



For the past four odd years, you and I have conducted what can best be described as a one-sided conversation. It has been an exciting venture for me and from some of the more candid reviews I hear about, this space is right up there with the *Readers Digest* in the bathroom reading department. Seems a fair trade off.

This being my last column for the foreseeable future has me in a very retrospective state of mind. It's not so important to me that it be memorable as it be meaningful - to both of us. That being the case, there are a few of you I need to recognize for your various forms of encouragement or instruction regarding the melange of literary felonies routinely perpetrated since *LIFE* has been a monthly feature in this rag.

Most notable in the unsolicited compliment department has been Don Hagen and Dick Woodward. These two, who possess about 87% of all the IQ points available in the world have, each in his own way, lavishly heaped praise on this work since its inception. Don never fails to say something terribly sweet to me about this column in the course of our all too infrequent reunions, so when I told him recently that my dubious career as a journalist of the undefinable was ending, his immediate response was that I must make it my business to write him a letter each month. I met Dick Woodward at the *Jersey Bounce* a couple of years ago and he could not have been more sincere or gracious in applauding *LIFE's* tenor (or whiskey soprano if you will). Now, this is a guy who probably reads Proust (and understands it!) so you can see why I feel so puffed up.

LIFE has never pretended to be great literature but more a chronicle of the flotsam and jetsam of life - as seen from a tenuous perch on the Good Ship Lollipop. You've endured MASS incarnation AND reincarnation, you've stoically been embraced by tales about Chateau Walrich and now Chateau Negative Cash Flow. You've been assaulted with diatribes about road construction and traffic delays and the high price we pay for those guys to lean on their shovels. I've gone on interminably about knife-wielding, certifiable psychos at garage sales, invading raccoons, the aberrant behavior of our cats and every so often, as if this newsletter was supposed to be about motorsports, I even talk about rallying! In this regard, Craig Coleman has been the only person who has been even remotely critical of the twists and turns *LIFE* seemed to take without warning. That's okay though, I seem to recall a few unanticipated twists and turns in some of Craig's rallies!

Despite the direction *LIFE* seemed to take each month, I tried to drop a few pearls, turn a few phrases and revealed a few of the snakes that seem to squiggle in my head. The game of life is just as inconsistent and unpredictable as *LIFE* has been. There were two other truths at

work here. First, I don't know (or care to know) enough about cars or motorsports to have offered four years worth of trendy analysis or opinion. Second, there is more to each of us than that common thread that bastes each of us to the *AUTOSPORT* subscription list. If just one of my columns during these many moons has struck within you a nod of agreement at the absurdity of it all, than I have managed to meet my own goal.

It won't be long before the phone at CNCF will peal one quiet night and who will be on the other end but one of the Dynamic Duo, the Priceless Princes of the Pine Barrens. Yes, either Coben or Dalton....it doesn't matter which, for when it comes to the Jersey Bounce they are interchangeable. First will be the small talk, "How have you been? I haven't seen you in ages...blah, blah, blah." Then the inevitable: "Gee, Suzie, that last column was terrific, I sure look forward to *AUTOSPORT* each month just so I can read your stuff....By the way, do you think you and TH can make it down to work the Bounce this year?" Well, I'm a sucker for a compliment, even a veiled one.

Rally veterans, Bob Sanderson and Andre Sigal have been *LIFE* groupies long before it became *LIFE*. Sandy never ceases to amaze me when out of the blue he'll greet me with a verbatim quote, carefully sliced from a long forgotten column. Andre particularly enjoys when I exercise my First Amendment rights to lambaste his employer, the NYS Department of Transportation. His only criticism is that my multi-million dollar protests are usually multi-million dollars short of the mark. Research has never been one of *LIFE's* hallmarks!

I shouldn't continue much further without making a few well chosen comments about our General Editor. Aside from his tolerance of my inability to meet a deadline, Mr. K. has brought this rag a long way during his editorship. He gave it its new look, designed the *LIFE* logo, worked literally thousands of hours making sure that the facts were as straight as the columns. My only gripe occurred a couple of years ago when he liberally edited one of my pieces - specifically a comment about him. In the piece I had called him "our Editor Emeritus", mostly because I'm particularly fond of E alliteration and partly because I thought the moniker was as cute as it was apropos. Well, Mr. K. thought it was all a bit much (being the quiet, shy guy he is) and proceeded to alter each double E reference to "General Editor". After a terse phone call in which he promised to let me know if he was going to carve up my literature in the future

and I promised not to refer to him as Editor Emeritus ever again, we resumed our usual merry relationship. I've sort of kept my promise, haven't I?

My natural and extended family looms large in the recognition department. I must begin with TH (and if you haven't figured out by now what that means there is no reason to spoil your confusion). Aside from being my biggest fan, he is also my most stern critic. He proof reads every word, reminds me what a lousy speller I can be and has often offered just the right punch to a saggy sentence. He knows not to bug me with inquiries about the dinner menu when the keyboard is flying but gently prods me toward it when inspiration seems to be wanting. He is the technical wizard that gets *LIFE* from here (CNCF) to there (Chateau AUTO-SPORT) without the benefit of a stamp and without burdening me with an explanation on how he does it.

Grandparents and parents display an enthusiasm for *LIFE* that goes beyond the natural level of pride one feels for ones progeny. Grandma Mary freely admits that she doesn't understand all of what I'm talking about but she loves it anyhow. Grandma Ruby occasionally drops me a note telling me how much she laughed over a particular piece and I'm sure if we could correspond with heaven, Grandpa Chuck would have his fair share (and then some) to say. The parents, in fact and in law, Behm and Walrich are always good for an ego boost when that gully of humor seems only loaded with rocks. TH's folks are quick to call when I'm late sending a column to them each month, my folks are mesmerized by what I have done with a portion of the college education they paid for.

Since TH and I both come from large families - that seem to be getting larger with every passing month - the US Postal Service will be going into a small recession with my retirement. Copies of this prose find their way to California, Texas, Illinois, Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Florida, a couple of addresses in mid- New York State, and a couple more way up-state. These do not count the ones that are hand delivered! With this in mind you must permit me one final indulgence.

You see, I have a brother who has spent the better portion of his life working on, repairing, building and re-building cars. I have always considered this a unique application of his education as a micro-biologist but my own career path has taken me in some pretty odd directions so we probably shouldn't dwell on that. There is literally nothing about cars he doesn't know or can't find out with a quick phone call. He has gotten me into and out of hundreds of automobile related jams for a fraction of what they would have cost and has manipulated the system to my personal advantage innumerable times. At any rate, one evening while we were in his living room in the company of Jack Daniels and Johnny Walker, he finally admitted that he was more than a little put off that I had never once even mentioned him in a column. Well, David, this one's for you, how am I doing so far?