Audiobooks for the Daily Commute
By Robert E. Holden

My daily commute to the office varies from 30 to 45 minutes each way. About 25 years ago, I began listening to audiobooks. I am now a passionate audiobook listener. Just from the daily commute, I can get in about five hours a week in pleasure listening. Here are some of my favorite listening strategies and recommendations. Whatever your interests are, there are tons of books out there for you.

I am a big believer in using the public library. You would be amazed at the free audiobooks available at the library, both on the shelf and online. The price is always right (free unless you are hit with a late fee). And browsing through the library shelves is fun.

You will be amazed at how many books you can listen to. The Brothers Karamazov, for example, takes only 37 hours of listening. Maybe that sounds like a lot, but you will be sorry, at the end of roughly a month of listening, when the book concludes.

When I first started listening to audiobooks, I was skeptical of the value of listening versus actually reading. Yes, there is a difference, but you would be surprised at how readily you adapt to listening. I have listened to Faulkner’s Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! and I am convinced Faulkner is appreciated best through the ear. Faulkner’s lyricism and southern speech pattern is better when heard than read.

If you become an ardent audiobook reader, you will want to expand beyond resources of the public library. I like Amazon.com. If possible, I buy used versions of the audiobooks. Audible.com has a huge selection and the site advertises heavily, but I have never used the service. Maybe somebody will drop me an email, and let me know what they think of it.

I am a huge fan of The Teaching Company’s The Great Courses series. The Great Courses generally provide 12 to 24 45-minute lectures on a particular course subject, ranging from science (string theory can be fun), history and the arts. The series can be downloaded, or purchased on DVD’s or CDs. For the car, CDs work great. Some of the courses are available at the public library, and The Teaching Company is always running sales. Never pay full price for one of the courses. You also can find used copies of the courses on eBay.

Let me put in a plug for Robert Greenberg’s music appreciation lectures with The Great Courses. Among his many credits, Greenberg has degrees from Princeton and the University of California at Berkeley. He is simply incredible! He brings technical skill and knowledge, wit and erudition to music appreciation. Right now, I am commuting to work with my daughter, who is a first-year lawyer in New Orleans. We have just started listening in the car to Greenberg’s “Beethoven: His Life and Music.” My daughter, who is no pushover for bad jokes, started laughing aloud over Greenberg’s description of Beethoven’s personal life. Greenberg has wonderful lectures ranging from musical fundamentals (time signals, chords, etc.) to chamber music, symphonic works and opera.

One of my favorite things to do, and I know to some of you this will seem peculiar, is to listen to lectures from The Great Courses on particular classics and to alternate the lectures with the corresponding passages in the audiobooks of that classic. I prefer to listen to the lectures before listening to the work itself so I know what to listen for. For example, I have listened to
audiobooks of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Homer’s *Odyssey*. I would first listen to one lecture on one CD, then switch out the CD and listen to the corresponding CD of the audiobook. It is a wonderful experience, much like taking a course as an undergraduate.

I want to mention a couple of my favorite authors. If you have never experienced P.G. Wodehouse, make a point of doing so. Wodehouse is a master of English prose and a master of farce. (The sad part with his story is he was something of a collaborator while interned during World War II. He lost favor in Britain and migrated to America after the war.) I recommend *The Code of the Woosters* as an introductory Wodehouse novel. Wodehouse will make you fall out of your seat laughing.

I also want to recommend the novels of Haruki Murakami. He is a contemporary Japanese writer, and his novels, generally featuring magical realism, are set in 1980s Japan. The rumor is that he has been shortlisted for the Nobel Prize for literature, although he has not yet been awarded that prize. Somewhat randomly I first picked up a copy of *Norwegian Wood* at the library and was just blown away. The title comes from the Beatles song and reflects Murakami’s and Japan’s multiculturalism. *1Q84* is a more recent, quirky novel set in an “alternative universe” of Tokyo, first quarter of 1984.

There is much, much, much more to be said on this subject, but I hope you will drop me a line and share some of your experiences with audiobooks.

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Confronting Change in Peru
By Kay C. Medlin

Change can be invigorating and exciting, but it also can be terrifying. It tends to be easier to accept when some measure of control is provided to the people suffering the change. Daniel Gilbert, author of *Stumbling on Happiness*, encourages us to continue to be open to change and warns, “Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they’re finished.”

In a Sept. 25, 2012, article in the *Harvard Business Review*, Rosabeth Moss Kanter talks about why people in business organizations resist changes. She recognizes that people fight change because change gives them a feeling of loss of control and a sense of uncertainty. New things make people feel stupid.

Much of Peru feels lost in a time the United States left behind centuries ago. When we visited there in September, we expected to be amazed by the ruins at Machu Picchu and to fall in love with the food. And we did. But we did not know that the most intriguing part of our visit would be the three days at the end of our trip, which we spent on Lake Titicaca. We expected to visit historic sites and to see how people lived centuries ago. We did not expect to see people still living in those circumstances, engaged in a classic struggle against the changes caused by a shrinking world.

Lake Titicaca is South America’s largest lake by volume. It lies on the border of Peru and Bolivia in the Andes Mountains, almost 13,000 feet above sea level. Scholars have long been fascinated by the tales told by local fishermen of ancient palaces seen during dry spells when the lake level drops, or of local Indians diving down and touching the roofs of stone buildings. Stories of lost gold were enough to cause Jacques Cousteau to come to explore the lake. He found no treasure — only ancient pottery.

Many of the islands in the lake are not natural islands. Some of them are half the size of a football field and are woven from buoyant totora reeds that grow in the lake. Centuries ago, the small, indigenous Uros tribe conceived of the islands as a way to isolate and protect themselves from the local population. After migrating out of the Amazon, they found themselves on the shore of the lake. Oppressed by the local population and unable to find land of their own to tend, the Uros harvested the totora reeds in the shallow parts of the lake and used them to build floating platforms. After building these platforms, the Uros used the same totora reeds to build houses on the platforms and canoes. In the middle of the frigid lake, the Uros found relative peace while living one of the most unusual lifestyles on the planet. The Inca considered the Uros subhuman and never bothered trying to subdue them when they invaded. The Spanish thought they were dirty and beneath contempt, and the local Aymara still dismiss them as dim-witted. But their culture survives almost 500 years after the fall of the celebrated Inca Empire. In 1997, the census counted nearly 2,000 Uros descendants. Now only a few hundred still live on the islands. Without significant changes to their traditional lifestyle, though, they are not expected to remain after this generation.
The Uros rely upon the fish in the lake to survive. But the small species that is native to the lake, the Karachi, is threatened. In 1938, North American trout were introduced into the three-million-year-old lake in an effort to increase the food supply available to the local population. The lake would never be the same. The trout brought disease that the native fish could not tolerate, threatening the Uros’ way of life.

Losing the fish was the first, but not the only, challenge to their way of life. Because of the proximity of the floating islands to Puno, a significant tourist destination, some of the islands are losing authenticity and are suffering the results of pollution. The environmental damage has, among other things, affected the growth of the reeds. Some of the Uros have decided to embrace tourism, seeing it as the only way to preserve some part of their unique culture, even if the authenticity of the simple fisherman’s life is lost. As one of the tourists making this possible, I knew that I was at once allowing them to preserve their home and assisting in the destruction of their environment.

At least partly as a result of the well-intentioned decision to introduce the trout to the lake, an ancient culture will almost certainly not survive. Those who have lived this way for decades surely feel helpless. However, for the younger members of the Uros, when life on the reed islands disappears, growing up in nearby Puno (or on other nearby islands) will mean getting to school without the dangerous boat trip to and from school every day. The opportunity to do more than work just to provide food and shelter for survival may be possible. Although the result may be positive for some, the Uros who have lived the same way for hundreds of years have no voice in the decision.

Travel almost always teaches. Sometimes the lessons are predictable: a new dish or a different style of architecture. This time, the lesson came from observing the complete transformation of a way of life. Imagine how difficult that must be for indigenous people, especially when fundamental change comes so rapidly.

The islands in Lake Titicaca are a short boat ride and several centuries away from the beautiful and modern Hotel Titlaka. When we returned to the hotel, I brought back with me images of people so determined to stay on their woven “land” that they were willing to spend all day, every day, doing what is required just to survive. The drive not to change for these few hundred Uros is powerful. Would understanding that they are fighting against a safer, more comfortable life for their children ultimately matter?

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A Day at the Movies in the 50s
By Roger A. Stetter

I grew up in Massapequa, a small town on the South Shore of Long Island, in the 1950s and early 1960s, and used to go to the movies with my two best friends, Grandin (Tom) Milby and Mike Brodsky. Tom came from a working class, Irish Catholic family and Mike from a middle class Jewish family. I was the youngest child of an interfaith marriage, comfortable singing Christmas carols with Tom in church and attending Mike’s bar mitzvah. Tom was our unspoken leader — the strong silent type that girls adore, like James Dean in Rebel Without a Cause. He was liked by girls because he was a “bad” boy. Some girls like that.

On Saturdays, we took the bus to the movie theater in Freeport and sat in back where we could crack jokes outside the hearing of the bus driver. We passed through several towns on the road to Freeport, including Seaford, Bellmore and Merrick. I didn’t know it at the time, but Freeport was a very old village dating back to Colonial times and, during the 1920s, a popular venue for Vaudeville acts by stars such as Buster Keaton and W.C. Fields. By the late 50s, when we went there for the movies, Freeport was a bustling city with many interesting sights.

We marveled at the shops on our way to the movie theatre. My favorite sold homemade chocolates and a dazzling array of candy, including gold foil chocolate coins that I could not afford. There was always a mob of kids waiting outside the theater but the ticket line moved quickly and the candy counter at the front of the theatre was always our first stop. I bought popcorn and a Turkish Taffy bar for the first picture. If I had the money, I would also buy chocolate Bon Bons, with vanilla ice cream inside, before the second feature, or so-called “B movie.” Some of the older boys smoked cigarettes or made out with girls in the balcony until the usher shined his flashlight on them and spoiled the fun.

We kids knew that the gangster films and horror movies told the truth about a world of good and bad guys and dolls who did what they did because of the people they were, saints and sinners. The bad guys were fascinating characters whose criminal schemes usually got them killed or behind bars; the good guys ended up with beautiful women we wished we knew.
The round-trip bus fare from Massapequa to Freeport was 25 cents; a movie ticket, 35 cents; and popcorn and candy, under a dollar. So after a fun-filled day at the movies, we came home with change jingling in our pockets.

My older brother and I once went to a movie in Lindenhurst and missed the bus home. He decided we should walk home through 6.9 miles of snow and sleet, which nearly froze my feet off. My mother was worried because we were very late getting home. But, never one to find fault, she welcomed us with open arms and had me soak my feet in warm water until I could feel them again.

We had carefree parents who enjoyed time alone and were happy when we were together. The only hard and fast rules were to stay out of trouble and be home on time for supper.

Even my dog, Lucky, could come and go as she pleased. She was a smart dog and never lost her way. She knew how to tell us what she wanted — including scraps of food from under the table. Lucky reminds me of the words from Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s poem, “[t]he dog trots freely through the streets.”1 When I came home, she would lick me from head to toe.

I drifted apart from Tom and Mike when we entered high school. They were girl crazy and had no use for school. I made new friends who shared my interest in books, Fellini and Bergman films, jazz and folk music. Sometimes we took the Long Island Railroad to Greenwich Village and Washington Square Park, where we listened to folk songs and bongo drums, and watched old men huddled over concrete tables playing chess.

I will always remember my movie pals and the good times we had. Tom, by the way, seldom shared his candy, but did have the good manners to say, “No dibs.”

FOOTNOTE

1. “Dog” by Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

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The Pond

An elderly man in Louisiana had owned a large farm for several years. He had a large pond in the back. It was properly shaped for swimming, so he fixed it up nice with picnic tables, horseshoe courts and some apple and peach trees.

One evening, the old farmer decided to go down to the pond, as he hadn’t been there for a while, and look it over. He grabbed a five-gallon bucket to bring back some fruit.

As he neared the pond, he heard voices shouting and laughing with glee. As he came closer, he saw it was a bunch of young women skinny-dipping in his pond. He made the women aware of his presence and they all went to the deep end.

One of the women shouted to him, “We’re not coming out until you leave!”

The old man frowned, “I didn’t come down here to watch you ladies swim naked or make you get out of the pond naked.”

Holding the bucket up, he said, “I’m here to feed the alligator.”

Senior Citizen Trying to Set a Password

WINDOWS: Please enter your new password.
USER: cabbage
WINDOWS: Sorry, the password must be more than 8 characters.
USER: boiled cabbage
WINDOWS: Sorry, the password must contain 1 numerical character.
USER: 1 boiled cabbage
WINDOWS: Sorry, the password cannot have blank spaces.
USER: 50damnboiledcabbages
WINDOWS: Sorry, the password must contain at least one upper case character.
USER: 50DAMNboiledcabbages
WINDOWS: Sorry, the password cannot use more than one upper case character consecutively.
USER: 50DamnBoiledCabbagesShovedUpYourPrivatesIfYouDon’tGiveMeAccessNow!
WINDOWS: Sorry, the password cannot contain punctuation.
USER: ReallyTickedOff50DamnBoiledCabbagesShovedUpYourPrivatesIfYouDontGiveMeAccessNow
WINDOWS: Sorry, that password is already in use.
Appreciation of Articles and Authors

This is just a note to express my pleasure in reading the latest issue of Seasoning (Vol. 3, No. 2, October 2015), especially the articles of Max Nathan, Jr. and Michael Rubin. Although I never had the pleasure of attending the classes of either, I did attend Max Nathan, Jr.’s Bar Review course in 1974 and I have attended many LSU Law Center CLEs when Michael Rubin was featured as a speaker. Both men are high energy, world-class brains, humorous, masters of their subject matter and teachers with few peers. These are men who all attorneys should aspire to emulate on a professional level although I fear most of us will fall short. It has been a privilege to have been in their classrooms.

Blake E. Harveston, Jr.
Mandeville