

*We've Got To Get
Back To The Garden*

Robert S. Swiatek

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First Edition

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for those who can't kick the habit

also by Robert S. Swiatek

Don't Bet On It

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for seeing eye dogs only

***This Page Intentionally Left Blank –
Just Like The Paychecks Of The Workers***

I Don't Want To Be A Pirate – Writer, maybe

wake up – it's time for your sleeping pill

***Take Back The Earth – The Dumb,
Greedy Incompetents Have Trashed It***

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Save The Animals And Children

Recipes For Joy In Life

Computers For Smart People

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Introduction

One of the impediments to any kind of progress is addiction. This involves each of us, our family, friends, those who live in cities, towns, states and countries all over the world. We're familiar with bad habits when it comes to drugs, food and work, but those are only a few trouble areas. When I first considered writing this book, I made a list of topics and settled on a few. I began work on one chapter at a time – in no particular order. As I did so, I realized that I had left out an addiction or two, so I began a list of these. In time, the list grew longer and longer. I decided to have a chapter for miscellaneous addictions.

Since some habits are to be commended, I reserved the last chapter for what I thought were good addictions. I began the book with addictions to drugs, starting in the morning with a dose of caffeine and dealing with nicotine, alcohol and prescription drugs – from the pharmacist as well as off the shelf. The last one was probably the worse of the group, illegal drugs. Each attraction isn't easy to overcome and every one poses danger to the health of the user. If a dealer enters the scene, innocent people wind up in the crossfire. In any case, others always suffer from the drug addictions of family or friends.

Food is the next consideration. Just look around and you can't help but feel that the epidemic is spreading, along with the waistlines of the people. We all eat to live, but for many, it's the other way around as they live to eat. Just because you love food doesn't mean you're addicted to it, but you should be aware of the possibility. Omnivores are probably food addicts. There'll be consideration of specific longing for three bad substances: sugar, salt and fat. Each is necessary to live but overindulging can lead to health problems: diabetes, depression, high blood pressure, doctor and hospital visits. Obesity isn't good for the person who craves food, nor is it good for the health industry or the

health of the nation. Dieting can be dangerous if the loss is too much at once, but not trying it could be worse. Obesity results from sedentary lifestyles, lack of exercise as well as overindulgence. Too many people make bad food choices.

The next addiction is to sports. In the same chapter I include another one since it's connected: gambling. My first novel was all about the national lottery. That purchase of a ticket is the worse investment imaginable, although hoping the teams you bet on your football ticket cover the spread isn't a good deal either.

This is followed by four chapters of bad habits that work together in society. In order, they are money, control, materialism and work. People with an addiction to cash probably want to be in charge – they want power over others. Slavery is a result even if it's not an addiction, and discussion of it can be found in the chapter on control. Chapter 7 gets into work, an addiction for too many people, even if it's not desired. The plantation owners of the past and the corporation chiefs today may not be work addicts but they have an addiction to having others labor for them, paying workers as little as they could get away with. The chapter before concerns itself with materialism, which can't be left out of the money / control / work ménage à trois. You can see that the addictions to money and materialism aren't precisely the same thing.

Chapter 8 is an addiction that envelops all of us: sex. It's not to be confused with the love habit, which concludes the book. The Internet plays a huge part with its contribution of pornography. The web hasn't completely replaced magazines and red light districts, but instead provides the locations of the latter with its information overload. I'll get into more of the data preponderance and technology in chapter 13.

Then comes danger and excitement in chapter 9, which grabs many of us. From the choice of vacations for many citizens, it appears that a requisite might be that danger

is part of the package, even if airfare isn't included. I had to add a few words on *extreme* sports – however you spell it – which I chose to have here rather a few chapters before. Chapter 10 is about the addiction to war, which for some belongs with the addiction to danger and excitement. They are separate, but related.

What follows is an environmental chapter in which we are concerned with oil addicts. I'll not limit it to that black liquid but include all fossil fuels, since we need air conditioning in the summer – is that because of global warming? – plus heat in winter, which seems to last for six months. I think that is because of climate change as well. Of course, we need gasoline because of an addiction to the automobile, which I'll mention in passing. I could just as easily had the adoration of the car in the chapter on danger because of the addiction of many to speed – here I'm not referring to a drug. Since the car is also one of the benefits of technology, it will also be discussed in chapter 13.

News addicts are next in chapter 12 and I mention political junkies as well. It doesn't matter what the source is, whether the Internet, newspaper, magazine, radio or television. If you're a world information addict, you may rely on all of the mentioned providers. I mentioned chapter 13 before as the technology chapter, with emphasis on the computer, television, telephone and automobile. All these advances have helped us in some way, but today, people are overwhelmed by it. This is not unlike the information overload, which I brought up earlier.

We need to step back, because of the repercussions of what computers – as well as any other technology – have wrought. The environment has been besieged, people have become sedentary, developed bad habits and become more isolated. Many people swear by their PCs, while more individuals swear at them, so there has to be some repair done. We can't abandon technology, but need to retreat and not be so reliant on it. Over the holidays we should visit

family and friends and leave our cell phones, laptops and all the other distracting gadgets at home. This can be done for a few hours.

Chapter 14 was the new chapter I added for all the bad habits I missed. Some of the miscellaneous addictions include vanity, good health, voodoo, vampires, ghosts, the occult, movies, change, reluctance to change, Harry Potter, conspiracies, racism, hate, *Seinfeld*, anything retro, discrimination, white, cleaning, education, religion, humor, hope, faith, charity, justice, truth, reading, learning and books. Many of these could be grouped under a major category and I probably missed a few.

By now it should be obvious that there are many connections between addictions. This forced me to decide how to split up the chapters. The option of writing a book with only one chapter never entered my mind, even though some writers have done it. Wouldn't that choice lead to a great deal of rambling?

Chapter 15 concludes the book with a good addiction: love. Since there are other positive ones, I listed those as well. The connectivity approach is important. One link not to be dismissed is that of addictions with the seven deadly sins. These are in alphabetical order: envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, sloth and wrath. A few of these are the results of addictions that will be discussed, while another will be briefly mentioned. What remains are loosely connected to the remaining addictions. Those two words, deadly sins, says a lot and can't be dismissed lightly.

Because of the books I have written, maybe I caused some of these addictions, but I hope not. Besides my first novel, I've written a cookbook – there's that food thing and it's in all three editions – a book on war, two on work, one on the failure of technology, a book on truth and a few on the environment, including a novel for sophisticated children about amazing animals. I'm sure I mention oil in at least one of that group of books. All my books are listed

before the introduction. For now, this book is available only as an ebook, just like the two that preceded it. From the titles listed you can figure out what each book is about. My web site is www.bobcooks.com – a source for recipes and really, truly free downloads, no requirements such as blood or kidney donations or having to sit through any of the 2012 Republican debates.

Addictions are difficult to overcome. It takes a great deal of effort, but it can be done. If you're the victim, you'll have to enlist all the help you can get from others. You'll need a lot of discipline and have to do much of the work yourself, including using the approach to work I describe in Chapter 7. Look for the reference to Grace Boggs. One approach to beat the food addiction that you can use is to hide the cookies, although I think it would be better to let someone else do that.

I have included quite a few references to outstanding books and movies. I'm neither a motion picture addict nor a reading one; I just like flicks and books. Of those books that I've read and movies that I've seen, I can't recommend them all. Since I almost have an addiction to music, each chapter represents the title of a song – I hope they're familiar – or the words from one. After you finish the book, you will understand the significance of the title. If not, consider the summer of 1967, which is connected to the last chapter.

For each of my books, I always write the introduction last, when I'll know what the book is about. I may have already selected the title – I hope for its cleverness – and I'll have to connect it to what the book is really about. Before I start writing, I select a book subject and some appropriate topics. Then I get to work. In my efforts, I have some ideas and a feel for where the book is headed. By the time I sit down to write the introduction, I realize I have learned a great deal and the final product isn't exactly what I originally pictured. I hope it's better than what it started out to be.

Before the concept of addictions occurred to me, I wanted to write a book about greed and criminal corporations. What resulted was a work on all three subjects. It's also about healing and taking action. To do this, changes will be needed and I hope I've provided a few ideas in this effort, especially in the last chapter. Throughout the book I comment on the environment, and though there's no chapter for earth addicts, this book is truly about the planet, without which none of us have to worry about addictions, greed or the business world.

Just as so many of these addictions are connected, we can see a parallel between the elements of the ecosystem on which we depend. It's another connection of its own. One species of life that is endangered is so necessary for plants and animals, that when it is extinct, a domino effect begins. It might take a while, but soon other species disappear, forever. Homo sapiens are as much a part of the ecosystem as weeds, vegetables, trees, deer and fish of the sea.

I included this in one of my books earlier, but I think it's worth another look because of interconnectivity. Consider the rain forest and the macaw, a creature that is so beautiful and colorful that individuals want to capture it and sell it for huge profits. In the process, as is expected, many of the birds die, which happens when they can't adjust to living inside someone's home, away from their natural habitat. In the forest they find nourishment, but what they're looking for isn't all that abundant. They seek out a special kind of nut, enclosed by a rock-hard shell. Even with a hammer, humans will find it extremely difficult to open. The macaw uses its strong beak and finds the task relatively easy. In the process of opening the nut, some of the fruit falls to the ground or water below. This excess is enjoyed by other creatures nearby, which in turn may become prey for larger animals. All these small events keep the system flowing and in harmony.

One of the addictions, also an affliction, is to technology. On Easter Sunday 2012, I conducted an experiment. My sister Pat and her husband Lou were kind enough to have dinner at their house. A week before I talked to Pat about the possibility of that Sunday being technology free, meaning no cell phones, laptops, Kindles, iPods, iPads or anything similar. However, we could watch television and listen to music. We were allowed to converse as we sat down to a dinner of fresh Polish sausage, baked ham, Challah bread, pierogis and many other delights. The weekend before I decided not to engage my PC on that Saturday and Sunday. You'll have to wait until chapter 13 to see how things turned out.

We can't deny the addiction of technology and its connection to the environment. The computer, telephone, television and automobile and all their derivatives have wrecked havoc on the earth. We can't abandon the benefits but have to control the technology and repair it. We need to change and in many ways, to retreat. We have to get back to the garden.

“All human actions have one or more of these seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reason, passion and desire.” – Aristotle

1. Good morning starshine

When I moved to New Jersey for a teaching job, I remember being welcomed to the area by the voice of Harry Harrison on WABC radio as he greeted listeners with a good morning and the words, *Coffee's on*. I'm pretty sure he said that. The title of this first chapter is a song made popular by Oliver. I didn't do the research so I'm not sure if he had a last name, or maybe that was it. My favorite version of the song is the 1969 rendition by the rock group, The Strawberry Alarm Clock – if you have one of those, it may not help you get out of bed. Someone else will have to make coffee. *Good morning starshine* is from the 1967 Broadway musical, *Hair*, with which you're probably familiar. If not, nudity is featured along with sexual freedom, environmentalism, pacifism, astrology and religion. It also mentions drug use, which is the subject of this chapter.

Our initial consideration is caffeine, which you probably figured I would be mentioning first. Research has shown that a cup of java might have some health benefits, although all bets are off with drinking the entire pot of the liquid throughout the day. I have an excellent sense of smell, both a blessing and a curse. One of the most pleasant aromas is that of fresh coffee brewing in the morning. When I worked in Norwalk, Connecticut a few years ago, there was another fragrance, just as delightful, that of roasting coffee beans, which I encountered on my lunchtime stroll. In this connection, I can't drink coffee in the afternoon – in the morning or after dinner is fine, though. This could have something to do with some aromas I'm not fond of, that of cold coffee with milk or cream and instant coffee.

Another nasal delight – at least to me as a kid – was what I experienced on Sunday afternoons in the presence of my dad and uncles. At my grandma and grandpa's house, they brought out the stogies – not my grandparents, the other guys – and I remember with fondness what permeated the

air. Certain blends of tobacco that pipe guys smoked were all right too, especially cherry blend. The other odors emerging from some pipes I can do without. I've never smoked cigarettes or a pipe, but indulged in an occasional cigar. I haven't had one of those disgusting cancer sticks in years. I'm not sure why I started lighting them up, even if they were Cubans. Smoking any of these three will deliver our second drug to avoid, nicotine. Even just chewing tobacco isn't good for you, as many baseball players have found out. Now they stick to *Double Bubble*, although they'd probably prefer Home Run Bubble, if it were available. Nicotine kills despite what some doctors in the 1950s preached when they pointed out that smoking a cigarette is really good for you. Do you think they were getting paid off by Marlboro or R. J. Reynolds? There were plenty of lawsuits and huge settlements, and yet people today still light up. After all, cigarettes are quite addictive, made more so by the manufacturers as they add ingredients to keep smokers hooked. If you kill off the customers, who's going to buy the product? They just find new victims.

Caffeine may be bad but not nearly as harmful as *nicotine*. A good rule may be to avoid anything that ends in the last three letters in those two words, or with a similar ending sound, such as codeine, benzene, propoxyphene, Marlene and Darlene. Perhaps not all of these are trouble. There is one drug that doesn't end with that very sound: alcohol. Drinking a glass of red wine can be good for you – emptying the entire bottle by yourself not so good. The same thought applies to a glass of beer. Sadly, our society doesn't really give you the moderation option. Just check out the size of a glass of the beer that's served at the local tavern. It's sixteen ounces and you can be poured a twenty-ounce serving of lager, or even thirty-two ounces. But officer, I only had one beer.

Television promotes the liquid with the hops and malt and you may be encouraged to drink responsibly, but

what can you do at all those holiday parties and tailgating events before and after football games? We're bombarded with advertisements as well as social pressure to imbibe. It's not easy to refuse a drink, whether it's beer, wine or hard liquor. You can order cranberry juice and pretend it's a glass of red wine, but you can't let anyone hear your order if you want to be one of the crowd. Keg parties won't leave too many participants anything other than in a state of inebriation or at least mellowed out.

People use alcohol to avoid responsibility while others just join in with the others, some unconsciously. Before long, one beer turns into a six-pack and if you're the recipient, you shouldn't drive home or get on the train, subway or bus. Some parents train their children in the *art of alcohol* by having them drink enough booze so that they'll never touch the stuff again. Sometimes that strategy works but you've seen people in an inebriated state one day who swear off the juice, but then a week later start all over. A drunken grandparent or parent might inspire someone to stay off the hooch, never touching the stuff, but in many cases the relatives turn out to be good tutors.

Stress on the job is relieved by downing one or two Molson Canadians, maybe more. A person drinks because of the spouse or children he or she has to come home to. The habit may start in college or high school, maybe sooner. It's not as bad as doing crack or heroin, but it's the wrong way to get high. One's liver will be affected, as will overall health. Marriages have been ruined by drink, jobs lost and families destroyed. Excessive consumption of beer, wine, gin, whiskey or tequila brings no benefits, only side effects.

You may not be drinking, but can procure another kind of drug from the pharmacy. The choices are endless. The first type is what you buy by just going over to the shelves in the drug section. You'll find laxatives, aspirin, vitamins – which I'll expound on shortly – cold medicine, relief for indigestion and something to remove warts. I don't

think you can get placebos off the shelves, as you have to obtain them with a prescription, which is the second means of procuring a remedy for what ails you. Your friendly doctor will write out an order – good luck reading it – which you can hand over to the pharmacist. What you receive from him may bring some relief, but also something you didn't bargain for: an unwelcome side effect. You may receive the same bonus from that stuff you found on the shelf without a prescription.

When you think about it, if you need Sominex to help you fall asleep, maybe what you did during the day wasn't all that great. Ingesting some drug so you won't experience heartburn before devouring numerous pieces of pizza and wings might be a sign that you should see your doctor. Is it possible that you're devouring too many slices of the pie and more than your share of those fiery things? The same applies if you've been having stomach problems for a few weeks. Most likely, no prescription or substance off the shelf will ease your suffering. It may even make you feel worse.

Antibiotics are drugs you can get from the pharmacist. For some pharmacies in supermarkets, you don't have to pay for them and store detectives won't chase you down. What does that tell you? Either the store really cares about you as a customer – not very likely – or they need to get rid of the stuff since it's bad for you. The latter has a ring of truth to it. Perhaps, it just passed the expiration date. Unfortunately, antibiotics are necessary to ward off infections, so sometimes you have to swallow the pill. The same applies to painkillers, such as Darvocet and Demerol, both of which I've been introduced to in the last fifteen years. It wasn't my choice. The former was withdrawn from the U.S. market in November 2010 – a bit too late for me – and contains a combination of acetaminophen and *propoxyphene*. What did I tell you about words ending in *ene*? Darvocet may leave you constipated. On the other hand, Demerol or meperidine is a narcotic pain reliever, similar to

morphine. Now you tell me. As far as the antibiotics go and my hospital adventures, I was prescribed tequin, levaquin, and cipro (TLC). For the first two, I think they left the letter *e* off the end of each. If you're not aware of it, cipro is the mother of all antibiotics, having been used in cases of anthrax encounters.

Each of these three antibiotics left me relieved of the contents of my stomach. I would have preferred that they just left me. It wasn't a good time. Maybe I should have taken one of these antibiotics along with the Darvocet and let them fight it out. I wouldn't have had to worry about infection setting in or being too loose.

The biggest concern has to be side effects. A few summers ago my doctor's office gave me two prescriptions for my minor bout with arthritis. I couldn't pronounce the names of the drugs, but after reading the label and what side effects were possible, I decided to swallow as few of these pills as possible. In all, I might have taken two and disposed of the rest, environmentally. These warnings are typical of any prescription that you hand to your pharmacist. You've seen the list: may cause drowsiness, headache, the desire to become a car salesman, heart attack or death, but the latter condition doesn't happen in all cases.

You may take a teaspoon or two of Vicks 44 to relieve a cough, but you'll be relaxed and may not want to do much of anything except sleep. Forget about driving that backhoe. A long time ago, I used Contac for a cold on occasion, which really didn't help that much. One thing that tablet – or capsule or caplet – did was zap me. It was snooze time. Respectable health care people say that there is nothing from the pharmacy that you can take to overcome a virus or flu, once it hits. It will take a few days to exit your system before you're back to normal. I suggest plenty of juices, chicken soup and rest. Better yet, to ward off those germs, make sure your diet is loaded with fiber, fruit and vegetables,

get enough sleep each day, avoid stress – good luck with that one – exercise and drink enough water to float a small boat.

Besides the short-term side effects, there might be problems caused by pharmaceuticals in a month or even years later. Other drugs might not have any problems, but within a short period of time, they are taken off the market. Perhaps, they weren't sufficiently tested. The dilemma comes up when someone discovers a cure for a very serious illness that people are suffering from and they need the chance to try something as a last resort. Do you bring out the drug too quickly and risk lawsuits, or delay and test, thus not giving those wanting it an opportunity for healing? Notice, I didn't say curing. This concern also surfaces when people use control groups to test a new drug. If each individual has a serious illness, wouldn't you want to give everyone the drug, not a placebo?

You may have seen the ad where an individual says, *I'm ready to begin my chemotherapy*. There might be another one for radiation. I saw what follows announcing a program on PBS, *ADD and Loving It?! Any of these is incorrect, politically and otherwise. This is like someone insisting that they're going in for *minor surgery*. Those two words shouldn't be together, even if what is happening is on an outpatient business. What is the difference between advertising and lies? Not much.*

If drugs originate from herbs in the rain forest, why do the former have side effects while herbs don't? Actually, both need monitoring, but drugs have extra potency because of the other ingredients. Recall what I mentioned about the additives to cigarettes earlier. Herbs are pure, but just like drugs in combination with others, the mixture has to be investigated. Two drugs by themselves may be acceptable, but the marriage could be fatal. Of course, one person could use three herbs and feel fine, while another use the same mixture and not feel that great.

As far as supplemental vitamins go, are they really worth buying? I take quite a few each day, including a multi-vitamin, but maybe I could cut back on a few and feel no worse without them. How do you ever test that reduction out? I mentioned the makeup of drugs and some of the ingredients on the label, but you'll see the same deal when it comes to vitamins. In the winter of 2011-2012, I saw David Agus briefly talk about his book, *The End of Illness* on *The Daily Show with John Stewart*. I read the book and highly recommend it because of all the great suggestions and insight, much of which I concur with. These fine ideas can be found throughout this book. Agus has a great deal of common sense and hope though his work. He also accepts the fact that medicine doesn't have all the answers.

Because of the makeup of vitamins, by not taking one or two, you might actually feel better. Certain vitamins stand in the way of effectiveness of others. We all need fiber, protein, carbohydrates and vitamins, but much of our requirements comes from eating certain foods. For example, eating one or two Brazil will give you an ample supply of selenium. There's no doubt it's best to obtain as many nutrients as possible from breakfast, lunch and dinner. This means your diet can't consist only of Ring-Dings, Twinkies and Ho Hos, even with the addition of a multi-vitamin.

I brought up placebos before, but suppose that some vitamins are nothing but water pills? If so, people are rolling in dough at our expense. Couldn't that scenario also be carried out regarding drugs? We're told to eat a handful of almonds every day to keep healthy, providing fiber and protein. They're rich in omega-3, omega-6, phosphorus, zinc, magnesium, iron, potassium, calcium and vitamin E. The fat in them is the healthy kind, also found in salmon and olive oil. Someone else might direct you to avoid eating nuts because of the fat content. Who do you believe? The two suggestions might be by nutritionists, making our choice even more difficult.

I once subscribed to *Prevention Magazine*, which I found to be great as far as health issues were concerned. I gave it up after a few years. I'd read an article praising the benefits of a food but then a few pages later, was directed to avoid that very same product. Health care has many unanswered questions. I'm sure you've gone to your family practitioner with a minor ailment and he prescribed a few tests. A week later, the tests came back, all inconclusive. Fortunately, he didn't prescribe a gizzard transplant. There have been occasions when I'd have some small concern, which I just ignored. In one case, my nose became very tender – maybe I shouldn't have been using that stuff from chef Adolph. A day later, the symptom disappeared. I make a point not to sniff airplane glue.

This brings me to the next set of drugs or substances. The list includes marijuana, cocaine, heroin, LSD, magic markers and the already mentioned glue. Legalizing marijuana has been proposed. Why not do the same for all of the other substances listed here? The idea has some merit because it might curb high prices and the killing of dealers, users, runners and innocent bystanders. On the other hand, we don't want to encourage drug use. There are already enough substances provided by the pharmacy. Of course, many drugs have medical uses, such as marijuana and morphine. You can argue that making all drugs legal could work, but it could encourage bad habits and addictions. It's a hard choice to make.

Prohibition began over four millennia ago in China. In the United States it started in 1920 and many people thought it would stem the use of alcohol. You can read about those adventures in *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* by Daniel Okrent. As you can guess from the title, it didn't solve the problem of drinking. Because it was a concern, legislation was passed. Consumption of beer and whisky may have even have increased with Prohibition. That experiment ended in 1933. Today, beer manufacturers, bars,

taverns and those who imbibe aren't complaining. This failed effort might point out that legalizing drugs may not be any better than the Prohibition experiment.

As is usually the case, what is needed is education. People will always be downing a beer or glass of wine. Arresting drunks and not offering solutions for their habits achieves nothing. Alcoholics Anonymous has provided help, community and means to kick the habit. Unfortunately, the drinker has to check into the clinic himself. Friends and family can only strongly suggest that he needs assistance that they can't provide.

I need to mention the airplane glue and magic marker advantage of getting high. It's cheaper, but dangerous and not a smart choice. If you weigh in the harm to one's health, the cost of experimenting with these substances increases. Throughout the years, young people have tried different things to get a different prospective on life. This has been going on forever, so why would anyone expect that to change today? On January 1, 2012, my friend Bill was relating some of the new possibilities for a new state of consciousness – maybe it's more appropriate to call it one of unconsciousness. He didn't come up with these ideas. Rather his son relayed what kids nowadays were trying in the schoolyard, even without Julio. I didn't pay very close attention so I can't pass along all the details of what was discussed. I'm sorry, but I don't want to create another addiction.

2. T. J.'s gingerbread house

Evoking delights of the kitchen, the words above make up the title of a song from the 1986 CD, **Save Tonight for Me** by Chuck Mangione. In the lyrics, jambalaya, cornbread and a few other treats are mentioned, which probably includes dirty fried rice and gumbo, but I can't quite make those out since narrator Chuck is whispering. Each can make anybody hungry and as you might guess, this chapter is all about food addictions.

Am I addicted to stuffing my face? We all have at least a slight addiction to that so I thought I'd relate some of my food connections – the humorous experiences you can read about in my cookbook. Through undergraduate school and graduate school and even during my first two years of teaching, I worked in a supermarket, eight years in all. Not long after that, I worked at Gioia Macaroni Company in Buffalo for six months helping trucks get loaded with company products. My first job in the business world was at Nestle Foods in White Plains, New York. I also returned there for two separate software consulting projects, one for a year and the other for twice that length. In addition, I had about a six-month contract at Welch's Food in Westfield, New York and one contract in the Syracuse area for a month and an even shorter one in Western New York – both at food companies, but I can't remember the names of either.

There's another thought I should add. It wasn't an addiction, but just like boys play with guns and soldiers and girls have their Barbie dolls, before I became a teenager, I used to clip out the pictures of cans and packages of food in the supermarket ads. Maybe it was an omen. I love to cook and mentioned my cookbook – three editions with three different titles, ISBNs and covers – so perhaps I really should be classified as a food addict. With that thought, here are ten indications that you may be addicted to food.

10. You buy a 12-pack of toilet paper each week
9. You've written a cookbook
8. You go to a bakery, pick up a cake and eat the entire thing right on the premises
7. Friends invite you over for dinner and they're not home
6. There's no lunch in your home, only supper and dinner
5. When you leave a supermarket after shopping, they have to close and restock the shelves
4. You live downhill from a supermarket and have a conveyer connecting the store to your house
3. Your kitchen doesn't have forks, just shovels
2. All the letters in your name spell out a food group
1. When you go to the buffet, the servers come out in riot gear

My first job is to debunk some of these ideas. The very first one may not mean you're an addict but you could have another problem. The fact that you've written a cookbook doesn't indicate an addiction to food. Still, you know that both Paul Prudhomme and Al Roker have published their recipes in cookbooks and each had the size to play offensive linemen. But that was then and today they've trimmed down, so the second clue at the top is not valid. As far as the other eight signs, all bets are off and you might have the disease. You'll have to see a nutritionist.

Obesity is a huge problem in this country. The cause can be broken down to sugar, salt and fats found in food. That's what makes it taste so good. Of course, that's a bit misguided since you can come up with delicious food without any of these or only a small amount. We need each of these in our diet, but not all that much. Flavor can be imparted to food by the use of herbs, spices, seasonings and the way we prepare dishes. Meat serves that same purpose and it need not be brimming with fat.

One of my addictions might be that I have a sweet tooth – I think it's hereditary. I try to keep it under control. My mom had the same attraction to sugary products and I think I can say the same thing about her mother, my sister and my niece. I'm not a chocoholic, but I eat the dark kind because it's supposed to be good for you. I don't crave sweets but have them from time to time. I really like cherry flavored Twizzlers, but by not having them around very often, I don't finish them all in a few days. That's one way of beating a sugar addiction. If you live in a candy store, you'll have difficulties.

Sugar can be found in just about everything except a kohlrabi – but who eats that thing? There probably is some sugar in that vegetable, which I eat like a radish. The kohlrabi, turnip and radish are all related, I think. We obtain enough sugar each day from a healthy diet. There's too much sugar in soda, enough for us in juices and other foods. Water doesn't have any unless it's flavored. If you brew your own tea, it doesn't have sugar until you add it. I suggest honey and lemon or lime. For sweetening dressings, baked goods and dishes, you can substitute maple syrup or applesauce. If you have to use sugar of any kind, stick with brown sugar.

Sugar in soda, candy and so many other foods, is what keeps us indulging in it. That's how we get hooked. Coca Cola, just like any other soda, is not a food, but I may have been able to include it in the first chapter since originally one of its ingredients was cocaine. It wasn't until 1929 that that beverage became cocaine-free. Maybe the manufacturers decided they could save money by using sugar instead. Drinking a soda a day isn't very healthy, but consider someone who swallows a six-pack, or more. Switching to diet drinks may result in less sugar, but the substitutes for it are even more dangerous to humans. A false sense is garnered as people wind up finishing more bottles of diet soda since they think it's better for them. This is not

unlike the thinking when an individual orders a Whopper with a Diet-Coke and a tossed salad.

That embellished hamburger and ranch-drenched salad are loaded with fat, our next concern. They both taste great, but are loaded with harmful supplements. I never had salad that way, but confess to enjoying a Whopper from time to time. I don't anymore and avoid fast food establishments and try staying away from chain restaurants, with one or two exceptions. One of my other guilty pleasures on past road trips was a beer accompanied by two McDonald's hamburgers. Now, it's *my way* to not eat there or at Burger King. The movies, *Super Size Me* and *Food, Inc.* are both insightful and should keep you way from those places. In Western New York lurks another danger and temptation, the fish fry. People here pound down deep-fried chicken wings, too. Many Buffalonians have a fish fry every Friday, but not me. If you add French fries you've married the fat with salt.

Salt is another ingredient that we need to cut back on since what we eat contains enough. It's what's added that convinces us we can't eat just one, when it comes to that bag of chips. I don't recommend those baked ones – they're terrible. Have your chips, but just not as often as you've been used to. I discovered another delicious replacement for potato chips: baked sweet potatoes. Wash and trim the ends of the potatoes, slice them, say half an inch thick, place them in a baking dish, add a tablespoon of olive oil and stir. Bake in a 350⁰ oven for fifteen minutes, stir again and bake for fifteen minutes more. You don't need to add any salt to enjoy.

Alternatively, why not try some pretzels or popcorn? Quite a few years ago, I owned a dry air popper but didn't care for the popcorn produced that way, so I got rid of that device. A few months ago, I bought another popcorn maker and I figured out the secret to digestible popcorn made by the hot air method. Take the popped product; add a tablespoon of olive oil and some sea salt. You don't need butter. By no

means should you substitute margarine or that stuff for non-believers, which is actually margarine.

There are other unhealthy flavors that lead to addiction, besides salt, sugar or fat. Chemicals add false flavors and do the job. Not long ago, I bought a supreme pizza from a local supermarket. Obviously I liked it because I bought another. One day I read the unending list of ingredients, the majority being chemicals, and decided that pizza shouldn't have more than a few ingredients. I still eat pizza, but from local pizzerias. I support the people who live here and run their own business rather than the chemists. Moreover, the pizza is always better than from the supermarket. If not, find a better pizza place nearby.

You can't look at a person and say that he or she is a food addict because of appearance. I have the body of a runner, even though I don't indulge in the sport and haven't for a quite a while. I do walk a lot. My mom's Uncle Steve – I assume he was my Great Uncle – could put the food away, or so I was told. He was very thin and helped my father build our family's home. On weekends, my brothers and I carried bricks and did other grunt work. My Great Uncle Steve was a carpenter, electrician and bricklayer. He was also a policeman in Cheektowaga, New York, a suburb of Buffalo, so if anyone broke into the house when it was being constructed, he could arrest that person.

The secret to this man's eating prowess may be attributed to metabolism. Some people can finish one plate after another of salad, steak, potatoes and greens without showing it. They may not even be food addicts. Others look at or think of food, and when they get on the scale, they see the words, *Game over*. There's no justice in the world. Poundage is a problem. One woman addressing the issue of obesity is First Lady, Michelle Obama. Her program to educate the children is the best place to begin. Many schools now have edible and healthy food while others are still shoveling out swill that the students can't even identify.

Candy and soda machines have been loaded with fruit and juice as replacements, but the good efforts need to be continued. A special thanks goes out to James Trevor “Jamie” Oliver, known from his cooking shows, shown in over forty countries, including *The Food Network*.

There are many solutions, but exercise can’t be neglected. Discipline can achieve good results and cooking one’s own meals won’t replace eating out, but it will bring tastier, healthier meals. Whenever I dine at restaurants, I note that when I wake up the next morning, there’s dryness in my throat. They’re probably using too much salt or sugar. I shouldn’t have had the *Death by Chocolate*. If you’re the cook, you have control of fat, salt and sugar. We’ll all human so we have cravings. Hiding the food in your home is a great idea. A better suggestion is to have someone else find a place for those snacks.

3. We are the champions

In 1977 the rock group Queen introduced the song to us heard in the title above. The New York Yankees used it after winning a championship. It certainly wasn't there in Babe Ruth's day or even during the time of Mantle and Maris. At one time I was a sports fan – maybe at times too obsessed with one team or another. I'm happy to report that not only am I not a sports addict, but I'm no longer a fan. On the other hand, there are many people who are either or both fans and addicts.

When you really think about it, it's only a game and big business keeps raking in the dough, more and more with the passing years. I feel that the word, *sport*, has become a one-word oxymoron. You may have to think about that during the off-season. A good sport – in the sense of a compassionate player – has concern for his opponent, but you see hockey, basketball, football and baseball players doing harm to their opponents. Just before the spring of 2012, the word *bounty* was headlined in a reference to professional football found in a sports section article of the *Buffalo News*. Some justify the hard hits by saying the rules allow them. Even the fans beat up on the players or each other. There are a few games that one questions whether they really are sports? Tennis, golf and bowling seem safe, but let's hope that doesn't change.

What makes an addict when it comes to sports? You might think it's because of the home team, but you do see allegiance to the Saints when an individual never left his hometown and hasn't ever moved from the East Coast. You see fans of one team all over the country, but many times they all lived in the city of the team they're cheering for. A football addict might spend all day Sunday – for sixteen weeks of the year, perhaps more, following his team. Does he own stock in that team? Do the coaches and management hear him out when he suggests they try a different scoring

strategy for winning since the one they're employing is offensive to most of the fans?

Real addicts don't limit their actions to Sunday – or Monday for that's night's football, or any other day of the week. Now you find professional football on Saturday and Thursday, too. These fans have to listen to or see the pre-game shows and post-game shows. For professional or college football, the former begins somewhere around Wednesday and ends with the kickoff. The post-game show starts at the end of the game and goes until around Wednesday. Not all addicts go to all the pre-season games, but many do. They also go to the practice sessions and may even spend an entire weekend viewing the draft. They go to a few road games as well. These indeed are addicts.

Every sport has them. *Fever Pitch* – a great title – stars Jimmy Fallon and Drew Barrymore in a delightful 2005 movie, where the hero's passion for his team stands in the way of the woman he has come to love. If you haven't seen it, you'll have to since I'm not telling you the ending. I think being a baseball addict really is something to be commended, since the game moves so slow. There's probably more action watching grass grow, which you can do at any ballpark between innings. Baseball is truly a beautiful sport but the action is stopped too often and for too long periods of time. Perhaps having two pitcher's mounds and two pitchers hurling the ball alternatively could add some excitement. Nowadays, despite the fact that I'm a lukewarm fan, I should mention another movie, which I haven't seen, *Moneyball*. I read the book by Michael Lewis and highly recommend it. Both movie and the book are tied in to an addiction that is discussed in the next chapter: money. Why do you think Lewis chose that one-word title?

The season today of every sport is just too long. It's done because of greed. Just as the season never ends, the games themselves go on and on. The reasons for that are rule changes and commercialization, where all the sponsors have

to sell their products. Don't the corporations or management have any concern for the sports addicts? They have lives and family too – some of them. It's not easy being an addict.

Fans need not be sports addicts and addicts don't have to be fans. The former case should be obvious but the latter might seem a bit strange. It has to do with the definition of a *fan*. In our context, Webster says a fan is *an enthusiastic follower of a sport or entertainment or an enthusiastic admirer (as of a celebrity.)* Interestingly, Webster also states that the word fan means *to strike out in baseball*. The word *fanatic* is short for fan and generally we acknowledge that fans are devoted to a single city or team. With this in mind, I think someone who watches football all weekend long, not caring what teams are playing each other is a sports addict.

It's tough being a sports addict, but it may even get worse. You could have another addiction – somewhat related to sports – if you like to gamble on the games. You can bet on a single game or a group of them. Before proceeding, I need to explain some of the terminology. I'm not really much of a gambler so I may not have everything exactly right here. A runner is a person who hands out sport gambling tickets, collects the money for bets and then pays off the winners afterwards. The gambling ticket lists the weekend games and the spreads. The spread involves the number of points that an underdog in a game receives against its opponent. Let's say that the Packers are favored by three points over the Lions. The underdog, the Lions, would be given three points and the line of the ticket for that game would be

Green Bay

Detroit (+3)

Picking Detroit would give you a winner if they either the game ended in a tie after overtime, the Lions won the game or lost by one or two points.

Picking games against the spread works the same in all sports, but let me confine it to football. With the ticket in

my hand, I could pick four teams or more, and for me to win, they would all have to cover the spread, as discussed in the Green Bay / Detroit scenario above. If I bet one dollar on four teams and got them all right, I would win ten dollars – the payoff is 10 to 1. Picking more than four teams and getting them all right results in a higher payoff, but the odds against winning also increase. It's hard enough to pick one winner, let alone four. More games than that means throwing away your money.

I'm not sure when I first saw those football tickets, but I did see a handful in my last two years of teaching, as the math department office was a gambling den each fall. When I interviewed for the job, I had no idea what I was getting into. I should have had some clue when I walked into the room and one guy had on a visor and there were a few guys running. The two women in the department didn't participate in the professional pigskin predictions nor did two of the male math staff.

We had a Monday Night Football pool and a few combinations of betting with the tickets, but you could also bet against Las Vegas individually with as many combinations on those tickets as you chose. My strategy was to pick four teams each week and lay down \$5. If I won, my prize was \$50, so I figured with a 16-week season, if I won twice I would be ahead of the game – by a whopping \$20. Somehow I managed to do just that.

For you gambling addicts, here's the bad news. If you picked four teams, the odds should have been at least 16 to 1, not 10 to 1. And now for some more bad news: return to the Green Bay / Detroit game as discussed above. If you bet the game and Green Bay won by three points, you'd lose no matter which team you picked. Only the house – i.e. Las Vegas or the bookie – wins. I'm not finished. Suppose the game happened to be fixed? You probably wouldn't win. The fixing could be done by the referees, a player or two, a coach, upper management, the league or heaven forbid, Las

Vegas. Gambling addicts may just want to head out to the casino.

You needn't leave your home to place a bet. Get on the world wide web and look for online poker. Martha Frankel was convinced that no one could beat her at this card game, even the Internet. She describes her experiences in her 2008 book, *Hats & Eyeglasses: a Family Love Affair with Gambling*. If you happen to be a poker addict, you may want to read this treatise, especially if you feel it's time to try winning without sitting down at tables with other people.

Fixing goes on in all sports. The 1988 movie, *Eight Men Out* dramatizes the actions of the Chicago Black Sox – the color of their socks was right on the money – in losing the 1919 World Series. It stars one of my favorite actors, John Cusack, for once playing the bad guy, unless you were a gambler. There have been fixed games in college basketball and there's so much money bet on pro football, that I doubt that there's a complete season in which none of the results are fixed. You've probably watched a game or two where you figured the game was rigged just because a team managed to lose despite having an insurmountable lead late in the third quarter.

If you're a gambling addict, you may want to stick to just being a sports addict, because buying a lottery ticket or heading over the casino, isn't much better. I discussed the whole lottery thing in my first novel, which you should read if you buy lottery tickets – especially if you increase the number when the jackpot is \$300,000,000. The odds against winning at LOTTO are astronomical, but your chances plummet to zero or slightly above that if the game is rigged. Ann E. Weiss wrote a book called *Lotteries: Who Wins, Who Loses*, which talks about lotteries and gambling and answers the question, *Is it really beneficial to anyone?* Rather than buying one or more lottery tickets, head over to Atlantic City and play roulette or black jack. Your odds are better, but you probably won't beat the casino. Some people

tried to win at black jack, also known as 21. You can read about it in *Bringing down the House: The Inside Story of Six M.I.T. Students Who Took Vegas for Millions* by Ben Mezrich – the last part of his surname seems appropriate. In 2008 a movie was made of the book called *21*.

Is being a sports addict hereditary or does one need a degree to practice? When a parent takes a child to a sporting event, three things can happen. At the end of the game, the child could be bored, could care less or not interested in repeating that day. A second possibility is that she enjoyed the sport and may want to go to another game. Last, the child decides she can't get enough of what she just sat through. She doesn't want to leave the arena, even demanding to stay for the second half of the doubleheader. When she is told that they just attended a football game, and there'd be another in a week's time, he becomes despondent and can't be controlled. This last situation could indicate obsession and it looks like she is a sport addict. From my example, you should realize that those addicts can be male or female.

With television's numerous sports channels and almost non-stop football on the weekend – heck, between high school, college and professional football, there's a game on the tube every day. In many cases, you can see a game broadcast that was played a few days ago. I read where the sales of television sets will be boosted in late January because of the upcoming Super Bowl. I hope I ordered enough pizza, wings and chips. I've already mentioned post-game and pre-game shows, so it seems there's maximum saturation. When one season ends, another begins. Well, that was the case years ago. Now on a few days of the year, you can watch a football game, hockey game, basketball game and baseball game. The seasons all overlap because of the length of each and every one of the sports.

Being a sports addict may bring new friends, but you could lose other ones. Your spouse could depart as well and take the children along. If so, how can you groom young

people to follow in your footsteps? Maybe it's good the children are gone – for their sake. As with everything else, moderation is the key.

You may not have heard of the greatest basketball team of all time that no one ever heard of. Until recently, I hadn't. Some might argue that it was the Celtics, Bulls or the Lakers, but the 2011 documentary, *On the Shoulders of Giants*, presented by the great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, proves otherwise. The Harlem Rens showed people that they were the best. Despite that, some people still wouldn't acknowledge their greatness. Over a few days in Chicago in 1939, they beat the Harlem Globetrotters and what was at the time, the best white team as well, the Oshkosh All-stars. The Globetrotters were mostly for show, but they were quite talented, when it came to basketball.

The Rens were a product of the Harlem Renaissance. They were also known as the Renaissance Big Five and New York Renaissance. Playing in the 1920s and 1930s, they displayed their talents at the Renaissance Casino and Ballroom at 138th Street and Seventh Avenue. When the game was over, the baskets and some of the seating were moved aside, and the jazz and the dancing began. During the 1932-33 regular season, their record was 120-8, including 88 straight wins. Though the documentary sounds like it's all about basketball, it covers much more ground and I could easily have mentioned it in chapter 5.

4. Love that money

I have a vast collection of music, including many songs that I like that weren't big hits – they weren't even close to being successful. They're by obscure bands that created great music without any financial success. It's all about marketing, but I don't recommend selling out either. One of those songs is the title of this chapter – I think. The group is Bandit and the words in song are, *Man don't live by bread alone. Love that money.* Maybe money doesn't create evil, but add to it that other noun, *love*, and that's another story. You can call it the money addiction, which brings with it greed.

The robber barons of the twentieth century aren't much different for those of nineteenth century or the twenty-first century, except in magnitude. Do you think that Bill Gates and Stephen Jobs acted more ethically than the Carnegies, Vanderbilts, Morgans, Mellons, Astors and Rockefellers of yesteryear? From that long ago time, John Warne Gates was a Texan gambler and industrialist, also known as “Bet-a-Million” Gates, who was big on barbed wire and founder of an oil company that became Texaco. Conveniently, Gates could keep trespassers away from his oil interests with the barbed wire. All these individuals made great sums of money but were not satisfied with that. They desired more. This is another addiction: power. I'll talk about another bad habit in the next chapter that is related to both addictions. There are other connections to these addictions in chapters 6 and 7.

You can find obscene wealth throughout the world, as it's not limited to the United States. In fact, it's right alongside the poverty of the streets. People with outrageous amounts of wealth might argue that they worked hard for it. I believe they either inherited it or in most cases, stole it from others. You've heard about salesmen – car or otherwise – agents, lawyers, marketers and lobbyists. There are others

and I'll include CEOs in the discussion. For each of these people, I ask, *How much do you need? How much can you spend?* I guess some people just can't have enough green.

The Occupy Wall Street Movement (OWS) is speaking to the vast class distinctions across the world today. Something is drastically wrong when the top 1% of the population – the super-rich – owns 40% of the nation's wealth and they take home 24% of national income. This is from research of a few months ago, so by now those numbers could be even more skewed and indicative of the widening gap. The filthy rich were blessed with George W. Bush's insane tax breaks, which they still possess. Many of the superrich feel that it's time to say goodbye to this financial advantage, but not every one of them. Many in Congress support having the tax cuts extended, and want the rate to be lowered further. Who's paying them off?

Agents, lawyers, consultants and marketers are among the groups of people who provide a service. On too many occasions, they take the money and run. When you work with any of them, it enables you to put bread on the table and pay the mortgage, but they'll take a good chunk of cash for their efforts. It's a known fact that sports and entertainment agents are paid an outrageous percentage of a client's salary, indicative of grabbing all the dough they can. I've dealt with one agent in my life and I wouldn't recommend this person to anyone. It's hard to conclude that agents aren't thieves, only after the big bucks.

My experience with marketers hasn't produced any significant results except that I've been freed of cash from my checking account. This may be one way of overcoming any addiction to money. Dealing with marketers hasn't convinced me these people actually know what they're doing, other than as pilferers.

I shouldn't say bad things about attorneys, since there are some who really work in the name of justice. Unfortunately, the courts are set up so that a lawyer on one

side will set out to convince you that he has the facts in his testimony about the client. At the same time, the opposing lawyer's aim is to move you to believe he is offering the truth about the person on trial. Most of the time these two presentations can't both be acceptable. I'll talk more about torts later, but you can get a brief glance into the greed of lawyers and corporations in John Grisham's 2003 book, *The King of Torts*.

Sales people do a good job of raking in the dough. I bought a car a few years ago, dealing with a sales person whom I'll call Sly. I drove it for two years but wasn't that happy with it so I traded it in at another car place, dealing with another sales representative, whom I'll call Slick. The names I chose here might rightly reflect the industry. I should add each represents either sex – something you probably figured out. My readers are smart. Anyway, a short time ago I received a correspondence from Sly. Since I didn't own the vehicle anymore that I bought from his company, I phoned him and gave him the lowdown, indicating my dissatisfaction. I also mentioned his company, whose name I won't provide here since it's not that important – there's no sense in giving any free advertising. I brought up some bad press that his corporation received over the last few years dealing with recalls and unethical behavior. We didn't scream at each other, but when I hung up the phone, the fact that he worked for them didn't appear to bother him. Sadly, all the car manufacturers are alike, as they all have failed in many respects over the last thirty years.

As far as Slick goes – I hope he or she doesn't read this – I won't mention the corporation that Slick sells cars for. My treatment was about the same as from Sly. I still have the vehicle I bought from Slick and it still gets me where I'm going. The bad news is who these people are – car salesmen. I'm not finished with Sly or Slick, and I'll get back to them. Car salesmen may be the worst, but are they

any better than any other kind of salesperson? Just consider their job. They have to sell you a product, even if they don't approve of it because they need to make a living. It's hard to argue with that, but I could never do it.

I never elected to be in the field of sales – choosing teaching and computer work instead – but I had no choice on a few occasions, especially when I was interviewed for a job – contract or otherwise. More recently, I was called upon to sell my books. Who else would do it? I believed in my books – the product, that is – but that didn't make matters any easier. Sales just isn't for me. As far as traveling salesmen go, I prefer them to the snake oil kind. I'm not too thrilled about those reptiles either.

If a person in sales has a product he doesn't believe in, what does he or she do? There are only two choices: find a new profession or make some compromises. The latter choice means fabrication, spin, ignoring the truth, lies and brainwashing, the last of these may even have to be done on him- or herself. Sales people remain doing what earns them big bucks. After a while, they start believing in the product they sell.

There's another way of inducing people to buy: marketing or advertising. My attempts at this option weren't successful either when it came to my books. Advertising uses television, newspapers, magazines, fliers, the Internet and radio, among other means. Any of these employs spin. When a book of mine received rave reviews and I mentioned that on a flier, many people questioned what was advertised. I'm sure you've watched a commercial on the tube and then asked yourself, *Do they expect me to believe that?* It's a great deal of el toro crappo – at least the garden should do all right this year. Keep in mind that the advertisers are corporations.

Consultants work for consulting firms, which are corporations that help you find short-term employment with other corporations. I've dealt with the former in obtaining

contracts with the latter and written about both of these entities in my books on work. In general, the experiences have not been pretty and I won't bore you with them any further. Consulting firms have to pay for their Lexuses and Mercedes, so the people in them have to be classified as money addicts. What they do is legal, but they may not pass either the moral or ethical criterion. Why should they? Just like the car companies of the salesmen I encountered, we're talking about big business.

I don't read the paper very often, but I've seen enough press about companies being investigated, CEOs being indicted, fines and jail sentences being handed out – these weren't bonuses or part of retirement packages. From time to time you'll hear of a company that paid out two million dollars in a settlement, but not admit responsibility. I won't give the names of these crooked firms. I probably should list responsible companies since that list would be considerably shorter. No matter the size, every corporation is about making money – greed can happen even if it takes a while – I only hope that the good companies don't become part of the longer list I didn't mention above.

The use of the phrase *corrupt corporations* is now a pleonasm, since the adjective seems redundant. A company becomes greedy when they produce a product that is unsafe. For one thing, it will harm the planet and wreck havoc on the population, health wise. These products have been known to pollute the air we breathe, contaminate the water we drink and harm the land in which we plant fruit trees and vegetables, and on which children play baseball and soccer. The product has also been known to kill people, both the buyer and the person who produces the goods. You can read about it in my 2008 book on the environment – it's the one with *earth* in the title. I'm sure you've heard about Love Canal. Information about Area 51 – which people will tell you doesn't exist – can be found in Annie Jacobsen's 2011 book, *Area 51: An Uncensored History of America's Top*

Secret Military Base. I can only warn you, it's a scary book and not for the timid.

Too often these polluters ignore any regulations or safety measures and lie about tests they've done on the area. They even deny valid procedures taken by others to measure air and water samples that could put them in jail. It's all about selling the product and having the green roll in. These very same corporations want regulations suspended or cancelled so they can make even more money. They may have something there: why have regulations at all if companies ignore them? There aren't enough funds to police the companies that aren't concerned about any precautions or guidelines for safety's sake. These businesses have the gall to suggest that they do the policing themselves. Yeah, that'll work, just like Sherman when he insisted his march through Georgia would be just like the St. Patrick's Day Parade, since he was an environmentalist.

Corporations want the cash, as much as they can accumulate, but so do people. Any corporation you can think of is made up of human beings. I grant you that much of the behavior of these people embarrasses all of us from time to time. Because of my writing, in 2008 I was obliged to be incorporated. I was never a corporation nor will I ever be one – it's against my religion. For a few months there was a corporation called Swiatek Press. It had no expenses, which was a good thing because it had no assets. It's a long story. As I write this, Swiatek Press is no longer. It has been dissolved. I wish I could say the same for a few other corporations. Even with this situation, I had to pay corporate income tax as well as my personal one. I'm thankful that I only had to file the latter taxes this year.

Some people think that corporations are people. If so, shouldn't they then have to file both corporate and personal income taxes? If you've been keeping up with the news, you're aware that a few corporations don't pay any corporate taxes at all. Mention personal taxes to them and they'll laugh

in your face. Other companies pay almost nothing each year. Citizens like you and I who don't pay our taxes are reminded of what we owe, including fines. We have to pay it all, unless we settle for a lesser amount.

In this country, firms not only avoid paying taxes in their money addiction, they do a few other things that upset normal people. They receive tax breaks. They downsize or make workers redundant. It's not as bad as it sounds, they just fire people, but it's bad enough and no way to treat those who helped bring in the profits. They accomplish the same result by outsourcing work across the ocean, sending the jobs there. It's considerate of them to give people of foreign lands labor opportunities even if it pays considerably less, environmental concerns are ignored and working conditions are deplorable. At the same time, loyal employees have to find ways to make ends meet.

If some CEO makes a yearly salary of 131.2 million dollars, and if he spent \$35,000 a day, he couldn't spend all that money in eighty years. This doesn't even take into account what he received last year and what he'll receive next year. With that same salary, he could spend \$1400 an hour and he still wouldn't run out of cash. If he had more than one wife, there could be a concern. This is obscene.

I've mentioned Michael Lewis earlier. He's written a few books, and from those that I've read, you'll enjoy his research and sense of humor, neither of which is missing in *Boomerang: Travels in the Third World*, his 2011 work. It delves into all the recent financial troubles faced by Iceland, Ireland, Greece and Germany because of greed and missing intelligence. If the guys who caused the mess were financial geniuses, I think the schools they graduated from should be denied accreditation.

Another great example of the money addiction that descends into greed is the Internet. Some insight can be obtained by reading the 2011 book, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You* by Eli Pariser. All

about secrecy and advertising, the book suggests that collecting as much information as it can on you will make your wallet lighter and alleviate any back problems that could result. They procure cash from the public because they know all its secrets and wants. George Orwell's 1949 book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has met its technological big brother. Not too many of us are delighted.

Maybe at one time, there were many free offerings on the web, but today that's a thing of the past. Not long ago I was after some software that was free – at least it was advertised as such. Before I could procure what I wanted, I had to inform the web site of what magazines I wanted to buy – my choice was none of those offered – what my favorite TV programs were, who my favorite author was and if I bowled more than seven nights a week. I decided to forget about the software since I really didn't need it or want to continue with the survey. You can read about my feelings about those things and polls in my 2009 book. It's about truth and the only book I had published that year.

Do an Internet search for something that's free. You'll come up with a few possibilities. However, when you pursue any of them, they'll ask you for your credit card. Today this happens all the time. The worst examples of this are genealogy websites, who overcharge you for information that just isn't fact. I can make a guess as to when my great grandfather was born and where – I don't need or want to pay \$20 for an estimate of either the date or place. Maybe these people watched the original movie, *Wall Street* too many times. Gordon Gekko is in the 1987 movie as well as the remake, but I'm not sure if his scenes were filmed inside prison, since I didn't see the sequel. Once was enough. Greed still isn't good.

There's another addiction connection between that of greed or the money addiction, which you can find in chapter 7. Keep in mind that money can't buy good health, happiness or love. In fact, the more money you have, the more difficult

it will be for you to find true love. I'll get more into this love addiction later with the discussion in the concluding chapter. There I'll also mention cougars and rhinos – with which you may be familiar.

With or without the Internet, you can still be scammed. These thieves may not be addicted to money, but certainly appear to be drawn to laziness. The *highest* class of these people are those who appear to have a legitimate business – like agents, lawyers and marketers. Receiving an email enticing you to enhance your business by using their services – especially if the offer sounds too good to be true – is need for caution. You've heard about the emails sent to people mentioning a huge amount of money that you can share in. All you have to do is provide a small check or reveal a checking account number where they can send the cash. Beware! There's another bogus attempt to procure your cash when you receive an email from someone you know – you recognize the email of the sender. The note says that he has been mugged in Paris and has been freed of all cash and credit cards. You're asked to wire a few bucks to Western Union. If you oblige, make sure it's with Monopoly money.

Linda, my high school classmate, sent this email in February 2012 with two stories. They're examples of the money addiction, greed, laziness, immorality, too much information and a great failure of technology. Even if either occurrence didn't happen, you need to be aware of the possibility.

A couple of weeks ago a friend told me that someone she knew had their car broken into while they were at a football game. Their car was parked on the green that was adjacent to the football stadium and specially allotted to football fans. Things stolen from the car included a garage door remote control, some money and a GPS, which had been prominently mounted on the dashboard. When the victims got home, they found that their house had been

ransacked and just about everything worth anything had been stolen. The good news is that they were about to move to a new house and this would save them time packing. The thieves had used the GPS to guide them to the house. They then used the garage remote control to open the garage door and gain entry to the house. The thieves knew the owners were at the football game, they knew what time the game was scheduled to finish, and so they knew how much time they had to clean out the house. It would appear that they had brought a truck to empty the house of its contents.

If you have a GPS, don't put your home address in it. Put a nearby address (like a store or gas station) so you can still find your way home if you need to, but no one else would know where you live if your GPS were stolen.

This lady has now changed her habit of how she lists her names on her mobile phone after her handbag was stolen. Her handbag, which contained her cell phone, credit card and wallet, was stolen. Twenty minutes later, when she called her hubby from a pay phone telling him what had happened, he said, *I received your text asking about our pin number and I replied a little while ago.* When they rushed down to the bank, the bank staff told them all the money was already withdrawn. The thief had actually used the stolen cell phone to text the husband in the contact list and got hold of the pin number. Within twenty minutes all the money had been withdrawn from the bank account.

Do not disclose the relationship between you and the people in your contact list. Avoid using names like *home, honey, hubby, sweetheart, Dad and Mom.* When sensitive information is being asked for through text messages, be careful what you provide. If you're being text messaged by friends or family to meet them somewhere, make sure the message came from them.

I might add: the woman should have married someone smarter. Didn't she see the episode of *Seinfeld* with George and *Bosco*? In the first story, I made up the part about the moving and packing.

5. You don't own me

You don't own me is the title of the 1963 song by Lesley Gore. It was way ahead of its time as it heralded the consideration that women should have experienced many years before. If the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified on August 18, 1920, why were women still being treated as second-class citizens a half-century ago? The answer is the same as to the question, *Why in the 1960s, were people with brown skin being discriminated against, and even worse?* Today, matters have improved but there is still condescension against people based on their sex or the color of their skin. This immoral behavior can be seen in slavery, which exists today despite the Civil War of the nineteenth century. These are examples of obsessions with power, status and control, and the subject of this chapter. Money is part of the picture, too.

I could just as easily included this story from 2012 in the chapter on money or work. Mac McClelland, a journalist for *Mother Jones Magazine*, went undercover to report on work conditions in a Third World country. She didn't have to hop on a plane, just go to a town in an area west of Mississippi and report for work. If you want a clue, I think the place is in a state that begins with the letter *T*. Despite her determination, she didn't stay long on the job – she never really intended to. Anyway, at the huge plant that McClelland entered, the people who are employed there suffer conditions not unlike what slaves endured on plantations over a century and a half ago. What they do is fill orders for products that we buy online. You can read about it in the March / April 2012 issue of that fine magazine, which is also available at the Mother Jones web site.

February is Black History Month, but I think that it should be done away with, since every month should be a reminder of the struggles and sacrifice of a group of human beings against racism, discrimination and prejudice that

began in colonial times and continues today. I'm talking specifically about slavery and it was in other areas of the world as well, but nations *ended* it a great deal sooner than on our shores. Obviously, for many, the word *ended* fell a bit short because of what we have in Syria, Saudi Arabia, China, India and Africa today, which I'll get into shortly. As McClelland pointed out, it's in the United States as well.

We've heard about *The Peculiar Institution*, but have no idea what it was really all about. It hasn't been purged from society and I think perhaps people are becoming educated to its nastiness in all its forms. You may have seen the movie, *Underground Railroad: The William Still Story*, on PBS in February 2012. It's an excellent documentary about a great man. You can obtain more insight on the movement in the 2002 book, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* by Ann Hagedorn and the 2005 book, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* by Fergus M. Bordewich.

A Slave in the White House: Paul Jennings and the Madisons by Elizabeth Dowling Taylor is a more recent book of an individual's role as servant to James and Dolly Madison, both in the White House and at Montpelier, the Madison plantation. Like so many of the Founding Fathers, our fourth President, also known as the *Father of the Constitution*, owned slaves. Maybe we wouldn't have had that situation if the Founding Mothers were included in the discussion.

Jennings' life tells of an energetic, ambitious young man who saw his place but simultaneously learned all he could – especially the ability to read and write – so that he could be released from the bonds of imprisonment. Because the color of his skin was lighter than that of the other slaves, he was assigned inside duty, rather than having to sweat and struggle under the tortuous sun. This method of *favoritism* was widely in practice at the time throughout the South.

Many insist that being a slave wasn't that bad. Oh yes, it was – worse than you can imagine. Even in Paul Jennings's role, there was a responsibility that couldn't be avoided. The servants in the field worked in harsh conditions from sunup to sundown. In the summer, the days stretched on for hours and hours, but then the workers could go home to their abodes – horrible places to live with conditions the way they were – but still better than being out picking cotton or tobacco. It if was any consolation, they had Sundays off. On the other hand, Paul was on call twenty-four hours a day. You decide which was worse. I'd have chosen neither and rather have gone fishing.

The masters of the plantation had money addictions, which translated into those for power, and ultimately control. Most of the Founding Fathers were also bosses over others and found it extremely difficult to abandon the farm. They wrote about all men being created equal, but somehow really meant that to apply only to those whose skin was white. Albinos are fine people. What the Fathers were really talking about was denying people in servitude on the plantation many rights that they should have had. Nobody's perfect. However, if slavery was outlawed at the time of the American Revolution, maybe 600,000 lives could have been saved. Knowing human nature, there still would have been issues, I'm sure.

The leaders at that time may just had money worries – maybe it is the root of all evil – and they needed to build up their nest egg. Without Medicare, Medicaid, pensions, IRAs, social security and casinos, who knows what one catastrophe could bring to these dudes? Simultaneously, you know how hard it is to be a farmer. Maybe their faith just wasn't strong enough. The money addiction posed additional problems.

Fast-forward to the Civil Rights Movement, which you can read about in *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, the 1998 book by John Lewis. It relates the

untiring efforts of Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Julian Bond, Andrew Young, Metger Evers, John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, Malcolm Little and all the others, as well as the lynching, bombings, assassinations and all the injustice in Alabama, Mississippi and the rest of the country – the South wasn't alone. The 1960s were a horrible time because of this, and the war in Vietnam and unrest in the country didn't make it any better. *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* traces some of what was happening during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Even before that in the mid 1950s, the United States witnessed meaningful change along with rage and injustice. I didn't hear about *The Clinton 12* until the end of February 2012. This wasn't about Bill, Hillary, Monica and a few others but rather a narrative about the integration of the first public high school in the South. You probably never heard of the group because hardly anyone else has either. This story is another attempt of one group to control another.

The Clinton 12 was made up of a dozen African-American teenagers who were selected to desegregate Clinton High School in the Anderson County town of the same name in Tennessee. This was in August 1956 shortly after the United States Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. The high school was an all white school and the townspeople, for the most part, accepted the decision and the twelve new students at the school. The citizens just wanted to follow the law, but there were a few people in the town that weren't quite as receptive to the addition. They were members of a group that met at night, wearing white hoods, and had a few Ks in the acronym for their name. As a result, trouble and conflict were brewing. Twenty-seven year old Franklin John Kasper arrived in town from Washington, DC and advocated segregation in the same manner as that of Governor George Wallace. Kasper brought with him outside agitators and recruited people from within the community. Tension was brewing and the Tennessee

Highway Patrol and National Guard had to be called in to halt the impending violence. Kasper was brought to trial on charges of sedition and exciting to riot but escaped with a not-guilty decision rendered by a jury that was discovered to be infiltrated by four segregationists.

The situation was revved up again within a few months, resulting in Rev. Paul Turner, Pastor of the Clinton First Baptist Church, being mugged. People watched the proceedings – even thinking he was being killed – and only one woman came around to help. This took place on December 5, 1956, the day of the election, in which segregationists had submitted candidates as members of the White Citizens Council. At this point, the town had had enough after what had happened to Pastor Turner. They voted for their people, which resulted the next day in the headline, *Pro-segregation candidates lose*.

In the months that followed, Clinton High School increased the number of African-American students in attendance, but the conflict wasn't over. At 4:22 am on October 5, 1958 the school was almost completely destroyed in a blast that investigators determined used one hundred fifty sticks of dynamite. Linden School was an abandoned elementary school in nearby Oakridge, ten miles away, which could be used for the education of the displaced students. It was cleaned, painted, furnished and equipped, and the student body was there for two years. When the faculty and students first arrived in Oakridge, the Oakridge High School band performed the Alma Mater of Clinton High School. Two years later Clinton High School was rebuilt.

These events had great significance and should have been told when it happened, rather than taken over fifty years. The victims suffered greatly, emotionally as well as physically. The narrative of the Clinton 12 is about racism, hate and injustice but also about a dozen brave, dedicated youngsters along with a supportive town that rose up to

uphold the law and fight for morality and justice. Their acts of determination should not have been hidden for all these years. There's further information on the 2006 documentary, *The Clinton 12*, with a moving sermon by Pastor Paul Turner shortly after he was assaulted. The sixty-minute film is available as a DVD and you can probably find it at your local library.

Another film that relates some inspiring events that took place in the mid 1960s is *Glory Road*, which tells of the great coach, Don Haskins, and his Texas Western basketball team. It is not only about that sport, but also about control, racism, hate, determination and the fight for social justice. So many similarities can be found between this movie and the documentary, *The Clinton 12*. Especially of note is the realization that it took a half a century before *Glory Road* was released as a movie.

Another means of control has been going on for years – it exists even today. It's of a conspiratorial nature and is being done by the media. In high school I had decent grades, even in history. Once I got to college, if I recall correctly, I was only required to take one history course, but I struggled with it. Recalling all the history I was taught in school, perhaps I had my troubles because we weren't being taught all the facts. There was a great deal of misinformation. It had to do with *historians* who had no choice but to rely on the *media*, although at the time, that term wasn't used. Those who wrote history obtained information from letters of the time as well as from the news of the day. The former gave a good, close to accurate picture of events, but the news may have been off the mark at times. This caused the distortion.

You probably heard of the Black Power movement and the Black Panthers, but didn't know the real story of either. After some reading and viewing of documentaries, I knew that the group and movement were both maligned. Peniel E. Joseph's 2010 book, *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama* mentions that the

1999 book by Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was off the mark at times. I read the book of the same name many years ago, but Malcolm X is also credited with being the author. I'm not sure if that edition was any better. Reputedly the best papers in the country, The New York Times and Washington Post failed at times in their reporting. It may have appeared that Malcolm Little – Malcolm X – and Martin Luther King, Jr. were at odds with each other. They certainly had their differences, but they met each other and were both integral to the Civil Rights Movement. They faced the situation with slightly different approaches to the problem, but both were great leaders against racism and injustice. Without one or the other, Barack Obama may not have been elected president in 2008.

You may never have heard of the writer, poet and musician, Gil Scott-Heron. In 2012, his estate published the book, *Gil Scott-Heron The Last Holiday: A Memoir*. This book is the autobiography of the artist who many have sited as being the godfather of rap. His writings and music are altruistic, highly complex and sensitive while simultaneously providing commentary on the black American experience and social injustice of the 1970s. Born in Tennessee, he moved to New York City and established himself with his determination as more than just a musician, crossing paths with Stevie Wonder, Mohammed Ali, Jesse Jackson, Jackson Browne, Bob Marley, Michael Jackson, John Lennon and so many others in the national spotlight.

If you haven't read Pulitzer Prize winning author Eugene Robinson's 2010 book, *Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America*, I highly recommend it for its progressiveness, insight and brilliance. John Singleton's first movie, *Boyz n the Hood* was released in 1991 but twenty years later it still has merit and significance. It was a masterpiece. Another incredible director is Shelton Lee – known to all of us as Spike Lee – who has produced great flicks such as *Crooklyn*, *Do the Right Thing*, the

documentary, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, *Bamboozled* and *Summer of Sam* in his long list of credits. The last movie of his that I saw was the 2001 documentary, *A Huey P. Newton Story*, which is the rendering to the screen of the Off-Broadway production. It features Roger Guenveur Smith in the role of Huey Newton. For his stirring performance, Smith captured the Obie Award.

We can't comprehend the suffering that those in the Civil Rights movement endured. Today, the situation is improved in many respects, but we still have slavery. Now it doesn't discriminate as everyone can be made to suffer. That's what's happening when workers lose their jobs to downsizing and outsourcing. Working on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico is no better than working beneath the bowels of the earth in a coal mine. I'll get into more in the chapter on work. This relationship between the master and slave, worker or subject – call the latter what you will – is all about power and control. You can't deny that it's about class because we have one class ruling over the other. This relationship – I think the word, *bullying* could be appropriate – has been going on for centuries. Fortunately, people have been standing up for their rights for years and continue to do so today. In 2012, those in the Middle Class – what's left of it – and the poor have no time to rest.

Mark Lane is the author of nine books, has been a member of the bar for half a century, a former member of the New York State legislature and the best-known researcher in the John F. Kennedy conspiracy. His 2011 book, *Last Word: My Indictment of the CIA in the Murder of JFK* may surprise and shock a few people. It is a fact-driven, stimulating, persuasive and disturbing book by a courageous, patriotic American. I'm sorry that I revealed the ending by mentioning the title, but to the majority of people, it comes as no surprise. On June 10, 1963, John F. Kennedy made the

following speech at American University, talking about peace, explaining the kind needed:

“Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children – not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women – not merely peace in our time but peace for all time.”

In his tireless efforts, Lane risked his life and was blacklisted and scorned by people in power who wanted control and nothing revealed about that dark day in November 1963. He wasn't alone in being hounded and discredited, as were a few others, including Oliver Stone, who produced the outstanding 1991 movie, *JFK*. There were numerous eyewitnesses, whose testimony at the time of the assassination was ignored, some of whom were silenced forever. Further insight into that time is offered in the 2003 documentary, *JFK II: The Bush Connection*.

Power, also known as control, rears its ugly face at the hands of corporate America but also from the everyday citizen. Everyone has come in contact with them. *Seinfeld* fans saw this person in the face of the soup Nazi, and I've seen this individual time and again. He might be a manager, but could be a friend, relative or neighbor. You don't have to go to a restaurant for soup to come in contact with a Nazi, even if those persons don't compare to the ones of three quarters of a century ago in Germany. Maybe control freak is a better term to use. I've seen these power-hungry demons in restaurants, car rental places as well as from others in authority. Where does it come from? Perhaps someone feels superior to others and so it's his job to be a Simon Legree.

He likes things his way, even saying, *It's my way or the highway*. Oh, no, not one of those urban renewal people! There's the bully on the block or some of the other addicts I've already mentioned. No one said there was a limit on addictions – you can get as many as you like.

My friend Bob mentioned as a topic for this book the addiction to religion, on which I decided not to spend an entire chapter. However, the Catholic Church can't be pardoned on the issue of control. Their exclusion of women in church matters has gone on for centuries. Even today it reflects on the quest for power. Jesus of Nazareth may have been the leader but you can't accuse Him of having power or control. If that had been his agenda, he would have escaped from the agony and death on the cross. He didn't judge sinners, and instead forgave them, preaching forgiveness and justice for all, whether you were a tax collector, fisherman or carpenter. These seemed to be all professions of men, but he didn't exclude women by any means. When he died at Calvary, those hanging around were Mary Magdalene and his Mother. The male contingent of disciples may have gone fishing – it was Friday, after all.

Things haven't changed much in two thousand years as we come in contact with those in the religious life to whom you can't really say very much, or even question. They like to be in control. A good example of this was the recent change in the prayers at Mass. In my mind, some of the new words are nothing more than what were there fifty years ago. Are we returning to the past rather than moving forward? At Mass, I make an effort to not say the words we used a year ago, but sometimes those words come out. Old habits never die.

I'm sure you've seen a manager or parent – let's say with the name of Randy – who could be in control at the office. Somehow though, it's not quite there. In its place Randy strives to be in control at home. The situation could be reversed. In relationships, we have the same scenario with

one person scheming to control the other. If both attempt it, the relationship is likely to be doomed. On the 1998 CD, **The Dirty Boogie** by The Brian Setzer Orchestra, Brian duets with Gwen Stefani on the tune, *You're the Boss*. The two sing of their partnership with Gwen closing with the words, *Maybe tonight I'll be the boss and tomorrow night, I'll be the boss*. I think you get the picture.

When it comes to addictions to power, so many of the other addictions mentioned in this book are involved. The companies that market the food as well as the restaurants that sell it – even if it's healthy food – have control over you because of the advertising. If junk food is involved, you're probably already hooked. It's no wonder the clothing business for large people is booming. The media can conspire with the corporations when it comes to beer or prescriptions for health from the pharmacy. Even if it's legal, it might be lethal. Using illegal drugs means that you are being controlled, maybe even more so – you aren't in charge. Peddling drugs to the population makes them subservient, docile and unable to function. Those dispensing those narcotics not only reap the profits and have control, they also continue to have the power while the cash keeps flowing in.

Much of this control is through television. Jerry Mander's 1978 book, ***Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*** should be read today since it is so significant. TV makes zombies – I realize they're big on television now – of too many people. When I moved away for the first time from my parents and headed over to New Jersey, I didn't take a television with me. I did have my stereo and records, though. Go to any appliance store and you'll see rows upon rows of high definition televisions – I doubt that they'll be any other kind. That's the first purchase followed by one for a satellite dish or a commitment to Time – Warner cable. Once the setup is complete, the prison sentence is now in place. The viewer is now being controlled.

The stores that's sell television sets might have you along with the cable company, but so do the networks and advertisers. Why be satisfied with merely one addiction when a handful can be accomplished, all in the comforts of your home. Bring out the chips (chapter 2), a six-pack of brew (chapter 1) and tune into the NFL or watch the news (chapters 3, 9, 10, 12 and 13). Ask your wife for the remote (chapter 5), and once the game is over, tune into some infomercial about retiring using a proven method of raking in the dough by the guy with the rug (chapter 4). Make sure your cell phone is within reach in case you get called in to fix a problem at work (chapters 7 and 13) and surrender and submit to your spouse's wish to tune into the shopping network (chapter 6). She'll want to buy something, so hand over the cell phone (chapter 13 again) and credit card (chapter 11 – that thing is made of plastic). Once you do that, she'll probably hug you (chapter 15). I think all the chapters are included.

When I first considered writing this book, the first thing I did was make a list of addictions, followed by possible titles of songs or lyrics therein for each topic. One possibility was the 1969 song, *Space Oddity* by David Bowie, in which you can hear the words, *Ground Control to Major Tom*. I thought about using them in this chapter on power and control because of that second word, or even on the chapter on technology. Interestingly, those five words in the song indicated a system that seemed to be out of control. I settled on the song by Lesley Gore instead.

6. Spirits in a material world

My brother called one day and mentioned that he had a police record. He did some crazy things, but I never figured they'd take him to the precinct for questioning. He replied that he bought the album, **Ghost in the Machine** by The Police and got it on sale. There's a fifty-fifty chance that this story is true, but I'd be willing to wager money that my brother has that song, *Spirits in a material world*, somewhere in his collection of music, even if he doesn't own the album mentioned earlier. That album is available on CD and it has that song on it, first recorded in 1981. This chapter is not about spirits of any kind or law enforcement, but about addiction to material goods – shopping addictions.

The comedian Steven Wright offered that you can't have everything. Where would you put it? I figured if you had everything, you'd have a place for it. In response to the Wright thought, my friend offered that before she died, his mother-in-law had the answer. She would put it in the attic. George Carlin added that the reason people move to bigger and bigger houses is because they run out of room in the house they're living in. Materialism does have its problems.

One addiction I don't have is a shopping one. I really hate purchasing goods. Since I avoid buying processed foods, particularly the frozen kind, I do grocery shopping once a week, whether I like it or not. I don't look forward to that, probably because I spent quite a few years working as a stock clerk in one of the neighborhood supermarkets. You need to eat in order to live. Throw in some coupons and maybe it's not so bad, is it?

Not that long ago, I clipped coupons, but not every one that was in the paper. You won't save money if you buy something on special that you won't use or don't want. You may have heard of someone who had a grocery bill of \$75 before applying coupons, but after turning them over to the cashier, her bill was \$20. Don't believe it, but even if it is

possible, she could have had \$5 being handed back to her in change for a \$20 bill had she bought only the groceries she needed. I stopped bothering with coupons when I realized I was throwing most of them out after the expiration date had been reached. There were just too many restrictions, such as the store didn't have the product or it did, it was out of it when I shopped. Coupons, rebates and refunds are all a big scam. An instant rebate might be fine, but isn't that nothing more than what we know as a sale?

The marriage of television and advertising has produced too many addicts, shopping and otherwise. How could you not have an addiction to materialism? Strange as it may seem, you could have it without a money addiction and vice versa. People in the top 1% can love to accumulate possessions but hate being in the mall. They have others doing the shopping. People who can't avoid yard sales and flea markets aren't concerned because their billfolds aren't bulging with bucks. That's why they love garage sales: the stuff is downright cheap.

I've had more than enough experience with yard sales, most of which I couldn't avoid. One was at a cousin's house on a visit there a few years ago. That one was pleasant because it was a few hours on a single day. The second one was in a gymnasium at a local church when I tried to sell some of my books at one of their garage sales. The only good thing is that it was indoors – I did sell one book. To begin with, no one will buy books at these venues even if you lower the price of a book substantially. They may spend a dollar or two, but that's about it. Also, they don't have time to read since they're too busy going from one garage sale to the net. On the day in that gym, I never saw so much junk in one place as was there.

The other yard sale I was roped into was a weekend at my parents' house. I thought it would never end, beginning in the morning and lasting until late afternoon. This dragged on for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. If that

wasn't bad enough, my mom wanted to do the whole thing over again, even adding another day to the adventure. Flea market people have something I don't have and I'll never get into the culture. I figure that there are really only a handful of these enthusiasts. They take turns being the host, while others are the buyers. They reverse the roles from one weekend to the next – these yard sales are everywhere and you can find one anytime. These people buy each other's stuff and eventually sell it to someone else, maybe even to the person from whom they bought it. That's what I call recycling, and there's no tax collected.

There are two types of people: some who love to shop and those who don't. Those of the first type may be shopaholics. *Shopaholic* is a slang term for compulsive shopping also known as compulsive buying disorder. Books have been written on the subject – which I didn't consult since it doesn't apply to me – including *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic*, which is one in a series of novels by Sophie Kinsella. That novel was made into the 2009 movie, *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, which I did see. There is a Norwegian TV series called *Shopaholic* as well as a 2006 Hong Kong flick, *The Shopaholics*.

A friend of mine mentioned that whenever she's down in the dumps, she buys a hat. I replied, *So, that's where you're getting them*. It may sound funny but when you spend a great deal of money on something to buoy up your *spirits* – there's that word from the title of the chapter – a day or two later you may feel the same way you felt before you made the purchase. Another reality is that just as an automobile depreciates as soon as you drive it out of the showroom, with each passing day your new house, new appliances and new clothes get closer and closer to becoming junk. It can't be any other way. Notice I didn't mention anything about a spouse here.

There's another kind of person who may be either a shopping addict or material addict, maybe both or neither.

He's the one who never throws anything away. You could call him an accumulator. That could be a good name for a movie title. I'm surprised Jerry didn't have a character with that name on *Seinfeld*. Accumulators can be of either sex. If one marries another, just be thankful they're not your parents, unless you're already infected with the collecting sickness.

If an accumulator needs a hand moving on the weekend – from what I said earlier, you should be able to figure why they need to move so often – tell him the Missus wants you to tune up the vacuum cleaner. If that doesn't work, ask if you can help with the packing and proceed to toss things in the trash. That should free you from helping this person moving in the future. You may even be excused for the coming weekend.

Other than moving, collectors cause other headaches for family and friends – ex-friends need not worry as they've taken action already. Besides yard sales, flea markets or whatever you call them, I'm not thrilled with packing boxes, loading a U-Haul with stuff, unloading it, unpacking boxes and setting up a new home. Unfortunately it has to be done from time to time – more so for those who have a hard time tossing things away. Another name for these individuals could be hoarders. No matter what you call them, these people don't discriminate – they'll take anything. You'll see both collectors and accumulators on the PBS program, *Antiques Roadshow* as some of the pieces shown are quite valuable while others are nothing but trash. Growing up I was familiar with the sign, *We buy junk, sell antiques*. The difference between one and the other has to do with how much someone is willing to pay for the object.

When it comes to almost every instance of moving, those who have to do it will face one of two options. They may have to buy more furniture, curtains and appliances. The other possibility is that they'll have to sell, donate or burn some of what they own since it won't fit in the new place.

If burning is necessary, it shouldn't be done in the new residence. The first few times I moved, I had neither problem as my vehicle carried all my possessions – it wasn't one of those big cars either. These moves were done in one trip, I might add. After a while, truck rentals were involved and there were never any disasters, but these weekends aren't called *adventures in moving* for nothing.

Any addict involved with material goods will be tied down to deep debt, credit cards that are never paid down or more meals of rice and beans than the family might not tolerate. This could be good for achieving weight loss. Anything that sits in a box with the original packaging and still hasn't been opened in five years is something that shouldn't have been bought. If you have clothes that you haven't worn in three years, you probably won't ever wear them – they may not even fit – so why not donate them to a charity that will provide it for someone who can use it? This excludes leisure suits, which shouldn't be burned, since they're toxic. If you have a gadget in your kitchen or a tool in the basement that you haven't used in three years or only once or twice in that time, it can be donated to the Salvation Army. The next step is to limit what you buy.

This was suggested some time ago, but seems to be out of style. Suppose you feel like buying a laptop computer. You look at a few models in Best Buy and are ready for the purchase. Instead, wait, go on home and think about it. Do that for three days. Do some serious considering and if you still think it's what you want, go ahead and shell out the cash. You could use your Discover Card, but by spending the real green stuff, your credit card statement at the end of the month will be a bit smaller, if there's one at all. The problem with shopaholics is that the credit card is their only means of doing business.

I'll get into danger and excitement in chapter 9, but let me expound on the former a bit here, since it applies. Doing your Christmas shopping too early can get you

arrested. On one occasion, my uncle Bubba was questioned about being in the store before it opened. On a more serious note, people have gotten killed on the day after Thanksgiving. Maybe that's why it's called Black Friday. On November 28, 2008 at 3 o'clock in the morning in Long Island, a Walmart employee was trampled to death in a shopping stampede. This is a day when you should either go see a movie or just stay home. Have a turkey sandwich.

I have a few problems with Black Friday. First it creates more shopaholics. Christmas is a beautiful time of the year but the day after Thanksgiving only darkens it. Commercialization is all about greed, not about love. If you want to participate in Black Friday, you'll have to arise quite early in the morning. You'll also have to wait, maybe even camp out in the cold. I'm not one to get out of bed before six o'clock and prepare myself to go shopping. I used to camp in the Adirondacks, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Florida panhandle and quite a few other places. While at the first two parks listed, we experienced snow and really cold weather even though it wasn't even December. I don't camp out these days and even if I did, I'd avoid any time when the temperature fell below 40⁰ Fahrenheit.

I close with the top ten indicators that you may be a shopping addict.

10. Your middle name is Walmart
9. The first position on your speed dial is for Target
8. You buy the largest pickup truck they have to accommodate your purchases
7. Your cable TV has a dozen shopping channels
6. You buy a house with a bargain basement
5. You vacation in the mall of America
4. Job searching, you ask the interviewer if the company offers shopping days with pay
3. Instead of renting a storage unit, you rent a row of them
2. During a yard sale at your house, your spouse asks what happened to Johnny, and you say someone offered more than you were asking so he was sold
1. You call in sick to the family Thanksgiving dinner so you can rest up for Black Friday

7. Workin' for a livin'

Workin' for a livin' is a rousing 1990 song from Huey Lewis and the News. It reflects the stress and nonstop pace of what faces us in our jobs, no matter what we do to earn money to pay the rent and put bread on the table. I like up-tempo music but not the reality of the workplace that is forced on us in the daily grind. Most of what we witness in the business world is irresponsible, brimming with incompetence and devoid of common sense to the point that we need to examine what work has evolved into – I thought evolution is supposed to make things better. Is that why people don't believe in it? There'll be consideration for work addicts, also known as workaholics, as well what has to be done to make corporate America less filled with pressure, more productive and a healthier environment.

The list of song titles I could have chosen for this chapter title seems endless. If you've heard of Donna Summer, you know that her eleventh studio album, **She Works Hard for the Money**, released in 1983, sold quite a few copies and produced a top single with that title. A few years before that release, Sam Cooke recorded *Working on the Chain Gang* – not a happy tune. Dolly Parton wrote and performed the song, *Nine to Five* for the 1980 film of the same name. I don't believe health care or pensions were talked about in the song. Songs sung by the slaves in the nineteenth century were done to lift their spirits and also to keep them from killing their masters. It certainly wasn't for partying.

Tennessee Ernie Ford had a hit record in 1955 with the Merle Travis song, *Sixteen Tons*. These are a few words from the song.

*You load sixteen tons, what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter, don't you call me, 'cause I can't go;
I owe my soul to the company store.*

Note that Ford doesn't mention Black Lung disease in this coal miners' lament. It may not have applied to those workers underground, but you've probably heard someone say, *He works sixteen hours a day, seven days a week*. If that's not enough time, should we add an hour or two to each day and another day to the week? Unreasonable as that suggestion is, it could be the answer for the person who uttered, *There aren't enough hours in the day*.

In a related comment, you'll also hear someone ask the question, *Where did the time go?* Don't look at me; I didn't take it. Time sounds like another addiction, but it won't have a separate chapter dedicated to it. Someone who is caught up in that habit might say, *I've got to keep busy*. Maybe she saw the bumper sticker, *Jesus is coming; look busy*. I didn't realize He was in management. I thought that was the Father's task. The Holy Spirit is concerned with the union. *I don't have the time, I've got to run, Time waits for no man* – I'm not sure if that applies to women – and *She's just so busy* are more phrases related to the drudgery of labor.

How many times have you heard, *A man works from sun to sun but a woman's work is never done?* Does that only indicate a time management concern or is it because the female sex spends hours at the office managing her people and then has to come home to cook supper and be with the children until they're put to bed?

If someone says, *She is a slave to her work*, we have indications of a workaholic as well as a process that was supposed to be eradicated over a half ago century ago. This might tie in regionally to the expression, *I'm swamped with work*. I visited New Orleans a few times and spent a few

months in Florida on a short computer contract and I can tell you that the companies below the Mason Dixon line didn't match what is paid in the North. I don't think that has changed today.

The phrases, *Work can't kill you* and *If you work hard, you'll succeed in America* are myths as are a few other ideas about work. I'll return to those misconceptions later, but let me offer another gem, *Up and at 'em; go, go, go*. What the heck does that mean? I'm not exactly sure, but here's what I think. It directs someone to get out of bed – even though it's Saturday and quite early in the morning – and get to work, spoken by a master. The speaker could be a parent, guardian, teacher, coach, manager, project leader, plantation owner or even another relative, roommate, friend or spouse.

Any of these sayings should instill in a subordinate a work ethic, but it shouldn't create labor addicts. The task of the master is to make men and women out of boys and girls, in that same order. A mother, father or stepparent who uses a child for having work done, but doesn't allow that child to enjoy leisure time is not much different from the plantation owner. Each is a slave driver. The job of a teacher is to impart skills necessary for children to succeed later in life, especially reading, writing, mathematics and love of the arts. Nothing is said about making sure the student is accepted at Yale or Harvard and eventually raking in the dough with a Wall Street job. A coach should instill sportsmanship in the players as well as how to accept defeat, gracefully – the latter not an easy assignment.

You know about the cotton and tobacco bosses, which included George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, our Founding Fathers. They did a great job on the Constitution, but failed on another important issue. I discussed control earlier so I need not mention it any more. There are numerous books on slavery that are listed in the references at the end of the book. Sadly, slavery has not been

abolished in the twenty-first century. All you have to do is look at the sweatshops all over the world, the coalmines and the corporations, which instead of rewarding the workers for their outstanding productivity with raises and bonuses, outsource jobs and downsize the workforce. They have no problem coming up with outrageous salaries, bonuses, stock options and retirement for the CEOs, even when corporations fail and they may even be cited for ethical violations.

When it comes to a manager or project leader, either can be a tyrant or just acting because they have little choice in righting matters. Of course, they could speak out and lose their job or just resign, but you're aware of buying groceries and providing for one's family, so neither is usually an option. Handling bossy relatives, roommates, friends or spouses may appear to be easier to deal with, but it too has difficulties.

Work addicts aren't born that way. They're the result of grooming by powerful people, even without a matrimonial event. Any workaholic can be of two types. The first individual – who we'll call Chris – chooses to join the group while the other has the habit, but it wasn't that individual's choice. We'll call the latter Rene and try to come up with something for both to make their lives better and less stressful in the workplace. Chris may be beyond help, but we'll see what we can come up with anyway.

Before proceeding, here are a few considerations that can't be ignored.

Some people will do as little as possible to collect a paycheck.

There's a very simple solution to laziness. If you don't produce, you have to find another job. As a software consultant, I strove to work beyond the call of duty: I wanted to avoid being made redundant – not in that sense, but simply not getting fired – and possibly being rewarded with

a raise and a contract extension. One less interview was a plus. Maybe I was just trained right. If you're an employee, manager or CEO and you don't do the job, you should receive no bonus, no raise and no health benefits. You'll have to find another company to hire you, from which you can get all those things. That suggestion hasn't been followed. One reason is the failure of management, especially in the interview process. A lazy person shouldn't been given the assignment. When it comes to management and especially corporate executive officers, the problem is cronyism and good-old-boy networks. Maybe government has to be called in to do something about this. We the people can have a say, as well. There are so many of us, that working together, we can shut down a corporation.

I've already mentioned avoiding fast food corporations and chain restaurants. Instead, patronize the local restaurants that serve healthy, delicious food. The ones that serve swill will close because no one will eat there. The same action can be exercised against the other mammoth companies. Say goodbye to the big banks and join a credit union. Recently, many people have done that and the banks are noticing. You'll find a good choice of credit unions in your area. Buy wine and chocolate from local businesses – we all have addictions – and get your vegetables from Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Join a cooperative, and if you can, grow your own herbs and vegetables. All these choices may not shut down a company, but your action could make them behave better.

No one can work a sixty-hour week – even spending forty at it is too stressful.

You can equate burnout to being stressed out. After I had been a programmer analyst for a few years, someone mentioned to me that burnout in the profession shows up within ten to twelve years. In my case, this person was right

on the money: it hit me just before I had been doing that work for eleven years.

Corporations downsize departments and projects, reducing the number of people in a group somewhat. This forces the others to take up the slack. Before you worked forty hours a week, but now it's fifty or sixty. No one can put in that much time each week. Even forty is too much – there's too much stress. When I came up with this conclusion, I started listing jobs with stress: police officer, soldier, journalist, computer technician, teacher, doctor, nurse, any health care person, coal miner, sweat shop employee, office worker, construction laborer, religious minister, oil refinery worker, chemical factory laborer, lawyer, government employee, professional athlete, coach, nuclear power plant worker, air traffic controller, postal worker, banker, salesman, agent, realtor, politician, IRS guy, telemarketer and pirate. Did I leave anyone out? As you see, today, everyone has stress related issues. This means even a forty-hour workweek is too long. How about *thirty*?

Before meeting the eighty-hour week lunatics, it's a known fact that downsizing shows everyone can be replaced. No one has job security now. Suppose you know all the nuances of an application system for the computer at a company. If you've been there long enough, you'll be replaced with someone younger, not as capable, but with a much smaller salary. Are there so few salaried employees today – Walmart is a good example, here – because so many corporations hire part-time help so they won't have to provide health insurance? Is there even a Middle Class? Thinking about a career? It's more realistic to consider the idea of earning a living.

Studies have shown that both downsizing and outsourcing just don't work. My discussion of stress in the workplace should convince you that we need a thirty-hour workweek – this is the opposite of downsizing. Upsizing will work. Since forty hours per week is too much, going to fifty,

sixty or more – that’s downsizing – could bring the company down. As far as outsourcing goes, it creates unemployment in the United States and lead in children’s toys, which may not be what any of us want. It could mean more cash for the company using both methods, but that will evaporate once the lawsuits arrive.

I promised you a meeting – another great waste of time – so let’s dig deeper into people who say they *work* long hours, like say sixty each week. A person who is truly his or her own boss or a high-level manager who tells you this can be ignored. The former goofs off a great deal, so his week isn’t really as long as claimed. The latter arrives at the office at seven a.m. and leaves twelve hours later – $12 \times 5 = 60$. On arrival at his desk, he moseys on down to the cafeteria, buys a paper, coffee and Danish and sits down with a few other managers. By the time he does anything of significance, an hour has elapsed. He takes a few breaks during the day, a long lunch and maybe even a short dinner hour. The sum of the hours of respite from work totals six hours. Do the calculation and you’ll find he has a *thirty-hour* workweek. Eureka!

From a business prospective, downsizing three employees – each doing the forty hour gig – into two, each having a sixty hour stint per week is ludicrous, crazy, dumb, smacking of missing managerial intelligence and unhealthy for the workers. Could these two unfortunate souls be Chris and Rene? Stress equals unhappiness, deteriorating health, less productivity, perhaps hospital visits and worse. It probably will require interviewing and more training and could lead to the downfall of the corporation. Why not hire another person, train her, and now there are four employees, each working a thirty-hour week. The increased costs are offset by the boost in productivity as well as the fact that the company won’t disappear. Jobs are created and we may be able to help cure people of their addictions to work.

Whoever said, *Work can't kill you* was smoking something. I hope my discussion of the long hours demanded by some managers should convince you that stress results in too many bad things, healthwise and bottom-line wise. You know about black lung disease, the danger in the mines, the hazards of the sweatshops and people going postal, even if the perpetrator isn't buying stamps and nowhere near a government building.

People migrate to the United States because someone encouraged them with the words, *If you work hard, you'll succeed in America*. I believe in a more progressive alternative: working smart. That eight-word phrase means well, but it can be improved upon. I don't go along with either option when money, work or control addictions are thrown into the mix.

In general, management is inconsistent, incompetent and not capable of leadership.

As a long-time software computer consultant, I've had the *pleasure* – that's definitely the wrong word here – of being at numerous major corporations on the East Coast. I can rightly use the word doofus to refer to many of the managers with whom I have been in contact during those years. On the other hand, there are competent, brilliant and compromising managers. They are the ones who refuse to downsize their department, but instead add more workers, just as I put forth earlier. They respect the opinions of their subordinates, stand up for them in front of higher management and even implement suggestions offered. Getting rid of these great leaders will only have them work for another company, leading to bankruptcy of the firm that let them go. The good news is that now there is no need to worry about how to dispose of the doofuses at the company that let a good thing get away.

There's no reason why an individual who can retire doesn't do so.

People who can retire should do so for a number of reasons: they've worked long enough and now someone else will have a job. Retiring means that if they haven't already burned out, they will avoid it. The reason why some don't leave the workforce is because of an addiction to money, also known as greed. The problem could be solved by mandatory retirement, but doofuses have suggested raising that age, so that you can't retire at fifty-nine, only creating more unemployment. Some retirement packages are so attractive that remaining on the job will not benefit workers. It's a great idea. Not leaving may even cost you, considering taxes and social security. Some people reluctant to retire will insist that they'll have nothing to do. There is such a thing as volunteering. I guess all work addicts can't be cured.

Control enters into picture regarding work addictions.

Control was discussed in chapter 5, but note that those in charge may not have an addiction to work. They certainly want it done, but they don't want to do it. They're addicted to money. The robber barons were guilty a century ago. Today, we have our share of these thieves. Slavery has been around forever and you can read about it in numerous books. I've included a few in the references at the end of the book along with some fitting movies. Since I discussed work in two other works of mine, you're welcome to check them out. My web site has pages for each book. If you've forgotten the name, do a search on the world wide web with my name or just do a find in this book on *cooks.com*.

At one corporation, one individual is expected to put in fifty hours while another does almost nothing.

What's wrong with this picture? An office has one person there for over fifty hours each week. The same company has a guy who takes up space in an office – let's call him *George* – who doesn't seem to be doing anything and nobody knows what his job is. He probably has no idea either. The two people could even be in the same project. Management needs to do something about this. However, their job doesn't end there since there are so many other concerns. You've probably heard that there are people that are unemployed. At the same time, so much work needs to be done. It's time for a marriage.

Our whole concept of work and leisure time is out-of-whack. We need a new way of thinking in this regard. From our discussion we've been told at times to look busy. In many cases, there's a need to *play the game*, of which I can't approve. This is in lieu of being productive. Leave it to corporate America to have too many meetings and come up with phrases – maybe that's what those gatherings are for – rather than get anything accomplished. There are solutions, if we only had smart managers to implement them. First, let's reduce the number of hours in the workweek to thirty. Is there that much work in a specific company to even justify a forty-hour week? There's too much goofing around. As a consultant, I've seen jobs being created that don't exist or need to exist. Does the name *George* ring a bell? I'm sure you remember him.

I've worked on projects that were never completed or tasks others had worked on. In my last assignment, coworkers insisted that the assignment just wasn't something that could be accomplished. The person who requested the job didn't accept the fact that the work was finished because nothing more could be done. He probably had no qualms about other people working sixty hours a week, even if that was ludicrous. If he himself didn't mind the long hours, maybe we should ask if the way he worked just wasn't efficient.

If you don't know of Grace Boggs, she lives in the Detroit area and has been working all her life for the less fortunate. She's featured in many progressive magazines, including *YES! Magazine*, which I highly recommend. Her recent thoughts agreed with my feelings about this whole job / work scenario. We have so many ideas that we don't think out; we jump on the bandwagon without listening to and understanding the music. We're so addicted to money that we join the demonstration and write our congressmen about keeping the air base open, because of *jobs*. I would join right in if the base were converted to new technologies – meaning the old agenda is replaced with new projects of wind, solar and other green energies. This would be doing something. Obviously, the old functions of the base will be obsolete if we eliminate war. With the end-fossil-fuel process, not only will every job lost be replaced, there'll be more new jobs, including higher paying ones. Perhaps the state where the base is located could be so influential in green alternative strategies, that other states and countries could utilize them. That wouldn't be a bad thing at all.

There's another related addiction: to 24/7. If your working around the clock goes on for too long, your clock will stop ticking and you won't be around. You know that I chose the word, *tick* as one of the words in the title of my first book on work. People carry on Sunday as though it's another day of the week. In the sermon in church on March 11, 2012, there was mention of keeping holy the Sabbath. It could mean going to church that day, but I also think it should encourage us to make Sunday truly a day of rest. We can do the other business from Monday to Friday. This is all a bonus of the thirty-hour workweek. Saturday can be reserved for shopping if we can't do it on the preceding five days. When Christ was in the Temple tossing out the moneychangers, that is, the businessmen and businesswomen, He probably had the Sabbath in mind, but He also may have inferred a need for separation of church

and state. It shouldn't take much thought to see that connection.

We're all aware of how the length of the workweek has changed over the years. It seems that it dropped all the way down to thirty-five sometime in the 1970s. At that point, computers made the scene, and the workweek should have decreased even further. How about a thirty-hour week? That didn't happen, though. What went wrong? Technology was a big failure and management can be to blame as well. People didn't stand up by joining the union. Actually the union was downsized, so people lost that opportunity. Americans were lazy and hooked on money and possessions and right along with those two we can add work addictions. That's where we are today.

Just like the unions, people have been downsized and some have complained about the high salary they just couldn't live without. The others decided on an alternative: living with less, but enjoying life without all the stress. They found more meaningful work and found that their health improved. There are a few ideas at the end of the chapter.

You may not have heard of *The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich* by Timothy Ferriss. I recommend the book, but the idea of four hours may be a bit drastic. He has some great suggestions and ideas. I don't advocate joining the new rich since many of them are the reason why the United States is having so many problems today. Let's proceed to a 30-hour workweek along with a minimum wage of \$15 an hour and proceed from there, eventually lowering the number of hours even further and raising the minimum wage. As you might surmise from the title of Ferriss' book, there are too many created jobs and too much unnecessary work. We're overloaded with useless information. Technology has gone wild and made our workweek longer. Fixing technology involves more jobs. The mess is due to addictions of control,

money, materialism, work, technology and a few others – I think you get the idea.

Talking about an addiction to work, many may not see the never-ending circle between work and materialism. You have a decent job and are told about an upcoming raise. Before you even receive it, after work, you buy a motorboat and charge the purchase. As a result, you have a balance on your Discover Card at the end of the month being carried over. You don't pay the entire amount because maybe you haven't the bucks. Perhaps, you not addicted to materialism, but rather one to credit cards or the water. Those won't be handled in this book so you're on your own. Now you need to work more hours and you may soon be a workaholic.

There are some simple solutions, but they're not easy. Forget impulsive buying. Either control those pieces of plastic or toss them. I've mentioned the delay of making a purchase earlier. Do some thinking instead. Don't buy so much stuff that you run out of room and need to buy a larger home. Create a budget and stick to it. If you're looking for a mortgage make sure you can afford the payments and don't ignore all the costs of running a home. I could go on, but you're smart enough to figure these things out. You'll need to do that to rid yourself of addictions.

8. Physical

I had the pleasure of seeing Olivia Newton-John in Las Vegas in the 1970s. She really sang up a whisper. Actually she went beyond that – the comment about the whisper was from my friend – as Olivia gave a fine performance. Her first number-one single was *I Honestly Love You*, released in 1974 and my favorite. The title of this chapter is also the name of her 1987 smash hit from the album of the same name. If you guessed that it's all about exercise, you're off a bit, but not by much. Specifically it's about being addicted to sex.

In his 2009 book, *Tokyo Vice: An American Reporter on the Police Beat in Japan*, Jake Adelstein explores the exploits of the yakuza, the Japanese mob – the underworld of crime that makes the Mafia look like an evil stepsister. It's all about modern-day greed, corruption and sex. Adelstein is an American journalist who went to the island nation seeking peace and quiet at the age of nineteen. He was admitted to all the right groups in order to report on the underbelly of a culture unknown to him and much of the world. He found crime that included murder, human trafficking, extortion and much more while reporting for the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, a Japanese newspaper that is published in Tokyo, Osaka and a few other cities.

His investigating involved eighty-hour workweeks and actually joining the culture in order for him to obtain his byline. Naturally, his marriage suffered as he was apart from his family more than he was with them. That's the problem that all journalists face, not even mentioning the danger. He encountered death threats and he couldn't have chosen a more fitting title to his book than *Tokyo Vice*. It's an eye-opener and not for the faint of heart.

Adelstein deals with the mistreatment of women, who are enticed to move to Japan with the promise of high paying jobs in a respectable environment. When these

innocent females arrive, they find neither. Instead they're trapped in a world of dark sex with no hope for escape. Their dream of returning home is quenched; many of these victims had come from nations in Europe. The sex trade is practiced by many other countries besides Japan, and those in charge don't discriminate when it comes to the age of their subjects. Young children are often victims.

I'll spend more time on the Internet later, but here we need to investigate reasons for its success. As you might guess, pornography has a great deal to do with it. When I did a google search on the Internet, entering *the Internet and pornography*, I found a host of possibilities. There were pages upon pages listed, more than you see below. Here are some of the beginnings of what I found there, with my comments afterwards in italics:

If you are reading this you have probably unwittingly been directed to an *Internet pornography* site. Almost everyone has.

*A friend of mine mentioned that he was looking for a gift for his friend and decided to use the Internet to help. His choice was from a store that has a few outlets in Western New York, **Dick's Sporting Goods**. I'm not sure what gift he had in mind, but I'm sure you know what happened when he did his search on the world wide web.*

Due to the international nature of the Internet, *Internet pornography* carries with it special issues with regard to the law. There is no one set of laws that apply to the distribution, purchase, or possession of Internet pornography.

I didn't read the rest, but you can use your imagination.

Nov 19, 2004 – Researchers tell a Senate hearing that *Internet porn* is more addictive and harmful than street drugs. One calls for government-funded research.

You want to make sure that there are a sufficient number of committee meetings.

Jan 26, 2008 – *The Internet Is For Porn* By avenue Q. . . . Top Comments. 95% of *the Internet* is *porn*, 4% is cartoon *porn*.

If you didn't cut math class and do the calculations, that doesn't leave much left for anything else. If you reduce the percentages somewhat, since they could be a slight exaggeration, the conclusion is still that most of the world wide web is infected with porn.

Cybersex Addiction – compulsive use of *Internet pornography*, adult chat rooms, or adult fantasy role-play sites impacting negatively on real-life intimate . . .

A man accused of trading pictures of child *pornography* over *the Internet* pleaded not guilty to several charges Friday.

I think that shows enough examples. I've heard that the Internet connection to porn may have begun when some person in Congress was on the world wide web and wanted some trashy magazine or something similar but didn't want the porn purchase publicized. This is how the whole credit card transaction process developed so buyers would have some protection. No one wants his credit card compromised. This scenario is probably fact and we should thank our local representative for protecting our privacy.

Porn on the web has replaced much of that found in the newsstands. Perhaps it even provides more shelter. That's the way some people think, but they haven't heard of the 2011 book by Eli Pariser, which I mentioned earlier. Be

careful what you do online, because there are people watching you. They may not be big or your brother, but they're out there. If you use any social websites, don't provide too much information. In fact, if you use the Internet at all, people are gathering data on you. Once you read *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*, you'll probably put on the nose with the glasses and head out to the newsstand for your porn, if you're so declined.

With so much on the Internet and the selection of porn available in so many stores, it's no wonder that there are so many addictions to sex. Look at what your email provider throws at you every day – the ads and headlines, for starters. You probably saw the wardrobe malfunction at halftime of the Super Bowl a few years ago. The day after the Oscars in February 2012, one of the stories from the previous night awards ceremony highlighted Angelina Jolie and her thigh stunt, whatever that was. If you watched the goings on, you may also have seen Jennifer Lopez's wardrobe malfunction – remedying these problems of J. Lo and Janet Jackson sounds like a job creating opportunity. In February 2012 at the Super Bowl, the tailors apparently did their job, but Rapper M.I.A. offered a salute using a middle finger for the network cameras at halftime, while joining a performance of Madonna's new single, *Give Me All Your Luvin'*. This seems to be a sexual thing.

A few men need more loving than one woman can provide. That's all right because in their country, you can have more than one wife – a practice found in Africa and the Middle East. Actually you need not venture that far away as the United States has a religion that isn't adverse to polygamy, The Church of Latter Day Saints. You know it as the Mormon Church. I don't think that in all these places a woman can have more than one hubby since she could never do all that cooking. In some countries – ours goes along with it too – a man has one wife and at least one mistress. No one makes a big deal out of it. It works the other way as a

married woman has an affair. A man may not have a mistress, but manages to have an affair. Stop in the name of love.

It's probably not love, but I've always wondered how the wife or husband feels in second place. What about the outlook of a wife and that of all her competition in the case of a one on five scene? In the case of an affair, the extra may eventually demand that husband or wife leave the spouse and engage in the marital thing, which may never happen. In a few situations the third person doesn't care about that angle. He or she is happy with the way things are.

The man with multiple women seems to be a sex addict, as do the men and women who seek out affairs. It doesn't appear as though love is all around. It may not be anywhere. The abandoned or neglected spouse doesn't experience love either and may know what's happening but somehow hangs on.

The recent sex scandal in the church has to be an example of sex addiction. If you look at a statistical prospective, it isn't all that unexpected. The costs have been astronomical, financially as well as from a consideration of psychological damage. It certainly doesn't encourage people to join the church. Granted, priests are human, but we look up to our leaders and are very disappointed when they let us down in this way. All we can do is forgive.

The media contribute to this *coupling*, although that's probably not the right word – maybe it should be called *Ménage à Whatever*. Advertising on television is accomplished by young bodies of both sexes, and it doesn't matter what's being sold. I'm sure you've seen commercials where after thirty seconds you still haven't determined what they were selling – and it was only a fifteen-second venture. Apparently, sex can be associated with any product, even laxatives, attorneys or apple pie. For now, people in wheelchairs don't shuffle about with any sexual innuendo.

Escaping from a sex addiction isn't an easy thing. It takes a great deal of discipline to overcome, just like any other addiction. Sex makes the world go around. We just need to assure that it's not spinning out of control.

The last chapter in this book is about the love addiction, which I think you'll agree is different from the one to sex. Is a pornography addiction equivalent to a sexual one? Each can lead to the other, at which point they probably aren't much different. If one porn addict hooked up with another porn addict or one sex addict did the same thing with another sex addict, would that make the two addictions distinct? No matter what the answer is to that question, either addiction does harm to people. Marriages and relationships dissolve, families are broken up and the health of participants deteriorates. I close the chapter with one more question. Why is sex on television OK – but only sometimes – while blood, killing, violence and gore are always acceptable?

9. Danger heartbreak dead ahead

The title above is that of the 1965 song by the Marvelettes. I have the song in my collection of music, but it's by the group, Loading Zone, whom you probably never heard of. Don't feel bad; you're not alone and throughout the rest of the book, there'll be more examples that you don't know about. Linda Tillery was one of the lead singers in a rousing rhythm and blues cover of the song. The addiction of the chapter has to do with danger and excitement, both of which are reflected in that song. However, our discussion will leave love for the last chapter and close in on a different kind of excitement.

In February 2012, I happened to catch a few minutes of the television show, *Rock Center with Brian Williams*. I believe the title originated because the people featured on the program seemed to have had their brains replaced with granite. I could be wrong since I only saw a small part of the episode. What I did view had to do with the crazies involved in extreme sports. There are two alternate names for it, Xtreme Sports and X-Treme Sports, but either way, I think they really all spell danger, especially injury and doctor visits. We're all probably familiar with young people and their unbelievable skateboard skills, but Williams pointed out that now these *athletes* have taken it to another level: they've upped the danger. Now death results from some of the stunts.

I would never attempt to climb Mt. Everest or any peak that posed so much danger at any time of the year, let alone try to go up a vertical wall. Each of these options pales in comparison with mounting one covered with ice. The men involved (I think women have more sense) partake in these dangerous undertakings – I like that word here – including skiing down 80⁰ mountains that should only be photographed. A few other sporting challenges I'll skip are bungee jumping, skydiving and trying to outrun flying

bullets, each of which can be found in Xtreme Sports. I'm just kidding about that last one, as I don't think it's an event yet. The late great comic George Carlin on hearing the stewardess – excuse me, flight attendant – ask people to get on the plane, responded, *I'm getting in the plane. Let the daredevils get on the plane.* I sincerely I hope those extreme people don't choose that daredevil option, but it was exactly what many people were doing in the early days of aviation.

The Empire State Building was once the world's tallest building, but now it's not even in the top-ten. Amazingly, it took less than fourteen months to build. Today, it would require longer than that for a new skyscraper to receive approval for meeting all the construction and environmental codes. Building it was extremely dangerous, and I'm sure you've seen footage of carefree laborers who walked along the beams during construction. I wonder if they had a beer with lunch before they began their high-altitude stroll. Construction on any skyscraper that surpassed that building in height is nothing more than Xtreme work. It takes a special breed of thrill seeker or excitement addict. There's no doubt the adrenaline is soaring on these jobs.

People crave excitement; that's what entices people to enlist. There have been too many instances of soldiers being bored waiting for battle to begin when they say, *Let's get started and get this over with.* I guarantee that the over that results won't be welcome. It looks like we may have a few war addicts in the making, but that's for the next chapter. Soldiers don't have it easy, but neither do these people: policemen, journalists, lumberjacks and postal workers. I was a high school math teacher for eight years, but I wouldn't care to return to that profession for many reasons. You can read about those in one of my other books. When going to school as a child, Mom fixed us lunch, but that's not what's being packed today.

I've already talked about work, so I'll only cover dangerous exploits here. Thanks to cable TV, you've

probably seen those men and women who drive highways covered with ice in the mountains – they actually drive on frozen roads or terrain – but what about the people who built and continue to work on the highways? If you're working on a construction crew, twirling that caution / stop sign won't protect you against a crazy driver in a hurry to make it home. Speaking of lunatics, I used to like driving, but with all the road rage and people behind the wheel who need either driving class, a designated driver or courtesy training, it's no fun anymore.

Quite a few people who earn a living at sports not designated as Xtreme aren't free from danger. Boxers spend time in the ring getting their heads bashed in, over and over. That's only good for the makers of aspirin and painkillers. The fighters risk brain injuries and worse. People who engage in auto racing and those who play rugby, hockey, football and basketball for a living – some of these professions pay quite well – may crave the excitement but not the pain that ensues. As we've seen, money inspires many people, even if the price paid for it is a shorter life.

What about working at a nuclear power plant, chemical plant, huge factory that prepares meat for our consumption or in a coal mine? Don't forget those who built the dams, subways or tunnels – through the mountains or under the rivers? Those who worked on the Underground Railroad or were part of the Civil Rights Movement risked their lives for a great cause, no matter what the color of their skin was. People on board the Titanic faced danger but they seemed to not worry about it. Great improvements have been made in various means of travel, but after some of those cruise adventures in early 2012, do you still feel like going on one? If we're too concerned about risk, we won't leave our homes, becoming recluses. Because the National Automobile Dealers Association states that most accidents occur within twenty-five of our homes, does that mean that we should stop driving or exit the zone as soon as we can?

The reason for that statistic is that most of our driving is within that radius.

There's always risk, unless you're not living. Some people just carry it to extremes. If you're a senior citizen, you might find an alternative to skiing – even cross-country skiing – and bicycling, unless surgery is no big deal to you. You probably quit Nordic combined and biathlon events before beginning to collect social security checks. Older people tend to have balance problems, besides those checkbooks – that's what sons and daughters are for. The former are cautious, walk with canes, avoiding stairs and hilly terrain. They use the rails when walking down or up to the second floor. With age comes wisdom, along with common sense, if it hasn't already arrived. Youth are filled with daring, bravery, naivety and risk. They're short on experience and out to impress the opposite sex. We were all young once.

All these feelings of excitement and the lure of danger need an extra ingredient to convince the participant to proceed. That driving force is money and lots of it. As *Rock Center with Brian Williams* pointed out, the cash was there as were the athletes. Network coverage of the proceedings brought in the green and people watched it passionately so that the broadcasting network needn't worry about sponsors. At this point they joined in the *fun*. Before it was Xtreme Sports. Maybe now it should be called Obscene Sports.

With the warmer weather brought on by spring's arrival, many hop on their motorcycles. It was still winter in Buffalo in March 2012, but you couldn't tell that from the weather in the low 70s. I heard the news of the death of a biker who missed the turn. There's excitement being on the bike, but too much danger.

The only biking I did was on twelve-speed two wheelers. To say that I traveled that way with no mishaps bypasses the truth. I mentioned earlier that I enjoyed taking trips in my car, listening to music on cassettes and CDs. How

things change. I have no desire to drive on the Autobahn, but we come to close to it today in the United States. Speed has taken over and drivers ignore any reasonable law on the number of miles per hour you can traverse.

People set up vacations to the rain forest or for a safari to Africa. What's the sense of going away without a bit of excitement? You need to see the elephants, lions and tigers up close. I can see them at the zoo. Some really adventurous souls chose an excursion to Machu Picchu, a vacation in Greece, Italy or Bolivia. In a few of these they ride a bus driven by a local who obtained his license from being a winner in a sobriety contest. In one way that may be good, but once he's on a narrow road having a mountain on one side and a cliff on the other, you'll wish you just went to the casino.

The 1977 movie, *Sorcerer*, is about four wrongdoers who wind up in Central America, rather than being tracked down where they live. Before long, they drive two trucks carrying explosives on a two hundred mile journey that no sane man would venture. It's done to quench an oil fire and the roads that take them to their destination are almost non-existent. If you guessed they did it for the payoff, you're right on the money. It's hard to escape the connections and we'll see more.

10. War, what is it good for?

The words above aren't exactly the title of the song I want to refer to, but rather a few words found therein. The actual title is just, *War*, which Edwin Starr made a hit in 1969. The two words that follow those six above are, *Absolutely nothing*. Many people may not completely agree with Starr, but they're war addicts, for whom this chapter is intended. They're the undertakers, weapons manufacturers and people high up in government who go to war – they don't do any of the actual fighting – and send young people to wage their battles. This has been going on for years and doesn't appear that it will change anytime soon.

War addicts are created by society, especially one filled with conflict. You can't deny that the world is a violent place, whether in our country or anyplace else. Here control – which was discussed in chapter 5 – is exercised though wide-screen high definition television. Chapter 13 mentions TV, which covers the addiction to technology. Filling the screen, which in the early days was tiny compared to the 48-inch sets of today, you can't help but get a glance at murder, fires, gore, explosions and horror that permeates the screen daily all in high definition. What I have in mind is *The Jerry Springer Show*, but it's not the only example. This is not even taking into account the news programs. There are too many programs with fighting, beating, blood and mayhem, but the public craves it. Look at some video games – you need not check out that many – and you will see more of the *feasts* I described on daily TV.

You'll find battles and disagreements within families, some resulting in abandonment and people not speaking to each other for years. It could get worse and occasionally it does. Some said that guns don't kill people – yeah, they do – but by themselves can't wreak any annihilation. Human intervention brings about death. Nobody in their right mind wants war – that includes billions of people throughout the

world – but then why is it never-ending? Are we that addicted to violence and killing?

The seeds of violence begin with jealousy, anger, differences of opinion and quests for personal agendas. Two parties don't even have to know each other to get in each other's face. Margo is a writer for a food magazine, who gives a talk on the publication one evening. Fifteen minutes into her spiel, Linda stands up and admonishes Margo because of the articles the latter has written. Margo may be a vegetarian, one who loves meat or someone who indulges in it only occasionally, but that isn't much concern for Linda, a strict vegetarian. Margo is upset, but keeps it all inside. She really wants to ask Linda about all the times she takes her kids to McDonalds' Restaurants, or when she gives cookies and candy to her children after school. She is much relieved when Linda excuses herself to go smoke a cigarette.

The Pro-Life advocates battle the Pro-Choice people. They've been doing it for years, even resulting in death on occasion. Pro-Life and Pro-Choice aren't opposites, but that doesn't seem to matter in these conflicts. It would make more sense if the two groups worked together to reduce the number of abortions – the majority of the population thinks this killing is wrong – while realizing that women have rights. They've had that privilege of voting for less than a century, thanks to the Nineteenth Amendment. Before that, women were treated like slaves, something the Catholic Church practiced for years. There are still some in that organization who are against altar girls and the female sex having any power in church matters.

The Occupy Wall Street Movement (OWS) – which I mentioned earlier – has made great strides recently. It's modeled on the precepts of Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi and Jesus the Carpenter, who each preached nonviolence. When someone spits on you, it's hard not to respond; a nightstick applied to your head without a reaction means you're probably a saint. Those in OWS are taught to simply

take it without reacting. Nonetheless, you've probably heard of groups behaving in the manner preached by Martin Luther King, Jr., but still being pepper sprayed and beaten, not unlike what many at the Chicago Democratic Convention of 1968 experienced. The victims of the disgusting racism of Theophilus Eugene Connor in Alabama in the early 1960s reacted the same way, without violence. The bigoted Bull of Birmingham directed police dogs and fire hoses on the peaceful marchers from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Campaign, which included children.

Sometime in early 2012, I received an email from a group called *We Are The 98%*. I was tempted to respond and tell them that they had one of the digits wrong. I didn't reply, since they're a new faction and maybe they can do some good. Perhaps they weren't happy with the leadership of OWS or maybe it was a control thing. Forget your differences – more important issues are at stake and need to be addressed.

I'm sure you've said something to an individual but he only replied that what you said had no merit. He told you the *facts*. He may have shut the door so only he could talk, not allowing for a real dialog. He just wanted control. He may even have been the type of person who skirted around what you had said and got into some discussion that may have been remotely connected to the subject at hand. He wouldn't answer your questions either because he didn't know the response or didn't want you to know the reply. Sadly, since you can't talk to someone like this, the best thing may be to just avoid contact with him. Maybe he's not a war addict, but he's certainly a control addict, which was discussed in chapter 5.

We have AA and AAAAA – that's for those who drink and drive. Don't tell me you never heard of the latter. Maybe we also need WAA – War Addicts Anonymous. Besides the aforementioned candidates for one of the classes, there are some people in the military, such as generals,

majors, lieutenants and sergeants who should enroll. Those with lesser rank who have to peel potatoes – they march too – can be addicts. Apparently people in Congress also fit into this category. If not, why are there still men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan as I write this? If only they were home by the time you read this! You could even be a Veteran, draft evader or need not ever have been in the service and still be a war addict. If you went to jail to miss a vacation in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s or headed up to Canada at that time, I doubt that you're a war addict.

The question to ask is how would a WAA session be carried out? Before doing that I should tell you of my experience in this regard. I came close – too close – on two occasions of not being on the planet to write my book on war or this one. Both happened in the 1960s. Canisius College, from where I received my undergraduate degree, didn't have a physical education program. As a result, we were forced to take ROTC. I think we may have been tricked by the military – oh no, they wouldn't do that. Anyway for some reason I had in my mind to stay for four years in the program and receive my commission. Unfortunately, Arlo Guthrie was a few years from releasing his brilliant, hysterical song, *Alice's Restaurant*. For me, ROTC classes began at the college and after one or two and that first drill, I decided that two years would be much more than I could handle. You're supposed to go to college to learn something. You could say I learned real quick.

Having escaped at that point, I was teaching high school math, when in the spring of 1969, the mailman delivered a letter to me, mentioning that Uncle Sam needed me. It didn't really say that, but I was classified 1-A. For those not familiar with that classification, I could be visiting the Far East courtesy of the U. S. Government. I don't mind traveling, but it was much too long a flight for me.

I was fortunate to not ever be called to active duty. I wasn't that old, but maybe someone at the draft board

thought I was. I'm not sure what I would have done, but since I've never been a war addict, nor do I care to spend time in small rooms with concrete floors and metal things protruding up to the ceiling, carrying an M-1 rifle wasn't an option. I would have visited Canada and foreseen that Jimmy Carter would be president. If I couldn't kill someone to defend my life and I was shipped over to 'Nam, I wouldn't be returning home alive.

Not only does the service brainwash young men and women – many still teenagers – it also makes addicts out of them, as if WAA didn't have enough people to fill the seats. Maybe my book on war could be used as a textbook. To find other textbook possibilities, just check the reading list at the back of my 2008 book on war. Here's another that I read in February 2012: *December 1941: 31 Days that Changed America and Saved the World* by Craig Shirley. My book is better because it's much shorter and doesn't have all that propaganda. I learned a lot from the book – with many proofreading mistakes – but there's a reason why it was so long. The author mentioned report after report of what might have been occurring at the time. There was one possibility and then another, but only a handful were fact. I don't really need a book with events that might have happened. If you're a historian, do the research, verify the happenings and then write about it.

Since I won't be attending the classes for war addiction, here are some of my ideas for it. You're welcome to them without attending the classes. To me, the book, *December 1941* brought about the reality that if war breaks out, forget about the truth. This applies to any war. It will be many years before truth sees the light of day. Even then, this can still be obscured by shadows and lies. If the truth can't be reported, how do journalists do their job? Why do they even bother to go and cover a war? You may have heard of Dexter Filkins. If not, he covered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This courageous New York Times

correspondent even wrote a book about his time in those countries, *The Forever War*. You're welcome to read it but like all current books on the topic, it's revealing, depressing, irritating, at least R-rated, and honest. I read it after my book was published, and at that point I had read enough books and seen enough movies on war.

Filkins experienced much of what the men and women doing the fighting went through. You might argue that for him, it wasn't as bad. Yeah, it was. It may even have been worse. He was embedded with the troops. He wasn't armed, except for a camera and notebook. Not only do we put soldiers and civilians through hell, people covering the war aren't spared. Do you still want to be an addict? There's more.

For those who haven't seen the 2005 documentary, *Beyond Treason*, popcorn won't help you. This short, powerful film mentions what soldiers were exposed to: depleted uranium, the effects of oil fires, immunizations, chemical and biological warfare. As if being in combat wasn't dangerous enough, now there was an unwelcome bonus which brought with it sickness and even death. To make matters much worse, the government didn't do much for the wounded veterans. This process has been going on for more than sixty years, with a quarter of a million *troops* – once, not that long ago they were referred to by the submissive term, *boots* – being permanently disabled from the Gulf War of 1991. From that conflict almost half a million men and women were seriously ill and in the process of dying. Another kind of sickness results for anyone involved in war, journalists or soldiers: mental disorder. There are others who suffer the same way. A person who heads off to war and returns home will never be the same. Citizens of Iraq had to be suffering as much as American soldiers. How many people died or were to die who may have been another Mozart or discovered a cure for Agent Orange disease?

Naturally, the planet suffers as well, but in multiple ways from the devastation. The air, water and land are poisoned, but at the same time the planet is depleted of resources that you and I could benefit from. As the next chapter will discuss, resources are limited: there's only so much, especially oil, so much of which the war burned away. I'm not only talking about the fires, either.

Returning to brainwashing, people in charge in the service do plenty of that when recruiting – you've seen the ads for adventure and wonderful opportunities for education. It's more of a serious effort in boot camp. That has to be done since higher-ups don't want to see anyone who is afraid to kill another human being. Further reinforcement is added through the press, especially when war breaks out. Then the listeners tell others and the brainwashing spreads.

With the death and disfigurement from war, something else is lost: good will between nations. It's no wonder American tourists in a foreign land aren't treated that well by their hosts. Nations should be working together, and sometimes they are, but that can have repercussions. Country A fights with country B against country C, and a few years later, country A is aligned with country C against country B. It gets even worse since country A supplied weapons to country B in the first conflict. Now soldiers of country A are being wounded or killed with their own weapons. I'm not even mentioning friendly fire, which happens in every war. Maybe the word to describe all this is insanity.

When a young man or woman is shipped off to war, it affects that person deeply, but there are others that are touched and concerned. The soldier has brothers, sisters, a mother, father, aunts, uncles, classmates, nephews, nieces, grandparents, friends and fellow workers. He or she may not have each and every one of these, but I may have missed a few loved ones such as a son, daughter, mother-in-law or father-in-law. Sadly, some of the people back home may be war addicts, but they're still concerned. Now consider a

regiment and this involves more people that make up a town or even a small city. When the young man or woman finally comes back home after finishing his or her assignment, do you think that all will be well and good?

If you're a peace-nik, people will brand you as an isolationist, fascist, communist, weird or a supporter of the enemy, which just isn't true. Indeed, you're a pacifist and you have enough intelligence to see the craziness of war. Some may offer that a particular one was a just war, but with the weapons used, that's an impossibility. Even if two individuals are fighting each other with sticks and stones, one or the other could get hurt or worse. All right, so the war wasn't just, but it had to be waged for the sake of freedom and liberty. Was negotiation ever considered, that is, a serious discussion? Bargaining is a compromise, which means each party asks for something but gives up something else in the process. A successful negotiation can never begin with the statement saying that a particular issue is off the table.

My book on war has the word *cost* in the title, so we shouldn't forget to include some mention of that. The number of casualties in any war will always be an estimate. To determine the total cost of that war, put a dozen pieces of paper with various random numbers on them into a hat and draw one. Multiply that number by another random number and the result won't be any closer to the real figure than the number reported by the Secretary of Defense. Why even try to get those numbers. You'll come up empty. You won't be wrong by saying the number of dollars for war is big – very big. If you're a war addict, that cost will come out of your pocket. Who's going to pay for your other addictions?

Suppose the government says the budget is forty billion dollars for one year of the war – and they're being truthful. What hasn't been added in is the budget for the CIA, FBI and other intelligence agencies. You'd better not forget about the National Security Agency (NSA). Of course

they have a budget, but won't reveal it to anyone. The NSA is so secret that two people in the office don't know each other or even each other's names – and they may have desks next to each other.

You can see why I'm not a big fan of secrecy by any government or by spying agencies. If the latter wants money, it'll have to be revealed – not just to the giver, either. It has to be made public. If nothing is revealed, that's what the agency will be given – nothing. I know, I drive a hard bargain, but I'm a taxpayer and I want to know where the money is going. I don't think that's an unfair rule.

The Geneva Convention has a few rules for war, which seems to me to be a bit ludicrous. Do they have referees who will call a penalty on one country and have them stay out of the action for a day? Not that I heard of. What reason would one country have for following the rules? We're talking about barbaric acts, destruction, hate and killing. I don't think it's worth the effort to search out the rules of war, per the Convention, but according to Craig Shirley's book, *War was supposed to be conducted civilly*. Are these people serious? These Geneva Convention thoughts obviously came after out the Civil War, which resulted in approximately 600,000 deaths. That war didn't have the right name.

War addicts don't have it easy. Just consider the month of November 1941, when the people of the United States wanted no involvement in Europe's war. President Roosevelt didn't feel the same way, since he provided England with assistance, even if it wasn't soldiers for combat. After the *bombs fell on Pearl Harbor* – I don't think that ever made it as a song title at that time – the feeling of the American people changed dramatically as there was unanimous support for the country's involvement. How quickly people change their tune.

Wars have been going on forever with the labels *great war* or *the war to end all wars*. The former wasn't –

great, that is, since it's estimated that there were 22 million casualties – 5 million deaths and 17 million wounded or missing in action. The latter was obviously misnamed – wars are still going on today. If it referred to World War II, the number of deaths was estimated at over 60 million. People didn't learn from these two experiences because the Korean thing – it wasn't a declared war – followed and then Vietnam. More followed that one, which you're aware of as I write this. From the Kingston Trio song, *Where have all the flowers gone?* come the words, *When will they ever learn?*

In the August of 2010, I was at the Lewiston Arts Festival, when a guy saw my 2008 book on war, of which by now you know the title. If not do a *goodsearch* on my name and you should find the title or go to my web site. This soldier said, *You should give war a chance.* He continued, *It has led to some really great innovation.* I asked him if these things could have still resulted without war. As he was walking away he mentioned something about war making men out of boys. I didn't get a chance to respond, but I should have said, *I worked with Richard Knaus in Cheektowaga a few years ago. He was shipped off to Vietnam and never returned alive. Do you have anything more to say?* That same afternoon a gentleman who had been in the service saw my book and said, *No one hates war more than a soldier.* A few months later, when I relayed these encounters, a woman whom I talked to said that if someone needs to enlist to become a man, he'd never be one. Which of the three people described above is a war addict?

At the Letchworth Arts & Crafts Festival two months later, someone brought up the *Greatest Generation*, referring to the many who fought in World War II mentioned in Tom Brokaw's book. I objected, saying if they were that, they would have talked about their war experiences and made efforts so that we wouldn't have had Korea, Vietnam, Iraq I and II, Afghanistan and all the others conflicts in the last 65 years.

Today, we have a great opportunity for a true Greatest Generation, if we can only stand up and work towards peace, ending war, as we know it. A group of women in Liberia did just that recently. Facing the brutal dictator, Charles Taylor, who was responsible for the rape, killing, annihilation and even creating soldiers out of young boys and girls, these brave individuals used nonviolence, calling for peace and didn't abandon their cause until it was achieved. Leymah Gbowee and Carol Mithers relate this remarkable story in the 2011 book, *Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer and Sex Changed a Nation at War*. Gbowee was one of many leaders of the movement. You can also view the efforts of these determined women in the 2008 documentary, *Pray the Devil back to Hell*.

I close with a few words from a newspaper editorial written around Christmas time of the *not so great war* – that doesn't tell you much at all. Here's a hint: December 7.

“No Christian order can be recaptured, no Christian civilization can be saved, till the Christian world rediscovers its integrity. It is easy under the pressure of danger to develop a common front for fighting a common enemy. It is less easy to develop a common front for living together. Our main hope that a Christian shape will be given to tomorrow's life is that the star is shining – that same star that shone on the shepherds as they watched their flocks on the Bethlehem hillside and in the morning led the wise men of the East to the inn in the town. Thither our wise men must also repair.”

11. Only so much oil in the ground

If I'm not mistaken, the title of this chapter is also that of a song I heard performed in Niagara Falls in the summer of 2009 by the rock group, Free Henry. You can also find it on the 1975 album, **Urban renewal**, by another group that's been around for years, Tower of Power. Rather than talk only about oil addicts, I'm going to make the discussion even broader by dealing with fossil fuel addicts. Webster defines the term fossil as a person whose ideas are out-of-date. It wouldn't be a stretch to say fossil fuels are so twentieth century.

After Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, you would think that people would learn, but the spring of 2011 brought the tsunami to Japan with a monumental nuclear disaster. Nuclear power may not be entirely in the ground, but in too many places you can find toxic, nuclear waste as well as radiation buried underground. Some barrels with this scary stuff are actually above the ground. One place to store it is as bad as the next. Dumping it in the ocean or sending it off into space isn't a viable option either. After the incidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, the health of both areas was compromised, which can also be said for Japan. Winds move radiation to all parts of the globe after any nuclear incident and we just don't need these disasters to be repeated. The people of Japan suffered greatly in April 1945 with the dropping of the two bombs, and in 2011, more radiation was showered down. You can insist that it's a local problem, but it isn't.

Any nuclear meltdown affects all of humanity and all of the earth. Technology helped develop the bomb and nuclear possibilities, like medicine and energy, but at what costs? It hasn't solved the problem of accidents, despite all the checks and balances and hasn't come up with a way to dispose of spent nuclear fuel. What about all the accidents

that happened which we don't know about? There are more than have been reported.

Innovation is not without fault if there's no foresight. Too many ideas don't include the possible repercussions that could come from failure or any kind of problem. Backups might be nice, but they can fail, even with a group of them. That I've seen on more than one occasion. A better approach is a safer one, backing off. Renewable energy might appear to be more expensive, but in the long run it saves money. Nuclear power was said to be so cheap, but no one figured in health costs or environmental destruction. Everyone ignored the damage to the population and the earth. Another consideration not to be ignored in the calculations is litigation, which could bring down any corporation.

Massey Energy is paying for the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster, which occurred on April 5, 2010 in Raleigh County, West Virginia. Twenty-nine miners lost their lives in the worse coalmine disaster in forty years. Some compensation has been awarded, but that's not the end of the lawsuits. Workers may have made decent wages to descend into the coalmines, but at what cost? Explosions and collapses in the mines and black lung disease cut short the lives of many of the miners. It was too big a price to pay.

On April 20, 2010, an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon, an offshore drilling rig, resulted in an explosion and fire that killed eleven crewmen and could be seen thirty-five miles away. Two days later, the Deepwater Horizon sank, but the oil was still gushing. You need not add any olive oil to the pan when cooking the shrimp. This was the largest offshore oil spill in the history of the United States. The company responsible, MOEX Offshore 2007 LLC has agreed to a settlement of \$90 million. There probably will be more payments. I'm sure you've heard of the Exxon Valdez. It wasn't a cruise ship. What you may not know is about other oil spills, which are not limited to a single corporation.

Any or all of these companies could fold and many people wouldn't even shed a tear.

You heard about the explosions in obtaining another fossil fuel, gas. In the early part of 2012, there was a big fuss about one way of obtaining gas from beneath the surface. The citizenry are appropriately up in arms about the process as they ask industry not to frack with them. There have been too many problems with hydraulic fracturing or hydrofracking. It's also known as fracking. The water supply is in danger of being contaminated, not to mention all the harmful chemicals that wind up in the ground and in the air. It's just not worth the risk. Fracking is the big conspiracy of the day. You can't conclude otherwise when the corporations refuse to reveal what chemicals are used in the process of induced hydraulic fracturing. It needs to be permanently banned in the United States.

People insist that global warming exists while others say it's all a myth. The former include scientists and the deniers are also scientists – junk ones. Maybe we should call them junkies or junksters. It should be obvious that global warming is happening by looking at the melting glaciers. You can also witness numerous islands in the Pacific disappearing into the ocean, never to be seen again. Look at the fact that temperatures have risen over the last few years, way above the average expectancy. If that's not enough, what about all the abnormal weather like a seven-foot snowfall in Buffalo over the course of one day a few winters ago? If you say that's Buffalo, how do you explain the winter of 2011-2012 when almost no snow fell at all there? There was some on April 23, 2012, though. What about all the outrageous hurricanes – you might have heard about Katrina – tornados, earthquakes and tsunamis over the last decade? These weren't normal occurrences.

In early March 2012, my Christmas cactus started blooming again. It had done so a few weeks before at Yuletide, so it's not as though these new flowers were just

late. On March 14, 2012, on my morning walk, it was sunny but a bit cool – only in the low 40s. Less than a half mile after I started, I noticed a few swarms of what appeared to be black flies. Maybe a week before, the temperature here rose to the mid 60s, but a day later, it barely got into the 30s for a high. The Buffalo News on March 25, 2012 reported that the city saw eleven straight months of higher-than-normal temperatures – and counting. The paper also reported that the 82^o temperature of the previously Wednesday was the highest recorded for the month. In late winter of that same month, I took my daily walk in shorts and a t-shirt – perhaps I should have worn the renewable energy one with the words, *The answer is blowing in the wind*. A week later in the spring, I did the walk wearing jeans, quilted flannel shirt, down vest, gloves and knit cap. The wind chill temperature was in the teens and it may even have hit single digits. In 2012 on the weekend of April 14th, the National Weather Service reported over one hundred tornadoes in the Midwest. If *global warming* isn't occurring, how do you explain all these aberrations? I prefer the two words in the last sentence in italics to climate change, which is too foggy. There'll be more on fog later.

I've mentioned conspiracies earlier, but here's another: global warming. The reputable scientists and the evidence offer proof of its existence, thus making a conspiracy of those who deny it and even write books saying it's not occurring. For the deniers, wouldn't the conspiracy consist of the movements that are trying to keep the earth from non-existence, such as 350.org?

Another look at it is through a bit of logic. Either global warming is happening or it's not – these are exclusive possibilities. We can take two approaches: do nothing or take caution and steps to solve the problem. For the latter, ending dependence on fossil fuels is my suggestion. If we take measures and global warming isn't happening, we'll still be all right. If it's occurring and nothing is done, we're up the

creek – no paddle here – and it’s rising fast, just like the oceans. Did you expect otherwise? What do you think we should do?

Clarification is necessary for those who welcome the warmer winters here or any place where winter should last three months – not six. First of all, trees bud earlier than nature wants them too. With those early blossoms, a frost in May can kill potential fruit on peach and pear trees. Because of the above average temperatures, bugs and other harmful critters aren’t controlled. I hope you don’t mind mosquitoes, lime disease and the scarcity or high prices of fruit and vegetables at the co-op. The lack of snow anywhere might lead to drought later, affecting fruits and vegetables. If you still feel global warming is a hoax, you probably have stock in a fossil fuel company. You need to read *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway.

Sharon Levy’s 2011 book, *Once & Future Giants: What Ice Age Extinctions Tell us about the Fate of Earth’s Largest Animals* discusses the end of the lives of the mammoths and mastodons brought about by the Ice Age – or was there another influence? – connecting it to what the planet is going through today. Megafauna played a huge part so many years ago. It appears that a restoration of those large beasts of yesteryear might contribute to restoring the environment, done by rewilding projects. These don’t bring back those mighty creatures to life but instead rely on animals that exist today in other areas as substitutes that offer remediation.

As far as the supply of available fossil fuels in the ground, the energy companies have clouded the picture with a few lies. The amount they postulate is more than is actually present. Even if their numbers are on the money, what about actually procuring these resources? In many cases, they’re either unreachable or much too expensive to pursue. The

corporations have been spinning the facts for so long I'm surprised that they're not dizzy from their efforts.

I've already mentioned the most influential concern: costs. We've been told that nuclear energy is so much cheaper than oil, gas, solar or wind. This spin happened decades ago. Someone's smoking something and I don't think we can convert it to energy of any kind. Maybe they're using a mathematical system of calculation that we don't know about. Any way you look at it, the numbers don't add up. They have never factored in the cost of onerous concerns such as health costs and litigation. I mentioned Massey Energy and MOEX Offshore 2007 LLC and Deepwater earlier. It may be time to talk a bit about shadow corporations.

Many companies *give us the business* – I'm sorry, I mean do business – but anyone will have a tough time finding out just who they are. They operate overseas and use various names and shell companies – I'm not implicating Shell Oil here because they seem to have done some good things, although you know all about spin. A good example is the MOEX Offshore 2007 LLC settlement mentioned before. If you do a *Goodsearch* – use it instead of Google – you can list your favorite charity, doing it once, and each time you look for something on the web, a donation is made. I hope this isn't a scam. With this search method, you'll find a reference to the Gulf oil disaster in Wikipedia. Dig into it a bit – something the Deepwater Horizon was doing – and you'll find a few layers of corporate ownership, or should I say hiding places. This is quite typical and done to confuse and probably help in times of litigation. Good luck finding out anything.

That's why I used the words, *give us the business*. It's more precise and closer to the truth, something the corporate world doesn't want to be bothered with. It's all about making money. Can you say greed? The real goal is huge short-term profits. Maybe it's being done because they

know that they're destroying the planet and it's no sense worrying about the future. To me, it just doesn't make sense. Are people so shortsighted? Do they have their heads in a place where the sun doesn't shine? At least they won't have to worry about sunstroke or skin cancer.

Fossil fuels are passé. We're running out of them. They're causing global warming. They're too costly. Add in health costs and the costs of litigation and green energy beats them hands down. It's not even close. Corporations have saved money by paying off people to keep quiet. Whistleblowers have two options: take the money and run or further pursue the injustices. In the latter choice, one must consider the lives that can be saved, specifically that of the seeker of justice. Closing down polluters is great but the brave people who do it not only put their own lives at risk, but also that of their families. You might say the same about judges who rule against the guilty corporations.

Solving the problem of global warming is simple, but it's not easy. We first need to reduce this energy reliance. Here I'm talking about fossil fuel addicts and that collection includes oil, gas, coal and nuclear. Since oil is found in so many products, let's start there. It's found in ammonia, anesthetics, antihistamines, artificial limbs, artificial turf, antiseptics, aspirin, auto parts, awnings, balloons, ballpoint pens, bandages, beach umbrellas, boats, cameras, candles, car battery cases, carpets, caulking, combs, cortisones, cosmetics, crayons, credit cards, curtains, deodorants, detergents, dice, disposable diapers, dolls, dyes, eye glasses, electrical wiring insulation, faucet washers, fishing rods, fishing line, fishing lures, food preservatives, food packaging, garden hose, glue, hair coloring, hair curlers, hand lotion, hearing aids, heart valves, ink, insect repellent, insecticides, linoleum, lipstick, milk jugs, nail polish, oil filters, panty hose, perfume, petroleum jelly, rubber cement, rubbing alcohol, shampoo, shaving cream, shoes, toothpaste, trash bags, upholstery, vitamin capsules, water pipes and

yarn. I thank *Greedzilla* for that partial list – they saved me some research. Visit greedzilla.com for more information. Note that oil is in cosmetics, all kinds of products that we use for health care, food packaging as well as in our food. It's in panty hose and garden hoses.

How do we replace it? The answer is the same as for how we replace fossil fuels: with substitutes. Hemp shouldn't be ruled out. We already know of the cloth bags that are displacing paper and plastic in grocery and department stores. As consumers, we need to keep those cloth bags in our cars and use them instead of plastic, as often as possible – I do. Insist that others do the same.

Green energy is now. Wind, solar and geothermal are all in use and successful alternatives to fossil fuels. A transition takes too long, whereas a switch can happen immediately: not at the end of the decade or the end of next year, but today. Besides the three mentioned, there are so many other possibilities – some may not work out. We won't know one way or the other if we don't try. In the course of human history, great inventions and discoveries has been arrived at through brilliant thinking. We have that challenge today – we can meet it. This is not limited to this country alone.

David Suzuki is a Canadian academic and environmentalist, featured on *The Nature of Things* on the Canadian television network, seen in over forty nations. A professor of genetics at the University of British Columbia, he has written books on nature and the environment, is known for criticizing governments for their inactivity in protecting the planet and is a long time activist for bringing about a reversal of global warming. If you glance at his photo, you may be enticed to drive to Colonel Sanders' place for some chicken.

The Nature of Things episode I viewed on February 23, 2012 highlighted Suzuki's trip to Japan a year after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster of March 11, 2011. The

government is monitoring the radiation, but people are also doing it themselves. David's journey may have been about that awful misfortune, but it's also about hope. So many good things resulted from that tragedy, specifically green energy opportunities. He emphasized that scientists of Japan are utilizing a source known about for years, geothermal. Not to be ignored is the potential of harnessing the power of the oceans and rivers. Besides wind and solar, an exciting new development that emits no harm to the earth was illustrated using magnesium to produce clean energy.

You may have heard about the four R's: reduce, reuse, recycle and rethink. This should be our strategy today. Reducing waste as well as our excessive uses of products and processes is a great beginning. You may have heard of the Luddites, the nineteenth century English group of artisans who had issues with the Industrial Revolution. You need not be a member of that group or a hermit, just more concerned for others and the earth. The people of the United States represent less than four percent of the world's population and yet use over a quarter of the energy resources. That has to change. A solution to today's problem with obesity is to stop eating so much. There's nothing wrong with having a piece of cake, but it's not really a good idea to eat the whole cake – at a single sitting. Instead, stand up and walk away from the table. We need the same approach when it comes to energy.

Reusing and recycling go hand in hand. Minimizing trash that winds up in the landfill is imperative since we have fewer landfills today. That means that people are recycling now but not enough are bothering to do it. If you grow your own fruits and vegetables, you probably have a compost pile. If you live in an apartment, you can still compost waste. In some areas of the country, you have the option of collecting the waste and dropping it off so it can be composted.

Rethinking means doing all of the above and more. I'm sure you've heard of all uses of Coke for cleaning a

toilet bowl – that’s probably where all of it should go – or cleaning silverware to make it sparkle. The latest issue of the Sierra Club Magazine shows how to convert an old microwave into a mailbox. I enjoy the magazine, but forget Coke and use vinegar – it works wonders. The mailbox idea will probably frustrate postal workers who are disappointed when they can’t warm up their sandwich in your mailbox. Scratch that idea. Nevertheless, we do have many reasonable alternatives to consider, including the fifth *R*, research. A bit of that can’t hurt.

Conservation has to be a part of the solution. The brilliant comic Gallagher said that grocery shopping on a full stomach should result in less spending, but that idea doesn’t work at the liquor store. He has another bit of advice that I’ll share later. Following with the same ways of proceeding in the past – especially when few good results were achieved – won’t do much good. New ideas have to be tried. Some will fail but others will work – sometimes in an outstanding manner. Innovation can provide great benefits.

12. A day in the life

The beginning of the song represented by the title above is, *I read the news today, oh boy*. They're from the 1967 song by the Beatles. If you know the song, you're aware that it's not a happy song, just like the addiction that is the subject of this chapter, news. Maybe we should call it the *blues* instead. Some people can't get enough of it so they subscribe to *Time Magazine* or *US News and World Report*, buy the papers – two or three, at least – and tune in to CNN and all the other similar networks. They watch all the Sunday morning news shows. Maybe they're only political junkies, like my friend, but they're still addicts. In the next few pages, I'll try to convince you to get a different habit, like building time machines or spamming porn websites.

First of all, the news is so bad that we rarely get a glimpse of the heartwarming stories of the brave individuals and true heroes of the day. If so, they're on the back pages, which we use to line the cat's box or birdcage. This is so for a few reasons. Readers, viewers and listeners love crime, disaster and celebrity misbehavior. All of it sells copy. Decency and morality may be fine – the public loves that too – but the media wants to keep people tuned in. Another reason has to do with who's in charge of the newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations that dispense the news. It's the corporate moguls who care about making money – as much as possible. When green enters the picture, they know what works.

How often do you hear the late night news broadcast begin with, *Terrorists blow up South America – leave a note*. Stay tuned. As you may have guessed, that was a bogus bit, which I hope never occurs, coming from the mind of the late comedian George Carlin. You may have seen the start of the news program with, *Body found along the river this afternoon*, or the early appearance of the meteorologist – not good news at all, unless hurricanes, floods, blizzards and

tornados excite you. Too often, these broadcasts begin and finish a story and just before the commercial break throw out a teaser line for the next story. They don't want you to switch the channel. They want you to leave it where it is if you quickly head over to the refrigerator.

The main sources of our news are the Internet, newspapers, magazines, radio & TV. Each of these utilizes the same techniques to hold your interest. The headlines scream out to you and captivate you so you'll read or listen to the entire story. If they don't do this, you'll buy a different paper, subscribe to *Newsweek* instead of *Time*, tune into another station or dump Yahoo and create a new email address.

I'll have more to say about television in Chapter 13, but you can see that an addiction to news may also be one to radio or television, maybe both. People are hooked on all three and can't escape. I may have a music addiction – I don't think so – but certainly not to news, radio or TV. I watch the latter only when I'm viewing a flick on DVD or a video that I taped or procured from the library. Other than that I watch very little TV and rarely have the radio on. I'm no fan of talk radio, even on NPR. I buy the Buffalo News on Sunday, only read the comics, science section and the headlines, reading some of the whole story and an occasional editorial.

Why I abstain from all the news that'll fit in print is because there's so much irrelevance as well as misinformation. It's something like Facebook. There are magazines about the stars – that may approach being acceptable – but I'm not sure we need a magazine for those who missed an episode of their favorite soap opera. More people know who killed JR than the name of the president of Ubeki-beki-beki-beki-stan-stan. Some people don't know either of those answers – yours truly included, and I don't care. Neither issue is real and doesn't merit an answer. There's also too much coverage about who was voted off the

island, but I was neither aware of the election and no one mentioned what island they're talking about.

In chapter 5 I hope I convinced you that the media has snowed us on a few occasions – that's a phrase that's not limited to my hometown. The papers, magazines – some like *The National Inquirer* and a few others are in a class all their own – TV, Internet and radio commit too many mistakes in reporting. I don't watch Fox News for a few reasons. It's not on the cable I subscribe to, and even it were, I wouldn't tune in. The name should be Fox News Entertainment. Hannity, Limbaugh, Coulter and O'Reilly don't entertain me. CNN offers the best alternative if you consider network news, but it's on twenty-four hours a day, so it's repetitive. It would almost have to be. You hear the same stories over and over.

The snow I mentioned in the last paragraph might be compared to fog or haze, which is another closely related addiction. Here I'll only consider the word, *fog*. You already know who the *foggers* are: the government, corporate America, the media and others connected with none of these three – they may be your friends or family. Companies want to sell you their products, so they use advertising as the fog. If I have to elaborate on how the government and the press, TV and radio *fog* us over – that's using another *f* word – you're already surrounded by haze. You and the general population are what are referred to as the *foggees* – another word I made up for discussion purposes. The foggers are also those with the addiction of control as we are the ones being bamboozled.

Before viewing the documentary, *Hot Coffee*, I thought I might mention it in chapter 1, since the first thing I brought up is that liquid. Once I saw Susan Saladoff's hopeful yet truly discouraging movie, I concluded that mention of it could be made in either the chapter on money or control. As you can see, chapter 12 – news addictions – is where I put it. This is public interest lawyer Saladoff's first

film, and it's really powerful, just like that of the corporations.

You probably have heard about the 1994 lawsuit against McDonalds Restaurants and know all about this *frivolous* action. Many people – ninety percent or more – know very little about what happened. This is familiar territory as I have indicated examples of great stories that no one is aware of. In this coffee case, the victim was severely burned, so much so that surgery was required. Who wouldn't be with coffee that was 180°. I drank this company's java occasionally since it was quite good, but it was always much too hot. The company should have been sued – for many other reasons besides coffee, but read on. Prior to this caffeine clobbering, the corporation documented over seven hundred complaints from consumers of the extreme temperature of the liquid between 1982 and 1992. After the incident and before the lawsuit, there was an attempt by the soon to be plaintiff to merely recover costs for her medical treatment. She also tried to inform the authorities of the situation so it wouldn't happen again to anyone. Her goal was merely to have a lower temperature for the brew.

\$200,000 in compensatory damages was awarded by the jury and reduced to \$160,000 with \$2.7 million in punitive damages, equaling two days of coffee sales of the company. The punitive award was reduced to \$480,000, despite the fact that the judge called the corporation's conduct willful, reckless and callous. This case smacks of misinformation insofar as the public judged this to be a good reason for tort reform since so many people bring supposedly insignificant issues to court. They didn't know the facts and maybe weren't interested in them.

I'll put the coffee aside for a minute. According to Black's Law Dictionary, a *tort* is *a private or civil wrong or injury, including action for bad faith breach of contract, for which the court will provide a remedy in the form of an action for damages*. John Grisham's, *The King of Torts*

paints a fine mosaic of it. Clay Carter is a DC lawyer who barely survives by helping the less fortunate. He leaves it all behind when he gets an offer he can't refuse for becoming an attorney at the top. Pharmaceutical companies have sold millions of dollars of their products to alleviate pain and suffering of citizens, except that they're accompanied by harmful side effects. Carter hires a staff, which keeps on expanding because of the caseloads, and the income of the firm skyrockets. He's just helping the people who have been wronged. *The King of Torts* illustrates the greed of the corporations and that of the lawyers for both the plaintiffs and defendants. By the time you're at the last quarter of the book, you'll have observed that Clay was showered with a few of the addictions mentioned in this book. Don't stop there. Read the rest of the novel. I need my coffee.

Hot Coffee goes on to reveal a few other times when corporate America spills stuff over us – perhaps crapping over us is a better description. The lives of three other people are followed in seeking justice and receiving nothing in return except lies, manipulation, disgust and longsuffering. Those involved are a Mississippi State Supreme Court Justice, who was wrongly accused of crimes more than once and found not guilty in each case; a nineteen-year old woman who was gang-raped in Iraq by fellow soldiers and spent over four years in the court system without any compensation; a couple from Nebraska who could have avoided being in the movie had only a doctor followed the oath which says, *I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone*. Sadly, this same doctor had been guilty of negligence in the past.

Tort reform is another attempt by big business to have it their way. This process is used to keep the people who have been harmed from reclaiming what a corporation owes them because of negligence. There is absolutely no need for tort reform since a jury and judge should be able to

decide what is frivolous with little delay, given the facts. Unfortunately, the conspiracy to fog the truth has been going on for too long, very well documented by the movie. Mention needs to be made of the Feres Doctrine, which states, *The United States is not liable under Tort Claims Act for injuries to members of the armed forces sustained while on active duty and not on furlough and resulting from the negligence of others in the armed forces.* That's reassuring.

Binding mandatory arbitration (BMA) is another topic that Saladoff brings up in her film, used by companies to rule over the populace. Every major consumer group in the United States opposes BMA. You can probably find this clause in every contract imaginable, such as those from credit card companies and where you work. That's what denied justice to the nineteen-year old rape victim. The list doesn't end there as BMA occurs in contracts for the telephone, automobile, insurance, health insurance, loans, house construction and nursing homes. By signing it – in a few cases it's snuck in later after you sign an agreement – you've given away your constitutional rights. You aren't allowed to use the American court system if you have an issue. Instead you have to use an arbitrator, who is a part of the corporate structure. He or she need not follow any laws or justify any decision made. You have no rights for an appeal as it favors business and will cost you more than if you had your case brought to justice in a court intended by the Founding Fathers.

With so many of our rights being trampled on, it seems that any effort on our part to right things is doomed to failure. I experienced a few instances of having coffee tossed onto me – you have, too – but I'll only relate two really big cases. The first happened a few years ago when I decided to move some of my investments from one mutual fund to another. The first fund was closed out and completely sold but I noticed the proceeds weren't in the destination fund for at least a month. I did a few calculations based on fund

values and then wrote a letter to some head honcho of the first company. In it I said I lost a few dollars because of the delay. The letter I received mentioned that I was justified in my concern but that my calculations were on the low side. They would make the adjustment provided I signed an agreement, which I won't disclose since I can't – if I do, they'll come after me. I thought about bringing the issue up with the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) but I decided that from their behavior in the past, the SEC probably stood for Securing Everything for the Corporation. It would cost too much, take too long and I may not get anything or may even receive a bonus that I didn't want – think getting a deal you can't refuse.

At the time, I had not heard of John Henry Faulk nor read his excellent book, *Fear on Trial*. Faulk was a radio and television entertainer during the latter's Golden Age. He was unjustly blacklisted and unable to find work. He consequently sued AWARE, Inc. as well as two individuals, writing about it in *Fear on Trial*. Even though it's exclusively about a court case, you won't put the book down until you're finished reading it. The lawsuit was begun in 1957 and finally settled in 1962, with \$3.5 million being awarded, but an appeals court lowered that to half a million dollars. This was hardly sufficient for the harm that had been done to Faulk.

You might think I had read the Faulk book by the time I decided to take the money and run in my investment adventures, but I only finished reading it around the same time I received a letter via UPS from a New York City attorney representing a trust, a major corporation and a well-known publisher. They didn't like the title I had chosen when I republished my cookbook. My title was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and you probably heard about [REDACTED]. I've always wanted to redact something. It's not that they didn't think my title was unsuitable – I doubt that they even opened the book – but the letter mentioned

something about trademark infringement, dilution of properties associated with their aforementioned books and unfair competition.

I called the lawyer but only left a message and called the publisher mentioned in the letter, and didn't get through to anyone. I decided to unpublish the book and took care of the details, including responding with a letter to the attorney indicating my action. The next day that person returned my call. When I indicated what I would be doing as stated in my letter, the representative said that I need not take such drastic measures. All I had to do was change the title of the book. I should think it over. Apparently this individual wasn't schooled in the publishing business, because that would have meant a new title, cover, ISBN and work on the interior and cover of the book as well as taking all copies of the book out of print – no small task. This lawyer also didn't realize that writers could use words in the titles for their books that had been used before. I chose to remove copies of my book from local stores and donate them and what I had at home. Talking to various people, even those in the law profession, all agreed that these people had no case. What I chose was to avoid any appearance in court and the time it would take, all the hassles and disruption to my life. *Fear on Trial* and *Hot Coffee* are great teachers. Thanks John Henry and Susan.

Shortly after my decision, I thought I really should have had some fun, doing nothing at all in response. When the second letter showed up, I should have said I would do something, but not even bother. When the third letter arose I could have mentioned that my publisher was notified and I would check with them. By this time, a few years would have passed. To the next correspondence I would have replied that the publishing company I used had no assets, but I would pursue the matter. Correspondence number five would have been answered with the fact that the publishing company was dissolved. Actually, this information about the publisher is fact. Alternatively, I could have said that I

checked into the parent company, but got the run around but would keep trying. You know how corporations hide under all those shell companies. Another option I considered just recently was having a respected attorney call them in reply asking for a financial settlement – money from them – to put the issue at rest since I had been harassed for years. Why should I pay them when they had all the money? How the years go by when you're having fun. I chose none of these options because some people need time for their sense of humor to *develop*. Maybe I should also add social justice as well.

As you can tell, I'm not crazy about haze and fog. I don't like being a foggee, which I mentioned a while ago. Foggees exists in varying degrees and may not even be addicts. The first kind refers to the people I described in a haze. You need to be more aware of the intentions of the foggers – not always an easy task. The other kind refers to the rest of us, who have some insight, but still are susceptible, since the snow is all around us. Many people are happy with being fogged. I don't mean it that way. Anyone that has or will be hazed needs to be alert, follow the news and politics without being an addict and read more books and fewer newspapers.

I read more books in a month than some people read in a year. Maybe I'm a reading addict, but you can learn so much from books. I'll mention more about my supposed addiction to books in the last chapter. Returning to the media, I occasionally watch the news on PBS as well as many of the programs there. I recommend what they offer over reality TV and all the other *crap* on regular television. That's the word that Walter Matthau uttered to describe the medium on his appearance on *Saturday Night Live* on December 2, 1978.

I do listen to the afternoon headlines on *All Things Considered* on NPR. Once in a great while I may even tune in to *Morning Edition*, which you can find there as well. If

I'm traveling, I'll locate an NPR station to catch up on the world. I think you'll enjoy reading a book that I finished in February 2012 by Bob Edwards, the guy with the deep voice and great thoughts on the air. His book, *A Life in the Box: My Life in Radio* is informative, humorous and insightful. You can find him on Sirius XM Public Radio.

As you know, there's another addiction that was only mentioned in passing, to the radio. Along with it might be the talk radio addiction. Remember that it's just talk and opinion. In some cases truth is a big consideration along with experience. In others, the commentator wasn't really concerned with fact checking. After all, that isn't the main task of a fogger. Look out; they're everywhere.

I can't mention enough times that the Internet has so much information but so much of it is unreliable, just like what you'll find in the media. Books offer information, but they too may be truth deficient. As a reader you need to discover what on the page is reliable and what is el toro crappo. Even dedicated investigators get it wrong at times, but reading enough books – whatever that entails – should get you closer to what really happened. I don't think you can hide the truth, ever.

Another kind of addict closely related to news is that of a trivia addict. Naturally, he can't miss *Jeopardy*. Occasionally I'll watch that game show, but not when I'm home. When I do, it comes to me that some of the responses are so simple, while others I could never come up with the question. If that sounds backwards, it is. This is nothing more than trivia, but people pride themselves on their skill at coming up with the answer (whatever leads Alex not to spout, *No, that's incorrect.*) Maybe these addicts have a game of *Trivia Pursuit* to pursue that evening.

It seems to me that what the Internet has available is just too much information. It becomes burdensome and doesn't allow us time to accomplish much. In many instances searching the web won't give you exactly what you

want. You're just wasting time. A good example of this I mentioned earlier with genealogy web sites. In that case wrong information is completely worthless. Doesn't that consideration apply to so much data found on the Internet? It's just another example of greed where people want the rewards but could care less about doing the research to get the information right. That's a familiar refrain.

This trivia addiction may be similar to one that other people have regarding the old days. They don't want to leave them. We can't forget the past – our family history is extremely important. Unfortunately, the people with many of the answers have left the earth before we had a chance to record their lives and their connection to relatives. If we do talk to them, it may be too late since they can't remember about Uncle Bertha and Aunt Baby. We should have had more concern a lot earlier in life, but we were just too busy.

We also can't forget the past for history lessons. You've heard it enough times so I'll try to rephrase the message, *Wake up, pay attention and think of what happened before. Don't repeat the old days if what happened before didn't work, wasn't ethical, moral or sensible.* I won't get into economics or legality since economists, like news people, have been wrong at times. You need not go back very far to see examples of that. Just because something is legal doesn't make it right, either.

Keep informed and read, but don't limit what you read to newspapers. Read fiction as well as non-fiction. Obviously, you'll have to separate the rye from the weeds. There is some great historical fiction available – you'll be entertained and enlightened. Don't complain that you haven't the time to read – turn off the television at least for a few hours. You won't miss a thing and you may no longer be an addict of one kind. It's a start. It's truly important to get a life.

13. Rocket man

The title of the chapter refers to the 1972 song given to us by Elton John. I like *Bennie and the Jets* better but since this is all about technology, maybe *Rocket Man* is more appropriate, despite the *Jets* in that one song.

You can have some fun when you're visiting any of the facilities in the United States associated with NASA. When the question and answer period arrives, stand up and begin, *In the summer of 1969, many people thought we actually landed on the moon.* It shouldn't be too long before you're escorted out of the building. You probably want to have a bit of cash to post bail. I'm not going to spend time at all in this book on conspiracies, since they don't exist. That's because people don't believe in them. One consideration that arises too often is that when a *commission* is created, what follows is a *cover up*. From those two words in italics, we can form the word, *conspiresi*.

Here, we're concerned with technology addicts. You probably know if you one of these people. I'll deal with some of the ways to break away from this obsession, later, difficult as it may seem. I should add that I'm not a *luddite* – that sounds like a paint. I think I could be called a technocritic.

I've written at least four books on the failure of technology. One talks specifically about that with emphasis on television, telephones, cars and computers. The other three books, which include my second novel, should tell you enough just from the title. Refer back to the beginning of this book for the list. My intent is to cover some of the failures that weren't mentioned in those books, or at least aspects therein. This book is also about the environment, too, as you can tell from the title.

Let's start with taxes because we face that burdensome task every April, if you want to wait that long. I do my own taxes since my return is relatively easy. I'm

retired; I have IRA distributions; I collect social security; I have one mutual fund; I have no rental income and no alimony payments. As business expenses, I include my royalties, book sales and expenses on a schedule C. For the federal return, I file a 1040 form, schedules A, B, C and D. It sounds fairly uncomplicated. Then why is it such a headache and burden every March? After all, I said my return was easy.

A few years ago, I decided to create an excel spreadsheet to do all my calculations. It does a great deal and I figured that once it worked properly, I could just plug in new numbers each year and presto, I'm done. Now all I need to do is transfer those numbers to the various forms. Well, that would work except that just about every year some change is made, making the spreadsheet out-of-date and in need of an update. To fill out the forms, I set up the calculations for all the corresponding worksheets. Of course, those could change from year to year as well.

I entered the numbers for 2011 on the spreadsheet, but the 2011 tax dividend / capital gains worksheet was vastly different from the year before. That meant more work, revisions and frustration. In early 2012, I spent quite a few hours determining my federal tax, reserving the following Saturday for transferring the numbers to the forms – six in all covering nine pages.

I can't imagine doing a return handling the sale of a property, stock sales, rentals and whatever else the client has to be worried about. Of course, they have an accountant to do that who might be burdened but takes on the task and thinks of his upcoming paycheck. There has to be an easier way and there is: eliminate the income tax, both personal and corporate, and just collect sales taxes. Either that, or make payment of taxes voluntary. That worked with corporations policing themselves. People will complain about the sales tax but as you can see, those who spend and spend will be paying the most. As far as the corporations, they have no

taxes to pay, but if they fail to follow a regulation, they will be fined – quite heavily. If they cause a mess to the environment, they have to clean it up and pay for the remediation. If they are caught a second time, the fines are vastly increased. A third offense results in an astronomical increase of the fine as well as jail time for the CEO, maybe even those on the board – at least the culprits weren't assigned to death row. And one more thing: companies shouldn't expect any more corporate welfare.

This is a simple but great solution. Because of the need for really strict regulations, high paying jobs are created. Accountants have enough work, so they don't complain and H & R Block figures out a new business strategy. The not-so-busy lawyers are invited to visit the moon – all expenses paid – with some politician who thinks we should establish a McDonalds on the planet for the new colony there. We won't tell them it's a one-way trip. Capitalism still works and better than what we have today. I'm freed of all that time spent just before April 15, which now becomes the feast of St. Calculus.

Since I'm discussing computers and software such as Excel – a huge failure and disappointment along with Word – let's look at the advances in the area over the last forty years. My work with computers began with mainframes, which had a few problems, but over all, worked quite well. Those computers were built, tested and then tested some more – that's why they functioned properly. Sadly, the same can't be said for PCs, whether talking about Microsoft PCs or Apple PCs. Many claim the latter PCs are superior and they may be right, but are flawed in some way. Here are a few reasons why both need treatment: *spellchecker, just do a restart, system processing, please wait, Houston we have a problem, system error, our PCs can't do that, hit any key, VISTA, contact tech support, system updates, invalid data and give up yet?*

I won't explain each of these phrases, because I think you've probably witnessed all of them at some time or other. Each message may seem innocuous, while others dealing with system updates are to be expected. However, you shouldn't have two updates of the same software within a few hours of each other. Restarting a computer for some situation such as a locked screen isn't what any computer should have to resort to escape. By the way, do we really need an escape key? If the screen is locked up, why is there no key to unlock it? If a PC has a mouse, does that prohibit elephants from using it? Why wasn't cheese provided with the mouse? If my PC can crash a lot, should I buy collision insurance? When a computer program blows up, do I need to hire a new staff? You probably never considered any of this.

While on the subject of the PC, I should mention my web site, which I created and maintain. There are tools one can use to monitor activity there. It involves looking at the logs that are taken daily. It's a bit complicated but you don't need to interpolate the results, as some software will do it for you painlessly. For my site, I obtain a few hits daily, including spider hits. I wondered what that meant and I found out. When you see *spider* or *robot* in terms of web traffic or analytics, it just means that a non-human is looking at your site. Does that include salesmen, lawyers and politicians?

I searched around a bit and found out what to do to keep these robots away from my web site. From what I can tell, the spider hits still happen, but those arachnids stop at the home page. With the software I have, this seems to be true, but I have no way of verifying that the robots don't arrive at the lesser pages. How do you do a test on this?

To digress slightly, one of the rules of systems – such as that of computers or weapons – is you never implement before testing. You always need the latter. Another addiction I won't cover in an entire chapter is to Star Wars, specifically being drawn into the Star Wars Initiative (SWI),

as proposed by a former president. I always wondered how to test that system. It just couldn't be done too well. Of course, that didn't stop those who created the atomic bomb – there were numerous tests. When it came to the neutron bomb, I may be wrong, but it wasn't tested. They just couldn't find any volunteers.

The marriage of corporate America with the computer has been very detrimental to the health of the nation. Most emails are junk, the entire concept of email increases the length of the workday and the Internet has provided us with information overload, which you can read about in *Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload* by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenthal.

A short while ago I decided to clean up my supply of business cards. Over the years I accumulated quite a few so I finally threw most of them out, saving one or two, or so I thought. On February 28, 2012, I searched for a specific one, but couldn't find it. It had a direct dial number that I wanted to use. Since I needed to call for a blood test at a diagnostic center, I just called the phone number in the telephone book and naturally I was blessed with voice maze – I'll have more about the telephone shortly. A time was available the next day but I wanted to do it that day, so my other option was to just head to the center and wait. I brought a book along. When I arrived, it was lunchtime – not for me but for the blood sucker – all right, she really is a nice person, but that's exactly her job – so I decided to go home, call and schedule an appointment for the next week. I may have been able to have the blood drawn that day if I could have found that business card or returned later. The appointment was in a few days, which I missed, but luckily I returned that same day and had my blood sample taken, with a minimal wait time, just by entering the place and sitting down. I was lucky, but it shouldn't have been so complicated and such a mess, not unlike that in our congested lives. We have so much information, much of it meaningless, so we toss it and

in the process also discard phone numbers we look for later. Isn't technology wonderful? If you think so, go back to the end of chapter 4 for some warnings.

All these bonuses derived from marrying the business world to technology shouldn't have occurred, but they did. It was all done by people, even the development of computers. The latter don't create problems, humans do. They did a lousy job, but the good news is that they can fix it. It is imperative that all technological problems, whether it be with computers, telephones, automobiles, television or any other innovation, be taken care of by the people who created them, their relatives or friends.

Moving on to television, today's version of it leaves much to be desired – that's the feeling of the majority of people. You can compare it to the program *Seinfeld*. Both started up slowly and there was talk that TV was just a fad that wouldn't last long. After the initial episodes, *Seinfeld* came close to being canned, but somehow it hung on. Television progressed, so much so that we witnessed the *Golden Age of Television*. The show with Jerry, Elaine, George and Kramer reached new heights – it turned into a sensation, with some really funny moments provided by brilliant writing. It was voted the best sitcom ever. Television and *Seinfeld* both faded, with Jerry – the comedian and star, not the character – deciding to pull the plug after a specific time. Maybe that's we should do. The show ended with a great finale – some didn't agree with that assessment – and went out the way it should have.

Unfortunately, television is still with us, worse than ever. All you need do is see what's on: reality TV – that's what most of the shows are, even on the History Channel – various days in court shows, cop and CSI shows, news entertainment and channels dedicated to cooking, sports and other mundane areas. On *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* over twenty years ago, Gallagher offered these insightful words about television: *Sometimes I wish there*

was a knob on the TV so you could turn up the intelligence. They've got one brightness – but it don't work. And why do they call it a TV set when you only get one? In my mind, Gallagher's a genius.

I referenced *Seinfeld* earlier and have most of the shows recorded on video cassettes. Even though the old episodes are shown half a dozen times a day on various cable channels, I don't view them or even the shows I have on tape very much. I'm not an addict, but you could be one or be enthralled by reality TV, old television shows, sitcoms, game shows, or cartoons. It may be hard to distinguish these types of addicts from a generic television addict.

We have a few options to combat the TV generation. Watch it less. This you can do by limiting yourself to one show per night, for starters. Better yet, use your DVD recorder, video recorder or TiVo to your advantage. Decide which shows you wish to view and record them. You can watch them later. If your inventory of recorded programs leaves you behind in viewing, you've selected too many shows. Reduce the number. By watching these recorded programs, you save a few minutes per hour, since a half-hour program without commercials is about twenty minutes. You'll have more free time to communicate with your spouse and children, read a book, smell the roses or just get back to the garden.

Though not entirely responsible for it, cars, trucks and vans have done their part in fostering global warming. In some ways the industry has cleaned up its act by making cars safer – at the same time allowing travel at higher speeds – and adding pollution, among other great features. Sadly, the numbers of miles per gallon have decreased over the last thirty years, not increased. We're going backwards. Creating huge gas-guzzlers isn't helping. When the hybrids made the scene, many thought we were on our way to a better tomorrow. Whether you create a hybrid, completely electric car or one that runs on hydrogen, the manufacturer needs to

make sure that the new technology isn't more harmful to the planet than the old. In addition, the miles per gallon numbers should blow by the other vehicles.

There are many solutions to this dilemma, especially reducing the number of hours we spend on the road. The last five years before I retired, I commuted to Rochester from Buffalo for my software contracts, driving alone, so I put on a few miles. I offset that a bit by registering over forty miles for each gallon of gas that I used, even approaching fifty. To further help the environment, I stayed overnight in Rochester as well as working a four-day week. I even tried to telecommute, but management wouldn't allow it. Shame on them. We all have to do our part.

Another thing that can be done is to stay off the roads on as many of the days of the week as possible. This can be done by car pooling, using mass transit and grouping together our errands so that we combine trips to the library, grocery store and cleaners. Drive on one day instead of three. Walk to the corner store for a video or newspaper if it's a half-mile away. You'll help the planet, save money on gas and get some exercise. Just don't buy too many Devil Dogs at the 7-Eleven, thus negating the benefits of the small workout.

When it comes to the telephone, the cell phone is the worst innovation. This can hardly be disputed when the majority of people say it should never have been invented. Simultaneously, more than 50% of the public says they can't live without it. Note that this last thought doesn't contradict the first opinion. It just means we have a lot of addicts. I won't get into the annoying features accompanying that gadget but instead hone in on a book by Dr. Devra Davis entitled *Disconnect: The Truth about Cell Phone Radiation, What the Industry Has Done to Hide It, and How to Protect Your Family*. She outlines the danger of cell phones, with emphasis on the harm they do to young children – big users – as well as the brain cancer and death of

people who just about had them attached to their bodies. Besides the book, you can find more insight from two links on the homepage of my web site.

When I tell people about the danger, they insist that they only use theirs sparingly. I hope they're not humoring me. Still, if cell phones cause brain tumors with excessive use, shouldn't we be concerned with any exposure to them? The Green American Magazine issue of January / February 2011 suggests the old landline may be the best option. Avoid cordless phones as the base spews vast amounts of radiation. There are a few other suggestions offered in the magazine, also on my web site.

We need to consider this cell phone thing in a similar manner to our approach a few chapters ago with regard to global warming. Either cell phones cause harm or they don't. Devra Davis's book, *Disconnect* shows that radiation is a concern, but let's assume that those gadgets are safe. We can keep using them or at least use them less. Taking the latter approach, we might be OK if radiation is truly a concern. If cell phone usage leads to health problems, hospital visits and cancer can only be expected. Not too many people care for surgery or visits to the doctor, except for a new type of addict that I haven't covered, nor does Blue Cross. I'll get to it later. If you admit that there is some harm from those devices, wouldn't the cumulative usage eventually do you in? What do you think is the right choice here?

Cell phones have evolved into gadgets of non-communication. With them, you can take photos, surf the web, send text messages, watch movies or television shows and blend margaritas. All right, you got me – that last choice isn't possible, just yet. I'm sure that I've missed a few applications on the cell phone and by the time you read this there will be more that weren't available when I wrote this. The phone isn't what it used to be. Despite what many say,

there seems to be less communication between people today with computers and cell phones.

In her 2011 book, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Sherry Turkle concentrates on what the technology of PCs and all their derivatives – cell phones, laptops, mobile devices, Ipods, Kindles, along with texting, instant messaging and email – have done to enslave the population throughout the world. She is the Abby Rockefeller Mauze Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT and a licensed clinical psychologist. *Alone Together* is a call to stop and smell the coffee.

The answering machine was a good advance, but no one can recommend the call-waiting feature. Caller ID was good until ID block came along. To really mess matters up, team the computer with the telephone. I'm not an expert on this but I think it goes something like this. A computer hooked into a few phones dials a group of telephone numbers and there are some people monitoring what's going on. If a call hits an answering machine, the message is left with no further action needed, unless the recipient happens to pick up the phone. In that case, or if the call results in someone answering it before their message comes on, a blinking light tells the men and women to pick up the phone and engage the customer. This truly annoying method of calling is used by telemarketers, fundraisers, bill collectors and credit card companies.

Most likely, you've seen another application uniting the computer and the telephone. You call a business and wind up weaving through a maze of options, never even talking to a human, no matter what you do. This is not fun for anyone, but now it's even worse. When you call a corporation with a question that needs a human response, you wind up talking to a *smart* computer. Maybe that word in italics is similar to the meaning in our youth when a parent responded to us, *Don't get smart!* Obviously, the system has

a few bugs to work out. This is illustrated when the computer asks you a question requiring only a *yes* or *no* reply. When you reply *no*, the computer retorts, *I don't understand you*. Do you think maybe the response should have been *nyet*?

As far as television and the world wide web, they scream at us to *buy, buy, buy*. We really should answer, *bye, bye, bye* – and not for just a few hours. There are some good things that each offers – not very many, though. Also, we can't stay away forever because of our addictions. The answer might be to reply, *bye – I may return again*.

As far as the experiments I described on page 7 in the introduction, here's how matters played out. On the weekend before, I managed to not turn on the power switch on my desktop. Thus I kept off the Internet and failed to check my email, but I usually only look at it on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, anyway. A week later, on Easter Saturday and Sunday, I repeated the accomplishment. I can improve on the email checking idea by restricting myself to only one email glance on each of those three days. As far as staying away from technology connected to my PC, it wasn't as easy as I thought. This is due to my reliance on my PC for data that I keep there, which I should probably move elsewhere.

For the Easter Sunday trial, there were nine attendees and there was a bet on the technology habit, which never came off. I stayed away from it – it was only for about five hours – and so did six others. The two who used gadgets were the youngest person and fourth youngest of our group and their technology use was done sparingly. We passed the test, but I have to say that the two may have been bored. We should have forced them into the conversation more than we did. Another factor that really affected the day was the command to stay off the gadgets from one of the hosts.

I mentioned an email at the end of chapter 4 dealing with GPS and texting. Start considering how far we've come, and you can't help but realize that today technology is spinning completely out of control. As so many new options

are being offered and advances are before us, new concerns and difficulties arise. Simultaneously, the old messes remain.

“The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.” – Isaac Asimov



14. A change is gonna come

The title of chapter represents the title of a song by one of the legends of gospel, soul, pop, rhythm and blues: Sam Cooke. Released after he was murdered in Los Angeles in 1964 at the age of 33, it's an anthem for doing things differently. Although kind of an opposite, news addiction was highlighted in chapter 12. An addiction to the old isn't the opposite of one to the news. Someone with the former doesn't want to leave the past and doesn't want to see change. People with this in mind may very well be control addicts or even money addicts, maybe both.

I briefly mentioned *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama* by Peniel E. Joseph. It's all about change and highlights the activities of five great Americans. Last but not least is Joseph, whose book showcases his abilities as both a writer and teacher. He introduces us to four outstanding individuals, two of whom were assassinated in the 1960s while working for social justice that should have been accomplished during the years of Reconstruction after the Civil War. Stokely Carmichael was the third person of the group who risked his life registering African-Americans to vote in the deep South. His efforts burned him out and he died in 1998 of prostate cancer, at the age of 57. We know the last person as the forty-fourth president of the United States, Barack Obama. Each of these people was significant in overturning an addiction to the status quo, advocated by those people who stood in the way of progress and change. Change for the sake of change is not always a good thing. In this century and the ones preceding, it was necessary since the teachings of the Founding Fathers almost two hundred fifty years ago haven't been followed. The words of the Declaration of Independence, *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these*

are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are not limited to pale males, that is, only one sex with white skin qualifies them for consideration.

This addiction to keeping the status quo can be translated as the addiction of non-change, holding on and not letting go. We experience this innumerable times in our lives when someone we know leaves us, never to be seen again. It has been described that people are like deer: they come into our lives and then are gone. I've also heard that people come into our lives for a season, reason or relationship. Some have to be let go. We're all guilty of this addiction of hanging on. Maybe we just aren't comfortable with change, but it's inevitable, even if it happens too fast.

I mentioned connections of a few addictions before, but I'd like to comment briefly on some habits that haven't been covered. The list seems unending, beginning with Harry Potter and education. A few summers ago at an arts and crafts festival in Western New York, someone mentioned that his granddaughter was an avid reader, adding that she has read Harry Potter fifteen times. I wanted to reply that this child is not what he said but rather a Harry Pothead addict – if you haven't already figured it out, I'm an agitator. In this case, I kept quiet, but there are people like that who only read the books of an author or two. Others only read books on the best seller lists, which doesn't assure anyone that these are good books. You can see that the Harry Potter child may even have been an education addict. The latter are the individuals who go to school forever – not to be equated with the good habit of learning, exemplified by a person continually in quest of knowledge, asking questions – but none of them dumb.

I mentioned vitamins in chapter one, but didn't connect any habit to it. Vanity, good health and exercise could be grouped in along with those pills. Everyone desires good health, which exercise can help accomplish. Vanity that embellishes face lifts and changes provided by questionable

surgery is not an addiction to be proud of. The health habit is carried to extremes when someone heads over to the doctor's office at the first sign of a cold. Connected to vanity is the cutting-the-grass addiction, which could easily have been mentioned in chapter 7.

I view many movies but don't have that addiction. I pick the flicks I watch and don't subscribe to Netflix or even have a high definition television. I think buying this type of TV encourages one to watch more mindless television (MTV.) There are too many motion pictures that are pure trash, with gore, blood, explosions and special effects so numerous that they're no longer special. I saw a movie recently that was all done on a blue screen. How can that even be classified as a movie? Maybe it's a technological comic book. Creating a movie based on a television show, producing a remake of an old classic film or even a **Rocky** sequel probably won't be that great. Do something original, but not incomprehensible or outlandish.

Many people are into voodoo, vampires, ghosts and the occult. That's the craze today as many movies and television shows deal with this zaniness. It may be all right just as long as blood and altars aren't involved. Scary movies today can't compare with the black and white classics of days gone by, which produced fear in the viewer without all the creepiness. Alfred Hitchcock's **Psycho** – in black and white, but with words – stands out.

When it comes to conspiracies, you have addicts, who say that everything is a conspiracy. I can't buy that just as I can't buy those who deny that conspiracies exist. Just consider people who felt that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing President Kennedy. These people look down on those who disagree with them, but aren't they themselves part of a conspiracy begun with that tragic event and the subsequent Warren Commission? All you have to do is study a bit of the past to witness the actions of conspirators. They've been going on for years.

Some people are animal addicts. They love their cat or dog – that’s fine. The people to watch out for are those who love all animals but carry that too far. When Fang or Fluffy is more important to an individual than that person’s spouse or family, something is wrong and needs changing. It has been shown that pets improve the health of their owners. Each receives something from the other. Just be reasonable in your devotion.

Racism, hate, discrimination and white can be joined together. The Ku Klux Klan is the best example of this union. Any addiction in this group is the opposite of social justice, which I talked about earlier. In fact, I spent an entire chapter on control, another relative. It’s amazing that people would don white hoods and kill other human beings, just because their skin was lighter than the people fighting for justice. The people of the world today are not white or black. We’re all beige or what might be called a shade of brown. If we hate anyone whose skin is lighter or darker than our own, we’ll have no friends, and forever war.

You’ve probably known individuals who are addicted to cleaning, maybe because of their avoidance and fear of germs. I’ve known people who had weekly cleaning rituals involving *Spic and Span*. I clean but prefer order since you can tidy up today and tomorrow there will be dust somewhere. Others may be allergic to cleaning, that is, they avoid it at all costs. Spending all that time doesn’t leave you much time to do important things.

We haven’t dealt with all addictions – there are so many of them, so I’ll close with a comment on politics and religion, which should be separate. Too many people want them combined in a democracy, but if they’re joined, fascism or a dictatorship results. All you have to do is look at history for verification of that. The Founding Fathers got something right, but unfortunately many haven’t been paying attention or simply interpreting the Constitution and the Bible to fit their own needs.

15. What the world needs now is love

As you can guess, this final chapter deals with love. As far as the addiction of love, danger lurks when it becomes an obsession, especially if it leads to stalking someone. If it doesn't go that far, it can still be a problem. This covers romantic love as well as other forms of L. O. V. E.

I'm no Dr. Ruth, but I have a few ideas. When it comes to romantic love, it seems as though there are no rules or ways to figure out if it will be a success. However, I think there are a few thoughts that may be helpful. First, *love at first sight* probably won't work. *Like at first sight* seems to have more promise. The former might be a type of addiction – at least it appears to be materialistic. You can refer back to chapter 6 for a refresher.

There are three types of addiction that I'll get into before talking about romantic love. The first is a kind that can't lead to anything other than disaster, divorce and heartache. It's the smothering type and never-say-die attitude of attraction that one feels for another that appears to be romantic love. This is an addiction discussed earlier. I'll leave it up to you to figure out what kind that is. It happens when a man meets a woman and can never let her go. What he does is promises her the moon – really unrealistic since it's reserved for a colony – in order for her to marry him. At this point, he's finished, as she's completely in the driver's seat. He may *be giving it all he's got* – another great thought in a song by Chuck Mangione – while she's taking it all in and checking out her options. She may have had a different person in mind, but this sounds like a deal too good to pass up. Loving in return never entered her mind – at least not too much.

This could somehow work out for both of them, but it could lead to her taking him for everything he's worth when she begins an affair with another individual. Assuming he has a few dollars, that may not be all that the husband with

the addiction winds up losing. In order for romantic love to succeed, each party has to give equally, which wasn't happening here. As I said, this is another kind of addiction.

The gentleman's desire for marriage may be no different than what other people seek. These are the people who marry and it doesn't work out. The first was Zsa Zsa Gabor, who had enough husbands to field a baseball team. Then there was Elizabeth Taylor – her husbands would have had to play without a complete outfield, but could manage a basketball team with a few reserves. Then we have Mickey Rooney, who was born in the same state as I was, on the same month and day of the month, but in a different year. I have to be careful what I say about him since he's still with us. However, I think he has a good sense of humor so let me say that his wives wouldn't have had enough players to go up against either of those two baseball teams of husbands.

You probably know men and women in this category. They are divorced but then marry a second time – maybe even a third or more. They're just trying to prove that it's not their fault and they can succeed with the opposite sex. I've known a few people who have had at least three spouses – not quite up to the count for our Hollywood threesome. Every one of these people may have had romantic love in mind, but we can't exclude this addiction to marriage idea, either.

The last kind of addiction happens when cougars or rhinos enter the scene. Apparently, love happens between various species. Most people know cougars as older females who look for younger men. With that thought, I think you know what a rhino is. For those who don't, the rhino is the cougar's counterpart. In either case there could be romantic love, but it could involve addictions of another kind – both discussed in previous chapters. It may be a better idea to pair the cougars with the rhinos.

For true romantic love, meeting someone online, at a bar or at church might result in obsession and

disappointment. The first two possibilities have a good possibility of sex coming into the picture too soon. On the other hand, dating someone at work almost seems like a last resort. It may be frowned upon or even forbidden, so most likely, it's out of the question. The biggest problem I see is seeing the other person on the job every day after a breakup. How do you meet someone with romance in mind?

As far as *blind* dates, perhaps that adjective is there because love is adequately defined by it or we'll never see it work that way. With that option, two people are fixed up – as if either or both of them are broken – and that arrangement may actually work out. After all, the fixers know each person and figure sparks could fly. The difficulty is that the setup people may not know enough about one or the other person, so it could just as easily be a waste of time for both parties. Still, on occasion, romance has resulted from all of the listed couplings.

In the 2010 movie, *Barney's Version*, our hero loses his first wife, Clara, who commits suicide shortly after the marriage ceremony. Maybe, she didn't like his cooking. His second attempt comes after he has a blind date. She becomes Barney's spouse, but he's not quite through as he later marries Miriam Grant after being swept away by love at first sight. You'll have to see how all this plays out by viewing the movie, but you'll enjoy the ride. It's a great love story with a stellar performance by Paul Giamatti in the role of Barney Panofsky.

There may be something in *like at first sight* – in this case love at second sight is fine. Two young people who go to grade school and high school together and hang out, becoming friends, get to know each other quite well. There's no pressure to impress the other and eventually true love could develop. Being friends initially could be helpful in avoiding the situation of addiction, in case romance blossoms between the two. Going from being friends to romance is more likely than moving from romance to

friendship. Jerry and Elaine on *Seinfeld* may be the exception since they were romantically involved – even before the first episode of the program – and then became friends. In one episode, Jerry just about refused sex with Elaine since he felt their friendship would suffer. I don't have to remind you that *Seinfeld* was fantasy.

Avoiding romantic addiction is harder than you think. Someone mentioned this bit of wisdom to me regarding serious relationships: *If there's any doubt, then there's no doubt*. Translated, it means find someone else. As always, many people can't see the forest for the trees. Add love to the picture and now that person is in the jungle – there's danger there.

Romance is very subjective, while breakups are objective. The more additive the love, the less chance there is for seeing what's really taking place. When there is a rupture, even if there is a possibility for a future reconciliation, the best approach might be caution. Rushing back immediately may only return the relationship to a repeat performance of disaster. No one wants that. Hold back. Delaying for six months may not be what should be done, either. I've always figured that after a split, if one person decides to get back together, the other should really think about it. If there is no further rendezvous, maybe that was the best thing for both people.

As I mentioned earlier, there are no easy answers. Blind dates work out as do meetings on the Internet or at a bar. People who start first as friends and later marry aren't guaranteed happiness, so Dr. Ruth, now what? With the divorce rate as high as it is, people may give up rather than trying to make it work. If two people each care exclusively for each other – forgetting self – it could work.

In early 2012, I viewed the absolutely wonderful, but sad movie, *Marley and Me*. It was a great story illustrating the love and unselfishness of two people for each other. I read the 2005 book, *Marley and Me: Life and Love with the*

World's Worst Dog by John Grogan a few months before I saw the flick, and I recommend it as well. There was another kind of love in both the book and motion picture – unconditional love. That went both ways: between each family member and Marley and the latter's devotion to John, Jennifer, Conor, Patrick and Coleen. Marley knew what he was getting into by not messing with cougars or rhinos.

Romantic love can never be perfect love, but this love between the world's worst dog and the Grogan family came close to perfection. It is not unlike the love of a mother for a child – love without bounds despite everything. Unconditional love is devoid of addiction and occurs throughout the world when someone offers another comfort, food or shelter with nothing in return. It's also evident when people visit the sick and dying or go the extra mile to come to the aid of another.

As you can see, pain and suffering result because of addictions to control, money, drugs, technology, oil, materialism and war. Brave people have been standing up and working to make this world a better place for centuries. Their struggle is nothing more than the achievement of social justice and seeing to it that the law is not being broken. The 2000 motion picture, *Steal this Movie*, is a great remembrance about a charismatic, energetic, brilliant leader during the Vietnam War. His life and his efforts were inspiring, as is the story told by Robert Greenwald, who describes those individuals who were in great danger as they called for voting rights for African-Americans and an end to unjust, unnecessary and immoral war. Besides Greenwald, the others, Anita Hoffman, attorney Gerry Lefcourt, Jerry Rubin, Bobby Seale and Tom Hayden might be as familiar as the hero of the movie, Abbie Hoffman. Not to be overlooked is the fact that the latter had a great sense of humor and *Steal this Movie* is a love story.

There were so many choices I could have used for the title of this chapter, such as the Beatles', *All you need is love*

or *Love can make you happy* by Mercy. What I chose was the 1965 song by Jackie DeShannon. It truly says a lot. Each of the fifteen chapter titles musically encapsulates various addictions, but I never mentioned music itself as a habit. Love and music are both addictions that are welcome, so long as one doesn't get carried away with either. Just consider the 1976 song by the Ojays, *I Love Music*. It has both *music* and *love* in the title. An unforgettable lyric in the song is *Music is the healing force of the world*.

Quite a few other songs have the same connection, such as the 1974 Orleans song, *Let There Be Music*, from the album of the same name. The words, *We free the people with music*, are from the title song of the CD, **Milagro**, by Santana. The translation of the word, *milagro* is miracle. While in college, I joined the glee club and on the first day I was at practice, the first song we rehearsed – for some of us it was learned – was *Let There Be Music*, an absolutely beautiful and harmonic work. This song was not the same one that Orleans recorded – they came up with theirs way after we sang it in glee club. A few years after that rehearsal, I sang this glee club song with our singing group in a joint concert of men's choruses – I didn't have a solo, but sang with the others. Even without practice, I recalled the harmonies as well as all the words. Some things you just don't forget.

So much can be accomplished with music. If you're singing and dancing, you won't be thinking about hate or getting even with someone. You won't have time to do that. You won't be envious, ostentatious or have any anger. Music uplifts with the words, music and the harmonies. That is one thing we all need in our lives: harmony. The starting point is with each one of us. If we can't have peace within ourselves, there will be no peace.

I've discussed a list of undesirable habits, but are there any good ones? You can be addicted to really good things like love, music or peace, but nonetheless, problems

can still result. Nonetheless, these three fit into the category of good choices, along with humor, hope, faith, charity, justice, truth, reading, learning and books.

I've indicated that I don't subscribe to any newspapers, but read as many books as I can. One author who I recommend quite highly is John Grisham. One of his insightful works is a historical novel that I finished reading in March 2012, *The Chamber*. It's has nothing to do with the Chamber of Commerce. Grisham is referring to the gas chamber. Thinking about it, both of these chambers are nasty. His novel is about capital punishment, the KKK, social justice, family, discrimination, law, racism, hate and the addiction to the truth. Adam Hall – once known as Alan Cayhall – defends his racist grandfather, Sam Cayhall in an attempt to save him from the gas chamber. Adam does this because he wants to find out the truth about his family. You could say he had an addiction to it, but as the death hour draws near, Grisham makes us wonder if Adam did the right thing coming to Mississippi from his office in Chicago. That's all I'll tell you – you'll have to read the book. When you do, you'll be deeply affected. I didn't mention it, but the book is also about unconditional love.

Previously, I talked about Leymah Gbowee's book dealing with the Liberian women's struggle for *peace*. While they were busy doing that, there were times when that very same concept was missing from the movement itself. There was bickering and fighting – not the physical kind, but the result of pride and addictions to control and power. I'm sure you've sat in on meetings of groups whose members only cared about the next meeting, rather than doing anything meaningful. These individuals wanted to be recognized without putting forth any effort. That was happening in Liberia. Read *Mighty Be Our Powers* for the inspiration as well as for the warnings about the pettiness that gets in the way of progress, sometimes caused by addictions.

All through this work, I have mentioned my addictions – we all are guilty of one or another, to some extent. I mentioned moderation before, and you can see that addictions can hurt others and be hazardous to a person’s health. This applies to most addictions. You can also see the connectivity of so many of these habits throughout the book. Money and materialism are intertwined but so are war, power and control. The associations don’t end there, but we have it in our power to manage and overcome these addictions. If we don’t, we will suffer or much worse. We’ll always have sports addicts with us. We may never rid the world of war addicts, but wouldn’t it be great to eliminate war in the near future? The solution is love.

You may not have heard of Kevin Clash, but you may have heard of his friend, Elmo of the Muppets. Clash is the man behind that red creature – I should say underneath him since he is the creator and puppeteer responsible for bringing delight into so many households for so many adults as well as children. Kevin’s book, *My Life as a Furry Red Monster: What Being Elmo Has Taught Me about Life, Love and Laughing out Loud*, is the biography of a teacher, who was dedicated to follow his dream without a college degree, which he has achieved. You can also watch the Independent Lens movie on PBS, *Being Elmo: A Puppeteer’s Journey*. Clash touched so many people throughout the world and continues in that effort today. His book is about family, education, idealism, optimism and above all, love. This is all we need.

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