

Defining Moments  
07-01-2013 by Harry Zirkelbach

*Past Individuals and moments responsible for the dozen in this room encompass many individuals and events of the past decades. It is easier to single those that stand out, than those of significance initially trivial.*

*I can write without contradiction,  
everyone here was affected directly or obliquely by WW II.  
Those years where events were more significant than individuals pawns;  
yet it is important to recognize how each reacted to constant change  
war demanded without reservation.*

*One more observation. It's not always the overpowering event or person that defined a choice made. These epic moments/individuals are recognized, effecting all in varying degree. Yet it is the often the unrecognized event, the casual comment, the invisible hand, that brought us to this page.*

*A friend's wife volunteered to serve on the rural Draft Board. When one of her sons came of age, the Board deferred her boy. Yet the community of mothers with sons serving in war, became enraged, pestered her family for an imagined inequality. The mother was effected, and as this mounted, she committed suicide. Died protecting her son. Later this boy was continually deferred by that Board. She remains an unrecognized war casualty. Service etched in memory in that rural community. And mine.*

*In the second grade, fellow students not remembered because we moved away later,  
a classmate died. The Nun who taught our class asked the parents to allow her to take classmates to view the deceased. This child was not a friend yet, but that viewing stands out today. That single evening, that Nun taught me the only two recalled  
Second grade lesson.  
Life is finite. Pay attention.*

*Another trivial moment. The Junior College where I first studied, taught only Freshman and Sophomore courses. Some who enrolled, and their parents, had looked beyond the two years, had selected the University of Detroit to finish their Engineering education.*

*I agreed, applied. We studied together. enjoyed friendships those two years. Yet when those semesters ended, I remained the only one of five who had applied for admission. This had been our decision to attend the Jesuit University of Detroit, yet it seemed unreal that the others recanted.*

*In fact none attended College that fall, 1941. Suddenly I am no longer a follower.*

*And now two unknown gentle voices. In London 1988, we asked for directions.*

*The first instance was at Waterloo Station, where we asked a bus driver for direction. He provided them. As we followed his path, becoming aware of that bus Tooting at us. The driver and passengers waved. We stopped, listened. He apologized. Provided corrections. Then he and passengers waved again, turned around to their correct route*

*In the other moment we asked for directions from a employee of the London Underground. He was specific. While waiting at the chosen platform, he suddenly appeared on the opposite side, saying we had watched on closed circuit TV, saw we took a wrong turn. We needed to go down a level then up to where he stood to reach our destination.*

*Small kindness to strangers.  
Made those faces more memorable than all other events of that London exploration.*

*A final salute. On our first England vacation we stayed at a B&B downtown London.*

*On the day in mind, we had returned from self-directed sightseeing waling a few blocks from Victoria Station when a L=large sightseeing bus pulled along side and asked "Can you direct me to Victoria Station. Surprised, we pointed to the structure identifying his goal. Wondered. Our host later told us, in spring drivers from around England came to drive tourists, had to be acquainted with the streets for their summer work, found their way for the tourists, returned home.*