Interestingly blessed

a little book of essays

by David Joseph Marcou (DvJM)

For God, ancestors, providers, subjects, archivists, counselors, medics, readers, & family/friends, esp. Mom Rose & the Entire Marcou Extended Family, the Yi Do-Suns, the Jim Mac McDougles, Bernard McGarty, David W. Johns, Dan & Ruth Kapanke, Charles & Christine Freiberg, the Roger L. Chase Family, Mark & Jean Smith, Dale Barclay, & Ignacio & Argentina Peterson.

“It’s one thing to be blessed and it’s another thing to know that you’re blessed.” —Daniel J. Marcou on Facebook, ca. Thanksgiving 11-23-17.

SA54 is WI's most-prolific living author David Joseph Marcou’s 139th book, incl. Korea2050; Spirit of La Crosse; All the Best; The Cockney Eye; James Cameron’s World; Manhattan Moments; Vital Washington; Amer. Women; Peoples’ Champions; Street Photos; Black Diversity; Visually Captivating; All Creatures Great & Small; Badger Homecomings & Miracles; Evolving Happiness (poems); Rebirths (plays); & Gratitude. Grad AquinahS’68, not ’82 as in 1 AHS class note), UW-Mdsn(’73), UIa(’78), & UM-Clmbia(’84), DvJM’s works have -- been nominated for Pulitzers & POYi’s, won Sept. 12th & Gov’s awards, & been displayed at SI, etc. He’s freelanced for nytimes.com, theguardian.com, Milw. Journ. Sent., RPS Journ., BJF, Bsns. Korea, LaX Trib, Cath. Life, Mo. Life, Smithsonian, Etc. Ancestors incl. Louis Joliet, farmers, teachers, shopkeepers, meat-cutters, record-keepers. DvJM’s offspring so far is productive son Matthew.

Cover photo: Family photos on Rose Marcou’s apartment walls, Onalaska, WI 12-24-17 (Scene photo by DvJM)

Two quotations. The first belongs to the late Sir Winston Churchill, who, when asked as a young man for his reaction to New York City, said just seven words: “Newspaper too thick, lavatory paper too thin.” The second belongs to the Great American Buying Public: “Will it sell in Peoria?” Now, it’s hoped this article will sell widely, including in Peoria, New York City, London, and my hometown La Crosse, WI. If it doesn’t make a decent splash in those places, it won’t be for lack of perseverance or good faith. I’ve worked very hard 36+ years, telling as many people as possible, the story of Bert Hardy and James Cameron, two great journalists who made 1981’s London autumn the most memorable three months of my life.

My grades had been abysmal at Mizzou, but I still entertained hopes of righting myself in the J-School’s London Graduate Reporting Program as an intern for the Sunday Times. My grades would turn out poorly though, not because I wasn’t writing quality stories, I was, but because I wrote only eight stories not the required 12. I assisted program mates by taking photos for their stories more than I maybe should have. In fact, I’d been working at photography less than two years, and was keen on taking lots of pictures of the UK’s people and sights then.

Several years later, when I taught adults writing and photography at Western Technical College, the first item I put on my students’ professional tips list was, “Before the interview, research your subject……” That may seem obvious, but I was at a loss as to Hardy and Cameron in late 1981, not because I failed to try to research their careers, but because there just wasn’t info easily available in the libraries I checked. The moderator of my program, the Sunday Times’ John H. Whale, said, “the names are a bit familiar, but I can’t quite place them”, when in fact, Hardy and Cameron were very famous already among British journalists, and Mr. Whale was a veteran British journalist. It seems now Mr. Whale wanted me to really earn this story.

Any good reporter must research, interview, write about, and photograph their subject/s to get to the heart of each truthful, detail-rich story. And every journalistic report requires empathy, as well as balanced curiosity and basic facts. I lived through the London autumn of 1981 without drugs (except cigarettes) or sex, met several famous people, then went stateside and tried mightily to confirm interview details at the Mizzou J-School Library. There was almost nothing there for it. And since I’d pinned my hopes for good grades on my high quality reports
rather than quantity, that dearth of research material set me back. There was one item Photojournalism Director Angus McDougall let me know upon return – Hardy and Cameron had won the Missouri Pictures of the Year Korean War category award for their Oct. 7, 1950 Picture Post photo-essay “Inchon” – but the tight-lipped quality of Prof. McDougall’s comments confounded me. Soon, I’d have a nervous breakdown, which afflicted me severely in 1982, and which gave me problems the rest of that decade, though I did live and work as a journalist in Seoul from 1984-87, a place I’d never have gotten to without having met and interviewed Hardy and Cameron. And without my getting to Korea in 1986 in particular, my son, Matt, would never have been born; he was conceived near the close of 1986 in Seoul.

If there’d only been one photojournalist for Britain’s great Picture Post magazine from 1938-1957, Bert Hardy was the best one. And though that magazine’s staff would employ many writers and photographers of note, Hardy’s name always comes to the fore. The writer James Cameron, on the other hand, worked there but two years, yet with Hardy, they did some of the most memorable coverages in UK journalism history. And given Cameron’s 35 years as a foreign correspondent, most famously at Picture Post, his work has led key experts to call JC the “greatest foreign correspondent of them all”.

The name “Bert Hardy” came into my consciousness in Sept. 1981, when Sunday Times photographer Sally Soames suggested I have my photo-prints processed by Grove Hardy Ltd. Ms. Soames said Grove Hardy Ltd was “the finest black-and-white printing firm in London”, and when I pushed her on it a bit, she added, “maybe in the whole world”.

My semester was eventful, and included coverages of a tense meeting between 50 IRA relatives (re: the Maze hunger strikes) and Cardinal Basil Hume at Westminster Catholic Cathedral’s rectory. Also, I covered a Canonbury preschool for a month of photos, painter Erica Daborn, paralympic champ Rudi Christopher, Almeida Theatre, El-Hakawati, the world’s only professional Palestinian theatre troupe then, etc. My picture-taking included Covent Garden seen from the roof of Drury Lane Theatre, a London Zoo panda, last days of Billingsgate Fish Market, Union Chapel, British Museum/Library, Brixton, Soho, Thames Day, Lord Treloar College, protests at 10 Downing St., Sikhs, skinheads, etc.

As autumn rolled on, I grew anxious to find an 8th story to hang my hat on, since it didn’t appear I’d have time to do a full 12. It would have to be a very productive
story. Prem Olsen was my black-and-white printer then; his lab was close to 13 Willowbridge Road, where I lived with flatmates including Pinki Virani, Indian-native who’d become author of “Once Was Bombay”, ‘Aruna’s Story’, and ‘Bitter Chocolate’, and my roommate Calvin Lawrence Jr., who is now an emeritus Newsday national editor and current abc.com coordinating producer.

I told Prem of my plight and he said he knew of a British photographer who’d taken fairly good photos, plus who told great stories about them. That was Bert Hardy, whom I soon was speaking with via phone to schedule an interview. The Hardys lived in the Surrey countryside, and I was told to take the train for Oxted from Elephant & Castle Station. The train took 38 minutes to arrive, and Mr. Hardy was waiting with his sports car to drive me to his 350-year-old farmstead. He’d been raised in the old Elephant & Castle district of London, and only took up farming late in life, though he appeared good at that too.

There were two interviews with him; I asked many questions and saw many of his photos, including classic WWII and Korea stills. I needed to return on our second day to take his photo, and a man from the Rank Company had been asked to stop by then too. I took many photos of them, but my second wife hid my best early negatives in 1987. I still retain 3 key photos from that shoot, my National Portrait Gallery photo-portrait of Bert standing by a doorway with his two dogs animated at his feet; my photo-portrait of Bert seated by a living room window holding a writing pen; and the dogs, Lizzie and Kim, playing on a road by a tree.

The Hardys let me know I would need to interview a “mystery man” too, before I could write my story. That man was James Cameron, whose agent told me I couldn’t bring a camera with me for our interview.

When JC answered the door (at 3 Eton College Road), he asked if I was Mr. Markham, I guess because the name Markham figures into his life-story more than once. Though I no longer know where my notes are from the Hardy and Cameron interviews, I recall key details about those meetings, including what may or may not be an apocryphal exclamation by Gen. Douglas MacArthur (given to me by JC) when Hardy and Cameron apparently popped in on the UN Commander in Korea without warning – “God-dammit, now what are you two doing here?”

I learned of two very famous coverages Hardy and Cameron collaborated on in 1950 Korea -- at Pusan, where they discovered UN atrocities (that story was yanked from the presses by PP owner Sir Edward Hulton, who didn’t want to give aid and comfort to the enemy), and “Inchon”, their dramatic coverage of that
dusky, treacherous landing by sea and land, the pivotal Korean War battle for the
UN side.

But I didn’t feel like my interview with JC was complete, so I phoned him a day
or two later to schedule another interview; his housekeeper or wife said his
shoulder was bothering him badly. So I ended up mailing him a letter with my
questions in it, and he dutifully answered. In the coming years, I stayed in fairly
close contact with the Hardys and employed his darkroom for many black-and-
white prints of my photos. The Hardys even sent my son and me a personalized
photo-postcard each Christmas until a couple years after Bert died (July 1995).

James Cameron died in Jan. 1985 when I was working for South Korea’s Yonhap
News Agency, and his widow remarried and returned to her native India. Since
Cameron had written the monumental obituary essay upon the death of King
George VI in 1952, “The King Is Dead”, for the London Illustrated News, I wrote
a long obituary essay about JC’s life and death soon after his demise. Ed White,
AP’s Seoul Bureau Chief (who’d famously directed AP’s Saigon Bureau during
the Vietnam War), suggested I show it to the British Ambassador; but I was going
through tough times, unable to obtain the right medicine for my ailment. I placed
the essay among my things, and lost track of it until 2015, when I was completing
my 5-volume set of books on Picture Post, Bert Hardy, and James Cameron with
my bio on JC. That obituary essay (updated) became the Afterword to “James
Cameron’s World (1911-1985)”.

As the years passed, many tributes had been accorded Hardy and Cameron.
Bert’s photos, writings, and awards have been covered; and James’s books,
articles, play, and BBC series have acquired fair audiences too. One JC book of
note for US readers in particular is “Here Is Your Enemy”, the result of his five-
part Dec. 1965 series in the New York Times, after he became the first western
freelancer to go to Hanoi during the war. Britain never declared war on North
Vietnam, so though some famous US journalists called JC a “traitor”, he was
actually doing a superb job of reporting what hadn’t been reported much in the US
yet, the “other side’s point of view”. Three years later, those same US journalists
and Walter Cronkite agreed with JC’s Vietnam commentary. Now a prestigious
journalism prize and lecture are given annually in the UK in James Cameron’s
honor. The inaugural lecture in 1987, my son’s birth-year, was given by star
Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee.
A Very Rough Year for Me in 1982, by DvJM. (NB: I’m sharing painful details in this essay to help others who struggle with a tough mental health situation like mine was during the early 1980s, who can overcome it like me with hard work, good care, and the right meds.)

1982 was my most difficult year of 67 years on Earth so far. In autumn 1981, I'd taken part in the Missouri-London Reporting Program, which was so hard on my grades, I had to drop back from an MA-degree path to a BJ-degree path. In London, I'd written eight good stories, where 12 were required. I also took thousands of photos, most of which I'd lose variously, but not by giving them away or selling them. I did interview two giants of British journalism, though, the author James Cameron, who the James Cameron Memorial Lecture and Prize is named for, and his Korean War photographer-mate, Bert Hardy, who won the Missouri Korean War Pictures of the Year Award in 1951 with his Inchon (1950) photos; both men achieved many other stellar heights too. I photographed Mr. Hardy and his dogs, and my best view of them I later donated a print of, to the British National Portrait Gallery for its Photographs Collection; it’s still there, including online for many years. And I’ve authored and published book-length bios about both men too.

However, what I tried to do in December 1981, back in Columbia, Mo., was write my ninth story for the Program and hopefully bring up my grade a bit. Very few people helped me with that; the J-School Library had one book relating to each man but not easily catalogued. And Angus McDougall, then head of the Photojournalism Sequence, phoned the Pictures of the Year Office to confirm for me that Mr. Hardy's Inchon photos had won in 1951. However, my ninth story, about Mr. Hardy, was not published in Columbia until 1984.

In late 1981, I took a part-time job – I worked for the Missouri-Penney Writing Awards Program as a clerk-typist. When the awards were given, I met Dave Lawrence, a famous newspaper editor I'd correspond with many years, but that program’s workload ran out, so I was let go. I caught on briefly with the UM Press, as a clerk-typist again.

During that brief UMP time, I did everything I was asked to do early on, including typing letters of reply to potential and actual Press authors. However, the letters began to seem unusual after a while, and I wondered if I wasn't been tricked. The word “finesse” floated around campus then, as a talisman epitomizing for one
thing, how someone could be let go “smoothly” from a job, and I had a feeling I was to be let go. Some of my ideas then indicated my paranoia.

One day I had to type a reply to a Press author who lived on a farm in-state. I debated to myself what I should do with our director’s letter to him, because that female’s communication, as given to me, seemed so simple as to be pedantic and overly-rural. So I decided to do a Radar O'Reilly impression and concoct a spurious reply. I put the letter in the pile for my boss's signature, and next day, she discovered it.

She called me into her office and said employees of hers and the Press could not invent letters like I had – that it was an insult to the person receiving such letters to do so. I apologized to her, but she wasn’t interested in that. This incident -- which occurred around the time I was paying visits to a campus psychologist Profs. George Kennedy and Daryl Moen had recommended – didn’t help my situation. I soon was admitted to a local psych unit, but when I saw what its regimen amounted to, lock-up with almost no treatment, I jimmied the window of my room that night and headed for the hills (in-city; it was mid-winter).

The difficulty of my situation persisted. I was generally living with a couple who couldn’t assist with my therapy because they were full-time students. Before long, I was involuntarily committed to the university hospital's psych unit, escaped immediately for three hours, and spent several weeks in-unit after re-confinement, where my diagnosis was confirmed; soon, I was being let out weekdays to attend classes. Due to the strong medications I was on, class-work didn't work, so I withdrew from classes after a few weeks.

Released from the unit, I found a full-time job as a clerk-typist in the University’s Community Health Education Program. I did passably well at first, but full-time work eventually got to me, and I was committed as part of a five-day program at another Columbia psych unit in early May. Once again, I was on strongly restraining (not therapeutic) medications (they made me psychologically and physically very ill), and when my parents drove from Wisconsin to take me home, I begged them to let me go off the worst medication until I could be put on a new one in Wisconsin. They allowed that, and I was soon visiting a local psychologist and a psychiatrist in the Badger State.

The meds from them would work, though by autumn I had to spend six more weeks in a La Crosse unit to adjust to them properly. After adapting a bit to independent living plus after living a few months in Madison, in Jan. 1984 I was
back in Columbia for my final semester at J-School, which I completed decently, though I barely slept (I had to cut my medication-dose to 1 capsule every other day so I could afford medication without health insurance, a thrift I learned a hard lesson from: it exhausted me by semester's end).

The night before graduation, there was a party I attended. For the first and last time in my life I really smoked marijuana. It may have been the mixture with my medication, or simply bad grass, but I struggled to keep from running out into traffic heading back to my room. I finally got a good night’s sleep though, and had to be awakened by my landlady when my parents arrived from Wisconsin for the graduation. I was a chain-smoker then, and since J-School Graduation was outdoors, I was told later I chain-smoked for most of the ceremony. (If I would have “simply” quit smoking that semester, I could have spent the extra money on sufficient meds for me to sleep decently every night.)

Graduating that May (1984), my first full-time job in journalism was for Yonhap News Agency in Seoul. Pharmacies did not stock my medicine in Korea, and I was put on a bad substitute, and had to return to my hometown, La Crosse, several months, returning to Seoul in Feb. 1986 after I’d landed two new journalism jobs. I eventually did better; I’d brought my medicine from Wisconsin this time, and had more of it shipped later. My son, Matthew, was born in Sept. 1987, three months after my new South Korean wife and I moved to La Crosse together.

I've authored and published more than 135+ books, all but one of them since 1991 (my first book, the photo-book “Calling America,” was published in Seoul in 1986); I've also seen published more than 1,200 articles and 10,000 photos created by me. (I don’t know if I’m Wisconsin’s most-prolific author yet -- the deceased August Derleth long held that title – but I’d guess at least for now, I’m this state’s most-prolific living author.) In La Crosse, I taught college extended education writing and photo classes 11 years. Given a very difficult diagnosis in early 1982, I’ve done relatively well since then, especially since ca. 1989; I’ve not missed a daily dose of my medicine since ‘89.

Mainly, though, I've kept my diagnosis and my medication confidential within a small circle of medical personnel and a few extended family members. Regarding the psychologist I first met in La Crosse in 1982, he’s a superb (not always easy by the way) professional I continued to meet with for therapy until his retirement ca. 2013; we now meet as friends for coffee occasionally. His name is Jim.
Mr. Twain's Secret, by DvJM.

Long ago, at UW, when my grades weren't so good, but I still knew there were good things to learn in school, I decided to focus on what I'd earned a few good grades in previously -- writing. My first wife and I had tried two marriage counselors, but she loved another man deeply. I moved to Iowa (1977-78) alone to earn a Master's degree in Literature and History (American Studies), requiring much reading and writing.

I earned that degree and my first wife and I divorced. Then, after working a full-time job at UW-Madison for what's now the Robert LaFollette School of Public Affairs, and saving some money, I enrolled at the Missouri School of Journalism to study reporting, writing, photography, and editing. A decade or so later, after journalism work overseas and in America too, I taught adults writing and photography in my hometown. In 2000, I edited my students' grassroots history, "Spirit of La Crosse", the first complete history of our city.

Just as we'd wrapped up our book-signings for SL, we embarked on a new group book. A few of us were at my apartment discussing it when it became clear we'd need a master-typist to get copy to our designer for what would become the national-award-winning first volume of "Spirit of America". My 13-year-old son, Matt, who was working on our computer during that meeting, overheard our talk and how pressured we were to find a good typist. Matt piped up, "I can do that." When I said to the others Matt could type 100+ words per minute very accurately, he demonstrated his skills and everyone signed on for him to type what would be the 100,000-word text. (There were 300+ photos in SA1, too.)

I'd recently obtained full custody of my son, and though we had some tough patches the next couple years, Matt knew that that typing job, which we paid him decently for, was important, and he did it well. He'd earlier wanted a paper route, but I didn't own a car then and knew from many years before, that parents need to help their paper-carrier offspring with a car-ride occasionally. I didn't let Matt have a paper route, but I did the next best thing -- I taught him how to create papers and books.

Ability comes in many forms. One of my nieces in her 30's, worked as a nurse and then married a computer software man. They saved some money and bought a historic home they wanted to restore, and it has been on the Heritage Home Tours circuit in La Crosse since its restoration. I've never owned my own house, but I can see the value in their investing in a good house and working on it. Jacqui is now a La Crosse city council member raising two children; Joe works full-time.

Matt married as well, and after four years as an Army Ranger combat medic, attended and graduated magna cum laude from Philadelphia’s Drexel University. He’s now an electrical engineer in Illinois. When accomplishing positive things in life, it may or may not make much difference when you get started; it's just
important you do get started. As Mark Twain once stated, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

**Key Life Lessons, by DvJM.**

Having studied thoroughly only one language, English, I feel a little like Sir Winston Churchill sometimes. He only knew English, but as thoroughly as Shakespeare. What I’ve learned from Britain and the Brits has filled some of the books I've authored, but the best wisdom I’ve learned about that nation and people came from meeting Brits in streets, stations, pubs, cafes, offices, schools, museums, libraries, and dwellings when I lived in 1981 London as a reporting intern for the London Sunday Times -- and from photographing Brits, too. Generally at least, that people can be as feisty and argumentative as any; in fact, the United States has rescued their armies in some wars, though we should never have been involved militarily in World War I; it’s likely the Allies couldn’t have won WWII, though, without US involvement. The Brits can also be endearingly comic, sympathetic, and pithy.

Bert Hardy was my favorite Brit ("The Cockney Eye" is my bio on him) with his Korean War journalist-mate James Cameron (my bio on him is “James Cameron’s World”). I also wrote a book on their Korean War coverages, “Crucial Collaborations” -- my son’s mom’s family suffered in that war and I worked as a journalist in Seoul, 1984-87.

The oldest of seven kids in a neo-Dickensian upbringing, Mr. Hardy left school to work full-time at age 14; he’d become top photojournalist for Picture Post magazine (1938-57), the most widely-read British magazine during WWII. Bert Hardy had the human touch and an eloquent, earthy, at times whimsical, eye. He died in 1995 at age 82, but is still a "supremely revered" photojournalist.

I interviewed and photographed Bert at his Surrey farmstead in November 1981 and soon after interviewed Mr. Cameron too, a superbly eloquent and truthful writer of English essays, articles, and a drama, though he’d left school for news work at age 15. I interviewed JC at the beautiful London home at 3 Eton College Road he shared with his Indian wife, Moni. He died in 1985, but a top journalism prize/lecture is given in his name annually. Also, his good friend Studs Terkel, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his oral history of WWII, “The Good War”, dedicated that book to Cameron, calling James “Master of His Trade”. JC hated all wars, but WWII a little less than all the other bloody, immoral affairs. James and his dad had both been thoroughly opposed to WWI, and believed WWII might never have had to be fought if WWI had a much better treaty or hadn’t been fought at all.

As for learning more about the many facets of the English language, it helped that my editor while at the London Sunday Times was John H. Whale, a political
and religion expert there, plus its chief proofreader with wife Judy. (The Whales had insisted on being the paper's chief proofreaders, because literary standards had fallen so low at that otherwise leading publication.) Mr. Whale would write 30 essays for the Sunday Times Magazine on grammar, punctuation, style, and usage that became the book "Put It in Writing". Born in 1931 and Oxford-educated, he'd begun his career acting in Shakespearean plays, and could speak plain or high-church English poetically, sensibly, wittily with anyone. And he had one of the most commanding radio voices I've ever heard. He'd later become religion editor for BBC-TV and also edited the Anglican paper Church Times before passing a decade ago.

Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Sir Winston Churchill, and Agatha Christie wouldn't be the positive influences they are for me without Hardy, Cameron, and Whale. The English and History teachers at Aquinas High School and good university professors didn't hurt either; same for my parents, who inspired in me and my siblings a thoroughgoing inquisitiveness into life and a love of story-telling. As for war-mongers in allied and adversary governments, they could learn deeply humane lessons from those generally positive role-models.

Which is what I most learned from nursery-school children I photographed daily a month in autumn '81 in London's Islington, next door to where George Orwell once lived -- beautiful, bright youngsters, who allowed me with their teachers to record their funny antics and serious goodness, suggesting why Christmas is Christmas, and why Tiny Tim (Scrooge via Mr. Dickens too) shouted, "God Bless Us Every One!"

When History Makes Peace, by DvJM.

David McCullough, the very respected historian who has won two Pulitzer Prizes so far, including one for his biography about President Harry S. Truman, has long talked about the value of studying history: "History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are." That navigation can lead to a life of learning that teaches even teachers how to learn. As Mr. McCullough states, "Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love". And work really is easy when you’re doing what you love to do, learning continually, no matter what others think of its ease or difficulty.

It helps readers grow personally to reflect on and imagine what life must have been like many years before our own. Whether you like reading about Revolutionary America, Civil War battles, Victorian England, Republican France, the German Reichs, the “Greatest Generation”, or the Golden Ages of Mesopotamia (the cradle of human civilization, latter-day located in modern Iraq),
China, Korea, Japan, Greece, Rome, Russia, Mexico, the Holy Land, Australia, or Egypt, the knowledge and wisdom gained from your readings may not always mean a paycheck for you, but you'll have good ideas on how to solve easy as well as thorny problems today that were similar in earlier eras.

Because I became a professional writer and photographer at age 30 (I'm now 67), after studying history, literature, journalism, and photography in good universities, and because I’ve always loved books, I've authored many books of my own, including histories and biographies. Documenting and learning from the past and present is essential to human societies’ solving problems in the present and future. And it's not always necessary to have a college degree to love history or to write about it accurately. President Truman never earned a college undergraduate degree, but read histories and biographies regularly and applied historical lessons to his life, including his two presidencies.

Mr. McCullough states: "No harm's done to history by making it something someone would want to read." Reading up on the past yourself, then, helps you find enough in it to decently speak and/or write about the wisdom you've gained from your new knowledge. You can't go wrong by understanding history well; it's the doorway for everyone who studies the meeting points of civilizations past, present, and future.

And if you’d like to write historical accounts yourself, you’ll find that sharing your insights can add greatly to modern civilization, if, that is, you are empathetic to all societies and their issues, and truly interested in seeing all peoples get along with each other to preserve world peace. It’s what Jesus Christ entered this world to prepare the way for, world peace.

That seems worth remembering too, this Christmastime, a time I will also always associate with the writings of the great British journalist James Cameron, especially his very moving account of the World War I Christmas Truce in “1914”. Have a Blessed and Peaceful Holiday Season, and the Happiest and Healthiest of New Years too!—DvJM, originally written in late 2016, & updated in January 2018.

An Obituary Tribute Re: David Ambrose Marcou II, by DvJM.

What can any writer add to praise the courageous, skillful, and humor-rich life of a husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, brother, brother-in-law, uncle, cousin, and friend like the beloved patriarch David Ambrose Marcou II. His dad was David Ambrose Marcou I, and what a great father-son pair those two were. But Mom, Rose Caroline Muskat Marcou, was a superb wife for Dad – very stubborn when in the right, for the good of the family, plus hard-working and long-suffering.
Dad was born either above the Marcou family grocery store or in its back room, depending on where, when, and from whom you hear the story, in Mondovi, WI, on April 14, 1931, three months after Mom’s birth. A Buffalo County newspaper sponsored a contest for the “Buffalo of Baby County”, and though Dad was physically short, he weighed 30 pounds at the 6-month mark, and won easily. But shortness wasn’t usually how Dad’s makeup was characterized, far from it.

Growing up, Dad was the youngest of five children, born to David I and Agnes Mary Fitzgerald Marcou. Dad’s siblings were Margaret, Jim, Rosemary, and Alice, all preceding him in death. But there are dozens of offspring of Dave II and Rose, and the number grows.

Rose is one of seven children, and she and Dad have seven grown kids too – David Joseph Marcou (author, photographer, and editor), Dennis (La Crosse’s municipal judge and an attorney), Dan (a retired highly decorated police officer of 30-plus years, and now a noted crime author married to Vicki), Tom (a former career Air Force man, who then worked many years as a high-level civilian federal employee, same as his wife, Joy; the couple build and sell homes in Texas now), Diane Skifton (who’s married to Robert/“Rocky” and has worked for the La Crosse Police Department 25+ years), Lynn (a longtime Target team-leader, who changed careers and is now working for La Crosse County as a Social Services Specialist), and Mary Kate (an accountant for a big construction company who was valedictorian at Logan High in the class of 1981). All seven grown kids have kids.

Dad’s family moved to La Crosse ca. 1940, and opened Marcou’s Market on Rose Street. Dad made the varsity baseball team at Aquinas HS as a freshman, but his parents asked him to quit that team so he could work in the store. Mom had moved in with a host family, away from her parents’ Cataract, WI farm, and attended Aquinas, where she did well. Dad kidded that he first asked Mom on a date just-as an important class-assignment came due at Aquinas. Mom was the scholar, Dad the streetwise young man, though their adult jobs were mainly as a medical records transcriber for nursing homes, and as a meat-cutter & meat-manager, respectively. They graduated Aquinas in 1949, and married the following Valentine’s Day, 1950.

Dad, though, knew the first time he met Mom she was the woman for him. He may have drunk, smoked, and gambled a bit (later in life, gambling was still a “vice”), but he always came home to Mom when he most needed to. And when he felt rambunctious as a young husband/dad and came home late at night, oldest son
Dave would sit in the kitchen to chat with Dad while Dad ate his steak or hamburger quietly rather than giving heck to Mom, which may be one reason Diane told Dave III and Lynn recently that Dad could be naughty but was more often neat.

Even when the family didn’t have a lot of money, they’d all pack into one car in the summertime, and drive at high velocities in the era of no-seatbelts to Milwaukee for a Braves game; and try telling his kids the national anthem’s reference to the Home of the Brave(s) meant anything else but the Milwaukee Braves. The Braves had tremendous heroes for kids to emulate then -- Henry Aaron, Eddie Mathews, Warren Spahn, Lou Burdette, et.al., but the greatest heroes to the Marcou kids turned out to be sitting in the front seat of the family car going to and from Milwaukee, their parents. Dave II and Rose lived through a large number of severe physical ailments, but always bounced back better than before, until Dad’s bout with shingles began taking the final toll even his heart disease, cancer, gout, and diabetes, couldn’t take by themselves.

Dad wasn’t known as a writer (Mom, on the other hand, is a superb writer), but the single letter Dad wrote to Dave III and then later to Matt, Dave III’s son, scored with them for life. He said only what needed saying most and said it with such warmth and humor, the reader always knew it came from a big French Canadian/Irish/American heart.

When he was in his prime, Dad could throw around sides of beef with ease; he never forgot his one summer working in a John Deere foundry in Iowa, swinging an 8-pound iron ball all day in the blazing heat.

The family hopes there’s warmth where Dad is now, not blazing heat, and plenty of good food and drink, family and friends, music and laughter; those are things we will always remember Dad loved having around him. That and a good Badgers, Packers, Brewers, Cubs, and/or Bucks game on TV. (When people called David Ambrose I “Butch”, and later, former UW men’s basketball coach Bo Ryan’s dad also “Butch”, it’s hard for a WI-based family not to cheer the Badgers on to victories; and what positively memorable characters those two Butches were.)

One other thing for now -- Dad loved a funny story, and told many. The family would have liked to tell him this one during his final days, but didn’t hear it until soon after his passing -- the story of a man a bit down on his luck who went to the beach to think things over. The man came upon a lamp partly buried in sand, picked it up, and rubbed the sand off. A genie sprung forth, and let the man know
he could make one wish that would be granted. The man said, “Well, I’ve always wanted to go to Hawaii, but don’t like flying. Could you build me a bridge between the mainland and the main island?” The genie looked at him and said, “Man, do you know how much steel, concrete, and construction that would take? It’s impossible. Make another wish.” The man thought a minute, then said: “Well, I’ve always wanted to understand my wife better. Could you make it so I know what she’s thinking, and what she really wants?” The genie looked down and said out of the side of his mouth: “Do you want that bridge two-lane or four-lane?” (Dave III was first told this story by a beautiful redhead named Heather, though not local news-anchor Heather Armstrong.)

(A personal note) Dad, thanks for many great memories; the family will see you again if the good Lord is willing and heaven still resembles the heaven on earth you often made for your family and friends. What a great man you’ve been! If some people never knew you, maybe they know about you now, and wish they’d known you personally. You were a true King David, and will be for a very long time!

An Unusual Friend of Mine: Ginny Kwak, by DvJM.

In early Spring 1986, my former Yonhap News Agency colleague and fellow Mizzou J-School alum David W. Johns and I went out clubbing in Seoul’s famed (for Western-style shopping, nightclubs, & prostitutes) I’tae-won District. The club we ended up at that night was the Sportsman’s Club, where we met for the first time and danced with the tall, thin, beautiful Ewha University grad Ginny Kwak and a female friend of hers I don’t believe I ever saw again.

Since having romantic partners hadn’t been my strength in many years, I let Ginny (and DWJ) know I very much wanted to date her. She gave me her phone number and soon we were going to dinner and discos weekends. We also shopped and attended a pro baseball game together, and later in summer did daytrips visiting a resort area and soon after Uijeongbu, the TV setting (ca.1953) for the M*A*S*H series.

Although that six-month period I was sexually active with many women (the only time in my life I was that active), I didn’t really “score” with Ginny, though I did get much closer to her physically on one of our last dates (she may have spelled the English-version of her given name “Jinny”, but it maybe can be spelled with a “G” too).
With all the opportunities I had to make possible progress touching her, early on I waited each time until I was dropping her off from our taxi (at the same location she said was not where she lived). She always turned down my advances then.

She didn’t fully turn me down on the date I referred to that took place later. We went to a bar-restaurant between I’tae-won and Oksu-dong (the district I lived in), a bar I’d frequented previously. It had little cubby-hole seating areas for two behind curtains with solid walls on three sides of each cubby-hole. Customers could request songs from the DJ, like Tom Jones’s “Green, Green Grass of Home”, a song my dad said he wanted played at his funeral, sung by Eddy Arnold or Porter Waggoner. (The song is about a convict meeting his maker and fantasizing about one last visit to his hometown.)

Though we didn’t consummate our relationship physically that night (Ginny had asked me to be gentle with her and I kept thinking a waiter would interrupt our little face-to-face too), we did enjoy each other physically that night. I’d often asked Ginny to marry me, but she always turned me down; I don’t think I asked her to marry me that night. If she would have married me, my son Matt wouldn’t have been born, so I’m glad Ginny turned me down then. I don’t know that I’d reject her if she wanted to marry me now. I’ve been divorced since 1992.

Ginny had told me before, about a then-current male-friend whom she apparently slept with occasionally. When Ginny and I separated ca. Sept. 1986, I’d just started dating my second-wife-to-be. Many years later, I posted a note on a South Korean-English Language website asking if anyone knew what had become of Ginny Kwak (if that’s her real name). A man named Alexander MacDonald contacted me from Tennessee, he said. He claimed to have been the “other man” in Ginny’s life in 1986. He told me they shared an STD, Herpes. He e-mailed me a photo of them together, & he looked at least part-Korean.

Ginny and I had shared an appreciation for some musicians (Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, the Righteous Brothers, Prince, the Beatles, et. al.), and she knew a lot about western culture generally, plus about North Korea. Alex told me she knew very much about North Korea, and may even have been a North Korean spy. He said he’d seen her disassemble and re-assemble a handgun quickly before, using one hand. He asked if I had any idea where he could find Ginny. I said “no”; but he may have already known what became of her. He might even have been married to her then without letting me know that.
Once, back in Summer 1986, Ginny phoned me at work, because she wanted to see me on a weekday. She worked in an office then, and apparently something came up of a serious nature regarding her boss. I figured he’d impregnated her or maybe wanted to marry her with/without the former circumstance being true; she said none of these things was true. She wasn’t really specific, but it may have had to do with sexual harassment, or maybe he didn’t want her dating me.

Though I couldn’t trust Ginny completely, I did love her. Once, she tired of seeing me wear my maroon-colored windbreaker, so we went shopping and she bought me a heavy dark-wool coat with an AP Man label in it. I don’t know what became of that jacket, but I photographed my son once wearing a coat much like my AP Man coat. (Same night, I bought Ginny’s young sister a big white teddy bear we called “Prince.”)

Never yet an Associated Press, AP, staffer, I’ve freelanced for two AP outlets often, La Crosse’s Tribune and Milwaukee’s Journal Sentinel, the latter where I was La Crosse correspondent 13 years. And in J-School, I was assigned by AP to report on the latter-day 1981 reunion of the Cole Younger clan in Hermann, Mo. with photojournalist Sally Stapleton; that very beautiful and bright lady went on to earn two Pulitzers as an AP photo-editor in Africa. Our photo-stories on the Younger reunion weren’t published by AP directly as far as I know, but my two stories, one on front-page, and one front-page photo by Sally, were published in the Columbia Missourian, an AP outlet, that summer.