

# The Rodkey Reader

To be taken in the morning with a grain of salt

February 14, 2014 Vol. 8 No. 1

## It's a Hard Knox Life

This summer, a surprising transformation took place at Knox House, Knox Church, Toronto. What had long been a church-owned student house got a makeover: new paint, new tenants, new furniture, and a new RA—or “don” as these Canadians quaintly call it—Elissa. This meant Elissa’s first few weeks back were filled with manual labor and mishaps that often accompany DIY projects, such as scrubbing and painting the floor on hands and knees only to have others

walk through the still-tacky paint, or dropping air conditioning units out the window, scaring unsuspecting passersby (Casualties: the bus shelter below may never be the same).

But Elissa and her fellow students have endured with equanimity the inevitable snafus, viewing them as community-building moments. After all, the Knox vision is that Knox House be not just affordable student housing, but a vibrant faith community. To foster community spirit, Elissa hosts house film discussion nights in the newly-beautified space, as well as an occasional lecture series on bringing faith into everyday life. The first of this series, “Remembering War”, featuring two veterans reflecting on their experiences, received glowing reviews and suggestions that Elissa had missed her calling as a TV show host. Less glamorously, she endeavors to get everyone to remember their chores (training the young men to take out the house trash was considered a par-



ticular triumph).

Elissa has found living at Knox House gives her a sense of purpose in the desolate no-man's-land of dissertation writing. She has not neglected her graduate work (although blending

the two requires super-human feats of discipline such as going to the library to study). By now an old-hand at the conference-presentation circuit, Elissa looks forward to presenting in London in May, finally fulfilling her secret goal of grad school: paid-for international travel! —Krista



## The Great Escape

Trapped by the brilliant sunshine and 70-degree weather of Santa Barbara, after enduring not one but two canceled flights, the Rodkey grandparents were growing increasingly desperate.

“It wasn’t until we found the half-completed tunnel leading out of the guest room that we knew things were quite that serious,” an anonymous source said in a phone interview. “Even so, the attempted escape via hang glider off the roof took us all by surprise.”

Their (eventual) departure wrapped up a jolly holiday stay which included such favorite pastimes as Scrabble and Boggle rounds, laughing at Grandpa’s endless store of jokes and Grandma’s one-line zingers, Christmas caroling and singing the family hymn. An expedition out to the wharf to



purchase saltwater taffy allowed them enjoy the sunshine and their grandchildren’s presence, to say nothing of providing fodder for gloating over their good fortune with their Idaho friends.

Their delayed escape was the benevolent work of the elsewhere infamous “Polar Vortex” which also delayed Erik’s and Elissa’s departures, giving the family another half-week together, and officially marking 2013 as the Year of the Delayed Flight. —Erik

## Jeanne Discovers Yap; Yap Library Holdings Spike

In a sun-drenched corner of the Pacific lies the Micronesian island of Yap, human population 11,377, book population less than 2,000 (according to a 2010 census).

Could this state of affairs long exist in a world which contains Jeanne Rodkey?! Our source explains the not-so-shocking turn of events: “It’s quite simple really. Mom discovered a recently flooded island and a library with dampened spirits, so naturally she responded by flooding said island with books.” No word as yet on how international relief forces plan to respond to this literary deluge, which has reportedly trapped several postal workers underneath piles of book-rate packages.

See *Island Discovered*, pg 3

## Twin Toyotas Reunited at Last Shocking Truth Revealed on Page Two





## Twin Toyotas —Reunited at Last (cont'd from pg 1)

Since the mid-90's, the Toyota truck has loyally served the Rodkeys, providing reliable transportation for John's daily commute and later for Adelle's musical errands. With its fashionable blue zigzag and infrequent visits to the shop, it earned the nickname "Old Faithful" and won the hearts of the people. Yet the truck harbored a shocking secret: it was a twin! In April, Adelle discovered its doppelgänger roaming the streets of Santa Barbara. After the further discovery that that this 'new' twin had nearly half the mileage of Old Faithful, she entered into negotiations with the current owner and



jubilantly drove the vehicle home, where she witnessed the happy reunion. Their tragic separation at birth was almost totally forgotten as they wiped tears of joy from their wind-screens. For the following six weeks, they could be seen enjoying each other's company whilst sunning themselves in the driveway, catching up on past times, and even pulling elaborate "mirror-image" pranks on the neighbors, making them think they were seeing double! For more about the recent adventures of Old Faithful, see **Indianapolis 2500, pg 3** —Adelle

## Sweet Driver Academy

Having been accorded the title of "Sweet Driver" for his consistent driving finesse, John set out to convert the world to his methods of precision driving by opening the Academy of Sweet Driving. Class offerings will include advanced courses such as "The Art of the Gradual Stop," "Downshifting for Fun and Profit," and "Driving Smoothly: How To Prevent Your Car From Emulating a Jackrabbit," as well as training for Olympic events of Competitive Precision Parking, Crazy Southern Californian Driver Avoidance, and Synchronized Auto-Ballet.

The Academy's current enrollment consists of a single student, 15-year-old Cody, who is taking "Stick-Shifting 101." Together, John and Cody requisitioned an empty parking lot to hone Cody's skills in parallel parking, high-speed reverses, and choreographed car routines. While the perfectly-timed release of the clutch remains elusive, Cody has become familiar with the many mysteries of First Gear, at least in theory. When contacted by the RR about the success of Cody's driving lessons, his instructor responded "The Force is strong with this one, but he is not a sweet driver yet!" —Adelle

## Wakeful Krista

As the Rodkey philosophical night owl, Krista has never been mistaken for a morning lark. So when she was assigned the arduous task of teaching Intro to Ethics at 8 AM, her first thought was to perfect a sleep-teaching technique. But fearing that in her sleep-state she might inaccurately



represent her beloved Plato, she turned to other strategies for keeping self and students wakeful. Erik's solution, unsurprisingly, was a daily thermos of English Breakfast, and Krista found that tea had multiple uses. She kept her students alert by "accidentally" splashing tea while gesturing excitedly about Marcus Aurelius and discovered that strategic spilling of tea on quizzes had salutary

"It's been far too long since my last time home" Jeanne complained to the RR, referring to her 2009 trip to Alaska. Unwilling to be separated any longer from her beloved state, Jeanne headed north, this time

accompanied by John and Cody. They arrived at Kako Retreat Center, the camp run by Jeanne's parents, after 15 hours of travel and discovering how much better teens handle sleeping on

airport floors than their elders. Once at Kako, they were quickly put to work as the entire camp mobilized for one

of their largest annual weekends, the Ladies' Berry-Picking retreat. Jeanne helped with airing out each cabin and scrubbing squished mosquitoes off the walls, while John learned the fine art of Alaskan bush flying in a Cessna 182. Cody reveled in his position as camp gopher, since this role entailed riding the 4-wheeler all around camp. To complete the Alaskan experience, John took Cody fishing, though John found his ability to teach this skill significantly impaired by his own incompetence. Returning to her old stomping

## High Road to Alaska



grounds in the village of Stony River, Jeanne delighted in visiting with friends from her childhood days and reconnecting with the school children who came to Santa Barbara

three years ago. At Kako, preparations for the retreat reached a fever-pitch: John began ferrying native women between over a dozen villages and Kako, Jeanne scrambled to put the final

touches on her lecture notes as the retreat's speaker, and the blueberries ripened on the hills, just waiting to be picked. Cody spent the three days of the retreat in the exhausting work as chief babysitter, entertainer, and law-enforcement for an energetic 7-

year-old. To no one's surprise, Jeanne thrived on connecting with the ladies of the retreat, and her words of encouragement were both timely and applicable.

The bumper crop of blueberries resulted in buckets filled to overflowing, and everyone returned home, deeply satisfied. —Adelle



effects on general wakefulness.

Krista also kept herself awake by drawing on her artistic side. By creating beautiful Powerpoint slides using great works of art, she was able to give her students a visual background in the Greek culture, highlight portraits of key historical figures, and illustrate moral dilemmas with masterpieces from Caravaggio, Frida Kahlo, and others. Always looking for ways to increase the students' culture, she assigned a philosophy-themed scavenger hunt to be done in the school's art museum. The students hailed her genius, and despite the early hour, endeavored for her sake to think philosophical thoughts. She brilliantly managed her overcrowded class, an overcrowding that can only be explained by the popularity of the professor. —John

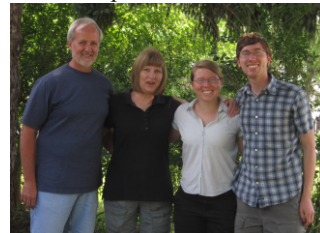
## Sweet Driver Alum Successfully Runs the Indianapolis 2500

And they're off! Last August, sweet driver alum (see Sweet Driver, Pg 2) Erik Rodkey sat at the wheel of Old Faithful, heading east, bound for Indiana with Krista, truck stuffed to the gills with Erik's cello and a load of furniture for their Bloomington apartment. No trip past Malibu could be complete without a stop at the Getty Villa to satisfy Krista's love of ancient Roman artifacts. Nor could the trip be complete without a little 5 p.m. LA traffic, but having endured the traffic and visited an old Westmont friend, Chandra, it

was a straight shot to the desert for a night of driving. Erik drove steadily down into Arizona, across New Mexico, and through the Oklahoma panhandle, with only a few hours nap in the desert to soothe the tired eyes. Mid-way through Kansas, they stopped to stretch their legs, only to find themselves swept up in a celebration of small-town America: a town fair featuring burgers grilled by the fire department, free ice cream cones thrust upon the unwary, and a bevy of antique cars.

All Rodkey Road Trips include an ob-

ligatory stop at an airport, so Erik made a two hour detour to observe the Kansas City Dawn Patrol, a flock of WWI replica airplanes often seen convorting in the skies above Kansas City. Finally they arrived at the Fosters, long-time friends and fellow Santa Barbara exiles, allowing Krista and Linda to reminisce about art lessons as Ron gave Erik a tour of their antique printing press. Reasonably rested and refreshed, they drove off into the sunrise, ending their adventure in Bloomington hours later, tired but triumphant. —Jeanne



## Musician, Gardener, Accountant, Spy?

Adelle has long had a reputation as the most diversely accomplished family member. Her oboe and piano teaching, home-making, gardening, remodeling, and "house-triage" skills are the stuff of legend, as faithfully chronicled from the Rodkey Reader's earliest pages. Under Adelle's watch, the yard, with its orange trees and tomato plants, continues to blossom, the house gets cleaned and repaired, and her music studio flourishes. In one case, the sound of her playing, as it drifted through an open window, attracted a passing bicyclist and won her a new student.



This year Adelle has added to her titles of Domestic Goddess and Master of the House-Keeping that of Lord High Accountant. A longstanding in-

terest in the "Quicken Game" motivated her to audit Accounting 101 at Westmont. Learning these skills was a cinch and she immediately put her knowledge to work in her own finances. Sadly she has refused an opportunity to do pro bono work for BookEnds on the grounds that her accounting philosophy conflicts with Jeanne's theory: "If you don't have receipts, you didn't spend the money."

However, is Adelle's prodigious proficiency altogether innocent? The RR has long sung her praises, but can her hours of hard work really be explained by her far-fetched pleas that "all she wants is for the house to be organized" and "what else is a Myers Briggs J to do in a household of P's?" It seems far more likely that gaining stewardship of the ancestral halls is merely a cover for some as yet unrevealed nefarious scheme. For all we know, Adelle could be the agent of a foreign government or worse, a musical secret society! Inquiring minds demand to know Adelle's true motives, be they ever so dastardly! The RR calls for an investigation to sweep aside the deception. — Krista

## Island Discovered (Cont'd from pg 1)

In all, 1,048 books were sent, increasing the library's holdings by 50%, and helping the BookEnds stock dwindle to a more manageable number. (See "Bookends Diets, Relocates.") For the first time, stock was shipped not only from the main warehouse in SB, but also inaugural shipments made their way to Yap from the newly opened Bookends branch in Bloomington, Indiana, (operated under the auspices of the Society for the Appreciation of Children's Literature - see "Humility" RR 2008) which contributed 114 books directly to Yap.

We of the Rodkey Reader have long predicted the potentially dire consequences of Jeanne's "Empty Nesting", but none of us imagined that the mothering instinct could extend to whole islands! —Erik

### BookEnds Diets, Relocates

In October, the Bookends collection was welcomed into its new home at Montecito Covenant. This new location boasts 4 industrial-strength metal shelving units in one room, allowing easy access for book retrieval. To fit into this convenient space, the Bookends Collection had to go on the Yap Diet to lose a few (hundred) pounds of books, and fit its svelte 3,712 volumes into this new abode.



### BookEnds Stats:

3712 books  
18 countries  
40 families

## Anti-Burglary Feature Foils Piano Students

Fearful of miscreants stealing in while the household was slumbering and making off with the two pianos and pump organ in the front room, Adelle was relieved to find that sagging hinges and a moisture-swelled front door precluded easy access. "It was easy to open: simply pull on the handle, kick the bottom swiftly and twist the knob in the opposite direction while applying the shoulder forcefully to the upper half." However effective in repelling burglars, even Adelle was forced to admit that her 6 and 7 year old music students were also deterred. Students and teacher alike are relieved to hear that a door replacement project is now underway. Miscreants take note: this door has a deadbolt, and is unyielding to the unwelcome. —John



## Kids Struggle as Parents Enter "Texting Teen" Stage

Upon returning home for the summer, the children were distressed to realize that their parents had fallen victim to that dreaded stage - the texting teenager. Scandalized, they witnessed such infractions as texting at the table, constantly checking messages while on a walk with their beloved children, and playing Words With Friends at all hours. After some soul-searching ("Where did we go wrong?" "This calls into question our whole parent-raising philosophy!"), the children took decisive countermeasures, namely shaming, reprimands, and confiscation of technology. Sadly the parents remain largely unrepentant and enthralled by technology. While the children hold out hope that they will one day learn to use their technology appropriately, in the meantime they work on the more manageable goal of getting them to come to dinner when called.

—Elissa

## Triple Tempest

Despite record low levels of rainfall in Santa Barbara, the Rodkeys witnessed a surprising number of Tempests in 2013. Early July, the family ventured down to Ventura for an outdoor production of Shakespeare's *Tempest* staged by the Kingsmen Shakespeare Company. The outdoor setting provided the perfect venue for a summer picnic dinner with friends while anticipating the play. The Kingsmen *Tempest* was presented with energy and a slant toward humor, proving to be a solid production with a conventional interpretation.

"Convention interpretation" certainly would not describe the John Blondell staging of the same play which they attended a mere 2 weeks later. Would the tip-off of its unconventionality be the scenery, consisting entirely of poles suspended from the ceiling, or perhaps Miranda's initial entrance riding an antique bicycle? Another unusual and intriguing staging decision was to double-cast the trios of the minor characters (Alonso-Antonio-Sebastian and Caliban-Stephano-Trinculo), which highlighted the parallels between the two subplots. The double-casting also resulted in a rather ridiculous reunion



## 2nd Annual Christmas Pageant a Grand Success!

Following in the footsteps of L.A. Philharmonic's prodigy Gustav Dudamel, youthful conductor Erik Rodkey directed the even more youthful voices of children ages 7-10 in another successful Christmas pro-

gram. The congregation of First Presbyterian, Bloomington, was clearly riveted as the children sweetly sang carols such as "Rise up Shepherds and Follow". The art song 'Before the Paling of the Stars' with lyrics by Christina Rossetti, set a new musical high-point for the choir as the children's voices soared with the expressive melodic line. It also set a literary low-point, as countless minutes of rehearsal time were squandered on Erik's repeated reassurances that "ox and ass" may with propriety be used in church. The spectacular improvement in vocal quality under Erik's tutelage was noted by the chorus members' parents, who have resorted to calling music graduate programs across the country in a last-ditch effort to sabotage Erik's grad school plans and retain him for another year of the choir's growth. — Adelle

## The Rodkey Reader: a Behind-the-Scenes Expose

The Rodkey Reader, well known for its goofy family in-jokes and self-deprecating humor, has been widely assumed by its readers to be written by an innocent but disorganized family in a fit of eccentric inspiration over Christmas, accompanied (at worst) by occasional gentle family squabbling. Little do they know the dark truth behind the Reader and its production! Sensing scandal, this reporter went undercover at the Rodkey ancestral hall and publishing house, embedding in time to witness the actual production of last year's Reader. That it was published shockingly late only highlighted the need for a no-nonsense investigation. The April 1st publication date masks a disturbing reality behind the reader that is no joke.

As many astute readers have suspected, the 'Christmas' newsletter isn't even written at Christmas, but in the months following. The process is prolonged to a ridiculous extent as family members tire of their assigned articles and trade

them haphazardly, argue about what's funny, and war over layout with conflicting OCD tendencies. The family as a whole is shockingly dependent on its youngest member to 'Bring the Funny' and to sharpen flat jokes. That member, in turn, is irrationally dependent on his antique typewriter to produce his content. Members of the editorial staff are known to routinely edit the articles about themselves to be more flattering, and often stage photos to match the story! But if these lapses of journalistic integrity weren't bad enough, there is conclusive evidence that 99% of the quotes in the RR are entirely fabricated! As my anonymous source put it, "the quotations fit so seamlessly into the surrounding sentences that that it leaves no alternative than to assume they were created precisely for that purpose." Based on these revelations, I assert that the RR's publishing license be revoked and all the editors transfer their writing skills to *The Onion*. —Anonymous

scene at the end which involved a multitude of flying hats. The two performances — the predictable and the bizarre — made for a complementary viewing of the bard's famous play. The deluge of tempests continued even after the summer theatre outings. The household was awash with the sound of

Shakespeare's creation as Adelle practiced Beethoven's Sonata Op. 31 No 2, allegedly inspired by and nicknamed "*The Tempest*." The showers of notes and cascades of arpeggios, while welcome, unfortunately did little to replenish drought-stricken Lake Cachuma. —Adelle

## Rodkeys Recommend Reading

|                           |                              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Arcadia                   | Book of the Dun Cow          |
| Cranford                  | Ehregard (Dinesen)           |
| Middlemarch               | Faith Seeking (Denys Turner) |
| North and South           | The Missionary Letters of    |
| The Princess & the Goblin | Vincent Donovan              |

## Rodkeys Recommend Watching

|                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sherlock Holmes (Brett - 1984) | High Road to China          |
| The Thief and the Cobbler      | Moonrise Kingdom            |
| Blancanieves                   | Beasts of the Southern Wild |

## Elissa's Panel Discussion on Remembering War

<http://knoxontoronto.org/blog/2013/11/11/remembering-war/>

## Editorial Staff

|                     |                   |                    |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| rodkey@westmont.edu | erodkey@gmail.com | arodkey@gmail.com  |
| jrodkey@gmail.com   | krodkey@gmail.com | errodkey@gmail.com |