



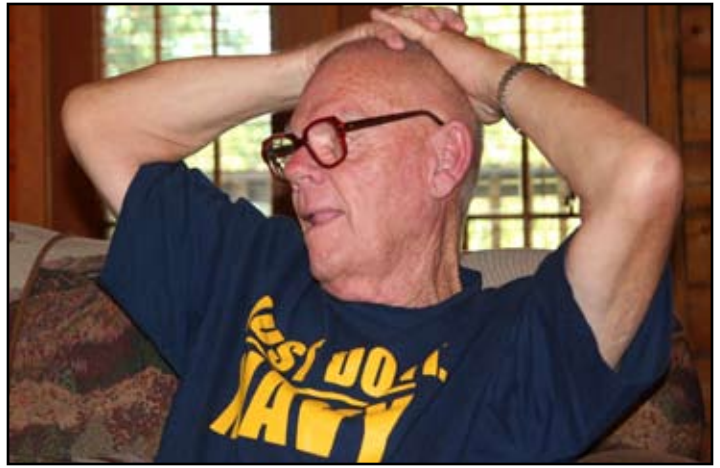
Branson Semicolon

In literature, a semicolon offers a degree of separation less than that of a full-stop period. That's what Terry & Deanie and Jackson & Yoshi were doing at Bill & Sandra's rented Branson lodge, playing afternoon hooky from an organized bus tour for *USS Colahan* shipmates and their wives. None of us were interested in the Roy Rogers & Dale Evans Museum and the Branson Veterans Memorial. Instead, the six of us had lunch and wine in secluded privacy. I've known Terry for fifty years, ever since we were junior officers together aboard the *Colahan*. Bill was an engine-room snipe on the warship, but my personal acquaintance with him spans only a few years. Above, I tried to capture a sweeping image of the setting. Deanie and Sandra are focused on Yoshi here, while Bill and Terry chat in the blurry background. Yoshi knew that Sandra was a knitter — it's impossible not to notice — so she brought along a unique alpaca shawl, one of four by the same Japanese designer. Yoshi had purchased them in Karuizawa and Kusatsu in central Japan, where we go often. The colorful shawl is a simple rectangle with beaded corners that allow it to be tied around the wrists



Yes, Sandra is a knitter with a vengeance. She can and does knit in darkened theaters, as Yoshi and I witnessed a couple of times. Here, at our Branson semicolon, she knits and talks at the same time.

to form a loose-woven sweater. Sandra immediately began taking measurements and making a sketch. No doubt it will show up in a Sandra McIver knitting book someday. The title of this little illustrated piece, “Branson Semicolon,” stems from joshing by Bill and Terry, who said, “What do you have against semicolons, Jackson?” I’ve just never had much use for semicolons, and have seldom if ever, as an editor, allowed writers to employ them simply to separate what they considered related sentences. But the matter is hardly worth mentioning, except to explain the derivation of the title I chose for this article. We had only a couple of hours to play hooky. Yoshi and I had to rejoin the *Colahan* group for a dinner show aboard the Branson Belle on Table Rock Lake, and we persuaded Bill and Sandra to come with us. As stragglers, we had some difficulty getting aboard the Belle. Bill struck out at the landing’s ticket office. They had never heard of the *USS Colahan*. Sandra went and got our tickets. Our wives seem to have more brains. Thank god they love us anyway.



The two snapshots above, of Terry and Yoshi & me, were taken by Bill. I don’t know why other people’s photos seem to be crisper than mine. I have a good camera, state of the art, with a legendary Leica lens, and I have the best image-manipulation software. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that I know only how to push the button, and almost nothing at all about the software. At left, in a picture I snapped, Deanie and Yoshi are glued to what Bill is saying, something thoughtful, no doubt.

Jackson Sellers
October 2006