Thursday, April 01, 2004                                                c:/wklyltr4.4wc12

                               (2004 NHN&WR letter/story/poem/card/whatever # 5)

**UVB, or not to Be**

(Shakespearean study program coming along fine.)

          Our ‘*Is it Black, or is it Bleu?*’ letter drew surprising comment.  One was a three page commentary on over socialization by *‘Big Brother’* Governments.  I have to admit, this got me thinking and if  *“he whose name will not be mentioned”* thought that letter socialistic, wait till he reads this one!  Ken is still being ‘nickled & dimed’ by petty annoyances related to staph infection recovery.  The latest is a red rash on the lower legs.  Looks like a cross between poison ivy and psoriasis.  Boy, does it ever itch.  Into combat mode we went, bringing up proven “WMD” (Weapons of Malady Destruction) : Bag Balm, Duct Tape, Calamine Lotion, Tar Soap and Vinegar Water Soaks.  Struck out.  The ultimate fall-back measure is called for, an appointment with Dr. Hobbs.  As this entailed a three hour trip to North Hero, you know the itch was bad.  We pick up the story from there.

The consensus of the office visit was psoriasis, 2 to 0, Lucile & Hobbs yes, Ken abstained, Jason stayed in the car.  The initial course of action would be ultraviolet light.  We were to report progress or lack of same in two weeks by phone.  OK,  ….. back to Ottawa we went.  Ultraviolet light comes in two flavors, A & B.  We were to use UVB, but how would we get it?  We could sit out in the back yard and sun ourselves.  With the average temperature 20 below zero, this did not seem to be an option.  We could sit by a southern window on sunny days, but we have no sunny southern window and few sunny days.  One west facing window has sunlight from 2 to 3 P.M. about one day in four.  That was not going to cut it.  Lucile suggests a Tanning Salon.  C’mon Lucile, be serious.  Ken doesn’t even go to old fashion barber shops let alone unisex dens of hair/body care.  Marc says treatments are administered at the hospital.  C’mon Marc, hospitals started the whole thing.  Nope, no way, …..  for *“Do It Yourself Man”* it would be home sessions or nothing.  While growing up in Hempstead L.I. N.Y, Ken’s family had the benefit/misfortune of a sun lamp.  The lamp was tall and had a long flexible neck.      Into it, one screwed a special ‘Sun Lamp Bulb’.  Feel like a little sun?  Move the lamp next to the bed, strip to the waist, lie down and you’re all set.  Ah, luxuriate while developing a golden tan that all ‘Palefaces’ at school would envy.  The downside?  School the day after falling asleep under special ‘Sun Lamp Bulb’.  *“Hey everybody, ….. look at Beetface!”*  Peer ridicule and parental admonition soon resulted in Pavlovian association: SunLamp and OvenTimer.  Suing the maker, seller or recommender of special ‘Sun Lamp Bulb’ because of our stupidity?   Never entered our heads.  Fast forwarding up to Ottawa, we hit an impasse.

          With a course of action chosen we now find residential UVB lamps can not be purchased in Canada.  Drug store conversations went something like this:

*“We only have lamps that simulate sun.  They won’t do anything for skin problems.”*

*“Our lamps just combat ‘Winter Depression’.  Are you depressed”? “Well I wasn’t, but am rapidly becoming so.”*

*“They are not sold in Canada, too many people got hurt.”*

*“I hear they are still available in the U.S.  Go across the border and get one, but don’t say I told you.”*

Good Grief!  Ken is indignant.  Government politicians telling an intelligent Harvard graduate he is incapable of operating a sun lamp!  (Wonder how many oxymoronic comments that sentence will engender?)  Because he might hurt himself?  What about cars?  They hurt loads of people each year, let’s make them illegal.

This is not a scenario confined to Canada.  We like the ease and convenience of electric kettles.  The one we have in North Hero recently died after years of loyal service..  Could we go out and purchase a new one?  Of course not.  The U.S. Government does not consider them safe, whether the operator is a Harvard Grad or not.  Where do we buy them?  Canada.   We have even smuggled them to users as far south as North Carolina.  The situation brings ‘Old MacDonald’ to mind.  With UVB here, ….. and  kettles there,  here a lamp there a pot, customs all over the lot ….. Old Ken Jefferson has a rash, Itch-I Itch-I-O.   But we digress, and the itch is not getting any better.  Our first thought was to cross the border during daylight hours, buy two sun lamp bulbs, screw them into our headlights and drive back..  Stop, ….. old fashioned thinking.  Headlights are sealed units and sun lamps take incandescent type bulbs now.  Better solution, arrange for a four pack of UVB bulbs in the U.S.  We  already have a new boxed  ‘Betty Crocker’ Bouilloire Electrique, capacite de 12 tasses awaiting smuggle to Vermont.  Eyeballing same we would guess it’s box would hold six UVB bulbs.  A devious plan simmers.  Empty the ;Betty Crocker’ box.and use it for our lunchbox..  Cross to the U.S.  Get the UVB bulbs. Put them in the ‘Betty Crocker’ box.  Put dirty laundry in the UVB carton.  Cross back to Canada.  Save the UVB carton to transport Betty’s Bouilloire Electrique, capacite de 12 tasses  on the next North Hero trip.  Don’t you just love it when a plan comes together.  If Ken cleans up so he doesn’t look like a terrorist and all NHN&WR Staff look old and helpless it should work.

We have put deep thought into this letter and think we have the drift of the way things are going.

Banning UVB lamps will lead to walkup ‘Bath Tub Tanning Dives’.  *“Knock three times and ask for Louie.”*

Clandestine neighborhood ‘Kettle Clubs’ will spring up. *“It’s the Oldest Established Permanent Floating Coffee Game in U.S.”*

Didn’t we try legislating ‘goodness’ back in the twenties?  It doesn’t work, and I resent being protected from myself.  Meanwhile, *“Lucile ….. where is the Calamine Lotion?”*

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A last minute addendum.  Ottawa schools are closing playgrounds in the winter.  Supposedly frozen ground presents a greater potential hazard to falling children.  Two quotes from The Ottawa Citizen’s, February 13  City Editorial.

*“This kind of warning, while well intentioned, is symptomatic of a philosophy that pushes risk ever further from the individual.  Within reason, questions of safety should be left to teachers and parents.”*

*“Our children are learning a dangerous lesson: the belief that they have a right to be protected from all risk.  If we do not want to raise a litigious generation, it’s time to stop ducking liability and start teaching accountability.”*

At the risk of being serious, we concur.

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Hey Hey Hey!!!! Last minute UVB reprieve from our neighborhood electrician!  UVB letter #2 coming up soon!

Lucile & Ken.

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