

Madness

by Jack Swenson

We moved to the country because we hated smog and poor people. We love it here. In my spare time I work on my opus magnus, recording each and every mention of my family name in my hometown newspaper since its founding in 1896. So far I have spent twenty-two years at this project. Meanwhile my wife and I both inherited money, all that we will ever need. More. But then, can you ever have too much money?

Politically I am not an extremist; I am a moderate. A middle of the roader. I believe in free market economics, soak the poor and give to the rich. I picture myself at a fancy party in Washington, D.C., rubbing elbows with the rich and famous, schmoozing with Bill Bennett and Ann Coulter, giving Glenn Beck's rosy cheeks a pinch, slapping Sarah Palin on the butt. Dick Cheney asks me to go hunting with him, but fearing a shooting accident, I decline.

I love it here in our little retreat. I play golf. I read my book of names. Over and over again. Our name appeared in the newspaper 254,991 times between 1896 and 1944. Yes, I have more to do. I work on the project when I am not cleaning out the garage or shooting squirrels with a BB gun.

I am in poor health, and I can't sleep at night, so I send morally outraged messages to friends and don't sign them. The secrecy thrills me like women's panties. Come over sometime and we'll eat oatmeal and talk about my trip to Iwo Jima.

