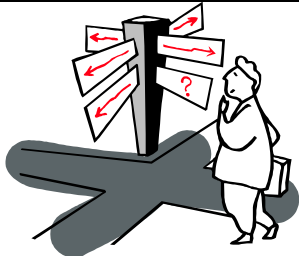


A Seeker's Journal

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FINDING ADVENTURE

NOW AND THEN I think of a favorite childhood character, a Mr. Wiggily Longears, whose adventures always seemed to make life more exciting for himself and those around him. For those who may not know of Uncle Wiggily, he is the central character in a series of delightful children's books written by Howard R. Garis. Uncle Wiggily always looked for adventure and always found it. Within each of his adventures was a lesson about life; a good example for children who read about him.

Now, from the weathered position of senior citizen I wonder if Uncle Wiggily's upbeat approach to the adventures that life offers is not a respectable road for the older generation as well as the younger. If you think about it a bit, that annoying trip to the supermarket could be turned into an interesting event—an adventure. All it takes is a little imagination and a measure of anticipation. I don't like pushy people with pushy carts in the aisles of my supermarket; I hate being crowded and rushed. It might add a touch of adventure if I were to keep a record of the number to times someone bumped me with a cart or pushed me in a checkout line. Should the perpetrator note my tally and inquire, that would be an opportunity for additional adventure, wouldn't it? Non-violent, of course.. To add a bit more, I will share my tally with the store manager.

Another unwelcome but necessary trip nowadays is going to a hospital for tests of one kind or another. I recently had that particular adventure, and if it becomes necessary again, I will certainly find a way to add something of adventurous value to what can be a frightening experience. Perhaps to engage the technicians in a conversation relating to amateur journalism and the fun they might have in writing of their own daily adventures.

Dining out can be boring, but here again, it offers a possible adventure. My wife and I often play such games as picking the most distinguished person in the restaurant—or perhaps the most casual dresser. Silly? Perhaps, but it gives the meal an added flavor. Try complimenting the server; something that is often neglected, but always appreciated by those who can add to the enjoyment of your dinner.

When I was six years old I had my first great adventure. My parents and I traveled by train from our home in the farming country of southwest Georgia to Orlando, Florida where my half brother lived. It was December 23, 1937 and the railroad terminal was decorated for Christmas ... although sparsely. We boarded the waiting train at about 9:00 o'clock in the evening. I had no recollection of traveling by train, although my mother assured me I had done so. As youngsters are prone to do, I was eager to drink from the water fountain and to see if the toilet was like the one at home.

Our first stop was in Albany, Georgia where we were to change trains. I was curious about all the small red and green lights on the tracks near the railroad station, so my father took me outside to walk along the loading platform. He knew all about the lights, since he had worked for Railway Express at one time. He told me to watch for our train and showed me which track it would be on. Soon I saw the headlight appear. I could hardly wait until it drew alongside, and I could see a real steam locomotive up close. As it neared, the combination of a steam whistle, the chug-chugging of the exhaust, and tremble of the platform where we stood began to intimidate me and I hid behind my father's legs. The smoking, steaming monster rolled by us and slowed to a stop so that the passenger cars were beside the platform. I was afraid of the locomotive, but fascinated by the sheer size of it. We boarded a passenger car and settled in for the next stop—Jacksonville, Florida. I found an empty seat and fell asleep thinking about Santa Claus.

Next morning we were in Jacksonville. It was early and the railroad station was largely deserted. I roamed around the sitting area, then fought boredom by counting the cars that went by on the overpass adjacent to the terminal. Finally our train to Orlando arrived and we were on the last leg of our trip.

We were pulling into the station at Eustis, Florida in early afternoon. Another train was pulling out of the station on a track across from us when we noticed people jammed against that train's windows, pointing toward our train with looks of horror on their faces. We stopped, and I noticed people running across the tracks toward the car we were in. They gathered toward the end of our car, so I went to that section and watched. The men brought a man from under the train and laid him on a sheet. He head was injured, and I saw someone put his glove on the sheet—a hand was still in it. The conductor told us that an elderly man who was walking backward and waving to passengers on another train had fallen onto our track and been killed.

By late afternoon we were in Orlando, where my uncle met us and took us to my brother's home. It was Christmas Eve and we went into Orlando after supper. I had never seen so many Christmas lights, so many stores, and so many people! I had several cousins to show me around the many "dime stores" and by the time we headed for home, I was almost able to forget the tragedy of the old man in Eustis. The trip back to Georgia was more crowded, but still "old hat" since I was now an experienced railroad traveler. #