

PREFACE

JOHNNY CAN'T READ

“What does it say?”

“I don’t know. I’ll just have to wing it.”

That’s what I want to do as I get older, wing it, because what I can’t make out is almost always what I need to know, the important stuff. Instead, I too often take risks with things like instructions and warning labels because Johnny can’t read... the fine print. Print so small that I need a magnifying glass. Meanwhile, the brand name is large enough to read from across the room, confirming what really matters in corporate culture. At least I’ll be able to tell the doctor what product sent me to the emergency room, even if I might not know why it did.

Not as important, but no less aggravating, I also have a hard time reading books, printed on paper, with a smaller font size. To reduce the number of pages in a book and, therefore, the cost to print it, some publishers make the words smaller than legible. The opposite tack of those in Mrs. Winkler’s sixth grade English class who wrote in flowery script on wide-lined notebook paper to meet her “just a page” criteria, which is why she later added the 300-word minimum to her writing assignments.

To make matters worse, some publishers even go so far as to reduce the number of paragraphs in a printed book because those blank spaces in between add up, creating more pages. I eventually gave up on the last such book I was reading with its page-long paragraphs. Reading the book was like listening to a telemarketer natter on while I wonder if they'll take a breath before I curse their existence and then hang up.

But mostly, I don't like the fine print because my inability to read the tiny type reminds me I'm getting to be older people. While my mind is still happily skipping down Sesame Street, my body is gradually breaking down on the downhill road to the marble orchard. The first warning sign came around my 40th birthday when I realized I could no longer get out of a chair without making noise. Noises.

It's not just my creaky joints either because as eyes age, they also lose their flexibility, reducing their acuity. Imagine that. Even eyes get stiff with age. Something I'm reminded of every time I watch a sporting event from the States and the National Anthem plays... "O say, can you see..."

"Not like I used to."

"You have glasses, you know!" (Sue adds to my stories whenever she can.)

Yes, I do, but I seldom wear them because they only help me see things far away, and things far away usually don't need to be in perfect focus unless I'm taking a photo, and the autofocus on my Nikon helps with that. I have trouble with those things just beyond my nose, my eyes working best with objects as far away as my drafting table used to be and my computer screen now is. Go figure.

That's why I'm looking forward to something I've never had - a large-screen TV with a high-definition

picture... when I watch ice hockey. Because now, sitting more than a couple-two-three feet away from my computer screen, it's hard to follow the pixelated puck when I'm streaming a game. To make up for what I can't always see, I do what any "Yah, hey" hockey fan would tell me, "Watch the players, not the puck, and you'll know where the puck is."

Yes, but sometimes, I like to see it...

While it doesn't help me watch hockey, I have a visual aid - a magnifying glass my Grandma Curran gave me when my age was still a single digit. Grandma gifted it after I started collecting coins, started when she began handing down her collection once she was convinced I wasn't going to use a Liberty silver dollar to buy candy or anything else - still true, even after all these years. Grandmas know.

The magnifying glass that once helped me read the fine print on coins now helps me read the fine print, period. It's nearly as old as I am, but its "vision" is still perfect. Over the years, the magnifying glass has moved with me because it's one of my earliest memories of Grandma, and I knew it would again come in handy. Now it sits on my desk, within easy reach, thankfully large enough I can see it without its help... for now.

I told you all that to tell you this... because of my less than 20/20 vision, next thing you know, my hair will start turning gray... "Ahem..." (Sue, again...), I do my best to make sure I, and you, can read, without a magnifying glass, any book published with my pen name on the cover. That's why this font isn't money-saving small, why there are two spaces at the end of every sentence, and why paragraphs are short, to make reading easy on my, and maybe your, stiff eyes. I know it'll be easy because I've already read this book... it now your turn...