



HOLIDAY 1992 EDITION

Burnhamish

HIGH FIBER. MULTI GRAIN. CHOLESTEROL FREE. FAT FREE. SALT FREE. SUGAR FREE. KIND OF TASTES LIKE PAPER

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukka, and a Joyous Winter Solstice to all!

It's Christmas already? I must have overslept. Actually, I wish I could have slept through the last, oh, ten months, or so. Not that I don't feel *every day's a joy*, as my most wise and erudite father would say, but some tend to be less joyous than others. It's a matter of degree, I suppose. Please don't go! I don't mean to be a downer in this season of happiness and cheer, I've just been under a lot of stress, you see. Many of you know the saga of my search for a meaningful career. Too bad, you're going to hear it again. Well, some people don't even know I moved the *first* time! And putting this story in writing gives it a kind of permanence in that should I inexplicably exit from this world, my words will live, somewhere, tacked up on some dear friend's refrigerator with one of those magnets that looks like a chocolate chip cookie but really isn't- I love those things.

We all saw it coming; we, the employees of the newly renamed J.I. Case *Technical Development Center* were about to face some serious layoffs. As an engineer, I was considered a *professional*. How in the world could they lay off professionals? I had five years of college education- one more than most people! I didn't get paid for overtime! I was paid very well! BINGO! There's a way to save some money! Shoot. Although I'm a bargain at any price, I was low man on the totem pole. Bottom rung on the ladder. An unripe banana. A short nap in the Big Sleep. Actually, I'm well known for my short naps, especially during meetings. But I digress.

As of February 13, 1992, I was officially severed. In my case, however, it wasn't as bloody as it could have been. Working for an international company for two years has its benefits, such as severance pay, which, along with unemployment checks, helped keep me going financially, and even left me

with enough money to buy extra commas, which I placed in this sentence. Although I began my job campaign in November (fearing the inevitable), I didn't get anywhere until just before my severance money ran out. I interviewed for a direct position with Harley Davidson and for a couple of contract jobs in Detroit with Chrysler. Picture me on a Harley. When you're finished laughing, go to the next paragraph.

The Harley thing fell through while I was in Detroit. I was considering taking one of the Detroit offers when an interview popped up with a small company in Milwaukee. This was a direct position, related to my most recent work experience, and closer to Chicago, so I took it. I was so confident in my decision, I turned down *Honda of America* for a interview. OOPS. At least I had a job. It was a learning experience. That is, I learned more about the company than I wanted to. The revolving door at the employee's entrance should have tipped me off. I also learned why people who move to Zion, Illinois don't stay for long. Zion is someplace to move *from*. After one month I started checking out the job market. After four months, the man who hired me was fired. I started *really* checking out the job market. Employees were dropping like flies. Flies were dropping like employees. Everything was higglety-pigglety. I was out after six months, on *my* initiative this time.

I am now the newest design engineer at Kysor/Westran in Byron, Illinois, a division of Kysor Industrial Corporation. I will design air conditioning products for on- and off-road heavy equipment. Now, this job should last a while (barring any extreme cost-cutting measures by my new employer), but just in case, I want to state that I work easily with most people, am an effective communicator, and can draw good.

Oh Brother

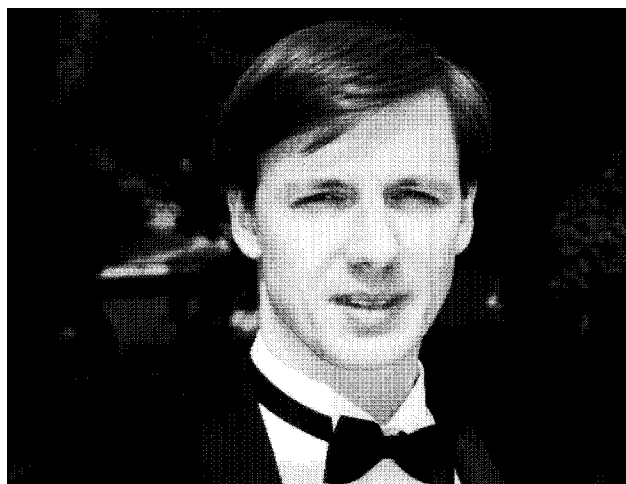
sib•ling, sib'ling, *n.* A brother or sister. -*a.* Having to do with a brother or sister.

-*New Webster's Dictionary
Handy School and Office Edition*

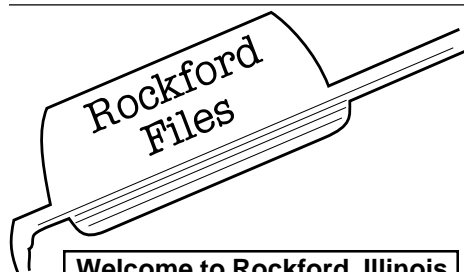
Chances are, if your parents had more than one child, you have siblings, whether you like it or not. You can pick your friends, but you can't pick your siblings. And you can't pick your sibling's nose. I shall include in the definition adoptive, half-, and by-marriage siblings. The belief by some that their siblings are really extra-terrestrials disguised as humans is beyond the scope of this text and shall not be examined here. However, those who hold this belief should be examined *somewhere*.

Within my immediate family there are four children, five if you include Dad; but for now he shall assume the parental role. In order of appearance, they are: Julie, Mary, Yours Truly, and Jim. This is the roster as it has stood for almost twenty-five years, and, barring any extreme actions by Mom and Dad Burnham, this is how it shall remain. As you can see, I'm third in line; a "middle child", a distinction shared with Mary. Certainly there are advantages and disadvantages to not being the oldest. Julie was the first one out, so she is always "Julie". Obviously, Julie is Julie- but I am going someplace with this. Being the oldest, Julie has the honor of being referred to by her given name by most people outside the family. After Julie came Julie's Sister, then Julie's Brother, then Julie's Other Brother.

So I'm Julie's Brother. But I'm also Mary's Brother. I'm both Bill's and Gary's brother-in-law. To many, I'm Jim's Brother. Now do you see? With siblings, many times you will be referred to in terms of your brother or sister. It's worse when you bear a striking resemblance to them. People I've never met have approached me on the street and said, "You're Mary's brother, aren't you?" and then proceeded to recount how they once went to gradeschool with a girl who was in the dorm room two doors down from a girl whose cousin went to a dance with Mary her freshman year in college and how I bear a striking resemblance to my sister. I would then say how remarkable was the process by which our genes determine our physical appearance, and thus, having exhausted all avenues of conversation, would politely excuse myself and continue on my way. After, of course, I remembered where I was going in the first place, before I met this silly person.



**Watch
out for
this man-
he is
John's
Brother.**



Welcome to Rockford, Illinois
Home of John E. Burnham.

It could happen! This is the first installment in what may become an ongoing series about Rockford. This city is home to many people, just how many is probably noted on a road sign somewhere at the city limits. If any of you see one, let me know what it says. Rockford holds the distinction of being the second largest city in Illinois, Chicago being the first, I think. Rockford has a river, called the Rock River. The countryside is somewhat less flat than most of the rest of the state, but I would hesitate to call it more hilly. Someone described it to me as being a small town, but *really* spread out.

That's cool. It's certainly less crowded than a major metropolitan center like Chicago, and drivers are civilized, like me. There are plenty of sports bars- almost as many per capita as there are franchised restaurants. Residents have their pick of fine shopping complexes that rival those found in cities twice the size. All the first-run movies are shown here, too. The Rockford *Register Star* runs *Calvin And Hobbes*- you can't beat that!

Then I turned on the radio. And turned it back off. Most of you know me to be a music aficionado, with eclectic but very particular tastes, resulting in a devotion to only the hippest stations in the Chicago area. Being a large market, there is plenty of room in Chicago for every imaginable radio format. Rockford is *not* a large market. There is an oldies station for those who can't listen to *Ninety-six Tears* too many times in one week. There is an easy listening station for those who can't listen to the Obscure Symphony Orchestra's rendition of *Ninety-six Tears* too many times in one day. And Rockford's rock stations haven't forgotten those who can't listen to Tom Petty too many times in one hour. And the *Country* stations! What is a hip, open-minded, cutting-edge kind of guy to do in this Frequency Modulated Wasteland?

I now listen to NPR (that's *National Public Radio*, Howard Stern fans...). Not only do they report the news without interjecting an anecdote about a bodily function (speaking of Howard Stern), but they play jazz and *lots of it*. Chicago doesn't even have a dedicated jazz station! My life in Rockford has meaning once again. I am becoming politically aware, and I know what GRP stands for.

I know I've only been here a couple of months, but these are my first impressions of Rockford. Not a bad place, really. It isn't Chicago, but that may be one of its strengths.

Burnhamish Say:

He who laughs last just got the joke.

Jelly-Side Down

Moving is a part of life. Going from the dinner table to the couch is, *technically*, moving. But this type of motion is not of what I speak. I speak of the act of picking up one's worldly possessions, and transferring them, as well as one's self, to another geographical location, which more often than not has a different zip code, but many times is similar enough to one's old zip code that one mixes them up on *all* the change-of-address cards one sent out. Murphy's Law hard at work. Murphy's law is also in effect when you drop the toast upon which you just finished spreading Mom's homemade strawberry jelly and it lands *jelly-side down*; hence, the title of this essay. The theme of this essay, *moving*, is an activity that has featured itself prominently in my life during 1992, among other events, not the least of which was looking for new jobs. But you've read all about that. Far be it from me to be redundant about things I've already mentioned!

The first moving experience (any and all puns intended), to Zion, was not unlike moving me to college, only heavier. Owning little furniture, I managed to require only a cargo van and a few hundred weekend trips home with my fast red car. Of course there were perks with returning home so often, not the least of which were laundry facilities and a social life. Zion is the Death Valley of social activity. This fact made the thought of moving to Rockford very pleasing. Rockford is, after all, the second largest city in Illinois- there must be something to do! I chose to move on the last weekend in October. Halloween, to be specific. This meant coordinating my efforts to result in as little inconvenience for my helpers as possible. We would have to pack me, move me from Zion to Rockford, and get everyone back to Chicago for their respective Halloween obligations (myself included). I secured the services of my good friend (and a nice guy) Jeff Noce, my brother Jim, and my wise and erudite father, and we pulled it off easily.

"So where's the jelly on the floor part come in?" you ask. Cool your jets, it's coming.

Because I arrived in Rockford too late, I had to wait until Sunday to return the moving van. Being in Chicago for Halloween night, I drove back to Rockford Sunday morning in order to get the truck to the Budget center before they closed at noon. Not knowing my way around, I got lost and found the center just *after* twelve (dropped the toast). They were open until one (jelly-side up). Fine. Next stop, Zion. Zion? Running short on time Saturday, I decided to clean the apartment on Sunday, the inspection being on Monday. I also left a few

items there that I could bring back in my car. No problem. It took longer to clean than I thought, and it got dark outside. With few lights *inside*, it was tough to see what was dirty. It was raining, windy, cold, and dark while I made a thousand or so trips to my car packing the "few" things I left in the apartment. Finally, a few hours and a throbbing headache later I made a final look-through, dropped off my keys, and left Zion, Illinois, hoping never to return...

...for at least a week. I discovered I had left my Visions® cookware in the dark recesses of one of the cabinets (dropped the toast again, jelly-side down). Upon returning to Zion to retrieve my pots, I lost my book of temporary checks for my new account in Rockford (dropped the knife I was using to spread the jelly). No problem, the nice bank lady said, but we will have to close the first account and open another. But I had written the check

for October rent from the first account and it hadn't cleared. That's okay, just notify the landlord the first check will bounce, write a new one, and the bank won't charge the NSF fee. But since the October rent was now even *later*, I would be charged a late fee by the apartment management (turned around to get a sponge to clean up the jelly and bumped my head on the cabinet door I forgot to close). And we will have to charge you ten dollars for handling the first check that we know ahead of time is going to bounce (reeling back after bumping my head, I plunged my hand into the pot of oatmeal cooking on the stove). But since it is after the ninth of the month, we can only accept a cashier's check for rent payment (slipped on the jelly I had not wiped up).

After cleaning the oatmeal, jelly, and blood from the floor, I changed my clothes and sat down at the computer to write these words. Nearing the end of the essay, I felt it would be prudent to save the file, because I hadn't done so to this point. The computer locked up and lost everything. Extremely frustrated and a little hungry, I went into the kitchen for a bagel and cream cheese...

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