

Bridges

08-14-2017 by Harry Zirkelbach
Stars and Sun Date 34871

In the Aspen Room in which the Writers gather every Monday morning, there are two windows on one wall, and two prints of scenes on each of the other three. Included is a drawing of covered bridge; an historic piece, for I believe some who gather weekly have never seen a covered bridge, much less know why they were covered.

As a child, dad was an employee of the Pennsylvania Rail Road. He had a free access to ride their trains anytime. We lived thirty miles north of Pittsburgh; on many week-ends Mom would dress my sister and me for that ride to family relatives in Shaprsburg (an eastern suburb of Pittsburg) on the Allegheny River. On the train, from Pittsburg seated facing the river's north shore, there seemed to be a bridge every time the last one disappeared. There were busy with traffic and day or night the scene was partly obscured by smoke from that thriving industrial valley, those years before the Great Depression. Once in motion, the conductor would come through announce the next stop a few miles away. I memorized those names too, loved shouting them with the conductor. These bridges, rain or not, that journey remains etched in my mind. Long after Dad quit the Railroad, these views were etched in memory. And enjoyed again in recounting those moments with family and friend as we were dragged alive through the labyrinthian Dickensish ugliness years of those late 1920's.

In 1932 when I was ten our family moved north to Erie on the Lake. The trips to Sharpsburgh along the Allegheny River to Mom's family ended forever. Here we saw few bridges. The existing spans covered valleys without a stream. From this I would learn over time that no major river flowed into any of the six Great Lakes from these 48 States. All that 6 quadrillion gallons of fresh water (one fifth of all the world's fresh water) is provided from Canadian Rivers. No need for a bridge over non-existing rivers and the boat traffic there.

An aside to this tale of no major streams flowing into the Great Lakes, this topographical feature; all water falling as rain roughly 30 miles south of these six Lakes, eventually becomes a contributor to the Mississippi River, that great world drainage basin.

Barbara and I visited most continents, viewed bridges galore, loved walking those on the Thames in London and the Seine in Paris. Watching, these waters seemed to ignore the Ocean, rather meander in search of their Salt Water grave. One great "old" bridge connects Sydney Australia with its burg, North Sydney, across the Tasmanian Sea. This is a solid structure, unlike our Golden Gate Bridge which would seem to float over the Pacific, a thing of beauty.

In Australia with plenty of time to explore we chose to walk across this monster, from Sydney across the harbor. As we begin at the southern anchorage, we find an open door into the superstructure, begin that climb ever north. Following this

platform allowed us to view the bridge surface , the harbor in both directions.from inside the frame. Climbing ever higher until mid point we stop md view the City, Ocean traffic, Sydney's Opera House from this unusual perch.

Shortly, we me a half dozen Maintenance Workers eating lunch. We change pleasantries, an proceed to the other end, climb to the roadway and walk on its surface to return to Sydney.. An addition to our unique travel moments.

Bridges connect related pieces, across troubling waters. All this reminds me of the Bridges of Windsor Gardens. They are Frank and Dee Bridges.They live in a Town House. They have been active in that community, everywhere, and on the Golf Course. And recently they have been an anchor in a four couple bridge gathering, monthly, more than cheerfully, adding conversation between friends, always avoid any hint of troubling waters, reminding the others they are a bridge of friendship with all residents of windsor Gardens.