Pop's Teasers

A Guidebook
for Mind Stretching

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by Bob Ayres

OUTLINE

Parents and teachers note: Pop's Teasers are intended to encourage creative thought, discussion and enjoyment. There is also tremendous value in exercising one's ability to think sequentially and to solve problems. There are strong positive values communicated in the text as well. The key questions in each teaser are in bold type. As an additional bonus, ask your children or students to draw the Corn family tree from the information included in the brain teasers. Have fun!

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Up to 50 copies permissible for educational purposes

FROG LEAPING

Pop's father was Dr. Courtney Corn, and his mother, Laura Lou Lacey Corn. Unfortunately, both of them and Troy's older sister, Lou, passed away during the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918 and 1919.

Troy, Ira Tate, Darius, James, Carl and Nora Lee were all raised by Charlie and Leona Wiggins. No one knew exactly how the Wiggins were related, but they adopted the Corn children and cared for them for many years.

Dr. Courtney Corn was a large, burly man who worked hard in his medical profession. Pop is the only one of the children that remembers much about Dr. Corn. Pop tells a teaser that his father once told him.

"A frog is at the bottom of a well that is ten feet deep. The frog is strong and can jump upward three feet with each jump. But the well is very slippery, and the frog slides back two feet into the well with each jump. How many jumps will he have to make to get out of the well?"

When Pop told me this, of course, I figured the answer to be "ten," since the frog makes one foot of progress with each jump. I thought the tenth jump would put him on top, and the eleventh would put him out.

Pop chuckled and said I would make that poor frog work too hard.

Do you know how many jumps it would take?

In My World

When Mom and Pop were "courting," as it was called in those days, Troy would visit Mom's house after church. This was the way all proper ladies entertained guests.

One Sunday, as fate would have it, Troy and another would-be suitor were visiting Miss Rosalie's at the same time. Everyone was nervous as Troy and the other gentleman vied for Rosalie's favor.

At one point in the conversation, Troy turned to the young fellow and remarked, **"In my world, there are trees, but no leaves, feet, but no shoes, yellow and green, but no blue or red. In fact, there is no rainbow nor color.**

The fellow laughed nervously, "My, you have an unusual world. Is it near here?" Troy was undaunted. **"There are zoos but no animals, food but no drink, marriages but no husbands nor wives."**

"Certainly your world must be heaven."
Troy smiled. He knew he was winning. "No, nice try!"

Most of the evening was an effort to discover Pop's world. The poor lad was so upset by the conversation that he left in a huff, never to call on the Redmon family again.

Troy won the hand of the lovely Miss Rosalie, and for the next seventy years they have been sharing their unusual and exciting world together.

Do you know the secret to Pop's world?

3
PASSING TRAINS

The year was 1938, and Leona Wiggins, the woman who had raised Pop, had died in New York City. She and "Uncle" Charlie had moved there in 1924, just two years before he died. The Corn family couldn't afford to all make the trip, so Pop was going alone to her funeral.

Candy, Cornelia and Ira were all quite young, and Mom Corn was pregnant with Ramsey. The entire family was very sad at this event, but the children were even more upset about their father being gone for a week.

To lift their spirits, he told them the following teaser.

"Every day at noon a train leaves Atlanta for New York, and another train leaves New York for Atlanta. The trip each way takes 25 hours. If you left Atlanta on one of these trains, how many southbound trains from New York would you meet on the way?"

Candy chided in. "I know! Let me whisper in your ear." Pop smiled. "That's right, Candy. When I pass twice that many trains, I will almost be home. So, don't be sad."

Ira, who is deaf, was still very young. He signed to Pop, "Train? You riding train?" Pop nodded yes and signed back. "What (do) you think about (the) train, Ira, much fun?" Ira smiled and nodded. Then he made that special sign with his hands that means, "I love you."

How many southbound trains will Pop meet on his way to New York?

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Pop believed in Women's Rights a long time before it was popular. In fact, he still doesn't think it is popular enough. He always encouraged his daughters, Candy and Cornelia, to learn "anything you can, about everything you can."

One day, as a practical lesson, he was teaching Candy how to plow. She was only about twelve at the time, and tractors in those days were not as easy to drive as they are now. So, Candy was frightened and whimpering more than Pop could stand.

"Candy!" he said with sternness in his voice. "The only thing holding you back is yourself. It is time for you to learn how to plow."

Candy was just too upset at the time, so Pop had an idea. "Candy," he said, "Come down here and let me show you something." He pulled a piece of pencil he had stuck in his pocket, and wrote on the back of a grocery list that Mom had given him...

Don't   standing   estimate
  criticize   your   or   your ability.

Of course, Candy had to ponder this. When she finally figured it out, she smiled. "Pop, if you can believe in me, then I can, too." She climbed up on the tractor, and to this day can plow a row as straight as anyone.

Do you know what Pop's message to her is?

5
A-DISAPPEARING FISH

The cold well water splashed over Pop's hand as he pumped the handle. He squeezed out his handkerchief and wiped the back of his neck. Ira was home from the school for the deaf in Cave Springs, and sat on the ground nearby. He was only about ten at the time and did not understand nor enjoy hard work on the farm.

"Have fun?" Pop said in sign language. Ira looked down and shook his head.
"Rather fish?" Ira's eyes widened. "Yes, sir!"

"Can't let you do that, boy. There's been fish a-disappearing down at the Little Pee Dee." Ira looked puzzled. "Disappearing?"

"Yessir, the other day there were two fathers and two sons out fishing and each one caught a fish. When they got home, they counted and there were only three fish."

Ira sat up. "Three fish? They lose one?"
"Nope," Pop said, standing up. "They had all the fish they had caught." He started back to the tractor.

Ira worked hard the rest of the afternoon, and time passed quickly. As they walked back to the house, Ira smiled at his father, and spoke rapidly with his hands. "I know why there were only three fish," and then he explained. "You teased me good, Pop. I forgot all about how hot we were."

Do you know where the missing fish is?

THE LOVE OF GRAMMAR

Cornelia Corn is the storyteller of the family. She collected the traditions of the family. She married but never had children. She has a degree in English from Salem College and taught high school for 40 years.

But she has not always had such a love for English. One time, when she was in the 8th grade, she was complaining about grammar to Mom Corn.

Mom always paid attention, and never made people feel bad about feeling bad. After awhile, Mom commented to Pop, who was reading nearby.

"Mr. Corn, don't I remember that one time you decided grammar was useless, and we could all save good time and energy if we just dropped all the punctuation in our language? What changed your mind, Mr. Corn?"

Pop followed Mom's cue, and nodded. Pop took a pencil and piece of paper and wrote out for her...

"Those that are are those that are not are not those that are not are not those that are those that are those that are are not those that are not is not that so it is," and...

"The new boy came into the church on his ears. He had earmuffs over his eyes, glasses in his mouth, chewing gum on his feet, tennis shoes around his waist, a cowboy belt and in each hand. A Bible."

Can you help Aunt Cornelia fix these paragraphs?

7
HARD-BOILED TEASING

The Corn family has a long tradition of back-packing and camping. Jimmy C. Corn, would occasionally go with his cousins on various trails of the North Georgia mountains. Cold nights around the roaring campfire were special times for hearing Pop's teasers. Here's one Jimmy heard years ago at Tesnatee Gap.

The family was huddled together around the campfire to keep warm. Ira was the only one not with them since he was in his senior year at the school for the Deaf in Cave Springs. Although he usually came home for weekends, there was some special event at the school this particular Friday night.

Cornelia told Jimmy she could boil an egg in a paper cup. Of course, he didn't believe her, so she bet him a Nehi and moon pie.

She got an egg from Mom, placed it in a paper cup full of water, and set it in the fire. Sure enough, the water kept the cup from burning, and the egg cooked until hard-boiled! Everyone was amazed!

Then Pop asked Jimmy this teaser.

"Jimmy Crack, there are two groups of campers -- one at the ocean and one on the high mountains. They drop an egg into boiling water at exactly the same time. Which campers will get to eat the hard-boiled egg first?"

Do you know?

8
FAMILY TIES

Back in the forties, Pop and Candy, went to the high school where a bluegrass band was playing.

While they were sitting there, Pop noticed the man two seats down from him was beaming with pride at each guitar-lick played by the lead guitar picker.

During intermission, Pop leaned over and said to the man, "My, you sure do seem proud of that boy who's playing the lead. Are y'all related to that boy?"

Candy couldn't hear what the man said, so a little later she whispered to Pop, "What did he say? Is he related to that man on stage?"

"Yep," Pop said with a smile, "He told me ..."

"That boy's father...is my father's son, but I'm not his uncle.'"

Candy paused for a moment, scrunching up her face. "Oh, Pop!" Candy exclaimed, nudging him on the arm, "You always do this. Tell me...please." She secretly loved for him to tease her with riddles.

Pop smiled. He knew Candy would ponder this one for awhile. After the concert, Pop and Candy were walking home and talking about music. Pop asked if she had figured it out. "What do you think, Candy?"

What is the relationship between the two men?

9
CHANGING WORDS

When Ramsey was around 12 years old, Pop noticed that he was studying his chin in the mirror. Pop smiled to think of his youngest child growing up.

"May I borrow your razor, Pop?"

Pop raised his eyebrows, "Why boy? Mom already finished peeling potatoes."

Ramsey laughed and turned towards his father. "When did you start shaving?"

"Well, I tried to wait at least until I needed to." Then he smiled at his son. "Come on, Ramsey, let me show you another way to change a boy into a man."

Pop took out a piece of paper and wrote **boy**, left some space and then wrote **man**.

"Now, here are the rules. **You can change only one letter at a time and each change has to be an acceptable word.** For example, you can change "boy" to "bay," to "may," and finally, to "man." Now, you have changed a boy into a man.

"Not bad," Ramsey commented. Can you give me some others? Try these!

MOM	into	POP
WARM	into	COLD
HOG	into	PIG
TWO	into	TEN
SEED	into	CORN

The Porter's Shorter Change

One time, Pop had to stay in a motel during a trip to market in Atlanta. He told about a conversation he had with the manager of the motel. The man told him a story about 3 businessmen who stayed at the motel that week.

Apparently, the manager charged the men $30.00 for a room. A little later, he realized that the room should only cost $25.00, so he gave the porter $5.00 in one-dollar bills to return to the three men.

As the porter walked to the room, he thought, "There are three men and five dollars, so why confuse them? I will give each man $1.00, and keep $2.00 for myself."

And so he did. Later, the manager found out what happened and demanded that the porter pay back the $3.00 that he had stolen.

The porter insisted that he only had $2.00.

But the manager said, "**There are three men who each paid $10.00 and each received $1.00 back from you, so actually they paid $9.00 each for their room. Three men paying $9.00 each equals $27.00.**"

"**The cost of the room ($30.00) minus what was paid on the room ($27.00) equals $3.00. So, give back this money.**" The porter insists that he only took $2.00.

So, where is the missing dollar?

POP FINDS A WAY

Pop was always getting into some crazy situation. Once he was taking some popcorn to market in a sack. He decided to take along the Corn family's ornery red-speckled rooster, who just loves to eat popcorn kernels.

Besides this craziness, Pop caught a wild field fox getting a drink at the river, and grabbed that fox by the tail, tied a rope around his neck, and was now leading him to market, too.

Now, this was a fine sight. Pop was carrying a sack of popcorn under one arm, a rooster under the other, and leading the fox along by the rope.

The only problem is, now, Pop can't leave those three alone for even a minute. The fox wants to eat the rooster, and the rooster is determined to eat the popcorn.

Worst of all, they came up to a river to cross. Tied to a tree on the river was a boat. The boat was so tiny that only Pop and one of the three could fit in it. If Pop decided to leave the fox and rooster together and took the popcorn across first, then when he got back there would be nothing left but a smiling fox and a pile of feathers. But he couldn't leave the rooster with the popcorn, either.

Can you help Pop cross the river with all that he's carrying? Remember, Pop can only carry one item across at a time.

TRAVELING TEASERS

It always seems like teasers are particularly appropriate when you are traveling.

One time when Mom, Pop and Ramsey were going to Cave Springs for Ira and Bex Rayford's wedding, they were discussing the policies of President Eisenhower.

Ramsey was also very interested in joining the military, so they had been talking about this for hours. There were no interstate highways at the time, so travel was much slower. So, Pop decided to change the subject.

"Ramsey, I heard the strangest story the other day."

"Okay, Pop," Ramsey rolled his eyes and then winked at Mom. "What crazy story did you hear this time?

"Well, it seems that a car was driving down a lonely country road, and there was no moon out, nor was there any available light from the street lights. The car did not have on its headlights, nor did an approaching car have its headlights on. The oncoming car was going a little fast and came up over the hill across the center line. But, the first car saw him coming, and barely avoided a wreck. Now, how did this car know to swerve?"

Ramsey was almost grown, and quite experienced with Pop's teasers by this time, so he asked about the "northern lights," the starlight, the shooting starlight, and even about the number of fireflies. None of these were right.

What do you think?

13
GRANNY REDMON'S CREW

When Ramsey was on tour in the Middle East recently, his wife and children were visiting the Corns. Eric and Amy, the older two, were out playing with their cousin, Larry, and having a great time on the farm. But little Ann was feeling sad about her daddy being away.

Pop noticed Ann sitting alone on the sofa, so he went over and sat down. "You know," he said, "I really miss your father." Ann looked up at her grandfather with a tear in her eye. "Yeah, me too."

Pop paused, "You know what I remember about your father when he was a boy?"

Ann's eyes brightened and glanced at Pop.

"I remember how Ramsey loved to play with his cousins when we visited his Granny Redmon. She had many grandchildren, so Ramsey had many cousins to play with."

Ann looked puzzled, but Pop continued.

"Yes, in fact, Granny and Grandpa had seven daughters, and each girl had a brother. So, how many people were in the Redmon family?"

Ann pondered for awhile, and her mood completely changed. She dropped by the kitchen with her answer, and then ran out the door to play with Eric, Amy and Larry.

Do you know how many are in this family?

MATHEMATICAL MUSINGS

One time, Mom and Pop Corn's oldest grandson, Troy, was visiting. Since he was named after Pop, the family always called him "Troy C.," which was often confused by others with the name "Tracy."

Troy C. was around 14 at the time, and the "New Math" had been introduced. So, one time he was teasing Pop.

"When you were young, Pop, had math been invented?"
Pop smiled, "You'd be surprised how much "Old Math" we had in those days. **I'm sure you know the distance to the moon, the circumference of the earth, and how long it takes light to travel from the sun to the earth?"**

Troy C. was stunned, "No...do you know?"

"Sure but I also wanted to show you something else I learned in grammar school. Take out some paper."

1) Write down any number with 3 figures.
2) Write this number backwards.
3) Subtract the smaller from the larger.
4) Write this number backwards.
5) Add, and you will always get: 1089.

Troy C. looked at his grandfather in amazement. "How did you know that?" He tried at least 20 different combinations and they always came out the same.

Well," Pop said, "There were many wonderful things about the classrooms of the past...even though the caves we met in sure got cold." They laughed together.

FAMILY TANGLES

    Just before Jimmy got married, he went over to his Aunt Rosalie and Uncle Troy's house with his bride-to-be. It was the first time she met Pop Corn, and she made the mistake of asking him to explain how everyone in the family was related. He said, "Let me draw you a chart that will help explain," and he drew the following chart.

Lou

Troy   Rosalie   Erin

Kelly

Casey

Candy
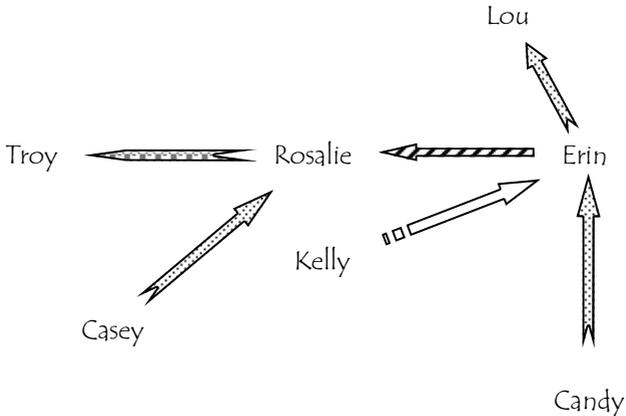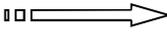
| you are my wife |
| you are my sister |
| you are my husband |
| you are my mother |
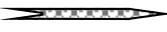
    She was young so she didn't know any better than to put up with this foolishness.

    Pop said, "This tells you what each person can say about

the other. **For example, Troy could say to Rosalie, 'You are my wife.' Rosalie could say to Erin, 'You are my sister.' What could Troy say to Erin? 'You are...'"**

Now, you go ahead and finish these up." When Pop left them with me, he winked and said he'd be back directly for the answers. See if you can figure them out.

What can these people say? "You are my…"

1. Troy to Erin   _____

2. Casey to Rosalie   _____

3. Candy to Casey   _____

4. Lou to Troy   _____

5. Casey to Kelly?   _____

6. Lou to Erin?   _____

7. Candy to Lou?   _____

8. Troy to Casey?   _____

9. Kelly to Lou?   _____

10. Troy to Kelly?   _____

INTERGENERATIONAL TEASING

Ira's children, Troy C. and Donna, were teenagers back in the turbulent 60s and 70s. Troy was teasing Pop about how smart his generation was with their "New Math."

Mom and Pop were wonderful with Troy C. and Donna during those times. They never seemed to be as bothered as the rest of us by Troy's long hair or Donna's mini skirts. During one conversation about New Math, Troy tried this teaser on his grandfather.

He said, **"Pop, can you put three 4s together to make 5? Can you put them together to make 11? 4? 48? 40...?"**

Pop interrupted, "Hold on a second. Let this tired old brain think." He pulled out a piece of paper and started writing. "Yes, in fact, I can." And he wrote out the answers. Troy C. was quite impressed.

"Now," said Pop, "let me ask you this one Mr. Smarty Britches. **Is it cheaper to take two of your friends to one rock concert, or take one friend to two concerts?"**

Troy paused, "I don't know...I guess it would cost the same." Pop lovingly winked his eye and smiled. "No wonder you don't have any money. All that hair is making it hard for your brain to work."

What are the answers to these teasers?

DOTS FOR DISTRACTION

I don't know how he does it, but Pop always has an idea for entertaining the grandchildren when Mom wants them out of the kitchen. The other day, Pop quietly gathered all the children around, produced a pencil and paper, and drew nine black dots, just like this:

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●    ●    ●

●    ●    ●

●    ●    ●
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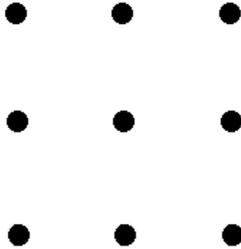
"Now," he said with a smile in his eyes, "which one of you can put your pencil on this paper and **draw only four straight lines which include all nine dots, without ever lifting your pencil from the paper?**

Remember, straight lines, only four, and don't lift your pencil from the paper."

The children all worked on this teaser for a long time, but finally, it was Ramsey's son, Eric, who yelled first, "I got it!"

See if you can figure it out.

Bookworm Delight

Pop tells the story of a special three-volume set on "The Legend of Mom & Pop Corn" he once had.

He set the books on the shelf in order.

As he did so, he noticed that each book measured exactly one- and one-half inches thick. One inch was the text itself, and each cover was one-fourth inch thick.

So all three books side-by-side measured four- and one-half inches.

Pop says that months later he discovered that a bookworm had eaten its way through the books from page one of the first book to the last page of the third book.

He said that the worm must have been hungry for knowledge about the Corn family roots.

But he quizzed me on how far I thought the worm had traveled. I thought the answer would be four inches, but Pop smiled and said, "No, the books weren't THAT interesting to him."

So, how far do YOU think he traveled?

SORTING SOCKS

Soon after we celebrated our 20th anniversary, we were at the Corn's for a Sunday afternoon picnic.

Their oldest son, Ira, and his wife, Bex Rayford Corn, are both deaf, and speak with their hands. Different family members would interpret for Ira and Bex.

We were talking about funny things that happened when the Corn children were young, and suddenly, Ira got the biggest smile on his face. He told the following story, and Pop voice-interpreted for him.

"One time, when Cornelia was young, I was three years younger, I still remember, and Mom sent Cornelia up to her room to pick out some socks. She had six pairs of blue socks and five pairs of white and two pairs of red, but they were all mixed together.

Cornelia never kept her drawer straight. It was dark, so she brought down the entire drawer full. She carried the whole drawer down just to get one matching pair of socks, any color. We all laughed. **Pop asked Cornelia to think a minute about how many socks she really needed to bring down to be sure that she got one pair that matched.**"

We all laughed and thought for a minute, and finally someone figured it out. Donna, Ira's daughter, pulled me aside a little later and confessed she never did figure it out.

Do you know?

Teasers Answers

FROG LEAPING
EIGHT jumps because on the eighth jump the frog jumps completely out of the well and therefore does not slide back in the two feet.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TROY
Only words with DOUBLE letters are a part of Pop's world... therefore, there are feet but no shoes, green but no red, knees but no legs, etc. Try it, it's fun!

PASSING TRAINS
3 trains. One hour after he left, he would meet the train which left yesterday. Half-way he would meet the train which left the same time he did and then one hour out of New York, he would meet the train which will leave shortly before he arrives.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF
Pop's message to Candy is, "Don't (over) criticize your (under) standing, or (under) estimate your ability."

A-DISAPPEARING FISH
The 2 fathers and 2 sons fishing were actually a grandfather, father and son, which makes 2 fathers and 2 sons, (since the father was also the son of the grandfather) so there were only 3 people fishing, therefore, 3 fish.

FOR THE LOVE OF GRAMMER
"The one that is, is. The one that is not, is not. The one that is not, is not the one that is. The one that is, is not the one that is not. Is not that so? It is." and...

"The new boy came into the school. On his ears, he had ear-phones; over his eyes, sunglasses; in his mouth, bubble-gum; on his feet, hightops; around his forehead, a blue bandana and in each hand, a comic book."

HARD BOILED TEASING
The SEA-LEVEL CAMPERS will get to eat the hard-boiled egg first. Water boils at 212 degrees FH at sea level but the higher up you are the lower the boiling point. Therefore, the water on top of the mountain, boiling at a lower temperature will take longer to hard-boil the eggs.

FAMILY TIES
The man on stage is his SON. "That man's father (which is me) is my father's son (which is also me). Pretty tricky play on words, eh?

CHANGING WORDS
MOM into POP   (MOP – MOP – POP)
WARM into COLD   (WARM – WORM – WORD – CORD – COLD)
HOG into PIG   (HOG – HOE – TOE – TIE – PIE – PIG)
TWO into TEN   (TWO – TOO – TON – TEN)
SEED into CORN   (SEED–SEEN–BEEN–BEET–BELT–BOLT–COLT–
COLD–CORD–CORN)

THE PORTER'S SHORTER CHANGE
This is most easily understood as a simple error in logic. The manager moves from one set of assumptions to another. He shouldn't have sub-tracted what was paid on the room from the original cost but what was paid on the room minus the $5.00 returned, which is $25.00. So, there-fore, the difference between $27.00 and $25.00 is two dollars, which the porter has. Now, I am sure there is a better, more mathematical explana-tion but my degree is in social studies, not math.

POP FINDS A WAY
First, Pop has to carry the rooster across the river and leaves the fox and corn together. Then he travels back and picks up either the fox or the corn and returns to the other side. (Let's say he picks up the fox) When he takes the fox across he leaves him there , picks up and carries the rooster back to where he started. He leaves the rooster, picks up the corn and crosses back over. Now the fox and corn are together on the other side. So he picks up the rooster, crosses over, now has all three together and is on his way!

TRAVELING TEASERS
Fortunately, this entire event occurred during the daytime so no lights were needed.

GRANNY REDMON'S CREW
10 family members because each daughter had 1 brother but he was the same brother to all. 7 girls, 1 boy and 2 parents.

MATHEMATICAL MUSINGS
Any three digit number, when taken through these steps, will result in 1089. By the way, the circumference of the earth is 25,000 miles, the moon is 240,000 miles away and it takes light 8 minutes and 20 seconds to travel from the sun to the earth.

FAMILY TANGLES

1. Troy to Erin   "You are my sister in law."
2. Casey to Rosalie   "You are my aunt."
3. Candy to Casey   "You are my cousin."
4. Lou to Troy   "You are my son-in-law."
5. Casey to Kelly?   "You are my father."
6. Lou to Erin?   "You are my daughter."
7. Candy to Lou?   "You are my grandmother."
8. Troy to Casey?   "You are my niece."
9. Kelly to Lou?   "You are my mother-in-law."
10. Troy to Kelly?   "You are my brother-in-law."

INTERGENERATIONAL TEASING

How do you put together 4's to make other numbers? Use your imagination... 4 x 4/4 = 4;   4 + 4/4 = 5; 44 divided by 4 = 11; 44 + 4 = 48; 44 – 4 = 40. Also, it is cheaper to take two friends to one concert because you only have to pay for yourself once.

DOTS FOR DISTRACTION

Think outside the box.
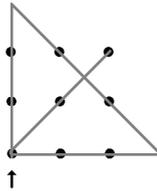
BOOKWORM DELIGHT

2 inches. The key is where the first page of Volume I starts. If you have 3 books in order on a shelf, then page one of Volume I is the closest page to the last page of Volume II. Therefore, the bookworm ate through the front cover of Volume I (1/4 inch), the complete text and cover of Volume II (1 1/2 inches) and only the back cover of Volume III (1/4 inch).

SORTING SOCKS

If she really didn't care which color socks she put on then she could just bring down any FOUR randomly selected socks because two of them would have to be the same color.

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Thanks for joining in the "Legend of Mom and Pop Corn." I hope you learn more about your own family, too. I bet they have interesting stories. Ask them sometime! It's fun to learn!
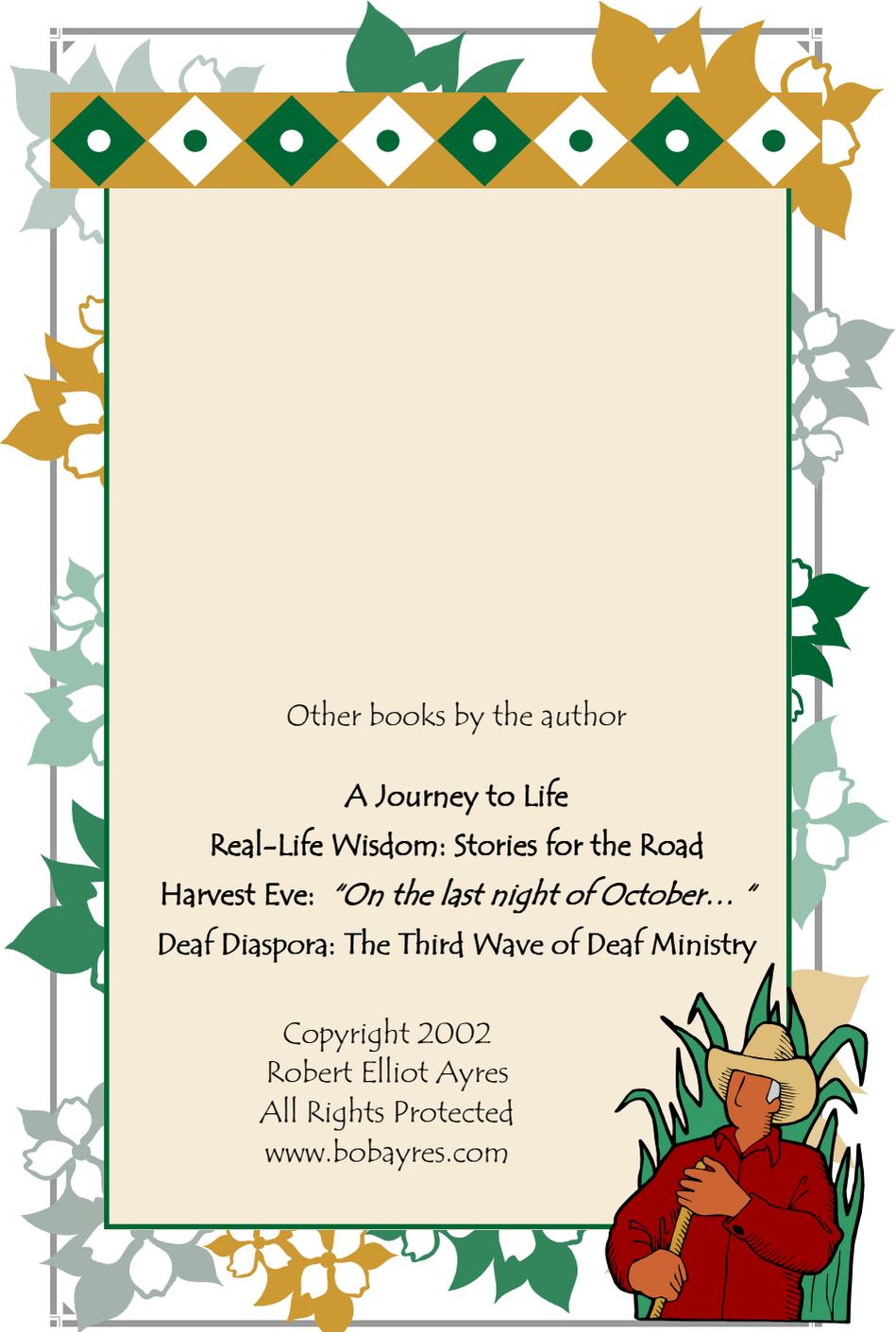
Other books by the author

A Journey to Life
Real-Life Wisdom: Stories for the Road
Harvest Eve: *"On the last night of October…"*
Deaf Diaspora: The Third Wave of Deaf Ministry