety of recreational spaces you can enjoy there.

Fred also produces the always interesting, **Watch The Closing Doors**, about various forms of public transportation around the world. His latest issue, #83, showcases all the merchandise that is now available related to trains and buses. How about cuff links that look like subway tokens? Or maybe you'd like boxer shorts with the Paris Metro map printed on them. The possibilities are endless!

If you've never checked out Fred's zines, give 'em a try. A four-issue sub of either one is available for \$10 well-concealed cash sent to: Penthouse L, 1170 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11230-4060.

WATCHING:

Ro and I borrowed **Wonder Wheel** from our library recently and watched it one evening. It's writer/director Woody Allen's latest screen production from 2017 and we both enjoyed it. There are few laughs in this effort; it's really a serious outing for Allen this time around, with outstanding performances by Jim Belushi, Kate Winslet, Justin Timberlake, and Juno Temple.

It's all about four people in 1950s Coney Island (the main residence in the film is right next to the legendary Wonder Wheel ferris wheel) and how their lives intertwine. As is typical for one of Allen's films, there is a lot of material here to play on your mind. I found the ending to be especially revealing because it shows how, despite all that happens throughout the story, there is very little that actually changes within the characters' psyches.

I would certainly recommend it; just don't expect a light-hearted comedy this time around.

I bought another nature-based documentary DVD similar to several others I reviewed in previous issues; the latest is **Expedition To The End Of The World**. The opening sequence states, "In northeast Greenland unexplored fjords are hidden behind the ice... but the ice is melting... and for a few weeks a year, the waters are open."

A group of artists, photographers, and scientists of various persuasions all set out to examine an area where no contemporary human has ever ventured. What follows is a fairly slow-moving but intensely philosophical search for signs of past life, as well as new species, amidst the realization that our planet is undergoing massive changes.



An observation that I myself have often thought about was put forth by one of the cast as he stated, "Nature is only great because man exists. It's hard to imagine on a snowy day that the mountains look at each other and admire themselves."

I enjoyed the artistic approach to presenting this story where beautiful photography and cinematography are sometimes supported by pieces of classical as well as heavy metal music. There are lots of soul-searching and self-examination on the parts of the members of this party, and much exchanging of ideas between them. Unfortunately, I found their debate on the meaning of life becoming a bit tired toward the end.

Produced in part by the Danish Film Institute, it's 90 minutes long, in 16.9 wide screen format, with 5.1 Dolby Digital sound, in English and Danish (with subtitles). All things considered, I thought it was good enough to recommend it, especially if you're into nature and enjoy exploring our world.

PBS recently showed ***The Concert For George***, a 2002 tribute to the deceased Beatle produced a year after his death. Watching it, I came to realize how many of my favorite Beatles tunes were actually written by Harrison – which I seldom think about while listening to their music.

It was poignant seeing some musicians who appeared in this concert who are no longer with us, like Billy Preston (famed session keyboardist from the '60s, whose work I admired on the ***Mad Dogs and Englishmen*** tour with Leon Russell and Joe Cocker), and Tom Petty.



Updates, Oddities & Random Thoughts

AUTONOMOUS CARS

I guess we can all agree that there are a lot of bad drivers on the roads today, especially with more people getting their licenses every day. So when the industry announces the idea of self-driving cars, we might think, "Okay, at least we'll be rid of all those assholes, right?"

But, having worked in the automobile industry my whole life, I know that, as soon as you trust your life to machines, there are going to be problems... even if those machines are computer-controlled.

Now, I don't profess to know how autonomous cars work. I mean, how do they know to stay in their lane? Is it all coming from satellites, like the guidance on your GPS or smart phone? Whatever it is, I know that it's way too complicated to trust it with my life. Already there have been a half dozen deaths as a result of autonomous cars having accidents in a relatively short trial period.

Sure, the idea of having emergency braking systems that stop your car if you inadvertently look away (for the moment that the car in front of you stops short) seems like a worthwhile feature. But, while I know humans are always capable of making mistakes, I'd still rather take my advancements in technology in small doses before handing over our destinies *entirely* to machines or computers.

Tesla driver in Utah crash: Autopilot was engaged

The Associated Press

said by telephone.

There was light rain falling, and roads were wet when the crash occurred, police said in a statement.

"Witnesses indicated the

Tesla Model S did not brake prior to impact," the state-
ment said in a statement on Sunday.

Police said they had been in contact with the National Transportation Safety Board

On May 7, 2016, Joshua Brown made history. The Canton, Ohio, resident became the first person to die in a self-driving car.

Brown, 40, had turned on Autopilot, the autonomous driving system of his Tesla Model S, and set the cruise control at 74 miles per hour. As his car raced down a highway west of Williston, Florida, a tractor-trailer came out of an intersecting road.

Tesla's Autopilot is a technological marvel. It controls the car, using radar and cameras to scan the road. It keeps the car within lanes on highways. It brakes, accelerates and passes other vehicles automatically.

According to one of Tesla's public statements, the camera on Brown's car failed to recognize

Uber driver was streaming Hulu show just before self-driving car crash: Police report

- Police said the crash was "deemed entirely avoidable" if the driver had paying attention.
- According to the report, the driver could face charges of vehicle manslaughter.
- The Uber car was in autonomous mode at the time of the crash.

A SELF-DRIVING WAYMO minivan being driven by an operator crashed in Chandler, Arizona, Friday, threatening to resurrect tough questions about autonomous technology and rip the barely-crusht technology's reputation, which was badly wounded when an Uber self-driving car hit and killed a pedestrian in the same state just seven weeks ago.¹

parking gripes.

Inspired another to get off their procrastinating butt (their words not yours).

Kept your cool when suggested (although with extreme tact) you were old by using the phrase: you are further along.

Although I certainly don't have any editorial influence, but because of the popularity of Ken Chronicles and approaching 50 issues, it would be great if you were to acknowledge (LOC writer on occasion) Fred Argoff and his publication, Brooklyn!, for reaching the milestone of 100 issues, if you haven't already.

(In my latest reviews for Xerography Debt, I did indeed mention Fred's upcoming 100th edition; plus, I've reviewed it in this issue. –Ken)

Now on to something that usually puts me in a pondering frenzy, the opening quote. At first I agreed with Mr. Young completely, then I started to ponder. How does one even begin to measure success? If one has a lot of cash they had to be successful somehow. If someone reading Mr. Young's book could not have children, would they consider themselves unsuccessful? What about people who have children but the children do not love them; does their success suffer a reversal? I could ramble on and on but in the end I have to agree, success is hard to measure. Mr. Young feels it's his children and I wish him congrats on his success. As for me, if I can cause someone to ponder for a moment or get a slight upturn of the mouth that is the beginning of a smile even if briefly, I consider that a success. Am I setting my success goals too low or too high?

(Someone with a lot of cash might be considered successful but the question remains, "how did said person acquire his cash?" If he stole it, he might be a successful thief; but if he acquired it honestly I'd certainly call him financially successful. I think Neil Young is talking more about life-fulfilling success and not just that of acquiring wealth. –Ken)

Unfair! I was following along agreeing with most everything you noted about New Music when suddenly I found myself trying to decide if I should try to hide from or seek out the songwriter who now haunts me with the thought of dust forming crop circles in the carpet. Should I sweep first or find the tune and sweep later?

Ed Maly puts me in mind of an old fellow by the name of Arden. Arden had a junk yard on the edge of a small village and his tow truck looked like it was about to fall apart the minute he started it up. It didn't matter what time of day or season, if you gave Arden a distress call he was there. It seemed like the more difficult the job the less he would charge and his fees were next to nothing. Once when I was building my shelter a delivery truck got stuck. I won't go into the grief the driver was giving me, the angry phone calls between the driver and his base. I just got fed up with it all and called Arden. Arden looked the situation over, leaned against his truck, and it looked like he was staring vacantly off in the distance for a long time. Finally, he pointed out a tree and handed a cable to

me with specific instructions to which side of the tree I should go around. Then he told the driver exactly where to hook the cable. He popped that delivery truck out with ease. Arden's charges were a few dollars more than he figured it cost him in gas to get from his place to mine. I thanked him for coming and his reply, "That was fun." I wish I knew more people like Ed Maly and Arden, maybe I should stray off my rolling Pennsylvania hill more.

I had a great laugh when I read the Facts of Life and can match that jockey winning the race despite being dead. Well, in my case it'll be misbehaving despite being dead. I already wrote the first draft (update it when necessary), unsealed (if I decide to update or add to the draft) preaddressed stamped envelopes (good thing there are forever stamps) to mail my 'if you are reading this I am dead' letter. Hint of the contents: satisfy those who want to know the names that go with D. B., latest misadventures, and how I plan to misbehave when I'm dead.

I really enjoyed the read, the great photos, anticipate opening the ceiling, and still pondering what could make the ice from Mount Chimborazo sweet.

Thanks for the Ken Chronicles #47.

DB Pedlar, 25727 Cherry Hill Rd., Cambridge Springs, PA 16403

Via e-mail, 22 May 2018

Hi, Ken;

Thanks for sending along Ken Chronicles #47. That's an excellent front cover photo. The white bird against the blue sky and sea with the red webbing and aluminum sheen of the recliner makes a very vivid color combination, well worth investing in full color printing. All the photos this issue came thru very well. In the past some of your pics have been too dark or muddy due to printing problems, but the contrast and tone on every shot was perfect this issue.

I find the divide between friends on political issues is too great to bridge in these modern times. The only way I can retain certain friendships is if the Trump supporters I know and I agree never to discuss politics or the world situation. That way we can continue to interact on a social level without our contact breaking into a shouting match. A singer at a radio concert the other day said he thought the recent elections demonstrated clearly that democracy in the United States was dead. He may be correct, but I hope not.

Let me just post my Trump comments for the issue right here and get it over with--- Obsessing about the current state of American politics can lead to severe depression and suicidal thoughts. The Pussy Grabber In Chief has consistently and continuously shown himself to be an incompetent, narcissistic lout incapable of sustained rational behavior. Many people both here and around the world marvel that the United States government can still function with this individual and his party of like-minded cronies in control of things.

I do not see that the situation is likely to change in the immediate future either. Many people place a lot of hope on the upcoming mid-term elections, however some factors are in play which lead me to believe that not much will change. While there are many people who regard Caligula Trump and the GOP as a disaster, I find it significant that among the people who consider themselves Republicans or strongly conservative, Trump's approval rating is steady at around 87%.

To admit that they have elected an incompetent moron to office would threaten their very core belief system. They will pretend that any little failures he shows (such as extra-martial affairs with porn stars and Playboy models, or money laundering for the Russian mafia) are trivial, that he is actually doing the work of saving the nation and getting back to whatever principles they think they hold near & dear. For the fat-cat cynical GOP party members, payouts have come with the administration's erosion of regulations and rules, and of course, with the massive tax bill that gives unprecedented tax breaks to rich folks and big corporations. Why would they not support somebody that lines their pockets with gold and empowers them to do damn near anything they want with impunity?

These people vote, and they will certainly vote the straight Republican Party ticket in the mid-term elections. Add to that the fact that most GOP controlled state legislatures have effectively gerrymandered the voting districts so that it will be very difficult for a non GOP candidate to win, then add in voter registration challengers and restrictions, shortened voter hours, selective pruning of voter rolls without informing those individuals who have been dropped from the rolls that they can no longer vote, and it looks to me like the GOP will carry both houses of Congress easily in the upcoming elections.

I would be very happy to be proven wrong, but I just don't see any changes in the political landscape coming up anytime soon.

(Our political views are exactly the same and I agree with you on the points you have made; many old friends no longer even talk to each other because of the extreme differences in their views. –Ken)

Nancy Strickert's LOC reminded me of a few Truisms that I had always heard and believed were true of New Yorkers too. One of the first and firmest was the belief that all New Yorkers were rude and belligerent, especially when it came to non New Yorkers. In truth, I have found it to be just the opposite. I have encountered a couple of obnoxious people in NYC, but the overwhelming majority of people I met there, even casually, were very friendly and open, going out of their way to give directions and advice whenever I needed it. That's a stereotype I was very happy to discover was wrong.

I don't know of many places left that will actually fix small appliances, or any other mechanical things that isn't a major investment item. If you have a problem with your car, or your central air conditioning system or your washer/dryer you can find somebody to fix it. At least most of the time. But often it's not worth the effort. If your refrigerator or stove

breaks down, and it's not something relatively simple or easy to get to, you are better off biting the bullet and buying a new machine.

Even traditional repairable items are being abandoned by the trade. Got a TV or a radio or a phonograph that needs repair? Good luck finding somebody to do the work. A shop that has been in business for a couple of generations several towns over will still do repairs on reel-to-reel tape recorders and big stereo systems, but increasingly they prefer to work on large audio systems such as the systems installed for churches or big companies rather than spend time on individual owners and their compact machines.

I have friends who collect movies on 16mm film, but they can't find anybody to repair their projectors. One guy has ten machines that need some kind of repair, but he can't find anybody in three states who will repair the things. Sooner or later he and the other film addicts are going to run out of replacement machines to buy and that will probably be the end of their hobby.

I envy guys like you that know how to do their own repairs and home improvements. As I have mentioned before, I can't repair anything. Whenever I try to do even simple things horrible problems result, sometimes problems that result in me doing real damage to myself. I've finally learned it is just easier to pay an expert, or buy a new item and get on with life.

(As I get older and my body starts to break down, I'm reluctantly hiring other people to do some of the more difficult jobs. –Ken)

In the same line, I noted your comment about another old line bakery closing down in your area. Around here there are almost no independent bakeries left at all. The big grocery stores have their own in-store bakery departments, but they don't offer the individual odd items and snacks the independent bakeries used to carry. I always liked fig bars, for example, but, with no neighborhood bakeries around I doubt I'll ever taste another one again. The donut chains and pre-baked items carried in the grocery stores have spelled the end of the local bakery tradition.

(I am indeed thankful we still have a half-dozen good, traditional bakeries within a short drive from our home. –Ken)

I noted your comments on new music and not listening to music when you are working on your zine. I listen to music almost all the time. I have radios on almost every room of this house, and I have a radio on wherever I am almost all the time, including when I do my fanzines. If a tune comes on that is a particular favorite, I can always stop what I'm doing and listen to it, then pick up a few minutes later. The only exception is if I'm doing research for an article or project and I hit a difficult spot that requires some intense concentration or detective work, then I shut everything down until I get the problems resolved. Then the radio comes back on.

I tend to listen to stations that play the kind of music I like. I listen to some new music, particularly when I'm working at the warehouse

(you may or not recall that I operate mail order book/comics/fantasy war game biz, and the stuff is located in a warehouse next town over), since the reception there is limited due to all the metal in the structure.

I don't like or listen to rap music at all. Some kinds of modern music I don't care for, but a lot of the new tunes are OK without being memorable. I tend to favor folk music or singer-songwriters who craft their own music. I can listen to classical music, operas, heavy metal rock, or country music in short bursts, but those kinds of music will never be big favorites with me. Since this is my life and my time, I feel I should invest my time listening to the music I like, and not listening to material I know I will not like.

Enjoyed your movie and book reviews. "Nordfor Sola" sounds interesting enuf that I might seek it out. I find it hard to accept the idea that two surfers would actually be so dedicated that they would endure the brutally cold arctic weather just to surf the ice slush, no matter how great the waves were. Maybe I'll track this down and view it in, say, mid August when the temps hit 97 degrees with 80% humidity. Right now it's too close to winter for me to seriously consider it. It's the end of May, and tonight I had to turn the heat back on. The thrill of living in New England dims considerably in these situations.

Another nice issue. I look forward to receiving the next one.

Bob Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035, fab-ficbks@aol.com

via e-mail, May 23, 2018

Hi Ken,

Thanks for the Ken Chronicles #47. Mark made sure he passed it along to me. I know Mark had comments so I'll have to make sure I don't say anything that *he* has plans to mention. :)

I really liked your section on the new music you are trying. I for one am stuck in the '70s to early '00s so I cheer on your bravery. I did make it a point to listen to "Hide and Seek" by Imogen Jennifer Heap. Yes, you are right, it is very haunting and I have to admit it *did* make me a bit melancholy, but it was definitely worth a listen.

Coincidentally, on a work trip out to Joshua Tree, California, my boss (who is the same age as me but way cooler) said "You like Led Zeppelin right?" Of course I do, so she threw on her Pandora and introduced me to a band called Greta Van Fleet. She told me the story, but I confirmed it on Wikipedia, that the band got the name from a family member who mentioned someone from their hometown named Gretna Van Fleet. They liked it so much they changed it a bit with the namesake's approval and started calling the band that. If you like Led Zeppelin than this is probably something you will like. The song "Highway Tune" is a really good song to start with.

I'll close for now, all my best to the family.

Nancy Strickert, Rialto, CA

Ken's Facts Of Life:

The line left in the air
behind a departing plane
is made of water vapor.

A long, wide trail could mean a storm's coming;
shorter or quickly disappearing trails
mean fair weather.

— L.I. PULSE Magazine