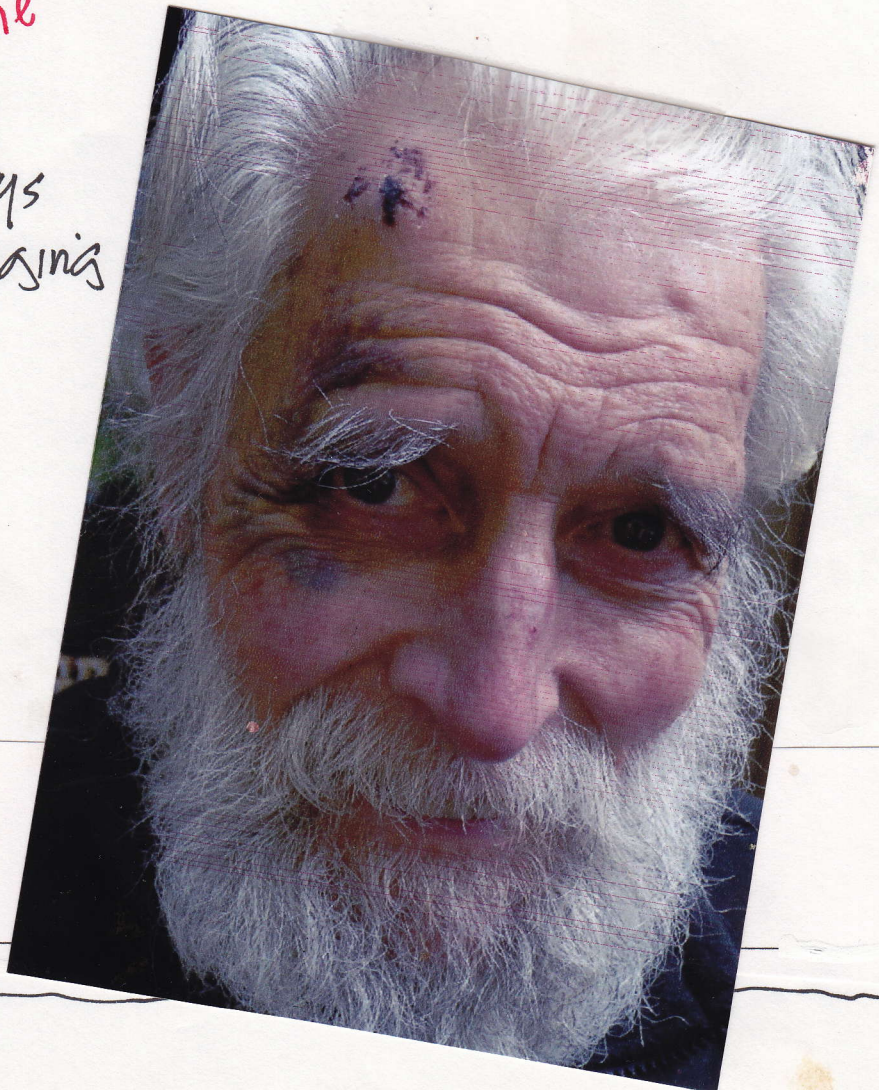




Back in the days  
when little boys still  
wore dresses ...

... and today  
when <sup>those same</sup> little boys  
are still hanging  
around.





OBITUARY  
Malcolm Wells (1926, Camden, N.J. )

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A few years before her death I asked my sister Mimi if she'd ever thought about her own obituary. She hadn't, but it took her only a second or two to come up with one:

"I was born, I went to school,  
I grew up, I got married, I had  
two kids, and I died."

Her response clearly illustrated our differences. Mimi didn't need to tell you about her life. I had to tell you about mine. That's why the obituary that follows will probably run to several pages.

My original name was Malcolm Bramley Wells. A great-grandmother in Cleveland was a woman who'd never heard of me. She was Mary Bramley, and she died not long after I was born. So my middle name was soon dropped. I have been just plain Malcolm Wells or Mac ever since.

My big brother, Jack, was killed on a motor scooter in 1950 at age 29. Mimi died of lung cancer at 58. She'd been a heavy smoker. Full of fun, she practically wise-cracked her way to the cemetery. I, too, smoked - for 30 years - (till I was 47) but have gotten away with it so far (as I sit here coughing my way toward a third year of pneumonia). My whole life, in fact, has been one of getting away with it. I'm a lucky man.

My mother was an artist. She taught me to draw, to understand perspective, and to see land forms. My father, "a mere appliance salesman", as he put it, taught me to be dependable, to look people in the eye, and to smile. Those characteristics have always

opened many doors for me, although the “smile” part gets pretty well lost in my beard.

I married Shirley Holmes in 1947. She was just a month past her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was she who opened my eyes to subjects like race in America, subjects I’d had till then taken little time for, dazzled as I’d been with the wonder of myself. Later, it was Karen who continued that eye-opening process, making me aware of conditions beyond the world of architecture.

My big brother, Jack, had been one of those guys who could do anything: pick up a musical instrument and play it almost by instinct. Artist, musician, cartoonist, gymnast—you name it. And there I was, his klutzy kid brother, standing by his drawing board, trying to absorb everything I saw. I was never able to do things quite right. So even though I fell into a life of good luck later on, it all came to me slowly, as I tried in vain to be Jack redux. I was too shy to go out for sports in high school, and I didn’t even have a date till the end of my senior year.

I don’t have a degree of any kind but as I neared 60 I was asked to teach an environmental design course at Harvard. If nothing else, teaching taught me that I was no teacher. Then, for 10 to 15 years, mostly in the 80’s, I lectured on my favorite subject, underground architecture, at schools all across the continent.

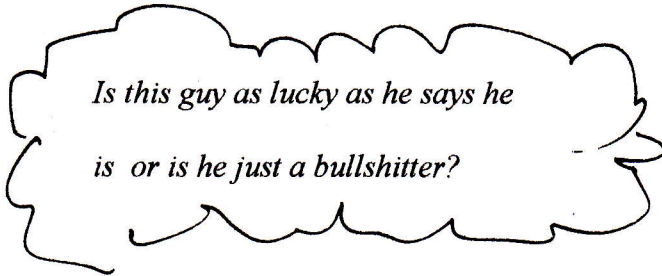
Eight or ten books later, I’d moved to Cape Cod, built another well-publicized house, and done the usual “successful architect” thing: gotten divorced and remarried.

Karen North Wells, the landscape painter, has now been my wife since 1984. Her two kids, Jonathan Kelly (1970) and Kirsten Engstrom(1972) seemed to have survived, even thrived, in spite of having inherited a geezer. Each is now married and a parent of two children.

My three kids, Kappy (1949), John (1951), and Sam(1955), have made me a

three-time grandfather. My kids, as you might guess, are wonderful. My luck in life continues.

I am an atheist, a Democrat, a skinny old bearded guy, and an owner, with Karen, of the Underground Art Gallery at 673 Satucket Road in Brewster. My former wife, Shirley, down in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, remained and is a better person and better sport than I would have been if she'd left me. (My luck continues.) And Karen's art is more widely appreciated every year, thank goodness, for she now supports me. She, like Shirley, is a wonderful woman. Sunshine and roses.



*Is this guy as lucky as he says he  
is or is he just a bullshitter?*

I have so many old-age health problems, Karen must devote even more of her time to caring for me, which she does not only without complaint but with enthusiasm!

But wait: don't cut me off here. I haven't told you about my two years in the Marine Corps – World War II – studying engineering at Georgia Tech and carrying a wooden rifle, of working with the Seneca's, or doing a World's Fair building, or *designing* a quilt, or never having touched a computer or a cell phone, or having done dozens, probably hundreds, of incredible designs and...

*Attention, editors of the world's  
leading papers: I want that last  
sentence to tail off into a string of dots.*