Monday, December 12, 2005. c:/wklylt5.5wc16

 (2005 NHN&WR letter/story/poem/card # 21)

**December 12th.**

 It is 9:20 A.M., December 12th 2005. We were going to send a NHN&WR Christmas/Holiday (Christian/Non-Christian, politically correct/incorrect, US-Canadian) Greeting this morning. (Actually #13 on the days ‘to-do list’.) We have not gotten to it yet.. In fact, truth be known, we are not having an exceptionally good day and may go back to bed before something really drastic happens. Our weekly morning physical regimen includes a 10 minute stint on an exercise bike. (Entire Physical Regimen available upon request, … no charge.) A timer is used. Daydreaming combats boredom. Today the bike stint seems long. A glance at the timer. Hasn’t moved! Hasn’t moved? Check a clock. Good grief, … been daydreaming twenty minutes. Wasted 10 minutes. What a way to start the day. One discipline remains, sit-ups. They are done and the scene moves to the winery (laundry).

 We have Chablis in final fermentation stage and Bordeaux Blanc in secondary fermentation stage.. Time to check the specific gravity of the latter. Golly, … the airlock plug is mashed down too far. Can’t get hold of it with the fingers. Trusty ‘Swiss Army Knife’ to the rescue. Pry that son-of-a-gun out of the carboy.. Ouch, … Trusty ‘Swiss Army Knife’ folds back on poor thumb! Et Tu ‘Swiss Army Knife’. Hmmmmn, not bleeding too badly. If this batch was Burgundy we could probably continue sans band-aid, but it’s white. Upstairs for a band-aid. Back, … continuing. Any blood on the wine thief? No, … good. Specific Gravity 0.995.

 Lucile is up. She checks the day’s ‘to-do list’. She comments.

 “*#12 is ‘Mix African Violet Plant Food’, let’s do that now. And you forgot the front door Christmas wreath, that’ll be #17.”*

Our bottle says*, “Schultz 8-14-9 African Violet Liquid Plant Food.”* And since this is Canada our bottle also says, *“Violette Africaine Engrais Liquide.”* Like the namesake on ‘Hogan’s Heroes’, Schultz instructions really say nothing. To wit:

 *“Just 7 drops per liter of water every time you water. Water from top to bottom. Avoid wetting leaves. For feeding once or twice a month use up to 14 drops per liter of water. One full squeeze of the dropper dispenses approximately 14 drops.”*

There you have it. Now I ask you, Water from the top? Everyone knows you water Violets from the bottom. Use this stuff every time you water? Water just once or twice a month? Don’t get the leaves wet? Good Grief, … I suppose we could use the wine thief to get the liquid food past the leaves, but this would no doubt be detrimental to future wine bouquet. Your Editors discuss the situation. A compromise is reached. Ken will mix it, Lucile will apply it.

 Time for breakfast. Bacon and hash browns. Cavendish frozen hash brown potato patties/galettes de pommes de terre, have always been heated in the conventional oven. This A.M. Ken tries something different. The micro-wave. More instructions.

*“Preheat browning tray for 4-5 minutes on high. Place 2 patties on tray and heat on medium heat for 2 minutes, turn and heat for 1-1/2 minutes or to desired crispness.”*

Instructions are followed. Lucile calls from the living room,

*“What are you doing out there.”*

*“Heating up the micro-wave tray.”*

*“If there is nothing on it you’ll burn a hole in the middle.”*

*“Burn a hole?”*

*“Yes, … a hole.”*

Ken peeks in the micro-wave. Too late. Dark brown spot, direct center, about the size of a half dollar with a tiny hole burned right through in the middle. Morning breakfast is zapped in a pasta dish. Conventional oven browns are much better. One patty was eaten, one was tossed in the garbage.

 Now to the wreath, homemade, assorted nuts (no peanuts) & pine cones with big bow. The squirrels ate all the peanuts last year. The front door has a large oval leaded glass panel. It is very difficult to get a screw into this leaded glass panel. Ken had fashioned a special hook which he sticks up with , … yes, … you guessed it, duct tape. The wreath and hook had been placed on the living room table the day before. The wreath was still there. No hook.

*“Lucile, where’s the hook for the Christmas wreath, it was on this table.”*

*“Oh oh, I threw that in the garbage yesterday, I’ll get it.”*

*“Don’t bother, … it will be covered with uneaten galettes de pommes de terre*.”

Ken makes another special hook. Duct tape is gotten. It is a brand new role. It seems to be welded with an inch of sticky stuff every six inches or so and is impossible to unroll in a usable form. It is taken to the kitchen counter. With much difficulty three feet is torn off in hopes that the roll will normalize itself. Sticky stuff from the tape is now all over the kitchen counter, ... and worse yet, the band-aid from the thumb is now stuck on the three-foot length of tape which has assumed a life of its own. Counter is a mess and fingers are sticking to each other. A new band-aid is called for. Boy, ever try to get one of those little guys free from its wrapper with sticky fingers which refuse to act independently?

(At this very point of the writing, Lucile came into the office and asked for a straight razor blade. She is trying to clean up the kitchen counter.)

OK, back to the morning travails. Three more feet are ripped off. Repetition of band-aid transferitis. Good Grief. Finally, after the fourth band-aid the piece of duct tape comes off clean. Six-inch pieces are cut. The hook is taped up and the wreath hung on the leaded glass front door. Voila! Eureka! Off to the normal post exercise regimen: The Reading Regimen.

 The 2005-2006 winter reading program is: Novels. Three *‘Best 100 Novel Lists’* were scanned this fall. Sixteen novels, present on each list which had never been read, were chosen. (NHN&WR’s Sixteen Novels for 2005-2006 available upon request, … no charge.) First of these sixteen is ‘Ulysses’ by James Joyce. Have any of you ever read this? If you haven’t, … don’t. Like a first Shakespeare it seems to be written in a foreign language. No continuity, no central character/narrator and a wandering mélange of unconnected wayward thoughts. It is very important to mark your place in this book. If you don’t, it is almost impossible to locate where you were, … mainly because you didn’t have the slightest idea what you were reading in the first place.. And Good Grief, … wouldn’t you know it, on this December 12th morning the Ulysses bookmark is missing. Just back up about 50 pages I guess. What a morning, … been up 4 hours and seriously considering a nap. Better not, bed might fall down. Broken timer, sliced open thumb, suspect plant food, burnt-out micro-wave tray, yuky hash browns, and back to page 68 in Ulysses. Don’t think we will ever consider a NHN&WR Christmas/Holiday (Christian/Non-Christian, politically correct/incorrect, US-Canadian) Greeting again.

 But since we have reached this point anyway and are attempting to persevere, … back to item #13 on today’s ‘to do list’,

Merry Christmas All!

Holiday Wishes to all!

Happy New Year to All!

 Can’t believe this. Lucile is back in the Office. The Christmas Wreath just fell off the leaded glass front door.

 From Ottawa, Lucile & Ken.