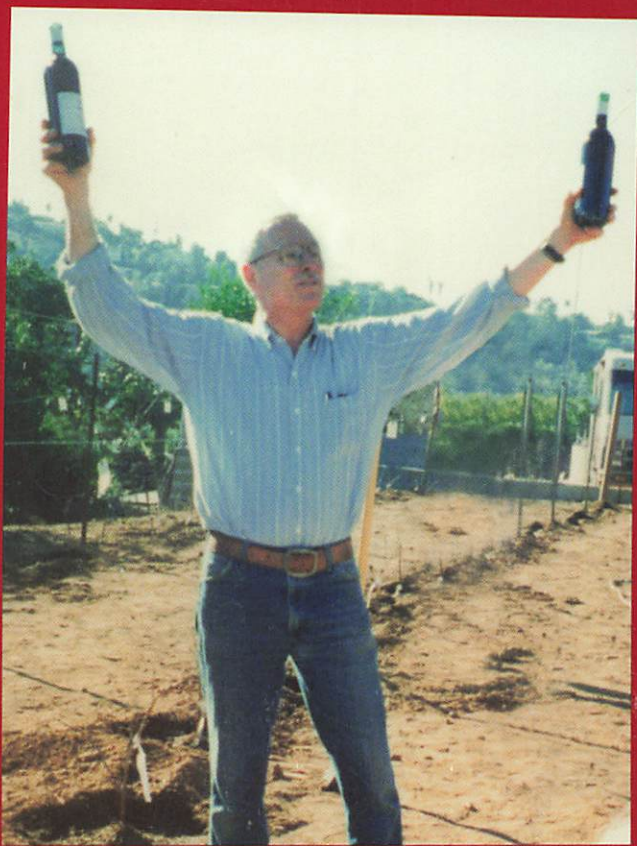


*Miles from
Moberly*

A MAN'S JOURNEY TO THE 21ST CENTURY



RODNEY RIPPEL

iles from Moberly: A Man's Journey to the 21st Century

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I especially am grateful to my wife, Pauline, for the patience and understanding I received during the process of putting all these reflections into a book.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my family, past, present and future.



from

ROD RIPPEL

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MEMO

To: Betty Resek
From: Rod RippeL

I'm sending a copy of
my recent 'Memoir' to you as
A small contribution to whatever
Archive and legacy of the O:É
you and others may Assemble.

Thanks for your contributions
toward enabling "Bending History".

Sincerely

Rod RippeL



DIVERSITY
BRINGS US ALL TOGETHER



Printed on Recycled Paper

INTRODUCTION

It is a mystery what human memory chooses to preserve from all that is given it. Who was the great conqueror who sighed on his deathbed, "Three things I longed for in my life and did not have the opportunity to enjoy: a little house on the seashore, a canary in a cage, and a pot of basil."

Nikos Kazantzakis

This is a collection of episodes and writings about my life. All are true, some are true with a little fancy thrown in. This is not an autobiography. Not a day to day recital of, I did this and then I did that.

My personal existence has little significance to anyone save myself, and perhaps, a small circle of family and friends. Writing has helped me 'experience my experience.' It has given me an opportunity to reflect on the themes and events of my past. I suppose that it is also a kind of preparation for the next number of years I am allotted.

My method has been to comb through my journals of 35 years to select material which seemed significant to include in a memoir. This proved fairly daunting since there were over 90 notebooks filled with chaotic notes, events, names, poems, dreams, opinions and commentary. I also discovered that there were still gaps which would have to be filled in. I had hoped that the material would not necessarily be placed in chronological order. This could let the reader start anywhere and leave off when interest was lost. A sort of pick and choose what you want to read idea. But because of the gaps and other reasons, I've had to impose some order and chronology has won out. I hope it won't be day to day boredom, but present episodes that will tell a story.

I aspire to be a good reporter, avoiding self-promotion and minimizing psychological introspection. However, I could not report either the joys or tragedies of life without some interpretation, sharing of feelings and self defense.

I do not want to dwell at length on my so-called occupational careers except to give some context for locations and choices made in my life. This is

not an expose' of faults or flaws, of mine or others, but it isn't meant to be a white wash either. I have made mistakes and have my share of failings. I hope to include these where it is important and appropriate. I hope not to dwell on them. The failings and struggles of my marriages are barely mentioned, and then only in passing, where to do so sheds light on significant choices and other episodes of interest. If someone has interest in these areas he or she can ask me or my wives in private. I assume a major responsibility for the evident failings and some of the triumphs of both my marriage relationships. Whether I have learned from them is an open question.

It is my guess that any memoir raises as many questions as it answers, and fails to answer some questions which might be obvious to anyone except the writer. You can always point these out to me.

Four saints¹ have grasped my imagination. Their virtues and vices, accomplishments and failings, their strengths and flaws have enlarged their status as authentic human beings in my meditative pantheon. They have given me inspiration and direction. Regardless of how well I have emulated them, I revere their struggles and ideals. From Jesus of Nazareth I learned of my divinity. Huey P. Long evokes compassion for the under dog and the uses of power. Joseph W. Mathews taught and lived a life of revolutionary service. And Mary of Magdala holds the values of the feminine for negotiating the soul's pilgrimage through life. I will endeavor to point out the impact of these great souls in this itinerary.

This is a true report, composed of memory, recorded incidents, fancy and imagination. I have lived at least four lives and am embarked on yet another. Therefore, this is an interim report.

¹ Jung records somewhere that the human psyche is like a teeter-totter balanced on a fulcrum. Virtues and Good are on one side of the fulcrum, Vices and Evil on the other. The more a soul cultivates Virtue and the Good, the more the integrated psyche is capable of Vices and Evil. Great Souls (Saints) are those with the widest capability of Good and Evil. A 'saint' of only virtuous deeds and thoughts is only a simulacrum of a human being, and not a true Saint.

PROLOGUE

THE DREAM

September 23, 1991:

I am walking on the street connecting East Rollins with Burkhardt St. in Moberly, Missouri. At the foot of Burkhardt I go through a door down into a large basement which is beneath the entire block of the street on which my grandfather's house is located. There appear to be entrances into the basement at intervals along each side. A man is there in the shadows. I can't make out his features. He comes up to me. I do not know him.

The man in the basement is of indeterminate age - I sense no threat from him. In the dimness I see he is bearded, his features hidden from me in the shadows on his face. He seems friendly toward me.

"Who are you?" I ask. He approaches close. "I am one who knows these gates, where they lead," he responds, indicating the openings along the sides of the basement.

There is water trickling somewhere. The walls damp in places and dry in others. Some entrance ways appear relatively lit from an unknown source. Others are only suggested in the darkness. Some appear to have been used recently and some I notice are overgrown with mosses and lichens. Others look dusty.

I repeat my question, "What do you mean you are one who knows these gates? Who are you? Where are we?" He does seem inclined to answer, but gestures me to follow him.

Where before I had thought this basement was only a block long, as I follow him I am unable to see the end of it. The width seems the same, about the distance across an average street.

"The doors must lead into the basements of different houses," I offer. My guide only nods.

Finally we stop before one door about a block from where I entered this basement. I look back, surprised that I can't see the end where I came underground, the cavern receding as far as I can see in the dimness in both directions. I think the opening in front of us would be about where my Grandfather's house was located on Burkhardt. There is a door recessed into the opening that wasn't visible from the main basement. "Is this the door to my Grandfather's House?" I ask. My guide nods. We have stopped before the door. I feel permission to open the door. The guide helps as it slowly opens with effort.

I go inside expecting to be in the basement of Grandfather's house. Instead I am entering a narrow hallway dimly lit by candles on the walls at random intervals. The hallway stretches off into the distance and disappears into the dimness.

Upon inspection I see that the hall is lined with niches and little shelves with candles of wax figurines placed at varying distances. Only one or two candles appear to be lit, the others seen by dim reflected light. I go over to look at those nearest to me and see that the candles are shaped in the form of little effigies of men, some in colors and quite vivid, others blurred and indistinct. Still others are grotesquely misshapen and bent over. Some are so mangled as to be unidentifiable as figures at all. Some look like unborn fetuses. In some cases there are just mounds of wax fragments, residues of former candles.

I turn to the guide for an explanation. He simply points to a niche not far from the door entering this hall. I am taken back to see the figure of my Father, slim, grey-haired, standing with a song sheet in one hand. With his other hand he is holding his throat, a strained look is on his face. His torso is strangely contorted and I see there is some kind of band or rope wrapped around his chest and pulled tightly so that his chest is caved inward and restricted. At his feet are black musical notes, as if fallen from the pages of his song sheet. Some notes are fragmented and strewn around the base of the niche. I cannot stand the pained look on the face of the caricature, this figure of a man whose nickname was 'happy.'

The guide motions me to come deeper into the hall to another unlit niche. In the dimness I see a more vivid figure. It is Grandfather! He stands with a stern, determined look on his flushed face. His short hair grey and thinning. One hand is resting on a Bible lying on a pedestal next to him. His eyes are clear. His other hand holds a kerosene can labeled 'Northern Missouri Petroleum Company.' His jaw looks out of proportion, gritted tightly closed, the unwavering look of a proud man not used to being challenged or crossed.

I turn away. In other niches nearby I see the other sons, my paternal uncles. Malcolm, a dark brooding presence, the candle still warm from its recently extinguished flame. His eyes are deep-set and furtive, jealous, fearful. Ralph is in a Naval Maritime uniform, his features blurred and color drained.

William Henry (Dub), is youthful looking, his features barely formed at all or perhaps the previous heat of his candle has melted him. There is Tormey James, not the chair-ridden stroke victim of recent memory, but a rather shy looking figure in plaid pants and a crew cut. One niche - Rodney - my namesake. A featureless column of golden wax, an unwritten tablet.

I am overwhelmed, turning to the guide, "What does this mean? Where are we? What is..."

"It is your paternal masculine heritage," He responds.

I look further down the hallway. I see numerous effigies. Figures of farmers, teachers, hunters, a pastor, a soldier, a thief, peasants, scoundrels, prisoners, dark shapes of men, men on all fours, men cast down, others groping, bowed over. My mind is dizzy with the scenes of men in all conditions. Some broken, some upright and clear, others dim and indistinct, some twisted into unintelligible shapes.

The deeper I go the less distinct. Now and then a vivid shade stand forth, recognizable as human by the bright dark eyes that pierce even now. I see crouching shapes, struggling to wrest an existence from unseen prey. I see heavy browed shapes hardly human. All with eyes, some still burning, others clouded with dashed hopes.

Deeper still the effigies become even more blurred and animalistic until at last I come to shapes that resemble fetal creatures, fish-like, swarms of tadpoles.

The hallway has turned darker. I am afraid to go further. My guide presses me from behind. It becomes pitch black. Then, in the distance, I see a light like that of a single candle. Weary and apprehensive, I approach to see a single niche carved into the side of a dirt wall. In the niche is what looks like an effigy in wax with a wick flickering around the skull. Below the niche is a small plate with writing on it which I can't make out. I look closer at the wax figure making up the candle. It seems to have two sides as if two statues of men were sculpted and melted into one another back to back.

I peer to one side of the figure and I am surprised to see it is a replica of my guide! It is drawn, or rather sculpted, in exquisite detail with fresh colors, with eyes flashing and a reddish beard. There is a vibrancy about the figurine that is almost radiant. Turning to the other side, my mouth falls open. It is me! Sculpted in wax, my features are barely discernable and weakly drawn, but nonetheless... me. Clearly me, as if done by an amateur or a child with tentative strokes and unclear execution.

I turn to the Guide and ask, "Who are you? Why have you brought me here? Are there other doors, doors where I should go?"

“Yes and you may, perhaps, visit many, and many will be familiar. There is, for example, the door of your Maternal Feminine heritage. But you may not open that door until you have learned of this one. And this one has not yet been visited enough by you. You need to bring this heritage and struggle out of the darkness and half-light. You have much to claim from this door. Only then may you find other doors that will open for you.”

I look on as in a trance. I realize the flame is burning down the figure looking like me. My features seem to become more fluid and as I watch, the face begins to change, becomes my father’s, then Grandfather’s, then innumerable other faces in turn until I am dizzy and shut my eyes. Upon opening I see that it is my face once more but again is melting away. It is melting into the face on the other side of the figure. My face is becoming the Guide’s! I am weakening, He is gaining in strength. I am consumed, He is growing. I diminish and He becomes. Dizzy, I look to see the plate beneath the niche before the flame dies. In the dimness I read: ‘RR, ...

In one last effort I cry out, “What is your command?” The Voice burns like a flame in my mind, “Become.” With a last gasp I respond, “Ancestor, give me your Blessing!”

Part I

Miles from Moberly

1

HERITAGE

*Your skull is a pit of blood round which
the shades of the dead gather in myriad
flocks to drink of you and be revived.*

N. Kazantzakis

Ancestors

It may be a romantic fantasy, the yearning for the exotic of a man born in the vanilla middle of the United States, to hear the voices of innumerable ancestors struggling up out of the darkness of the past to once more give expression to their hopes and dreams. We know we carry their DNA and combinations of genetic memory. Does each person also carry yearnings and responsibility to fulfill unrealized potentials? To harmonize the tensions found in his heritage?

I see two streams flowing and intermingling from my immediate past; two not totally independent inventions of how to be human. On my father's side my ancestors were Germanic land dwellers, possibly Goths from middle Europe, probably farmers or hunters. On mother's side Celtic peasants or traders from the British Isles, Ireland or Scotland. Teutons and Celts have met in the past in mongrel Europe and intermixed producing conflicts and partnerships that have contributed along with many other strands to the fabric that is western civilization. The Teutonic and Celtic streams are restless and inventive. The Celts have given their songs, stories and imagination; the Teutons their industrious energy and technology.

Art and technology. How to harmonize these ancestral urges flowing in my blood?

Family Origins

My ethnic background is European. My father's grandparents were German families who immigrated to this country (US) sometime in the nineteenth

century, probably just after the Civil War. Mother's family are Scotch-Irish. I do not have data on when they immigrated to the States.

As a young boy growing up we were oriented more to my father's family than to my mother's. I believe this had to do with the fact that my mother's father died shortly before I was born and that there was a patriarchal bias in the traditions of both my parents' families. My father had 5 brothers and one sister all living in or near Moberly, Missouri where I grew up. My mother had two brothers who lived in other cities and who traveled a lot. Consequently we saw her family members less frequently.



Carl Edward and Cora Mae Rippel
on their wedding day

The family names from father's people were Rippel (Ruppel?), Miller, Ackerman, Schneider and Tochter. Occupations included millers, bakers, farmers and wagon makers. The Rippel's were mostly farming people who had migrated through Pennsylvania to Iowa around 1875. Because land was expensive and unavailable around Sigourney, Iowa my great-grandfather Charles Rippel purchased an old plantation near Winchester, Tennessee around 1900 and moved his family there including my future grandpa, Carl.

My grandmother Cora Mae Rippel's family name was Miller. They were merchants, teachers and preachers. Grandmother's father was an itinerant Methodist preacher who moved from Pennsylvania through Ohio and Michigan to eventually settle in Iowa.

The story is told in the family that my grandpa Carl Edward Rippel had first met Cora Mae Miller in Iowa but when his father moved the family to Tennessee he was obliged to go along with his brothers and sister to help farm the large property there. But Carl was either unhappy working the family farm or he pined for the girl left behind in Iowa. He returned to Iowa and married my grandma and started a family there. My father was born in Sigourney, Iowa in 1906.

Sometime after 1906 they moved to Moberly where grandpa founded the Northeast Missouri Petroleum Company to sell kerosene and later gasoline and other oil products in towns throughout northern Missouri. In the late 20's he sold this company to the Conoco Oil Company.

On my mother's side the family names were Dodge, Russell and Hunter. I'm sure that in both my parent's families the names could tell a story about occupations, locations, etc.. Her families were peopled by teachers, merchants, doctors, and sales people. My Grandfather Dodge was a Mason and employed many years with the Wabash Railroad in Missouri. The Wabash maintained a round house and division headquarters in Moberly up until World War II. Mother's kin were scattered throughout small towns in southern Iowa and northern Missouri. These families seemed to have had the habit of wider ranging travel than the Rippel's and may have come to the area from Appalachian states which were settled by immigrants from the British Isles.

I have very little specific data as to places-of-origin in the British Isles for mother's people and no information on their immigration to this country. I suspect the data is available in the memory of certain family members, or at least a research path could be established. I was surprised and grateful when talking with mom's brother, Uncle George, to discover that he had actual pictures of Dodge family members going back four generations!

The other piece of interesting information I learned was that every male member of the Dodge family as far back as he was aware of, was named George! For example there was George Leland, George William, George Edward, George Russell, etc., etc., etc.. And I was named after my grandfather Dodge and given the name George Rodney, Rodney being my father's brother who died in childhood! Neither my mom nor dad passed this tradition on to me. As a result none of my sons carry the name George. I wonder if it is too late to ask them to assume the name? For example, George Steven Carl, George Curtiss Edward, and George Clifford Neal.

In the case of the Rippel's (or Ruppel) I do have some information which traces that family back to two villages somewhere in Germany, possibly in middle Rhineland near Frankfort. Records indicate that a Johannes Rippel 'ausgerwandert' (i.e. immigrated) to the USA in about 1851 and is related to our family. This family name, Rippel, is relatively rare and it should be easy to trace the movement of people from Germany to the States.



Mabel R. and George W. Dodge
and son, Russell

Attitudes and Values

Among the values I see in my families-of-origin are that they were industrious, frugal, patient, practical and uncomplaining. They were church-related people, not pious or self-righteous. They were pragmatic in moral conduct and well thought of in the community. The Rippel's were non-drinkers, put a high value on masculinity and independence. Both parents' families seemed to adopt a live-and-let-live attitude about morals and behavior of other people. The Dodge's were more urban and selected occupations that took them farther afield to the bigger cities. While my family was pretty traditional and conservative in behavior it had an astounding flexibility of attitude and thinking. There was a tendency to identify illness with weakness. When Grandma Rippel complained about dizziness at age 86 my Aunt Vida persuaded her to go to a doctor. The doctor asked grandma when she had last seen a doctor. Her response was when she had given birth to her last child at age 46!

Among themselves my family was gregarious, liked food and family gatherings, talked loudly and had a love of music but no musicians. Cooking was a prized talent among the women, however, in my parents generation the women were quite active in community work, teaching and holding jobs in various capacities. My parents loved books. In the wider family politics and the war were topics of great interest in many gathering discussions. I was too young to remember if sex was spoken of much but we were not an especially prudish family. I suspect it was a lively topic, especially among the women. My parents were certainly more liberal talking about sex than their parents.

There was a sense of pride in being who we were. The Rippel side of the family seemed to value "doing without" or avoiding ostentation. There was a tendency towards depriving ourselves of "luxuries" and deferring pleasurable purchases into the future.

Many family customs followed the church year. Gatherings were held at Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and sometimes Halloween. Patriotic holidays like Memorial Day were celebrated as was the 4th of July. Graves were visited every Memorial Day to tend the plots and leave flowers. Food was always present at family gatherings and I particularly enjoyed these occasions where many cousins were present.

We went to church weekly. Many of the men sang in the choir and the women were involved in various church groups. Grandpa Rippel taught a Men's Bible Class for 30 years. At family gatherings he always said the grace at meals. It must have been in German. I heard it so many times but couldn't tell you what he said. My father's generation did not say grace at meals on a routine basis. We had our family rituals but we did not bring 'churchy' rituals into everyday life.

Schools and PTA were also features of social life for the family. These meetings would feature plays, choruses, readings by students, dance, solos, etc.. Home entertainment was mostly radio programs, small games, cards, and reading. Occasionally we would go to a movie.

The above is a very quick summary of life slightly before and during World War II and its immediate aftermath. With the advent of TV in the 50's and

as I got into high school, family life changed and became much more fragmented and busy.

Attitudes and Traits - A Rough Summary

The Rippels: Traditional, rural orientation, authoritarian, patriarchal, independent, elitist, frugal, industrious, personally naive, honest, stoic, withdrawing, non-ostentatious, corporate style.

Religious (i.e. church oriented)

Men of this family:	Passive
Women they married:	Strong

Grandpa's exhortation: "Become a Methodist Minister"

The Dodges: Progressive, traveling on, urban orientation, secular, patriarchal, addictive (alcoholism), liberal with money, individualistic style, worldly, egalitarian, sophisticated, assertive, blustery, hard working.

Spiritual (i.e. Masonic Order oriented)

Men of this family:	Active
Women they married:	Weak (depression)

Grandpa's exhortation: "Become a Mason"

Out of all this mix one trait that has imprinted itself in my personality and produced a lifelong struggle of either being 'over-against' or 'accepting' is male passivity. In and of itself this pattern would be no problem but in relationships with certain personality types it can be the source of major conflicts and suffering.

Some might call it mellowness or the gift of being laid back. Other might call it just plain laziness. The problem of passive men manifests itself deeply in relations between the sexes, particularly with strong assertive women. Combined with the traditional patriarchal attitudes of prior generations passivity in a man produces a pattern of withdrawal from and depreciating of women. Particularly assertive women. Ironically it seems passive men are drawn to assertive women. This is a recipe for either disaster or courageous engagement.

Thus, a major gift of my family heritage has been the struggle to relate to and appropriate the gifts of the feminine within my own self and in relations with real external women.

This has been a major tension in my life, how to harmonize the gifts of the two primary ancestral streams conveyed by my family. I can only speculate had I had greater exposure to the Dodge men how different the struggles of my life might have been.

Genealogy

My younger brother Jeffrey has sent me a genealogy of the Rippel family going back 4 generations to the immigrant Rippel who came here from Germany. Jeff speculates on what the motives and driving forces were that produced this migration around 1850 (a time of turmoil and changes here as well as in Europe). He wondered what the conditions were in Europe, especially the religious context. Something leads me to think that it may have been a more materialistic inspiration for Wilhem Ruppel's move to this country. A brief note for Wilhem and his sons identifies them as "laborers." Maybe economics, pure and simple, impelled this family to immigrate. They ended up here as farmers. They don't appear to have been educated professionals, merchants, or religious clerics. It does appear that they were "Protestants," or at least became so after reaching this country. It is a little odd that they weren't Lutherans. I wonder what church records would show and also what was their home village? Chances are they didn't own land in Germany or have an opportunity for education.

The New World would have offered a fresh start and perhaps, a chance of getting land inexpensively for farming. Later other possibilities would come. It surely isn't a dishonor to come from laboring people.

2

MY FATHER

*"A thousand things came to him out of the night
Telling of a world we only dreamed of". W. Stafford*

Every year the lilac bush
Outside our kitchen window
Had a resident Cat Bird.
Dad enjoyed it's song
And would wait patiently
For the evening concert.
Sometimes early in the morning,
Before he left for work
He would have the pleasure
Of a morning song as well.

I saw my father's acquiescence to his lot in life. It was the pattern of most men in our town. In my dad's case he decided that he would be happy regardless. He was not given to extremes. He was a shy man, conservative with money, frugal but not stingy. His childhood nickname from age 6 was 'Happy' and it suited him well. That posture seemed to work for him well. He presented a cheery, future oriented outlook. He courted contentment and avoided conflicts and unpleasant situations.

His main passion was his singing. He was a tenor and singing was a lifelong pursuit. He recognized both his talent and the limits of his ability. He called himself a 'whiskey tenor' indicating that his voice was not 'big' like Pavarotti's, but a light, lyrical voice which most people enjoyed.

He was a partner with two of his brothers in a combination wholesale-retail oil service business established by his father. Five brothers worked in this business and dad largely deferred to his older brother, Malcolm, in its operation. He worked long hours most of his life, certainly during my childhood and teen years.

I have fond memories of dad in my early childhood, his singing around the house, his 'whiskering' me late at night in my bed when he came home from work smelling of tobacco and gasoline. His taking off my shoes! And going over the little piggy rhyme. The sense of pleasure in having my feet released from shoes! Mom also used to play the piggy game and both of them read a lot to me and my sister and brother when we were small. Other memories of dad had to do with his building birdhouses for Martins in our back yard, tending the rabbits

in our hutches, keeping chickens, mowing the lawn and taking out clinkers (the ash left over after coal is burned) from the coal furnace in the basement of 507 Cleveland Ave. He was a good woodworker and painter.



His gifts were muted by his shyness, a strange insecurity whose source must be the rather stern upbringing of traditional German families. He practiced the same distance in most of his social relationships, not from personal makeup, but he simply didn't know any other way. With his family he was engaged and a gentle affirming parent. In fact, he was a genuinely "warm" human being, open and loving. But he avoided involvement and exposure, was apparently uncomfortable being vulnerable. Being demonstrative was too risky because he easily slipped into sentimentality and lost composure. He often said that his tear ducts were too near his heart.

It seems his way of protecting himself was to avoid entanglements which involved emotion. This spilled over into avoiding responsibility and decisions that didn't flow from an already established plan as to how life should go. It would be easy to conclude he missed a lot and denied himself a lot. Whether this is the case I don't know. It gives the impression that he couldn't handle or didn't have the capacity for deep experiences. I don't mean that he was shallow in his thinking or feelings. His mode of revealing and expressing feelings was reserved and rarely pushed forward. He did not appear that he entered into deep relationships and intense experiences except for a very few persons. That's why I say his gifts were muted by his shyness.

My father was an orderly man, not interested in seeking the limelight, given to quiet entertainments, solitary or small group games, and content to be home with family. He did not require an immaculate house preferring a home that looked 'lived in.' He loved watching sports such as baseball and basketball. The one game he enjoyed playing was roque, a form of croquet played by many of the men of our neighborhood.

His one chance at passionate intensity was singing and theater. He enjoyed being in a male barbershop quartet called the Mark Twain Four sponsored by the coal company of that name. He had an active interest in theater during his college years having leads in Shakespearean plays such as 'Much Ado About Nothing' and 'A Midsummer's Night Dream.' He was the tenor of McKendree College's Centennial Quartet and traveled to represent the school at concerts in churches from 1924 to 1928. Dad was a member of our church choir and sang lead solos in annual cantatas and Christmas concerts.

He took part as a leading interlocutor in minstrel shows sponsored by the PTA of my grade school. For those who don't know, minstrels were shows

where white men would put on black face makeup and portray stereotypical caricatures of blacks. You never saw a group of white men having so much fun! His was the last generation of whites that would perform in such shows (because of the unflattering stereotypes portrayed).

He was not a joiner of clubs or an organizer, not a crusader or persuader, not given easily to controversy but instead desired low key harmony. He entered discussion readily with his peers on politics and social issues but generally avoided issues not readily resolved. I never remember him discussing religion, only to say that God doesn't take sides and that we don't know much about the supernatural if anything. He was a moral man. He would take charge if it became necessary. He worked hard when it was seen as required by those close to him. He submitted to duty, he did not define it.

He was my father, and I am his son.

It seems ironic that a man whose one passion was singing and theater would consistently counsel me to 'take all the math, chemistry and science that you can.' That dad would point me toward technology instead of the arts helped create one of the primary tensions of my life.

I was writing about weather one day and thoughts of my father came up. He never had anything but sunny days and cloudless skies, or at least that's what you saw from the outside, the perpetual fair weather manifesting itself through this man. Where were the dark storms, the turmoil and tempest of writhing conflicts and repressed doubts? Did he not experience these as well? Did he not know the time of gentle rain and preparation? The times of fallow heat or constant wind? At this distance I only see the striding walk and smiling face of sunny days. Even when the thunder blows struck he held to his mast of optimism and "red skies at night, sailor's delight." By morning it would be clear, not a cloud in sight.

I saw him pass through a number of crises. The loss of his wife to cancer, the loss of his business, the break of relationship with his brother Malcolm and a defeat in seeking a public office. To this day I don't know whether he really possessed true spiritual equanimity or whether he was just sailing in denial. I would like to think his spirit posture was genuine and that he grieved the blows he took privately, resolving not to exhibit it.

Or was it...

Just you wait and see RR
 Just you wait and see
 The Flood won't get us
 No sir ee

The Flood's coming after I'm gone
 Won't happen to us
 We got Arks and the Weather Channel
 And the rainbow promise

No need to worry
No more Floods for us

What about forest fires? Santa Ana winds and a spark, three thousand acres and 300 homes destroyed in the fire. Or maybe next time for us the fire will be more subtle, like the Wind Of Heaven that fell on Amos or got Jeremiah and Jonah?

Wasn't there any flood or fire in Dad's weather? Not that you could tell. When the storm came he tilted his tiller same as always, not one inch to port, not an inch to starboard. Just as he walked on Moberly Streets, the storm would pass, ignore it.

Pass it did, the wreckage still washing ashore and the pieces still unmended.

3

MY MOTHER

*You had a portrait taken
Coiffed ala Clara Bow
Wearing a long dress, high heels
And a fox fur.
You don't smile,
Only the fox
Has a gleam in his eye.*

The winter before I was born, my Grandfather Dodge was killed in a railroad accident. He was a conductor with the Wabash RR and was away, working, much of the time. Dad and Mom lived with her parents at the time in the old house on Taylor Street. According to the newspaper, a series of rail freight cars had gotten loose in a yard near Fergus, Missouri, and George W. Dodge, conductor, had attempted to jump onto the cars to brake the runaways. He apparently fell and was run over by twelve cars.

The pictures of Mom at the grave are heart rending. It was winter and bitter cold, the trees in Oakland cemetery stripped of leaves. Somber relatives in dark overcoats and furs are huddled together, looking as cold and stiff as the trees. Mother is grim, as you would expect, but she is not crying. What, I wonder were her true feelings? She never talked to us, Carla, Jeffrey or myself, about her father. She was her father's only daughter and, according to her brother George, his favorite. In his words she was "doted on and spoiled". Was she afraid the floodgates of her feelings would be too much? What price did she pay keeping these memories to herself over the years?

My mother was a woman of spiritual depth. I was witness to her struggle for wholeness and ways to actualize herself, although at the time I had little understanding. She was innately more ambitious than dad and was often held back by her decision to defer to him. Subject to periods of depression and sadness, she nevertheless maintained an active life and loving outlook. She had worked as a telephone operator and a secretary before getting married. After I was born she did not work full time but engaged in volunteer and part time work outside the home up until her illness when I was entering college. She possessed considerable skills in short hand and office work. She was an excellent seamstress and made many of my shirts and Carla's clothes when we were children. She was also an inventive cook, especially when it came to desserts and

pies for which she had a reputation.

She found time to work with the local Parks and Recreation Programs during summer months and volunteer with church youth programs at other times. She countered her tendency to depression with copious journal writing which she did in shorthand and kept in stacks of spiral bound shorthand books. During her battle with cancer she read widely and corresponded with Babe Zaharius, a well know female golfer who had also had a colonectomy and who had written a book of her experience. Much of mother's journey was conducted and confided in solitude to her journals. None of her journals has survived.

Mother was keeper of the family's social calendar such as it was. Dad was not inclined to socialize much and worked six and sometimes seven days a week. Church and PTA were regular social outlets. Mother wanted other outlets such as playing bridge, dancing, and getting out with other couples. When my parents did so it was almost always at mom's initiative. Attending other events such as concerts and dad's rogue games were also times when mother could enjoy socializing. In my early childhood they went out more frequently and used a sitter from across the street. After Jeffrey was born Carla and I provided the baby sitting.

Mom was a good cook. I remember the times she cooked chickens and baked cakes or pies. Before and during WW II dad kept chickens in a fenced area behind the garage. Along the side of the garage he had built rabbit hutches and, for a time raised rabbits as well. I think the idea was that we could have both for eating.

You can't imagine the process of preparing rabbits or chickens for cooking from scratch. It's so easy to go to the store these days and pick up chicken ready boned and skinned. Or if you prefer already cooked! I remember Mom chopping the head off the chicken with a hatchet and watching the body flop around wildly splattering blood around the back yard. Then she would pour scalding water over the bird and begin the process of removing the feathers. What a mess. I'll ever forget the odor of wet feathers. If I would experience it today I'd immediately think of her taking that stripped bird and disemboweling it, saving the good organs, throwing the feet away, getting it ready for the oven.

Much more fun was being around in the kitchen when mom was baking. She always let us 'lick the bowl,' leaving a generous amount of the cake mix for us to clean out. Her pies and marble cakes were favorites for years at family gatherings and church pot-lucks. The odor of a baking rhubarb or cherry pie



Mildred Dodge Rippel

reminds me of our kitchen at 507 Cleveland Ave.

Looking back, I'm amazed at the amount of hard physical labor she did in keeping a home running. I remember her ironing and sewing, and doing the family wash was a major chore. During our grade school years she prepared three meals a day which often included dad who would walk home at noon.

I was always struck looking at family pictures and albums of how few pictures of mom show her laughing or even with a smile. This sobriety wasn't the result of the absence of a sense of humor. During the time of her illness with cancer, after the operation which removed her colon, I asked her what it was like to have a bowel movement. She said to me that one of the pleasurable things she missed most was the ability to "clamp down on my anus!" We both roared with laughter. Or another time when she spotted a handsome young man in the hospital she remarked, "He could put his slippers under my bed anytime!"

Mother was very proud of her children and liked to take us visiting with her relatives and friends. She started taking me to the library very early on, introducing me to that wonderful world which opened up a thousand more worlds to my inquisitive mind. She also manifested the power and impact of feelings and emotions, sometimes frightening, strange and bewildering to me in their uncharted variety and intensity. I was familiar with jealousy, anger at not getting my way, hurt of unfairness and pain. But depression and sadness confused me. Mom introduced me to tastes, clothes and pride in my appearance.

She wanted me to have 'artistic' talents and early on enrolled me in tap dance lessons. There was a rhythm band, and later on piano lessons and clarinet. Perhaps the tap was too early and I hadn't developed coordination. As for piano and clarinet I didn't settle into the discipline, complained a lot and, eventually, was relieved of having to apply myself to them. These and other ambitions mother had for me represented an ongoing tension between us. She was proud of me and my school work but I know deeply disappointed that I didn't follow her lead. It set a major pattern that I have had to wrestle with for the rest of my life in relating to assertive women.

Dad encouraged me in other ways. He let me try things. Told me about the war. I listened to him sing. Began to introduce me to science. But also opened the world of building things, of bird houses, of games like checkers and roque.

My father, laid back and not looking for engagement in conscious striving, and my mother desirous of making a better life and reaching new potentials. Her artistic ambitions projected onto me as a means of meeting some of her needs and hopes. The tension between my parents, between passive acceptance of life as it is and decisional happiness on the one hand and mundane and spiritual ambition on the other, imprinted deeply on my psyche. These themes, the downward pull of receiving life and the restless movement upward to achieve, became the dominant tension of my life.

4

CHILDHOOD IN MOBERLY

I was a gift to my parents. I was a first child. They obviously wanted me and cared for me. They could see that I was a beautiful child and that I had a natural good disposition, sleeping through the night early, seldom cranky, naturally curious and energetic during the days. They praised me often for my good behavior, my curly hair and dimples. I think they didn't know what else to do to affirm this gift which had arrived from the mystery. I brought them the opportunity to experience that mystery, to experience playfulness. That was all I ever thought about and wanted to do until I was age 8 or 9. I brought them 'otherness', the experience of something different, something difficult, always wanting their attention, care and approval. Without noticing, they put strings on that approval.

I was a challenge for them. They weren't totally prepared for spontaneity, mystery and playfulness. What new, inexperienced, young, just married couples are ready for the challenges of parenthood? So they resorted to their authority. This was what they knew and it was the acceptable mode for parents.

They did the best they knew how, and probably better than most. They did not, in general, impose arbitrary rules. They responded to my curiosity by giving me information, answers, data, warnings, and above all a safe secure and loving environment.

I grew up in Moberly, Missouri a small mid-western city of about 10,000 located about half way between St. Louis and Kansas City. It was a rail junction point for the Wabash Railroad, a farming center and had some light manufacturing. The county was Randolph but had the nickname of 'Little Dixie' which reflected the rural southern attitudes of the area. I remember Miss Eula Baker who taught American history in high school in the early 50's who had three great ideals: the British Empire, the Confederacy and the Democratic Party. That pretty much characterized the intelligentsia of the town.

My earliest memories are centered around my family, school and early exploration of the city. I have very few early memories without Carla. She is 21 months younger than I. We would go with mom to Burton's Drug store where she met with friends. Often we also went to the library. Both dad and mom read to us, but I think dad got this duty most in the evenings.

One time we visited Grandma Dodge's big house on Taylor street. Carla and I ate newspaper and made ourselves dizzy by twirling around. I think we both got sick. I know I did and threw up on the rug. I teased Carla unmercifully. It must have annoyed mom. At times I felt pestered by Carla. When the teasing got too much she cried and went to mom for comfort. I would be scolded. At about 5 both Carla and I had our tonsils removed. I was scared. We went to McCormick Hospital and I remember the big light and smell of ether. We got ice cream, a very unusual treat, when we got home to Cleveland Ave. Carla and I always seemed to have competition at meals. Who would get the biggest portions, the first serving, etc.. Some of our favorites were egg-in-the-cup, pancakes, who would get to eat the chicken's heart, milk-on-toast, hot cereals and fried mush.

It must have been in the late 30's when bums and hobos came by on our street begging for money or food. Mom would give them peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I remember one of those guys throwing his down on the ground. This memory reminds me that both mom and dad were influenced by their experience of the great depression. Much of what Carla, Jeffrey and I were taught and the attitudes we grew up with, both conscious and by osmosis, came out of that period.

I must have had a short attention span as a child for anything other than play. In spite of this I liked school and school work never seemed difficult or distasteful. Play activity was foremost and extensive taking many forms, learning to ride a bike, playing baseball, neighborhood street games, and the usual "house" and aping of grown ups. Nothing was organized in the sense of little league or supervised play. During baseball summers I'd follow Gene Dennis and his dog, Poochie, everywhere. Gene always had extra ball gloves, bats and a baseball. He was my best friend and the first real athlete that I wanted to model myself after.

We would organize the kids of the southeast end of town to play the west-siders in sandlot games in the summers. The teams always ended up without an umpire unless an older man in the neighborhood would volunteer. It was fun times and I played outfield and sometimes 3rd base. It was great to feel one of the gang. I was not a great player, my coordination not being what I wanted it to be. But I made up for it with my enthusiasm. I recall hop-scotch and various forms of hide and seek. Kick the can was a favorite as well as 'anti-over', a game of throwing a small rubber ball over the roof of a house to a buddy on the other side.

Summers seemed endless. I remember Carla and I had identical Superman pullovers we liked to wear playing in front of our house. Lola Pennock lived next door and was always wanting to buy a lock of my hair for 50 cents. The Smiths across the street really irritated me because they were always coming over to my house and walking right in without knocking or anything. We had all the usual childhood diseases including chicken pox and measles. I viewed them with great impatience as unneeded interruptions of my play time. Life and the universe were all wrapped up in that single block on Cleveland Ave and in the

house where I was born in the front bedroom in the middle of a winter storm on December 26, 1934.

The saddest place for me as a child was the front porch of our house. There were waist high railings and a banister all around on three sides, the porch extended across the whole front of the house. There was a porch swing and front steps leading down to the sidewalk. The front yard was narrow and there was a large tree, I think elm, just to the right of our walk as you looked from the porch. I was often confined to the porch when I was a young child. Sometimes Mom just wanted to be sure I didn't wander off. Or if she were grounding me for some other reason. If it were raining this is where I would wait it out.

I remember looking out from that porch thinking I would never get to play again. Especially if, for some reason, I was being punished by confinement there. I would never be able to make up for all the play I was missing. Like there was some kind of Big Bank somewhere that kept track in a Book on playing and if you didn't make a withdrawal you lost that playtime. I realize now that this was an early experience of my mortality, my finitude in a universe with many alternatives and only so many can be chosen.

As a child I experienced things taking forever. For example, if it were pancakes for supper I couldn't wait to get mine first! I would be starving. If I heard other children play outside, it seemed to take forever to get me dressed. It was an eternity in which I was missing out on the fun and play! I didn't even know what I was missing out on, only that others were having fun and I wasn't. I knew if I could get out there I could have fun, running around like a chicken with its head chopped off, losing my mittens and cap, getting myself all dirty, soiling my clothes with grass stains, getting covered with chigger bites scratched until they bled and I'd be miserable. But they were having fun and I was missing out. As a child I went for everything at full speed and often to excess. Eat pancakes until my stomach hurt. Spin on the rug till I fell over from dizziness. Beg for ice cream now. I want outside. I want to eat. I want to play.

Not a pretty picture. A sort of helter-skelter, chaotic wildness. I experienced pressures to keep me controlled. Mom was the source of many. I developed devious ways to circumvent control. Wild, get loose, get out from under prying eyes and commanding voices. It's her! She's calling. Not now. Not now. I know I could have fun if I stayed out longer, a little longer. If I could have just one more turn at hide-and-seek. If I could just stay longer, we're just getting started. Why do I have to come in now? You are always messing up my fun.

The seeds of a life long pattern and struggle to develop some self control were set very early in my life.

Our school ground at Southeast Park School was a magnet by the time I was 6 or 7 and remained a central gathering place until I was in the seventh grade which was the last year of our grade school system. There was a ball diamond and play ground with swings, etc.. The school had an active PTA and each year there were pot lucks, plays, concerts and other activities which involved our parents. Each year there was a "minstrel show" starring all the men of the area.

My father always had a leading role and the shows were always a big hit! You wouldn't dare have such a show today!

Beginning when my sister and I were quite little, mother used to take us to the downtown library. There would be someone reading stories at the library and sometimes a rhythm band. We would load up numbers of books to bring home. Both mom and dad would read to us. Later I would continue to haunt libraries, a habit I have followed all my life. I'll always be grateful that my parents encouraged a love of books which have provided me a lifetime of pleasure and meditative friends.

My parents didn't give us money. Only when it was savings bond day at school during the war were we allowed to take a quarter to buy the bond stamps. This was something which dramatized our difference as a family from most of my peers in grade school as many had pocket money to buy candy and treats on the way to school. When I would tell dad and ask for a nickel to have something to buy he would always say, "We don't have to do what other people do," or something to that effect. It was an extremely rare event to have a nickel or penny to buy something at the store on the way to school.

As I grew older my explorations expanded. Activity still concentrated on school, sports (basketball), hobbies and friends. I remember one summer when my mother was Director of City recreation centers at Southeast Park and South Park schools. I spent the entire summer playing ping pong and checkers. I was quite good at ping pong winning easily in competitions. As I recall, we got colored ribbons for participating in various contests.

I liked school work, particularly geography. Very early I remember being intrigued with Louisiana, Australia, China and South America. Palm trees and the tropical animals fascinated me. I wonder just how much these early interests influenced where I lived and traveled. I did well in my studies. Dad suggested now and then that science and math were good subjects to pursue. Later in high school I enjoyed drafting and geometry as well as general sciences. I was always a little frustrated in art classes. Art in those days consisted of coloring a pre-fabricated line drawing. I could never stay within the lines and my pictures never looked slick like those of some of the girls in class. So I never got the approval of the art instructor. Otherwise nothing in school seemed too hard. I was curious and interested and relatively bright.

The radio was our only 'media.' It was a big source of entertainment and news of the world. I would come home from school with eager anticipation of listening to serial shows like 'The Green Hornet' or 'Jack Armstrong The All-American Boy.' I remember evenings at Cleveland Avenue sitting in our living room as darkness gathers outside. The window curtains frame the darkness as if emphasizing the cozy atmosphere of our small family area. Father sits on the mohair sofa reading the newspaper. He smells of gasoline and tobacco mixed with soap from washing up after working at the service station. Mother sits next to him stitching a hand towel held in two wooden circles using needle and thread. My sister and I are sprawled on the floor amidst library books and toys.

We all listen to the Jack Benny show emanating from the large Philco radio with a green eye right in the center of the wooden cabinet. I am fascinated how it seems to expand and contract as the sounds change from the speaker. There are two rays coming out of a center pupil which change with the signals. There are commercials for products which use very catchy jingles like, "LSMFT means fine tobacco." I like Rochester's voice, a sort of grave rough quality that is counter point to Mr. Benny's nasal twine. And Dennis and Mary have distinctive voices also. I think Dennis must be a young man and Mary's voice communicates a mature feminine presence. They all have funny lines, although I don't get half the jokes. But I enjoy the show nevertheless. Especially when they visit Mr. Benny's money!

I always knew Rochester's was the voice of a black man although they never came right out and said it on the show. Just like Amos and Andy's show, they were black voices and now and then there were white voices from certain characters. The situations always pictured good relationships but, of course, Rochester always 'worked' for Mr. Benny. Our family made a regular practice of listening evenings to these and other programs.

The news was also important as we were in the midst of World War II. I could sense the importance this event had for the nation and our community. Many homes in our neighborhood and city had the little flags in the windows which indicated that a member of that household was in the armed services. The system of rationing all kinds of foods and strategic goods was in place and had an impact on all of us. There were stamp books for meat, butter, sugar and other food items. Dad's business had to mete out gasoline via ration books. At school we took 25 cents a week to buy war bond stamps.

I always felt safe at home. In the living room I'd sit next to the mohair couch and the big Philco radio and I would listen safe and secure. When I was about ten I used a string to outline a map of Okinawa on the living room rug. It was in the paper daily as WWII news issued an updated map showing how our troops were advancing, etc.. I wondered about the war. It never occurred to me to be afraid, but I knew it was terrible. Some of the news reels at the movie theaters showed horrible scenes. And the war was a constant presence with saving stamps and various drives to collect vital materials for the war effort. Our home and especially the living room was a place I always felt safe in.

Early in my life I knew women were powerful, could almost smother me if I weren't careful. Teachers reinforced that lesson. Authority figures exercised power including Sunday school teachers.

A critical event in my development occurred in 5th grade one day during a geography lesson. I corrected Mrs. McCart for saying that Africa was a country in the continent of Asia. She became very angry shouting at me never to interrupt her again and informed me in front of the class that I was wrong. It was shaming and abusive. It also fueled my budding life-long conscious skepticism of authority figures.

I never had many elaborate toys if you don't count the little steam engine Santa gave me when I was only 5 years old. Yet my siblings and I never lacked for them. I was conscious that dad and mom were frugal yet not stingy. Many of our major toys were used. My first big bike was first owned by a black child who lived near the railroad tracks close to dad's business. In many cases I grew up playing with toys, bikes, gloves, balls, bats and equipment of my friends before I was allowed to get one of my own. Dad always said, "Just because other people do things doesn't mean we do." It was part of his justifying a deprivation mind set and also somewhat of an elitist attitude. Somehow I never felt deprived, just realized I would have to wait. Eventually either the need for an item would be revealed as superfluous or I would get my own baseball glove.

I did have some entirely new first toys. My parents got me a small billiard table after a long campaign of begging and pointing out that it would keep me out of the billiard halls which in Moberly at that time had the reputation of being dens of iniquity. But most items were second hand. I've always been fond of Barbra Streisand's song, "Second Hand Rose." My first basketball, bike, ice skates, double-breasted suit, and automobile were used, or as they say now, pre-owned. It never occurred to me that this was anything but sensible. And it was reinforced when I saw that a lot of my peers with wasted and unappreciated toys.

I have to remember that my parents had just come out of the worst depression this country had ever seen and then were plunged into a global war the like of which had never been before. The fact that they brought three children into the world during the course of these two major events is testimony to their faith about the future. Those times, along with the normal conservative patterns of their families, explain much about their attitudes to money and frugality.

I was about ten years old when my younger brother, Jeffrey, was born. I remember that Carla and I were taken by Grandma and Grandpa Rippel out to the farm to stay while mom went to the hospital. This was unusual as we hardly ever went without mom and dad to gatherings at the grandparent's farm. I watched the scroll type speedometer on grandpa's car as we drove out the gravel roads east of town. It was like being on our own vacation.

We had been anticipating a new baby for some months and were aware of mom's growing size and that she would give birth at the hospital. It all seemed like a natural process to us but we weren't too acquainted with the details. Carla and I didn't waste too much time wondering about it as we were excited by the preparations that had gone on to have a new baby around. It seems incredible today that someone our ages, 9 and 10, could have been so naive. We just knew the baby would come out of mom soon. When Jeffrey arrived we were all enthralled. I had the privilege of watching him be cared for and of participating in things like changing diapers and feeding him. We thought he was the cutest baby we'd ever seen. Watching him over the years gave me almost as much pleasure as I have experienced with my own sons.

As I got older and I began to earn some spending money. I was a baby sitter in late grade school for several families in the area. I was a paper carrier

(delivery boy), awed at the initiation rites into this category of "older boys" who seemed to be able to go anywhere and do anything without checking with their parents. I also was beginning to exercise more freedom of movement. I first started as a helper and later 'inherited' my own paper route.

As a youngster I felt 'slight' when it came to my physique. My muscles came off second best in comparison with most of my peers. Despite this I was always in the first ranks in competitions involving running and individual sports. I had a certain endurance and sinewy flexibility. I don't remember when I made the turn to thinking well of myself physically. I always liked my "looks" maybe even slightly vain as a result of being praised by mom and other adults. Especially about my curly hair. At 4 or 5 years of age I knew I had dimples and curly hair which adults liked.

Our next door neighbor, Lola Pennock, always remarked about my curls and often said she'd give me 50 cents for a lock of curls. On one occasion I ran home immediately cutting off some curls and went back to collect. To my disappointment she reneged when put to the test! It was a hard lesson for a 5-year old. It was in the lingering days of the great depression just before WWII and 4 bits was a good amount. I really had no idea. She could have given me an aluminum penny and I would have been happy.

It's ironic that the close connection of body and feelings natural in childhood is lost as we get older. I spent a lot of energy denying the so-called negative feelings as a teenager and later. But as a preschooler when I was hurt or sad, I cried. I cried when I was physically injured. When happy, I smiled and laughed, dimples and all. I knew that I "felt" things with my body. I felt scared in my stomach and that has stayed with me all my life. The physical reaction to anxiety, or anticipated excitement, is very close to the fear response. Even ecstatic joy produces similar body responses as fright.

Anger is the one emotion that has always been a problem for me. It centers in the esophagus, especially if suppressed. I have always been frightened of my anger, tried to avoid it, keep it under control, avoid angry people, and too rarely, I would express it or channel it into useful action. What to do with my anger is a lesson I still have a lot to learn about.

I don't see how parents can avoid projecting their hopes and images on their children, instead of waiting patiently to see what the child itself will move toward. How could anyone be open enough to find a balance in this equation?.

I know my mother had ambitions for me. She also had a need for validation, for recognition, for accomplishments which she couldn't avoid projecting on me. It's a "familiar" story, only the specifics vary from family to family. I'm sure the psychology books are full of this natural tension with its polar modes of rebellion or compliance to the parental urging and projection. Happily the parent can guide this process, choosing the avenues which the child shows evidence of desiring for itself.

In my case it became apparent that mother wanted an 'artistic' child. I would play an instrument or be a dancer or a musician. These would be , at the

minimum, the foundational talents that should be developed. There is nothing wrong with this scenario. However, if the child is pushed too early, before he is physically, emotionally and mentality ready and prepared, problems may emerge. I think this was the case for me.

I avoided, passively rebelled, used deception to get out of the discipline required. I tried to maintain the facade of obedience (what else could I do?); I had to have her love. I hated the piano lessons, the tap lessons, the clarinet, the DeMolay...

Dad was more strategic, subtle. He simply bided his time, suggesting I would do well to excel in school. He (and mom) encouraged my interest in reading and in doing my school work. Dad didn't discourage my interest in sports(i.e., play). He suggested I take all the mathematics and science I could in school. I signed up. I busted my butt to do so, and, to make good grades. He casually informed me one day that chemical engineering was a coming field. I went for it.

There's a lesson in this for me that I wish I'd been conscious of much earlier in my life. I didn't, and don't, respond well when pushed. I respond better to the tangential idea, the suggested direction, the "perhaps you should consider this approach." If I feel I'm being forced I react more to the approach and not to the content. I know now that I like the content mom was presenting more than the practical suggestions offered by dad. I became aware later in life that what I had done in school was 'get a training,' not an education. I resolved in my personal efforts to correct this but I missed out in the foundational skills of music and art.

Ironically, it made it all the more difficult to sort out what I wanted, what I needed, who I was and would become. The world comes with so many prepared scripts for children to fit into. Parents, teachers, culture, town, church and peers all had life scripts they thought I would do well to adopt. I remember Grandma Rippel saying to me after grandpa's death, "He thought you should be a Preacher." Mr. Fleming of the Stamper Co told me that, "Food will always be a going business. You should think hard on that." In many of these scripts technology and economics play a large role.

The final irony is about the artistic life. Perhaps it is the one I vibrate to with most passion as I got older. I was so busy avoiding and rebelling that it was never looked at in my young adult years.

5

AN IMPORTANT LESSON

Dad, who is going to win the war?

We will, he said.

How do you know?

Because, God is on our side.

One of my early detailed memories occurred in early 1942 when I was about 7 to 8 years of age. I was in the bathroom watching my dad shave. I used to watch this process with a great deal of interest. Dad's whiskers were always a source of admiration and pleasure. As a small child I remember him 'whiskering' me when he came home late at night.

I was aware that there was a war going on. The radio had plenty of comment and propaganda (I didn't know it was propaganda, so I had a good deal of fear and hatred for our foes portrayed as 'evil, conniving villains' and worse) and Pearl Harbor had just occurred in December of 1941 precipitating our entering the war. Later I would follow the course of the war with daily radio reports and the AP wire articles contained in the Moberly Monitor Index. The Index carried maps of the battles and campaigns which fascinated me.

There in the bathroom, watching my father shave, I asked him who would win the war. Without hesitating he replied that we would win the war. "Why?" I asked, "How do you know?" (To my young mind it appeared at that point to be very much in doubt.) "Because God is with us," my father said. This was, I am sure now, a reply meant to satisfy a seven year old's question. But then he paused. After a moment, "No that's not true," he said, "I don't know. Our enemies also believe in God and pray. *God doesn't take sides!*"

For the rest of his life my father never spoke much about God to me, or for that matter, to anyone. He was a person not given to serious theological discussion or speculation. In fact, he and I never had another serious talk about God and with his innate skepticism in most things theoretical, I doubt if he believed much detail about the 'supernatural' or religion. He seemed to me in later reflection what we would term an agnostic. Willing to wait and see what the true situation was.

That bathroom lesson has stayed with me all my life. If God doesn't take sides, is impartial or cannot decide, can prayers be answered? Maybe God

didn't know who would win! Maybe he didn't care! Or couldn't control the outcome! Maybe God isn't omnipotent, maybe God struggles with Good and Evil just as we do.

I prize my father's answer. Because it respected me and the question. He didn't know! My father said we'll have to see. The only thing my father said to me about God, the wisest thing my father ever said to me, I don't know. I don't know. We'll have to see.

Of course the ambiguity of the war wasn't easily dealt with because we were German! My family was proudly German. Both grandpa and grandma spoke a smattering of German and their parents had either come to this country from the old world or were children of people who did. Grandpa prayed at every meal and sternly taught Bible at church. Grandma, softer and much more approachable, was the daughter of a German evangelical preacher! I marveled at the books in German in their bookcase. Hymnals, a bible, a Moffatt New Testament. All testifying to the fact that Germans were people of faith, reverent, studious, moral and affirming Gott ein Himmel.

Both my parents read to us often when we were children. Some of my favorite stories were from Egmier's Bible Story Book and from Really So Stories. My favorites were about Samson, Daniel in the lion's den, the three men in the fiery furnace, Moses, and Joseph. Also about the little boy who lived in a nutshell and how the mouse (who was originally the size of an elephant) came to be its present size.

We read a lot from the Bible Story Book and curiously enough, I never liked the stories from the New Testament. This bias stayed with me as I began to read the New Testament itself. I was drawn to the human Jesus, the teller of parables and friend of women and those people on the margins of society. I even liked the exorcist and healer. But the business of the Christ, Paul's letters, etc., baffled me.

Much later dad's lesson and the stories of my childhood would extend to my own conclusions, especially regarding the most fascinating saint who I have labored over 50 years to understand and know. Even as a child I was never drawn to the Christ. But Jesus of Nazareth exercised a deep resonance within me. Him I loved. The Christ is another story.

6 SECRETS

Aren't the Emperor's clothes lovely!
But, Mother, the Emperor has no clothes.
Hush, Dear, of course he does.

When I was a kid I learned that secrets were usually something other people had that they wanted to make sure I knew they had. A show of disinterest usually resulted in their rushing to a revelation and the inevitable warning, "Now don't tell anyone." Why would I want to tell someone? I can't recall anything thus revealed to me that was important enough to want to share it with anyone else. It was usually a piece of trivia or gossip. But 'secret?' That remained a mystery to me.

I also learned that whatever content secrets had, my own or other peoples, there didn't seem to be any point to keeping secrets that were so trivial. I was always revealing the content of what others said and, of course, what I knew but was supposed to be secret. I came to have a very unclear idea of what constitutes "a secret." If something is truly secret, how come anyone knows it? And if someone knows something isn't it something anyone could know?

I was confused over the distinction between privacy and secret, over gossip and common knowledge about people. Confused over what is my business and no one else's. Is there truly anything about someone that is secret? I've continued to have confusion about this.

I suppose I never got introduced to the delicious game of telling secrets, keeping secrets. I never learned of the damage secrets can do, those things which are never talked about within and without the small circle of family, friends or even the town. Now I can see that many people I knew as a child were living with secrets, horrible secrets, abuse of all kinds not the least of which was emotional and even self-imposed suffering and guilt aggravated by social standing or perceived status and economic deprivation. Many stories which now stand revealed, I didn't know then. Secrets never talked about. How the lives of people I knew in Moberly were warped, directed down limited paths, frozen, truncated or handicapped by the things we never talked of. I think of the C. family on Woodland Ave. And their upstanding reputation. The father and three sons all abusing the same daughter. No one knew what to do with that kind of secret.

Many secrets have something to do with boundaries. Boundaries between people, acquaintances, fellow citizens. Perhaps there are things which should never be revealed although I'm hard pressed to think of examples. This stays abstract without some concrete for instance, or, as the Aussies used to say, airy fairy.

Let me try an example. I'd like to make love with my best friend's wife! Is this a secret? Is it something best not said because of boundaries in our relationships? Probably. Is it simply academic since most healthy men would probably feel the same way if they knew her? Is a fantasy a secret? Or just a thought not given expression, especially if it's not given serious credence by the thinker?

Or, let's take my bank account! Should it be a secret? Is it? Not if someone really wanted to know! Perhaps social boundaries and etiquette dictate keeping this information relatively secret?

The whole issue of secrets, privacy and confidentiality is confusing. I don't want people in general to know what a goat I really am! Is that a secret or just prudence? Or will they find out anyway!?

What if I had AIDS? Or was HIV+? I have friends who are both and who willingly share that secret! It clears the air between us. But what if they hadn't revealed it? Or that they were gay? I guessed the latter long ago. I really don't know secrets at all! (What's the song: I really don't know life at all -I've looked at both sides now...) Secrets about ourselves and others are tricky.

My most important secret is what I don't know about myself. What I have so carefully repressed that even I don't know what it is. Therefore, it is that secret, the one I most vigorously deny, which is my greatest peril, and also my salvation. This is the secret worth knowing.

Let me summarize so far on secrets:

- Secrets can be destructive.
- Most things that pass for secrets are short-lived matters of confidence or privacy.
- Corporate secrets, those kept by nations, societies, ethnic groups are mostly unconscious and are very tenacious.
- True secrets are about our self and are difficult to discern because we deny their existence routinely.
- There is a close relationship between our self-understanding and our secret.
- Our secret is also our treasure, a source of potential power and expression.
- Secrets give an advantage and, or, lead to tragedy.
- Secret is synonymous with unconscious.

To my Sons:

Here is what I'd like to tell you about secrets.

First, that I don't know much beyond the obvious. That the world makes a joke of revealing everything. Who is sleeping with whom, what his house cost, where the skeletons are hidden. All the talk shows revel in revealing "secrets." Nothing is unknown, safe from the camera's eye or the IRS.

Secondly, we keep some secrets. We don't want to look into the self, death, intimacy with another. We joke about virtue and faults but mostly hide from certain "secrets" in life. There must be something about boundaries, relationships, social etiquette, and privacy, things which ought to be kept to ourselves and nurtured in our souls. Not blabbered to any willing ear or microphone, not even to a therapist.

The world keeps many secrets for protections sake. See the Emperor in his fine clothes! Just go along. Don't rock the boat. The good ole USA and General Motors and, of course, White European Culture. So many lies that it begins to seem as if that is what the glue is that holds us together. Lies producing solidarity, substituting for facing reality. Denial the real building blocks of civilization! Secrets protecting us from reality itself.

I suppose consciousness is the antidote to secrets and the dark power they may exert. Facing the revealed truth liberates me from the power of secrets.

The hardest secret is the one about yourself that you don't know, can't know because you've spent your whole life denying it, living it down. That secret has become who I am. It is, therefore, my greatest peril and also my salvation, my treasure. It will destroy me or give me life.

Mostly I think, life comes from finding and revealing the secret. Saying it out. Death comes from harboring and keeping the secret. Continuing to deny a secret eventually absorbs all the energies we have and soaks up even the life we have. Literature is full of examples but a close look at our own experience confirms this dynamic.

The whole subject of secrets and what I've learned about them is threatening to me. I guess I've believed it was important to keep my secrets from other people. Keep the knowledge of who I am from Mother and from women in my life, otherwise they wouldn't like me if they really knew me. So secrets are about manipulation, protection and reducing risk. They are a weapon in the power games that people play.

I'm certain that some of my attitudes towards schoolwork and cheating were influenced by wanting to keep to myself knowledge and techniques which could give me an advantage.

Dad's phrase as I was growing up was that "We aren't like other people" was at once an elitist declaration and a secret we didn't dare broadcast to others. In what ways were we different? Only in our habit of deprivation and fear of competing in the American game of consumerism. Only in our practice of deferring an immediate pleasure for some unknown future gain. Often it was only depriving for the sake of deprivation. Second hand would do just as well as new, thank you! Oh, I don't deserve New. or the Best, only a hand-me-down! And I passed this "secret" on to my sons! They seem to have some perspective on this one, thank goodness.

There are upsides to keeping some secrets. I learned very late that some things should be kept secret, some things to nurture your soul and define the self developing within. Don't give away those secrets. A confident self can be an open human being, allowing intimacy and free relationships without concern about "giving away power." When you know the secret that you are a loved, valuable, unique human being you don't have to give away yourself to gain approval or get happiness. You won't give your happiness over to the control of another person. Giving the self away for any reason is a manifestation of denying the real secret of your life.

On the destructive side secrets of abuse such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse can cause horrible consequences later on. Healing can occur when the truth surfaces and is dealt with honestly. Such abuse can also be quite subtle involving deprivation of knowledge and emotional harm.

Most families have such secrets, some more devastating than others. I have to hand it to my Dad. He called Russell an alcoholic when I was a child. That was not a secret in our family like it was in so many others. But what untold, unrecognized secrets were there in the Kenneth and Mildred Rippel family? Perhaps the unstated unrecognized (or dimly recognized, if I remember many conversations of the women at family gatherings) secret was the belittling of the feminine. The unstated patriarchal assumption of Grandpa Rippel in his sons and grandchildren.

Sometimes keeping a dark secret gives the illusion of power, a deception to gain advantage from some imagined or real control. The freedom thus gained is usually illusory. It actually keeps both the holder of the secret and the one who is not being told in a kind of enslavement to the secret itself. Real freedom is to be gained from bringing these secrets into the open. Once the secret of drug addiction is admitted, then freedom to deal with it is possible. Knowing I am a sexist gives a possibility of adopting a different attitude to women.

The continuing struggle is with the secret we do not know. Is there an Other to tell us the secret? It's the secret we continue to repress, so successfully that we are unaware of it that must be brought up into the light. That secret will have power. For good if we learn it, for ill if we ignore it.

7

HOLIDAYS

I remember the gatherings at my grandparents house in the country. The drive out in a '36 Pontiac is one of my earliest memories. Dad must have kept that car until the late '40s as I also took some of my first driving lessons with it on the country roads outside Moberly. The holiday get-togethers always included all my aunts, uncles and cousins. This was one of the benefits of having the extended family living in the same area. Following WWII the Rippel clan dispersed and experienced other fragmenting events and frequent gatherings ceased.

Grandpa and all the men would sit in the living room while the women scurried around the kitchen and dining rooms talking and preparing food. There was an oil-fired stove in the dining room that radiated warmth and offered a space for the children to sit on the floor. We usually brought one gift from home and would be busy comparing and playing with each other's toys. Sometimes the men would listen to the radio and there was always a spirited discussion, especially about the war. Grandpa apparently didn't favor Roosevelt. I think Dad may have liked what Roosevelt had done, but he was never confrontational with Grandpa. When the food was ready, we would be called to the table. Children had a separate smaller table set for them. Grandpa always said grace in German. I was the first grandchild to be invited to eat at the adult table. Looking back it was a form of rite-of-passage.

This was the structure of holidays for the first 15 years of my life: Santa and gifts at home, then to grandma's and grandpa's for family celebration. It was always my father's family and not mom's. I don't remember any holidays with the Dodge's, it was always other times of the year that we visited with them. Memorial day was always spent with Grandma Dodge and the ritual included a visit to Oakland cemetery to place flowers on family plots. At other times we visited with Uncle George's family and other most distant Dodge relatives. The only time we saw Russell, mom's other brother, was when he might be traveling through. He was a truck driver and my dominant memories of him were his bright red face, his alcoholic breath and he frequently gave me a quarter each time we saw him. Dad frowned on the idea of accepting a quarter and was not approving of Russell. Consequently, we always saw him 'on the fly.'

I never have experienced holidays so carefree as during this period of my life. After grandpa died and the family business broke up it seemed the extended family disintegrated.

I was off to school, mother died, family members began moving away from

Moberly. In later years there were infrequent occasions to get together. A reunion was held in 1977 which was the last time I saw many of my cousins and most of the Rippels.

8 YOUTH

When I was in the seventh grade at Southeast Park School we moved from 507 Cleveland to 318 Woodland Ave. The house on Woodland had a large second floor bedroom which was shared by my brother and me. This large room was our fun space and we spent many happy hours there. At night we could here the trains coming up the grade from the east of town. In our imaginations we could hear the locomotives (steam) pulling all the way from Hannibal, MO. The windows in the room opened on the east and west sides. When the train came abreast of the house, we momentarily lost it, but it always emerged on the other side and we could hear it going into the Wabash yards on Moberly's west side. It was a sound that soon disappeared from our lives as diesel engines began displacing the huffing monster steam engines of our childhood.

We loved the house on Woodland although it tended to be cold in winter. It had large expansive lawns front and back and next door was a vacant lot where we would often have touch football games in the fall equivalent to the ad hoc baseball games we enjoyed during summer months. Someone kept that lot mowed and it was a beautiful playground. Dad put up a basketball goal on an elm in the back yard and the back alley became my major approach to the house during my last year at Southeast Park grade school.

In front of the house was a large tree and at the curb a storm drain opened into a large catch basin below the street. When it was dry it was fun to crawl into the drain and hide. One time I put Jeffrey down into the storm drain. He only remembers that I did this, not that I also got in with him and really took care of him. Having a younger brother was very enjoyable for Carla and me. We got to watch Jeffrey grow up from a baby and thought he was the most adorable child we knew or could imagine. Now, of course, in my imaginary evaluation he has been surpassed in adorability by my grandchildren.

When I was about 11 I wanted to become a newspaper boy with the local daily paper, the Moberly Monitor-Index. The newspaper had approximately 25 "routes" that covered the entire city. Each route was "owned" by a newsboy carrier, usually in his low to mid teens, who would purchase papers from the Monitor-Index and deliver them daily to the houses along his designated route. The papers were delivered each evening after school and the newsboy would collect the weekly subscription from each house on Saturday morning. Each route would have from 150 to 250 papers to deliver and collect for.

Each newsboy was in effect an independent contractor. The paper

charged the route carriers 17 cents a week per paper and the carrier charged each weekly subscriber 25 cents. A monthly subscriber got a break from the carrier at 95 cents. The carrier would adjust his weekly total paper order depending on people moving in or out along his route. He, since in those days girls never sought these jobs, would also be selling papers to anyone who might want one just for the day at 5 cents each. Each carrier usually hired a helper so they would go up the streets, one on each side and throw the newspapers onto the porches. It would normally take only an hour or two to deliver the whole route. The helpers usually inherited the route when the older carrier decided not to continue.

I caught on with an older carrier when I was still in Jr. High School eighth grade. He had just inherited a route from a 'retiring' newsboy. I later 'inherited' the route and operated it for several years. The route was one of the best in town serving the street where I lived. We would get the papers and deliver out East Rollins street to the cemetery at the edge of town and then come back on Woodland Avenue. My house was almost at the end of the route on Woodland. Sometimes the helper and I would split the route taking different streets throwing to porches on both sides.

The pressure to have a little money to spend mounted as I got older and I began to find more opportunities to earn some. I also was beginning to exercise more freedom of movement. I was a curb-boy at the Homeway Ice Cream Co. and later a soda-jerk behind the counter. All the kids in town came to the Homeway for shakes and malts. It was a heady place, all the waitresses were pretty. I got kissed by one on the basement stairs once! Later on I worked as a food lab assistant for the Stamper Co. One of the owners pointed out to me that food would always be a good business and I should consider working for him. The working times never seemed too burdensome for me. I usually left time for Sports and didn't work long hours during the school year.

Jr. High was a time of increasing interest in girls. I was shy but not so much that it was a big problem. Beginning in sixth grade I had "crushes" on various girls from a distance. I especially liked Betty James and Mary Sue Clay. Jamborees at Jr. High were great times. Everyone was so shy at first we didn't really get to dancing until the evening was half over. My mother taught me to dance the one-step and a two-step (Fox Trot). That was improved at the initiative of girls at the Jamborees, especially Betty Frances Watts and Chris Ann Burton. I think my first formal date was with Chris Ann at one of the "Formals" held each year in the fall. These were dances organized by Sororities with live bands. We had to fill out our date's dance cards with other boys so that she had someone to dance with the entire evening. These were nervous times learning what some regard as the "social graces." Getting "physical" with girls was a constant preoccupation and a taboo. The boys talked about it a lot, mostly speculation about who would and who wouldn't. There were always rumors about girls who "did" but most of us were intimidated by the thought of it.

I wasn't too good at the physical dexterity required in crafts. This was probably a result of the "stay within the lines" mode of teaching art. I didn't enjoy woodworking class and didn't take the auto mechanics classes that were

offered at school. I did help dad paint our house one summer and with his help Jim Newby and I built a huge tree house in our back yard. Dad installed electricity and Newby's father donated a sash window for our project. I didn't learn to swim until I was 15 years old. I was pretty frightened by early experiences with water. Once I began going out to Rothwell Lake the summer we built the tree house I really enjoyed it.

My hobbies during high school included stamps, astronomy, reading and chess. My interests didn't seem to last too long. In high school my real passion was basketball, I dreamt of being a sports star. I did relatively well in Jr. High but by the time I was a senior I was mostly warming the bench.

Just after WWII there were two 1948 Buick convertibles owned by one family, one fire truck yellow and the other fire truck red and the son drove them up and down Reed Street every week-end. He was in competition with all those guys driving '49 Mercs with 'Frenched' headlights and rear fender skirts cruising up and down looking, I presume, for bobby sox and saddle shoes under pleated skirts and white blouses leaving the Grand or Rosner theaters. This was before the advent of TV and home entertainment. We were all down on Reed Street looking for something, we weren't sure what. But we didn't want to miss out. Maybe it was our future we were searching for there on those hot summer nights in Missouri. It was the thing to do after a world war. Hardly anyone in my crowd had a car. I remember Jim Edwards was the first to get a car, a 41 Chevie and about six of us guys would pile in and cruise Reed street. Later Jerry Swarthout got a car. We were always bumming rides from these two guys. None of us had any hopes of getting a girl into a car and wouldn't have known where to go if we had.

When I was in the ninth grade, which is the freshman year in high school, we moved from Woodland Ave to 835 Rollins Street. This was on the western side of downtown and much closer to both the Jr. High School and the Junior College which had a campus where Rollins dead ended into College Drive. These years were a confusing time in my life what with hormones kicking in added to my natural shyness. The summer between the 9th and 10th grades was a painful period. What to do about girls, those strange and daunting creatures? What to do with all the time on my hands during the summer school recess? It was a time when any diversion that took my mind off my shyness and boredom was greeted with great relief and enthusiasm. Such a project was hatched early that summer with a neighborhood friend, Jim Newby. We proposed to build a little tree house in my back yard at 835 Rollins St.

We had this single large tree in our back yard. It was an Elm, I believe, with three huge trunks branching away from the main trunk at about 12 feet from the ground. Each of these branch-trunks forked into two limbs at about the same level above the ground, at roughly 2 stories up from the bottom of the tree. Spring is a time of launching new projects. And the branches and limbs of that large tree just seemed to invite images of a tree house.

That was the beginning of a project that would involve me and my friends and eventually my father through the summer and not lose its appeal even

after school started in the fall. Mary Elizabeth Crawford lived next door to our house in the very shadow of our tree. I remember her astonishment as the tree-house grew and, under the guidance and help of my father, we laid a large area floor supported by three poles running from each of the secondary limb-forks. The project continued to expand. We added four walls and a roof with shingles. Dad installed electricity and a sash window which was donated by Newby's father. Lastly, a front porch was added and we painted the entire house bright yellow with white trim on the window and door.

It was as if we were putting out a flower to the world, saying, "Look at me!" Look! At what we are doing! There's a new thing here. The tree house attracted a lot of attention among the girls and boys of our neighborhood. We would have 'sleep-overs' in the tree. Carla invited girls who had some slumber parties up there

As I look back I realize I took many miraculous things for granted, the cycle of nature, the lives of my family, the creation of home and family life. I accepted the annual rhythms of school and summer vacation without reflecting. I was only dimly aware of the miraculous newness of each succeeding cycle and the transitory balance of flowers, tree houses and people.

In my sophomore year at Moberly Jr. High I was on the Dragons varsity basketball team playing the best ball I ever played. I was a first string starter scoring high points during most of the season. I was chosen at the end of the school year as "Best Athlete with Highest Grade Average." This award, announced at our commencement exercises was greeted with surprise by me and not a few of the school's jocks who could hardly suppress their disbelief and anger with a system that could recognize a grade nerd like me as "best" athlete. My name would go on the standing trophy in the grand hall trophy case of the school to be seen by all coming generations of Moberly High students!

It was to be the high point of my so called athletic career!. Ever afterward I would be so self conscious. I had a reputation to uphold. Never again would I play basketball so confidently and relaxed. I was also to be outstripped in size as my peers continued to beef up the last two years of high school. I had to be content with being a second string bench warmer for most of the rest of high school basketball. I wasn't able to keep up with even my own expectations rising only to the sixth man during my senior year.

My brief moment of athletic glory did demonstrate to me the true worth of genuine submersion in a single pursuit to the point where you forget yourself. Forget yourself and relax and practice to the point of total passionate exclusion of everything else and the ball always goes in the hoop. The answer always comes, the game becomes that effortless ritual of life itself: expenditure and pure delight. That was my life during my sophomore year. And I know now that it's the life long pursuit of artists, writers and ambitious over achievers. It's a life I was not to pursue with the same passion in any endeavor afterward. And that seems to be true of most people unfortunately. It's a life that requires total adsorption in a given narrow field and tremendous sacrifice of all else. Not many are up to it.

My father threw away all my high school photos and memorabilia when I was away at college. And I never confronted him about it. I knew he would have that calm, reasoned explanation, “travel light, don’t carry around a lot of baggage.” Yet I was sensitive, a trait that I little understood as a child or teen. Possibly the origins were in response to mother’s appreciation and approval.

I learned to hide disappointment early. I was sensitive and hurt when I wouldn’t be chosen first to play with, or selected early in the process of forming baseball teams, or be on my best friend’s side in games of all sorts. It was always butterfly stomach time when it came to girls as I grew older. I was shy and unable to find words to say to them. I was slow to catch on socially and, being one of the youngest in my grade, I was slower to mature physically than most of the other boys.

Although slow to mature and develop, I’d eventually catch up, not the last and, generally, not the first. I was a good follower, better in the second ranks, a good strategist and innovator, even an imaginative improviser after someone else had set the context, lighted the stage, written lines and explained rules and parameters. I like a set-up, set rules, set framework and boundaries within which to ‘do my thing.’ My forte is in stretching the boundaries, expanding flexing or even ignoring the context.

I was a good loner. I always expected to ‘do it myself.’ I didn’t want, or like, to be helped. I often found that things intellectual, like school, came easy. I got frustrated when things didn’t come easily, like when my shoes didn’t tie themselves! Damn things, perverse laces, who invented these instruments of torture requiring talent beyond my dexterity and mental patience! I know I was frequently irritable and demanding. I wanted everything right now!

Very early I became a practicing skeptic. Not taking anything on ‘authority’, especially if the authority seemed derived from power or position only or arrogance. I could dissent in my own mind. I could find the flaw in what others said, wanted, did or constructed.

I began to experience within myself the feeling of power. Knowing the answers could give me a sense of power and control. Knowledge itself is power. From that time forward I applied myself to school and to learning. I did my homework. I retained the skeptical attitude to opinions expressed without backup knowledge of data. I learned to question. Out of this period of my life, which was mostly constrained, I remember my first experiences of the joy of knowledge obtained by applying myself and leading to a sense of inner authority.

In school I developed another related trait. I was adept at finding answers and solutions quickly. Homework came quickly and usually easily. I did not like telling others what the answers were. Sometimes I knew they hadn’t tried to figure it out. But often it was a case of not wanting to help. I wanted to keep the answers to myself. I wanted to be ahead of competition. Sometimes I may have felt contempt for those who were slower and less facile in getting their work done. So I withheld ‘the answers.’ I figured it out, didn’t I? I’m not about to show anyone else how I got it. They can do it themselves. And if they can’t

get it then I'm better off for it. I get things fast why should I let them know it. I can do it better by myself and all I need to do is get away, by myself and let me figure it out on my own. Then I'll know it. I can figure it by myself. I like doing it by myself. I'll do my job, everyone else should do theirs.

Winning has been very important to me. Competitive situations, where I was not at advantage brought out a passion and reserves that often put me in the front rank of boyhood races, wrestling and boxing matches and sandlot games. I was smaller, less able, less strong and less talented than a lot of my peers. I needed competition because I needed approval and I thought winning was the way to get it. I needed the approval of my peers and, of course, my parents.

I later transferred this drive into less physical competitions, more mental endeavors such as school work and grades. I did retain the drive and the desire to excel at sports well into the latter years of high school. But it was very obvious before I graduated that I was an average player at most sports. Only in basketball did I do moderately well, peaking early in my sophomore year.

It was a frantic time for me, the high school years. The drive to win and compete was accompanied by many disappointments. I was less accustomed to being a winner than I was getting used to disappointments and seeing my limitations, especially in sports. By my junior year all the other boys had caught up with my early physical growth and I found myself in the lower half of male students having reached my maximum height of 5' 10 ½". Not good enough to make the senior starting five.

So turning to the intellectual work gave me an arena where is was 'safe' to compete and easier to excel. I didn't do too well with girls, being a little shy and awkward verbally. Intellect was an arena where a lot of my peers weren't all that interested and I could see a payoff down the line.

But I did have some winning experiences, my sophomore year being a high point. I was popular, and scholarship and basketball fell into a groove for me. I was never able to duplicate the sports experience of that year. But I did manage later to overcome my shyness and 'butterflies' when it came to girls. My mother taught me how to dance the one-step and a beginning Lindy. I had a 'steady' in the last years of high school. That was my introduction to relationships and how fragile they are!

I have to marvel at the tenacity of youth and the pig-headedness and short sightedness. And I recognized in myself, a character flaw? Limitation? A lack of ambition? Call it what you will, a burn out on the competitive thing. A lack of aggressiveness which has been my trade mark throughout adulthood. Only rarely when passions are really roused as in the Frank Pollard affair at Detroit Water and Sewage Department did I ever experience a return of the full competitive spirit. I found a preference for individual pursuits where I could shine without fear of competition. Choosing arenas which were less than popular was one avenue I cultivated. I liked rational arenas where I could develop some expertise like chess, religion, Ecumenical Institute teaching, wine making, poetry, scholarship, science and engineering. I also began to develop an interest in team efforts that weren't based on individualism but more on group recognition.

Late in life I find myself satisfied with small victories. A wood construction, painting a fence or a room, a bottle of wine filled and corked. I often settled for not having the very best or most appropriate tool. I rationalize that nothing it seems, in the ultimate sense, is worth extraordinary passion. There's the rub--- where is my passion? What is it that could inspire my decision to be passionate again?

I still feel young at age seventy. I never think of myself as someone who has 'wise counsel' to offer. Yet, I have a tendency to pontificate on occasion on specific topics. My wife Pauline confirms that on some subjects I like to get on a soap box!

FIRST LOVE

In my teens I had my first serious experiences of relating with girls. At first these explorations were tentative and timid on my part and also, quite painful at times. I was very attracted to Mary Sue Clay but inexperienced and awkward. She was more aggressive than I was but she must have concluded that I either didn't like her or was a complete dunce. The truth was I did really like her but was so bashful and shy I was immobilized to share with her.

It wasn't until I was sixteen that I had my first real 'girl friend', what was termed in those days as your 'steady'. I had resolved during the summer between my sophomore and junior year to meet Patricia Ann Trebor and ask her to be my girl friend. She was that real good looking girl in Mary Crawford's history class. I was attracted to her; she really filled out a sweater! I asked Chris Ann Burton to find out if Patricia Ann would 'go out' with me and that's how it started.

What made this a 'butterfly in the stomach' experience for me was the fact that I was competing with another guy, Herb L, for Patricia's attentions. Herb and I used to discuss a lot about religion or maybe debate or just talk some since we both were pretty ignorant of it. Herb was Catholic and very conscientious. I was Methodist (the Charley Brown of Protestant denominations). My grasp of Methodism was that it really didn't matter what you believed as long as you were sincere. That kind of 'openness' fitted in nicely with my innate skepticism. Anyway Herb was pretty well versed about the catechism and religion in general but I could always get at him on the question of authority (vs. Bible). We lived in a Southern Bible Belt area, Randolph County being known as "Little Dixie."

Patricia being an Evangelical church member helped my cause (although Methodists weren't held in very high regard by her Pastor). She went steady with me. Going steady meant you didn't date other people and the girl could wear your ring and letter sweater. I was the center of Patricia's attentions during my last years in high school and experienced the 'rush' of my first love affair. One event associated with the streets of my home town stands out. On Concannon I got my first experience of fellatio, and it happened while driving! She just leaned over as we passed the Dairy Queen while I was driving dad's 1949 Dodge.

At first, both Patricia and I were nervous with each other. We were very attracted physically, the hormones were in overdrive. Later I felt her efforts to control our relationship. An example was always attending her church on Sunday evenings. I was happy to go along with this as it meant another opportunity for

us to sit together in my dad's car outside her house before she had to go in. It was a part of the pleasant dues I needed to pay in order to go out with her. But it really soured me on the incoherent prattle that passed for sermons by the pastor there and other authority figures. I loved the singing and could really get into the praise part of the service. There was evident a certain rigidity that let me know I was an outsider. Patricia and I talked of what kind of family we might have. She was ready for marriage, something I couldn't even imagine at this point.

One incident with Patricia occurred shortly after we decided to "go steady." It was the 1950's and I was going into my senior year in high school in the fall. I was in love for the first time with Patricia. I invited her to Sunday dinner to meet my family. We went to my church, Trinity Methodist, and then to my house for a traditional big Sunday meal. Mom had prepared a large beef pot roast, mashed potatoes, green beans, gravy, hot breads and deep dish apple pie.

Afterward we all collapsed for a while in the living room. In our house on Rollins Street my bedroom was just off the living room at the front end of the house. I remember my bed in that room was a full size bed, my first such bed all my own. The room was large and light with three full windows. I shared the room with my younger brother Jeffrey.

I was so sleepy after that large Sunday meal. Dad had gone to work and Mom was cleaning in the kitchen. Patricia and Carla went in to help with the dishes. I don't know where Jeffrey was. I was drowsy on the couch and decided to go into my bed room to lie down on the bed for a moment. I must have fallen off for a minute or two. When I awoke who should have joined me on the bed but Patricia! Wow, was I surprised. It was all quite innocent really, but this was the 50's in Moberly in my parent's house! Napping on Sunday afternoons was a common occurrence with my family but this was unexpected! I never forgot that lazy warm contact and coziness. It promised much that I desperately wanted, but then it was just a sleepy interlude that passed before the rest of the family would rouse themselves and find us.

Later, mom revealed to me that she was aware of what happened and was quite upset but didn't know what to do. I'm glad she didn't do anything at the time. But her attitude towards Patricia was distinctly suspicious afterward. It was only after Patricia had married an Evangelical minister, and they had their first baby, that mom developed a friendship with Patricia. I guess mom's worries about her and me were fully resolved by then.

I remember the first time I saw Patricia. I was sixteen and a virgin. I was sixteen and eager not to be a virgin. It was in my sophomore year in high school and she was walking home on Rollins Street. I thought she was the most beautiful, curvaceous woman I'd ever seen. The way her skirt clung to her hips and outlined her lower stomach was enough to drive me wild with tension. If only I could screw up the courage to meet her I knew she would like me, she just had to! The problem was how could I meet her? The thought of it terrified me. I didn't have the courage to just go right up to her. What would I say? What if she thought I was a bozo, or worse?

I had an inspiration. I would ask Chris Ann Burton to ask Patricia if she would go out with me. It could be like a hypothetical question...in case she would say no! I could pretend I knew nothing about it. It was just Chris Ann's curiosity!

Wow! She would go out with me, and did! Much later we would become "steadies," she wearing my letter sweater and later we had identical pullovers to wear on special occasions at school.

After we had been going steady for six months or so, during the summer between our junior and senior year, I picked Patricia up in my dad's car on a Saturday to go out to my grandparents' farm. The farm had always been a special place for me growing up. She was wearing blue shorts with an elastic band and a rough knit speckled blue and white halter top. We walked in the woods and I showed her all the places I'd loved since boyhood, the creek, the spring with its hand pump for drawing water to drink, the gardens of the flat lands below the house next to the creek and the little pond hidden in the grove of oak and maple trees just over the rise from the barn. We held hands and kissed frequently and my heart was full. I was not thinking sex but we were being truly sexual, lost in the warmth of feelings we were experiencing.

We drove home in silence to the flat she shared with her widowed mother. It was still light when we parked in the cinder driveway at the side of the two story house where the side door led upstairs. We sat still after I turned off the engine, not saying anything. The neighborhood was quiet. Patricia scooted down in the seat beside me and gently took my hand and placed it squarely over her mons. I was an electric wire! I was a Roman candle!

We had kissed and danced closely before but this was a new level of trust between us. I lifted the elastic band of her shorts slipping my hand underneath to feel the rough curls of her pubic hair and the warm pulse of flesh between her lips there. She was extremely wet and excited and she said so! Which added to my excitement! It was my first experience of a woman opening her thighs to my touch. That is the true moment of intimate sexual surrender in my opinion, not penetration or even sexual orgasm, but the moment one is invited to greater physical intimacy. There isn't any greater acknowledgment to a man of a woman's trust and arousal.

A year later, just after the summer following high school graduation, Patricia left to attend college. She was ready for marriage and I wasn't even thinking of that as a possibility until after I went to college. Within six months she was engaged to a student preacher who had a 'calling.' She told me I didn't have a calling and that her life would be dedicated to church work. She was moving on and I was still at home discussing religion with Herb.

There have been difficulties in every relationship I've had. With teachers, peers, girls, friends and wives. What a time of first love that was! I could hardly believe myself at the time. What an introduction to relationships based almost entirely on hormones and need. There couldn't have been less of a

future for us. We must have instinctively and intellectually known it. We both explored the new world of loving and being loved, of trying to meet our own and another's needs. That I wasn't mature and successful at it is no surprise.

BROWN NOSE AND STUDY HOUNDS

My college years are a blur to me now. I want to say that's because nothing of significance happened to me after breaking up with Patricia. I just buckled down to school work and deferred living until I could get out into the world. But, that wouldn't be an accurate picture.

I experienced the best years of friendships with my Moberly peers and, in general, had the luxury of concentrating on school work without having extra burdens of earning a living or carrying a lot of chores and responsibilities.

A key element in my survival in the college years was the Brown Nose and Study Hounds club, BNSH, an informal 'gang' of friends who hung together at Moberly Jr. College and who have remained friends for fifty years. We were a group of about 6 to 8 guys and maybe 5 or 6 girls who got together to study and party. We would get together in various places at informal times, but the usual place was Herb Lawrence's basement. His parents tolerated us (how I don't know)! We could dance and talk and study there. Some of the usual crowd to show up were Herb Lawrence, Bob Lang, Jerry Swarthout, Jim Newby, Jim Edwards, Vernon Stewart, Bob Dixon and myself. The girls included Chris Ann Burton, Joane Rainer, Selma Stuck, Peggy Kellogg, Shirley Watts and Terry Belzer. The makeup varied and sometime people would pair off but usually it was just a 'gang' who enjoyed each other's company.

MJC boasted a great basketball team, the Greyhounds, and for two years running were National Champs for the Jr. College Association. BNSHers usually did the games and then went out for a burger or beers at the Plantation or Reed's Corner. The collegiality and low pressure sociality was a great way to vent school pressures and share the college experience. It was all such an innocent and wonderful interlude before breaking up and going out into the world on our own.

Later a remnant of the guys from Moberly went on to the U of Mo and lived in the same private rooming house in Columbia. Our social life there was limited as we were in various different curriculums and the studies took more time. The exception was a weekly meal out at a local restaurant, usually on the weekends. This became the highlight of the week for me. I remember eating steak with Jerry Swarthout, Bob Dixon, Bob Lang, and Jim Newby at the Columbia Café during our college years. Those guys could really put away the food. They introduced me to steak with A-1 sauce and iceberg lettuce salads with French dressing. I don't remember eating anything out before those college days except hamburgers and malts at the Homeway Ice Cream Co in Moberly. But after going out with these guys I was hooked on at least one steak a week, even

though it ran \$2.75 for the meal. It was worth it. Swarthout especially loved the steaks. I don't ever recall his getting pork chops or the breaded veal. These meals came with mashed potatoes and a vegetable but the memorable part was the meat. In the 50's in Missouri they didn't cook anything rare but the size was enough to keep those cuts juicy and tender. This was before cholesterol. All cattle were fattened to excess and steaks were marbled to perfection. Fine fodder for youthful digestive tracks!

I also associate Swarthout with wing tip shoes with leather soles and heels, Threadneedles from Boyd's in St. Louis. He and Dixon would make a trip every year just to buy a pair of Threadneedles. These shoes were made with kangaroo leather and had a triangular steel insert on the outside quarter of the leather heels. After wearing them down a little you could hear each step click on the sidewalk. They were good shoes and hard to wear out. I had a pair that lasted until the early 70's. I finally discarded them in Australia.

Many people growing up in Moberly end up leaving and settling elsewhere. Class reunions have become a great way of reconnecting with both the town and old friends. Moberly was our 'Camelot', a magic place of youth and timelessness. Returning to find a town that is still 10,000 people with the same houses, streets and downtown only reinforces the Myth of Moberly. It's as if Moberly is stuck in some kind of 'time warp.' We know we change, we know we can't go home, but Moberly stays the same!

11

MY MOTHER'S ILLNESS AND DEATH

“Now I’m really alone with God
On a journey that is hard to take, and
I’m not big enough to accept graciously.
But so far this year I have been spared
Hay fever...wonderful!”

Mildred Rippel 9/1/1955

During my last years at the University of Missouri my mother died of cancer following two years of anxiety, false hope and suffering. I saw the collapse of the safe and rather innocent world I had known the first twenty years of my life.

The time was deeply shadowed by mother’s illness and the repeated assurances that everything would be alright. These were the initial messages from my parents and the medical profession. In retrospect I think Carla, Jeffrey and I were sheltered from the truth in the mistaken belief that it was what was “best for us.” In any event I was naively unconscious of the tragedy unfolding in my family as I focused on my studies. I was aware of mother’s illness and suffering but wouldn’t grasp its terminal nature and that our family, as it was constituted, was coming to an end.

The other event which also foreshadowed a sea change in our lives was the breakup of father’s business of almost 40 years. The state Highway Department was widening Highway 63 and would put an underpass at the rail crossing where the Rippel Brothers operated their track side warehouse and service station. The result was the dissolution of the partnership between dad, Malcolm and Ralph, the three oldest brothers and the scattering of the families held together by that business. Ralph and his family moved away from the Moberly area. W.H. and Tormey, the younger brothers leased a pumping only service station to the north of town and hired dad to work for them while he ran for a County office. My grandfather’s death at this time removed the only other focus of the wider Rippel clan. The disappearance of the family business, mother’s illness and death, and the movement of family members to more distant locations brought an end to the era of easy and frequent getting together. The cousins of my generation would rapidly disperse to even wider worlds.

Mother’s cancer was first detected, or diagnosed, as colon cancer. An

operation which removed her colon was done in Moberly during 1954, my last year at Moberly Junior College. We were led to believe that the colonostomy had removed the cancer and that mom would be alright. Much later information would indicate that the doctors, and possibly dad, knew differently from the beginning. It's hard to decipher what the real situation was. Mom appeared to blossom after the operation and we were reassured.

Mother was deferential to my father and left important decision making to him. While I saw her 'push' for great social outlets, and operate outside the home in various roles, she never really questioned his lead on other important areas. She depended on authority figures in medical and dental fields especially.

I don't know the full story. My feeling assumptions are that dad would not have been aggressive in advising mom concerning health issues or symptoms. Why did she let symptoms go on without seeking help, if she did? I can recall periods of depression especially after Jeffrey's birth and later general complaints, but I was a very poor observer, being wrapped up in my own world. The net outcome was a recurrence, of leg and groin pains after about one year. A second operation was advised and mother never recovered. During the last year of her life she was in considerable pain. She seemed to 'go inside herself' and find some new depths. She was on a profound journey, must have experienced painful isolation and solitude as her condition worsened.

Grandma Dodge, her mother, was a constant companion during this time. And her brother George was a presence at our house. I recall before leaving for the University in Columbia mom and dad talking late at night. Mother would frequently be up when I would come in late. She was able to joke about not having a colon and would talk about her experience. I can only hope that she and dad shared deeply at this time. At bottom they must have known that things were not as they had been told by a closed and unforthcoming medical profession. On the surface they appeared to embrace the hope of a good outcome! And together they kept that face towards, Carla, Jeffrey and I.

That would have been a typical 'Rippel' performance and the truth is: I don't know. What I do know is that my brother and sister and I were denied the significance of sharing this happening in our mother's life in any depth by our own preoccupations, and naiveté, and by the misguided decisions of our parents themselves. I have one indication that mother was repenting of this posture and wanted to go against dad to share more directly with us. But in the end they didn't, and we are much the losers for not having been challenged at that point in our lives. Mom wrote me a letter but it was never mailed. The result was that grieving the loss of mother was a much delayed and prolonged process, I speak for myself and I'm assuming it is true of both Carla and Jeffrey.

Mom died on January 26, 1956. I was called home from exams at the university that morning. Grandma Dodge, dad, Carla and Jeffrey were there. I was not present at mother's death bed, receiving the notice early the morning that she had died. Much later I asked Jeffrey about what had occurred and he wrote me the following account.

"I think that I was put to bed the night of January 25 with an awareness that

mother could not last long, perhaps not through the night. Even a child of ten who becomes the witness of several months' deterioration of a person into a mere shell of her former self can know. Even this child unacquainted with death, except for the fact that dad was always being called upon to sing at funerals.

It was 5:30 in the morning—about the same hour that I was born, as I recall being told about my birth—that I was gently nudged from sleep by my sister Carla. She it was, it seems, who was given the hard tasks of rendering news to a little boy who found things hard to understand. As when two years earlier, at lunchtime home from school, she sat me down by the couch, on the floor, to say that mother was going into the hospital for the doctors to look inside her to see what they could find. Why it was that dad could not tell me this is a mystery, but anyway, Carla woke me with the words, “Jeff, mother’s gone...” I buried my face in the pillow and cried a bit, perhaps she was crying with me. After a short while, she got me up, so that the family could have a brief last visit in the front bedroom.

She had gone through such piercing agony in the previous weeks, the bottles at the sides of the bed could not carry off all the fluid that was poisoning her system and made her incoherent. She called for her first son, who was away at the university: “Where’s Rodney?....I want Rodney.” I think she said that a lot.

Now she was rid of the pain, and I recall knowing that the look of it was gone, as she lay still in the bed, half-propped up by the hospital bed, and eyes still open. I think that someone held me up so that I could give a parting kiss. The visit was not long and the doctor was there to make final arrangements. Sometime then in the early morning, at first light, they took her away through the snow-covered streets.”

It's curious how the mind and denial works. For years, until my father's death in 1985, I couldn't have told you the date of mother's death. But during my years as a religious house prior with the Order of The Ecumenical Institute I fastened on the martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, a second century bishop in Asia Minor, as a celebration to be noted on his day in the calendar. I initiated this in reflections, witnesses and art work in the Sydney, Perth, Tainan and Detroit Religious Houses. I wasn't conscious of a motive save that Polycarp was a heroic figure and that his day, January 26 (old calendar), was sort of a low point in the annual calendar of the Order. Somewhere in the very cells of my body my mother's death would not be forgotten.

Following mother's death I graduated from the University of Missouri in June of 1956. I had buried myself in those University years taking a curriculum in Chemical Engineering. This followed my father's loose script and I applied myself well. I took classes one summer semester and managed to finish in four years a course of study that many of my peers took in five. I maintained an excellent grade point average, was on the Dean's Honor List every semester at U of M, and named to Tau Beta Pi, the National Honorary Society for Engineers. In

my senior year the companies came to the campus to interview us for jobs after we graduated. They flew me all around the US, New Jersey, Akron, Cincinnati, Houston and Baton Rouge. I finally accepted a position with the Esso Research and Engineering Labs at Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

I left Moberly shortly after graduating. I never had reason to return for more than a few days at a time. The old world was passing away. A new world beckoned in Louisiana.

Part II

Miles from Moberly

12

GOING SOUTH TO BATON ROUGE

In the interim between my graduating and the leaving for Baton Rouge where I had a job with the Esso Oil Company, I had come home to get my belongings and say my good byes. Carla and Jeffrey and Grandma Dodge were at our house and it was hard to say goodbye. As mom had said in her final letter to me, "Carla really blossoms and looks so pretty in her nice clothes. She took Jeffrey up to get a new outfit. He was so proud and handsome. I just don't see how I ever got such nice children and, so good looking, too."

They stood around while I gathered up my meager belongings on the day I was to leave. The largest thing was a big bass-reflex speaker that was part of my Hi-Fi equipment. I put it in the back seat of that 5-passenger coupe. Jeffrey inherited my mechanical drawing desk that I had faithfully used in my college career. I don't remember passing on anything to Carla. Dad, in his 'look to the future mode' had thrown out all my memorabilia with pictures of P.A.Trebor. Perhaps it's just as well not to cling to the past. Still I know I have anger about that after 50 years! I wonder if she ever kept any pictures of me!

When I was ready to leave I drove out to the service station where dad was working with his two younger brothers, W. H.(Dub) and Tormey. I was in the car he had purchased for me, my first very-own automobile, a 1948 Plymouth 5 passenger coupe. I had packed the car with all my earthly goods, for a last fill up of gas before heading south to Louisiana. I was thinking that things would never be the same again between us. I could never be back save for a visit and my Father was filling the tank for me and we had tears in our eyes and could not find words. Words, that old stoic Rippel attitude, that words didn't mean much. It was what you really thought and did that counted, not what you said. I suppose it was also what you felt. But words, they were too ephemeral, too slippery to trust.

And so we couldn't trust ourselves to say the sadness, the bittersweet joy of that moment, the pride, the love, the longing to connect, the fear of connecting, the utter respect for the other, the fear of being foolish and sentimental beyond our capacities. So we stood there in silence, He filling my car the last time, and I just thinking it would never be the same again between us. Finally a handshake and a word, "Goodbye, have a good trip!"

Perhaps the longing to establish intimate relationships with other men is the desire to reactivate that easy flowing camaraderie of youthful days when we thought summers would never end. We shared and speculated on everything

from girls to what we would do after school and college. The life scripts of our society(although we didn't know this at the time) were already constricting us, pre-deciding our futures in so many ways. We hardly knew freedom in the big sense only in the dwindling summers of youth. We had a gang, buddies, playmates, competition, joking, easy to be with, no real need to be on guard.

The question is the experience of intimacy, whether it's with another man or a woman. I feel I'm a novice when it comes to being aware of the feelings, thoughts and body reactions associated with intimacy, much less describing intimacy. Being aware of feelings when they are happening is a skill I am still trying to develop more. I'm prone to knee-jerk feeling reactions or the opposite, becoming aware of what I was feeling a day late! Combine that with the fear I have of being exposed, being known for who and what I am, i.e. my fear of being vulnerable, and you have some idea of how difficult the reality of intimacy is for me.

Dad also had this fear of getting too close and so we parted, not saying the words to convey or reveal our feelings, each believing that the other somehow innately knew the depth of those feelings. It is an assumption that, no matter how true, robbed us both of true intimacy and connection. It is one of my greatest regrets having lost this moment with him. In later years we had some good times and close moments, but we both lost on this one.

Now, at this point life took an interesting turn for me. The week I was getting my diploma at University of Missouri in a ceremony so large they had to hold it in the sport coliseum, who should show up to visit my grandma Rippel but her brother, Jim Miller, from Salinas, California. She had not seen this brother for over 50 years! This great uncle Jim was 80 years old and had just come into three or four thousand dollars through an inheritance and, fearful that if the government heard about it they would reduce his social security, he decided to take a trip east and visit his sister! He turns out to be quite a character!

Rumor, unconfirmed, has it that grandma's brother was somehow involved in siphoning off funds from grandpa's business, the Northeast Missouri Petroleum Company, in the late 1920's which resulted in grandpa having to sell the business prematurely. He was known, ever after that, as Black Uncle Jim Miller and was persona non gratis for the Rippel clan. Now he showed up visiting and telling such tall tales of his life and how he invented the railroad coupling air brake, got cheated out of the patent, made and lost a fortune, etc., etc.. We all had our jaws at half mast listening to him. O yes, he talked a blue streak and continuously, a trait we Rippels weren't accustomed to. He was planning to stay a few weeks in Moberly and then go up to Iowa and look up some relatives there.

When he heard that I was leaving for Louisiana in two days he asked me if Lula, Mississippi was on the way. I said I didn't know but when we looked it up on the map, sure enough it was just off Highway 51 about 135 miles south of Memphis in what is known as the Mississippi Delta country. Turns out great uncle Jim was in a 'Lonely Hearts Club' where men and women are introduced

through the mail and he had been corresponding with a woman who lived in Lula! He called her a 'woman friend.' He then said if I didn't mind the company he would ride along with me as far as Lula!

Well, he added his one suitcase to my little coupe, already filled to the gills with my junk and, after filling up at dad's station we took off. I don't know to this day if he gave that woman any warning that he was going to show up! It was the beginning of a hilarious ride south with an old man who talked almost every second. What tales and what a sense of humor! We spent our first night in a motel in Memphis and started out early the next morning for Lula.

Sure enough, when we turned off Hwy 51 and drove into a sleepy little town there on the wide front porch of a white frame house was Uncle Jim's 'woman friend.' After greetings and introductions we extracted Jim's suitcase, took a few photos, promised to keep in touch and said our good by. I was sad to lose such an interesting traveling companion but happy to have gotten to know a relative who was also a character. We did write and I still have his letters thanks to my first wife, Elsie.

After leaving uncle Jim in Lula I continued driving south through the Mississippi delta on Hwy 51. My next stop was going to be Hollandale, Mississippi to see Floy Edna Cope. Floy Edna was a girl I met while at the U of Mo. She was attending Stevens College there in Columbia. Stevens was a high class 'finishing' school where wealthy families sent their daughters. It was very popular with Southern families of means. Stevens operated a pretty tight camp, guarding the girls well but giving them all the 'opportunities' for developing the 'social graces.' That included sponsoring dances, teas, and other "socials" where the Stevens women could meet acceptable young men from surrounding schools in Missouri, Kansas City and St. Louis. How I got invited to these functions I have no idea.

It was probably because Floy Edna and her roommate, Marilyn from Alexandria, Louisiana, were Methodists that I got acquainted with at Wesley Foundation functions. My social life at U of Mo was pretty limited since I didn't have a car and the chemical engineering curriculum demanded a lot of time. WF provided a great place to meet and have low pressure activities with a variety of students. When Floy Edna heard that I had taken a job in Baton Rouge and would be driving there after graduating she invited me to stop at her home in Hollandale, Mississippi. Marilyn, who was extremely pretty and quiet, also invited me to stop over at Alexandria. Both were on the way so I accepted.

I find it hard to convey how depressing it was to drive south on Hwy 51 in 1956. I was taught by my parents and more than a few idealistic teachers and Methodist ministers, to sympathize with the underdog, and to stand up for justice and fairness in human relations and society. These had become my own values and I felt very strongly that the Black people of this country had suffered greatly and were subjected unfairly to White prejudice and oppression. This oppression was both active and passive, overt and covert, in a word, built into the very structures of our society. I was stirred by the heroic efforts that were just

beginning by Black activists to improve their lives through gaining civil rights long denied them.

Driving through Mississippi in 1956 I saw another side to the equation. I saw a society that was based on power derived from land ownership and the exploitation of cheap, unsophisticated labor. And I saw that there was no way that the White minority was going to hand over to Black people the means to a better life and power in that situation unless forced to do so. Keeping the Blacks semi-literate and poor was essential to maintaining the White 'way of life.' For the Black people I saw no way to peacefully better themselves except to leave.

Furthermore I saw something else. Fear! The Black outnumbered the White in the Delta almost 10 to 1. The economic welfare of the White depended on keeping the Black down, exploiting the cheapest labor available anywhere in the States. Keeping the 'Niggers' down was blatant. The fear palpable! The South was never as subtle at keeping them down as the North was.

Driving through the Delta of Mississippi I could sympathize with both Blacks and Whites. Both were caught in a reality that had no simplistic way of being changed. The ambiguity and the entrenched despair helped maintain the status quo. Creative efforts were just discounted from the start. And I was asking myself, who was the oppressed and who the oppressor? As James Baldwin put it in "The Fire Next Time," when you have your foot on my neck you are as much trapped by oppression as I am! Neither of us is free!

With these thoughts here I was, a white liberal, wet behind the ears, driving into a small Delta town of 2000 people, 1800 of whom were blacks. Floy Edna's dad owned the bank (and probably half the town). They had 'house Negroes,' yard men and other Black families who depended on them for hand-me-downs and part time work. Of course they weren't about to turn over the power of ownership of anything in the town to the Blacks. They were doing everything they could to prevent them from getting the right to vote or go to the same school they sent their children to.

I spent the day with Floy and her family. Mr. And Mrs. Cope set a fine table, crystal goblets and all. I know their daughter was already groomed for a future much different from that which I envisioned for myself or imagined for my peers from Moberly.

I had a repeat experience in Alexandria with an extremely wealthy family whose daughter was as beautiful as Liz Taylor, and whose life was already scripted for privilege, Southern aristocracy and, I suspect, quiet despair!

By the time I reached Baton Rouge I was sure of two things. The life of genteel Southern privilege was on its way out. But it might take another 100 years. After all it was only 100 since the Civil War! Progress was slow in changing attitudes and distribution of power. But it is also inevitable. As inevitable as Right and Good are different from Wrong and Evil.

I'm sure that the arrival of people like me, technocrats with college training, would hasten the end of the agricultural South.

I knew that whatever I did in the future it had to somehow be on the side of the underdogs of society. But it couldn't be just an intellectual thing. It had to be structural and it had to honor and help heal the fears of the overlords as well.

While racism is a deep sickness in our nation with manifestations in the economic and political arenas, it is primarily a spirit issue. An issue of victorious self image versus victim image, of hope versus fear! There could be no simplistic answers to this issue. Touch it and it could take your entire life.

13

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

I met my first wife, Elsie Stumpf, at the Wesley Foundation at Louisiana State University. I had been active in the WF at the U of Mo and when I landed in Baton Rouge it was a natural place to meet people with similar background and interests. I was also enrolled in graduate level evening classes at Louisiana State University in chemical engineering and logic. I was attracted to this vivacious blond with the thick eyeglasses. Later, Ray DeHannait, the director of the WF, would counsel the two of us prior to our marriage. He was very concerned that since we both had such poor eyesight, requiring heavy correction, that our children would suffer an extra handicap in that important physical capacity. He was out of his field and I thank God that his genetic analysis was not correct.

Elsie had a wonderful energy and an engaging directness. I quickly decided that I wanted to get to know her better. Her emotions were out-front and her idealism for issues of justice and racial equality, to mention only a few, were often overwhelmed by passionate feelings when she was verbalizing them. I was unaware of the extent to which I was adopting the role of older, more rational adult with Elsie in our early years together. This would become a major issue for us in years to come. As Elsie got older we became good 'problem solvers' together. But in the arena of feelings and non-rational issues my belittling of her stands would drive a wedge between us that, even after we became aware, we couldn't overcome. Early on we didn't see the storm clouds.

I met Elsie's parents while we were going together. They lived in Metarie, a suburb of New Orleans. Her father, Malcolm Stumpf, was an electrical engineer who headed up the Engineering Department of New Orleans Public Service. This was a City owned utility that supplied power, gas and public transportation services in the New Orleans Metro area. Malcolm was a native of New Orleans, a man of very methodical character and style who loved good cigars, Martinis and eating out at New Orleans' restaurants.

Malcolm had few hobbies being almost totally involved in his job and the projects of the Engineering Department. One of the significant innovations he was personally responsible for was a change in the color of the ceramic insulators used on high-voltage transmission lines. These insulators hold the high-voltage lines, attaching them to the poles without losing any current or charge to the pole or ground. Without them it wouldn't be possible to send electrical power over long distance lines. These insulators used to always be an ugly brown color. One day Malcolm was inspecting an urban line being

installed by his men and asked the supplier, "Why can't we have these insulators in a nicer color, say sky-blue?" Since then you will not see ugly-brown insulators in urban areas.

I was always comfortable with Malcolm. The fact that we were both engineers helped our relationship. I sometimes got impatient with his slow, deliberate style but it was just his way and part of the charm of the man. One other characteristic was also endearing but had its downside. Malcolm could not find his way to the corner store! How he spent a life time in New Orleans with its non-linear street system, I have no idea. The simplest trip required hours of pre-planning. I quickly became the family chauffeur whenever we visited the Stumpfs.

Elsie's mother, Lucy Stumpf, was a teacher in the New Orleans Public Schools. She taught first grade and it seemed a perfect match for her as she loved those age children and they adored her. From the very first time we met I think Lucy decided that I was one she wanted for a son-in-law. Perhaps she wanted to save Elsie from the guys she had dated before, or, maybe, it was my established status, charm or whatever, Lucy adored me from the start. I could do no wrong and there wasn't anything she wouldn't do, within her power, to please me. With my past problems with 's-mothering' women that could have been trouble in the future, but Lucy's style just wouldn't take offense at my efforts at distance.

Both she and Malcolm welcomed me from the beginning. Later, I transferred into Elsie's family with only a minimum of stress, but brought along a lot of my hang ups. Lucy was very loving to me and I had a hard time adjusting to her constant attention. I came to love her but I'm sure my behavior was a puzzle to her at times.

I was hardly conscious of how my cool, aloof behavior impacted those who loved me. I was so into being self assured and un-needy. Needing someone or something was a sign of weakness, a message I received from my father, which originated from his parents and so on back to the general German heritage. It was better to remain distant and appear as if you didn't need anything or anyone. That way you surely couldn't be hurt when someone ignored you, and you could fend off the chance that they would reject you. Assuming of course that you ever got involved enough for rejection in the first place.

So Mrs. Stumpf, Lucy, had a real impact on me. It was impossible to discourage her. She was always so attentive to me, and that made me uncomfortable! She was asking about what I wanted, whether I was comfortable, how I was feeling, could she get anything for me. Did I like the food? Did I need an extra blanket, a softer pillow, fresh fruit or candies? How was my Martini? Did I need more ice or gin?

Every time we visited Lucy and Malcolm, Lucy couldn't do enough for me. I tried being cool and distant, it didn't work. She really liked me, hell, she loved me! I had married her daughter and she wanted me to know that I was truly loved. It was so genuine and without guile. I was unprepared to take it in. It was so nice. I tried to be the nice son-in-law and practice competent distance,

what ever that was. She never paid any attention to it and went right on trying to spoil me. She offered to meet any of my needs that were in her power and appropriate to do. I began to melt towards her. I never had the opportunity to come right out and tell her what a pompous ass I had been in our early years. I really regret that I didn't. I should have said to her, "I know you must have been hurt and puzzled by my reticence and outright refusal to receive your love more openly. Please forgive me." I never got to come right out and tell her what a needy human being I was. I loved Lucy. And I never said it to her enough.

Lucy was killed in a tragic car accident during a rainstorm on a New Orleans street. Everyone was stunned. We didn't know the impact of grief and its denial. Both Elsie and I were out of the 'stiff upper lip' mold. I wonder now if either of us ever completed the grieving process over the loss of Lucy in our lives. For me it became part of the pattern of losing the significant women in my life.

Elsie and I were married in the Metarie Methodist Church by her uncle, Rev. Willie Poole. It was a traditional ceremony with the usual attendants with members of both families present. Several of my colleagues from Esso Labs came down to attend. My best man, Gil Berg, was a room mate of mine.

Our first apartment was a 'shotgun' type located just one block from the main entrance to the LSU campus and within walking distance of the University Methodist Church. I worked fairly long hours, 45 to 60 hours per week, and Elsie continued at LSU in her sophomore year. Later we moved away from the campus orientation and affiliated with Ingleside Methodist Church in Baton Rouge. This church had a large and active group of young married couples our age. Our lives centered around friends and activities at the church as well as friends from my work.

Within several years time Carla moved to Baton Rouge and Elsie's uncle, Willie, became a District Superintendent with a house not far from our neighborhood. We visited Elsie's parents frequently, with Mardi Gras being an annual not-to-miss. On these occasions we were always treated to going to a fine New Orleans restaurant. I think Malcolm and Lucy enjoyed eating out a lot and they always had a new place to share with us.

Every time I get the bill at a restaurant after eating out I think of Malcolm Stumpf. Especially if it's an expensive restaurant! I see him deliberately picking up the bill at the table, cigar clamped in his mouth, eyes examining the itemized account through his gold-rimmed glasses. With characteristic engineer thoroughness he slowly tabulates the individual items and costs. He may ask a question of the waiter or maitre de. Then just as unhurriedly, he reaches for his billfold, puffing lightly on the cigar. He sometimes would take a pencil and methodically calculate a tip, generous if service and food was exceptional, or the usual 10-15%. When paying cash he carefully lays out the bills one by one on the billet tray. If by credit card, he again examines the slip to see that the figures match what was presented on the bill, carefully adds the tip and totals the result.

He was a man in no hurry to relinquish his seat at the table and wasn't embarrassed to question a mistake in arithmetic or accounting. Once, observing our obvious impatience and embarrassment at his careful examination of a particularly long and expensive statement at a fancy French Quarter restaurant, he commented that he was too old to be embarrassed or rushed by other's impatience or discomfort. A waiter's impertinence never flustered Malcolm and he had plenty of opportunity to demonstrate this in some of New Orleans' best restaurants. I always think of him at restaurant bill paying time.

Malcolm's plodding style was a gift in many other situations also. I used to belittle his style in other activities, mistakenly taking quickness and avoidance of confrontations as a virtue. God forgive me my immaturity and arrogance on those occasions. I'll put it down to the stupidities of youth. I only wish I could tell him now, face to face, that I'm sorry and that I've come to emulate him, especially in paying restaurant bills.

The holidays became more problematic as I got older. I was still capable of being awed. The anticipation of getting gifts was wonder-filled. The selecting and giving gifts was hard work and I often felt I wasn't getting the hang of it. When I was in school I always went home to celebrate Christmas. We shifted gift opening to Christmas Eve as a family. Throughout our celebrations of Christmas over the years we were never indulged with a large number of gifts. As I recall 2 or 3 special gifts was the norm and maybe a number of trinkets and candies.

After my marriage to Elsie we always went to her parents house for Christmas. Gift exchanges were conducted in similar way to what I was used to. It was usually on the night before Christmas. Church was less a feature and the Stumpf household was less into singing together. When Steven and Curtiss came along they began to anticipate Christmas as well with all the excitement small children can generate. They were wonderful to watch well into their adolescence, joined by Clifford, and even now when we have the chance to get together for Christmas. I feel I get more out of seeing them together. Of course even now I seem to always get more gifts than most anyone in our family.

Elsie and I made no attempt at birth control hoping to start a family. After an initial miscarriage we were successful. The birth of our children remains for me among the most traumatic and miraculous happenings of my life. It's my guess that Elsie would say the same thing. We were young, but I've often wondered about the terrific toll on Elsie that having children was and how that has impacted her whole life.

Steven arrived early at about 6-months into the pregnancy and he gave us quite a fright. He was, from the beginning, an active preemie, amazing us with his energy and later his good mood. We had to leave him at the hospital when Elsie came home. There was never a doubt that Steve had the will to live. I would say he was a determined, curious little guy from the start. When we brought him home I could hold him in one hand, supporting his head and all!

With Curtiss we thought we were having a 'normal pregnancy' and

could time it OK. At least the doctor thought he knew when to expect the birth event. Since Steve was a caesarean, there was some debate as to whether to have a natural birth with Curtiss. Curtiss, himself, decided that issue for us by upsetting the time line (I think the official date was miss-estimated). A race to Our Lady of the Lake Hospital resulted with Curtiss trying to arrive on the way. There was confusion at the hospital in the rush to get Elsie prepped, etc.. The highly stressed doctor came out very shortly and congratulated me on the birth of a girl-child!! I phoned the Stumpfs with the news. Later I had to retract that message and we all settled in to anticipate mother and child coming home together this time. Again, the universe had a different plan. Elsie was detained at the hospital with an infection and possible pneumonia! I brought Curtiss home without her!

Clifford will be the third-time-charm we think. After an uneventful pregnancy surely mother and child will come home together on schedule. No way! After an orderly and timely arrival at the hospital the caesarean birth goes well. Then Clifford is to get his blood sampled. It may be that we were trying to avoid the tremendous scars on both heels that Curtiss suffered in attempts to get his first blood sample that we urged caution to the hospital nurses. At any rate, Clifford is subjected to the indignity of being sampled from a neck vein. In getting the sample his trachea was punctured and his lungs collapsed! More trauma. Cliff stays behind to recover as I bring Elsie home alone!

Somewhere around this point we decided, enough is enough!

So these precious guys, Steve, Curt and Cliff made their entrances with more than enough trauma and flair! I could fill a book about the joys (and anxieties) of having these three wonderful human beings in my life. They provided plenty of joy and reasons for pride as we watched them grow into healthy children and, later, beautiful young men.

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WORKING FOR ESSO

I was a new engineer at Esso Research Laboratories in Baton Rouge after just graduating, a wet-behind-the-ears chemical engineer from the University of Missouri. Esso Labs was the pilot plant Division of Standard Oil New Jersey. They hired mostly chemical engineers and to get us to sign on they wined and dined us during my senior year. It was a decision for me between Esso in Baton Rouge and DuPont in Orange, Texas. I'd worked the summer between my junior and senior years for DuPont in Orange. My supervisor there was Manning Riser, a finer person would be hard to imagine. He kept track of me for years even after I went to work for Esso by sending cards and letters.

Why did I go with Esso? It's hard to reconstruct now. The money was equivalent, as I recall about \$7500 a year and the benefits were comparable. I think it was probably some very intangible almost unconscious prompts that made the difference. During my early school years when we had to memorize the capitols of every state of the union I was always fascinated by the name Baton Rouge. It remained in my thoughts over years as I read of Cajuns and Huey P. Long. The other factor has to be my father's service station business which was the legacy of my grandfather's Northeastern Missouri Petroleum Company. Oil and gasoline had been our family's livelihood for over a half century at the time of my graduation from engineering school.

Getting down working at Esso Labs was a new experience for me. No one really said what was expected of you, except you were supposed to be creative, resourceful, and technically astute and, of course, come up with all kinds of ideas, inventions and ways to make Esso richer than it already was. I was assigned to work along side another older experienced engineer whose name was Don D. Dunlop. We shared an office with Perry P. Pryne. Our Section Head, Joe Polack liked to call our office 'the vegetable soup' with DD, PP and RR in residence.

I was assigned to operations on the Half Barrel a Day Fluid Hydroformer, BFH for short. This pilot plant was over 6 stories tall and larger than many factories I'd ever been in. It was certainly larger and more complicated than the unit ops lab at the University of Missouri. The pilot plant was designed to explore and evaluate new catalysts for producing (i.e. hydroforming) high octane gasoline. This was 1957 when there was an octane race on to satisfy cars being manufactured with increasing compression ratios and therefore needing higher quality gasolines.

The trick was to find ways to chemically alter gasoline fractions to higher octane

compounds without lowering the volume yield which would make it too expensive to do.

There were non-technical operators who actually ran the BFH plant. These men would open and close valves, start or shut down pumps, set temperature controllers, read instruments, physically take samples, adjust flow rates to spec and make notes in the plant log book. They would take their instructions from me or other engineers on the plant team. These were given verbally and in written form in the plant spec book. We would run various test conditions at differing reaction temperatures and flow settings, taking samples of the product gasoline for octane number and other properties.

I soon got to know the operators who worked around the clock shifts on BFH. And I soon learned what I was up against, things they don't teach you in engineering school or any other school that I know about. I was a green, untested novice 20 years or more younger than most of these operators and I was giving them orders! These were men, most without high school educations, but they certainly weren't dumb. I soon learned that each man had a reservoir of life experience, some good and some bad. They were union, most of them up to the top of their classification. That meant they were not going to go any higher in grade or pay unless they applied for a higher ranking job, got tested, etc., etc.. On the other hand, since I was in management, I could conceivably go on and become the President of Standard Oil.

I wondered what motivated these men to do a good job. Of course there were some who didn't and who would probably never get fired. They would come to work and do the minimum or less and pick up their paychecks every two weeks. Thank goodness they weren't the majority. Most did exceptional work. The success of pilot plant work depended a lot on these men who seemed to draw their motivation from just doing high quality work. They made the creative effort it took to run this sensitive, temperamental and often frustrating pilot plant. They kept pumps running, instruments functioning and leaks under control using their wits, experience, baling wire and chewing gum to speak figuratively.

I was seeing an aspect about society and workers I'd never realized before. Effort and results aren't always compensated by money, recognition and promotions. I couldn't give these men promotions. I could give them deserved praise. Flattery and false praise would never fly! In the beginning I felt scared and nervous about being in the position of 'designated authority' over these men. But they took me in hand and after testing me to see if I knew what I was about as an engineer we operated BFH as a team across the board.

One way they tested a new inexperienced engineer was when they had a problem in operating the plant, or a question about conditions, or samples didn't look good, or a pump failed mechanically during the night shift they would call me at 2 AM for advice as to what they should do. I learned early that you better have an answer and you never complained about the call. Sometimes, if it were a real crisis, I would get dressed and go out to the plant after telling them to put things on hold until I got there.

The other thing I became aware of is that there were certain individuals who were hostile to new and younger engineers. Their hostility probably was the result of life situations, their dead end work or any other condition. You couldn't really fault someone whose ambitions were being throttled by circumstance. There was one such individual on the BFH crew and he happened to be the union rep. Frequently frustrated men would gravitate into the union as a way of either getting and exercising more responsibility or, venting their frustrations at the company and management. In the case of Jack, our union rep on BFH, he really had a chip on his shoulder and was perpetually hostile and looking for mistakes on the part of supervisors and technical staff. He was grudgingly silent if you knew what you were doing and truculent if you proved to him that his accusations were groundless.

Then there was Andy, a huge man with a gruff exterior, who was one of the better operators and genuinely interested in the overall mission of the pilot plant. He had insights into how the operations should go and was often instrumental in avoiding problems and losing valuable time and data. After working with him on a number of projects over several years I learned that he owned a dairy in Tangipaoa Parish and was a multi-millionaire! He retained his operator job at Esso, doing shift work because he liked it!

One of the pleasant duties connected with working at Esso was hosting graduating chemical engineers who came to interview and be interviewed for positions with the company. They would be visiting the Esso Research Labs and the Refinery. I would be their guide and host for the day and evening taking them from interview to interview, show them the city, and neighborhoods where they might like live once they came to work for us. Of course, I also showed them neighborhoods where they could live once they became a Vice-President of Esso. One of the most pleasant aspects was taking them out to eat at local restaurants.

One of my favorite restaurants was Bob & Jake's, a seafood and steak house on Government Street near Baton Rouge High. I'd make the reservations anticipating the meal which was on the company expense account.

When you arrived at B&J's there was a display case of cuts of meat and a tank of lobsters and live crabs in the entrance foyer to whet your appetite. After seating, the wine list was presented. Ah yes, why not a Bordeaux, St. Julien, yes 1951. Who knew whether it was a good vintage or not? We didn't care. Usually there were cocktails before the meal. The whole evening passed in a pleasant glow of self-supposed sophistication.

Southern Louisiana restaurants in the 1950's were wonderful. I believe many in New Orleans at that time rivaled the best in France or Europe. At Bob and Jake's I especially loved the Shrimp Remoulade appetizer and their green Sensation Salad. The entrees were always good and the desserts! Well, just imagine cherries jubilee or pecan pie topped with rum raisin ice cream. We were young and discovering the splendid vices of food and excellent service.

In my years at Esso Labs, including one year's rotational assignment at

the company headquarters in Florham Park, NJ, I worked on numerous developments and projects, authored three technical publications in leading Chemical Engineering journals, initiated a dozen patent applications, and received one patent which was assigned to the company. All the projects I was involved with had to do with developing new or improving existing refining processes for production of new chemicals or petroleum products. Of perhaps a dozen or more projects that I worked on, only one resulted in a commercial application and that lasted only 4 or 5 years before being superceded by another product. In this field of technical development and research getting a 'no' answer happened on a high percentage of the projects started and was considered just as valuable as the break-through that might eventually make a profit.

This was the period of the 60's. Turbulent events were stirring in society including the civil rights struggle and women's rights. The flower children were everywhere and Bob Dylan's songs and folk music could be heard at concerts and on the media. I wondered what my contribution was to society. Were the technical innovations and failures I was part of really going to improve society? What talents did I possess that weren't being used? Just raising these kinds of questions began to produce doubts in my mind and impact my spirit. I became restless at work and although I'd had a significant promotion I knew being President of Standard Oil of New Jersey wasn't a real future for me.

15

LOUISIANA

*Why weep or slumber America
Land of brave and true
With castles and clothing and food for all
All belongs to you
Ev'ry man a King, ev'ry man a King
For you can be a millionaire
If there's something belonging to others
There's enough for all people to share
...There'll be peace without end
Ev'ry neighbor a friend
And ev'ry man a King*

Huey P. Long

Louisiana is a fascinating mix of cultures, geography, food, languages, urban and rural life styles. The politics of Louisiana during the late 50's and 1960's was a colorful holdover from the days of Huey P. Long. For over 40 years the dominant theme in politics was whether one was pro or anti-Long. The easy going attitude of voters in Louisiana allowed for both virtues and vices as legitimate expressions or perhaps inevitable expressions of the human spirit. I think it was Huey Long who said, "If you vote for my opponent he'll fill his belly, and those of his associates, at the public trough. As for me, I'm only skimming the cream!"

It was a time when Jimmy Davis as Governor would ride his horse, Traveler, up the marble steps into the Capitol foyer and later build a bridge across the Mississippi with no connecting road to the east and leading to a sugar cane field on the west side. Huey's brother, Earl was elected for two terms during this era. Earl tried to outdo Huey in his language and flaunting of conventional mores. He made a stripper, Blaze Starr, a national name by chasing her halfway across the South and back to Louisiana.

The sense of history in Louisiana is palpable. I worked at Esso with several kin of the Longs. It was a frequent topic at coffee breaks and lunch to recall Huey and his share the wealth program. In the pre-Long era wealthy sugar cane and cotton plantation owners along the river controlled power in the State through the New Orleans political machine. The northern Parishes of the State, populated by small back woods farmers, were completely shut out of the State's power and benefits. They were desperate to get a piece of the pie. After the Wobblies failed them in the 19th century they turned to the lumber companies

who promised them wealth and prosperity for their trees. The result: the companies came in and cut down every tree in sight and left the red neck farmers poorer than before, so much so that those Parishes to this day are called, "the cut-over Parishes.

Now this is the amazing thing about Southern politics that I didn't know: those Southern red neck farmers turned to the Socialist Party in their effort to gain power. In 1906 through 1916 they voted overwhelmingly for Eugene V. Debs for President of the United States! That's not your stereotypical image of conservative Southern voters! It was to no avail, the farmers of the northern Parishes could not unseat the entrenched power base who controlled the votes along the river and in the city. Add to this picture the Cajuns in the bayous and swamps of the southern Parishes. The laissez faire Cajuns could care less back in their isolated territory. Part of the reason they didn't vote had to do with lack of roads and bridges and schools as well as cultural attitude.

All this leads up to the marvel of Huey P. Long. Huey managed to overthrow the old time wealth based machine by forging a coalition of the disenfranchised northern and southern Parishes. His program of building roads, bridges, schools, welfare hospitals and providing free textbooks did more for the poor people of Louisiana than any State government in the U.S. has done before or since. He is an example of what I would term structural morality in governing as opposed to just being a good moral individual who accomplishes nothing. He exemplifies my definition of a 'saint.'

There is another episode for which I admire Huey very much. He single-handedly insured the election of the first woman U.S. Senator to be elected in her own right. That was Hattie Carraway of Arkansas! Huey barnstormed the State of Arkansas on her behalf when he was a Senator and in just ten days spoke to over 750,000 people. The Arkansas politicians who had decided to put in another hack never recovered from that whirlwind!

Food

Food is often the center piece of a culture and Louisiana has good food! I was introduced to many new foods after moving to Louisiana. Elsie and her family enjoyed going to the fine restaurants of New Orleans. The foods and coffee in Southern Louisiana were unique in many ways. It was a neighbor, C.J. Goudeaux, who introduced us to crawdads boiled with garlic, salt, peppers and vegetable seasonings. We would sit with piles of crawdads on newspapers spread before us, dipping them into red sauce and drinking cold beer.

It was a joke that you could starve to death while eating crawdads if you didn't have the skill of separating them from their shells quickly. You didn't have to worry though, because we always had enough for even the slow eaters. Washed down with cold beer on a hot Louisiana summer afternoon with an occasional pickle or remoulade salad, ah it was paradise enough!

One unique food I'll never forget and one that I have never had since was the blood sausage prepared by the Esso Refinery cafeteria. I'd get that sausage every time they put it on the menu, which wasn't too frequently. It was

hot! And flavorful! You know how you can get some “hot” foods and beyond the heat, there’s nothing there, no taste. Well, this sausage was a wonder. My mouth would vibrate with flavor and hot. Even now I salivate just thinking about it.

It was in the late 70's when Pauline and I first visited my sister Carla and her husband Mickey Norton for any length of time. They met us at the New Orleans airport and we drove to Baton Rouge on the new interstate (as opposed to the Airline Highway that I was familiar with from my days living in BR). The interstate was new and paralleled the old Airline Hwy with its many cross roads and road side stores, etc.. After passing through swamps and bogs, and a few large sugar cane fields, we came to the relatively high ground near Baton Rouge with its oak trees with Spanish Moss and swamp scrub cypress. High ground in the southern part of Louisiana is anything more than three feet above Mississippi river levels.

Mickey, who came from an old Louisiana aristocratic family, introduced Pauline and me to many classic Cajun dishes. He could whomp up a great sausage jambalaya. I've never had one as good as his. I still don't know his secret of cooking the sausage with a crisp exterior that would break open when you bit into releasing the juicy flavor of the interior. It would just melt all over your mouth along with the rice and garlic. Maybe it was the cold beer we washed some of these dishes down with that made it so memorable.

Carla learned from Mickey how to do her crawfish gumbo and etouffe which are unbelievable. What is hard to fathom is that in a good season the roadside ditches in the back country of Louisiana are teeming with crawfish just for the taking. When Carla cooks these dishes she always puts a batch in the freezer. I swear it's better every time she thaws some.

Mickey warned us on that first visit that we were in for a culinary tour de force which he had been lovingly preparing in advance. There would be sausage jambalaya, crawfish etouffe, okra gumbo before we were through visiting. And he warned, a warning we did not take seriously at the time, he would regale us with every detail of how each dish was prepared. This would include even his garlic-laced pot roast, his specialty.

One thing about Mickey, he isn't secretive about his recipes. I think he really wants to convert people to better cooking and eating, Louisiana style. His running commentary, given while in the trenches preparing a meal would include all the choices and alternatives chosen or rejected and the reasons why. And, of course, why his jambalaya, gumbo and etouffe were the envy of every Good Ole Boy in the state.

Mickey also serves as the unofficial scribe and publisher of Norton's LSU Forecast Newsletter which details the physical prowess of every LSU football recruit for the coming season, outlines the team's prospects, analyzing coaching needs and weaknesses and even makes predictions on certain crucial games. I also note, after receiving the newsletter for over a decade, that it also details the exploits and sexual magnetism of the writer in a most entertaining

way. The newsletter is a compendium of Mickey's two favorite subjects: LSU football and Mickey Norton.

So traveling to Baton Rouge I knew we were in for culinary delights and adventure. Having had at least some foreknowledge of Mickey's cooking I was anticipating Pauline's reaction. But after his enthusiastic introduction she was already a convert. What did I say about magnetism!

I told Carla and Mickey that I had only one other item on my agenda for our visit and that after fulfilling that we would be totally at their mercy. That item was to make the obligatory pilgrimage to the shrine-grave site of one of my saints, Huey Pierce Long. Huey, Louisiana's favorite son, is buried at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge. There I went to pay homage to this champion of the poor people of Louisiana. There on the grounds of the magnificent Capitol building which Huey had erected and financed in the depths of our country's worst depression is a statue of him with an epitaph in his own words engraved on the base:

Here lies Louisiana's Great Son Huey Pierce Long an
unconquered friend of the poor who dreamed of the day when the wealth
of the land would be spread among all the people.

"I know the hearts of the people because I have not colored my
own. I know when I am right in my own conscience. I have one
language. Its simplicity gains pardon for my lack of letters. Fear will
not change it. Persecution will not change it. It cannot be changed
while people suffer."

Satisfied and refreshed we could retreat to Carla and Mickey's for serious eating.

A Poem: Food and Friends

The ideal meal
Friends seated round an octagonal table
Elsie, Basil, Marie, Joe Hsu, Annie and Joe M
Long ivory chopsticks at each setting
Gorgeous red lacquered china
Plates, saucers, cups
Fragrant green tea
Dishes of Hunan ham, special eggs
Steamed rice, vegetables, sweet meats
Fr. Elmer serves collared greens
Turnips, okra pods,
Pauline pours garlic-laced vinegar over
A broccoli and green salad
Jim C swipes sprouted 25 grain bread

Through the olive oil bowl
Eddie O opens a Pinot Noir
At exactly 64.5 F into a tulip glass
Patty slices the Wonder cheese
A bottle of Lustau Solera Sherry nearby
Betsy A puts out a tray with
A lumpia-taco-dim-sum-eggroll-bagel creation
Mickey brings his savory pot roast
And I add blood sausage with green peppers
Wrapped in an Italian mini loaf roll
Aaahh, it was paradise enow.

16

NEW JERSEY INTERLUDE

In 1963 I was assigned to the Florham Park, NJ headquarters of Esso Research and Engineering Co on a year's rotation with the Process Engineering Division. My superiors at Esso Laboratories in Baton Rouge had observed that I was going through a period of low productivity and mid-life crisis. They reasoned that a change of scenery might be helpful. It proved to be something like a year long vacation. For Elsie and me it put a bracket on other issues that were stewing below the surface as to our long range future.

So we moved to Morristown, NJ, leaving all prior responsibilities and connections in Baton Rouge. We were less than 30 miles from Manhattan and spent nearly every week-end exploring the surrounding area. During the year we attended the World's Fair at Flushing Meadows, NY, traveled around the Finger Lakes region, visited Washington DC and generally took in as much of Manhattan as you would ever want. We commuted in to NYC on the Lackawanna RR from Bernardsville where we rented a refurbished carriage house after 6 months into our stay. Our favorite restaurant was called Rod's Ranch House!

We made friends at the Methodist church in Morristown where the minister had a terribly distracting habit of pronouncing Jesus as Gee's Oss. Our best friends were Chuck and Angie Rinehart. Chuck was an aerial photographer who, several years earlier, had jumped out of a plane at 3000' and realized that he'd forgotten to put on his parachute! He landed in a swampy area of NJ in about 3 feet of water, experienced a lot of bruises and lived to tell about it. He was "awarded" a membership in the Turtle Club as a result.

This was the year of JFK's assassination. I remember the mood at work when the news filtered in, the denial, the cries of unbelief and the general despair. We traveled to Washington later that year and visited JFK's grave site. It was in many ways a tragic year for our country. Little did we know then that more assassinations were on the way.

I went to hear Martin Luther King speak at Drew University near Morristown. The crowd was so large we had to listen via speakers while seated in the auditorium foyer. Even so it was inspirational as he gave a stirring call for the nation to live up to its moral ideals. He ended with a shortened version of the peroration from his 'I Have a Dream' speech, "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, I'm free at last."

It was a year of distraction, you could even say of general unconsciousness. Fleeing from responsibility, losing myself in family and my

beautiful children, the activities of a new place with new people! The urgency I had felt in Baton Rouge to get a life direction receded from my mind. What was it I was looking for? Was it Home? Years later, in the witness given at my wedding to Pauline, a quote from Robert Frost's poem, *'The Hired Man'* impacted me.

Home, the place where,
 When you have to go there,
 They have to take you in.
 I should have called it something somehow
 You shouldn't have to deserve.

Where is that place? There's no going back to mythical Moberly, where time stands still and even when you've been gone 40 years, it's still the same, only no one knows you, no one knows who your people are. It's as if you had never existed. Even if you manage to find someone who says, "Oh, I knew your Father or Mother," they didn't really know. Can this be home again? No, only a place of memories and ghosts.

Home is an idea in your head. I've experienced home in Missouri, Detroit, N.J., Louisiana, San Diego, Perth, Sydney, Chicago and Taiwan. I've also experienced longing for home in each of those places, a feeling of loss and sadness. Home is in the future...a measure of not being in the now. Norwood Ave in Detroit was home, a cozy place, just a three-room flat. But a three room flat isn't a necessity for home.

The RV was home for 2 years especially when we moved in it to San Diego many years later. San Diego was a cold place, it was hard to make a place there. I guess home has nothing to do with place. It has to do with a commitment to the place and the present. That's part of it. Claiming a place with hammer, nails and paint, cutting the grass or watering potted plants!

But maybe I don't know home at all. There's always that element of strangeness. Another old hymn echoes the feeling, "I am a stranger here, within a foreign land, my home is far away, upon a Golden Strand..."

When our year rotation in New Jersey was up we had the opportunity to stay permanently in New Jersey. We knew we wouldn't have another year like the one past, with its relative freedom from responsibilities and financial burden. Without a real plan Elsie and I elected to return to Baton Rouge and try to pick up where we left off. It seemed the better choice in light of the superficial variables such as weather, living expenses and relaxed life style.

Crisis

Back in Baton Rouge I was having an early crisis at 30 years of age. My interest in Standard Oil of New Jersey and my career as an upcoming chemical Engineer with Esso Labs was at a real low ebb. Bored or disillusioned with suburban life, nothing was enough, it seemed, to keep me at the daily grind.

Then the Mimosa tree in our front yard at 2540 Rhododendron Street up and died - from some kind of root artery clogging - like all of us men will ultimately go!

I put off topping the tree as long as I could, eventually cropping it back to a crotch with four main trunks with stubs. Then I let it sit as I pondered the relation of my situation to that of the tree. I somehow identified with it.

Neighbors discreetly inquired about what was I going to do with it and when.

At about this time that scrawny live oak tree out at the Esso Labs office was beginning to talk to me about 'Whatever It Is' that sustains things in existence. I was beginning to grasp a renewed take on existence, that no matter how shitty, my life was being sustained whether I wanted it or not. No one was asking my permission. 'Whatever It Is' that sustains life was sustaining me in being! The conversation with that darn live oak tree, twice knocked down by hurricane winds, led around to the idea of a new life attitude. It was a damn funny topic for a tree and a human being to engage in. It bugged me. That Mimosa was sure dead, real dead.

Could the Mimosa live again? Could liveliness be resurrected in that Mimosa? The idea took possession of me. I conceived the weirdest project that an addle minded chemical engineer living in a quiet Baton Rouge neighborhood ever took up. One that convinced my neighbors I'd gone over the brink, made my sons laugh at me and join in and restored a bit of playfulness between Elsie and me. It also helped me decide to move on with my life, grateful to a Live Oak tree and a Mimosa.

So one Saturday morning I bought 5 gallons of 5 different wild colored paints and we painted that Mimosa in the most glorious dress it had ever had since it shed its last soft pink blossoms and tender green fronds. We garlanded the tree with paper chains and little gift boxes and proclaimed a resurrection! For one more season its appearance manifesting the risen life! A symbol for me!

My First RS1

Shortly after returning to Baton Rouge after our sojourn year in New Jersey there was an unexpected visitor at our door one evening. His name was Wally Baker and he was a young Methodist minister with a church on the north side of the city. He had gotten our names from George Holcombe who had been an assistant minister at the University Methodist Church near LSU. Wally was recruiting people for a weekend course to be held that fall at a camp in southern Mississippi. The week end course was called Religious Studies One and would be taught by staff from the Ecumenical Institute of Chicago. He further stated the course was revolutionary in its theological approach and that it had really 'turned on' participants like George and others. They had shown such enthusiasm for the week end that Wally was planning to go and was recruiting people even though he himself had not yet attended one.

At this point in my life I was pretty discouraged with the historical, organized church. I was at a low point in my life and was floundering. I had a keen interest in theology having read many exciting authors such as Paul Tillich and Rudolph Bultmann. When Wally mentioned that those 20th century

theologians were a part of the week end studies I was hooked! My efforts to interest church people in theology had not gone down too well so maybe this would help. At least it might restore some faith in the usefulness of the church. So I went. Thus began a new turn in my life and the life of my family. It also began a long association with Wally Baker.

Was there ever a time when you have felt connected to the Universe (God) and saw yourself from a different perspective? That's like asking have you ever had a life changing event. For me my first RS1 weekend was such an experience.

The weekend was held at an old Methodist Church Negro campground in Waveland, Mississippi. It was the fall of 1964 I think. There was a lot of ferment going on in the South then. The Civil Rights Movement was brewing and I felt mostly on the fringes of momentous events and changes that were happening or about to happen. I had been restless and vaguely unsatisfied for some time. Church was a big source of this unhappiness for me. The church seemed so negative and in denial of its very ideals.

In my local situation there were many lovely people but little interest in either theology or social justice. I couldn't find a role to play and like my colleagues at work I was mainly 'in my head' most of the time. We engineers felt like we knew what the society's problems needed and that rational thinkers like us were the answer. I doubted that and felt like I was being bypassed by events from ever having a significant role in anything except to operate pilot plants, write technical reports and become a mid-level executive in a large oil company. Plainly I was ripe for change.

Looking back I don't know if I should bless or curse Wally. I think I bless him!

I see now that I was experiencing what was quoted from one of D.H. Lawrence's poems at that first weekend:

"I was so sick of the world, I was so sick of it,
Everything was tainted with myself..."

I had tried to encourage our little Methodist church to be more socially responsible by dealing with attitudes of racism and to getting serious about theology and its relevance to problems of justice in our society. What a joke. They literally froze me out and I concluded the church had just become a middle class bourgeois country club for people who didn't golf and couldn't afford the real thing.

The weekend raised many questions for me. Questions of both intellectual content and emotional gut-wrenching impact! My life direction was being challenged in a new way. I saw the question of the meaning of my life as something I could decide. I saw that I have only one life and that I could shape its possibilities and face its limits. The weekend course dealt with the old symbols of Christian faith, God, Christ, Holy Spirit and Church but in a new way. A way that dealt honestly with the world view of our time! For the first time I saw I could honestly translate these words into meaning for my life.

I left that week end determined to make changes in my life. I saw the possibility of a new life. I certainly had a new perspective.

After some time working with the Ecumenical Institute in a local capacity in Louisiana, following a lot of soul searching and debate, Elsie and I made the decision to join the staff of the Institute in Chicago. It meant a whirlwind of getting our goods ready to move and putting the house up for sale. Selling a car and as much furniture as we could in a garage sale before bundling ourselves into a car and heading north. When we arrived the five of us were assigned a three room suite in the old faculty part of the dormitory. The Institute's facility was an old seminary on Chicago's west side, about the 3400 block near Homan Ave. Our goods arrived some time later early in the morning and completely filled our three rooms even after we had pared down to a minimum. We were living in a Black ghetto on Chicago's West side. It promised to be different from what we had known.

THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

*“When you see a cloud rising in the west,
you say at once that it is going to rain,
and so it does.*

*And when you feel the south wind blowing,
you say that it is going to be hot,
and so it is.*

*You frauds! You know how to interpret the look of the earth and sky.
Why can't you interpret the meaning of the times in which you live?
And why can't you decide for yourselves what is right?”*

Jesus of Nazareth

An Introduction²

It was my privilege following the great wars of the middle decades of the century to join the enterprise of the Order Ecumenical. The mission of the Order was global in scope and also intensely local in its demonstration projects. The Order's life has never been fully described or recorded in a single account. I doubt that any one individual's effort to put his or her experience of the Order into words could convey the heights and depths of the Order's existence much less express fully the task to which it had set itself. Only the vast archives located in the Order's headquarters in Chicago contain the comprehensive papers and files. And even these records, exhaustive as they are, cannot adequately document the variety and character of those families and individuals who joined the Order, their rich intellectual and celebratory lifestyle. This is to say nothing of the intense personal sacrifice and commitment made by many in their sojourn as Order members.

I come up against the very limits of language in attempting to talk about our enterprise. It was at once magical and mundane, a mix of life and poetry, march and waltz, existing in the present as well as the past and embodying ritual, celebration and grinding daily work. The Order's mission took it into time and space, our ventures required forays into the middle ages, the near and distant

² I've borrowed the theme and poetic style of this introduction from Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East*. However, the events alluded to are real, not fictional, and the language can only partially convey the magic of the experiences portrayed.

future as well as setting forth from Chicago to all the continents. In our journeys we often paused for side trips to join friends and colleagues in music, festivals and ceremonies marking the passage of special time or zodiacal conjunction. I remember especially the advent of comet Kouhotek and the preparations which were made for this auspicious sign of the heavens. However, it was not unusual to find bands of our number at Wolftrap, on a week end at the Palmer House, or on a pilgrimage to the Isle of Iona. I was present with a group who set out to visit Bultmann on his death bed. I also set myself a personal goal to see Tillich's New Harmony and visit the shrine of Huey P.Long. Others sought out Lawrence's tomb in Taos.

Our leaders once diverted from the Helsinki World Council to witness the land of the Midnight Sun and traveled the great steppes and bogs of Scandia. My family was assigned for some time to the Great Down Under and eventually came into possession of Umbagai's magic didgeridoo and even set foot on the mystical island or Rottnest in the Indian Ocean. Others had equally sublime and spiritual quests fulfilled.

Some of our number witnessed the great Summers of '67 and '71, traveled to the shores of Lake Gitcheegumee for a huge urban picnic and danced there with thousands. We experienced the power and unity song bequeaths to those who sing together. Time and again our voices rose and visions filled the Great Hall of Kemper as we experienced our common mind. Our colleagues experienced miracles when RS-1 was taught and many reported seeing Satan fall from Heaven. Such was the power of our corporate commitment.

Truly if I endeavor to give a full account of the Order and its life I would fill volumes. What could I say of the miracle of the 222 Campaign and the first deployment of leaders to Religious Houses across the world? And what about the penetrations into time and space accomplished by teams and individuals. We sat at the feet of Bruno and Theresa. Francis and John of the Cross were honored at our tables. We canonized Mumford, Mountain Rivera, Barth, Boulding, The-Great-One-Gleason, Bultmann, S.K., Tillich, Kazanzakis, D.H.L., Bonhoeffer, Little Big Man, and the Niebuhr brothers among others. We visited ancient Greece, the middle ages and projected into the next century.

We encouraged our children to join us in these many endeavors and to become comprehensive, futuric and intentional human beings. Although our efforts were not seen as remarkable by non-believers or the leaders of the world, we moved in a trajectory of glory across time and space. Not all our number survived. The expenditure of time and personal sacrifice was enormous and, at times, many lost faith and withdrew from the journey. Our efforts were daunted by the enormity of our undertaking: to reform the whole world and usher in a New Social Vehicle for the planet. The audacity of this vision required great patience, foresight and working in many strange and unnoticed places. Our colleagues, in small bands, could be found in the jungles of Cano Negro, the outback of Mowanjum, the river bank of the Southern Nile, the high-rises of Hong Kong, a fishing village in Formosa, the island of Je-Judo, the towers of New York and the halls of the Common Market.

The work of the Order continues to this day having moved deeper into the secular modes of our time, working quietly and often incognito in village reformulation, nation building, third world self-help projects, teaching the technology of participation to groups, corporations and non-governmental agencies world wide.

Joe Mathews

Kaye Hayes once said to me, "Every one who comes to the Order takes Joe as his/her spiritual father." There was without doubt an attraction, and a definite awe bordering on fear of Joe. He was one of three Joes (Joe Mathews, Joe Slicker, and Joe Pierce) who were instrumental in starting the Order Ecumenical. Their vision, inspired by the group rebuilding the Abbey on the Isle of Iona, was of a religious Order of families bound together by common vows in order to accomplish a mission. Thus, was born the idea of a third Order after the first of men and the second of women.

He was a powerful, charismatic person and, more than that, a practical revolutionary who cared deeply about creating human communities in the deprived areas of the world. His presence commanded the group, sometimes leading, sometimes eliciting deep desire to move on the world's injustice with the force of our own lives. His words could evoke great longing. I saw a strength of wholeness in him. He could evoke feelings and not collapse into sentimentality or tears. His passion burned white hot when he was speaking about creating a New Social Vehicle for the planet. He was an actor not just an observer.

I saw in him qualities which were absent or long repressed in my father. Qualities of strength and passion which were too infrequently expressed by dad! I thought, how can I claim these for myself? I chose Joe as a role model and leader.

I valued my real father for his quiet strength and reflective qualities. His effacing shyness and his sensitivity for the emotional life which got expressed in his singing! But he was unable to access his deep feelings without losing control and lapsing into sentiment. He often said his tear ducts were too near his heart. He was a victim of his own sentimental yearnings and not their master.

Joe Mathews drove and deployed his emotions with great discipline and effect. He could evaluate his audience and move people, speak to their inner anxieties, hopes, fears, and inarticulate longings. He could then frame a vision incorporating concrete images which inspired commitment to building a new future for society.

He was ruthless in his love of the comprehensive, the inclusive, the deep, the spirit-filled, the awesome dimensions of human experience. He could be patient with the superficial but was often cutting in his quick dismissal of the trite, thoughtless, sentimental, bigoted, liberal, abstract, intellectual, or provincial. In short he was hard on human frailty unless it was a genuine manifestation of deprivation, disenfranchisement or oppression. He was tough and demanded

toughness.

It was fearful to become the object of his critical scrutiny. But his judgment was never personal, was always delivered in mercy with a concern for the future and what strategy or tactics were needed. He could condemn without condemning you. I guess it would be an example of “against the sin but not against the sinner”. And every one could grasp that was what it was with Joe. He did it in the open before the community and the community offered the protection and absolution to make it a working method for moving on. Joe was, above all, a corporate person. He was interested in the group’s consensus and refused to move unless the community was of a common mind.

I had a hard time dealing with Joe on a one-on-one basis. He could see through me. Getting bawled out by Joe was a sure sign that he respected you, thought you were worth criticism. He really let me have it for catering to Basil Sharp, as if either Basil or I knew what was really needed for the situation in Taiwan. Solomon himself couldn’t have sorted through the mess. But Joe was an advocate of deciding the will of God and then moving on it.

Festivals

When I was in the Institute I looked forward to festivals. There were occasions of putting on masks, marching through subway tunnels with hundreds singing, “I am a stranger here, within a foreign land, my home is far away...” There were neighborhood festivals and weddings which provided discontinuous outlets for the spirit.

My time in the Order is much of a blur to me now. Holidays were never a focus until the last minute but they were always time uniquely for just family. Throughout the year I experienced time as subject to many discontinuities. Holidays were a big discontinuity from the normal routines and a time where, if we were fortunate, we could relax. After the press of corporate ness it could be a lonely time.

Because of Elsie’s mother’s death just before coming to the Institute, we never enjoyed a larger family Christmas during those years. We did endeavor to preserve the excited wonder of Christmas for our boys. I don’t think we did a stellar job, but, on the other hand the boys were young and didn’t seem to notice or be critical. I guess they really didn’t have much to compare holidays to. I seem to recall that family outings in Perth were most enjoyable and were done sprinkled throughout the year. It was our best assignment in the Order years.

Intellectual Life

The corporate study life of the Order was wonderful. We sat at the feet of Bruno, Bultmann, Kazantzakis, Lawrence, Siddartha and Jesus. But the thing which surprises me as I look back at this strange odyssey with colleagues is the discovery of the art form methodology which we used with such regularity and corporate discipline at many of our gatherings. For me it was like the Rosetta Stone or Joseph Smith’s Golden Plates. It made looking at any art object or piece

fun and play while at the same time revealing insight after insight into the art, oneself and colleagues. Watching a movie became a new experience. I saw "Requiem For A Heavyweight" starring Jackie Gleason and Anthony Quinn during this period of my life over 50 times. If that movie opened in Escondido tomorrow I would be tempted to go see it once again. I think the art form method opened me up to see my life reflected in whatever art piece I was confronting, or more accurately, that was confronting me.

In a nut shell the art form method delays our propensity for jumping to the interpretive level immediately whenever we are confronted by a piece of art. This is done by disciplining yourself to first ask objective questions to get out the data you perceive. Then reflective questions reveal your responses to that data. Finally, you can ask, "What is the meaning of this art?" "What does it mean for me?" "What is the story I would tell about this art?"

The art form method enabled me to dialogue with the artist, to play with the artist's work, intentions, feelings and stories about the art. And to realize that it was also about my intentions, feelings and life. What is not surprising is that it was fun because it was social and stimulating. It provided for a continuing relationship with any art piece that proved interesting to me. I could come back to it at any time and take a new turn or twist.

Practical Aspects

My family's life in the Order began on Chicago's West side and took us to Europe, Australia, Taiwan and Detroit. The Order operated on the theory that one family's income could support itself and two other families in full time work of the mission. I began our intern year working full time at Chicago's Institute of Gas Technology. My entire salary went to the Order. Elsie and two other experienced Order families worked full time supported in part by what I earned.

Other sources of income for the Order were our educational programs and our active requesting of funds from individual, corporations and foundations. The Order provided shelter, utilities, food, health insurance, schooling and transportation. For the ten years our family was in the Order our average monthly stipend for incidental expenses was about \$80 per month. When children reached the teen years they could be assigned to other locations and were given their own stipend of something less.

There were, of course, many details and peculiar family needs that had to be worked out as the Order expanded. We grew from about 30 families when Elsie and I became interns to over 2000 families in approximately 5 to 6 years. We started in one location in Chicago and expanded to over 60 Houses world wide.

No one was ever asked to join the Order. As far as I know, no one was ever turned away. We drew people from all religious persuasions, initially from Christian churches which was our beginning base, but later attracted Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and secular individuals. All individuals participated in the common life of the Order which included a Daily Office, common meals, corporate studies, and missional deployment. Our missional work was initially

broken down into penetration (recruitment), formulation (organizing graduate cells), development (fund raising) and our 5th City demonstration project on Chicago's west side. Once I was working full time with the Order, after our internship, I was assigned to fund raising specifically for 5th City.

There is much more that could be said but this will give an idea of the Order's life and goals. Subsequent chapters will touch on personal episodes rather than on general aspects of Order life.

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FLOWERS

Flowers are strange, miraculous creations. At every meeting and course of the Institute a centerpiece was placed in the middle of the table or on an altar in the center of the group. Nothing was ever said about the article of collection of items making up the centerpiece. It was just there to work or relate to everyone present at some level. Frequently flowers would be a part of such a centerpiece. Here are some reflections on flowers.

Amaryllis

It was a time when the Amaryllis bulb sent by my sister-in-law was finally blooming in huge trumpets flaring open on the top of a three foot stalk and I thought for sure there would be a flood of scent to correspond to the explosion of orange and white bugle shaped petals. But alas, none at all, no scent. And, I wondered how a flower can restrict itself to only one sense, in this case the visual, or perhaps, like light itself, there are odors and smells beyond the range our olfactory cilia can detect. Is amaryllis above or below the spectrum of our noses? Pity it can't broadcast in a fabulous chord of aromas, a real bouquet, like the layered rose from our yard with that huge cloying bass note overlain with a range of middle tones reaching way back into the back of the throat where you almost imagined yourself tasting the flower instead of smelling it.

Oh Amaryllis, delight of the eye and so bold on your stalk. Surely you have other messages to that unformed place in my psyche reached by the inaudible and non-visual! An imagined smell of orange and white ice mixed with raw greens, a chord releasing at some deep level the true significance of flower, what you are! That beauty could be distilled into one space and point of time. Putting forth it's essence into fragments of its very being so that when it collapses it will have spent itself not just into the world, but into the soul of some beholder!

Amaryllis, you inspired some ancient poet to give you your name. Beauty captured in a flower. Named for the Greek Goddess whose blindness forever denied her the sight of you! She without eyes! You with no scent!

I imagine you, as she must have imagined so much of her existence. A chord of fragrance beyond the wildest experience of human noses that only a blind goddess could savor! Chords of heavy orange, ice clear top notes of bell like clarity reflecting the purity of your petals. Swift yellow and green fault lines of lilac raspberry texture caressing the mind itself.

Yes Amaryllis, you are lovely. But your essence eludes me. Your significance is far beyond my comprehension. You forever remain a mystery. A mysterious flower of the mystery itself. I am humbled by you.

Yellow Tulip

The yellow Tulip in the center of the table.
 Strange that I didn't notice you when I came in
 Yet I must have been aware,
 Aware of you at some unconscious level.
 That's the truth isn't it of flowers
 And art forms of flowers
 Sitting in our rooms and yards and offices.
 An art form of nature speaking to me at some non-verbal
 Inarticulate level
 Transforming me subtly but surely.

Yes, yellow Tulip, in your place of honor
 You are revolutionary.
 Transforming reality,
 Forcing me to relate to my relationship to you.
 You invite interpretation
 And consciousness at some point
 And eventually a whole story of creation!
 That is revolutionary power as you sit there
 Working on my unconscious self
 Demanding consciousness and
 Transformed relationship.

Is it not true that you have power?
 Was it not your ancestors
 Transformed the orderly dull financial markets of Europe?
 Where one blossom's value exceeded the
 Cost of houses, horses, gold jewelry!
 There is power in a yellow Tulip
 Sitting in the middle of a table of men
 To transform those men, silently but powerfully,
 A poem inserted
 The tip of a wedge into rock selves,
 Sensitive and delicate, O a winged gift.
 The rock will split! And we will come at the wonder!

CHICAGO AND BEYOND

The Institute was located at 3444 West Congress Parkway on Chicago's west side in an old Brethren Seminary. The small campus included a gymnasium, a chapel, two 3-story dormitories with class rooms on the first floor and in the basements. It was rented by the Order after it had been abandoned by that denomination. We rented it for \$1 per year. In ten years the balloon note would come due and we would have to step up to the mortgage for \$800,000. For 30 or so families it didn't look impossible. And ten years? That was a lifetime.

That campus became our home along with 30 other families and their children. Within a year or so we grew to over a 100 families in residence. In about 1971 the Kemper Insurance Company gave the Order their headquarters office, a huge 8-story building on North Sheridan Avenue on Chicago's north side. By that time we Rippels had been assigned to Sydney, Australia. The insurance company left thousands of metal desks behind. Every time we went there it seemed we were moving those desks around. It gave a temporary feel. My experience was that we were only there between assignments. We never settled into Kemper and I doubt it could have felt like home for me.

Even the tribal resettlement which occurred every 13 weeks after we arrived and 'settled' in never seemed to destroy the 'comfort' of that old run-down campus on West Congress. Those long single file lines of people where everyone came in and grabbed something of your stuff and took it to your next apartment or set of rooms didn't upset me! After a while stuff was stuff whether it came from the Morrells, the Mummas, or the Holcombes it soon became just 'our stuff.' After six months all the unneeded stuff found its way into that huge attic and we never saw it again. I wonder what happened to my slide rule and that \$300 dollar oil painting we bought in Baton Rouge.

The kitchen was homey. I didn't mind being assigned to meal prep. Cooking for 100 adults and 75 children got to be as easy as for 2 adults and 3 children. We were all walking around with 1960's revolutionary stars in our eyes. Couldn't wait to get up in the morning to hear Joe Mathews, or one of the other Joes, at Collegium. The words of an old hymn come to mind: "We are drinking at the fountain that never will run dry, for we are living in Beulah Land!"

Beulah Land! I guess being a true believer is a taste of Home. Being a fanatic with 100 other fanatics, we were 'clear' about what we were doing, clear about our values, clear about what community meant and hungry for a good word and a meaningful life. The days passed, years passed. Joy and woe equally there, equally bittersweet.

The Institute time represents 'soul' time for me despite the terrible

personal price we eventually paid, that my first wife and children paid. Even now I cannot say it was bad or a mistake, it just was. It was a time of commitment and service, a time of moments of selflessness in the best sense of that word. Now and again I experience myself longing for that life, longing for the great singing, the celebrations, the Daily Office, the study life and the comradery.

Europe

About two months after arriving in Chicago I left to go with a team from the Institute on a three month teaching and fact finding trip to Europe. Seminars and speaking engagements had been requested and arranged in the British Isles and on the Continent. Our travel plans included Eastern European countries behind the Iron Curtain and Mediterranean nations.

The Institute had made a practice of periodic research trips to the major continents to gather data for its cultural curriculum and begin making initial contacts for future projects. Trips had been conducted to South America, Africa, the Orient and Australia. It would be impossible to condense the 3-month experience in a short book; it took several oral presentations to report on the trip to the Order Collegium after returning to Chicago. I will mention some of my personal highlights and impressions.

We spent 4 or 5 days teaching religious and cultural seminars to monks and local people at a Cistercian monastery in Kilkenny, Ireland. The class work would often go into the evening hours and we rose at 4:30 am for Office led by the monks. What impressed me was the fact that every evening when I retired to my assigned cell there was a piping hot water bottle under my covers! The weather in Ireland was bitter cold and there was no central heating. I tried every night, unsuccessfully, to catch the monk putting that bottle in my bed.

I had the privilege (and terror) of teaching a room full of Dutch theologians a twelve page paper by Paul Tillich as part of our seminars in Kirken-Veld, Holland. What an experience that was!

Two of our group split off to make a side trip to Zurich to visit R. Bultmann after hearing that he was hospitalized there.

We entered Prague just days after Russian tanks had secured the city and ousted Dubchek, a liberal reformer, who wanted to install 'Communism with a human face.' Russian soldiers were everywhere on the streets.

In Hungary we were guests in the home of a professor who showed us a tapestry brought from the East by one of his Mongol ancestors around the year 1000 AD. I reflected that I didn't even know the names of my great grandparents!

We arrived in Bucharest, Romania on a very cold Sunday morning. Getting off the train we went to the Orthodox Cathedral when the Divine Liturgy was in process. It was being sung by four priests. I've never heard such beautiful deep bass voices in my life. The harmonies were glorious and it went on for three or four hours with processions where the priests carry icons through the congregation. The congregants stand the whole time. People would approach

and kiss the icons. Women and men would prostrate themselves in the priests' path and the priests would just step over the bodies and move on!

After the service one priest who spoke broken English invited us to stay for the baptism of twin babies. A huge cauldron filled with 50 to 100 gallons of water was sitting in the back of the church. A small fire had been lit underneath it. It was cold and there was no heat in the church. I tested the water...it was freezing! The priest gave us a running commentary on the liturgy of baptism as he went about it. Four priests presided. The couple presented the twins. Hair was shaved from their heads to symbolize religious vocation. Oil was anointed under arms and elsewhere, something was placed on their tongues, wine I think. Then they were stripped and each twin dunked, totally immersed in that cold water, three times, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Wow, did those babies respond with their AMENS!

We toured the Vatican, stopped for speaking engagements in Barcelona and Madrid, and taught a 2-day course in Northern Portugal before heading back to Chicago to arrive the day before Christmas. We had visited 16 countries, stayed in 36 cities, taught 10 full courses, 7 mini-courses, held 6 consultations, given 7 lectures and directly impacted over 1400 people.

Sydney Religious House

Our family was assigned by the Order in 1969 to Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. We arrived about one month before Christmas and found that the Institute House was a Presbyterian Manse located on Oxford Road in the heart of Paddington, Sydney's equivalent of Haight Ashbury. The sixties were closing fast but lingered on in Sydney. There were mini skirts and braless women everywhere on the streets of Paddington, and a budding colony of 'gays' just experimenting with 'coming out.'

One of the first events that happened after we arrived in Sydney was the opportunity to take the boys to a barber for haircuts. This was the era of long hair and Steven, in particular, had cultivated shoulder length blond straight hair like the Dutch Boy that advertised Sherwin Williams paints. We thought it would be a nice gesture to 'neat up' for Jim and Isobel Bishop who were our host priors in the House there. Steven was 10 years old at the time. He sat in the chair, behaving very well and endured the cut without blinking an eye. He got out of the chair, went over to the mirror, and promptly fainted! Later he was incensed. It was as if we had cut off a piece of his Self and the reflection in the mirror was not he.

Bondi beach and Dee Why were two of our favorite places in Sydney as well as the harbor with its new Opera House. I always enjoyed going to the Domain, a green lawn area in the Botanical Gardens where at any time during the day you might find someone addressing a crowd on any subject. Just down the street from the Religious House were the grounds of the Royal Easter Show where once a year there was a huge fair. We enjoyed exploring the environs of Sydney on every occasion we could.

Here's a peek at one aspect of House life involving our children. Note from my journal of Monday, November 30, 1970: Children's College with the younger teams. Present are Kim Morton, Linda Duffy, Robert Robbins, Clifford Rippel, and Jenny Robbins who was host at the table. Adult present, myself, Rod Rippel. We listened to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and we talked about bed-wetting. Robert and Jenny reported they had just been to the dentist. They couldn't eat for another half hour. Ended our meal and conversation with the group meditating on Clifford at Sunday School sitting on someone's gum.

Another note from my journal. A written meditation collected after participating with children on the subject: The Observing Self.

I saw a man a spying, spying at a ship
 I saw a man a spying, spying at the sea,
 I saw a man a spying, spying long and sad.
 I saw a man a spying, spying at the sea,
 And boy I'm glad, I'm glad
 I'm glad He's not my enemy.

Steven Rippel, age 10

One memorable experience at the Sydney House involved a unique bed. We were assigned space in the Old Manse, there being two large houses and an abandoned church on the property. The Old Manse really was old. It was the oldest building on Oxford road between Sydney Harbor and Bondi Beach, dating back to the early 1800's. Whites had only arrived in Australia in 1770. The Old Manse had stone walls almost three feet thick and a corrugated tin roof. We had a single room for Elsie and me. Our three boys were bunked with other boys in a large dorm room in the New Manse. We pitched our bed up on large crates to create a desk and sitting area underneath. It was neat, probably where I got the delight of sleeping up next to a roof. The room itself was not much larger than the bed which was a normal full size, not queen size.

I never forget sleeping there listening to the Barker's making love in the next room. The interior walls were not as thick as the exterior. That bed and most beds I slept in while in the Order, never took a lot of my time. I probably slept an average of 5 to 6 hours every night for all the years in the Order. If I got to bed by 11:30 I could sleep till 4 - 4:30 AM, or about five hours. What luxury. Family nights were attempts to make up the loss but I never remember getting caught up.

This memory brings to mind *other beds I have known*.

W.H. and Tormey's

I remember the bunks in Dub's (W.H.) and Tormey's bedroom at Grandpa's house in the country. The room smelled of leather and tobacco and

had the sparse simple look of masculine things: a dresser drawer with aftershave and scattered coins, a rack of Dub's guns, the small closet with leather boots and a secret passageway into the next room. I recall that we older cousins used to play hide and seek in that closet moving between rooms to confuse the younger kids. I thought the neat blankets, quilted in squares, looked so good. I used to lie down and let myself think of having a room like that, my own with my own entire closet and a small wood stool to sit on when I needed to tie my shoes. That bed was hard! I know there weren't any springs, just a mattress over a hard wood surface. It was a narrow bed just for one person, wide enough to roam and stretch. I think of the Rippel men when I image that room and bed, spare, quiet, not effusive or talkative. A monk's cell.

The ascetic life, it would be okay if you always had Grandma Rippel doing your meals, washing your clothes and cleaning up. No need for the outside world. There was a hermit streak acculturated in my uncles. I must have gotten a wiff just by osmosis and genes. Dub and Tormey sacrificed for the family and their other brothers. They didn't continue school and worked for the family business most of their adults lives. Dub never married and Tormey met Vida late, after the family business had been dissolved and he had assumed ownership of what remained. In World War II families with multiple working sons could elect to nominate one son to go into the army while the others remained home to support the family(s). Tormey served in the Pacific theater of that war. For these and other reasons of temperament perhaps, Dub and Tormey never established families of their own as did Malcolm, Kenneth and Ralph. They were monks of another kind, indentured to their parents and brothers for the long term of their lives. It was a simpler time and a simple life.

Our Motor Home Bed

Years after leaving the Order, my wife Pauline and I sold our home in Detroit in 1981 and put our goods and furniture in Marie and Bob's basement, we purchased a used Class C Tioga motor home and headed west. We had not a real care in the world except where to land each night.

That cab-over bed was the largest bed I'd ever experienced in my life up to that time. What a statement for a 46 year old man! It was queen size with sliding windows at the head and foot. There was flat head board space at one end with another fixed window on one side. A curtain could be pulled to separate the bed from the rest of the motor home giving the feel of a separate room. Overhead, within arms reach, was a reading lamp and a vent in the roof for air circulation and listening to the sounds of the night. I really enjoyed that bed despite problems of roof leaking and the cramped overhead. I loved to hear rain on the metal roof, so close. It was a cozy nest.

That bed was foam on wood, sleep anywhere we went, portable bedroom, nap space on wheels, shelter from the storm, a refuge when exhausted from driving or just tired from the day. I'd lie on my back and let the quiet night

air saturate my mind and blank out all thoughts as my body would slip into sleep. I wonder if death is like sleeping. If so, it won't be unwelcome when it comes, especially if I can have the same anticipation experienced for sleep in the Tioga bed. There are times when unconsciousness is a welcome friend.

Perth Religious House

The 2000 miles between Adelaide and Perth is known as the Nullabor (without trees). This vast area of Australia is flat and without a single tree. It is some of the loneliest, desolate and boring country found anywhere. The only plant growth is a waist high desert shrub that stretches from horizon to horizon in every direction.

In 1970 - 71 I traveled across the Nullabor six times. This was before they put bitumen on the 'highway,' which was then a dirt and gravel road for about 1500 miles until you reached Kalgoorlie, WA. I did make one crossing via the brand new trans-continental railroad. That was still boring but much more comfortable.

In 1971 the Ecumenical Institute-Australia held a summer program in Perth. A highlight of this event was the attendance of 30 aboriginals from Northwest Australia, an area of the Kimberly Mountains. This led to a significant collaboration between the Institute and the aboriginal people of Mowanjum, a settlement in the Kimberlies. The Institute was at that time beginning to work with many villages and communities in the third world in demonstration community renewal projects. The Perth House, of which we were one of the first families, always had several aboriginal teenagers in residence who were then able to attend the West Australia School for Aboriginals in Perth.

I loved Perth with its balmy climate, red tile roofed houses, nice parks and clean modern downtown with several 30-story buildings. In my imagination it always was an anomaly, perched there on the Indian Ocean 2000 miles from anything else. At that time West Australia had a population of about one million of which 750,000 lived within the city limits of Perth! It was like living at the ends of Earth!

The only comparable experience was the time we took a barge to the mouth of the Mississippi River. It's hard to imagine how deserted, swampy and isolated the four hundred miles south of New Orleans is in this country! It gave me that same 'going to the end of the world' feeling.

Perth, on the other hand, was a sophisticated city. The harbor area, known as Freemantle, had its old town and many restaurants. I remember especially the Greek places there. They catered to the many Greek and Eastern Mediterranean sailors who came into port. I was entranced by the dancing of the Greek men at some of these cafes. It was my first experience of seeing males expressing themselves with such free style using their entire bodies.

The big house in Mt. Lawley area of Perth was an old Anglican Rectory. I don't think Episcopalians have Manses. In Australia it was really the Church of England, so Anglican would be proper. This old 3-story rectory housed us all

(about 5 families and a dozen children) with its wide veranda porches, closet-less bedrooms, large living room/dining room, small kitchen and totally separate bathing and toilet house in the far back of a spacious lot. Perched on a sloping hillside, it overlooked a park opposite and in the distance the skyline of downtown Perth.

Our room was on the second floor. That year in Perth was for me the happiest year of my marriage to Elsie. We presided over this weird assembly of Spirit Movement colleagues as some kind of surrogate parents. We were totally committed to be responsible for them if not to each other. In that focus as priors of the house we experienced the most joyful time of our relationship. The presence of our sons who were always a source of pride and happiness made the time in Perth pass all too quickly!

The house was comfortable with Stanley Woolagoodja, our boys, the two Robbins' boys and the Duffy's son housed in the boys' dormitory on the second floor. The Umbagai sisters were in the veranda bedroom first floor and other families with younger children in their assigned places. I remember the Aboriginals, so calm and mysterious. They coveted their sleep time and were a brooding presence personified.

Outside the house there was ample space to roam. Clifford and I would walk across the park across the street to get to his preschool every morning. He would bring home the most glorious art which filled the wall of the second story hall with figures of men and women with belly buttons, nipples and wildly colored faces and hair.

One down side to life in the Order was that it was difficult to cultivate and sustain good friends. Of all the people in the Order itself Elsie and I would call the Mummas, Carl and Marion, and the Bakers, Wally and Joyce, our best couple friends. However, assignments and full schedules prevented spending a lot of time together. In Perth the schedule and pace were more relaxed. We met many colleagues in the Perth area. Elsie and I became good friends with Pom and Henny Lichtermoet who were among the first RS-1 graduates in West Australia. Henny was a practicing midwife who taught her clients natural childbirth. When I asked Henny what she meant by natural she said, "Giving birth entirely conscious and without pain and with no medication!" I told her that sure didn't sound natural to me!

The lazy Perth weather cast a balmy spell over everything. At 11 AM the Freemantle Doctor would blow into the city lowering the temperature by ten degrees into the mid 70's. Every day. Day in and out! There were colleagues anxious to share swims at the beaches, restaurants at Applecross where one cooked his or her own steak and bought a bottle of red wine next door for the meal. Every night the Kookaborros sang their lullabies. The Spirit Movement in its lazy time lines! Urgency was for Sydney, Chicago or Hong Kong, but not here, not 3000 miles from anything else in the world. Surely the world didn't need to be in any hurry. Or come any closer!

Leaving Australia was a doubly sad occasion. We were leaving our oldest son, Steven, in Sydney to attend the first year of high school there. We

were also leaving many fine colleagues and Aussie friends made in the two years we were there. It was hard leaving Jim and Isobel Bishop, priors at Sydney, who under that cocky and blustery Australian exterior were warm and vulnerable human beings we had come to love.

Elsie, Curtiss, Clifford and I were being reassigned to Taiwan to help colleagues there establish the first Houses on the island. We didn't know what was ahead only that it would be an adventure and a challenge.

Tainan, Taiwan Religious House

We flew from Sydney to Singapore spending a few days at the House located there, then on to Manilla. The Institute's House in Manilla was a beautiful spacious mansion located in the Mahkati district. While there we managed to visit my brother, Jeffrey, who was stationed at the U. S. Air Force base in the area. Imagine meeting your brother halfway around the world from Missouri! We had a very short visit and the rest of our time in Manilla is a jumbled whirlwind of memories. The only one I'm sure of is going to a nightclub and getting up on the stage to do the dance where there are bamboo sticks you have to avoid getting tripped with or having your ankles crushed! I needed yellow fever shots while there and spent several days in bed reacting to the inoculation.

We then flew on to Hong Kong where we left both Curtiss and Clifford in the care of Joe and Melanie Pierce at the Institute House in Kowloon. Both boys would attend grade school in the spring quarter before joining Elsie and me in Taiwan later that summer. We flew ahead to meet colleagues in Taiwan and get started on the work there. When the boys did arrive it was in a blinding rainstorm at the Tainan airport. We were so relieved to see them safe and sound.

Some impressions of Taiwan:

The train ride from Taipei in the north to Tainan was so elegant and always punctual. Steaming hot wash cloths were provided at intervals by attendants to refresh you from the tropical heat and stickiness. Fresh hot tea was served at your seat and had a wonderful cooling effect.

There were people, houses and construction everywhere you looked. The western coastal plain of Taiwan is the most densely populated area in the world. In 1972 over 14 million Chinese lived on that strip of land which was 90 miles long and at its widest point was only 10 to 15 miles. This area is heavily planted with rice paddies and fruit orchards of all kinds. A tropical breadbasket for Asia!

We saw women doing much of the manual labor of construction, particularly carrying heavy loads of bricks and cement on poles carried across their shoulders. Often I saw such women working with a baby strapped to one hip! Calloused shoulders testified to the fact that these laboring women were not filling in part time!

Taiwan was basically a police-state under the Nationalist Chinese and

Chiang Kai Shek, who was still living at the time. The one million or so Nationalist Chinese were not native to Taiwan having arrived in 1948 after being thrown out of the mainland by Mao Tse Tung. They took over the island with its Taiwanese population of 16 millions and imposed a harsh communist styled military regime.

The Taiwanese natives themselves had only arrived in the 16 century and displaced the indigenous aboriginal peoples who retreated into the rugged mountains of the central and eastern portions of the island where they remain today. These original inhabitants are thought to be descendents of Polynesian and Malaysian migrations of much earlier times. They have a separate language group with dozens of tribal dialects, unique appearance and customs. The Taiwanese who came in the 16 century now speak a form of Chinese with seven tones which is unintelligible to the Nationalist who speak four-toned Mandarin.

The Nationalist Chinese quickly imposed their language in the schools and new governance when they came in 1948. The Japanese occupied Taiwan for about 90 years prior to the end of World War II and you find many customs stemming from that era, especially bathing and the punctual rail system. While we were there you could detect the smoldering of Taiwanese nationalism against the ruling Kuomintang of Chiang Kai Shek.

One consequence of the police state was that every organized meeting of more than 6 individuals had to be registered with local police. Movement of foreigners associated with sponsoring groups, churches, military or approved schools was closely monitored.

The National Museum in Taipei has to be the most awesome museum in the world. Chiang brought trainloads of art and cultural artifacts to Taiwan when he fled China and these are housed inside a mountain next to the museum building. At any given time only a very small fraction of pieces collected there are displayed.

The hot humid climate reminded me of New Orleans in August. The difference being that there was no air conditioning. I always looked forward to meals. I was constantly hungry, as if I would die if the meal were delayed. We were living in Tainan, Taiwan in an old traditional house. We had rented the house with two other couples, Joe and Annie Hsu and their baby daughter and Marie and Basil Sharp and their three children. Curtiss, Clifford, Elsie and I rounded out the household.

Preparation of the meals was rotated among all the adults and every meal was prepared from fresh bought produce, fish or meat obtained from the local market place that day. Traditional Chinese ingredients and meals were prepared in a wok served with steamed rice from a large 5 gallon rice cooker that huffed and puffed all day long.

Day after day the Taiwanese weather was like New Orleans in August, high humidity in spades. At least 90 to 99+% humidity in hot tropical sun interrupted frequently by hot steaming rains. It seemed the temperature was always pushing into the low 90's and evenings and night offered only slight relief.

Breakfast usually consisted of watery rice, powdered fish, pickled cabbage, hard or soft noodles and sweet bread. I would always be famished by 10 AM, only 2 hours to go till lunch. If I were assigned to shopping it was torture. We shopped at the open-air market at designated booths where the farmers knew us. I usually negotiated by sign language, pointing to what I wanted and holding out the budgeted amount of money. First I would go to the egg lady for the day's eggs. Then on to the tofu guy. If we were having tuna I'd get the leathery brown tofu that tastes like pork when cooked in soy sauces and garlic. If pork were on the menu I'd get the soft beige tofu. Next it was the fish man for the freshly caught giant red-fleshed tuna. We always got at least two big cross sections. By this time my mouth would be watering. If prepared right the tuna would taste exactly like soy-marinated pork roast, or a melt-in-your-mouth piece of filet mignon.

Vegetables were a daily item. The green bamboo shoots, leak tops, onions, Chinese cabbage, greens, carrots and bean sprouts were staples. Fruits were available in a profusion of varieties. Star fruit, lichee, durian, pomelos, oranges, pineapple, stalks of ripe cane, mangos, papaya, and bananas were fresh every day.

Then back to the house for the noon meal. I would approach the table like a drowning man - I could hardly concentrate on the songs, the Meal Office, or the prayer. The plate would get its mound of rice, tofu, sauces and fruit. Sometimes we might have eggs stirred into the wok during the preparation of whatever dish we were having, the crisp vegetable complimenting the rice and sauce. I would eat as if it stood between me and life or death. I knew that by 2 or 3 PM I would again be famished. I was literally driven to the table exhausted by the constant heat, the effort to work or travel, and my abiding hunger. Was it simply physical hunger or the spirit drain of living in a foreign land where few spoke English and my Chinese limited to an essential dozen words?

In 14 months I ate as if I couldn't get enough. I arrived in Taiwan weighing 135 lbs. When we finally left I weighed 117.

Perhaps the most memorable personal event during our stay in Tainan occurred during Clifford's time in the first grade of the Chinese public school. There was a grade school in Tainan operated by the U.S. military for service families and other American families in various capacities on the island. The House only had enough money in the budget to send Curtiss, who was in fifth grade, to the American school. By virtue of his being on the faculty of the Presbyterian Seminary in Tainan, Basil and Marie Sharp's children had access to an English language school for missionary children.

We decided to enroll Clifford, who was 5 years old in the local public schools! It was like throwing a non-swimmer into the water in order to teach him how to swim! The teachers could not speak English, only Mandarin. Cliff was not totally at a disadvantage because most of the students in this southern part of Taiwan were Taiwanese who did not speak Mandarin either! Since the teaching followed the rote methods of Confucius anyway we decided Cliff could benefit.

He had several friends in the class who helped him with his characters, etc. and a lot of words were taught by songs. He would spend time with his class buddies doing pages of Chinese symbols for homework. All the first graders wore tan shirts and shorts, both boys and girls, and had bright orange baseball type hats.

The traditional house we lived in had a huge central altar room with a large long table and heavy wooden chairs. In front it opened on an outdoor courtyard with rooms on the side which led to a front door that opened onto the alley which was the street. There was also a back courtyard flanked by a huge bathroom on one side and a Tatami room on the other. The back door opened into a beautiful garden which was common to about 5 or 6 other houses which were occupied by the sons of the original patriarch who previously resided, before his death, in the house we rented.

One mid-morning I went to answer the bell at the main entrance. There was Clifford being escorted by two little Chinese girls who were his classmates. The three of them were in their tan uniforms but Clifford was covered from head to toe with excrement! Before I could say anything, Cliff said, "Dad, I've had a bad day!"

Apparently Clifford was in class when he experienced an urgent diarrhea attack. There was only one bathroom at the school and routinely the girls and boys would use the restroom at different scheduled times. Normally a pupil would not leave class to go! Cliff tried to get the teacher's attention but when that wasn't fast enough he ran out of class for the bathroom. The bathroom consisted of a sloped floor with a trench down the middle. To go, you squatted over the trench where a trickle of water ran. Cliff, in his hurry to get his pants off, ran in, slipped and slid right into the trench at the same time as he messed his pants. He truly had a bad day! Students were assigned to bring him home early.

I got Cliff into our large bathroom which was designed as a Japanese hot bath, grateful that we had such a facility to clean him up in. I have had frequent opportunities to recall this event, especially if I'm feeling sorry for myself having a 'bad' day.

While in Taiwan I was invited to a luncheon as guest of the Taiwan Sugar Corporation courtesy of Karl Wang, an executive. I was very impacted by the realization of how much Chinese culture is tied into the form and significance of the meal. The host, a Mr. Mao, must have given me ten short courses on the duties of the host and the roles of those present at the 8-person table, who should be seated where in relation to the main door, and the reasons for choices of food for the various courses. It was a pedagogical experience! Truly, I would be terrified to be the host at a Chinese table!

Another time I was asked to be the speaker at the regular monthly meeting of The Taipei Rotary Club. This was on May 24, 1973 at the Grand Hotel! I talked on the role of businessmen as self-conscious educators in times of cultural resurgence using the Confucius Revolution as a dynamic model. They gave me a molded lucite cube with my name embossed on it as a memento. My talk was later published in full in their publication, in English of course. From the perspective of 30 years later I was prophetic!

In the process of recruiting the first full course for business leaders in Taipei we talked with Chang Kai Shek's younger brother, a general of the Nationalist army, to get his 'nod' and support. In Taiwan it's not whether what you are doing has merit on its own but who sponsors you. After months of preparation and talking to individuals we felt we had run into a stone wall. But after seeing the general and George Wu, chairman of the Taiwan Reinsurance Corporation, who told us, "I will send 20 businessmen to the seminar," we made the break-through. All twenty of his names showed for the event!

Back To The USA

Leaving Taiwan was filled with ambivalence for me and I suspect for Elsie. Much about the Chinese culture and thriving Taiwanese scene was attractive. We had made good friends among colleagues, especially the McDonalds, Sharps, Hsus and Phanstiels. We were also aware that without learning the language adequately we would always be outsiders to the culture. The other observation is even more telling. For Westerners there is a deep fascination with the 'otherness' of the orient. Even those who knew the language and tried to integrate into Chinese culture will always remain outsiders as well. I had experienced a 'hard year' under the circumstances of indirect effectiveness. It is a hard lesson for westerners to learn as we are natural 'doers.' There is a Chinese proverb that I tried to emulate while in Taiwan which goes like this, 'everything comes to him who waits.' I was ready for a more familiar context. Perhaps you could call it homesick.

As our end of assignment approached we started anticipating reunion with our son Steven who had spent the time in Sydney while we were in Taiwan. We telegraphed him as follows.

"We fly to Honolulu Flt PA 2 arriving there 2PM July 1st. Pls confirm by return cable if you can meet us and give Flt No and arrival time Honolulu."

As it turned out we left June 13, 1973. The following notes from my journal describe last minute feelings and our trip in terse fashion.

Our prepaid tickets arrived at 9:30, we are booked out on Singapore Airlines at 3:30 for Tokyo. Overwhelmed with sadness. Feeling of inevitability when a parting finally happens. Raining in Taipei mirroring our feelings! Will miss colleagues, owe letters to Sharps and McDonalds. Will miss the beautiful Chinese people. Funny, they know they are beautiful! They are so superior, and it's because they are! They are so successful and experienced at society and at raising successful children! I never met a weak self the whole time in Taiwan.

Stop over in Tokyo. Very minimal stay. Didn't see much, only enough to wonder if they aren't creating a nightmare there.

Honolulu at last. Steve at last. We all cried. Clifford was embarrassed. Curt struggled to remain Mr. Cool. I have never been so happy to see someone. The day worked out wonderfully. Hotel, swim, evening meal and a show! Steve

so mature. Having been on his own with his own stipend. So Australian! God it was good to be together.

Hawaii, a shock to senses and pockets. Mostly pockets.

After several days in Honolulu it was on to New Orleans for a brief visit with Elsie's dad and then to Chicago in time for the 1973 Summer Program and the anxieties and excitement of a new assignment.

Detroit

The summer program in Chicago was a busy time of planning for the next year and celebrating the accomplishments of the past year on the Spirit Movement. Colleagues and friends from all across the world were in attendance. It was a time to renew friendships, see acquaintances and make new contacts. The Research group was exploring the cabaret as a celebration dynamic that could evoke the profound dimensions of human experience much like worship. The Movement was interested in finding secular equivalents of the liturgy for the wider community at large.

The summer was punctuated by evenings where the Great Hall was transformed into a night club with tables and low lights and a presentation of floor shows including 'The Man From La Mancha,' "Desert Song" and on the final weekend, "Cabaret." Live orchestral and Jazz bands were assembled from among our colleagues to accompany choruses and soloists. Elsie was recruited into the women's chorus line for "Cabaret." The joint was jumpin' and spirits were high. By the time assignments were posted colleagues were refreshed and ready for another year's work.

We were assigned to the House in Detroit. We arrived there to find a functioning House and Region of the Spirit Movement. Colleagues were ready and eager to introduce us to ongoing programs and activities. A Local Church Ecumenical Parish experiment was underway using the model developed at the summer program in 1970. New interns were scheduled to take up residence in the House. Several other House members were accepting Order assignments elsewhere in the world. The previous priors had been our dear friends Joyce and Wally Baker from Baton Rouge and they were being reassigned to work in Fifth City in Chicago.

Our first official gathering was a Region Council of Movement colleagues from across Michigan. About 40 people were present to participate in planning and take a look at the new prior family. One of the people present was Sister Pauline Wagner, a nun of the Sisters of Charity, assigned to a local parish in Birmingham, MI. I specifically remember thinking what poor posture she must have to be slouching down so low in her seat at the table. When she stood up I was amazed to see how tall and attractive she was. That was my brief introduction to Pauline who would later figure so importantly in my life.

The House itself was located in Highland Park and was an ugly 2-story modified duplex with small rooms. A large area had been cleared for dining in

the basement and the attic was converted into a Daily Office Hall. If architecture influences the human spirit this House was a disaster for its inhabitants. No one seemed to mind and the regular activities of House and Region Center proceeded at a relentless pace. I quickly integrated into the situation. I knew we were back in the good ole USA.

For the next 18 months I immersed myself in the role of House prior and moved from one event to the next with increasingly robotic efficiency. I was consciously exemplifying an adage of the Order that *a man of faith does not have personal problems*. In my case however, long standing and ignored personal problems were about to intrude upon my life.

Divorce

In looking back at the time with the Order in Detroit, only two events remain indelible and significant for my future. The first was the decision of my wife to leave me and secure a divorce. The second I have already mentioned in passing was meeting Pauline Wagner who would some four years later become my second wife.

Elsie decided to 'lay down the impossible,' a reference to the continuing burden our marriage relationship had become. For her health and future growth she decided to leave me and the Order. I was opposed out of a stoic's determination to persevere and keep the status quo. I then suggested we leave the Order to work it out. As a team we had always been good problem solvers, intellectually. We went through a round of 'counseling' conversations with Order leaders and our good friends, Carl and Marion Muma. Elsie was adamant that there was no future for us either in or out of the Order. She proceeded to move out of the House.

We remained then, and now, friends and on good terms. Ultimately I elected to leave the Order, turning down a reassignment elsewhere. At the time Elsie had an excellent job with the UAW as a legal secretary which enabled her moving on. I asked the new leadership at the House if I could continue living there until such time as I could afford to move out.

Elsie and I discussed the new family situation. Steve and Curt were in Order student assignments and could continue until the end of the present term. Clifford would continue to live in the Detroit House with me until Elsie secured adequate living accommodations. We cooperated during the entire process leading to our divorce and decided that Steve and Clifford would live with her and Curtiss with me. I don't quite remember what the rationale for that was (possibly had to do with the school Curt would go to after I moved to an apartment in Royal Oak, Michigan).

So it was that at age forty I found myself starting over with not much more than I had at age twenty fresh out of school. Of course the same can be said of Elsie. What we did have was the past twenty years of life experience and three wonderful children.

Part III

Miles from Moberly

STARTING OVER IN DETROIT

All our pain comes from restraint of love...

Blake

Curt and I took up residence in an apartment in Royal Oak where he was able to go to the high school located one block away. I'm sure it was no picnic for Curt although he had been thrust into many new and strange situations and schools in the past. You can develop a certain reserve and put yourself into a new place but developing friends and relationships takes time. Without some stability the effort to get involved in yet another new place must look like it takes too much work and bother. Speaking for myself I felt somewhat 'temporary' in this situation. My guess is that Curt did also.

I had started seeing Pauline socially. I think our first outing was to a square dance at Roger Parker's church near Ann Arbor. Prior to that, I remember that the Local Church Parish experiment had held a party at Lori and Grant Briener's house in Ann Arbor and swimming suits were suggested so we could all use their pool. I recall noticing Pauline in her red and white checkered suit and thinking, 'Boy, she has very nice legs!' About that time Pauline had taken a year's leave from her Order. Later the two of us were involved in volunteering for the Detroit House during the 1976 Town Meetings. We would often show up on the same team to help conduct these meetings. I especially remember one meeting in Saginaw. The team of 4 or 5 included Greg Walden, Pauline and me and we were all advised to bring sleeping bags. The team was billeted in an attic where bats flew in and out during the night!

One incident that occurred at about the time my divorce decree became final gives an idea of how efforts to maintain good relations between Elsie and me were perceived by the boys. I had invited Pauline to accompany Curtiss, Clifford and me on a picnic. While we were driving the topic of 'broken families' came up. I don't recall how, maybe it was on the radio. Anyway, Clifford was puzzled and asked, "What's a broken family?" We explained that it was referring to separated and divorced families. Clifford responded, "Well, our family isn't broken!" I'm guessing that the fact we still did things together on occasion contributed to Cliff's observation.

Pauline and I gradually became identified as a 'twosome' by our friends and by colleagues in the Institute where we continued to be volunteers in the Religious House activities. I was experiencing all the joy and exhilaration of 'first love' once more with Pauline. She was a very engaging and enthusiastic person. There was a quality of naiveté combined with strength and poise which I

found very attractive and exciting. I enjoyed going with her to concerts at Meadowbrook, dinner theater, movies, picnics, walks and activities at the Institute. I was most 'taken' by the fact that she enjoyed my company and gave me a freedom to express feelings in a way that was new for me.

Later, we enjoyed exploring new activities together such as tent camping, canoeing on Michigan's rivers, going to the horse racing track in Windsor, Canada and taking drives on those few good weather days in Detroit. I remember one picnic outing to a park in Macomb County where it did nothing but rain! I also remember thinking that I was 'getting serious' when a day passed missing a connection with Pauline or when she left on a trip out of town and I found myself waiting for her to return.

Getting a Job!

My first job after leaving the Order was with the Michigan Governor's Office located in Detroit. I was one of two Caucasians hired by Roy Williams, a Black man who reported directly to Gov. Milliken. I was an Economic Specialist assigned as liaison with the City of Detroit. Coleman Young was mayor at that time. The Detroit office being mostly staffed by Blacks, I referred to myself as 'their token White.' We had about 15 total staff in various roles designed to keep the relationship between the City (Mayor Young) and the State (Gov. Milliken) functioning smoothly.

My major assignment was to develop a revenue sharing system for the Detroit region which would help compensate the City of Detroit for services it rendered on a regional scale benefiting suburban cities. For example the Cultural Center, museums and art galleries in Detroit served the entire region but were heavily subsidized only by Detroit. Similarly other services supporting commuters, school tours, libraries, and certain utilities were traditionally provided by Detroit and had grown over the years.

When Detroit was riding high it could afford a certain level of largess. But beginning in the 60's and continuing in the 70's the car industry was in a slump. The industry was rapidly becoming global and Detroit's role was shrinking, as were its tax revenues and future tax base. Detroit was suffering loss of citizens, income and business. Needless to say the suburbs were not enthusiastic about 'revenue sharing.' I put forth a comprehensive model based on actual data and expenses for services but it got nowhere.

My work however, did get me an 'in' with what was going on in Detroit City. I was able to get a technical position calling for a chemical engineering degree with the Detroit Industrial Waste Pretreatment Program, a federally mandated function legislated under the Clean Water Act of 1970. These programs were just now getting underway all across the country after being delayed by President Nixon's impounding of the enabling funds. When Congress voted to override Nixon, some \$9,000,000,000 got released finally giving these programs a jump start.

It was in this job as an Industrial Waste Inspector that I learned a lesson about anger and detachment from consequences. Shortly after being hired by Frank Pollard, the Program Director, I was assigned to design and implement a discharge permit program for the approximate 1000 industrial firms discharge wastes into the Detroit Wastewater System. The permit would require industries to conform to the City Ordinance on industrial waste and, supposedly, also with Federal Law under the Clean Water Act, CWA.

As I got into this project, I found something disturbing. The City Ordinance which had been written by Pollard was in direct contradiction to the Federal CWA. Because it was so technical Pollard's superiors were totally unaware of this situation. I confronted Frank with this and he blew it off, saying that the Federal requirements would put all the companies in Detroit out of business and as long as he reported "industrial compliance" to the EPA no one would object and no one would be the wiser. He said no one in upper management would wade through the ordinance and see the contradiction. Furthermore, on threat of firing me, he forbade me to say anything about it, or write any memos to anyone except to him for prior approval and release.

In a nutshell the contradiction was this: Federal Law forbids discharge of total toxic metals above certain limits specified in the CWA. Industries in violation of these limits are subject to heavy penalties and fines and must install pretreatment facilities to remove such metals prior to discharge.

The Detroit Ordinance very craftily set the limits only on soluble toxic metals. Since solubility of these compounds is a function of pH (acidity/alkalinity), an industry could discharge tons of metals as a fine suspension by manipulating their discharge pH with, say ferric chloride. Once discharged this material would collect in the nation's rivers and streams ultimately producing widespread toxicity and other problems in water supplies and streams. It was a ruse calculated to benefit Detroit's dischargers. Frank Pollard actually believed that the Great Lakes, into which Detroit discharged its total wastewater, were so large that the toxins introduced would not cause any harm and would never be noticed!

I was detached from being fired. Frank and I exchanged many a shouting match over this issue. I gave my anger full vent. I spoke directly to his superiors. I disobeyed Frank by writing a memo to his superiors pointing out the situation. Years later I learned that the Detroit Water and Sewage Department considers this memo a classic example of how to expose a fraudulent superior or simply an incompetent supervisor.

To cut to the chase, I got Frank's job and a promotion to a Department Director level as well. Years later I wrote in my journal the following letter to Frank:

Dear Frank,

Well, Frank, you really asked for it. You misused your authority,

knowingly disobeying the law of the Clean Water Act, and misled your superiors giving industrial polluters free license to continue without accountability for their law breaking. That doesn't excuse my behavior. I vented my disrespect for your policies to your face, ridiculed your managing to our work colleagues and counseled our top management to correct your errors! Imagine me, proverbial Mr. Nice Guy doing such things. I almost got you fired! I did get your job and a promotion above that! You had a wake up call, Frank, and you wouldn't listen, so I upped the ante and took control of the Industrial Waste Division for the City of Detroit.

I'm sorry for the abuse and hyperbole, the anger I vented at you. You deserved better as a human being. You weren't a bad man only disabused in your opinions and beliefs. You wouldn't listened to the plain truth of the CWA. I'm sorry for my disrespect, but not for the results of it. That was needed. You could have led Detroit into a pioneering IW program but you left it to me to do! I owe you a great debt of gratitude for opening the door to my almost 25 years career as a Program Manager in industrial waste regulation management with two of the largest cities in the USA, Detroit and San Diego.

Well maybe that's what focused anger and a little detachment can do!

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PAULINE AND I GET MARRIED

*Home is a place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in.
I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't to deserve.*

Robert Frost

I was surprised by joy, captured in the event of my second marriage. Surprised because it was also a time of sadness and recent pain, a time of in-between, in between life directions, between livelihoods, and between a relatively secure past in the Order and an unknown future. It was going to be a new place to live, a new situation relative to my sons, and uncertain in terms of a reliable job. The new life was to be created. It was one of those discontinuous moments in life when it seems that, without my conscious decision to do so, all of my past bridges were being burned. Once again, as had happened before in my past, my life was taking an abrupt turn.

My wedding to Pauline marks this point of transition. The Chinese might use one of those ideograms holding the tension between opportunity and danger, but for me I was happy! It was joy bubbling over happiness! A feeling that I have had all too rarely as a self-conscious adult! Sometimes I think I was born with a personal disposition of expecting things to always work out for the good, my good, but also with a serious gravity, heaviness of sorts, a pervading sobriety. I have an ability to reflect on any event and see the cracks in the clay feet of whatever gods were serving me at the time, expecting their collapse either momentarily or certainly, at some point in the future. Thus, I would take a philosophical view of even the most favorable circumstances in my life.

So the wedding surprised me, a moment of pure joy, deep presence, fully engaged, not wanting the day to end as it lingered on into the evening. I felt joy at the people who gathered and the response they made to participating in the creation of what was to happen.

Pauline and I had determined there should be three teams for the wedding, one to cook the meal, a second to decor the Hall and a third to plan and orchestrate the evening's entertainment. This grew out of the fact that we were engaged at that time with three distinct communities, the Ecumenical Institute, the Leger Catholic community, and Pauline's work colleagues and friends. Thank goodness she had a job! People in these separate communities wouldn't know one another. So splitting them up into the three teams would give them an

opportunity to get acquainted while working at the three tasks.

The Knight of Columbus Hall was available all day. People came early. The spaghetti meal was cooked and decor hung, tables set and Books of Our Rites for Marriage were at each place setting. A marriage banner with our symbol served as a canopy over the head table. Wine and bread were on the altar around which the tables circled. The neighboring room was set up with a DJ station amplifier and tape player.

The singing was so wild and evocative. The ceremony of ancient words so rhythmic and beautiful and freighted with meaning and baggage! The symbols of broken bread and spilled wine! The witnessing and the rings! The communion ritual! Later we danced, there where skits and toasts and promises claimed. People told stories and gave warnings of Joy and Woe. The children, the men and women, acquaintances, colleagues, friends, gave their blessings. It was late on that snowy night when the Knights of Columbus literally had to throw us out of the Hall.

We spent a wonderful honeymoon in Florida at a condo provided by Pauline's parents, Paul and Dottie Wagner. I had met them earlier when they came up to Detroit and when Pauline and I attended a birthday party in Cleveland for one of Paul's relatives. It was on that trip that we told her parents of our intentions to get married. I'm sure this was not easy news for them following as it did their disappointment in Pauline's decision several years earlier to leave her religious Order. Both Paul and Dottie were gracious and supportive of us but they were very devout Catholics for whom vows of marriage and religious vocation were sacred duties and our decision represented a dilemma for them. While they recognized our love and commitment and symbolized it with a gift, they very quietly declined to attend our wedding. It was years before bonds of comfortable love and acceptance were forged in my relationship with them.

Some episodes that in retrospect may or may not deserve recording are the following. Pauline and I rented a house in Royal Oak and Curtiss lived with us. I'm sure it was not easy for a newly married ex-nun to set up housekeeping with a teenager step son while the father was away many nights in law school. I'm sure it wasn't easy for Curt either. It didn't take me long to conclude that the nation had enough lawyers and that 'lawyer-think' was not my cup of tea.

Shortly, we moved into a three room flat in the city of Detroit and Curtiss, probably with a sigh of relief, moved in with Elsie and his two brothers in their house in Dearborn. Our move to Detroit was not entirely voluntary since the City had a rule that City employees must live in the City or be summarily fired. Both Pauline and I found it anxiety producing to carry along the fiction of Detroit residency while I was driving a City provided car to Royal Oak every evening.

The three room flat proved to be one of the best economical moves we ever made. We had no responsibilities for maintenance or upkeep. With both of us working we managed to save money like it was going out of style. With both of us naturally frugal we thrived on low rent, low utilities, and low accumulation

of 'stuff.' I was even able to begin making wine while we lived there. I could store a small barrel or two in the attic.

For me that flat was warm with Pauline's presence, a cozy place of safety where we could relax and share the day's events. Our cares were minimal during this time and we were both productively engaged with our work.

Along about 1979 we bought a house near the University of Detroit. Oddly enough we found that the house on Lichfield Avenue did not greatly increase our upkeep chores. It was a beautiful brick English Tudor style home with small yard in a nice neighborhood of mostly larger homes. I think both Pauline and I enjoyed that house. We initiated and loved taking brisk walks through the area every day. Pauline had a second floor outside deck overlooking a large green cemetery for her meditation space during the summer months. I outfitted the basement for wine making and built a cellar under the front entrance stoop. Winters seemed cozy and warm with a fireplace a blaze and no need to go outside.

Before we had even thought of buying a house I did another completely irrational move and proposed that we buy a 1931 LaSalle. To my amazement, Pauline acquiesced and that made it imperative to find a garage. This later became an overriding motif whenever we sought new shelter. Does it have a garage? A 4-car garage?

What was it about those cars from the transitional era between the boxy twenties and the art deco mid-thirties? I loved their style – floating art objects on wheels. I think it has something to do with my father. He wouldn't let me have a car as a teenager. And there was a guy I knew in high school who had a 1934 LaSalle coupe! A beautiful red car with wide white wall tires! Also dad wouldn't let me work at the station, or even get familiar with cars. Probably part of his strategy to get me into engineering or science! Anyway I was hooked. And when we saw cars at Meadowbrook one summer, they were 1931 Cadillac V-16s. I knew I eventually had to have one.

So when we moved into Lichfield Avenue the first thing on the agenda was to retrieve the La Salle. We enjoyed it and our short association with the Michigan Region of the Classic Car Club of America.

This was a time of learning that as an adult I was responsible for how I appropriated holidays. A time of establishing new traditions with my partner, Pauline! We brought an interesting mix of self-consciousness and ritual to celebrating holidays and special occasions.

I was introduced to an interesting tradition in celebrating the Christmas holidays by Pauline's family. Her grandparents over the years always hosted a gala Christmas evening at the Dayton Country Club with meal, gifts and celebrations. It was a large affair since the grandparent's family was quite large, consisting of their 11 children with spouses and their children. I would estimate that over 120 people were present at the events I attended with Pauline.

Surely some of my most meaningful and deeply felt holidays have been experienced in this period of my life. Pauline always put out the crèche and the figurines spoke to me of another dimension drawn from our common heritage, a

dimension often overlooked in the hustle and hubbub of daily living.

The Christmas season is especially a time of high consciousness and stress for me. The holidays with New Years is rapidly followed by our Anniversary and I invariably feel like it's a rare year when we glide easily and effortlessly through. I enjoy the exchange of gifts and cards and the conversations this time of year calls forth. I love the music of Christmas. But frequently by the time the New Year celebration is over I'm psychically exhausted.

One tradition we observe has been to make a chart of the events of the past year and give the year a name or tell a story about it. Pauline and I have enjoyed introducing this practice to a number of friends over the years. We also had a 'living tree' for several years. This was a planted pine that could be used for several years and then planted in your yard. The now large pine tree on the east end of the patio at 9415 Lemon Avenue in La Mesa served as our indoor Christmas tree for about 3 years.

Shortly after I married Pauline we had the boys over one Christmas and made tree ornaments. Each year since we have enjoyed recalling this and using those hand-made objects for our tree.

I find it difficult to move quickly into the holidays. This is a result of both my love for and disaffection from the corporate liturgy of the Church. I can accept the church's language, liturgies and traditional theology as "poetry." It is less than meaningful in the modern world view. Yet its beauty and evoked feeling is very satisfying. I share Pauline's love of liturgy but at the same time realize that her depth of feeling for The Mass and liturgy in general is much richer than mine. I miss the Daily Office of the Order and especially the singing. Attempts at using rituals with two people often disappoint me and feel 'contrived.' Something is missing. My hesitation in this arena in our home must disappoint Pauline. The lighting of Advent candles at home, the exchange of gifts and reflections on the year past are the best connections for my spirit.

Sometimes I enjoy sharing the holidays with friends but mostly I experience this time of year as a solitary time. I sometimes wish we could stretch out the holidays over a longer time period where I could put less stress on myself. If I could recover the wonder filled experiences of childhood and early youth perhaps my stress would transform.

I have attempted to transpose the Christmas story out of its two-story, Theo centric setting into a meaningful myth for the modern world view. I still find it a very powerful and meaningful myth when separated from its ancient trappings. Its equivalent is found in every culture. I never divorce the Christmas story from the Easter story. It seems appropriate to always place the symbol of the cross inside the symbol of the open tomb.

The key to celebrating the holidays is to be a part of a community. Finding a community should become easier if you can drop the dogmatic elements and trust your heart to a group of supportive celebrating people. Yet it has proven elusive.

An Omen To Leave Detroit

One of the high points of my time in Detroit is the miracle of how we came to leave Detroit. By 1981 we were convinced that Detroit was too cold for the quality of life we were interested in. The problem was that Detroit was so depressed that even personal decision and energy couldn't overcome the inertia. Thirty or forty homes had been for sale in our neighborhood for at least two years and you could count the actual sales on one hand (finger). Pauline asked me that fall, "What would happen if we just up and left, stopped paying on the mortgage?" Fair question! I said it probably wouldn't do our credit rating any good.

Well, would you believe the next February, in the middle of our worst winter storm ever, there was a knock at the door. A woman wanted to use our phone. She was scheduled to meet someone who didn't show, a realtor, to look at houses. Pauline said, "Please come in and, Oh by the way we were planning to put our house up for sale this coming spring. Would you like to look at it while you're here?" She did!

The woman, who was a Detroit Municipal Judge, ended up buying our house, without benefit of a real estate agent!

We took that as an omen. We had permission to leave Detroit!

GOING WEST IN AN RV

Following the sale of our house we were able to put our furniture and goods in the basement of our friends, Marie and Bob Fehribach. Not sure where we wanted to settle, except that it had to be warmer than Detroit, we had spent several year's vacation exploring the southern reaches of the country. We had ruled out many places including San Diego for being too crowded and cold (we had been in San Diego on the beach on Christmas and almost froze). So we opted to remain in Detroit while sorting through our options. We 'baby sat' three homes until I got the idea of buying a motor home. We purchased a used 22 foot Tioga motor home, packed it with clothes and supplies and set out for the West in October of 1982.

Why West? Well, I had a Water Federation National Meeting scheduled in St. Louis in mid September and Pauline had a training session presentation for the Annual Association of Trainers and Facilitators in Anaheim, CA in mid October. So we headed West thinking we would surely discover where to land. We had some excellent looking literature from the Chamber of Commerce of Stockton, CA and Gene Marshall and his wife Joyce had invited us to stop in Hollywood and they could do some exploring with us! Gene wanted to set up a corporate community of some kind modeled after the Order's experience. We weren't sure about that idea but were open to exploring locations with the Marshalls.

So we headed West. A pair of DownUwardly Mobile Middle-aged Professionals (DUMMPIES), no longer yuppies, looking for America.

This more or less carefree trip west was one of the best times for me. Not always knowing where we would stop for the night somehow added to the sense of adventure. Pauline was a willing and eager partner. We adapted to RV living very well, after some initial trials and problems such as a leak in our water tank. It was fun together exploring! Of course, we had an interim destination but, beyond that, the future was wide open.

After fighting 40 mph headwinds in Kansas, sampling beer in Golden, CO and visiting the Lassiters in Albuquerque, we landed in Anaheim, CA. Pauline made her presentation at the Conference and we took in Disney Land before picking up the Marshalls in Los Angeles and heading for Stockton. Imagine four normal or above average adults in a 22 foot motor home with their clothes and other gear! I can't. I think I must have repressed the memories. We saw Stockton and were amazed at the fictional creativity of their Chamber of Commerce! If you are the arm pit of California you have to have creative writers doing your advertisements! So it was on to Davis, which the Marshalls

envisioned as the next Ecumenical Institute of Chicago. The first house we saw for rent was right out of Levitt town. So we retired to the KOA RV camp at Petaluma to reconnoiter. I thought Santa Rosa looked promising but the idea of corporate living with the Marshalls or anybody else was less than appealing.

I caught a plane back to Detroit to give a 2-week notice and context the Water Utility General Director (I was a Department Director at this point). The Marshalls headed back to Hollywood to figure out their future without the Rippels. Meanwhile Pauline, by herself in the KOA campground, was subjected to two weeks of solid rainfall after which she discovered the mattress to our bed above the cab was soaked from the bottom up! We had a leak in the roof down through the side walls onto our bed platform. The rain didn't let up after I returned having resigned my management job in Detroit.

We decided to go south to dry out. After a circuitous route through Scottsdale, AZ and Puerto Vallarta we landed in El Cajon, CA the day after Christmas 1982. A mild Santa Ana wind had come up and the temp was in the mid 80's. It stayed that way through the rest of January. We dried out, repaired the roof and settled in to enjoy RV living.

Charley Stelljes

We soon discovered that to get a job in San Diego as a dishwasher required a PhD in anthropology. Only if you actually had a Doctor's degree they would say you were over qualified. Eventually Pauline got a temporary consulting job with San Diego County. Meanwhile I was looking for work for about 12 months. During that time I met a fascinating individual who helped us with a pending transportation problem. Coming out from Detroit we hauled our Subaru behind the motor home so we had local exploration capabilities. After Pauline found work I was stranded because she needed the car to get to work.

That's how I met Charley Stelljes. He was 83 at the time and I was 48 or so, about half his age.

Charley owned and operated an automobile repair garage in El Cajon, about two blocks from our RV camp. It was a one man shop. He ran the shop at his own pace but was normally there a full day, six days a week. By his own pace, I mean he never seemed to hurry. Yet he never appeared to be real slow. Each job took his full attention; he completed each step before going on to the next until a job was done. He was bright and talkative but never distracted or unengaged from his work.

He tolerated, I even think he enjoyed, my company in his shop. I was unemployed and feeling a little at loose ends. Charley let me use his tools and help him with jobs where more than two hands were needed. He liked older cars and had one or two classics during his lifetime. He also had been the owner of several airplanes.

When I located an old disheveled 1947 Dodge coupe he let me work on it in his shop using his tools. We were living in the Tioga motor home at the time. He never charged me for the time and assistance. I asked him plenty of

questions and he showed me many tricks of the mechanic's trade. Eventually he restored the Dodge's engine and accepted payment for his time and materials for that task. I appreciated Charley's unhurried sure confidence as we worked together. He never showed any anxiety about life and that was a good lesson for me at a time when I was out of work. After finishing mechanical work on the 1947 Dodge, which I christened 'Fred', I got it painted by a local shop. The very next day I got a call from the City of San Diego water utility to come to work there as a Jr. Civil Engineer.

LIVING AND WORKING IN SAN DIEGO

Settling In San Diego

When we finally settled into the Vacationer RV Park and got a phone installed in our motor home we had time to reflect on the trip out here from Detroit. That odyssey was enough to convince me that if you believe good things will happen to you, they will!

Life in an RV Park can be very seductive. There was a swimming pool with Jacuzzi to enjoy every evening or during the heat of the day. After a warm walk, when the temperatures started to cool, we would enjoy a gin and tonic sitting around the pool visiting with people before preparing our supper in the RV. Every morning I would get up early and go over to the Club House for my first cup of coffee. We didn't have any income! But our expenses were low! It was very pleasant working together, planning job hunting and enjoying the balmy weather. It was like living outdoors. We had a nice patio next to our RV with an awning, a table with chairs and a pepper tree for shade. I think ours was the best spot in the park! We had privacy and separation from our neighboring RV'ers.

Months passed before we obtained work. It was actually the fall of 1983 before I had a call from Steve Pearson of the San Diego Industrial Waste Program that they might be able to hire me. Steve told me I was obviously qualified for the Industrial Waste positions they had open but they could only hire Civil Engineers since that was the way their civil service requirements were stated. That was frustrating. Several months later he called and asked, "Have you ever taken the EIT exam (Engineer-in Training exam)?" "Yes," I said, "During my junior year in college more than 30 years ago at the University of Missouri." "If you can get the records, you're hired," he said. I did and was hired as a Jr. Civil Engineer at the San Diego Water Utility. Talk about a DUMMPIE, I was starting at the bottom again!

A Fortunate Test

Facing a test can be a source of affirmation that comes from others and your self. It may be a physical test, mental or a test of courage or some other virtue or trial. The admiration of others is always exhilarating and heady stuff, but the crucial element is the affirmation you give yourself when you've done your best in an endeavor. Public recognition may not always accompany your most meaningful efforts. Many victories and losses are experienced in solitary struggles. I venture that winning has less meaning for someone who has not experienced failure or defeat. That begs the question as to which is the more

valuable experience, winning or losing.

I know loss, whether it is in a contest or the actual loss of a loved one, can produce in the process of grieving that event, valuable lessons in self development. I'm clear that in the moment winning is something I enjoy. What I'm not sure about is whether we should place much importance to either winning or losing. For a person of spirit there is no such thing as defeat.

One test that happened to me occurred after I'd been working for the City of San Diego for only a year and a half. The position of Director of the Industrial Waste Pretreatment Program became open and there were only two employees of the City eligible for the job. I was one. The other was a woman, Donna S, who had been an analytical chemist with the Program since its beginnings in the early 1980's. I had been hired as a Jr. Engineer in 1983 and had rapidly been promoted to the senior level in charge of Industrial Waste Inspectors. I had also been the Division Head of IW for the City of Detroit before moving to San Diego.

The City decided not to recruit on the outside since it had two very qualified individuals in house. I ended up being chosen for the position. As I look back it was not the end of the world for Donna and, though I'm convinced I was the best choice for the tasks that ensued in the next 12 years of the Program, it wouldn't have been terrible for me if I had not been chosen. It must have been a difficult choice for the interview panel. Probably the traditional patriarchal ethos of City utility departments worked in my favor.

But could I have stayed on and worked for her having to train her to function in a job I was already experienced at? That's a question I'm glad I won't ever have to answer. In all probability that outcome would have required more character development and letting go of ego than I have ever faced before in a work situation. I might not have been up to it. One thing for sure if I had not gotten the promotion I would have had to rise to the challenge to my male ego's grandiosity and fears. Given my background and experiences with women I could easily have failed this final test. I was thankful that I was spared that test.

My "Career" At San Diego

After being hired on the basis of an undergraduate professional test taken nearly 30 years earlier, I was promoted to head the Metropolitan Industrial Waste Program (MIWP) in 1985 barely winning out over a rival with greater longevity with the City of San Diego. I subsequently presided over the hiring of staff, upgraded the requirements for professional inspectors to include chemical engineers, initiated three subsidiary city-wide programs and made numerous improvements in the Industrial Pretreatment Program.

Our pollution abatement record was unsurpassed by any major metropolitan program in the United States! Our programmatic records (i.e., statistical accounting of individual industrial firms relative to Clean Water Act categories) became a source of controversy with EPA and became one of the litigation issues in the City's ongoing dispute with EPA mandated wastewater

treatment. We worked diligently to make MIWP as excellent in programmatic statistics and policy goal achievements as we had been in actual abatement of pollution. As a result the City was able to successfully defend itself in the EPA lawsuit.

I permitted employees of MIWP to exercise maximum personal responsibility and initiative. The response to this atmosphere of freedom was a high level of professionalism and growth, both for individuals and for the Program. My managerial style was directional in policy and initiating areas for new development but "hands off" in day-to-day operations and time expenditure. Accountability for total program performance was highlighted in reports and personal recognition of exemplary individual performance. My shortcomings in close supervision and traditional disciplinary actions were more than compensated, even hidden from view, by the talent, industry and professionalism of the people that I had, to a large extent, gathered into the MIWP team over the years.

Getting Settled

Through a series of minor networking miracles Pauline and I ended up renting a house on Richard Adams's estate on Mt. Helix in La Mesa. It was on Lemon Avenue. Our landlord, a descendent of John Adams the second President, referred to our arrangement as 'house sitting.' We moved in to a bare house and decided, almost reluctantly, to rescue our 'stuff.' I say reluctantly because living in our motor-home for the previous 18 months had given us a feeling of freedom and carefree living that we really enjoyed.

When we came west in 1982 we left all our furniture and wine making equipment in Bob and Marie Fehribach's basement since we didn't know where we might end up. I had no idea when and if we would ever have a place to put all our possessions. The Fehribachs were good enough to give us open ended cost free storage. I filled my two barrels with Michigan water (tastes like cherry wine) and patted my ancient technology wine equipment goodbye.

It's hard to describe the ambivalence I felt when I saw the mover's truck coming up the driveway with our goods. But we unloaded it. It was our junk. And we couldn't let it go. I unloaded my barrels and put them into the single car garage promptly forgetting them in the press of getting on with our new lives here in California.

It was almost five years later when the urge to pick grapes, press the juice and bottle wine returned. I realized I could get good fresh grapes right here in CA. In Detroit we used to get moldy California fruit off the rail cars from sidings in the Italian neighborhoods. So I hauled out the barrels. To my chagrin they were empty and dry as a bone. All that sweet Michigan water had long ago evaporated. The hoops slipped off, the staves collapsed and the heads rolled onto the garage floor! Without water or wine the oak shrinks and the barrels fall to pieces.

I managed to rescue one barrel by patiently soaking it in a large garbage can filled with water. It gave me an appreciation of the cooper's art since I had

to reassemble the staves, heads and hoops, gradually tightening every place where water leaked. I also developed patience because more than once staves, hoops and all would fall apart like fiddle sticks and I would have to start the reassembly all over. To get the barrel back to leak-free condition was a process that took over a month of soaking and repeated tapping the hoops to tighten the staves. At last it was ready for wine!

I can't think of anyplace I'd rather be than here. It's not even a 20 minute ride to the Zoo! I guess my cynicism about any other place being better (or worse) immobilizes me. Along about 1993 we finally bought a house here in La Mesa. There was a brief pause in the upwardly trending real estate market so we bit the bullet and once more became home owners. It was necessary to refurbish a lot of the interior. Pauline had a good plan and our dear friend Lee Adams provided the expert construction talent. Another friend, Lane Bond, performed miracles in painting the interior. Lee also helped us add a two-car garage so we could move our old cars in. The property is almost 3/4's of an acre. This is much more plant life that we ever wanted to take care of and it continues to represent an ongoing burden for us. To add to the dilemma we asked people to help us plant a vineyard in 1996 and it has become a source of grapes and wine (and extra labor and care).

San Diego has its seasons of rain. Unusual here but very welcome, a soft gentle rain! Usually water never comes in nice even packages. Floods or drought, irrigate or build levees to keep it contained, dams to store it, pumps and canals to move it from here to there.

Sometimes we have drops of moisture on the roof top in the AM. It's not rain, only the 'tears' of the palm trees. They act as natural condensers jutting into the moisture charged atmosphere and pulling out a film of water from the saturated air. Plants are responding to the rains of the season, salts have been flushed out of the soil.

In our front yard, pushing up through the rain-drenched soil, are the probing ends of mottled white and black fungi, like ugly sores erupting. What drives these vestigial reversed roots to seek the light and expose themselves above the dark under layer hints of some greater potential underneath? What else will rise up when the rains pause, and is it related to that force now pushing green out from the dark brown branches above?

Yesterday I came upon a golden skink sunning itself on the bricks next to our patio gate. A fat serpent length of about a foot or so with a large triangular head they always warn you about and the small disproportionately short front legs and back legs. When I moved, my shadow coming across his sun lamp, he flicked his tail and beat a quick retreat into the Japanese bamboo leaving a reptilian image planted in my brain and, overriding my instinctive fright, a certain sadness in his leaving.

Weeds

Shortly after buying the house on Butte, Pauline told me about the

weeds underneath the huge cedar tree she had christened "Josephine" and the tribe of three Macaws that had set up residence in its branches. Macaws with iridescent blue, purple and red feathers and loud raucous cries to match! Their active vociferous relationships, I hesitate to say family life as I have no idea if these birds are setting up house or just passing through, project an image of spring just as Pauline's getting out and plucking up weeds does. Weeds, unwelcome harbingers of spring also. I guess no image of spring is pure, i.e., without its anti-image or underbelly. Flowers and weeds, grass and crabgrass, song birds and Macaws all remind us of spring.

In Praise of Weeds

They grow without restraint
 Other plants hang back, need
 Encouragement and coaxing.
 Weeds show no discipline
 Their appearance is chaotic and 'natural'
 Their colors wan and unimposing
 They attract no predators and
 Very few synergistic helpers
 I wonder, who pollinates a weed?
 Perhaps co-dependent bees
 Who don't have enough selfhood
 To embrace a real flower
 Someone said a weed is a plant
 No one has found a use for yet
 Implying we haven't found a way
 To exploit this genre of life
 Our immediate response to a weed
 Hack it down, uproot it, throw it away
 Which beg the question
 Are there really weeds
 Truly useless living things
 That justify such response
 I suspect no
 A weed is unappreciated potential
 A weed is stubborn life
 A weed survives
 A weed succeeds where others give up
 A weed is learned aggressiveness
 A weed manifests subtle display
 A weed explores successful reproduction
 A weed harbors species we don't value
 Or take time to learn about
 A weed manifests beauty

Upsetting artificial order
 With nature's wild chaos
 A weed explores surprising niches
 In the eco system to set up house
 Weeds are carriers of strong DNA
 Friends to animals and soil
 Weeds don't waste time
 Making surplus fruit
 They are models of spare living

Notes From My Journals on Life in San Diego

1. America's Finest City?

It is a sign of the times that I could be sitting in my Pathfinder parked on "B" Street just catty corner from the Symphony Hall, and be approached by someone who falls under that loose category of "street person." A thin, bedraggled looking black male of indeterminate age, but probably early thirties, came up to the lowered window of my car. He had a poorly kept version of the Rastafarian hair-do, was clearly soiled with his own urine and, was smoking a cigarette. I was apprehensive, although he didn't have a menacing look.

For some reason, perhaps his lack of girth, and also his demeanor gave evidence more of being 'stoned' than of being aggressive, I didn't try to avoid him. I was nervous and spoke first to tell him I didn't have any money to give him. His response was somewhat unexpected, "That man over there called me a nigger, he didn't have to do that. Why did he call me a nigger? I didn't do nothin to him. Everybody calls me names. They got no right to call me names."

I said something inane like, "The world's gone crazy! I'm sorry, he didn't have a right." I was plainly uncomfortable, but the young man moved on muttering about the unfairness of it all.

I feel overwhelmed by the problems of racism, homelessness, drug addiction, lack of education, poor self worth and poverty - all rolled up into one individual. But it's not an individual problem. It's society's problem and we don't have a social answer! Somewhere this person still had or had developed, a sense of outrage, anger over being called a nigger! It may be the only thing to keep him in touch with his humanity. It could potentiate into violence against those frightened, dumbstruck Whites like me, who just sit in their automobiles and say, "I don't have any money for you." "I don't have any time for you." "I don't have any attention to give you, I don't want a relationship with you."

"Sorry bud, but you got me, whether you want me or not, you got me on your streets, in your neighborhoods, in your prisons, in your schools, hospitals, jails and stores. And I ain't going away. And you can't build prisons fast enough to get me out of your face. One day someone will call me NIGGER and something will snap!"

In the Gas Lamp Quarter there are enterprising “street people” who sell parking spots and “protection” for your car. It’s another sign of the times, but also a sign of enterprising imagination.

What’s the Republican Party’s answer to this? Not, I hope, more guns for white middle class people.

2. Termites & Politics

Termites and politics, the two banes of existence here in Southern California! The mood of the country has soured. People are not praising the paradise promised by Western Progress and politicians. I am so disappointed with the US of A. I’m so disappointed to be ‘so out of it.’ I am obviously not a “mainstream” American. I feel alienated from the trends in the country.

I am pro-choice, anti death, pro universal health plan, pro activist government, anti tax cuts for the wealthy few, anti guns (NRA), pro lobbyist reform, anti special interest influence peddling, pro social security by the government, pro civil rights, pro open borders, anti support of dictators and thugs as heads of governments anywhere, anti unilateralism, pro lend lease, pro government support of the arts, HIV research and pro green, to mention only a few of my political leanings. I think the country was being noble when it enacted Soc Sec, the Marshall Plan, Civil Rights, the Clean Water Act, Welfare, minimum wage standards, labor laws and standards and various regulatory laws and agencies.

Having said all that I realize I am not alone either in my opinions or my voting habits over the years. I just lost to a ‘majority’ who thinks differently. If that is a trend then it worries me. It worries me that reactionary forces seem to be gaining the upper hand in the country. And that my opinion of Bush is not more widely shared. Surely this country will come to its senses and turn away from the directions we are headed. What makes people so blind? Why were people so vindictively critical of a man like Clinton with his all too human flaws? What can reasonable people look forward to in this Republic?

3. Two Men At the Beach

I met two men while at the beach in San Diego. The conversation began objectively with comments on the weather, how hot it will be today. One man, young and swarthy complexion, offered that he’d just come from Borrego leaving 126 deg. F. Heat. “It’s not hot here,” he says. The conversation turns to where we are from and our common experiences with the deserts of Southern California. I mention date palms since the Borrego man was also born in Indio where dates are a big crop. Then the older man talks of grapes being grown all over the valley of Palm Desert and Coachella. Jobs and what we do came next. Retired says the older man. Almost retired says I. Unemployed says the younger. He does auto body work and has worked with the Borrego Water District. Wants to go to Santa Maria or Santa Barbara area!

A depressed mood results. A litany of how organizations and businesses have deteriorated in their dealings with people. Humaneness has been eroded. Medical benefits and other social safety nets are rapidly disappearing from

private companies and even government agencies. The mood deepens. I can sense the fear, the insecurity, the anxiety. Even the older man and myself, who are over our working years felt the anxiety.

4. Camping at the Beach With Friends

We go RV beach camping with Jim and Peggy Cossolias and their two nieces. Jim battles his generator and low batteries. The girls are already up and about. Pauline straightening the RV inside. Cool overcast skies, gray. Jim's generator is quiet. The coffee good. Sometimes life seems worth it. Reminds me of Garrison Keeler's spots on the natural mellowing agents in tomato juice. My breath makes small puffs of clouds visible against the dark background of the camp table. No coherent, deep thoughts intrude, only sense impressions. There is a feel of mist or dew in the morning air. Above the overcast I see the warmth of the sun trying to break through.

Dreams again last night. Only fragments remain this morning. Themes of work, Steve's wedding, vineyard and travel. Interesting people. Life seems good.

CIRCUMSPECTION AND SPIRIT QUESTIONS

This despair is one quality deeper than the despair of weakness(i.e., immediacy)...it is despair at not willing to be oneself. ...it sits as it were the self and watches itself, employed in filling up time with not willing to be itself, and yet is self enough to love itself. This is called circumspection.

S. Kierkegaard: *Sickness Unto Death*

Frequently, when I was bored in my job as Director of IW for the City of SD, the low grade despair which constitutes the existential basement of life would become more visible to me and add to the energy drain I was experiencing. During one such period Doug E came to work for me as a chemist/inspector with the IW Program. Doug would come around to my office a lot and sit and want to talk theology, philosophy, the ethics of suicide and the relation of depression to the loss of meaning. It was always mostly intellectual, rarely in the first person. I never let on that I realized he was talking about himself in these conversations but I would make suggestions like he might want to see a therapist or talk with an experienced counselor. He always deflected these saying he only had a theoretical interest in these subjects.

I can recognize circumspection when I see it because I'm very much given to choosing this as my prevalent mode of operating. Being a circumspect individual myself it was easy to see this was Doug's way of dealing with despair. Generally a circumspect person is conscious of having a spirit but chooses not to let others know. He or she keeps things external, gives the appearance of being in charge of his or her life, relationships, job, etc.. Externally he or she is the fine upstanding citizen who is in control of his or her life. If a moral dilemma or life question comes to this individual he or she will usually tackle it alone, rationally resolving it if possible but giving little indication of struggles, i.e., the old 'stiff upper lip'.

Circumspection represents a sort of 'middle way' for dealing with the fact that you have a spirit³ and are therefore subject to despair. At one extreme is the complete 'innocent' who is blissfully unaware that he possesses a spirit and is blissfully despairing. The opposite pole is the person who is defiant and who is in utter despair because he is lucid about being spirit and about life being the way

³By spirit I mean that a human being is related to the eternal and is more or less conscious of this fact.

it is and is 'damned' if he will let it get him down. Between the Garden of Eden and Satanic consciousness lies circumspection. In the 18 and 19th centuries the decision of circumspection may have been fairly infrequent. But today it is the very common spiritual stance.

Gradually, Doug's coming by to talk subsided. He would sometimes come into the office and instead of asking how I was, he would just sit for a while, after a few pleasantries, he would get quiet and sit not talking. Since Doug was a loquacious Texan, this seemed unusual; he liked all things Texan including goat bar-b-que, Aggies reunions, beer and football.

Our silences deepened but the occasions were fewer and fewer. Until Doug's twin brother was found dead suddenly. A suicide. Our last meeting was simply a hug and wordless acceptance that despair is the way it is for men, for all human beings. If you choose circumspection as the way to relate to your despair, and you have to choose some mode, you do so with respect to only three other choices: 1) defiance, 2) immediacy, or as a friend puts it, Fat Dumb and Happy, or 3) faith. A person can choose faith that has been operating in any of the other three. Choosing faith is never a permanent fix but, like the other choices, it is a moment to moment decision having to be made once and again in every present now. Doug was able to rise above defiance and he was far too conscious to adopt Fat Dumb and Happy, although that's the role he often played with. I think he knew what my prevalent decision was and he honored me and understood.

I attended his wedding and toasted him and his bride with Blake's poetry on Joy and Woe. Shortly after his wedding he and his spouse returned to Texas taking positions with one of the universities in Dallas. Now and then he would send a message, not by letter, but via other friends. Now and then I think it is possible for me to move from circumspection to outright affirmation of my life, and I do just in moments, like the one where we hugged at his farewell luncheon.

My Personal Outlook

Dr. Joe Aherns of Detroit said that I carry a high normal pulse rate. When asked what that meant He said that I naturally had a higher heart rate at resting than most people. Research has shown that neurotransmitters such as Dopamine and norepinephrine contribute to a rapid pulse and a "rosy outlook" on life! My natural chemistry has always led to a natural optimism and hopeful attitude. Elsie's uncle Willy used to say of his wife, Helen, "She's better by nature than I am by the Grace of God!"

Justifying My Existence?

In my adult life I am aware of having some of the marks of 'success.' I had a position in an influential bureaucratic structure of a leading international corporation, the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. I had enough expertise in a technical field to command the respect and recognition of my peers. I could

point to accomplishments, publications and patent applications in my engineering profession. I was Director of Industrial Waste control and enforcement departments for two major cities in the United States, first in Detroit and then San Diego. I was successful in single handedly reorienting Detroit's efforts of industrial waste regulation under the Clean Water Act. In San Diego I started over at age 50 as a Jr. Civil Engineer. As Program Director I was instrumental in shaping and defending City policies and efforts in industrial waste pretreatment culminating in the City's waiver application following an unsuccessful suit by EPA to force secondary treatment. I was a productive and successful bureaucrat and true civil servant.

In my personal hobbies I have enjoyed owning and restoring old cars, wine making and writing a few poems that I like.

I could point to the accouterments of property, investments, cars and other 'signs' of accomplishment.

In my personal relationships I could point with less certainty to being 'successful,' whatever that means. There has been considerable struggle in this arena. Joy and woe, some failures and disappointments, much pride and happiness! The men and women I have known and let into my life have been exceptional. To a person they have been 'spirit people, people of faith and high ideals, people who have challenged my life fully and, in some cases painfully. Despite my obvious failings and flaws, I know I am a better person for having known them all.

Why then, during the years of my so-called career, sketchily outlined in this life reflection, were there periods of feeling it's not enough? Fallow periods of boredom and seeking? Longing for something more? There were times when any distraction could take my attention away from conferred power. Empty power of accomplishments, position and external authority! The realization that what I was seeking was not granted by externals.

Real life, real authenticity and power, not externally conferred but internally validated was always there as possibility. The possibility of saying yes to my life, to my existence, as it was and is...there is real power and authentic living. No longer looking to my wife, my family or others to validate my life. When that yes is said and accepted I could move into the arenas of work and hobbies embracing even the boredom and fallow times! Frustrations will always be there, but yes, wine in the barrels too. Yes!

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DAD'S LAST VISIT

*Life goes on the way it goes on
Until, one day The Hunter of Souls
Appears at our house and knocks on the door,
And asks, "Is my son here? Is my daughter in this place?
Have you seen my child,
Who looks like this and acts like that?"*

*And we answer, "No we have not seen anyone here,
Who looks like this and acts like that!
Maybe you could ask at the next dwelling place
For the one you seek."*

*But The Hunter will cry,
"O my son, oh my daughter
Come back with me to your Home, dwell there with me,
And it will go on for us as it goes on."
African Story adapted by RR*

I had just turned 50 when he surprised me appearing in the kitchen at 9415 Lemon Ave unannounced, the result of a carefully prepared plan engineered by Pauline. There he was with Lucille and Pauline - smaller, it seemed, than the last time I'd seen him, his grey hair still full and shining only slightly thinner on top of his head. His features gave an impression of skin stretched over his skull so that high cheek bones stood out under deep eye sockets. The pale blue eyes were clear and his snaggle-tooth grin, a trade mark for as long as I could remember, was wide as ever. In all his 79 years I don't think he had ever been to a dentist. If he had I'm sure that tooth would have been snatched out of his mouth in a heart beat.

He stood there, all of 135 pounds, awkward, grinning. I stepped up and hugged him, shocked at how frail he felt, as if his bones might snap under my onslaught or that I might knock him over onto the kitchen linoleum, so tightly was I clinging.

How glad I was to see him! This stranger of 50 years of my life! This man whose presence I had taken for granted so many days as a youngster and teenager. Who I had heard sing with feelings he could never muster in conversation or in a letter. He had come to celebrate my 50th birthday. He had also come, I now believe, to say good bye.

I watched him those next days as he polished the fireplace andirons, replaced a burnt out light bulb in our living room lamp, fixed a loose end table leg and wheezed his way around the San Diego Zoo on a warm January day. He coughed a lot during the evenings. I was too unconscious to be alarmed. I'd always taken his presence for granted.

Paul and Dorothy, Pauline's parents, arrived and the six of us sat for an informal portrait. Dad, you and Lucille, Dorothy and Paul, sat on the couch with Pauline and me on the floor in front. I only noticed later how withdrawn you appeared of the six of us. At our celebratory meal at Tom Ham's Lighthouse your eyes filled with tears as you gave me a gold coin you had received from your Uncle William (Tennessee Rippels). You said you wanted me to have it. I mumbled a thank you somehow choking back the words I really wanted to say, "Thanks Dad, for all you gave, even for the withheld words, I knew they were there. I want you to know I love you."

The next day you spent much of the day wearing a sweater and a jacket huddled in the January sunshine on our patio. You offered to let me use your electric razor. When I went to return it you said, "You keep it awhile, I won't be needing it." That night we all sat exhausted in the living room, you leaned back breathing heavily. I was too out of it to notice your withdrawing had proceeded to a new level. You retired and began coughing, and coughed for most of the night. I should have been alarmed, Pauline was very concerned, even distressed. In the morning we had breakfast and you dressed warmly as we prepared to take you to the airport for your flight back to Kansas City. You looked wan and weak.

At the airport they put you in a wheel chair. I wasn't taking in what my eyes were seeing! The Rippel denial which I had so effectively learned at your feet, had me in its full grip. What could really be wrong? Wasn't he doing fine just a day ago? It's just a cold. As they wheeled you onto the plane you looked so exhausted, there were the usual good byes and well wishing punctuated by saying, "Dad, take care of that cough when you get back." It was the last time I saw you conscious.

Dad, I am sorry for having been blind to your deteriorating condition during that last visit. I was less than conscious and over optimistic in my assessment of your condition that it was vintage Rippel behavior was no excuse. Pauline warned me while you were there and urged me to take you to a doctor. My inertia echoes the history with mother. In retrospect, you apparently had already decided the nature of your visit. It was a last good bye. Once headed down that road, you did not waver.

A month later the family gathered to celebrate dad's life and death. We sat at the table, in council, as it were, and devised the liturgy we would use to mark the significance of this occasion for ourselves and those gathering to honor him. Jeffrey and I would say words over the body, to hold up the meaning of living and dying, to speak of his actual life now in its completion. We would do this on behalf of Lucille, Carla, Linda, Ellen, Pauline, Mickey and the Rippel family. It was an occasion of great joy and great sadness.

A BRUSH WITH THE PARANORMAL

I need to set a context for this episode in my life.

The events by themselves would be easy to tell. Without going into why I think them significant and sharing in only a limited way the internal and external circumstances leading to these events, I can say that my unusual stress level may have contributed to the strange and unusual events I'm going to describe.

I don't have an explanation for them beyond the label, "paranormal," i.e., outside the usual patterns of experience. I could talk explain them in terms of unusual stress in my life. Or again, talk about the generation of high energy mental electro-wave patterns, or just some kind of kinesiological phenomena. All these would put a label on what happened but might help in understanding. I have no idea why these events unfolded as they did. It could be sheer synchronicity of highly improbable single occurrences that happened in an unusual sequence within a short period of my life. Nothing like them has occurred since and nothing before.

In 1990 I was seeing a therapist to help me sort through relationship problems at work and in my personal life. I was under a great deal of stress trying to balance demands from several sources. Pauline was also seeing this therapist. His self-serving counseling added to both our levels of stress and resulted in our separating for four months.

I resolved to terminate my relationship with him

During my termination session with this man I was quite angry. I asked what his purpose was and his intentions. At the peak of this interview I was mentally agitated when suddenly two huge black crows crashed into the office window just a foot or so from where I was sitting. They crashed one right after the other in an interval of just a few minutes. Both the therapist and I were startled to say the least. After a shocked silence, the therapist said, "I've never seen anything like that." I took it as an omen of the bad energy between us and left the office forthwith.

In the following week I was quite tense and strained, unable to sleep well not focusing well at work.

I decided to get some distance on the situation and left abruptly to attend a three day conference in San Francisco being held by James Hillman, a psychologist, and Denise Levertov, a poet and author. The conference was being held at the Masonic Temple near a large open park in central San Francisco about 8 or 9 blocks east of the Pacific Ocean several miles south of the Golden Gate

Bridge. I got a room at a small motel of individual cabins right across from the beach. I could walk the 8 blocks to the conference site.

The first day of the conference I was hardly present to the sessions, my mind filled with the anxieties of my personal situation. At the close of the day's presentations I began walking towards the beach. The street bordered a large municipal park with dense trees and foliage in places next to the sidewalk.

As I walked along lost in my thoughts, suddenly a flock of black birds began dive bombing at my head! Swooping down they aimed directly for me and veered away at the last moment. I could feel the feathers of some birds that actually made contact with my hair. There were about a dozen or more birds swirling about me in a continuous bombardment. I ducked and held my arms up over my head.

This assault continued for almost 2 blocks as I tried to speed up and get away. Then the birds left just as suddenly as they had appeared and disappeared into the trees of the park.

I was shaken by this happening and unable to rest well that evening. In the morning there were no signs of the birds. I finished the conference. I could tell you nothing of its content now without referring to my notes.

I can only guess that my mental state for months leading up to these events was increasingly agitated and concerned. Also I had not been sleeping well. Apparently, whatever vibrations I was giving off were not comfortable for crows and black birds. I read the omen of these events as not good. In my personal life it was months before I regained any composure. Nothing since has matched the intensity of the stress I felt in the days immediately before and after my visiting San Francisco. I suspect that this was the closest I have come to a 'nervous breakdown' in my life.

MASCULINE SOUL

Men's Soul

I lost contact with Charley Stelljes after we moved to Lemon Avenue and there weren't many occasions to go by his shop. Several years passed and I went by and saw that the shop had been sold and another business located there.

A sadness came over me as I reflected how many times I have come into and gone out of the lives of other people and particularly of other men. It was clear to me that older men do have something important to impart to young men. I'm not sure I can say exactly what it is. It's not talk or information exactly. It's not wisdom. These may be part of it, but it's not any one thing specifically although there may be many little specifics. It's something more, just being together it happens. With no words! A deep longing is filled or satisfied in the physical presence of older men. Something in the blood is stirred.

I notice that I have a definite prejudice for older men and their virtues as opposed to the shortcomings of younger men. I want to believe that age confers something on us men, something that gives us an advantage over younger guys. I am aware that fools come in all sizes and ages and that an old fool is just as foolish as a young one, maybe more so since we seem inclined to expect time and age to impart some wisdom. An old fool is more of a tragedy than the foolish antics of youth. It indicates that life's lessons have not taken root.

But I still prefer the attributes that are more likely to be found in older men. A quiet reserve, a stillness borne of sure selfhood not driven by untamed wants or false desire! A calming presence exudes from men who have an inner resilience. Their experience counts even if they can't articulate it well.

A Group of Men

Beginning in the late 80's I started attending groups who were interested in various kinds of writing including poetry. I had been writing a journal for years and was interested in sharing experiences with other men. In 1991 I discovered a group of men who met weekly to share and write. We called it a 'masculine soul' group but mostly just our men's group.

Two of the members of this group were Jewish and I remember being envious of Phil and David's use of the phrase, 'a nice Jewish boy like me.' So

much is contained in such a phrase; so many images, connotations, naivete, intellect, richness in family life, ancient psychic sophistication. What kind of phrase could I claim? 'A nice sincere WASP?' Nothing has the same freight and baggage as 'a nice Jewish boy.'

As with most things there's a down side to being able to claim that self-understanding and self-description. There being so many attitudes and prejudices provoked through the centuries. Why do I resonate so positively when I hear that phrase and why so envious that there's no equivalent short grabber in my self-talk? I'd like to find an equally powerful revealing phrase for a mid-westerner of vanilla ethnic and cultural heritage. Something that would put zing into my resume! 'A swell guy from Missouri' really stirs up the image of an urbane sophisticate, don't you think? Thinking of myself as being merely vanilla in the American mid-west meant not having an immediate cultural identity. I grew up not even realizing what my ethnicity was.

Men's Sorrow

At one men's meeting Louis revealed that it was his son that shot a pizza delivery boy three nights ago in a brief argument over payment. Louis shared his pain in particular and we talked of men's grieving in general. It was a kingly night. Louis, courageous, fighting to bring his own life into focus! His son, like Absolom, is caught in a snare of his own making and choices. No one knows any advice and all refrain from offering any.

I feel the sorrow, not just Louis' and not just that of the man whose son was slain so senselessly. I also feel my sorrow. It is deep sorrow unrelated to the specifics of the events which have actually shaped their lives. It is the sorrow and sadness men have in our very cells, carried in our sperm in relation to our sons and the sons we were not able to have, sons never given life. Grief over the creative possibility all men carry that is still-born, miscarried, misdirected and doesn't find a womb for its preparation and ultimate coming forth. It is for those sons who wouldn't come forth and those who did that I feel a deep unutterable sadness. What to do? I don't know what, why or how.

We men carry our sadness, as one has said, like the rain, "it comes and goes" but underneath it is just there, like eternal waters. When we gather we struggle to rise with it to give it expression and to dance arming ourselves with weapons of words and song to give each other courage and support.

Events like that which have shaken Louis' life are surrounded by larger tragedies and devastations which go to the very roots. January 26 is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the commemoration day of St. Polycarp, and the death of Mildred Dodge Rippe. For me the annual season of sadness is here. It includes my Father's death as well on February 1. A season of sadness accompanied by painful memories of unreflected living and male insensitivity! A time when the spirit batters and probes until a chink appears in our armor and we can begin the process of peeling away the defenses which have allowed us to live but which now are suffocating our ability to live! To live and feel our pain, to know we are alive, quickened to every sadness and

disappointment. But not defeated or kept down.

The grieving is for those men who never let their armor down, whose fears outweigh their courage, who, for whatever reasons chose to remain trapped inside their coping mechanisms. It is also sadness for those of us who in whatever small way, like Louis, have suffered the abrupt loss of our defenses either by blows of fate or conscious decision to let down our guard. A sadness for this new level of pain, for the awareness that suffering defines our lives as a gender highlighting as it does our incompleteness, our striving and our failures. We men are united in this common suffering.

I saw in those 12 men gathered hearing Louis' story and pain, a resolve to feel their own individual pain and to open themselves to our collective grief. We left despite everything, feeling lighter, emboldened to "play the man" as was instructed to Polycarp in his moment of testing. I saw each man there admit that we didn't want to be tested. But I also saw that each one of us had already been tested and we had survived, even prevailed. I could hear the Dance Drums, feel the ground reverberate under our stomping feet, smell the sweet sweat of our glistening bodies as we joined our spirits and defied the gods!

This is the way it is with men. We are dumb, inarticulate yet we are rooted in wisdom and quiet suffering. We can dance, we can put ourselves in council with our fellows and feel the pain we cannot say! Perhaps we dare not say. But as the rain, coming and going, so the tears, like the waters of life itself, can flow for men to bring healing for our souls.

When we allow the deep inarticulate groan of our lives to emerge we break the iron bands that bind up our torsos. The Knight's armor is pierced and Death, that old toad squatting there inside, is at last set free, is seen as friend, as the one irreducible reality uniting us all.

Nurture

Nurture was a topic we often took up in our men's group. What does it mean to nurture and to be nurtured? To mentor and to be mentored by another man? What was our experience of nurture?

When I hear the term 'being nurtured' I think of Lucy Stumpf asking about my every need and desire when I visited her, of that picture of a dog who adopted the orphaned lion cub, of the times I would come home from school for lunch and there would always be something on the table. I think of Joe Polack who attempted to mentor me when I was a new employee with Esso Research, how he would inquire about my family and off work activities. I think of bottling wine, filling a plant vase with potting soil, mowing the lawn, having a cup of coffee early in the morning, giving and getting a massage, looking up a word in the dictionary, writing friends and relatives, getting and sending greeting cards. I think of a warm shower, clean sheets, taking shoes off hot steamy feet and rubbing my toes. I think of a good glass of red wine or cold water when my appetite and tastes are needy. I think of a fire in the fireplace, napping on Sunday afternoons and singing spontaneously. I think of coming home and finding the mail for me to open. I think of rain and sunshine.

It is nurturing to me when I sit with Pauline before supper and we talk. I

feel cared for by learning of her day and telling her of mine. It reinforces a feeling of being wanted, being needed. I feel nurtured when I find a good book, one that I want to finish without interruption. It doesn't much matter what the subject is as long as it draws me out to continue and finish it, although some subjects grab me more than others. I like to do concrete tasks and feel nurtured by those projects which can be brought to a conclusion.

Visible signs of progress towards an envisioned goal are nurturing. I like doing things with my hands such as drying dishes or just holding a pencil with blank paper before me. It's very nurturing when a poem I've been trying write for some time finally arrives!. I feel deeply satisfied when I discover another author's poem on a theme I love. I love savoring a fine meal, and many pleasurable sensory experiences. I love the grace of dancing but often feel it escapes me. But every so often an occasion comes when I feel at home with my body and how it moves to music. When I receive a word of encouragement, support or appreciation I feel nurtured. I believe I nurture myself much more often than I reach out to give nurture. I'm probably denying myself more opportunities for nurture by being so reluctant to nurturing others.

My projected image as a self-contained, self-sufficient person is related to my inexperience in giving and receiving nurture. It may be a common problem for men in our culture. For me, a self-confident image communicates that I am not a needy person. The corollary also seems true to me, i.e., a non-needy person more often does not see the need to nurture other people. After all, shouldn't they be as independent and even fearful of being interfered with as I am?

With that rationalization it is little wonder that I have had little experience with nurturing others effectively. My hesitant starts and stops in the art of nurturing have had mixed results. I see myself as nurturing others by being loyal, steadfast, true and honest, constant and sure. While it is often not seen as such I nurture by problem solving, doing small tasks, running errands, sometimes listening, staying ready to be helpful and by being patient. Is my patience seen as nurturing or just off-putting? Is my propensity to seek consensus nurturing or just hiding from having to decide and act? I nurture when I cook a meal or indicate how I appreciate what someone has done.

This is a hard subject for me. It reveals how much I am centered on getting nurtured and on supplying my own needs because I don't trust that others will be there for me. I feel a "should" in here somewhere and that makes me suspicious.

Here's what I know about nurturing. Too much is smothering, too little prevents a good self image from growing or being affirmed. Nurture occurs in small things and, I'm a poor one to talk about this, in consistency. Consistent care for another can be very nurturing if it does not generate or encourage dependency. I'm so afraid of being dependent on another person and of them being dependent on me!

This is like most other things in life, not black or white, a real gray area. Nurturing is an art, an intuitive process. We must depend on each other,

otherwise we wouldn't be human. We aren't human perfects. We need each other and we need to be needed. A catch 22? I don't think so. It's a natural balancing of allowing freedom of response from the other while truly caring about them.

I guess the other truth about nurturing that I know, intellectually, is that small things and consistency are just that, everyday acts and words which provide for persons and form a web of support and concern which doesn't rob them of their power. In fact it enables the other's power. (I have been so good at the belittling remark which really does the opposite of nurturing. It's trying to gain power for myself at the expense of the other. As if there is only so much and it's a deadly game to see which of us can capture the most!) This is why criticism is so devastating. It undercuts nurture. The truth is that both parties to a relationship are diminished whenever a non-nurturing act or word is allowed between them. I know more about nurture than I practice.

I do avoid the blatant criticism. I was taught not to be blatant. Be subtle when cutting another person to pieces, that way I can preserve my niceness! Another name for this is passive-aggression. Some of us are so good at this we aren't conscious when we do it. So that is what nurture is not.

Nurture must be what builds not destroys. Nurture is what children need and evidently thrive on. Nurturing a child is sometimes easy. Sometimes not! Nurturing an adult or a child requires thoughtfulness to see the other's need and willingness to respond accordingly. That's a real challenge.

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MY 60TH BIRTHDAY

The boys and Pauline coalesced around the idea of ‘Six Decades’ and planned a wonderful birthday celebration for me. It was a tribal event with memories and promises, dancing, music, gifts, marches, hidden goodies, cake and wishes, songs, photos and poems. I’ll not forget it. Truly it was a ritual to remember. Highlights were collected on flip charts and a rough time line was created using the titles I gave to each decade’s brain stormed list.

By the time we went out to eat I was truly celebrated. The gifts were wonderful, symbolic and practical. I was assigned the task of looking into the next 2 decades. Awesome! I have the beginnings of a “60th Birthday Manifesto” and a “Birthday Poem!”

We had also experienced synchronicity in meeting David Cohen (from my masculine soul group) at a coffee house in Coronado on the 24th. He arranged complimentary tickets to the “Christmas Festival” play at Lambs Players Theater for the evening of the 27th. An extra gift!

Curtiss’ gift was a retrieval of early family photo history! Much of our photos were lost. I wonder who got all of Malcolm Stumpf’s photo archive? My father threw out all of my high school photos and memorabilia as well as Mother’s journals, letters and personal writings. God bless Curtiss. Cliff and Steve also! It’s a prayer.

Prior to my birthday, Curtiss was sitting at our dining table hunched over my family photos and yearbooks with a piece of 8 ½ x 11 paper in front of him evidently planning something for my celebration! When we gathered in the living room on the 26th, he sat in the large stuffed chair with the foot rest next to the fireplace with his face in a half-smile amused mask, waiting for me to finish my rambling introduction. I had been given the assignment to say where, in all the mystery, I had come from! No one can answer that question! Of course I pointed to the pictures of my grandparents and great grandmothers as if that could explain my origins. I commented on the wide mustache of grandpa Rippel and the formal poses with men sitting and the women standing at their shoulder. I said, “Aren’t these people handsome”? And everyone agreed. I compared mustaches to Curt’s, saying I wanted to broaden mine. But really I was at a loss to address the question of where I came from.

When you can only go back as far as grandparents or maybe great-great grandparents and explain or share just a few family stories, you aren’t getting any closer to sources! Our sources must reside some 4 to 5 million years in the past! And I could only go back 3 or 4 generations. I could say with some certainty that some of my ancestors, and therefore the forbears of my three sons, recently came

from the middle of Europe, probably Germany. Sometime in the nineteenth century individuals or a family emigrated to this country and eventually settled in Pennsylvania and Iowa. Beyond that and earlier I draw a blank. On my Mother's side they are Scots and Irish, i.e., Celts. With names like Dodge, Russell and Hunter you could make a case for the British Isles as the place of recent origins. BUT, one look at Grandpa George W. Dodge and you'd have to say there's a Moor in our wood shed somewhere! That guy is as Latin in looks and complexion as I've ever seen. His name could have been Valentino! Dark eyes and swarthy, he has to be from Provence, Italy or Spain. Some genes at least came from there, I'll bet! Someone has said that he was 'Black Irish!'

Well Curtiss, you lasted through my introduction and the feeble contexting provided by my baby pictures. When your time came it was Baton Rouge and my career, such as it was (is)! Our records are no more complete at that point. New mysteries get introduced including yourself and older brother, Steve. And Steve's wife, Lani, injected an observation and question, "Where did Steven come from?" Talk about the mystery of origins and genes. She can see you, Curt, as being my child and even Clifford has bone structure and some features like my nose and eyes. But Steve, he is a compact, sturdy German from the low lands! Maybe Stumpf is the majority of the gene mix with helpings of Poole, Rippel and Dodge. I can see my Uncle Russell in you Steve. Also, to some degree, Grandpa Rippel's physique as well. So you are not disowned! I claim you! I claim you all. You are Children of Rod and Elsie. Where you came from is less important than you are here.

I am grateful, grateful for my sons, proud of them. In awe of them really. Surely their lives are infinitely worth while. I don't mean they are perfect. Just that, in themselves, with their flaws and struggles, they are persons I can be proud of and respect.

Cliff: You embodied the mystery. When you were small you drew stick men and women with breasts and navels (belly buttons) which delighted us. I walked you across Mt. Lawley Park to Kinderschool hand-in-hand. Walking the fields of paradise would not have made me happier.

Curt: At three you danced in our lives like a water sprite. Every venture was possible for you as you followed the lead of your brother. Later you would fill the same role with your little brother of guide and caretaker.

Steve: When you came you were determined, bright and eager. You blessed us with your joy of living.

I sometimes wonder what will happen with all this beauty? What can hold the beauty of Steve, Curt and Cliff? Not photos, or records, or video tapes, or diaries and memories certainly can't hold the living beauty. Is beauty simply to pass and vanish from our experience or is there a residue we can hold and cherish? The thought that it once was and that we can never fully recover the experience of beauty which has been saddens me. Does it suffice to have the memory? Is it enough? No, but it is enough in the present to experience the glow that happens when I think of these three. How beautiful they were. And how

beautiful they have become! Beauty carried in some inexpressible way, not repeated but still unfolding. Asking only to be seen in its present formulation. Give me eyes to see!

A 60th BD Poem

BB King, "There Is One More Time..?"
 Dancing to BB King was fun
 Keeping the barrel in the center
 Circling with my man children and our women
 Until we had slain the demons
 Let loose the Dragon inside
 We can't celebrate a life
 Unless we are certain we have one
 To bring our souls into the light
 Keep the light circling, the blood children dancing
 Bring soul to manifest
 And wine to release our spirits
 O let us play
 Play for our lives
 I'm 60 years young still looking for life
 Wanting significant engagement
 It must be here and I'm too stubborn to realize it
 Bless my sons
 Bless my wife
 Bless my soul

60th BD Reflections

Full and empty are themes for this time of year when the planet revolves to the place of maximum darkness and cold, a point of endings and beginnings. Darkness descends. Winter begins its barren grip and plants and animals settle down to wait for new seasons of activity in a semi-comatose condition. There is a natural feeling of emptiness in this time.

One response is to try and fill this emptiness, fill the spiritual void by whatever means are available. Food and light were featured in the early festivals for the solstice. Symbolic excess could counter the natural emptying out of the cycle of nature. Early people, who did not separate the spiritual self from the physical, ate food and lit torches and probably sang, danced and told stories to begin the year's cycle. Our current practice of New Year's celebrations is not too different but lacks something of the power of ancient rites in a magical world view.

I would guess that spiritual emptiness is harder to fill in our day. Food and lights and all kinds of activity are abundantly available. The emptiness remains although we are filled to the point of discomfort with food and worn out with the stresses of shopping, parties and work. Spirit emptiness remains

unsatisfied. Spiritual peace and insight elude us.

Perhaps the reason is that the move to fill ourselves is premature. Premature because we have not truly emptied ourselves! The illusion that we are full masks our need to experience our real state. We have not let go of all that fills us in the cycle of the year. We have not let go of the past, of cherished and painful memories, relationships and events. Our lives are full of things. We have not faced our true losses. We cannot move on and refill our lives until a natural emptying is completed.

The move is from us outward into the universe. To put out to the universe our problems, pains and also our joys and triumphs! To be completely emptied is to also let go of those things we cling to in the form of loved ones, special relationships, fond memories and special events. We cannot renew these important aspects of our lives without letting them go symbolically in order to receive them back with new creative power.

So the downbeat of the Solstice time is first a completing of the emptying cycle. Perhaps fasting is an appropriate ritual. Or going aside and going inside for a period of quiet inactivity and reflection may be needed. Perhaps avoiding crowds and furious social events is indicated before joining back with community and friends in the renewing cycle of the year. Perhaps we cannot join with others in renewed life until we have fasted and prayed.. Only then do feasting and light become really symbolic of our new birth.

During the dark time of the cycle stories and myths may be helpful to once again appropriate the importance of this annual turning point. In this context we might consider the following stories:

1. Nativity stories, e.g., the Christ birth myth and others,
2. The Buddha's enlightenment,
3. Mohammed's hadji,
4. Siddhartha's period of fasting and prayer,
5. HH's testing and despair in *Journey To The East*,
6. The stories of Job and Jonah,
7. Dicken's Christmas Carol,
8. ...and many others.

So on my 60th birthday I am to receive a word that my life is good, not morally, but ontologically. And I am invited to embrace the future.

Face the rest of my life. Face the beginning of old age. Face the beginning of a new year. The Solstice is past with its hurtful memories and the emptiness of winter, Christmas. Solstice is now complete, exposed to us all is the fact that the darkness has not prevailed and we are alive and can go on. We see the cycle, relentless and meaningless and we choose to invest it with song, dance and stories, and proceed on with our lives in separate contexts, locations and activities. We sense the emptiness of it all and so, we are ready to be filled. Wanting to be filled eager for a purpose to come into our lives and therefore, we are at the place we should be. Ready. We are at the point of expectations and New Year's longings.

For me it is a turning point. I do not have good images of elder life. I

am afraid of physical weakness, deterioration and suffering. I am weary of bickering and strife. Afraid of loneliness and loss. I am fearful of disappointment and hurt. Afraid of projecting hopes that will not be fulfilled, fantasies that pass me by. I talk as if catastrophe will come tomorrow.

I must prepare for the morrow. Prepare to have fulfillment and loss! Joy and woe (as Blake says). I long for grace, not divine grace that breaks in and overturns my life and redirects everything recreating my world. No, I long for human grace to manifest a life of acceptance, happiness and the will to be generous and giving to others, and myself, as I age. Grace in the sense of the right moves at the right time. Grace in the sense of harmony and right relationship.

Grace in the sense of centeredness and contentment. Grace in the sense of giving up the frustrations and frictions of unharmonious relationships and events.

Getting beyond my upsets and pettiness. Getting beyond my drive to be right and perfect. Getting beyond my desire to always be nice. Accepting loss of control in all arenas. Getting beyond blame. Letting the living dead be without condemning. Dropping the debilitating energy drain of anger. Especially anger at myself. I want to overcome my tendency to react and to be ready to respond with a full heart.

Grace to accept the daily process of dying.

Grace to put ego in its proper perspective viz a viz the self.

Grace to adapt to the legitimate needs of others.

Grace to accept the decline of my physical powers.

Grace to see the limits and possibilities in ever changing circumstance.

Some will say I'm talking about divine grace.

This could be my birthday manifesto.

FULLNESS AND EMPTINESS

More reflection on the full and empty theme! While there is a certain fullness, echoed by nature's expectations following the abundant winter rains, yet the emptiness is also present. Have I really fasted during the fallow time? Or did I just cover it over with busyness, the winter rush to get in the Waiver application and now the Program Annual Report. Next what will it be? What do my dreams indicate? Certainly I am happy with Pauline. She knows my illusions and equivocations but her questioning is always out of love. And I love her. But she cannot be my whole life. I have developed many other interests. Pursued my love of certain inanimate objects! Still there's a void. I dream of women but I wonder is it really my own soul wanting a connection with me? My soulish self wants expression through me and is not getting the chance she deserves. She doesn't find me attentive enough to the beautiful details of existence, the arena where the soul thrives, sorting through peas. Thus she is feeling needy, crabby and demanding, wanting my attention and a relationship with me. I can only say this void is painful to me also. And a "real" relationship would not assuage the emptiness I feel since I carry it within.

Where do I see myself on this journey? I see myself as the man who, having left myself, has returned to discover there is more to me than I have known or know. I am the man who must dig into my deeps, who after years of looking elsewhere has no other place to go except within and down.

I have traveled the world, sought myself in the reflection of others, thought others might have some special wisdom or an answer for my life. I sought to give myself over to an external mission, slay dragons, as it were, right wrongs, build the New Social Vehicle for the planet for century 21. I sought my passion there. I did find a release of passion and hidden reserves of spirit. I found good to do and I also indulged my selfish needs and ego. I inflated my worth beyond what was needed by the situation and realities I found myself in. Doing good also was an escape; I caused pain to myself and my family. When I came back to myself my situation was humbled and I was humbled. It was starting over from the bottom. I was in Detroit.

I had been thrown back on one simple truth. So simple and so self evident but so hard to accept: I am the answer to my life. The question my life raises is answered by my life. Once that is seen I could turn to putting new concretions, new directions on my existence! No one else would do that for me, or could. Some might want to or think that would be part of our relationship, but fundamentally this is a solitary endeavor. I cannot find myself in the reflected

glory of another, whether it is Joe Mathews or Pauline Ripple.

As Bultmann has said I refuse to see in the mundane realities of life the only meaning there is in life. The treasure is just dirt. To spend my days obtaining the means of living, buying food, putting a little away for the morrow is meaningful. Every moment is lived in anticipation of the next moment, but not only that, in some sense it is lived in anticipation of the entirety of my life. Life occurs in the present moment but is never unaware of the past or the projected future. I want the true and beautiful experience. I want love and acceptance, purpose and power to accomplish. I want to embed my life into the fabric of eternity (like Faust). But if I refuse the gift of the present, the crumbs of making money, going to work, eating, preparing the means of the morrow, I refuse the only meaning life has.

I remember the story of *The Ronin*. This was the rogue samurai who couldn't stomach the absurdities of his violent profession. He resolved to spend his life digging a tunnel through the mountain. He thought to connect two isolated villages. The daily task was itself absurd, but the purpose noble. He finishes the tunnel only to find that it doesn't emerge at the other village but nowhere in the middle of a precipice.

Life is the treasure of the absurd. The treasure of feeling the surge of joy that comes with moving dirt from one pile to another. Rearranging the molecules of the creation with one shout: one gigantic I AM. I am here. Treasure is self forgetting enthusiastic engagement in a task whose purpose I will never fully know or understand. Such is life itself. What purpose? Philosophers, saints, religious snake oil salesmen, they all want to talk of a purpose. Yet to give myself to life without knowing, do without asking what is the reason, what is the result I desire, that would be treasure.

I think I can see it now and then and even experience it in flashes. Moving dirt from one pile to another. Or not. Putting a nail solidly into that 2 x 4 stud without projecting the final product or its utility. In the moment the nail goes in, that is all. Just for the pure joy of driving the nail. To do a job right up to the point where it ceases to bring fulfillment and then to say, with the Ronin, "To Hell with it!" Doing with no thought of the result, could that be treasure for me?

I am so trapped into making a good wine, writing a fine poem, restoring a car, mowing the lawn, writing an Annual Report, putting a few \$ in the account! What would 'the hell with it' look like?

Is this just pseudo Zen bullshit? Does it really matter if the pyramids got built? Is digging a tunnel that leads nowhere just as much a treasure as one that pierces through the mountain to just where the isolated village is? Is the digging sanctified by the result? Is how I rearrange the planet while I'm here of any ultimate importance?

Perhaps it is only ultimate in the sense of it is important to me. Not to the planet. It could be important to a few or even many. The question is: important relative to what. (E.g., Jimmy Davis' bridge across the Mississippi

from one empty cane field to another empty cane field on the other side.)

The treasure is dirt. It is treasure because I require it to live and give meaning to living. It can be treasure for me only, and for a time only. I decide.

WEDDINGS

*Men are made for joy and woe
And, when this they rightly know,
The through the world they safely go.
Joy and woe are woven fine
Clothing of the soul divine.*

William Blake

Lani and Steve

Carla arrived before the wedding. Wonderful to see her again. She brings a calming influence and feminine grace.

How proud Mother would have been. All the travail she went through. Somehow it must have meaning, not in any 'New Age' rationalization, but in a profound way none of her children have yet appropriated. Hers was a path of pain and suffering endured in terrible isolation and, I project, loneliness. Her disappointments could have been assuaged by seeing her daughter so beautiful and confident! Nothing could justify her pain but she, herself, rose to human stature as she journeyed with it.

I don't pretend to know all the reasons for her suffering path and I wouldn't minimize it by saying it was a choice she made. But at some point she did elect to be on that path and it was a solitary journey that, unfortunately, none of us in the family understood or could give her spiritual support. I feel deep sadness that we do not have her words and journals to reflect on. That's more the tragedy for us. Dad was misguided in destroying these records of her courage and spiritual struggle. I have some inkling from the one letter I belatedly received from her. Held back because Dad did not want to burden any of us with her suffering! He underestimated us, and, ultimately, we are all the losers for it. We have been deprived as a result.

Steve and Lani had made all the preparations and what a detailed and beautiful job it was. It is obvious that Lani's family loves Steve! He has charmed them all! I was so proud of Curtiss, Clifford, Pauline, Carla and Elsie as we represented Steve's Family at the celebration. I prepared some kind of poem or statement which I read during the service. I'm sure it was some variation on Blake's poem which starts, "Man is made for joy and woe...". I can't attend a wedding anymore without some sober thoughts on what an undertaking marriage is. How does one

go about blessing such a venture? Not too light heartedly I think, but as the service says, "...reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God."

The wedding was held at a Swedenborgian Church (Wayfarer's Chapel) overlooking the Pacific and off shore islands. A Catholic priest co-officiated with the resident minister. The arrangements were exceptional. We adjourned to the Queen Mary in Long Beach harbor for the reception and wedding feast. It was wonderful watching Curtiss and Clifford clown with Steve. We all made toasts and elegant speeches. Later, Steve and Lani went on a honeymoon cruise in the Caribbean. MAGANDAH! (Tagalog for Wunderbar!).

Sophie, our 1931 Cadillac, performed her part in the festivities excellently, running close to 300 miles at 50+ MPH without problems. Curtiss was my co-pilot and I don't think I would have undertaken that journey without his physical and morale support.

Mari and Cliff

Sometime around 1994 Clifford had shown a great desire to study and Learn Japanese. He eventually took a job in Japan through a State Department exchange program which placed him in a local high school where he could give the students an opportunity to practice their English with a native English speaker. This gave Cliff the opportunity to expand his knowledge of Japanese language and culture. The job put him in close relationship with the students and families of a community in the Gunma district west of Tokyo.

While there he met Mari Tsukamoto, his future wife. She was fluent in English as well as several other European languages. Cliff had come on several occasions to visit family and friends. On his last solo trip he commented that he was missing Mari and was wishing that he had asked her to accompany him! Sounded like serious fondness!

It was no surprise in following months when we got the news that Mari and Cliff would marry in a civil application at Tokyo's municipal Hall. We were encouraged not to come and they promised to travel to the U.S. later in the year. We could join in celebrating and recognizing their marriage at a gathering of families and friends. Mari's parents and her brother and sister might possibly come as well.

It was Pauline who suggested that we might be able to plan a very pleasant and relaxing venue for having such an event by renting rooms in a hotel or resort with a hall for holding a reception meal. We could spend several days relaxing, and getting acquainted plus leave the catering to pros. When it seemed like a good plan she took the lead in making arrangements at a lodge in the Big Bear Lake resort area. People could stay in the Lodge and we would have a catered dinner and hall for the celebration event.

A few days before the event Mari and Cliff arrived in La Mesa and we had fun preparing pictures, an event booklet and decor items for the celebration. Mari reported that her parents, an uncle and aunt, and her brother and sister were coming from Japan. Friends were coming from Chicago and our family would be represented by Elsie, Will, Lani, Steve, Ian, Curtiss, Carla, Pauline and I.

The time was wonderful and relaxed. Mari and Cliff participated in a “knot tying” ritual during an evening of eating, toasts, speeches and conversation. Mr. Tsukamoto gave a speech which he had prepared and rehearsed in English about his daughter and I responded with one about Cliff. Questions were asked about how the couple had met and what they liked about each other, etc., etc.. Mari and her family had charmed all of us and the language barrier did not seem to dampen the affair.

Before departing the guests had an opportunity to visit Big Bear Lake, do some water skiing and see a local amusement park.

Thoughts on Marriage

When I first got married I was totally unprepared for it despite counseling and advice from various quarters. I was unable to relate effectively to women on an intimate level or deal with feelings, especially the negative ones like anger, hurt or disappointment. I was also unprepared to develop a life without female companionship. It was a major dilemma.

Someone has said that the purpose of marriage is to set up a primary incompatibility which the parties involved must resolve in order to become mature, whole persons. Sounds like Jung.

I think I’m in a safe place when I go home. My experience of safety is where I don’t have to be ‘on guard’ about what I say, what my feelings are, what I express or choose not to say. A safe place is where I can say, “Oh, I don’t think that’s important,” or “I don’t want to do this or that.” Marriage should be like that.

31 IN LATER YEARS

Some of the significant events of more recent years in San Diego are probably fresh in the minds of my children and relatives. I will only mention those which had the most impact on my life.

Grandchildren

The advent of grandchildren has been a great joy and brought with it all the problems associated with a grandparent when families are scattered across the country and globe. It has been wonderful to mark our calendars with these births:

Ian Niala Rippel	4/4/1999
Matthew Niala Rippel	5/7/2002
Amelie Blue Rippel	12/1/2003

The personalities of these 'gifts to the future' are, as we are writing, unfolding. To say more at this point is not possible. But their lives are welcomed to the world!

My "Retirement"

After a work career spanning from the fifties to the turn of this century I am no longer working regularly for a paycheck. To say that I have retired is a misnomer. I have a part time job with the San Diego Convention and Visitor's Bureau helping in various roles with the hosting and registration of participants at conventions held here in the City of San Diego. That keeps me in pocket change.

Looking back at my so called "career" you can see why I have labeled myself at certain points as a DuMMPie, i.e., a Downwardly Mobile Middle-aged Professional. I think my highest salary in terms of present dollars was in about 1960. Certainly my "quality" of life can't be measured by my annual salaries.

Over the years I have been a student, a research chemical engineer, a religious trainer, an Order Prior, an economic specialist, and an industrial waste manager. In the larger scheme of things I was recently retired from the City of San Diego where you could say my role was to assist in keeping the planet's water clean and pure. I was a water worker. In 'retirement' I will spend some time turning water and sunlight, with the help of vines and yeast, into wine. Both

these transformations, helping the world have clean water and making wine, are rather miraculous endeavors. And I could say in a literal and poetic sense, essential.

At my retirement luncheon, held by my colleagues at Tom Ham's Lighthouse Restaurant, I gave the following parting toast to my fellow water workers:

“ One of our minor poets, John Logan I think, has written that if he had to invent a religion he would use water. The Liturgy would consist of dousing followers with water sprays. And for communion water would be served for drinking and reflection.

Water is one of the most mundane and mysterious realities of our lives.

When you think about it, Logan is not off-target. There is something about water that those of us who have worked to clean it and make it pure and drinkable and available to people, that is a Calling, a real vocation. I feel honored and fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in this Calling and to work with the people that I've associated with in this water work. We could do far worse than to think of our jobs as sacred work and privilege (which is what Liturgy is).

I know that I'll never take a drink of water from the tap or a bottle, that I won't think of you my colleagues. And it will recall for me the people of the San Diego Water Utility, the Metropolitan Wastewater Department, the Metropolitan Industrial Waste Program, the Industrial Waste Laboratory, Wastewater Chemistry, Environmental & Technical Services Division and the people of the Detroit Water Department. It will become for me a form of communion, if you will, that will keep me connected to all water workers in spirit and mission.

So I offer a toast. I raise my glass of water in a toast to all water workers. May we have our thirst quenched in all that we do. But never sated! Hear, Hear!

My official retirement date was March 15, 1997.

My Stepmother's Death

Several years after my mother's death, father remarried. Lucille Dodson was a widow with two daughters. I always admired the courage it took for dad and Lucille to bring their families together and take on the responsibility of raising four teenagers! Lucille, dad, Carla, Linda, Jeffrey and Ellen comprised the new family unit.

They successfully negotiated those years with all four children eventually leaving the nest for lives elsewhere. After that Lucille and dad had several years of "snow-birding" taking their trailer south along with other friends

for winters in the Rio Grande Valley.

They retired in later years to an apartment in the John Knox Village in Higginsville, Missouri. They were the first of several Rippels to move into this retirement colony. Tormey and his wife, Vida, and later Berniece, Ralph's widow, followed dad and Lucille to Higginsville.

Lucille was a remarkable woman who mixed her life with dad's for over 25 years. She died on December 19, 2003 and is missed by all in our family. Her death emphasizes the passing of my father's generation. Only Aunt Berniece remains. In the direct line of Rippels I now assume the role of oldest surviving male. I guess that makes me a patriarch.

Pauline's Mother's Death

On July 5, 2003, following a wonderful visit by her five grandchildren to San Diego, Dottie, Pauline's mother, developed a severe pain in her right shoulder and arm. It was the beginning of a six month's decline which culminated in her death on December 1, 2003. For some months prior to that period, she had become the focus of increasing care and attention from Pauline and to a lesser degree myself. During her six month's decline both our lives became inextricably involved as we tried to care for her as best we could.

For many years my relationship with Pauline's parents, Paul and Dottie, could be described as 'distant' at best. They had elected not to attend our wedding largely as it conflicted with Dorothy's strongly held Catholic faith. It was only after they asked Pauline (and me) to help them with the increasing burden associated with their charities that my relationship with both Paul and Dorothy mellowed. Pauline became a trustee responsible for their accounts and relations with financial advisors. I was a sort of 'ex officio' advisor to the trustee. Following Paul's death in 1999 we invited Dorothy to come to San Diego to live and enjoyed having her nearby.

That was the beginning really, of an improbable love affair between Dorothy, in the last years of her life and, me in the autumn of mine. There was little in either of us that would have attracted the other. In the beginning of our relationship we had assumed that we had almost nothing in common. Except, of course, that I had married her daughter! She was reluctant to acknowledge even that connection in the beginning but was always gracious and civil to me. I later heard her admit that in her earlier days she had dated a 'clean-cut' non-Catholic which had greatly displeased her father.

But I guess, over the years I wore her defenses down, or more accurately, we wore each other down,—until we fell in love.

Our greatest mutual pleasure was to tease each other with that old saw, "You're my favorite mother-in-law!" "But Rod," she'd say, "I'm your only mother-in-law." To which I would respond with, "That's OK, you're still my favorite!" Then we'd both smile or chuckle as if we had just shared a huge secret!

I don't know about the Catholic heaven, but I'm sure a little taste of humor will stand Dottie Wagner in good stead during her sojourn there.

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REFLECTIONS

Whatever you live is life. Something to remember when you run into old colleagues or classmates –i.e., the colleague whose been around the world, or the classmate just returning from an ‘expedition up the Congo River!’ You must remember it when you sit in hotel lobbies or watch the crowds at the airport baggage claim, or stand at dusk watching lights come on in houses up and down a darkening street. Remember it when the time comes to catch a bus or plane, for all my Sin is taken away. For whatever you live is life.

Robert Penn Warren

Life Task

Lambs Players presented the story of Helen Keller in a play.

It was a dramatic presentation of Helen’s awakening that gripped me. The joy at overcoming such a handicap. What a beautiful thing was done for her by Ms. Sullivan. What a being was yearning for release and expression within Helen! I identified with that longing for self actualization. For me, as for most people, the handicaps are less obvious than for Helen. I feel somehow incomplete and unfulfilled. There is a struggle in the task of becoming a self. And how rare it is to find a mentor with the wisdom and skills needed to help in this important life-task. There are plenty of charlatans and snake-oil salesmen in the business of ‘the helping professions.’

We have been given an idealistic message of special ness and self confidence on the one hand and of the need for ‘salvation’ on the other. The gospel of self worth and external savior seems self-contradictory. In the West the Church began and soon developed the idea that it was the sole dispenser of salvation. It was a powerful idea. And power was the name of the game. Institutions and people are still using this message in both its secular form and its religious poetry to serve their own purposes. We still languish in the hope of a Messiah!

The longing that a ‘messiah’ will come to release our lives, our creativity, our happiness, our real selves permeates our consumer society. We will pay anything, do anything, and swallow any method, prescription, hokum or hikum to be made ‘whole.’ We won’t believe that we are whole. That would be too radical.

So minister, priests, pastors, psychotherapists, doctors, psychiatrists, new age gurus, quacks, wellness purveyors, twelve steppers, salespersons of all kinds get to us for the wrong right reason: our desire for health. Even when we

are healthy! We buy into the paradigm of sickness. And we pass it on.

How can we balance the longing we feel with reality checks on the purveyors of false hope. We are hard wired to strive for improvement and accomplishment. We want to meet our own needs. How can we avoid falling into the trap of meeting our needs by creating a false hope in others that we can then assuage? Snake oil is snake oil no matter how attractively packaged.

Depression

At times in my work life I've had no energy, unable to project myself into action, boredom assails me.

Yet the thought of not having a place to go to every day or some external need for me, some 'job' no matter how boring, is anxiety producing. I think this depression is not about anything external but about my fears and self-image. There is a 'conflict' over retiring; I want to, I'm afraid to. I want to have time, I'm afraid I'll be more useless and bored and without direction and purpose that I am now. I want to be free to exercise creativity. I have doubts as to my creative abilities to zero in on a meaningful project. I may have fantasies about another different life but I know nothing would relieve me of the burden of myself. These are escapes. No diversions are truly possible. I want romance. I am afraid to risk love.

I like familiar territory that doesn't involve new risks. I want love and acceptance yet I'm haunted by thoughts of rejection. I would like retirement to be an adventure. But I can't decide to plan more than a day ahead. At least at work there was an 'automatic' purpose to my life in the MIWP connection. Now that retiring approaches, what is my purpose? I want to feel good about myself yet many strokes I've gotten lately I've not been able to receive. I only hear the non-strokes. The affirmation of work and career no longer counts for much. What of any lasting impact was achieved? I did enjoy writing the waiver document report, the Industrial Waste Program Annual Report and working on the local limits project. But I discount them a lot. 'Retirement' looms!

Bliss&Destiny

As I listen to renditions by Coleman Barks of Rumi's poetry about longing, emotion wells up in me. I describe the feelings as "full." Surely we long to be connected with our longing. Blake says, "Desire not acted upon is an abomination." We long to be one with our true feelings. I have often had "full" feelings in many situations with people and even with a tree as a youth. But what about being connected with my "bliss?" What does it mean to follow my bliss?

Rumi's words give permission to be exactly where I am on my journey. He says, "...if you are unconscious do not try to be otherwise, until it 'falls' upon you, your longing is the answer to your longing..." You are your longing. The Mystery loves variety, you are your souls elaboration. In time fruit will ripen. The ocean feeling, belonging to this larger reality, fullness and joy, will be yours.

Joy is a glass of Zinfandel, a bowl of chili and a salad. And just as

concretely we can connect with other human beings across time and space. Barks and Rumi, Rumi and Shams, Jesus and his beloved.

I am so grateful that there have been people who love the ineffable quality of mysticism, the ssshh finger put to the lips quality. These are friends across the centuries. People who have put this quality at the center and left us their poems! But until there was a bureaucracy and Shams it was not possible for Rumi. Other conditions nurtured him as well. An open Islam, a tolerant Islam where wine, music and poetry flourished. Of all systems of his day crossing the Middle East, only Islam could have tolerated all faiths and ideas. Both Christianity and Judaism were too rigid and moralistic, Hinduism and Buddhism too other worldly.

Integrating Life Themes

Wine making is long range. And more important it represents a synthesis of two major themes woven into my life journey: of technology on the one hand and the arts and humanities on the other. The technical and the artistic are wedded in a bottle of wine. Drinking the wine is enjoyed years after the process of labor, thought and art involved in its expression has been done. There is time for reflection, for seeing how little control you really have but also appreciating how decisions of style and nuance came through into the glass and pleasure of the wine. Even the mistakes and the rough character of some flaws become cherished. Memories well up about certain vintages. People and ghosts haunt each bottle. Perfection in a wine eludes but like the Sirens call urge you to look forward to the coming harvest. A partnership with nature and chance is captured. It is never fully captured, not like a contract but more like a covenant where the decisional framework is always shifting. Perhaps, more than anything else, if I have a regret it is that I didn't make wine my vocational choice and economic venture earlier. With a name like Rippel how could I have failed!

A hobby like cars takes time and I often felt guilty taking and making the effort on them. Frequently it is frustrating work. Although solving a challenge on the cars is rewarding in itself

I want social connections but seem unable to make meaningful relationships of any depth. Those with men have been few and far between. Most of the time I don't want depth, only pleasant friendly interchange. I don't want to go to therapy or 12 steps groups. My experience hasn't been too positive. The time commitment is huge and the result problematic with my attitude. The men's writing group and Saturday breakfast have offered comfort and moments of focus. There are real friends there around common interests. But on the whole I remain somewhat aloof when it comes to reaching out for human contact. Like a hermit.

I seem addicted to 'accomplishment' like putting material objects together as puzzles. I enjoy writing reports, fiddling with cars, and making and bottling wine. Other enjoyments are reading and analyzing. I don't like as much the process of assembling people and directing their activities although I have had success in important arenas doing just that. I have liked planning, helping to

formulate a plan and devising the tactics to execute a plan. Sometimes in the execution the psychology of 'difficult' people takes all the enjoyment out of it. I am so addicted to external approval, burdened by any series of small petty criticism.

Overall, the life I wanted is the life I have had. The situation I have, with minor irritations, is one to be desired. Is this like the ancient curse? Beware you may get what you want! (Reminds me of the "*Tale of The Fisherman's Wife*").

Dear Rod:

Congratulations. You have reached the age where you do not live predicating your actions on the responses of others. You live your own life giving priority to what you want. Is what you want what you desire? Aye, that's the life question!

Part IV

Miles from Moberly

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Tonight as I write this I have a perspective on my life that is granted by longer years. Each life is unique and special but not every life is extraordinary by the standards of achievement set by contemporary society or history. My life has been interesting but in most respects quite ordinary and unremarkable. I have had accomplishments and failures none of which will make the history books. In every real vineyard there are gophers and birds and pests. And also there is, with a little luck and hard work, a vintage to harvest and wine to cellar and drink. So I embrace my life as it is and as it was. Like Marilyn Monroe said on the eve of her wedding to Arthur Miller, "If it took my whole life and everything which has happened to me to bring me to this point, then I have no regrets. This is who I am."

So I embrace my "accomplishments" and "failures" which are mostly trivial but to me are the steps taken to finding myself, an illusive chameleon whose "real" self I rarely allowed to surface except in moments of relaxed engagement. Tonight I can see my life as it is and I am not anxious, I do not expect that life has more, or less, than this and I am content. There will be no Nobel or Pulitzer, not even another Stamper Scholarship. Just George Rodney Rippel settling into his life, becoming one with his limits and possibilities, and his achievements? They will come and go. Perhaps they will be important, maybe not. Will there be advances from here? I shall relax and see!

Like the soft rain outside and the lilting music inside I feel no edges, no sharp self-rebuke or resolve. Only wonder that little George Rodney, playful, squelched, curious, obedient, devious, selfish Rodney could have made it this far and still be interested in going on. Still wonder what the future holds, still marvel at the warped variety of human beings. Perhaps there is some wonder in store yet, since there is wonder within.

Joy, the most illusive and rare emotion! I truly wonder if I have ever known joy in its fullest. Perhaps that is what is yet to come.

Rappers beat out their words like rivet guns on an airplane fuselage. A style appropriate to this rapid fire culture with its 3 second sound bites and image artists! Not like the Psalmist, yet if only we knew the words, maybe the Psalmist was the rapper of his day giving vent to his frustrations cursing and blessing and blessing and cursing.

What's going to happen to language with cyber-bits, networks, E-mail and CD-Roms? It can't help but change it and already has.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Remember O man, thou art dust and to dust thou shall return. You are dirt. You are penance walking and talking and if you

don't know it you are mortal dust—dust which chaos will once again claim and redistribute by a thousand fractal eddies in time and space until even the molecules won't be the same. Now that's humbling.

Creativity

I flatter myself that I might have something to say, some claim on my creativity, something to offer. But my lack of passion and intensity means I do not believe it very strongly. I do not believe there is something so unique and urgent about my life experience that I must at all costs say it, share it so others may reflect on their similar experience. Not believing it I do not act with any conviction. I do not find my passion kindled. For me, and I think for so many others, the unique truth is subtle and mundane, and therefore, easily discounted. Yet the mundane life is profound. It touches the well-springs of any life lived, even a comfortable life without great outer adversity or challenge.

A life with interior boredom, personal relationship failures, and no burning effort to achieve every-moment-consciousness produces a drama and tragedy of its own. Such a life has lessons for us all and may even be heroic in some sense. The compromised Babbit-life, the despairing middle class, moderately educated, uncomfortable with sports and what passes for much of our entertainment; the life unwilling to focus in on anything requiring discipline and effort, a 'go with the least resistance' life; what needs to be said about this kind of existence? Is it less worthy for its lack of extremes, its lack of achievement, its passivity?

It's the old story of worthy relative to what? Significant relative to what?

I know something of the motivations of the playwright, the wine maker, the poet, the craftsman or the corporate executive. The urge to capture in a bottle, in a piece of art, in a poem, or in a program the experience of delight, a wonder, an "Angel's visit." To do that requires that one prepare oneself. Go where the grapes are most intense, learn from soil and sun. To find that Hesperides is a life long search and journey. To put it into the bottle of yourself is genius and hard work.

The analogy holds for other endeavors as well. The poem falls onto the page of the poet who has been attentive for a lifetime. The painting appears when the artist has been painting and searching consistently. The channel opens. But only to those who knock at the door long and hard and unceasingly. That's the Artist's Way. And the price for creative effort is your life: 'Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani,' at the moment of highest fulfillment the Hero utters his despairing cry. Faust at his triumph hears the spades digging his grave. Quoeleth says, "Vanity, all is vanity." Sisyphus reaches the summit only to have the boulder roll down the mountain.

Why doesn't all literature follow the happy ending formula of Hollywood?

Power

How have I experienced power? The plus and minus. I should be well acquainted with this subject by now, from both sides. I think of productive time and of times of fallowness and waiting.

Going back, it has always been about power, self actualization. A struggle between my mother and myself. First, her attempts to get meaning and emotional validation from me. Second, a struggle within myself to deal with the situation creatively instead of reacting. I did not succeed well in the latter effort, resisting and rebelling in my internal struggle to embrace a posture that was beyond my maturity at the time. In the power struggle that resulted from Mom's external pressures to create an artist son in her image, I passively resisted. This looked like being the obedient son who took piano lessons, tap lessons, clarinet lessons, etc., etc., but all the time griping and grouching and wanting to be elsewhere.

It was all I could do to keep my Self. To avoid the smothering defeat. I did so at great cost, to my Self and great damage for my mother. She tried valiantly to find a center to build her life around. First Dad, then me. By the time Carla and Jeffrey arrived she had already despaired.

She began the inward journey, the journey that ultimately could have been her salvation. I'm sure that in the context of our family, it was frightening for her to reveal her pain and fears. She struggled mightily to contain it. I can only guess at the contours of her journey. Her journals are lost to us. What fragments of writing and observations by hardly aware children that have survived hint at a solitary courageous spirit battle of one who deserved the support of a spirit mentor, but had none.

Power has figured in every relationship I've had. With teachers, peers, girls and friends. PATrebor, what a time that was. I could hardly believe my luck at the time. What an introduction to sexuality and relationships based almost entirely on hormones and need. There couldn't have been less of a future for us. I must have instinctively and intellectually known it. For I exploited it for pleasure, sheer physical release, and to try and discipline myself as well.

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PLEASURE

“Every pleasure seeks to be embedded in eternity.”

Pleasure, how difficult to achieve, impossible to prolong or secure, a longing to be imbedded in eternity, the pursuit of which creates a sadness.

We can fill our lives in this culture with all kinds of activities, gadgets, creature comforts and passive entertainments. Yet none of these confer lasting pleasure or happiness. And there is so little in the present cultural context available as alternatives. The dimension of creative engagement and fulfilling pursuits is hard to find.

The art of being non-productive has been neglected. We feel guilty if we are not doing something significant or, at a minimum, pleasurable.

There's a tension, or better, a close connection, between hard physical work and satisfactory pleasure. Great celebrations follow hard physical expenditure. Social cohesion is enhanced, produced, catalyzed by joint physical effort. It's as if work, with no intention to do so, produces great play! Proceeding with the intention to go out and play often falls flat, results in a failure to achieve pleasure much less playfulness. Work with a purpose can produce pleasurable play. The great celebrations of my life, for example, Summer '67, Stanfield's Wedding, my own wedding to Pauline, the vineyard planting, Lee and Betsy's wedding, had as a common denominator a prior effort culminating in celebratory release and reflection. Our culture provides so little opportunity for this kind of involvement.

Role of the 'archaic' senses

Taste and smell are most associated with memory, early memories and experiences. These are the least objectified senses. The senses most identified with the body and least connected with the intellect or mind. These senses are the most incoherent, or more correctly the least associated with language. The vocabulary of taste and smell is highly subjective and difficult to master, requiring training to achieve a consensus. However, over time a very specific and specialized vocabulary has been developed about the data sensed by nose and taste. In fact, this vocabulary is quite detailed and unique. It can be used quite effectively by those trained and accustomed to its use, for example, the wine tasting community.

My intent is to point out the connection between the sense of smell and taste which is a consequence of the proximity of their physical organs. The nose and tongue are located in the head, close to one another. They use common body openings and rely, to a large extent, on the breath to collect data. Odors greatly enhance the enjoyment of foods. Amplification of taste experience can enable odor identification.

I'm reminded of another adjacent sense combination that I was introduced to by Roberta P when we were juniors in high school. She told me that she had been advised by a relative, "a good bowel movement was just as good as intercourse." To which a possible response was, "well, either I've never had a good BM or you've never had a good fuck!"

It could be that the pleasure of sex and elimination are related, for, as the Bishop's companion on the way to Bath said, "the seat of pleasure is not far from the outlet of elimination." Both receiving and eliminating are involved in sexual intercourse. Both are avenues of pleasure. Like taste and smell, in and out are related. The prerequisite for a good sex life is regularity in the bowel.

Reading Pleasure

An evening spent reading *The Book of The Hopi*, miscellaneous poems, drinking wine and munching. I'm sure I don't remember the sources, just a few quotes. Poetry and Hopi and wine - food for the soul!

"Eating is touch carried to the bitter end". Samuel Butler. How intimate one's risk with each other in sweet moments that sustain our mutual lives, yes but, we also know where exactly to hurt each other! Eros! Eros in the masculine mode, love permeating the cellular forces but also thrown across the world in great longing. Neruda says, "My thirst, my desire without end, my wavering road." Eros! Eros, spark of longing for a loved one seeming out of nowhere. Or is it simple human touch that opens

"Dark river beds down which
The eternal thirst flows."

"The silent drifting hours ...yet
No pathway worn between."

"Something old and tyrannical
Burning there.

...heat

From the time before there was fire.

...a captive prince

From the sunken kingdom of the father coal."

P. Neruda

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PLAY

In writing about the Mimosa incident I didn't really address the business of playing. All that stuff about existence and resurrection was so deadly serious! Not nearly as silly as the actions of painting a dead tree and celebrating the death of a tree.

I noticed, in the memories evoked by that writing, that life itself is a game, a serious game, but nonetheless, a game. Playing that game and being playful in that game is an attitude that I find tough to remember. For me it always takes a traumatic breakthrough to recover playfulness, a self-conscious, hey look at me, kind of uncharacteristic breaking of the mold to remind me I'm alive. It's a game. We aren't getting out of this alive. So what the hell. Who cares, lets live NOW.

I guess I noticed festivity; it's an attitude. A thing you put on like paint on an actor's face. You wear the pastel cloak and dance while there's music you hear, even if no one else does. Dance while there is wine in the glass. If you don't someone else may drink it. I noticed also the pattern I tend to fall into of waiting until the grindings of life wear me down before rehearsing that it's only a game. It's helpful to remember the past play times, the Tree House time, swings at Rothwell Park, swimming in the lake, tennis with girl friends, Newby's jokes, string phones between houses, pleasure of riding bikes, skates, sleds, snow fights, stolen kisses behind the basement furnace at birthday parties, and the experience of a first date. How easy it is to lose sight of what fun the game of life is.

What do I like to play at now? It's double solitaire or standing at the craps table with an enthusiastic crowd betting \$5 on 6's and 8's. Play is twirling a nimble female partner around the floor in an exciting Zydego dance. Play is finding that elusive part I need for the old car or a better one than I have. Play is getting one step closer to driving the '31 Cadillac down town. Play is putting the cork in a bottle of wine where I pick the grapes, crush them and coax the yeast to start its mysterious activity, rack the wine and finally, put it in a bottle.

Play is that which I do best. What I do with enthusiasm, without thinking almost about what it is I'm doing.

Play is Kenneth Rippel at 77 flying a kite!

Scattered Images of Wonder

Today I saw a man who "had heard" something communicated...a color coordinated colleague...a scaffold up against a white wall...a rose bush extravagant with 4 huge flowers...the mail box at 8645 Butte...our neighborhood

star shrouded with dark clouds...residual images of a night-mare.

Today I heard the faint screeching of a Macaw...the drone of radio voices...the lyrical lament of a holocaust service...the rough voice of Norman Mailer interviewed by Terry Gross...tires on the freeway...Pauline asking about my day...music from Mexico...a fire alarm.

It was a time when bunnies would come to our house and leave their candied eggs and jelly beans strewn around our yard and house. I was only 8 or 9 years old. I think then, about 1943, this age was at the threshold crossing over from childhood credulity to the beginnings of adolescent questioning and explorations. I was only beginning to wonder where things came from, why things are the way they are, who named our street and were things always this way? My transition to doubting many of the things of this world had hardly begun

It was in most respects still a time of magic and wonderment. Images from that time still fill me with a sense of warmth and innocence. The lilac bush outside our kitchen window at 507 Cleveland with its resident cat bird. The real rabbits we kept during those years of WWII in our back yard. The ants that labored incessantly on the stone wall next to the sidewalk.

One image of spring I remember distinctly involves my Grandma Rippel. Every Easter we would drive out to her farm and join with cousins, aunts and uncles for a Family celebration. There was a pine tree in the front yard next to a hedge that bordered the grave road to my Grandparent's house. We cousins used to do a rather un-organized may-pole dance around that tree. We didn't know or think about Mary or May Pole or anything connected with Easter. We just loved Grandma's reaction when we would pluck a few needles as we twirled around the tree and we would poke her arms. She would exclaim, "Oh, ouch." And we would laugh, laugh our heads off and repeat the trick the next orbit around the tree! We experienced the same hilarity every time doing the same needling on the arms of our Grandma!

Was it perverse joy in thinking we had precipitated such pain? Play Pain? Doing some forbidden thing to an adult and getting away with it under the guise of play? Perhaps, but as I look back it has become a ritual of spring and childhood. A remembered celebration that contained the joy of seeing the earth revive itself after the Winter months and the miracle of seeing pain thrown off and made fun of!

An experience with the Tarot deck and a reading

The Reader shapes the card-signification design and sequence. As the design develops he/she can read the process in one of many different ways, choosing one which more closely fits the person coming for a reading. Thus there is a dynamic: Cards/Reader/Client.

The Client depends on the Reader to explain (just enough) the significance of the symbols (Cards) which are ambiguous enough and universal enough to find application and response from the Client's experience and life. For a skilled Reader the Cards offer an occasion for an intimate interchange with

the Client which could not otherwise take place in normal intercourse. Thus, the Tarot is a psychically enhanced meeting wherein there are expectations of revelation, which set up an occasion of revelation in the conversation which ensues. The Reader, drawing on his knowledge of human nature and, if known, any information he/she may possess about the Client, can participate in creating a powerful experience from a given Reading.

It is somewhat analogous to going to a career counselor to ask about career direction. Or seeing a Dr. about medicine. Or consulting a therapist or pastor regarding personal issues. The Client's conscious and unconscious motives for the meeting contain the "answers" which are "revealed" in the appointment.

A truly human dynamic! And somehow very appropriate for those seekers who are still searching and who grasp that each soul travels from the magic world to the scientific world only to come back to the magical when maturity is achieved!

We leave the magical world view (of childhood) because of disappointments and a need for predictability in human life. We return to the magical world view when we discover the sterility of determinism and all the other isms as well. We rediscover the fertile under-soil of the cosmos, totally mysterious and destined to always be so. We return to accept that as the basic reality and give up the immature desire to have it all explained away.

We do not give up the desire to know more, to understand, to achieve wisdom in relating to the uncontrollable, in effect to come to peace with the gods, and to learn once more how to play, how to tweak the nose of fate, how to tempt even the gods to pay attention to us.

Some Things I Love

Pauline's attention to my wants.

Smells - wine fermenting, roses, star jasmine and mock orange, heavy odors of honeysuckle, the musky smell of a woman, a squeezed lime, bread baking or being toasted, yeast in warm water, grass after rain, fresh hair and skin.

Food in all its variety but especially fruits, wine, bread, eggs, vinegar and oil, garlic, chips and fish, salt, port and Madeira.

Steve's Puns.

Curtiss's knowing look - as if to say 'Dad, you know better.'

Clifford's questions and monologues.

Seeing cats, watching animals at the zoo.

Making wine.

Fiddling with mechanical fasteners.

A soft word of appreciation

The stretch of sinews and bone, the protest of muscles.

Ache and tiredness.

The surrender of sleep.

Pride in 'accomplishing' some task, almost anything.

Sitting on the patio, having a cocktail, enjoying the 'golden hour' with PWR.

Teasing by being slightly risqué or risky.

Reading a good book.

Visiting the library.

Checking on stocks and investments.

The surprise of "news."

Friends.

Seeing Carla and Jeffrey.

Caressing bottles, corks, cars and tools.

Pounding nails.

Figuring out puzzles.

Writing and the struggle to write.

WRITING EXERCISES

Coming Down(one sentence to a paragraph)

Somehow coming down to earth is hard and getting it just right so that when we connect with the earth's surface we don't go too far and actually penetrate beneath with our feet or, more likely, not quite make the last contact remaining hovering over the ground by an inch or two, a final crucial maneuver that seems to elude even the best of us who work hard on our inflation and grandiosity by alert awareness and then move quickly to correct by imitating the downward move to get ourselves re-grounded and centered but frequently under-correct leaving that last critical inch under ourselves and providing for a remainder of lightness and headiness that irretrievably shows up in abstract and uncentered actions which always cause psychic problems in our relations and practical problems in such mundane things as driving, walking, being off balance at important moments at just the time when a balanced act is required and the result, of course is the reverberation of that error throughout our being which tends to re-inflate and send us soaring once more - an over reaction almost worse than if we had originally over compensated in our descent and gone past the earth's surface slightly, a situation which produces that well known sluggishness with which we are all too often acquainted and which requires great effort to extract ourselves, somewhat proportional to the level to which we have sunk into the terra firma, it being, of course, much harder to re-surface if you are in up to your knees or, god forbid, your waist, than if you had just gone in up to your ankles in which case you might feel only slightly depressed compared to a real immobility in the case of the former depths which fortunately are penetrations rarely experienced since they are major energy requirements and are the result of either a descent from an extraordinary height or a too rapid downward momentum or, very infrequently, a corroboration of both states - which do tend to accompany each other unfortunately since both the heights to which we can ascend and our eventual awareness of them often lead to a desperate attempt to regain the stability of the surface and such attempts may result in a high downward acceleration if we are not careful and the effects of altitude are frequently to set aside carefulness and reflective thoughtfulness which leads to desperation and unwise reactionary behaviors; but to my experience such major catastrophes are not the norm, thank goodness, but do occur only rarely in our lives, a fact which emphasizes the great dangers associated with over-grounding oneself and which we see in the large numbers of those cases which seek professional help on extracting themselves from the earth's tenacious grip - a

process which can take years to successfully enable one to correctly connect with right underpinning and right balance on the surface - not below - not above.

What if one comes down totally immersed risking the fate of drowning or smothering in a total wipe out situation so that there needs to be some natural pressure to push out and up but there is certainly no swimming under the surface; it's hard to see, its density being too great and it is like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where he is toured through the various levels of Hell and there don't seem to be any stopping places in which to reverse the momentum and effect a return to the surface making it a one-way trip, or is it the case that we must we go all the way to the bottom most point in order for a recovery to proceed in the opposite direction, in which case we have no experience to judge which is the right course to take whether to value the earthly depression or like Lee, "The Flying Boy" try to enumerate them such as acquaintance with the body, getting in touch with feelings at last, patience, restoration through the whole grieving process, wisdom, the confidence conferred by survival, and the assurance of knowing when one is truly grounded versus levitating.

Squash Ball

I'm Playing second base for the locals. The game is dragging on and I'm bored out of my skull. Thinking about a cool beer or a chance encounter with Sharon Stone in some neutral or benign territory like the office or my garage. Fat chance. Things are confused enough! Then suddenly, out of nowhere a grounder is headed my way. I leap into action going to my left, reach down and grab a rotten pomegranate that explodes into my cow skin mitt. I scrape enough seeds together with my right hand to throw a smushy glob of fruit to the first baseman to get the third out of the inning.

Wiping my hands off with the bench towel I step into the on-bat circle, knocking dirt from my cleats, first the left foot then the right. I swing the bat up over my head as I relax my shoulders and step up to the plate. I hunker down for the pitch, glare over at the 3rd base coach who signals me to lay down a bunt! The pitch comes in looming like a big yellow squash, The Ole Squash Ball pitch. It's just my luck to get the call for a bunt. I could knock the smithereens out of that pitch floating in like that. I stick out my bat and connect with the pitch, a squash fragments just to the left of home plate in fair territory.

I wonder if I should run it out anyway, decide I will. Rounding first I look back to see if someone is fielding the squash. No, they are struggling with it. The catcher has grabbed the umpire's whisk broom and is sweeping it up into his glove. I keep on going, heading for second and come into the base with a stand up double!

The third base coach is jumping up and down waving his arms. He's waving me on to third. I check the squash briefly and see the confused expression on the catcher's face. He's still sweeping up fragments as I light out for third base. The coach signals a slide and I dive into the bag amid a shower of squash seeds, yellow chunks of melon rinds, and water. "Safe!", calls the ump behind the bag.

I stand up and look around at the squash scattered all over and behind third into left field. The left fielder who came in to back up the throw from the catcher is splattered from head to toe with squash, seeds and liquid. He is frantically trying to squeeze himself to retrieve a fist full of squash. The coach is waving me on in like mad Max as the outfielder struggles to collect himself and the fruit. I cross over home plate avoiding fragments of the bunted squash which hadn't been picked up by the opposing catcher. I am greeted by a barrage of rotten tomatoes thrown by the fans as pandemonium breaks out in the stadium. I've just scored an inside-the-park-bunt-home run!

If Only Who Am I(stream of consciousness)

Scattered on the floor of my study are the photos of family members living and dead. When I think of who I am, if I had not known the man with the telescope who lived in the shadows of Monroe Ave, whose house bordered the lot with the small shot-gun grocery store where a nickel could buy a taste of Cuban sugar cane fields or Venezuela cacao plantations to savor on the way to the red-brick school house with white sill windows and neatly lined up teeter-totters and, if I had not been told by Rolla Clay that if I didn't believe him when he said that Mary Sue wasn't a virgin I could kiss his 'you know what' and he'd bare it right there during recess for everyone to see me do the deed which left me without a come-back, a situations I was all too familiar with, if only I was quicker on the mental draw and carried quip equivalents of Colt 45's then I wouldn't be always dodging the neighborhood bullies for lack of repartee and maybe I could throw a little figurative weight around, a taste of authority which was a rare event for me on these occasions even though when city-wide exams came I could usually hold my own or better and, if I had not dreamed of the Mississippi River and followed the daughter of a delta town banker to her home on that wild ride southward on Hwy 61 with my great uncle James Miller in tow, car filled to the gills with Jensen speaker and an obsolete Hi Fi amp, I would still be cruising those back bayou highways between Alexandria and Ville Platte looking for Miss America and apple pie goodness among the live oaks and Spanish moss stuffed mattresses of Cajun Louisiana, a paradise in the 1950's and my introduction to Corporate life with Joe P, who wanted to mentor me and I was too afraid to let him get close to me because my role models were isolated, uncomplaining men who waited for others to act and even then just stood by to let the consequences appear like that old Chinese proverb, "all things come to those who wait," and if I'd gone through different hoops, gone to Korea, read some poems by Al Ginsberg or Kerouac, hitched my way to New Mexico, labored on a cruise ship, seen the infinite expanse contained in the finite choices being presented to me even then, the cup would have filled more than I could hold, spilled over, run out and the mess of life would have been different, only different, not better, not worse, just a different way to save my life and soul, a road of dissolution or application, pain or privilege, happy or sad, virtue or sin, boring or exciting, just different, chances are not given to the polar extremes but containing all of the above just like the life I actually have, the life I did build or decided to imagine I built, that imagination

which can fill in all those missing lives, the lives I might have had if only....if only....if only.

Dream of 'Overlords'(sci fi based on a dream)

I am Ji, financial officer and treasurer of the Advance Contingent (AC) inspecting a new site for one of the Tsirti's space-time 'shrines.' We measure the length and breadth of a 'foundation' in rectangular form by using ordinary quants. The number of specified quants is laid out and I flash back to previous sites, particularly on (?). Always the same size, always rectangular, the same configuration in space-time, even when other artifacts may be present in the neighboring 'field.' Similar discontinuities in the space-time fabric had been "planted" over the centuries on this and other worlds.

Active Imagination development:

I was expecting a periodic payment on the accounts of the Contingent (AC) while here at these coordinates. I didn't know what form the return would take. When it came it was 95,000 Glats, a better than expected performance. I contemplated what venue should be used to invest this sum.

While discussing the Tsirti's requirements and periodic apparitions with my colleagues we also speculated about their role and intentions in the Contingent's universal mandate to create a uniform, consistent apprehension of the universe by all sentient beings, wherever they might arise. A companion suggested we could revisit any of the Tsirti's manifestations, if we so chose, to see if we could piece together any new insights as to what the Grand Design might be.

Previous efforts in this regard had always proved frustrating over the centuries. Our burden was always to be working in secondary capacities, never privileged to directly see or witness the appearances of our overlords, but only to receive periodic instructions to go here or there, to receive or expend the Contingent's resources in strange and apparently unrelated ways in space-time where we could not contact or communicate with local beings. Who, and what the purpose of our Directors was, we could not discern, except in the consequences we could observe following one of their "visits" to beings we were forbidden to directly access.

We were free to speculate, even question our orders, but in the end we had no alternative but to follow them since we had no other desires, no other purpose for our own existence but to do so. We would move through time and space, investing our (AC's) funds and resources, seeing some results, but only dimly aware of their purpose and design. In watching subsequent developments it was always difficult to discern how much resulted from the AC's operations and how much was a product of the aspirations, desires and designs of the beings we were sent to.

Apparently, our masters and therefore the AC, had no direct power whatever over these other beings.

Our influence could only be indirect, proportional to the investment our AC betters were willing to pursue in every instance, these resources being finite and limited in some way that we ourselves never comprehended. Long periods of bypassed opportunities, it appeared to us, were tolerated even though resources were “plentiful.” In other cases expenditures would bring us to the point of no reserves and returns to the AC treasury would dwindle or go to zero! Our efforts would appear futile and ineffectual. Always mysterious and subtle.

What we have discerned with minimum equivocation is the following:

The AC over lord(s) have been active on many worlds for many millennia.

Emergence or presence of biological and sentient life forms is related to that activity.

The overseer(s) cannot directly interfere in the processes of the physical world.

Their agents, the AC, can impact the physical world in limited ways.

Our ability to do so is limited by access to consciousness manifesting sentients, by our own (AC) resources and, possibly, by limits not known to us set by our Sponsors.

We do not appear in the same space-time continuum with the sentient beings we are sent to, only to a closely related universe where we can influence their consciousness in limited and imaginal ways. This, apparently is our (AC) mission.

It appears we are implicated in

a) the emergence of religious images and systems,

b) theophanies of various kinds which can be related to intense periods of consciousness or image accessing,

c) Indirectly with the emergence of social movements.

We can exercise very little influence on consequences or these impacts nor can we predict consequences with more than directional accuracy. Our results are variable. Not all sectors who are receptive to our efforts respond with positive social advances. All do respond in some manner.

Since the AC operates with access outside the space-time continuum of a given world, we can observe the effects, over world time, of a given set of images projected early in a species development. Not all branches of a given species survive or get their versions of AC input into the dominance of their world. Frequently there is rivalry, destructive impulses and disappearance of some initiatives. In some cases this is evaluated by the sentients themselves as justified because of their group’s evident superiority. A minority, even in the dominant faction, may evaluate this as a tragedy the loss of which will inevitably hurt the world’s development.

Because our access to any given sector of the physical universe cannot go beyond that sector’s space-time Diffusion Fan Point (DFP cusp) we are as limited as the sentients are in seeing beyond that point in their history, i.e., what they term as the present represents a physical limitation in our access. We can see their entire existence up to that point and all other possible histories which

converge at the DFP (cusp). Beyond the cusp we cannot predict with accuracy as previously stated.

If the AC over Lord(s) decide, we may modify, delete or add projected images, myths or legends at any point in the sentient beings space-time continuum up to the DFP. Doing so changes the whole Diffusion Fan configuration and the nature of the DFP (cusp). The larger and more complex the DF configuration, the more unpredictable and problematic the results such modifications produce.

Last Will & Testament, A writing session with the Men's Group

This is getting too concrete. How envious I am of Phil's images of people eating pies, ice cream and pecans. You are asking me to be as concrete. Does that mean my LW&T is about possessions? Perhaps, perhaps not. Carl says he wants to go into the tomb at just the point where his children will have to take out a loan to pay for the funeral and burial. Nice work if you can do it, plan it that close, that is. None of us knows the hour or day.

I don't want to be in the position of the rich young man who 'laid up treasures by filling his barns with goods and then thinking he could take his leisure and enjoy them'. He was justifiably called a 'Fool' by Our Hero.

The question is: what is it I really have to give away? If I limited that to physical possessions I could draw up a proposal based on dying at the present moment. I could make a pretty accurate list for disposal. In fact all my spouse would have to do is get out the legal will.

As I see it a LW&T would have to be about something already set in motion, the common interests and desires clearly shared with persons still living. What would those be?

I can start by staying with your suggestion of concreteness. Of my stored up selfhood I would want it distributed to my wife and to my three sons, and to favorite charities.

My Journals I would suggest leaving to my sons (who else would have time enough to sort through them if they desire?). My wife could exercise a veto over any sections she deems. And here's a good suggestion: They could be disposed of at my cremation (good fuel)!

Wines, bottles and barrels, books, pencils and cars, personal items go to family if they want them. Otherwise auction the lot!

Dreams & Scripts(Outline of a screen play)

Over the years I have recorded in my journals thousands of dreams. My dream life is either erotic or neurotic. I can't get laid because I'm not interested in getting laid, not interested in new rejections, the old one is painful enough. I'm talking about the primordial rejection, the one I'm still not healed from and carry around nursing it as if I were going to be lost without it!

Yes, I need it because without that definitive rejection I would not know who I am. It is the key to my self image and identity. I am one who is rejected by women, by the significant women of my life, who have all left me! I'll bet the Tarot deck has me spotted and I'll be damned if it isn't the case, that I cling to my misfortunes as tightly as Pauline does to hers because without that grounding we would be truly lost. We know who we are by virtue of our dysfunctional primary relationship which we have to repeat since, by not doing so we are without a script. We would have to try a new script and we don't even have a clue. No play book, no screen play, no prompter of lines, no director and no guidance. We, as they say, wouldn't even know which act this is.

For us, of course, in our familiar chosen script, it is the last act. We have stumbled through an infinite number of previous scenes and acts always the same, always the same lines, always meeting the same characters and idiots. The imbecilic dialogue has become ingrained in our neurons. We can move through these scenes blindfolded. We are blindfolded and afraid to take off the masks.

What a symbol! A play where the characters have blindfolds on. They do not see because they insist they can see. They follow the script because that's what they know how to do. They are the Willy Whams of relationship and won't take off the blindfolds.

The characters: A man

His wife

Their pets (symbols of neuroses)

His children by former marriage.

Marlene McC's Bedroom(erotica development)

Years earlier, following a meeting one evening I volunteered to escort Marlene home since it was late and she was by herself. She invited me in for coffee and I gladly accepted. I was very attracted to her and in the previous months our conversations had been increasingly animated and, I thought, flirtatious.

Later we sat on the couch drinking coffee which I desperately tried to avoid spilling as I fumbled at talking and opening the buttons of her blouse. She had said something about women with dark brown aureoles and long nipples being the most passionate. Compared to what, I thought, as I endeavored to confirm the condition of hers. Kissing and looking at her breasts at the same time proved fairly difficult.

Then suddenly, as if she had been debating, she rose taking me by one hand and trailing her blouse in the other, led me down the hall to her bedroom.

I keep the image of that evening as one of those beautiful encounters that leaves you wanting more. And a lesson in the frustration of one night stands. The question of 'what if' is one that haunted me for a while until I realized it's one of those self imposed tortures the psyche loves to inflict on human beings to keep them from facing the realities of life.

Years later, on a visit, I had the occasion to re-connect with her. Now she was married. We enjoyed catching each other up on our lives. And, I think, each of us silently thanking our lucky stars that life had taken us on separate paths.

DRAGONS AND SEX

Dragons

Dragons, what do they need or prey upon? Cattle?

Unsuspecting peasants? Virgins!? If so, no wonder they are an endangered species. One hasn't been sighted in the surrounding mountains and countryside within living memory. And the Zoo, well they haven't ever had one according to the Society's records. Somewhere where virgins are valued. That's where Dragons may be found. The best bet will be in caves or underground lairs. Perhaps they are in dormancy, since Dragons can live exceedingly long lives, waiting for virginal essence to draw them out of their holes.

It is said that Dragons guard a treasure in their caves. No one, to my knowledge, or at least within memory has seen a Dragon lair or caught sight of their treasure. Surely it would be covered over with mold after such a long time. Even the Dragon would be covered with moss like a cedar shake roof in a rainy climate.

Perhaps it would take, at this stage, an army of virgins to rouse an old Dragon from his sleep and dormant reveries. It might take a mass-effect like the radioactive chain reaction sustained by a certain threshold of mass. It may be that there aren't enough virgins in the whole kingdom to raise a single Dragon to respond. If so there doesn't appear to be a great cry of loss from any quarter. Certainly, if older tales are to be believed, Dragons used to sustain themselves on occasional repasts of cattle or other farm animals. But if virgins were available a Dragon could go centuries without eating! A marvelous feat! Truly a miraculous species.

What about their ability to generate fire? This is beyond dispute according to all reports. Dragons were able to breathe out fire and smoke. Some inner capacity to generate heat and energy in concentrated forms was a unique trait of Dragons. This must have been an awesome sight to behold. There's no need to speculate as to the purpose for this unique evolutionary characteristic since we all have the need to generate heat and take on fuel to do it, and now and then, a real pot-boil comes to the aide of all of us in emergencies. I just wish I could get my passion flame-hot on demand at any time!

The other aspect of Dragons that deserves mention is the fact that they

can fly. The sight of a huge old Sire-Dragon in full flight must be truly awe inspiring, much less seeing a whole clutch in flying formation. How we could have let such a magnificent species deteriorate is tragic. A creature who lives underground, roams the countryside seeking out virgins, lives for centuries on their virginal presence, breathes fire and smoke, and can fly to great heights is truly wondrous.

Dragons demonstrate all the needed dimensions for a whole existence.

And, in China, they are symbols of happiness and power. How true.

SEX

When the Men's Group raised the subject of sex for discussion and writing I was hesitant. My experience with men in this area was that there's a lot of talk, mostly inflated and exaggerated. The result being a lot of bragging and very little honesty! To my delight these men wanted to share their experiences, frustrations, and disappointments with sex as well as their knowledge. There weren't any experts around that table.

Sex is a topic I approach with caution, aware that I am no great expert either from study or in great quantity of experience. I have an active interest in the subject and, I suppose, an average drive or libido. I try to be honest in my observations both of myself and others I have known in this arena.

One thing I have observed having been bypassed by the so-called sexual revolution of the 60's and early 70's is that it takes a lot of time to develop a sexual relationship and only a short time to destroy it if the underlying feelings and emotional ground is undermined. The physical urges may be present and possible but really erotic, sexual, desirous, passionate, playful, exciting sex is a rare event. That's an event to be courted and created. Unfortunately, it is often the 'true and beautiful' event that we try to capture or recreate. It either happens or it doesn't, and certainly if we try too hard, it doesn't. I do not know how to assure it. Sex is ultimately a mystery between people. I do know some of the precursor enablements, but they are just that, enablements only.

In my first experiences, which were largely hormone driven, I learned a lot but remained ignorant of much of the emotional aspects of sex. I learned that women could be as responsive and as eager for sex as men, and as capable, or more so, of physical pleasure from sex. I also learned that "erogenous zones" are not limited to genitalia but may be almost anywhere on the body.

Most importantly I learned how little a role the penis plays in giving pleasure to a woman. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to learn how many ways there are to give pleasure to a responsive woman.

What I learned in a limited way in these early experiences was the important role verbal exchanges during sex can play. My introduction to regular sex didn't include much in the way of verbal directions. I was uncomfortable either giving or receiving verbally. Embarrassment at being too direct inhibited my sensitivity in responding to non-verbal signals.

I also learned that sex can be a source of frustration and disappointment in relationships. Once patterns are set it becomes harder to overcome them. Becoming impatient, anxiously focusing on the genitals is a mistake. Sexual activity in this situation becomes less frequent and less than satisfying. Insistence on a mechanical sexuality can become self defeating.

On the positive side, I did eventually learn the value of the exciting dance of expectant preliminaries to greater physical intimacy; and the power of women to give themselves orgasm in the right setting with some sensitive help. Verbal expressiveness and instructions became a beautiful part of sexual play.

I have learned a lot. A sexual relationship is like a roller coaster ride. Tensions in psychic and spirit relations produce an unpredictability that either encourages or inhibits a good sexual connection.

I suppose all this is rather abstract. Sex is wonderfully concrete and earthy. Yet if it is 'explained' in laborious detail or reduced to a mechanical description as illustrated in most pornography, that elusive beautiful experience that occurs between two people who love one another is lost.

ACCORDING TO ITS NATURE

“God must have loved ugly animals, he made so many of them.”

The Circus of Dr. Lao

“I’m not here to solve any problems or do any planning.”

RR

Everything in nature is always acting according to its nature.

Grass grows as grass, trees grow as trees, cats act according to their cat-nature. The code in everything imparts its nature and its behavior follows. The gardener has no impact on the nature of the grass, the trees, the weeds or any plant. He may trim them, they go on and continue growing, acting as their nature dictates. He may withhold fertilizer or water. The plant will retrench, as plants they may wither and eventually, die. All the while they do so as their nature requires. They do not worry, nor are they unemployed. While they are sustained they grow, when sustenance is denied, they cease to grow and may cease altogether. They do no planning for the morrow and, while they are conscious in some form of their fellows and surrounds, it does not alter their basic nature.

Only humankind does not seem to know how to act according to our nature. We do not know our nature and we do not act according to a single uniform nature.

We, of all the creatures, seem to have the “ability” to violate ourselves. We can ignore facets of our needs and natures. We can recover or die as a result.

We have being and we are aware of it including the requisites for well being. But we also are aware of non-being. Non-being is part of our being. This tension, this awareness leaves us without a fixed, dictated nature. It is our glory and our wound. We are, as it were, open-ended creatures. Each of us, within limits, can create what we are to be. “To be, or not to be, that is the question.” That creation is a never finished process - it is always subject to revision and alteration.

What is so remarkable to me is that so many of us are rigid and fixed, subject to reacting to stimuli. You would think we’d get more flexible with age! And, it is true, as a species we exhibit an enormous spectrum of “natures” and behaviors.

Perhaps it’s an error to attribute too much uniqueness to humans in this regard. Recent experiments on other animals, in this case rats, have shown that brain cells and neurons can be created, even in older, rigidified rats! There’s hope for us senior citizens! Placed in a “creative” atmosphere rats, after an initial period of stress and withdrawal, responded and their brains actually changed

along with some behaviors!

Perhaps all the animal kingdom posses this capability to some degree and we are only one creature at one end of a spectrum of open-ended capabilities. This also suggests that as the living of animals in the wild comes to a close and, the only species are those kept in zoos and other enclosures maintained artificially, that these surviving "animals" will be different from their wild forebears. Their "natures" will be subtly altered. Perhaps they will begin to worry and plan how to secure themselves, get a useful job, and obtain insurance. I hope not. An element of "otherness" will be lost.

Animals I like:

Tortoise

I tend to anthropomorphize animals, i.e., attribute human-like motives to their behaviors and gestures. One result of this is an immediate identification with the great apes and monkeys. But more than that, if any animal shows responsiveness or toleration of my presence, I'm ready to project some human trait onto that animal.

It's a little strange; therefore, that one animal which has always been a favorite of mine is the desert tortoise. A more unresponsive, non-target for human projections you could not imagine. But something of the tortoise's stolid, solid, stoic qualities finds a resonance within me. Invulnerability to many external threats is something I would aspire to. I often wish I were not subject to caring, unaffected by emotional threats, stress and wounds, and I project these onto the tortoise.

Tortoises are known for longevity and by association; I attach wisdom, though such a quality is hardly in evidence by behaviors. An early myth has the dome of the world carried on the back of a primordial tortoise. A turtle carries the world swimming in the depths of the chaotic waters! Doesn't Venus herself come riding on the back of a huge turtle? Or steps forth from the shell of a tortoise?

My one experience with a tortoise as a pet stands in contradiction to my projections, especially the ideas about invulnerability. In 1962, in City Park in New Orleans near the shore of Lake Ponchartrain, I was playing with Steven and Curtiss when we saw a man with a huge gopher tortoise. This is a species native to Florida. The man offered to give us the animal and we took it home. We had not had it 24 hours, during which time I was planning how to build a sand hutch for it, before a neighbor boy admiring the huge reptile, dropped it on the edge of its carapace, cracking both the top and undersides.

A call to the vet suggested perhaps epoxy glue should be applied. We put the tortoise in a play pen outside and headed for the local 5 and dime. By the time we returned the tortoise had expired from exposure to the Louisiana sun and his wounds. Not having a temperature control system, being mortally injured and our neglect to know the best thing to do for him combined to do him in. His vulnerability touched me deeply.

Our misguided care and efforts contributed to its death. I grieved the harm we'd inflicted on one of nature's lords. I have had the opportunity to own tortoises since through the local Tortoise Club here in California. It is not a casual responsibility since they are an endangered species. I have decided not to risk another tortoise's life even though my experience has made me somewhat wiser than before.

Cats

Cats intrigue me with their grace, slow movements which can explode into quick focused action, their patient waiting with intense concentration, not a face whisker moves. They amaze me with their fastidious habits, their occasional playfulness and curiosity. There seems to be a sense of relationship with cats, at least they appear to act as if they have chosen you, and observe a code of honor which requires that if they have received a gift from you they will in return offer you a gift. I once observed this latter behavior with a feral black cat who roamed the fields next to our house on Mount Helix. After a Thanksgiving Meal on our patio where he first approached, I left a small piece of meat for this cat, later known to us as Shadow. Within a week we began to see offerings of dead birds and regurgitated field mice on our back stoop.

I think this behavior fits in with another trait we associate with cats, that of independence. Even while accepting food and being dependent, cats can act as if they are doing you a favor eating from your dish. They act as if they consider us their pets! It's this infuriating behavior that turns some people off to cats. As for me, I like sensing that cats are independent and will take care of themselves. This certainly was the case with Shadow who foraged for himself and apparently owed allegiance to no one.

Perhaps it was the low demand Shadow made on me that I liked. I loved having him come around. He would often come into my shop and plop himself down on my work bench next to the window and watch while I wrestled with trying to fit a running board onto my old Cadillac or some equally frustrating task. I found his presence strangely companionable and comforting. And we certainly didn't have a problem with gophers and rats around our house.

Then he'd up and go without a by-your-leave. And I knew I wasn't expected to put out a dish of cream or what have you. Occasionally I would, just to say, "Thank you, Mr. Cat, for dropping by."

The demand structure was low. Some people would say the payback for relating to cats is also low. I think I agree. When the chips are down, Cat won't be there for you. Cat is basically there for himself and himself only. It's the way of nature, except for some of us so-called "higher" animals.

I revised my estimate of cats after Shadow stopped coming by. We had a lot of coyote traffic through our neighborhood on Mount Helix and I think the life span of pets and feral animals was always at risk. I missed Shadow but I don't think cats are the pet for me.

On Animals

What's the significance of animals? Including myself? What gift do animals represent? Perhaps the universe is trying to experience itself and we animals are just one form in which the universe sees itself from many perspectives. We animals are a spectrum of the universe's ability to be conscious of itself.

Among other ways nature has experimented with apprehending itself are the plants. It appears that animals are one of the more dynamic ways nature has found of seeing itself, even of adjusting itself, although plants are pretty amazing. Whether hubris or reality, it appears that Homo Sapiens is the animal which is currently participating with nature in re-creating the universe and the 'natural.' We are 'seeing' the universe of which we are a part with ever increasing variety and perspective and our seeing actually changes what is seen. The world is actually a product of our sense perception. Perhaps the gift and significance of animals is a trajectory: a hint of what freedom may be.

A Tarot Card in my reading

The Princess of Cups holds a golden sea shell in which sits a huge tortoise, a land creature. Hovering above her head is a swan (the god Zeus?) And to her left is a large lotus blossom and her right, an ancient porpoise or fish. The scene is reminiscent of water with bluer depths below and lighter airy clouds where the swan opens its wings. The Princess wears a flowing white robe decorated with large hexagonal rosettes along the hem line. There are no numbers on her card. The ambient mood is tranquil. The tortoise is contained but looking outward. A land creature, a water creature and a creature of the air! The lotus blossom, a symbol of the Self! The color is blue and white. A pink light is cast on her robe and the flower.

Her place in my psyche reading is under My Fear. My fear to go into the realm where water dominates, where I cannot go without the protective carapace of the tortoise. Where my ability to swim and fly appears limited! The Princess is offering the tortoise, on a platter of gold shell! She holds up the one creature unaccustomed to a watery realm. The fish swims up-side down and the swan stays at the air-water interface.

The significance of these symbols seems just barely beyond my comprehension.

Rilke on Unfeeling Men

The knight with his armor
Ready to tackle the day, the world
With secure self-confidence.
Inside the armored case (torso)
Squats Death (Tod), brooding..

Rilke

Rilke's image of the knight is correct. All of us men in the West are knights. Good to be reminded - and also reminded that patriarchal Chauvinistic unfeeling doing is dead. That is, no longer viable for humankind.

GEORGE: A 1931 CADILLAC

I have had the good fortune to own several 1931 cars. I love the quality, shape, size and general ‘impressiveness’ of the 1930-32 Classics, particularly the Cadillacs and LaSalles. I restored a 1931 Cadillac five-passenger coupe from parts literally in baskets located throughout our house. The car’s name was George, in honor of the many men in my mother’s family who carried this name. The restoration work was a test of endurance, patience and sheer stubborn determination. It took over 15 years.

I did not try to create a “100 point” car. Rather I endeavored to re-create a functionally correct car which is mechanically sound and pleasing in appearance. Latches and other trim items were buffed and in most cases not freshly plated. Door locks were in excellent shape and did not require replating. The radiator shell was replated as were the head lights, tail lights and selected visible pieces of chrome trim.

I re-covered the running boards using rubber matting manufactured of a floor runner. It has a bolder grooving than the original running boards for 1931 Cadillacs but maintains the same basic pattern. Other substitutes for rubber trim were hand crafted from inexpensive rubber sheeting. Gaskets were also made individually for specific applications. I did this not simply to save money, although that was accomplished in some cases, but to give myself the pleasure of finding and devising solutions at hand for the minor problems of a restoration.

I am not skilled in metal work or painting so it was necessary to farm out this major work. However, I taught myself some basic wood-working skills and rebuilt the wood body frame from ground up. I assembled the body wood inside the existing metal body shell. Such a 3-dimensional puzzle presents a real challenge in geometry and basic wood-working. I also found that patience and a tolerance for trial and error methodology were necessary for this work. The only patterns I possessed were the decayed, checked, often warped and splintered wood from the original car. This car had been quite brutalized and fragmented. To help with the project of restructuring an identical 1931 5-passenger Cadillac coupe was acquired when I realized I was in over my head.

The car had spent a lot of time in the desert and served as target practice for various gun enthusiasts. There were bullet holes scattered throughout the body and doors of the car. I was tempted to leave these and present the car as a “Bonnie and Clyde” coupe, but I didn’t.

Previous owners had rescued the car from the desert and had the body dipped to halt further rusting, a process already well underway.. Some restoration had been started on the chassis. The engine and body were all apart in

basically disastrous shape.

The merits in acquiring such a car were 1) it was inexpensive, 2) no one could fault me if I gave up on the restoration, and 3) it was a relatively rare body style for 1931 Cadillacs and the Classic era. I liked the body styling. It is less "boxy" than the sedans and even the touring cars of the era. Very few cars of this model are listed in the directories of the Classic Car Club or the Cadillac LaSalle Club.

The engine was rebuilt by Mr. Ken Warren of the Egge Machine in Los Angeles. After rebuilding, the engine spent many months in the front entrance hall of our home. The transmission was housed in the kitchen hall. We built an additional two-car garage to house the restoration parts and provide space for the work. After getting into the garage we re-acquired our home!

After assembly the car was painted a beautiful Pinot Noir Red with black fenders and trim lines. George was beautiful. In 2001 I sold both 1931 Cadillacs to the Salome, AZ Car Museum where they can be seen on display. The second coupe is blue and is named "Sophie." I have a sense of pride and accomplishment to have had a part in bringing back this representative car of the Classic period in the art of car making.

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POEMS

Community

After painting my house
All residents seemed disoriented
Perhaps the frenetic buzz of scraping,
Washing and caulking
And the change in color
Upset their world.
Favorite entrances of spiders
And ants were closed
The odor altered
Trails covered over
I noticed colonies of ants
Milling around an electrical box
As if evicted
Web sites in the corners
Long used by generations
Of spider families
Now appear abandoned
Shadowed nooks and crannies
Of patio beams and fascia boards
Are now exposed in light colors
Prospective tenants are not lining up
For the new refurbished tenements
Neighborhood cats who regularly patrol
My yard and house crawl-space vents
Have deserted their rounds
Even roly bugs who crossed
My patio on their mysterious missions
Are gone.
The family of white-striped
Night-cats, mother and kits,
Who circumambulate my house
As if it were a Souther California Kaaba
Are nowhere in evidence
Since it was given a new exterior.
How forlorn my house

In its new yellow dress.
 Even the Hummingbirds aren't harvesting
 The Bird of Paradise flowers
 framing my office wall window.
 I haven't heard the mice who
 occasionally took refuge in my attic
 And their field cousins
 Foraging for macadamias in the ice-plant
 Have taken off for other Elysian Fields.
 The faithful skink who monitors my garage door
 Has deserted his post and the occasional coyotes
 Who use my driveway as one of their urban shortcuts
 No longer leave their droppings on my front yard.

I alone sit in my bright house
 Bereft of comforts and inconveniences
 Of familiar residents and visitors,
 The satisfying fit of beings in their places,
 Doing what they must do, making their little livings,
 Intruding into, preying upon and demanding from
 The others who share their domicile.
 An ecology of mutual existence interrupted.

THE EGO ADDRESSES GOD

I asked God since we are on a first-name basis
 May I be frank as in candid
 She said yes honey you can say anything you want
 Is it alright if I register a complaint
 Sure thing sweetie she calls me that sometimes
 You go right ahead just don't make it a habit
 I get tired of blue skies green grass and white clouds
 Is that it dearie God responds
 Not all how come all the street names were decided before I arrived
 And what about oil and water I mean not mixing and all
 Haven't thought about it for awhile but honey bunch
 Is there any thing more
 Well God says I its illness and death
 Do you really know what you're doing
 That's a hard one sweet cakes where she gets that I'll never guess
 Its just part and parcel one of the givens
 An axiomatic consequence of the way it is
 You know
 The order of things
 Providential circumstance
 Evolutionary necessity

Original sin and natural law
Come on God I said get real
Now hot buns she says what YHWH
Switching to her proper name and using the third person
What YHWH's telling you is
Its all one ball of wax and to be frank as in candid
YHWH's giving it all to you
Giving you the full treatment no less dear one
What YHWH's saying is whether
YHWH's know what YHWH's doing or not is not the question
YHWH's telling you all is yours
You get it all, no halves no seconds
ALL ALL ALL
You get the whole catastrophe
You don't have to get so upset I said
Cause that's my point I don't want the whole catastrophe
I don't want a universe where loved ones die
Or innocent children suffer.
So that's your point sweet pea
Yes I'm angry
I've always suspected you didn't know what you're doing
You never ask anyone for advice
You are always acting without my input
You're so damned insecure
Always insisting no other gods before you
Big deal maybe one of the other deities would do a better job
You don't seem willing to give them a chance
What are you thinking about
Well hold on dearie do you need Job to remind you
IAM Who IAM and besides
Have smelled the honeysuckle at dusk
Or tasted bacon and eggs on a cold camp out morning
Or heard the sound of a pure C-major chord
Well as a matter of fact I have so what are you saying God
This is enough to paraphrase one of your
So-called self-made auto magnates
In my capacity as creator there are two immutable laws
One for me and one for you
IAM never explain
And you sweetie lump never get to complain.

Untitled

There is a price to be paid
 For one's interview with the Transcendent.
 A Taboo, or Curse gets placed on your life
 Which often takes the form of a cutting off,
 An alienating or severing one of the
 Fundamental gifts or connections
 With our own instinctual humanness.
 A wound is inflicted leaving its mark
 Which then becomes the task for further heroic work.
 The price is a new threshold,
 An interface for finding the Way to remove the curse.
 If you talk to the End of Days
 You cannot enter the Promised Land.
 Wrestling with the Angel smites in the hip,
 Holding on for the Blessing, leaves a crippling scar.
 Contend with God's Favored
 Will knock you off your horse and blind you.
 Submit to the Vision, accept a thorn-in-the-flesh.

Missing Halo

The thirteen men dressed in classical Roman garb
 Are seated behind a low table
 All facing the same direction and,
 Notwithstanding that odd arrangement,
 Most of them are engaged
 In animated conversation with their neighbors
 As if filling time before
 The studio photographer gets the lens adjusted
 To the weird lighting
 Resulting from the golden back-glow
 Surrounding the heads of twelve.

Conspicuous by the absence of light
 Around his head, the figure on the far right
 Sits tensely clutching his purse
 And stares with hurt eyes
 At the man seated in the middle
 Who is extending his hands to food on the table
 As if to say, "Why don't we eat?"

On the floor, in front of the table
At the feet of the apparent host
Is a woman prostrate, her face buried on his ankle.
No one is paying her any attention.
Her hands massage the man's feet
With the hair of her head.
An erotic electricity fills the room,
The host has spilled his goblet of wine.

MEMORIES, ART & GRIEVING

Mother: Memory & Art

According to the Greeks, memory (Mnemosyne) is the mother of the arts. Art then is a child of memory and would seem to be 'a way out' of the Mother complex. That is, art is a pleasing product for Mom and is acceptable in lieu of our lives. We please Mother with our art rather than sacrifice to her with our lives.

Otherwise Mom has her hold on us, her male children, for our entire lives. The term, 'Mother Complex,' refers to the emotional memories distilled into our most intimate habits of feeling to which we cling as if for survival. We don't want to give up what we require in love, how we go about manifesting and appropriating our bodies, what we feel when we are 'at home', and the fears to which we have become accustomed. This is all Mother memory ruling a man's life. She is the continuity of patterns we have lived with for so long that we have become them. Therefore, we continue to live in her body, so to speak. She persists in patterns that seem so secretly mine yet attest to my origins in her.

Only a transformation of those in-dwelling memories into art can free us to become our own man. And that's the rub, it is hard work. I wish to remain a child. And Mom tenaciously keeps the child until she can claim the art as hers.

Mother: Memory & Grieving

I was struck by Carla's appearance when she visited us on the occasion of Steve's wedding. She is a beautiful 60 year old woman with silver gray hair and 97 pounds on a 5'1" frame. I was led to speculate on what my mother might have looked like had she survived into her mature years. Her death at age 45 following cancer was preceded by a period of confusion and denial by myself and, I dare say Carla and Jeffrey. Carla and I were late teens and Jeffrey was barely 10 years of age. Dad colluded in the denial and efforts to shield us from the reality of mom's suffering.

I wonder now about the grieving. Did we grieve mother's death? Have we grieved the loss even yet? How did we cover it over at the time? And how have we moved on in our lives despite having lost the center? There seemed to be no vision, no wisdom except: move on. Move on in life. Keep a steady hold on things and don't let life get you down.

And so we did. And now fifty years later, she rules our lives as if she

had never left. Carla looks the image of Mother. Jeffrey and I struggle to separate ourselves from the body, patterns, life and spirit which gave us birth. Truly our memories of mother are a complex holding us as secure as any belief or dogma.

If we do not mourn we are condemned to a life of guilt. We did not receive absolution and freedom to move on because we have not done our penance. But life will not be short circuited and so we repeat the patterns with every representative of the feminine we encounter or seriously engage with. We try to withdraw and stay un-engaged but we still are held to our mother's embrace. She is the ground of our being in a literal sense. We will not rise above the ground of our lives until we mourn the loss of mother and embrace creating the 'art' of our own lives.

Christmas 1955

Mother on the couch looking so frail and wide eyed. Unable to penetrate the fog of drugs, No one could say anything. No one could comfort, not dad, not Carla, not Jeffrey not myself. Least of all there was no comfort for mom. I cried for the last time in mom's presence.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Where does the premise, “If you really got to know me you wouldn’t like me...” come from?

1. Repeated criticism
2. A pattern of being told no
3. Constant belittling
4. Having wants subtly denied
5. Undeserved praise.

If our wants are denied us by those who, by definition, “love us,” then we must project upon ourselves the blame for this unloving behavior towards us. The logical conclusion is the we must be unlovely.

We accept the conclusion which we cannot project outward on those who act towards us in a withholding, depriving manner.

With criticism and belittling we cannot contradict those on whom we depend for our very lives. We interject these as true, and blame ourselves for being unworthy.

Thus is born our self-hatred. This is the way our process of accepting the blame for the behavior of others begins. This explains our shame and our inability to receive praise as our due.

False praise only reinforces our certainty that we are unworthy and adds another element: guilt. We really didn’t deserve that compliment, we know because it was for something we had no part in achieving, i.e., our looks, our being ‘nice’, not disturbing the others, and on and on. So we receive a false message and do not deny it, yet know its insincerity. The split in our self is planted.

Wounds

My childhood wound resulted from my early perception that mom was interested in what I could become for her sake and not in what I was. It didn’t matter that I had no idea whatever about what I wanted or who I was other than to be left to play! There was a push from her and resistance from me. Simple

physics. Later there would be deception and keeping up the facade of being what she wanted, or at least the obedient, 'nice boy.' I wanted space. Perhaps, if I had been given 'space,' I might have wanted for myself what she wanted for me. But it wasn't to be, for me to have those kinds of decisions. So my decision was to avoid control, appear to be obedient, or to enlist dad's help to avoid.

Notes on reading "The King of Elfland's Daughter" By Lord Dunsany

Be aware of the longing for "something new."

The wish to be ruled by a "magic" Lord.

Getting our wish (wants) has consequences.

"Something new" has unforeseen consequences.

He who invites "magic" into his life must be prepared to receive the "dark" as well as the "light."

In this world "time flows" in the Other it is "watched."

The Other recedes and comes near, not always with a discernable pattern.

From Martin Booth's "The Industry of Souls"

"It is the work of the soul, to love and hate; to seek after the beautiful and to recognize the ugly, to honor friends and wreak vengeance upon enemies; yet, above all, it is the work of the soul to prove it can be steadfast in these matters."

Deprivation Mind Set

Dad would say, "We don't have to do everything the Jones do." That was his way of justifying doing with less. Even for himself. I'm sure the impact of the depression years was part of this but also something of the Rippel's way of operating. Dad's Uncle Will owned a large farm in Winchester, Tennessee and was part owner of the county locker and Bank there. Yet Uncle Will and his two old maid sisters, Aunts Eta and Dora, made their own clothes, drank homemade coffee from chicory nuts and never made a frivolous expenditure their whole lives according to the legends handed down to Carla, Jeff and me. I inflicted this same mind set on my first wife and sons! I have the deprivation blues. Talk about the sins of the fathers!

Criticism

Was I praised for the wrong things? Forgiven for not being good at adult disciplines such as chores, farming, etc.? Excused from exerting myself at tap dancing, piano, clarinet? Was I placed on the treadmill of 'being good', being

praised so that I became the center of attention and craved the attention I got? Was it praise for inconsequential things? For those things that were outside my control, e.g., my appearance?

I excelled at the easy thing to do like play, schoolwork, sports and getting good grades. But I never got to work on cars, do part time work at the service station, work on grandpa's farm, or become comfortable with Uncle Malcolm's ponies. Looking back I realize that I got my share of having my shortcomings pointed out.

Now, as a grown man, I am angry at criticism. I find it hard to deal with my reality as a lazy, insensitive and unthoughtful husband. Any criticism starts me into a knee-jerk response. Why do I have such a hard time admitting that much of the criticism is true? Why do I have to pull something out of the hat every time I get criticized? As if to say, "I can too justify my existence. See, I am good at some things. People even tell me I am."

Why is it so hard to say: "Yes, yes that's me. I've wrestled with it, but that is who I am."

Because I do excel easily at many things, I can get feelings of inadequacy when faced with the new, the strange, the complicated, the unknown or the real tough jobs. I didn't really deserve a lot of the praise I got as a child. I couldn't take credit for having curly hair or a good disposition. Because I didn't deserve praise I was afraid to let people see that I didn't deserve it.

Words of criticism contain some truth and describe a self I try to disown. But this self is also the guardian of my treasure, my shadow beauty, my unacknowledged key to wholeness.

POSTCARDS TO WOMEN

Mom

Mom, you were a beautiful human being, strong and weak, with beauty of soul, yearning to find yourself and give to your children. If I could keep your example of courage and dignity in the face of overwhelming terror and loneliness, I could achieve anything. In your isolation you endured and grew in spirit stature. You never gave in to your despair. I was not there for you. Forgive me, help me forgive myself.

Carla

I gave you a rough time in early childhood. I teased you unmercifully when we were young children. I was jealous of your competition for mom's attention. But you were also my best play mate! You grew into a beautiful woman. You have had your trials and crises. But like mother, you have grown and bloomed into a gracious, wonderfully spirited woman. I know she would have been so proud of you.

Lucy

I rebuffed many of your overtures for connection. I mistakenly took your attention and love for suffocation. I realized too late what all of your friends knew, you were a loving, caring woman. And you really loved me, not just because I married your daughter. I was too immature to receive your full love. And I exploited your eagerness to care by sitting back and letting you do chores and cooking and caretaking as though I was always a guest at your home. But I did love you, Lucy. Especially your generous child-like spirit. Your love for me and your grandchildren was a marvel to behold. To this day they remember.

Elsie

I almost killed your spirit, that beautiful child-like-enthusiasm and care free spirit. I ridiculed your feelings which I see now were precious gifts. I treated them and you as unimportant in so many ways. I was blinded by my own insecurity and needs. I'm sorry. And I'm sorry that I didn't legitimate yours. Finally I discounted your criticisms as having no merit. I defended more and more and your critique became more and more strident and sharper in focus. Finally, all was gone, destroyed by my refusal to connect and love you deeply

enough. Furthermore I think I did not prepare you on the objective level for the kind of world where you would have to function on your own. You deserved better. I am self-indicted. I must forgive myself, mend and become the mature soul that my existence is constantly demanding.

PATrebor

At some point I realized our relationship had no future. Rather than share that with you I continued to exploit it for my own physical needs and gratification. I deliberately used your eagerness for sexual exploration. That you did not object is no excuse for my behavior. You were ready for a relationship at that level calling for marriage and commitment. I was no where ready for that step in my life. You have continued to hold a place in my imagination and dreams over all these years as the mysterious, uninhibited feminine.

A NOTE TO MY GRANDCHILD

I was once asked the question, "What epitaph would you put on your gravestone?" How would I sum it up? A life? I lived four lives by age 60!

What will I say to my grandchild as he or she sits on my knee and asks, "Granddaddy, what did you do in the Great Transition of century 20?" Would I respond, "I flossed and kept all of my teeth into my eighties." Or "I kept my lawn mowed and used Scott's Turfbuilder to keep it free of weeds." Or maybe, more to the point would I tell her or him the story of Sisyphus and say, "That's the life I led -- that's the life of all of us, Sweet Dear One. That's the life we all get, but I managed to make a decision. You see, little one, when I rolled the huge boulder to the summit, just before it was to roll back down again for the gazillionth time, I paused and took in the view from the summit."

The point, Dear Grandchild, being that I am aware there is nothing we can do to justify our having been here, taking up space and using the precious air and water, there's no permanent leaving of anything to be remembered by. We all work, we all die. But our lucidity isn't an excuse for cynicism. Our toil is not to erect a monument or take pride in any accomplishment. It is to experience the joy and woe of being. It's all worth while for those moments from the summit, those moments of consciousness, the visions of the possible, the knowledge of our true place in the scheme of things. And, Little One, one other thing, though we cannot justify our existence, we do not need to. Living is its own justification.

Your loving,

Grandpa

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SOCIETY

I was saddened and disappointed about the O.J. Simpson murder trial fiasco of the criminal justice system. I wonder what the Black church has to say about the issue of justice in this case. I'm sure in the larger context the church is well aware of the injustices done to Black people in this society and the pervading corrosion of racism. Can this be used to justify or rationalize the decision to acquit an obvious murderer? I am saddened by the whole affair, yet I cannot attribute perfection to the system in any case. It is flawed and human. What is served to convict a killer who strikes out in rage? Some abstract principle? Some comfort to the rest of us that 'you can't get away with it?'

So now it has been demonstrated that you can 'get away with murder,' what the cynics among us have believed all along. But that doesn't mean there isn't any justice. There is only justice imperfect and incomplete for grievous wrong. Redress is never complete and in some instances is never begun. Let us give thanks for those times where justice serves the oppressed and the disenfranchised. Even if only in the illusory victory over 'justice.'

Can life's 'problems' be solved with an outburst of violence? Or, for that matter, with resort to violence of any nature? I would like to believe it isn't true. God - say it isn't true! But you are dumb, God. You never explain. You exact your pound of flesh in ways that I do not understand. Why should one suffer and the other get away with murder? Why should the fool roll off a log and land in flowers and the wise fall into a pit? And all the while You are silent! Hiding behind your fucking status! A facade, no help and we stumble on in our ignorance and illusions. I know. This has all been said before. The Psalmist and Job said it better but were just as outraged as I am. See Amos chapters 5 -8.

Money

I have been concerned in my life with the welfare of the underdog and the poor and disenfranchised. I spent a good part of my life in direct service to these segments of our society. I have been an advocate for the advancement of planetary civilization in the economic and ecological arenas. I continue to support active charities in all these areas, and expect to be giving to the less fortunate through my abilities and funds.

However, our resources as a family are a drop in the ocean of needs. We can't hope to have a great impact on the world's need if we disperse our estate widely or in its entirety. We can join focused charities and combined with others donations achieve measurable results.

I would like to have a greater impact on the lives of my children and their impact on the world, rather than dilute my assets against intractable world problems. I believe my sons are men, good solid responsible men, with a growing role of responsibility for society and its future. Money does not solve personal problems but it may give enough freedom to release their efforts at creating a better world through their work and children.

History of US, 220 Years

Some policy perspectives of the Founding Fathers aren't emphasized very much in our current political rhetoric:

Deism
 individualism
 violence
 genocide
 capitalistic excess
 consumerism
 imperialism
 slavery
 racism
 sexism

to mention a few.

The 20th Century

I have lived through the last two thirds of the 20th century. This period of history has seen many horrors, and many revolutions. Some have been legitimate expressions of deep human longings, other degraded and unworthy. The backdrop of world events from the depression to the dot com bubble of the 90's has been a large stage with dramatic changes. Century 21 bodes to continue this onrush of cultural revolution, political upheaval and economic change. In the unnoticed foreground of these events families like mine have lived their every day lives pursuing mundane, limited objectives, contributing in small but concrete ways to the larger dramas of our times.

Many families, perhaps most, whose stories played out in the shadows of "larger events" suffered some form of tragedy. Lives needlessly lost or exiled, bent this way and that by larger social currents, ideologies and circumstance.

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WEATHER

Humility is one word that comes to me when I think of weather. Not weather in its benign forms but weather that renders me awe struck and helpless. A force of nature that returns me to a situation of dependency and powerlessness.

Only a few times in my life have I experienced weather of this sort. Once during the 1962 hurricane that came up the Mississippi toward Baton Rouge and again, during a commute home from downtown Detroit in a heavy snowstorm. In both situations I felt at the mercy of forces larger than myself or my resources. It's a humbling situation when your options are reduced drastically. It makes you realize how much we take for granted in our every day situations.

Fortunately, these two events were not life-or-death situations. In both it was a matter of time until the storms had abated. What I thought was humbling proved to be merely inconvenient and not a danger to life or limb. But it gave a taste of what more dire possibilities might arise.

In the case of the gulf hurricane we were isolated at home for the duration, unable to do anything but wait it out. That does have a humbling aspect. The Detroit snowstorm, on the other hand, had surprising positive consequences. An unexpected sociality developed among fellow commuters caught and powerless. A shared helplessness amplifies the need for social connection and reassurance. Virtual strangers began sharing our life stories and ambitions. Homes were opened on the side streets and neighbors and commuters who would never see or know one another under normal circumstances were having block parties and were welcoming stranded suburbanites in for coffee and snacks. A common denominator emerges in the face of overwhelming weather. The experience of shared humiliation and a reminder of our common insecurity as human beings!

Taiwan

The west coastal plain of Taiwan is at sea level with many rivers, rice paddies and fish ponds. There is water everywhere. It is also one of the most densely populated areas in the world. When we were there over 14 million people lived on the coastal strip of an island only 90 miles long. The oppressive heat of tropical Taiwan reminded me of Southern Louisiana, but in most respects

was even more stifling. During the days I would feel as if I were wearing a skin tight Saran wrap of perspiration. There just wasn't much evaporation happening to give any cooling sensation. At night I would lay in bed hoping for a little breeze to reduce the stickiness of sweat dampened sheets. Day after day of humid oppressive heat takes a toll on energy. The high hazy sun of unbearable intensity means movement is planned from shady spot to shady spot. A few stores had air conditioning but most homes had only circulating fans. Clothes on or no clothes the humidity felt the same. A daily bath or shower helped temporarily and evenings were usually cooler most of the year.

Fortunately in Taiwan edible fruits are available in abundance and these are cooling to eat. Cooking and eating hot foods like steamed rice is surprisingly easy and necessary to keep one's energy level up.

The occasional frequent thunderstorms sometimes brought a new phenomena, hot rains! Steam rising from hot concrete and asphalt created a sauna effect.

After two months of summer of continuous humid heat I noticed that I was functioning. The clammy hot moisture over my body began to feel 'normal.' I noticed the people continuing their work in a paced, deliberate fashion. In the tropics you don't hurry. You do less during the mid-day. The oppressive heat didn't shut things down. I saw Chinese babies totally wrapped with mothers going about their work. Most people dressed to cover themselves almost totally from the sun. I grew to like the 'sticky' feel of perspiration that is not going to evaporate. As a product of my response to heat it felt like an extra dimension of my body.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

A visit from Chris Ann and Gene evokes many feelings. Chris Ann and I go all the way back to the womb! Her mother and mine were friends during their pregnancies with the two of us. That makes her my longest duration friend. Our experiences and values are very similar as well as our feelings for Moberly—the longing for the past of Moberly as a place caught in timelessness and youth. Always subject, within limits to our re-interpretations, but somehow frozen in the world of rosy youth, carefree school days, joys and pains of childhood, dating, competition and joint ventures of growing up. How painful it was! Yet how willing I am to dress it in idealistic colors. It was and is a Camelot.

Bob Lang and Chris Ann Bowers are long time friends. Who would guess Kansas City would not have been in my future. I could have taken a job there. Could have married Connie Constance. Would Connie have been constant? Who knows. I can remember Jim Newby's mannerisms and image but can't recall anything he said. I used to be impacted by the banter between him and Lang. Probably was the beginning of my interest in poetry.

I was best man at Maurice Frazier's wedding. Also at Rudy Mattias'. At my weddings the best men were Gill Berg and Jerry ?. How strange the selection of 'Best Men.'

Rhonda

Rhonda is an amazing person and a tragic figure. Her acceptance of her life, it was always her way, to appreciate Grandma and the farm, to think of Dub and Tormey.

When all the cousins were together at Grandma's, what games we played exploring the farm, visits to the barn and hay racks. Crawling through the secret crawl space built into the closets between the bedrooms.

And there was the whole business of cousins not supposed to be attracted to one another. I didn't see the sense in that. I was in love with Rhonda, and before her Dolores, Ralph's daughter. As Rhonda became a pretty teenager I was more attracted sexually. I guess Aunt Reba, or certainly, Uncle Jim suspected it and really set it up to guard the girls. After one visit where I took Rhonda out on a movie date, I must have been a junior in high school, I never saw her alone again.

Rhonda had married Don and they had two girls and were living in Cape Girardeau. Elsie and I with our boys stopped once or twice to visit on our way to

Moberly. We didn't maintain contact over the years. I never saw Rhonda again until Grandma's funeral. It was not a happy time for us to re-connect. By that time Elsie and I were divorced and I had married Pauline.

Random Note

I wrote an article about our 1931 Cadillac coupe which evoked an interested response from Lester Wegeforth, son of the founder of the San Diego Zoo, Dr. Harry Wegeforth. He said that car was probably purchased new by his father and used by him to make house calls on patients in their homes. A spot lite had been mounted on the driver side cowl that could be operated from the driver's seat. He used this to light up house numbers to make sure he was at the right address. He also used this car to escort celebrities around the Zoo grounds.

New Orleans

The Not Easy

It shouldn't be there
 No place for a city
 Between two swamps
 A river and a lake
 Altitude minus three feet
 Hordes of mosquitos and
 Other undesirables,
 Tourists, Rednecks, and arty types
 Crowd in with Creoles, Cajuns,
 And scions of old plantation gentry.
 If it wasn't for the Roosevelt hotel
 You couldn't get an honest drink
 In the whole town.
 Instead watered down liquor
 Two percent beer and the ever present Sazerac
 Always available like trinkets
 Thrown from Rex and Comus.
 Oysters used to be okay
 But now are imported from Seattle.
 There are redeeming features:
 Good Music and the Garden District
 But finding either is
 Not Easy.

48

MYSTERY

Now and then: to turn away from simplifications, systems, abstractions, half and whole lies and to see the world as it is; not as an ultimately survey able and comprehensible system of concepts, but as a jungle of beautiful and ugly and terrifying, always new, completely incomprehensible mysteries.

The newspaper and media serve up the world in statistics, analyses and explanations repeated daily - reduced to two dimensions - the world seems flat, survey able, devoid of mysteries - ready to adapt itself to any explanation meeting the need of the public. We know there is no reality to this but we are reassured. We enjoy the illusion that we know what is happening in the world - and that, substantially, nothing has happened that the editors did not partially foretell in last week's editorials.

We transform the jungle of mysteries into a map - a pretty garden or a flat map, The moralist with maxims, the religious with faith, the engineer with computers. A flight into unreality, back to the bearable, the orderly, the comprehensible...

Within this bearable, orderly zone of concepts, systems, myths, dogmas we live 90%+ of our lives. We lead a peaceable quiet orderly existence, albeit cursing a good deal, comfortable, a roof over our heads and floor underneath our feet with a knowledge that our forbears lived similarly within an order, a law, a system not unlike our own.

Until, in an instant, all this disappears and is torn to bits, roof and floor become smoke and fire, order and justice confusion and chaos, peace and contentment the suffocating threat of death, our whole ancestral, revered and reliable pseudo-world has burst into flame and fragments and there is nothing left but the monster, reality.

One can call it God, this monstrous and incomprehensible thing, this terrifying, convincing thing and does giving it a name gain anything in understanding, in clarifying, in bearableness? No.

This reality (the curtain of lies and systems drawn back) never lasts more than a moment. It can be produced by an illness, a catastrophe, a momentary drop in mood, or awakening from an oppressive nightmare. A sleepless night brings us face to face with the inexorable. And in that moment all order, all comfort, all safety, all faith, all knowledge is doubtful.

Everybody knows the above described reality.

Even covered over, we do not forget it. It will find a hiding place in the

blood, in the liver, in the big toe, and unfailingly one day it will assert itself in full vigor and unforgettable ness.

Thoughts on 'Reality'

Reread Persig's book, *Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I resonate with his insight that we can never know the world, but only a small fraction of the awareness possible, and then we assemble those to create our world. The amazing thing is how consistent this world is from individual to individual. We must constitute part of each other's awareness and thought processes to get such a result!

We cannot know reality. What we know is our sense data which does not constitute anything about the world external to ourselves. But we have 'a priori' intuitions which assemble our sense data into a world, i.e., time and space assurances.

I recall Lawrence's poem, "If good goes into the stool, good is the stool, good is the pudding." Or something to that effect. The reality of "stuck." I have known many times in my life the reality of quiet peace of mind as a result of identifying with my work. Involvement with my "stuck ness" has been a much rarer experience. It would be nice to have that experience more. The quiet, the physical quietness of inner peace. The cessation of 'minding,' and the calming of random values, i.e., having no thought for an outcome or result.

If you have a high evaluation of yourself then your ability to recognize new facts is weakened. Your ego isolates you from the quality reality. When the facts show that you've just goofed, you're not as likely to admit it. A mechanic who has a big ego is in for rough treatment. My low evaluation of myself as a 1931 Cadillac mechanic helped me negotiate many puzzles and obstacles during Sophie's and George's restoration.

We should celebrate, as a society, that despite the allegations our education system has failed, we have so many masterful poets of the language. It is a delight to discover them. And not a rare delight.

In our front yard is a venerable cedar tree.
 We call it Joseph.
 This stone was placed in a hollow formed by a limb
 From the main trunk.
 It stayed there for one year.
 I'm giving that stone to you.
 Sharing the stored information it has gathered
 From its association
 With one of earth's special beings.
 To retrieve information
 Place stone under pillow
 And sleep on it.

Noah, a winter solstice figure. World was at low ebb. End of one world start of another. Planted a vineyard as the first task after the world's demise. Got drunk, the only way to relate of the loss of a world.

Grace

My wife is the wrath of God in my life. She knows where my illusion making organ, my "gizzard," is located. And she can always tell when it is operating to create for me a nice balloon, a nice womb-like world or, a great grandiose ego-self (either one since the self is just the flip side of the world we create). And, knowing my illusion, she punctures that world with a Word.

Not that she is so perfect. I know all her buttons and foibles and failings. Her stuff smells just like mine and other's. But that's just the point, when she confronts me in my illusions, killing her doesn't do any good. The Word is still there, independent of the agent who conveyed it. The Wrath of God comes from the most offensive, weak, unprincipled sources. Killing the Messiah doesn't get rid of the Messianic word!

I am left with my life on my hands, left with a decision, Yes or No. Am I going to say yes to the way life is, or find me some other illusion about life.

"God you vex, surely, surely,
Would no ear hearken to me
Thou dost vex me still
Over land and sea, You
Gruesome power exercise
Hedging my life this way and that.

A possible eulogy for G.R. Rippel.

Here he is-in his death. He is dying his death. He was a member of his family with all the equivocal relationships that involved. He was a chemical engineer, a citizen of the US, an environmental advocate for reasonableness, a son of Mildred Agnes Dodge and Charles Kenneth Rippel, brother of Carla and Jeffrey, a wannabe poet, a singer, a winemaker, a restorer of '31 Cadillacs, lover of Classic Cars, and a lover of women mostly from afar. He was father to Steven Carl, Curtiss Edward and Clifford Neal.

He was husband to Elsie Stumpf and to Pauline Wagner. He was a lazy man, an avoider in relationships, a novice planter of grape vines, a lover of barrels and wine bottles and pencils. His journals you will find are a jumbled, inchoate record of his journey. He battled his fear and fascination of women. He was loyal. Of his virtues there were many, and he had many faults. His vices were probably too few. He was a successful investor, thrifty, selfish, generous, narrowly focused, expansive in interests and hobbies, and a builder of two garages with Pauline.

The Funeral Celebration, a possible sketch.

I hope family and friends would gather to celebrate my one life and one Death.

I would be there, either in body or spirit, dying my death, or you might say, experiencing my Death.

I would hope my three sons might say the Words over my living and dying. My wife Pauline might haul out the modified funeral service of the Order similar to the one used at my father's funeral, light a candle or two, and perhaps lead the singing. Some suggested songs might be: "O God our help in ages past," "God moves in a mysterious Way" sung to the tune of "Ghost Riders," and "The Doxology."

Other songs could include "I Don't Know Why," "I Am A Stranger Here," and "On The Street Where You Live." If there is time many more come to mind.

If there is a procession, please play the theme from Zorba.

If my body is present I would ask my wife, Pauline, to take a bottle of alcohol and remove any signs of make-up that well meaning, but mistaken, morticians may have employed. Wash until my real face emerges with whatever wrinkles and scars it possesses at the time. I wouldn't want to be a stranger at my own funeral.

My sons, and perhaps others, would say words. Not words of praise but true words. Words telling of my passivity and the struggle to live a life. Words of the wounds I carried and created in others. Words of the alienation and brokenness of our family and its joys and triumphs. Perhaps they might share also of connections and love. Then they would pronounce the absolution on my life. The fact of its given reality. They would pronounce it all in. All complete, all good, not in some sentimental moral sense, but in the profound way that all of life is good, including death.

If they choose they could also remind those gathered that this comes from that in-dwelling Word we all carry but also was uniquely objectified by many heroes and heroines, but most dramatically by Jesus of Nazareth who was my life long pursuit and saint.

I cannot presume that others will have adopted my belief concerning immortality.

But if they choose to honor me they can say that I lived my one life and died my one death. We are all of us, eternal. Nothing can be added or taken away from that which comes into existence.

Then a final prayer for those gathered, not for the deceased. To which, I hope, those there will say their Amens.

JESUS OF NAZARETHJesus A Note

Let's say he lived in a small village 4 miles from Sepphoris, the major cross roads town in Northern Galilee where Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Syrians, Persians and Hebrews would have traversed and whose influences would have been common. Perhaps even Asians from the sub-continent could also have come through. It was a very pluralistic node. He was someone who walked everywhere he ever went! His sense of time and the rhythm of daily life was derived from the practical limitations imposed by that mode of transport, i.e., staying in peoples' homes, talking to friends and acquaintances, going to the market places, the lake shore, and , if it existed as such, going to synagogue. Did he know how to read? He might have picked up Greek as a second language.

A Saving Word

The thought that there is a Messiah coming, or 'out there' somewhere, or who has come, is the monumental illusion of the human condition.

Only the fundamental human affirmation that 'there is no Messiah' frees us to receive the ultimate true word about our existence: Our lives, as they are, are what the universe embraces, sustains, endorses, loves, ratifies, accepts.

That we do not require a Messiah is God's Messianic Word --- a final word, the Ultimate Word. To desire more than God provides is an illusion. That there is no savior is the Saving Word.

Outline of a Talk on 'Grace' with Four Points of Four points

Grace is a reality...

1. a concrete life **Event** occurring in a real life situation....
2. which is a life **Intrusion**....
3. against which I make a life **Defense**....
4. and requires of me a life **Decision**....

The Event of Grace...

1. comes as a **Seizure**....
2. provokes an **Offense**....
3. requires a **Decision**....
4. demands my **Death**....

Grace conveys an Absurd Word...

1. that **All creation is Good**....
2. that **All you (self) are is Received**....
3. that **All the past is Approved**....
4. that **All the future is Open**....

This Grace Word was expressed in a Story...(told by a faith-community)...

1. of **Jesus** of Nazareth, a historical man....
2. who became the **Christ**, a cosmic truth....
3. and was acknowledged as **Our Lord**....
4. which I confess is **the story of my Life-Reality**.

The True Meaning of the Christian Message(a little gnosis, secret knowledge, I'm passing on).

I find it most odd that the most obvious interpretation of the Gospel stories and of the Christ myth is the interpretation least likely to be encountered.

Jesus, an ordinary guy of the first century with a talent for telling unusual stories and aphorisms, lives an itinerant life wandering a rural province north of Jerusalem telling people about God's Empire, as opposed to the Roman, mingles with the 'questionable' element of society, including those who don't bathe very often and those who have various ailments, physical(skin lesions, scabies, eye sores, etc.) and mental. He does an unusual thing: He touches them! They are astounded and grateful. They listen to what he says.

What does he say(as opposed to the voluminous material we have in the Christian canon of what other people say about him!)? He doesn't mention God very much. He doesn't say anything about being a son of God, after all aren't we all sons and daughters of God? He does mention the True Human Being in the 3rd person. BUT, most interestingly enough, he does not claim to be the messiah. Even when writers later are pushing this they often put on Jesus' lips words like, "Don't tell anyone."

Patently this is not the messiah expected by the Jews. Their illusion of a restoration of the Kingdom of David, of political and earthly power is punctured by this image of messiah.

Isn't it obvious that Jesus, through his actions and through the story that has survived, is really saying, "THERE IS NO MESSIAH." "If you are looking for someone who is a Savior, who will wipe away every tear, make life hunk-dory, THEN I'VE GOT GOOD NEWS FOR YOU, THERE ISN'T ANY MESSIAH COMING." Start having 'ears to hear and eyes to see.'

Later in the councils and the book the story was modified although its message can still be seen. They said of these events:

Jesus arrived from the other realm in the same way that all the famous 'sons of God' do in our time, by a virgin birth. He suffered under Pontius, was executed, came back after being dead, and then went back to the other realm via an 'ascension.'

The central point of this? When you die to your illusions (messiah coming) then you live. The Cross and Open Tomb are the two major symbols of the story. The Christ stuff is just cosmic smoke and Greek decor.

Later, of course, the rag-tag group of people who knew Jesus, some of whom never were enamored of the Christ idea, did look back and said something like this: "You know, that guy Jesus, who said there wasn't any messiah coming, HE said THE MESSIANIC WORD."

"The word that there is no messiah is the ultimate word that can be said to an illusion-bound people or person. That there is no messiah is the messianic word, the end of all words.

That guy.....He must have really been the messiah to bring such a word."

MARY OF MAGDALA

Mary of Magdala represents the feminine in its most comprehensive expression. As portrayed in the *Gospel of Mary* she

is the first woman Apostle (and most likely, the very first Apostle of either gender),
knew the historical Jesus as a colleague, companion sojourner and enabler,
is the first witness of the newly manifest True Human, received special instruction and knowledge from Our Lord, does not falter when Our Hero has departed, comforts the distraught disciples, strengthens them in sharing her experience and vision, instructs them with teachings, not in her own name, but of the Savior's words,
calms and unites by turning hearts to the Good, demonstrates spiritual maturity as a basis for authority and leadership; a more reliable criterion than mere apostolic lineage or a person's sex,
explains how the soul overcomes passion and advances past the Powers that attempt to dominate it,
refutes with feeling and affection the divisive confrontations inspired by male ego,
calls the disciples to consideration of the Savior's *words* and for rejection of new teachings based on private 'revelation' or man-made traditions,
was loved by the Savior more than the others; that love and esteem based on his sure knowledge of her.

EPILOGUE

Dream of 10/5/91:

A woman guides me through a series of narrow portholes or doorways. I have to go through them on hands and knees crawling. Some are shaped like key holes and have doors with openings that I am barely able to squeeze through. The woman is rustling around outside the house. A woman in the house looks out the front door, nothing there. I go out the door after hearing a shuffling or scraping noise against the house. I see a dark shape, human but very primitive and diffuse moving against the house toward the back. I shout "Who are you?"

The guide is backing away from me down the side of the house, her hand extended scraping the siding, gesturing for me to follow. I follow her. We leave the house and go into swampy woodland. The ground is soft covered with moss and wild grasses. The tracks we make fill with water.

Deep into the woods we come to a clearing. The guide turns to me and extends a hand. I take it and we start plunging deeper into an open woods on the other side of the clearing, walking faster - almost running.

At last we stop at the edge of a large grassy plain. To the left the woods curve around so that it makes a dark border for the open fields. Far off on the right is a lake.

The guide gestures for me to crouch down. To be silent. To wait.

After a long time, I don't know how long, shadowy images begin to disturb the woods across. At the edge vague shapes are moving silently within the trees. Gradually I see emerging to the edge of the forest a herd of deer, but they do not move into the open. Then a large white stag with magnificent antlers moves just out of the shadows. The stag sniffs the air and paws the ground. Then just as mysteriously they are gone - melted back into the forest.

The guide turns to me - signaling me to remove my clothes. I understand there is to be some kind of task for me. I do as she says. She then begins to cover my entire body with animal fat, rubbing it into my hair and over my legs, arms and torso until I glisten with fat. She smears me with grass, dirt and old leaves. She places something on my head wrapping leather thongs around my forehead and ears until my head hurts with the tightness. My eyes

sting with grease and my nostrils are filled with the rancid smell of deer fat. When the guide finishes she gives me a leather pouch which I place around my waist and then she gives me a rock, a smooth stone about the size of my fist, black. I put it in the pouch. She looks to the woods where we had seen the deer and points. She leaves me.

I sit waiting. For a long time. I doze and start awake. It seems like days go by. Finally, toward dusk of one of the days I hear the rustling of dark shapes in the trees. The white stag emerges, behind him moving cautiously, the does and smaller fawns.

As twilight fades the Moon has risen. I move in the shadows of the trees to get closer. Off in the distance is the lake. I think the herd is going to the water. As I get to the place where they are coming out of the woods the herd starts to move slowly across the plain towards the lake. I drop to my hands and move to join the herd, slowly raising myself as the pace becomes faster. I feel a great exhilaration as I move into the body of the herd. We are running! There are shaggy bodies to my left and right. My breath is drowned out by the noises of the herd's hooves and breathing.

How long we ran I don't know. Suddenly the great stag at front plants his forelegs and wheels to face the herd. The herd stops. I drop to my hands breathing hard.

The stag has turned and I feel his eyes on me. Then I realize the weight on my head! I have antlers! They feel as if they are emerging from my own skull. The stage paws the ground, sniffs and advances toward me. I am terror struck!. I reach into the pouch and take out the stone. The herd is nervous and starts to separate as the stag moves back toward me. When he comes up and sniffs me I feel as if I will explode. The stag lowers his head and antlers to me. I leap up grabbing the antlers and throwing myself over onto the stag's great back. As if on signal the herd and stag bolt and I am hanging on for my life. The stag tries to dismount me. I reach up with the rock and strike a blow on the stag's antlers just at the tip of the largest prong. The end of the antler breaks off into my hand.

At that moment the herd and the stag are gone. And I am standing in a circle of rocks on the shore of a lake with a stone in one hand and the tip of the stag's antlers in the other. Before me stands the Guide only she is wearing a huge set of antlers on her head. I throw myself down at her feet and cry out, "Who are you?" She lifts me up and leads me over to the edge of the lake. She points for me to look into the water. I see myself reflected, standing there alone. I hold the point of the stag's antler in my hand.

A Postword

What's the Voice of the ancestors demanding? What does it mean to

become? Become what? What is worth the expenditure of our one life? What is it we want? We know, all too well, what we lack, a capacity for intense deep feeling and an intuitive trust that those feelings are there and can guide us.

How can we overcome the fears of not being in control? Look at dad. Look at any man you know, or that you have heard of, read of. Was dad in control? What was he really in control of? His economic destiny? No! His family? No! Only by a continual subtle intimidation of mom could he keep her and us as satellites in our proper configuration about him, and even that doesn't work, death or some other psychic reality was bound to intervene and it wasn't control at all, only convenience, a false peace and security. Bought at a frightful price.

Imagine what powerful creatures Kenneth and Mildred could have been if they had allowed the full play of their intuitions and instincts. Imagine what offspring?! Or imagine the power of dad and Lucille if that element of "control" had been overcome!

What are we really afraid of? That "life" will somehow get to us? It will, my friend, anyway! Are we afraid of economic chaos? Loss of control over our wives? We know we don't possess that power. If we don't know that we are in real denial and illusion.

I think we are afraid of being inadequate, shown up as being out of control. We are afraid of a straw man. Afraid of that which is already demonstrated, to everyone and ourselves if only we'd look!

What if we could admit, if only for moments at a time, that we are unsure, afraid. Our courage would rise! Our strength immediately come to us. But since we pretend that we are strong, we remain weak and mousey. We have to hedge every possibility until it is no possibility at all, only a sure thing. And sure things are no surprise, not too interesting, don't return anything at all!

O, wouldn't you like to be engaged in an adventure? Pitting your life in a struggle for some destiny to which you are yoked, of which the outcome is uncertain, to be discovered and built? Some new invention of consciousness, human endeavor?

Saviors of God

Your dead do not lie in the ground. They have become birds, trees, air. You sit under their shade, you are nourished by their flesh, you inhale their breathing. They have become ideas and passions, they determine your will and your actions.

Future generations do not move far from you in an uncertain time. They live, desire, and act in your loins and your heart.

You are not free. Myriad invisible hands hold your hands and direct them. When you rise in anger, a great-grandfather froths at your mouth; when you make love, an ancestral cave-man growls with lust; when you sleep, tombs open in your memory till your skull brims with ghosts.

“Do not die that we may not die,” the dead cry out within you. “We had no time to enjoy the women we desired; be in time, sleep with them! We had no time to turn our thoughts into deeds; turn them into deeds! We had no time to grasp and crystallize the face of our hope; make it firm.”

“Finish our work! Finish our Work! All day and all night we come and go through your body, and we cry out. No, we have not gone, we have detached ourselves from you, we have not descended into the earth. Deep in your entrails we continue the struggle. Deliver us!”

But you must choose with care whom to hurl down into the chasms of your blood, and whom you shall permit to mount once more into the light and the earth.

Saviors of God
Nikos Kazantzakis

GEORGE RODNEY RIPPEL

A Summary Chronology

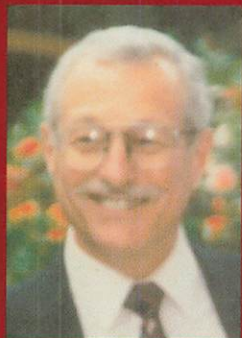
YEAR	AGE	EVENTS
1934		Born 12/26, at 507 Cleveland Ave., Moberly, MO, to Mildred and Kenneth Rippel
1936	2	Carla born 9/30
1938		
1940	6	1 st grade Southeast Park
1942	8	WW II underway for U.S.
1946	12	
1948	14	
1950	16	
1952	18	Grad. H.S.
1954	20	Grad. Moberly Junior College, Stamper Scholarship
1955	21	Mother's cancer
1956	22	Mother's death Jan 26, Grad. University of Missouri, June, Chem. Engr. Work for Esso Res. & Engr, Co., Baton Rouge, LA
1957	23	Married to Elsie Stumpf
1958	24	
1959	25	Steve born Oct. 27
1960	26	
1961	27	Curtiss born June 24
1962	28	
1963	29	Move to Morristown, NJ; Kennedy assassinated.
1964	30	
1965	31	Move back to Baton Rouge; Attend RS-1
1966	32	Clifford born March 22; Council I Chicago
1967	33	Summer at Chicago
1968	34	Resigns Esso, moves to Chicago, joins Ecumenical Institute, assigned job with The Gas Institute of U of Chicago.
1969	35	EI European trip, assigned to Australia, move to Sydney
1970	36	Sydney Religious House, Paddington, NSW
1971	37	Perth Religious House, aboriginals assignment
1972	38	Sydney Summer program, leave for Taiwan, Steve stays in Sydney, meet Jeffrey in Manila, Curt and Cliff assigned to Hong Kong, in Tainan open Religious House, Curt & Cliff arrive for school year.
1973	39	Return to U.S. meeting Steve in Hawaii, summer program in Chicago, move to Detroit RH, Steve in Student House.
1974	40	Curtiss in Student House, Steve in New York House.
1975	41	Divorce, takes job with MI Governor's Office in

		Detroit. Leaves Order: EI
1976	42	Royal Oak, MI, Curt moves in, Steve and Cliff with Elsie, Law School
1977	43	Marries Pauline Wagner, Jan. 8, renting house in R.O., takes job with City of Detroit Water Industrial Waste Program, Curt move's in with Elsie, move to Detroit, rent 2 nd floor apartment, starts wine making, Rippel reunion in Moberly, 25 th H.S. reunion
1978	44	Volunteer week in Venezuela EI project, replaces F. Pollard as Head of IW
1979	45	Becomes Director of Ind. Waste Dept., buys an old LaSalle
1980	46	Buys house in Detroit, explores eastern USA for winery location.
1981	47	Looking at relocating in U.S., rule out San Diego as too cold.
1982	48	Feb snow storm woman looks at house decides to buy it. We buy used RV and head west, goods in storage with friends, resign Detroit IW.
1983	49	Living in RV park in El Cajon, kids visit, get jobs, buys 47 Dodge(Fred)
1984	50	Rent house on Lemon Ave in La Mesa, Dad's last visit for BD
1985	51	Father dies Feb 5, win promotion to Head Industrial Waste for City of SD
1986	52	Sophie, '31 Cadillac
1987	53	Build a garage at Lemon Ave, pave driveway
1988	54	Travel to China, visit Tainan and Japan
1989	55	EPA sues City, IW mounts defense.
1990	56	Resume wine making with the Adams families
1991	57	1 st separation
1992	58	EPA Trial and waiver negotiations, on stand in Federal Court for 2 days, George gets painted, 40 th H.S. reunion
1993	59	Buy the house on Butte, completely remodel the interior.
1994	60	Add on a two car garage, bring cars home,
1995	61	Resume wine making in earnest, work on George progresses
1996	62	Pauline's parents ask for our help, she becomes trustee of family CRUTS, Vineyard planted with party
1997	63	Retires after 14 yrs. Service with City, 45 th H.S. reunion
1998	64	European trip tour with Cossolius'
1999	65	Pauline's father dies, July 14, Men's Writing Group, gold medal wines at Orange County fair, our 1 st

		grandchild, Ian, born Apr. 4
2000	66	2 nd separation, visit LA, attend Westar Institute
2001	67	Part time job with San Diego Convention and Visitor's Bureau.
2002	68	Sell George and Sophie (boo-hoo), 50 th H.S. reunion, 2 nd grandson, Matthew, born may 7
2003	69	Pauline's mother ill, dies on Dec 1, Ian visits grandparents
2004	70	Christmas in Denver, spring in Ohio
2005	71	

My Work History, Rod Rippel

	<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Employer</u>	<u>Job Description</u>
1	1948	Moberly Monitor-Index	Paper Route Carrier (Wilhite)
2	1950	Homeway Ice Cream Co.	Soda Jerk (Brown)
3	1952	Stamper Foods	Creamery clerk, lab asst (Fleming)
4	1955	E.I duPont	Plant Engineer (M. Riser)
5	1956	Esso Research & Engineering	Chem Engineer (J. Polack)
6	1967	The Ecumenical Institute	Training/Prior (3 Joes)
7	1976	Gov. Office, St. Of MI	Econ Specialist (R. Williamson)
8	1977	Detroit Water & Sewage Dept	Director of I.W. (D. Suhre)
9	1983	San Diego Water Utility	I.W. Director (A. Langworthy)
10	2001	SD Convention & Visitor's Bur.	Conv. Asst. (M. Pease)



RODNEY RIPPEL

Rod RippeL is a retired chemical engineer who graduated from the University of Missouri in 1956. In the mid-1960's he left Esso Research & Engineering Co to join a religious Order of families staffing the Economical Institute of Chicago and traveled widely as a lay trainer in theology and community reformulation. In 1977 he returned to engineering in industrial waste pretreatment control where he was a manager for two major US cities, first in Detroit and later in San Diego. He lives in San Diego where he enjoys wine making and softball.