Trips to Visit My Mother and Emil

Calling my mother at least once or twice a week was mandatory. Sometimes Emil would answer the phone, and in response to my asking how he was, he would lower his voice and say, with barely controlled desperation, "I can't take it any more." She was at him day in, day out. His only peace, he would say, came when he took his morning walk to Ocean Beach. I asked him why he didn't divorce her. He dismissed the suggestion: he was too old.

Sooner or later, a visit was necessary. Sometimes a gathering of the L —s had been scheduled, and, if the number of guests was large, my mother might engage someone to help her in the kitchen. Afterward, while my mother and the help did the dishes and cleaned up, the men played Whist, and I tried to act interested in the goings-on of the L — family while counting the minutes until I could get out of there.

If I visited her alone, she would sometimes put an LP on the ancient stereo system in the front hall — some standard piece of classical music, although apart from opera I doubt if she could identify a single work. It was nothing but an appropriate ornament for an upper-class home.

Emil would sit in his chair, and we would talk, or, rather, I would bring up subjects I knew he was interested in, and he would ramble on about them: Nixon's greatness as a president, the need to control rioters, his experiences in South America as a vice president of Wells-Fargo, his youth, his parents' travel agency in Biel, and how he came to this country with only a few dollars in his pocket and got a job as a clerk in the Emporium. He would recall a massacre (which he pronounced "mass*ack*er") having taken place somewhere. (During one of these conversations, he told me that Swiss dialect is actually a medieval form of German — what German was like centuries ago. The old language had been preserved in this dialect.)

Every once in a while, in a lull in the conversation, he would listen briefly to the music that my mother had put on the stereo, perhaps snapping a finger once or twice, swinging his hand in some vague approximation to the rhythm, and say, "*Oh*, *ja*, *es geht*..." [Oh, yes, it goes], thus showing that he understood it, that he appreciated this fine music, and then he would resume his rambling.

Sometimes I would get a whiff of his foul breath, the smell of old teeth.

Eventually, we would be called to lunch, which was served in the dining room next to the kitchen, an elegant room from another era. My mother, serving, hovering: "Is the meat all right? I got it from Mr. — . He's such a good man. So simple. He always asks how I am. And, of course, I have to tell him, though I hate to talk about my illnesses. He assured me the steak was top quality. Top quality. Oh yes."

Sometimes there would be a bottle of wine, usually Wente Bros., I think because Emil knew one of the owners, or because he always got a gift bottle for Christmas. It was certainly not because he had consciously tasted and compared the wine with those of other wineries.

He would do his best not to displease my mother — he would chew his food, keep his eyes on his plate. I would try to engage him in conversation.

I: "So, Emil, what do you think of the mayor's decision?"

At first he didn't hear. I would repeat the question. It would take a few seconds for it to register in his dimming mind. He would look at me, eyes searching mine for the meaning of what I had just said. Then, with a wave of the hand: "Ah, it won't work. It won't work. They don't understand." And he would smile, showing his gold teeth, a smile that expressed his happiness at knowing what others refuse to know. Then he would launch into a recollection of his experiences in South America as a young bank official during the thirties. My mother, watching him like a hawk, her index finger rubbing her thumb, would signal us with various shakes of the head and

motions of the eyebrows, at the same time mouthing the words, "He is not right!" meaning, of course, not right in the head. He would continue to ramble on. Now, suddenly, we would be in the midst of World War II, then back in his childhood. I would try to listen because, first and foremost, it is a good intellectual exercise to try to follow talk like this, and second because I felt sorry for him. But my mother could not control her anxiety. She would get up, interrupt him to ask about second helpings.

At Christmas, it was worse.

My mother: "Isn't the tree beautiful?"

I, with head lowered, as though in preparation for a beating: "Yes, it's beautiful."

She: "Oh, you just say it's beautiful."

I, in monotone: "It's beautiful."

She: "Yes, I decorated it myself. The doctor said I shouldn't do so much, but if it's for Christmas... It took me since Friday." (Three days previous.) "Do you like it?"

I: "Yes, I like it very much. It's beautiful."

Emil, throughout, tapping his fingers on the table as though keeping time, uncomprehending, "Yep...yep...".

Learning Scuba Diving

I no longer remember what prompted me to take up scuba diving. ("Scuba" stood for "self-contained-underwater-breathing-apparatus".) It might have been a chance conversation with someone at work, or something I saw on TV. In any case, I soon learned that, in order to go scuba diving — or, more precisely, in order to be able to buy air for your tanks — you had to have a certificate that proved you had taken a training course. Somehow or other I found an outfit at the end of University Ave. in Palo Alto, near Route 101 The course was taught by a tall guy with big eyes, and took place in a swimming pool, but I am not even sure at this late date if the pool was on the premises, or if it was in the Y or somewhere else. What I do remember is my inability at first to breathe through the mouthpiece and open my eyes under water at the same time. We would stand at the shallow end of the pool, the instructor would have us don the tanks, bring the mouthpiece over our head — the mouthpiece was attached to two hoses going back to the silver, circular "demand regulator" that supplied air whenever you breathed in, but not otherwise — get the rubber seated in our mouth, pull the face mask down over our eyes, then kneel so that our face was under water. We were then supposed to breathe through the mouthpiece. But I couldn't! To peer through the clear green underwater, see the others submerged as I was, see up ahead where the bottom sloped down to the deep green end of the pool, was no problem at all. But to bring myself to breathe in and out *at the same time* was an impossibility. I had to come up above the surface, try it there. That was OK: we breathe in the air, we hold our breath underwater. It was a lesson I had learned long before in Mohawk Day Camp. Breathing underwater was as difficult as learning to drink through a straw had been in grammar school.

But eventually, somehow, I learned to perform this impossible task. We may then have done a little swimming under water, but the next important lesson was how to do what was called "doff and don" at the bottom of the pool. The thought was that it was a good idea to know what to do if your tank suddenly stopped supplying you with air while you were not near the surface. First we had to learn how to remove our own mouthpiece while we were sitting on the bottom (at the deep end), held down with extra weights. We then had to start breathing from the mouthpiece of another tank — one of the instructor's assistants held the mouthpiece out to you. This too

required a major effort. Your natural instinct was to take the deepest breath you could before removing your mouthpiece. But if you did that, you had no more room to put the air from the other mouthpiece, so by rights you should exhale your air. But who was going to do that when there was no guarantee that the other mouthpiece would give you air when you started breathing in again? On the other hand, if you exhaled while your original mouthpiece was in your mouth, then removed the mouthpiece and grabbed the other one, there was no guarantee, again, that it would give you the air you desperately needed. I assume that I eventually arrived at a compromise, which was to exhale about half of my air, then remove my mouthpiece and insert the other one. That way, I would have enough air to get to the surface if the other mouthpiece didn't deliver air, and on the other hand, I would have enough room to put the air if the other one worked after all.

The final exam — called I think "final checkout" — was to be near Point Lobos, near Monterey, a good two-hour drive south from the Peninsula. After the checkout, we would be allowed to do our first diving in the waters around the Point. And so, on the appointed morning, we arrived there, rented scuba equipment from a nearby store, and gathered on the rocky, sandy beach. A few words from the instructor, and then we timidly entered the water. I don't recall them requiring us to do doff and don. I do remember swimming along, a few feet below the surface, paddling, looking at the stones that covered the bottom. I don't remember what we were asked to do, but eventually we were proclaimed graduates, and allowed to paddle around in the little inlet.

I doubt if I dove any deeper than ten or fifteen feet. I was leery of the underwater plants waving in the underwater wind (you never knew what could be lurking behind the leaves, waiting to grab you and drag you into a fanged opening in the rocks along the shore). It was all quite nice, and I was eager to do more of it. I kept thinking, remembering the diving books I had read in high school, "This is the experience that Cousteau has given us!"

Marriage and a Home

Courtship of Marcella

In August of 1966, Mac Lawrence, the head of advertising, hired an assistant. She sat on the other side of my cubicle at one of the desks in front of Mac's enclosed office. As soon as I saw her, I knew I would have to pursue her, even though, or rather *because*, it was hopeless. I see her now in her white, seemingly stiff dress, narrow at the waist, then widening toward the hem, her black hair worn neck-length, with two sharp points on each side of her cheek pointing forward in a way that reminded me of a ram's horns. She had thin arms, and the typical male of the time would have judged her legs to be a little on the skinny side. But she had an aristocratic air that said, "I have a good education, I'm smart, and I'm here to show you what a good job I can do."

I thought she was beautiful, and all the more so because she seemed unattainable. I became convinced she was my last chance to get married and have a family like normal people. And so, with unbearable anxiety and not a trace of pleasure, I began pursuing her. I had in my favor the prestige of being Technical Publications Manager, but I also carried the terrible shame of being a sexual cripple, which sooner or later would have to be revealed.

In order to win her, I would have to go to coffee breaks when she was there, and make it look like I wasn't doing it intentionally. I was beside myself with anxiety, always afraid of blushing, of not appearing a desirable male. She told me later that one thing she liked about me from the start was my hairy arms, which, since I usually rolled up my long-sleeved shirts, were always in view.

The first time I called her on the phone she said she couldn't talk then, but that I should call later in the week. I had to live for two impossible days pretending that such a thing was endurable. Then, on Thursday evening, with, I am sure, my heart beats audible in my voice, I called her again and invited her to see the then recently released film *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*, which was playing in San Francisco at a theater somewhere out in the avenues. I can still see the marquee, the brightly lit entrance. I was on pins and needles over every slow part lest she be bored with this all-too-obviously male movie. But she seemed to endure it without great discomfort.

On that or our next date, she revealed that another guy in Marketing was pursuing her. (In memory he was a blond kid.) So I knew I would have to hustle all the more.

Sooner or later, of course, I had to invite her to see where I lived, which was in the studio apartment on Woodside Ave. My shabbily constructed pine board bookshelves leaned to the left. The furniture all belonged to the landlord. Months later, she remarked that the apartment, or, rather, the condition of the bathroom, almost decided her against continuing to see me. She said the bottom of the toilet bowl was brown, indicating it hadn't been cleaned in months, which was true. In fact, it had never occurred to me to try to get rid of the brown — I thought that was the way some toilets were.

She, on the other hand, like all women, had a nice, clean apartment at 405 James Rd. in Palo Alto. (In my black address book, there is an asterisk next to her name, and, at the bottom of the page, another asterisk, followed by the word "Best".)

I invited her to take a sailplane flight with me. She was clearly nervous about it, but I could see she was trying to show that she could be brave, so eventually she consented. We drove over to the airport, I asked for a 2-33, by that time having obtained the license that allowed me to take up passengers. I tried to impress her with how carefully I checked the plane from back to front, how I tested the controls, how I obviously followed a prescribed procedure before flying. Her expression as she watched me remained the same: "Well, I suppose it's possible I could come out of this alive..." Remembering Cor's experience, I tried to fly straight and level most of the time, making only a few turns. We returned, landed, and she seemed relieved but also excited as she climbed out.

My one goal was to make her like me, make her be willing to be my wife. I was certainly attracted to her physically, but I was far more attracted to her because she was a prize. (I didn't *deserve* the best, I simply had to have it, as evidence that there was hope for me in this world.) I asked her boss, Mac, if he knew of any good restaurants in the area, or in San Francisco, and he recommended Monroe's on Lombard Ave. in the City, which has long since gone out of business. It served a Continental cuisine with a few British dishes like roast beef with Yorkshire pudding. (In memory, the tastes that come to mind are: roast beef, mashed potatoes with gravy, and peas, which I doubt is accurate.) The walls were covered with a kind of ornate red wallpaper which gave the place a kind of respectable whorehouse atmosphere. The place was always packed, the bar ponderous and made of dark wood: you got the impression that the people who sat there had important business to work out during their drinking — this wasn't just your ordinary lush sitting there. The patrons seemed to be pretty much San Francisco Old Money, which I liked. Dining there made you feel rich. We usually began dinner with a martini (often a Gibson for me), and I felt very successful to be able to take a woman as good-looking as Marcella to a place like this. We began to call it "our place", with appropriate sense of humor over using that lovers' trite phrase.

We both regarded one of the Beatles's tunes as "our song". It was "If I fell..."; in memory I see us sitting in Monroe's, though it might have been another restaurant, and suddenly hearing it played as part of the restaurant's background music.

"If I gave my heart to you
I must be sure from the very start..."

We "talked easily". Most of our conversations, I'm sure, were about goings-on in the office. But we also talked about our backgrounds. She had been born in Alameda, Calif., had grown up in Woodside and Menlo Park, on the Peninsula. Her mother came from a homesteading family in Montana. Her father was a Basque immigrant who, when he first came to this country, had actually worked in a salt mine. Later, he worked in the Oakland shipyards, then opened a liquor store in Woodside, where he put in twelve or more hours a day, six days a week, until he was able to retire. It was clear that she was reluctant to admit her father had been in the liquor business. I tried to get her to overcome this shame, arguing that he had done well, had been able to buy a house in an affluent area. There were various relatives: her sister, Tina; her aunt, Tia Pilar (it was years before I understood that Tia wasn't her first name, but meant "aunt"); Uncle Bob, the crackpot inventor from Nevada or Boise, who was always on the verge of becoming rich.

She had majored in journalism at the University of California at Berkeley, with a minor in fine art, although she took all the fine art courses in the four-year arts program. Then, after receiving her bachelor's degree, had tried Boalt Law School for a year but in those days this was extremely difficult for a woman, especially a woman who was shy. One day she was called on and was asked, prior to the kind of hard questioning that law students must early on learn to deal with, if she had read the assignment. She had, but in order to avoid having to speak in class, she said she hadn't. Soon after she dropped out. Although she ranked high in the class, she was ashamed that she wasn't No. 1. She later said that she regretted the decision to quit, and placed some of the blame on her mother, who had failed to give her any self-confidence.

And yet, she had had a good education in her undergraduate years. Several years after our marriage, she quite casually revealed that she knew the essence of Kant's philosophy, namely, that space and time are forms ("intuitions") that human beings impose on the world[1].

She showed me some her paintings, and I thought them quite competent. The only one I remember now was of a farmer's tractor, done with rough, heavy outlines, the tractor green, the background red and orange.

One summer she had worked as a waitress at Tahoe, a job she didn't like, and had had a brief relationship[2] with a guy she met there. She seemed a little ashamed to admit this to me. She said she always worried that she would be smarter than any man she had a relationship with.

Then she went to Europe, alone. In a railway carriage in Germany once, she pointed to a seat, asked, "Ist frei?" The man she addressed replied in German, and they went back and forth several times before both realized they were both American.

During our courtship, she introduced me to her closest friend, Sue Meacham, who was a true child of the sixties, a painter with a sexily scruffy voice, and a healthy skepticism toward most of

1. By that time, I had the highest admiration for Kant's idea. But when I first read about his philosophy — and this may have been already in high school — I couldn't accept his 12 Categories of human thought: unity, plurality, totality, reality, negation ... They seemed entirely too abstract, too unrelated to my everyday thought, anyway.

2. We didn't use the word "relationship" then, but I can't remember the word we did use. Perhaps "affair".

the things I regarded with deadly earnest, like success in business. Once, when we were discussing the portrayal of children, she remarked that she had tried to paint little kids but that the paintings always seemed wrong. Then she realized that she had been painting their heads the same relative size as adult heads, but that kids' heads are in fact relatively much larger. She had a boyfriend, later to become her husband, named Jim, a tall, amiable guy who was working toward a PhD in dramatic arts at the University of California at Berkeley. He had all the seriousness and career orientation she had dispensed with, although he still maintained a sufficiently developed sense of humor to be able to agree with me when I remarked that, among other things, Kafka was a great *comic* author.

Marcella wanted me to meet these friends of hers and so she invited them over to her apartment on James. I knew that I was being exhibited for their judgment and despite the fact that I sensed, as she bustled around the apartment, that she was proud to be showing me off, I was filled with dread over the prospect. When the conversation started, I tried to crank up my sense of humor to get through the ordeal, but that went nowhere. I realized I was trying to apply the same kind of banter we used in the office, but that I was talking to people from a different world. I felt the evening was a complete flop.

Somehow or other, her friends persuaded me, or I decided it would impress Marcella, if I sat in with a jazz group playing at a club in the East Bay. I haven't the slightest recollection of how I heard about it, or why I believed the musicians would allow me to sit in, but one evening, Marcella, Sue and I went over there, and I was given my opportunity. It was probably the worst performance of my life: I didn't know the tune they called and was unable to follow the chords — the performance was so bad, in fact, that when I returned to our table, red-faced, mumbling apologies, they didn't even think it necessary to make the demurrals that are usual in such circumstances. I could only sit there, damp with sweat, thinking, "The woman I want to marry has seen me make a complete fool of myself in front of dozens of people."

She had two other close friends, always referred to by the single phrase "Pat and Max". Of course, she would speak about them individually, but they were really a single unit as expressed by the phrase. Pat was short, a little on the heavy side, with short blonde hair and a boisterous laugh. Max was taller, thin, quiet, with a Texas accent. Both of them are best described as hippies who had settled down. Pat was an elementary school teacher; Max was studying for a degree in social work. At home, Max played the guitar and sang in a nasal hillbilly voice.

They lived in a little house in the East Bay along what was then the Nimitz Freeway; we would sometimes go over for a visit. They had recently acquired a big police dog which Max was in the process of obedience-training. He described the daily walks, the repetition of commands, the jerking of the leash. Before we arrived, they would put the dog in the garage, but throughout our initial conversation, as we sat down in the living room with our beers, we could hear the animal growling and hurling itself against the door. Pat would laugh at this and tell us that later, when they let it into the house, we would have nothing to worry about, it wouldn't bite. (Words I had heard, and hated, ever since my days as a newspaper boy, when they were often spoken as the animal was tearing at my pants or snapping at my legs.) I tried to laugh along with everyone else, but I was very afraid of what would happen when the beast was allowed to storm into the house. My fears were confirmed. It jumped on me, barking in my face, growling, its slaver dripping down, eyes seeming to be gauging whether it would be better to bite my face from the left side or the right. "Down boy, down boy," I kept repeating, as Max kept plucking away at his guitar. Pat looked on with a trace of nervousness, as though she had changed her mind and decided that maybe it would bite us after all. It had a way of fixing its eyes on mine and making sure I under-

stood what it was thinking: "One false move out of you — one move that I *decide* I don't like — and I'm going to dig my fangs into your flesh and start to rip it to pieces." Underneath my faked laughter, of course, I was furious at being put in this position. For Marcella's sake I didn't say anything, but on the way home I made it clear that I wasn't about to put up with it again.

We Overcome My Impotence

Sooner or later I had to tell her about my impotence. I think I did it while we were sitting on her bed at James St. after a date. I told her how much she meant to me — I'm not sure if I said "I love you" yet — and asked her to help me overcome this lifelong problem. She nodded, didn't seem to consider it a big deal. And so, for four nights I tried to accomplish the superhuman task of (1) getting and keeping an erection in the presence of a woman; (2) saying all the the right things throughout the process; (3) inserting that erection into the impossible place, namely, between a woman's legs; (4) going back and forth without losing the erection sufficiently many times until an orgasm occurred; (5) acting as though I enjoyed this, in fact, found it irresistible.

I very soon realized that the deed was not going to be accomplished without the help of fantasy, because, in fact, the goal was to have sex without sexual desire for the woman I was with. For me, then and now, sex was not something you enjoyed in the presence of others. This most intimate of acts was not the kind of thing you did with other people, and especially not with someone you liked. For one thing, by allowing yourself to enjoy it, much less allowing yourself to lose yourself in the passion of it, you were giving yourself up to the woman, which was absolutely out of the question for me. For another, I considered it a distinct possibility that we might get stuck together, as the dogs did when I was a little kid, and then I would be attached to the woman for who knows how long? The ambulance would have to be called, the attendants, and then the doctors, would snicker. We would have to lie together, on the same gurney, in plain view, in the Emergency Room, while the broken legs and gunshot wounds got treated first. Sex with a woman was a means to an end, namely, having a wife and children and a home. No one expects people to have orgasms when they are at work in the office; it is just not done. It is inappropriate. Nor do they say, "Why did you take the job if it weren't for the purpose of having orgasms?" For me, the real perversion was indulging in sex with another person. What was normal, what was natural, was to enjoy it alone. So, in effect, the task became one of masturbating in another person's presence, but not only "another person", but a woman, and not only masturbating but using her most intimate organ as the means of creating the friction.

Finally, if truth be told, I didn't want to have sex with any woman who wanted to have sex with me, because her wanting to have sex with me was proof of how undiscriminating she was in her choice of men, how desperate she was, and therefore how undesirable.

I would try and try until we were both exhausted and my forehead was covered with sweat. On the fourth evening, after dinner at a restaurant and a movie, we were driving down El Camino Real in Menlo Park when one of us noticed a fortune teller sign. Half in despair, I suggested that we go in and have our fortunes told. It was the usual hocus pocus, a bored old woman with too much make-up, dressed in the public's idea of a fortune teller's costume, sitting behind a crystal ball. She said, "You will succeed in an enterprise that is very important to you."

That night, using — who knows? — a more powerful fantasy from one of my porn magazines, or the image of a sexy girl I had seen that day — but, in any case, panting and sweating, I was able to have an orgasm in a woman's vagina for the first time in my life. (Years later, we read in the paper that the fortune teller had been arrested for fraud.)

Afterward, we lay together, she on my left-hand side, I with my arm around her. I felt washed and clean. The moonlight was coming through the window. I decided to propose to her. I consciously and carefully asked myself the questions beforehand several times: "Are you sure you know what this means? Do you realize that this will be forever? Are you prepared to make the commitment?" I let several minutes go by, thinking, and meanwhile talking to her and, of course, repeating my thanks to her for helping me. And then I said, "Marcella...would you marry me?" And, without much hesitation, as though she had been rehearsing similar questions in her mind, she said yes.

I bought the engagement ring without consulting with her from the jewelry store in the little shopping center at Embarcadero and El Camino in Palo Alto. But it angered her that I did not let her participate in the purchase.

We Start to Live Together

We slept together at her apartment on James, not the least reason being that we both knew (or believed) that the modern married couple lives together before they get married, in order to "be sure" they are about to do the right thing. I felt I needed to make the experience as realistic as possible as far as our future life together was concerned, and so I got up early in the morning, or stayed up after she had gone to sleep, to work on my novel, a satire of the Vietnam situation tentatively titled *Pow-Pang*. I sensed her uneasiness about this compulsion, and considering the quality of what I was producing, I didn't blame her, since I was merely wasting time in the most painful way possible. So I hated myself for wanting to do something that displeased her, and for that something to be worthless in the bargain.She wore a muu-muu around the house, and I kidded her a lot about it — really about wearing an item of clothing with such a name. For a while she was amused, but then it was clear she felt I was overdoing it, and one day said so. I was deeply ashamed, because I felt that the jokes were gestures of affection toward her.

We would lie on the floor and watch television. I, out of nervousness, in order to have something to say, often asked her, after each ad, if she bought that stuff. I could tell it was getting on her nerves after a while. But, anything to seem casual, at ease. She had an uncanny ability at figuring out who had committed the crime in murder mysteries. I never knew, and never managed to develop any skill at this. In old age, I watched English murder mysteries — Miss Marple, Inspector Morse, Rosemary & Thyme and numerous others in this genre that the English have made their own — purely to see and imagine living in the country towns and villages where the mysteries took place.

Sadly, I cannot remember many of the things she laughed at, but one I do remember is a line from one of Woody Allen's films, in which the Woody Allen character is asked what sort of philosopher he is partial to, and he replies, "...oh, your Greeks, your Romans, your eclectics."

Sense of humor or not, Marcella had no tolerance for my nodding off while we were watching TV together. When I woke up, she made it clear how angry it made her. As a result, in old age, when I was renting a room to (female) college students, and once in a while they and a friend or two and I would watch something on TV, I always made a speech before the show began in which I made clear that anyone could leave at any time, without explanation, although they couldn't say things like, "This film is garbage!"; everyone also had nodding-off privileges: they would never get an elbow in the ribs and a lecture on how rude it is to fall asleep when watching TV with someone else.

We set the wedding date for November 20 or thereabouts, and moved to an apartment at 556 Matadero Ave. in Barron Park, Palo Alto, right next to the Flamingo Motel. It was a modern duplex, single story, with a wide concrete patio and flower beds. Matadero Creek ran past just a few feet below the right rear bedroom. The carpets were beige. Some uncommunicative old guy and his wife lived next door. On Thursdays we would lie on the floor together, her head on my arm, and watch *The Avengers*. I thought of her as a Diana Rigg type in her no-nonsense independence. Later, on Sunday evenings, like many Americans and most of the nation of Britain, we watched the episodes of the *Forsyte Saga*, which I thought an outstanding piece of work.

She hung several of her oil paintings on the wall, including the one I particularly liked of the tractor. She painted for the first year or so while we were married, and took courses at Stanford, but ran into disagreements with one of her instructors.

One night she woke up with a start, then woke me up, and said she heard a noise in the kitchen. We both listened, motionless. Yes, there it was. A small sound. Then silence. Then two or three more similar sounds. "You go see," she said. "It's probably a burglar," I said. "I could be killed!". "You go see," she said. I don't know if we kept a flashlight in the bedroom, but somehow I mustered the courage, she following. Nothing in the kitchen. But the next day she said she heard scratching in the walls. So we had mice. I was inclined to let them stay but she wouldn't hear of it. I had to buy a mouse trap, which I set below the kitchen table. Next night we were awakened by a loud "Snap!" "You go take it out of the trap. I can't," she said. I went into the kitchen, and there was the mouse, the wire flat across its neck, a little stream of blood coming out of each tiny nostril. I thought: "A poor husband and father who will never see his family again, and all because of us!" I couldn't bring myself to bend the wire back. We both stood there, trying to get the other to do it. Then we decided that the only alternative was to throw out the trap with the mouse still in it. Should we pick it up by the tail? Oooh, no! Just pick it up by the edge of the board. And so one of us put his foot on the garbage pail pedal and the other, trying hard not to look, head turned aside, dropped mouse and trap into the pail and let the cover slam down.

Another time, a threatened invasion of Nature fortunately didn't take place. As a result of heavy rains, the creek in back rose to within a few feet of the floor of the guest room at the rear of the house. We would stand by the window, watching the brown water race by, wondering if the tree growing in the side of the bank, would topple over, blocking the stream, and causing a flood, but we made no plans what to do if the water began flooding the apartment. Fortunately the water soon subsided.

In one of our conversations, she remarked, matter-of-factly, that she didn't think there was only one person in the world that we can love. If I hadn't come along, there would have been someone else. It was like a punch in the gut for me. I think the real reason was that I took it to imply that if I failed to live up to her requirements in a husband, she would not hesitate to end the marriage, since she was sure there were others out there.

Marriage

"I asked myself whether marriage with Albertine would not spoil my life, as well by making me assume the burden, too heavy for my shoulders, of consecrating myself to another person, as by forcing me to live in absence from myself because of her continual presence and depriving me, forever, of the delights of solitude." — Proust, Marcel, *The Captive*, vol. 5 of *Remembrance of Things Past*, Modern Library, N.Y., 1956, p. 26.

We were married in Palo Alto on Nov. 6, 1966. We were both convinced it was our last chance: otherwise, at 25, she would have been an old maid, and at 30 I would have been doomed

to eternal bachelorhood. (If a man wasn't married by the time he was 30, he was either too ugly ever to find a wife or else he was queer.) As it was, since the wedding would be in November and I had been born on Sept. 14, I was already two months over the deadline.

We wrote our own wedding ceremony, which at the time was considered a daring, modern thing to do. (The truth is, she wrote it, and then asked if I agreed with each part. I had no strong feelings about the matter.) We chose Dan Lyon, pastor at the Unitarian Church in Palo Alto, to read the words. The wedding was around noon, and so we sat in the apartment and played cards until it was time to leave. I kept taking deep breaths to try to control my boundless anxiety. Would I break into a sweat as I tried to endure the interminable moments standing there with the woman who was to be my wife, with friends and my mother looking on, my mother trying to decide if this really was a good thing for her son, especially given that the father of the woman he was about to marry had owned a liquor store? Would my baldness show? —

"[They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!]"[1]

— I mean, would the bald spot shine out so much that people would not even pay attention to the words that were being said, but instead concentrate only on it? Would I be able to make love to her properly on a day as important as this? My God, what won't she be expecting? It better be good, Franklin. I was paralyzed just thinking about it.

Her parents and mine were among the guests, my mother blinking in the sunlight, not sure if she was among Decent People or not, obviously proud that her son had finally done the thing that a good son must do after he has found a Good Position at an Important Company. (She hadn't the vaguest idea of what I actually did, except that it involved telling other people what to do, which was good, and that the company had a good reputation.) Our best man was Bob Biddinger (a friend from Lehigh who, like me, had moved West), he looking handsome in his stylish dark suit, his shake-a-leg-manner and smile exrpressing just the opposite of my appalling anxiety.

I don't seem to remember my mother or Emil coming to the wedding reception. We took home what remained of the wedding cake and put in the freezer, since the custom was that you were supposed to save it for a year, then eat it.

Honeymoon

We went to the Highlands Inn in Carmel for our honeymoon. Since I had no opinions, or knowledge, about desirable places to go for a honeymoon, I had been glad when she came up with this place, which had a reputation among young marrieds as the place to go. She arranged everything. I can't remember if we successfully made love, but I do remember that in the morning I rolled over and began reading Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in an interlinear translation of hers which I had borrowed as soon as I learned she had it (and which I still have[2]), because it seemed to me the ideal way (given Mr. Jones's example at Briarcliff High) of both reading the poetry in the language it had been written in, and of having someone else look up the meanings of all the words for you. At the time, I was trying to memorize the Prologue. (I had previously read the Miller's Tale elsewhere; it wasn't in her book.). I spoke the Middle English words softly to myself as I hung over the side of the bed holding the pages in the light coming through the win-

1. Eliot, T. S., "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
2. *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (Selected): An Interlinear Translation* by Vincent F. Hopper, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Great Neck, N.Y., 1958.

dows. (I no longer can remember where I learned the pronunciations of the Middle English words.) When she woke up and found that this was what was on my mind on the first day of our married life, there was no doubt about her feelings. We had an argument. I spent the rest of the honeymoon ashamed of myself, trying to make it up to her by an extra display of obedience and initiative. [But afterward, she allowed me once in a while to refer to myself as her *housbonde*, in the Chaucerian pronunciation ("hoos*band*uh"), and her as my weefa ("w*ee*fuh").]

More Scuba Diving

I have met only two people in my life who I felt were as miserable as I was, and one of them was an engineer in Marketing named Jim Heintzelman. He had a crew cut, and a kind of clenched-jaw way of speaking that suggested a military background that he had taken seriously. But I sensed that he too labored under the same intolerable weight that I did, that he too knew what so few others knew, namely, that it is virtually impossible to do something that can justify your right to go on living, no matter how hard you try.

In the course of conversation with him, I gathered that he idolized and at the same time resented his older brother, whom I met once at the brother's apartment when Jim invited me over. His brother was successful, handsome, comfortable in the world, unlike Jim.

Perhaps we got to talking when he heard that I flew sailplanes. He was a power pilot, that is, he flew planes that actually had an engine. He would sometimes land at Sky Sailing, hang around for a while, then take off again. One day he happened to see me come in for a landing in a 1-26. He kidded me afterward about how earnestly I sat in the cockpit, eyes straight ahead, leaning forward, concentrating, oblivious to all else in my determination to do the job right.

When I told him I was also a scuba diver, he said that he was too, and suggested we fly down to Catalina Island, off the coast of Los Angeles, where there were some outstanding opportunities for diving. And so that is what we did one weekend: he, his girlfriend of the moment, Marcella and I. The four of us stood around on an airstrip south of San Jose, probably Reid-Hillview, having just crammed our tanks and suitcases into the luggage compartment of an all-too-small-seeming Cessna, wondering if we shouldn't maybe go to the bathroom just once more, to make sure, while Jim ran back back to the terminal to dot some "i" or cross some "t" in his flight plan. He took the responsibility of being a pilot very seriously. Every step of every procedure was carried out with precision and deadly earnestness. It was as though his instructor had told him, "OK, Heintzelman, we're going to give you a license, but if you make one mistake, if you forget one item in one check list, if you *just once* allow yourself to experience *levity of heart*, we're taking it away again, permanently. *And we will know!*"

Then we all piled inside, Jim turned various knobs, scrutinized the control panel, adjusted his seat belt, spoke in very serious, no-nonsense tones, to the control tower, and brought the bouncing plane to the end of the runway, revved the engine, scrutinized the dials in front of him again, then with a great roar of engine, released the brake and let the plane gain speed as we sat with our backs pressed against the back of our seat.

All I can recall of the several-hour trip is the dull conversation about the irregular coastline of California, the lines of white surf clearly visible far below.

Catalina Airport had been made by essentially cutting the top off a mountain that rose directly from the sea. We came in from the ocean side. There was the sheer cliff rising from the sea, and the flat part, which was the runway. It was like landing on an aircraft carrier. At the other end, we could see where the airport ended and the mountain dropped off again. You either did this landing right or you were in the water, or rather, if you misjudged and rolled too far, then you fell off the

cliff at the other end, after which you poured on the power and dived to pick up speed so that you could begin to pull up before you smashed into the waves. I was quite nervous, and for at least half an hour had been dealing with a full bladder, but I thought, if you're going to have to land on a strip like this, Heintzelman is probably the best pilot to have in the pilot's seat. And he did an expert job of it. He taxied to the little shack on the side of the runway, we opened the doors, crawled out, straightened our stiff backs, and I ran for the men's room. Then a van drove us down the spine of the island on a bumpy dirt road, to the town of Avalon on the other end of the island, snatches of the song by the same name going through my mind from my music days, duh dah dah dah dah dah-dah-dah, duh dahhhh, duh dahhhh, ...

Heintzelman had heard about a wreck on the bottom near the entrance of the harbor channel. He had somehow gotten directions, and so the next day he and I piled into an outboard and went out there. (I don't think the women did any diving on the trip.) In memory, it seems quite remarkable that he would have been able to find the wreck at all, since it was some 120 feet below the surface, and thus not visible from the surface. Perhaps he had been given some sort of cross reference: "Get on a line between the big rock above the south end of the harbor, and the bush at the end of the point, then move along it until you are about 100 yards from point. It's right below you..."

We put on our wet suits, flippers, the heavy tanks, the lead weight belt, the mask, snorkel, fitted the black rubber mouthpieces in our mouths, took a few breaths of tank air. Heintzelman may have given the thumbs up sign. He went over the side. I followed him.

We checked our watches. He had a plastic card with the decompression table on his wrist. This table gave the safe rate of ascent relative to the time spent at a given depth. It said, in effect, take so-and-so-many minutes to ascend *x* feet, then so-and-so-many minutes to ascend *y* feet, and so forth. Ascending too fast put divers at risk of the crippling, and sometimes fatal, affliction known as " the bends" which was caused by bubbles of nitrogen forming in the blood stream. We kicked downward into the green, brown murk. Soon we could no longer see the surface. We must have had a long anchor rope to follow down, as when at age 19 I made my 60-foot dive in Kensico Reservoir (without scuba equipment), but I don't remember if we did. I followed his kicking black flippers as he descended into the green-brown gloom, his bubbles streaming behind him. Every once in a while he would tap the depth gauge on his wrist to be sure it was reading the correct depth (just as pilots tap the altimeter to be sure it is reading the correct altitude). Down through the green-brown gloom we went, I trying to save air by taking as few breaths as possible.

Then, suddenly, a greenish golden glow appeared below us, and then we saw brown chocolate-pudding mud just barely visible in the dim light.

Heintzelman seemed to know where he was going, because he pointed and we slowly kicked in that direction, the water tight and cold around us. I was surprised that there wasn't as much of the undersea cracking sound that I remembered from Point Judith that summer when I was in White Plains High and Jim Swan and I went skin-diving there. After not many seconds, there suddenly emerged, in the gloom, the shape of what had once been a vessel of perhaps a hundred feet in length. The black hull, which was about 75 feet in length, was still intact, though most of the top deck was gone: only black beams remained. The wreck had been there for some fifty years or more, I think he told me. I looked at my depth gauge: 120 feet.

We swam cautiously around the wreck, I keeping a very sharp lookout for what I imagined lurked in such places, namely, sharks and moray eels. We saw neither. When we were down at the bottom, where the hull disappeared into the mud, he tapped his depth gauge. I checked mine. We were at 128 feet, by far the deepest I had ever gone. I began to try to imagine 128 feet of

water over my head, between me and a breath of fresh air.

I recalled that at around 170 feet you have to start worrying about nitrogen narcosis, a kind of drunkenness caused by the excess nitrogen in your blood. Divers in that state had been known to remove their mouthpieces, having decided they were really unnecessary. I tried to imagine what 128 feet of water above my head looked like. That was longer than our back yard at 14 Elm. It was more than twice the depth I had dived to in Kensico. I followed Heintzelman as he earnestly nosed around the wreck. I don't think he dived down inside it. I certainly had no desire to. A few small fish leisurely went about their business.Every thirty seconds or so, he checked his watch. Then, after one such check, he pointed up. We had probably been down not more than 20 minutes all-told, but in order to avoid the bends, we had to allow ample time to ascend slowly.

And so we started to ascend, staying close together as we left the little green cave below us and kicked slowly upward, like beings that can fly. Within a few moments, we were out of sight of the bottom, and completely surrounded by the green-brown gloom. He pointed to the bubbles rising from our tanks, made a motion with his hand to indicate that was the way up. Later he commented that, without the bubbles, it was possible, had we had perfectly neutral buoyancy, to mistake vertical for horizontal and set off to reach the surface by unknowingly kicking along parallel to the bottom, which, if we didn't eventually recognize what we were doing, would have resulted in our simply running out of air — at a depth of 110 feet or so.

So we followed our bubbles. He kept checking the decompression table card on his wrist. Sometimes he would stop kicking, adjusting his breathing so that we merely stayed at one point, in order to keep to the ascent schedule on the card. If we ascended too rapidly, we risked getting the bends; if we ascended too slowly, we risked running out of air before we reached the surface. It took almost no kicking to keep up with our bubbles, but for a long time it seemed to me we were getting nowhere. I kept trying to think about what it meant to have, say, 100 feet of water above your head, 100 feet of water between you and the stuff you breathed so naturally and so unconsciously throughout your life.

Up we went, in our ginger ale environment, controlling our desire to just start kicking rapidly for the surface. Slowly, the gloom seemed to become a little brighter, the green-brown began to turn to a light yellow-brown. Heintzelman motioned enthusiastically to indicate that yes, we were nearing the surface. I looked up, still couldn't see the surface. But the water was becoming less dark. Then, were those waves, the underside of little waves (one of the strangest sights in the world, for me)? Yes. Up, the distance much longer than it seemed, and then there was the surface, right above our forehead. A few more feet and we crashed through the surface. We still had air in our tanks, so we could quite leisurely remove our mouthpieces, and, with snot and spit dribbling down past our mouths, we could exult in this adventure that we had survived.

I remember little of the town of Avalon except its stifling, movie-set atmosphere — it seemed to be an American seacoast village trying half-heartedly to become a Mediterranean seacoast village. The houses of the wealthy on the cliffs overlooked the harbor. I saw the actress Janet Margolin coming out of the Avalon Ballroom one evening. (She played the mentally disturbed girl in the film *David and Lisa*, and I had fallen in love with her. I loved her beautiful face, her Jewish looks and her air of wistfulness and uncertainty, which may or may not have been attributable to her role.) In person, she looked troubled, like a famous person who doesn't much like being famous. She never became well-known, although she did play in two Woody Allen films. She died in 1993 of ovarian cancer, at the age of 50. I write this having just seen her again as the wife of the Woody Allen character in *Take the Money and Run*, and I say it without hesitation: if God were to allow me to marry any Hollywood star, living or dead, with the promise that he would

bring her back exactly as she appeared in the films I remember her in, without question I would choose Janet Margolin.

I remember the seaplanes that regularly landed and took off from the harbor. My favorite childhood model planes had come back to me life-size. The engines gave a roar, white water appeared under the main float, the plane seemed to rear back as it made its sluggish way through the water, then the engine went into a steady, higher-pitched roar, the white water streamed by the float, and suddenly the thing was in the air, the pitch of the roar now dropping as the plane headed away from us, toward the California coast.

The city of Avalon had preserved as an underwater park an area on the left-hand side of the channel that led to the harbor. No diving or fishing, much less spear-fishing was allowed there. You could take a glass-bottomed boat trip over it, which we did. I was utterly amazed at the richness of the undersea garden below us. All sorts of plants waved in the undersea breeze while fish of all types and colors and sizes swam along leisurely, some with yellow and black stripes, some silvery with pink mouths, some dark green, some rising to look at us as we passed overhead. The contrast between what had been and what was could be seen immediately on the other side of the channel, which had always been open to diving and spear fishing. The bottom there was virtually barren: rocks, sand, the glint of an occasional beer can, a few small fish searching for the meaning of life, and that was it.

We had heard about a place called "Long Point" which was about halfway to the other end of the island, and somehow we found a guy who called himself a guide. He offered to take us to the Point, which was right next to the Isthmus, the narrowest portion of the island, where you could easily walk across to the ocean side.

So we rented an outboard, and the four of us, with the guide, headed along the leeward coast. I think we stopped to dive at a couple of places, because the cliffs along the shore clearly dropped off steeply underwater, which meant plenty of depth. We finally reached Long Point, and in a jiffy the guide had his equipment on and, telling us to follow, climbed over the side, which we did. I can see him now kicking down in front of what seemed like an undersea cliff. We were descending from the ceiling of a vast, underwater hall. He never looked back to see if we were following him. He clearly had no time for such nonsense. At the bottom, some 90 feet down, as he later revealed, I watched him, his flippers moving slowly against the current, reaching into holes barehanded to find lobsters. These had no claws, so there was no danger of his being bitten, but there definitely was a danger of his getting his hand caught, or of a moray eel or who knows what else biting his hand and refusing to let go. Divers were supposed to use a wire clothes hanger to get lobsters. The part that fit into the clothes was bent double. Holding this part, the diver pushed the hanger proper into the hole, trying to feel for a lobster. If the diver sensed there was one in there, he drew the hanger back out, hoping that it had hooked behind one of the lobster's legs, or some other part of the body. The lobster was then thrust into a burlap bag that the diver carried, and the diver went on to find the next one. I watched our guide for a while, then went back to the boat, having no interest in imitating him.

A few months later, Heintzelman and I made another scuba-diving trip, this time to Santa Barbara Island, off the coast of Santa Barbara. We flew into Santa Barbara Airport (he pointed out that nearby was a small airport that was, according to some sort of measure, the busiest airport in the country).

We boarded a boat large enough to hold a party of perhaps fifteen people. There were narrow bunks, since this was to be an overnight trip. We would go out and dive for lobster, have dinner,

then those who wanted to could go night diving, an activity I wanted no part of, since as far as I was concerned, it would be like jumping into someone else's nightmare: apart from the strange creatures that emerged from their undersea lairs when darkness fell, there was the real possibility that the light you were carrying would go out, so that you would be caught in that inky, unbreatheable darkness with slimy things circling you.

We anchored off Santa Barbara Island and, along with the others, I climbed over the side and kicked down to the bottom, which at that point I doubt was much deeper than 30 or 40 feet. Once at the bottom, I saw that I was in the middle of a beautiful kelp forest. Thin leafy stalks rose to the surface, swaying in the undersea breeze. There was ample space to swim in between them, so that, in the light yellow-green light, you felt as though you were taking a leisurely walk in a wood on a fall afternoon. I looked at the sand bottom, its occasional rocks, and was not at all confident about what might be lurking there. I had no interest in catching lobsters, so I just swam along among the kelp trees. I doubt if I stayed down more than twenty minutes or so, since I felt that by then I had proved I had sufficient courage, and so that was enough.

In the evening, they served us a meal, with plenty of beer. Inevitably, there was a fat guy with a beer can who seemed to have a permanent position in the stern, commenting on the goings on, joking with the divers he knew.

The night divers went into the inky depths, and eventually we all crammed into our small damp bunks, and somehow eventually I got to sleep.

We Buy a House

Although I was perfectly content in the apartment on Matadero, I think Marcella and I both accepted without question that young married couples should buy a house, at the very least as an investment, especially if they were going to have a child, which we both wanted. Once again, she took charge of the situation: she found a realtor, went to look at places the realtor called her about. I was merely the man who brought in — not the money, but the larger amount of money of the two of us. I felt that the two of us were being hurried along by a cultural program over which we had no control. My job was to obey while at the same time always making it seem as though my obedience was in fact what I wanted to do on my own initiative. Once in a while she would talk about "Carnation Carey", I thinking it some kind of odd woman, possibly the nickname of the realtor. It turned out to be my misunderstanding of her pronunciation of "Cornish and Carey", the realty firm she was using.

The realtor had us look at a little house in the lower part of Los Altos, a few blocks from El Camino Real, at the corner of W. Portola and Mercedes Avenues. It wasn't in the more affluent Los Altos Hills, or even one of the more affluent parts of Los Altos, being just a few blocks from El Camino Real. But it was a perfectly good place to raise a kid. It reminded me immediately of a gardener's cottage, with its picket fence overgrown with ivy, its small front yard, a row of thin trees along one side, protecting it from the street, a low fence separating the house from the neighbors on the other side, a separate garage with two doors in the back, a redwood tree behind it near the back fence. Egan grammar school was situated across the street.

We went in. The living room was large, friendly, with a fireplace. You went through a doorway and there were stairs on the left, two bedrooms on the right, with a bathroom between them, and straight ahead a big kitchen and dining area in the back, very country, and then a laundry room in the back of that.

When we entered the kitchen, a fat woman was stirring what smelled like an enormous pot of beans at the stove. We were introduced, and asked the usual questions, among which were, how

much they had paid for the place. Answer: $23,000. They were asking $28,000. Afterward, the realtor told us they were Mormons, and were outgrowing the place, despite the fact it had three additional small bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. We worried aloud to each other about such an enormous price for a house. Was there any chance the place would rise much above what we paid for it? (At the time of this writing, early 2000s, it is probably worth close to 15 times that amount.) We decided to take the risk, and so we wound up as owners and occupiers of 171 W. Portola Ave.

People from Marcella's department and mine helped us to move in (not exactly a custom, but often done, in those days). She had everything planned, all the boxes marked with the room they were to go in, the furniture likewise. This ordeal I hated went surprisingly well. She had beer and snacks prepared for everyone after the work was done.

Then, in succeeding days, as we were getting settled, it was time for The Merging of the Books. I asked that my science fiction magazines — *Galaxy*, *Astounding*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, some of the copies tattered from years of being dragged from one apartment or rented house to another — be kept separate, and so they were given their own place at one end of the long built-in bookshelf that ran along a wall of the living room from the front door to the kitchen. I don't remember exactly how we merged our books, but I do remember leafing through some of her books, one of which was Henry James's *The Ambassadors*. I had never read any James before, and the convoluted syntax of the first paragraph — which was really a single sentence — absolutely stopped me in my tracks. I tried again and again to understand it. Over the years, in idle moments, I would make renewed attempts to understand that opening sentence, and always failed[1].

It was clear from the start that Marcella had in mind that I would help her fix up the place. I tried not to think about it.

A Visit to Mari-jo

I suspected that Mari-jo had not been happy to see me get married, although, of course, she said nothing and revealed nothing that I could detect in her behavior. Putting a brave face on the event, she invited us to come and visit her at her apartment in North Beach in San Francisco, which we eventually did. She was cheerful, with that, Isn't-it-exciting-for-you-young-things? manner that women use among each other. During the visit (I don't think she cooked dinner for us), I mentioned I was trying to write short stories "based on sound", that is, in which the stories are built up from the sounds of words. She said that Joyce had done that in *Finnegans Wake*. My heart sank. I knew that it was one book I would have to stay away from.

Working at Signetics

I was beginning to get nervous at Beckman for a new reason: I was starting to feel that I was able to keep things under control without the constant anxiety of my first years as a manager. The job was becoming predictable, which brought on the thought: "If you stay in a job you are able to

1. In old age, I bought a used copy of the book because I felt I should have it in my library. The first paragraph was not difficult at all. I assumed that the reason was that it had been edited into comprehensibility, and began searching for the earlier edition that Marcella must have had. But all the editions I came across had a perfectly understandable first paragraph. I still can't believe that my reading comprehension was so poor in my late twenties.

do, you are a loser." In other words, winners always seek challenges, whether they want them or not. Marcella had no objection to my looking for other possibilities. And so I began looking around, mainly, I suppose, though I have no recollection of the details of the search, by reading ads in the newspapers. Signetics, on Arques Ave. in Sunnyvale, an integrated circuit manufacturer that had been founded by ex-Fairchild employees, was looking for a publications manager. I applied and got the job. (Fairchild was the same company I had worked for in Yonkers during the dead year (1956-57) I lived at home, when I was 20. By the time I started working at Signetics, Fairchild had sold it to Corning Glass Works, which was based in New York.)

This was an entirely different business from Beckman's. The chips were about the size of this square: ■. You could hold several quite easily on the tip of your finger, although they were packaged in plastic packages about the size of a candy lozenge. They were sold by the thousands. It was much more competitive. New products, or, rather, variations on existing products, could be created much more quickly. It was very much a commodities exchange atmosphere, such as I imagined existed at the Chicago Board of Trade, in which slight differences in price or in the functions available on a chip could sway a buy decision. The engineers and programmers all seemed harried, gruff, and, most of all, impatient with the kinds of questions that the necessary evil called "technical writers" tend to ask. My group, consisting of an artist, a repro typist, a photographer, and I, had the responsibility for producing data sheets on the various circuits. Each sheet was two, sometimes four pages, in white and orange, of text and figures describing the electrical performance, and logical functions, of a chip or family of chips. Once in a while we were asked to edit a Technical Note, which was a few pages explaining how to make some popular type of circuit using Signetics chips.

Art Heller

My supervisor was Art Heller, the head of Advertising, a New York Jew who had brought his accent, and much of his attitude about business, to the West Coast. I remember his pock-marked face, which always seemed to have a shine of sweat, his full lips, his slicked-down hair. He was a man you soon learned to fear, not so much for his decisions or views on how the work should be done, but because of the suddenness with which he let you know them. I would tell him about a meeting with the engineers or with someone in Marketing, and then what I thought would be the best way to deal with the task we had been requested to do and, without preliminary remarks, he would say, "I want you to ... and then I want you to ... and if they don't like it, tell them to see me." I sensed that he expected me to go through the exercise of coming up with a recommendation because, after all, that was part of my job, but then the final decision was his. He seldom reprimanded me; he just laid down the law.

But one day he went too far. I forget the details, but I'm pretty sure it had to do with an agreement I had carefully worked out with another department as to what we were going to deliver by when in the way of some instructional literature pertaining to a new integrated circuit tester the company was about the introduce to the market. When I heard that he had overridden the agreement without so much as telling me he was going to do so, I lost my temper (for the first time in my industrial career!), marched into his office, and said, "If you *ever* do anything like this again, you're going to have to get another publications manager." He was genuinely taken aback at my anger because up to then I'm sure that, like most people, he assumed I was a nice guy who would never risk doing anything that would make other people dislike him. He had a kind of surprised smile on his face, waved his hand in a calm-down manner, and promised it wouldn't happen again. There was no doubt that he respected me the more for my outburst.

On the other hand, another time it was I who had to do the apologizing. His boss's secretary handed out the paychecks every two weeks and, since he wasn't in his office this one time and it was locked, she handed me the envelopes to distribute, which I did, except, of course for his and mine. Absent-mindedly I opened what I thought was my envelope, looked at the figure, and found it to be over $150 higher than it should have been! For a moment, I thought he was giving me a raise. Then I looked at the name and saw that it was his check: I had opened the wrong envelope. As far as I was concerned, it was the equivalent of surprising him in the act of making love, or taking a shit. I made abject apologies.

Another time I earned his (grudging) respect when, during a long discussion involving him and other members of my department about how we were to handle a particularly heavy amount of work in a short time, work that could be handled in a number of different ways, I said, during a lull in the conversation, "Well, I think we need to ask ourselves, 'What are we trying to accomplish here?'" He jumped on the idea immediately, said that's exactly what the basic question was.

He drove an old Karmann Ghia. I always had the impression it had been his attempt, before he became a well-paid advertising manager, to be included, but just barely, among the elite. It was as though, in the early 2000s, someone were to drive a battered old Mercedes.

He had a sufficiently dirty mind to be able to stay one step ahead of the fraternity-boy side of the engineering mentality. For one product promotion, he put together a composite photo of some of the marketing managers and staff and either various pretty girls or else just pictures of products, but all in a huge bed. The caption read, "At Signetics, we like to get into bed with our customers." Other photos and captions were mildly salacious where possible.

I remember him once remarking, as we were discussing the task of writing, that he always "composed at the keyboard". Another time he said of some workman who had been fixing something in his office that he was "amazingly flatulent". I didn't know the word, and had to look it up. And I seem to remember him using the expression, "goes boppin' along", spoken in his New York accent, when talking about a technical concept: such-and-such, for example a logical pulse, went boppin' along until some event had occurred, or condition had been reached.

One thing I always respected him for was a line that I used myself many times thereafter when I depended on someone else to complete something by a given deadline: "I don't mind bad news, but I hate bad news in the last minute."

Kate

A repro typist was a person, almost always a woman, who typed the text and data for the data sheets and Technical Notes onto shiny, clay-coated paper that was then given to a printer to be offset-printed — that is, the pages were photographed so that metal plates could be made from the resulting negatives, these plates then being mounted on rollers which, picking up ink from an ink roller, proceeded to print the sheets. The process was called offset lithography because it wasn't the plates that did the printing, but another roller which received the ink image from the plates.

Since the data sheets were frequently changed in the last minute to keep the figures competitive, the repro typist always felt herself at the tail end of a chaotic process, which she in fact was. Thus, at least in the data sheet business, repro typists tended to be temperamental, cranky, inclined to fits of petulance. The manager had the job of soothing them, cajoling them, saying and doing whatever was necessary to get them to finish the camera-ready copy on time. But repro typists only did typing. The pasting of the pieces of typed material into precise position was the job of the artist, who worked with an X-acto knife and glue, and was equally temperamental because he was even farther down in the process.

Our repro typist was Kate — , and I am sure that even if she had never entered the field she was in, she would have been an eccentric. She had a horse named Souvenir, or "Soovey", as she called him, which she rode in dressage competitions. The poor woman, being middle-aged and none too good-looking, with her bony features and stringy, neck-length hair, had no one else to love, and be loved by, and so she often brought her horse to work with her in its trailer, especially if she felt he wasn't feeling well. During the day she would get up and stand at the window and look down in the parking lot to be sure he was all right. He spent the entire day in his trailer.

Artists

The artist who was working in the department. when I took over had a bad stuttering problem. He had an almost spastic way of jerking his head when he laughed. He and Kate did not get along. When he left, I hired a good-looking blond guy, who once complimented me on my dry sense of humor. I was flattered, of course, especially as I never really thought I had a sense of humor at all.

Further Proof I Was Not Meant to Be an Engineer

Even though data sheets were about as dull a form of technical communication as can be imagined, I liked the idea that they described logical functions: AND, OR, NOT, NAND (NOT AND), X-OR (EXCLUSIVE OR), not to mention all sorts of adders, counters, and other constituents of logical circuits. I liked the fact that all the engineering — the physical chemistry involving silicon and arsenic and the etching of layers of material and depositing of aluminum — lay hidden underneath these functions, which could be described by a truth table, exactly as in Manny's little after-hours course at Beckman. If both inputs of an AND gate are set to the value 1, then the output will be 1. Period. No ifs, ands, or buts. If either or both of the inputs is 0, then the output will be 0. Period. If the input to a NOT gate is 1, then the output will be 0, and vice versa. Period. End of the story. (Of course, 1 and 0 were expressed as voltages: say, 0.7 volts for a 1, 0 volts for a 0.) So this part of the business — of the product — I felt close to: the logical functionality, and what could be accomplished with it, namely, the building of ever more complex circuits which were capable of doing arithmetic and other calculations and of controlling machinery.

The actual circuitry, with its diodes and resistors and capacitors, remained incomprehensible to me. To this day, I have only the vaguest idea of how a chip is produced, even though I made numerous earnest attempts at committing the process to memory. But no matter how hard I tried, it always seemed to remain the property of *them*: the harried, curt engineers whose minds were on things no English major could possibly understand. As in the past, I couldn't understand how all these parts which were connected together could, when electric currents were sent down the wires, do anything predictable at all. Electrons on a wire traveled at a foot per *billionth* of a second. So up until some time t_0 there was no current flowing, then, at time t_0, suddenly, from the inputs and the power supply, but not necessarily simultaneously, all these electrons went racing down the wires. How could anyone possibly predict what they would do when they reached the various components? Suppose the inputs got their assignment of 1's and 0's a fraction before or after some other part of the circuit received power from wherever it was supposed to receive power. Who could possibly speak of a sequence of events under such circumstances? It was, for all practical purposes, an all-at-once phenomenon. I envied the engineers the genetic gift that enabled them somehow to make this unpredictable simultaneity produce logic functions that remained the same day in, day out. But I must hasten to add that this idea of a circuit as an all-at-once phenomenon worked backward to the logic functions themselves, and within less than ten

years from my Signetics days, it seemed important to me to think of logical functions — for example, those produced by computer programs — as all-at-once phenomena. "Get rid of sequence!" was the phrase that kept going through my mind. In other words, I began wanting to think of every possible computation by a program or logic circuit as having already happened, so that we could talk about the "geography" of the function, how different computations were related to others, and not have to think in terms of "Well, when *x* happens, then the program does *y*, however, if *z* happens, then the program does *w*, unless..." This idea lay at the basis of my approach to an unsolved problem (the Syracuse Problem) I tackled in the early eighties. So something good came out of my bewilderment at the electronic goings-on inside integrated circuits. But that is getting ahead of my story.

To communicate more clearly the difference between my view of logic circuits and that of the engineers, let me relate an incident that occurred in connection with the manufacturing process. The integrated circuit business was literally a *mass* production business: large numbers of circuits — little chips in plastic packages — had to be produced and tested and shipped. Obviously, the accuracy of the circuits was crucial. They had to perform exactly the logical functions that were advertised, or else the larger circuits they went into would not perform correctly. But suddenly we began to hear that something had gone wrong with the manufacturing process: an alarmingly high number of chips had logical errors! The engineers and technicians dove into the problem, yet after several days, it remained unsolved. No one had an answer. People began recalling a discovery made several years earlier — one that established a permanent reputation for the discoverer — namely, that, under certain circumstances, cosmic rays could cause errors in chips. Cosmic rays, for God's sake!, from way out in the boundless reaches of outer space, could find their way to, of all places, a tiny bit of circuitry in a room inside an industrial building, and do precisely the right thing so that the chip's behavior was suddenly wrong. But the cosmic ray prevention technology was in place in the Signetics manufacturing process, so that couldn't be the problem in this case. Days went by, the upper managers were beginning to panic. There was talk of stopping manufacturing altogether. Then, some bright technician had an idea: maybe it was the humidity! The weather had been particularly humid in recent days, and even though the chips were manufactured in a protected environment, perhaps, once they were put in packages and sent out for testing, the humidity was able to have an effect. Sure enough, this turned out to be the cause. The humidity was just enough to cause occasional, and unpredictable, short circuits between the pins on the chip mountings. The problem was fixed and manufacturing resumed.

I remember telling people this story in succeeding years. I always found myself adding, at the end, "And that is why I am more at home in programming and mathematics than in engineering: when you write a program, or do a proof, what you put on paper remains for all eternity. It may be wrong, but even the error will be the same for all eternity. You never have to worry that tomorrow, '+' will have somehow become '2', or '=' will somehow have become '*x*', or the statement that was true yesterday will somehow become false today. I want no part of an intellectual discipline in which the weather — the *humidity* (or cosmic rays or God knows what else) — can make my work be wrong." Or, as I sometimes put it, "The advantage of programming and mathematics is: *no splinters*!"

Lest I leave the wrong impression: *if* the engineers could have provided me with the circuit equivalent for each of the basic logic functions (AND, OR, NOT, NAND (NOT AND), X-OR (EXCLUSIVE OR)) — and they certainly could have — and *if* the company said to me, "Your job is to write a program that will convert any logic expression that it is given [for example, NOT (I_1 AND I_2) OR I_3 AND I_4, where I*j* is an input that has value 0 or 1] into its equivalent cir-

cuitry, I would have been delighted, and no doubt would have worked long hours to succeed at the task. (For each possible combination of input values, the circuit would produce the corresponding output value, a 0 or a 1, of the expression.) In subsequent years, of course, such programs were developed and used, although it was very difficult to get them to produce *optimal* circuits — that is, circuits that utilized the smallest possible number of transistors, and that could be connected with the least amount of metal on the and cover the least amount of area on the chip. Nevertheless, I would have regarded the challenge as one that was definitely worth my time and effort.

The Guy Who Handled the Advertising Copy

Art Heller was the head of Advertising and Technical Publications (or whatever they called us), but he believed in having other people do most of the day-to-day work. To handle the writing and placing of ads in the trade magazines, he hired a guy whose name I have forgotten, but who was yet another character in the collection of odd folk who made up the department. I remember mainly his way of speaking, a kind of deep, nasal voice, with a peculiar way of forming his *s*'s: I think this was a consequence of his not quite having gotten used to the results of the extensive cosmetic dental work he had had done. Or maybe he had false teeth even though he was only in his late thirties or early forties. He was a guy who had a lot going against him in the physical department, and who was clearly bothered by this: he was short, he apparently had had bad teeth, and I believe, although to this day I am not sure of the fact, he was bald. His toupee was just good enough that you were constantly wondering if it was a toupee or not, but not good enough that the question never occurred to you. Everything about him seemed new, recently done. I wouldn't have been surprised to learn that he had lost an arm, and that one of his arms had been recently sewn on. He seemed always to be spending money on improving his personal appearance. For all I know, he wore elevator shoes. I never heard anyone remark on his work being unsatisfactory, and he seemed at ease in talking with the various editors and advertising agency staff he worked with. And yet, I always had the impression he was an extremely insecure man, a man whose only hope for any value in this world was to create — with the help of the best of modern medical technology — a body that others would finally approve of.

Virgina Tutt

Art also hired a woman for what I think were called "Special Projects". She was definitely a take-control type: kind of leggy, a bit tall, and with a combination of fierceness and sexiness that left no doubt that she knew the ropes in the cutthroat world of corporate advertising. (Sometimes she did a mailing of an advertising letter to all the prospective, and actual, customers on our various mailing lists. The letter announced a new product or offered a discount on an existing product. She told me that, industry-wide, only about 3% of the recipients ever responded to such mailings, which I found very surprising.) She invited Marcella and me to a dinner party at her house in Los Alto Hills, a house that turned out to be a little cottage at the end of a long gravel driveway, behind one of the old mansions. She and her husband gave the impression of an upper-class, wealthy couple being temporarily a little short of cash, and so being forced to live, temporarily, in a little cottage behind a house like the one they were clearly meant to live in, and soon would be living in again. I don't remember what her husband did for a living, but I remember a sense of competition arising as soon as we had met. Before the evening was over, one of us challenged the other to a foot race around the property, which was to finish at the end of the gravel driveway. I was surprised at the guy's speed and, in fact, he beat me, but got sick afterward. During the evening, we learned that Virginia and her husband were friends with at least one member of The Jef-

ferson Airplane.

I no longer have the slightest recollection of the reason, but within a few weeks after she arrived, she and I were at war, and thereafter there was no doubt in either of our minds that we hated each other's guts.

Clarence Williams

I had not lost my liberal ideals, and as the Black Panthers raged before the media, and the nation demonstrated against the Vietnam War, I felt I had to take some action on my own — felt that I had to take advantage of the power of my position to do something for the good. So I began calling — , a black woman in East Palo Alto who was frequently in the newspapers for her outspokenness as a civic leader. I told her that we needed another illustrator, and wanted to hire a member of a minority. She sent a young guy named Clarence Williams who had just earned his degree in Fine Arts from, I think, San Jose State. He was small, soft-spoken, very serious, and, I soon learned, a member of the Black Panthers. He did his work competently. Naturally, I couldn't resist talking to him once in a while during breaks about the black problem. He used to tell me about how his local Black Panthers group would go up to Skyline, the top of the ridge of low mountains that ran along the western side of the Peninsula, between us and the ocean, and practice firing weapons.

Among the projects he was working on was the establishing of the East Palo Alto Cultural Center. I had several long discussions with him in the company cafeteria during which I argued that economics came before culture. "Once you are making a decent income," I said, "then you can turn your attention to cultural matters." (Which, in fact, was exactly the case with him.) "First comes money, then comes everything else." He disagreed. First the people need to become aware of their culture, then they can begin to raise themselves up out of poverty. I was very careful to keep the discussion on as high a level as possible, always allowing him to make his point before I spoke, always trying to support my points with logical arguments. Neither one of us ever lost our temper, and the truth is I had a lot of respect for his seriousness and determination and intelligence. I felt a certain amount of pride that he would feel confident enough about my objectivity as a manager to be able to disagree with me on a political issue.

Angie

The department secretary was a young woman named Angie. She had an Italian last name. To me, she represented a type that seemed a throwback to the peasant of the last century, an effectively unretrainable employee. She was Catholic, a dutiful church-goer, and engaged to be married. A major part of her work consisted of keeping up-to-date the thousands of three-by-five cards which contained the names of prospective customers who had responded to Signetics ads in the trade journals. A daunting, boring task that was always on the verge of overwhelming her and preventing her from carrying out any of her other duties. Art suggested, rightly, as it turned out, that I investigate the procedure she was using with a view to making it more efficient. In the most unthreatening way I could, I told her that it was a shame to see her always so overburdened with the cards, and maybe we could figure out a way to make the job go a little more easily. You could see that she immediately felt threatened. I asked her to explain what the steps were. She uttered a few words, but nothing that could be called an explanation. I began asking her questions, but it was useless. Nothing was going to change the way she did her work, and nothing did.

Barbara

We decided to hire a secratary to do the work that Angie never had time for. I made a second call to East Palo Alto. They sent me a very attractive black woman, whom we all called "Barb". Unlike Clarence, she seemed to have no particular agenda and in fact seemed glad to have the job. She was much more flexible than Angie, and, I sensed, had a certain affection for me for having made the effort to bring a black woman into such a (relatively) prestigious job.

Jim Riley

The president of the company was one of those rare executives whom I had no trouble respecting and admiring from the start. He had been a star salesman for Corning, but the strain of the job had turned him into an alcoholic. He decided that his career could not tolerate that handicap and so he resolved to give up drinking, which he did, I think with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous. When people discussed his virtues as a manager, they always included mention of his will power in overcoming his drinking problem. In any case, at parties he would always be seen with nothing more potent than a bottle of soda.

In other aspects of management, too, you sensed that he had read the books, chosen what in them he deemed the best, and then willed himself to implement the techniques and ideas. He was an openly friendly man, and I think this was genuine, but he also had mastered the ability to remember the names of dozens, probably hundreds, of the people who worked in the plant. I would see him say hello, by name, to a woman who worked on an assembly line, or a technician, or an engineer. He was an accomplished speaker, always able to bring his audience in with a little humor. When he called a company-wide meeting, people looked forward to it. We all believed that he did not lie to us.

Here is an example of his skill and at the same time his attitude toward his employees: he had been called, on short notice, to give a talk somewhere; the talk required a dozen or so slides, I think showing various facets of sales, production, quality control, including a few about the industry in general. He asked Art if we could get these done on time, Art naturally replied that we could, and I handled the delicate job of smoothing the way with the illustrators. But they worked hard and got the job done in time so that Riley could go off and give his talk, which I think was on a Friday. The following Monday, bright and early, he came into our office, thanked Art for the effort his department had made, and then personally thanked each one of us. Even though it was a simple gesture which he must have known would pay off far beyond his investment in time, I felt that his appreciation was genuine.

Years later, I heard that he had become a venture capitalist, and I once saw him in a restaurant on Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road talking to what appeared to be some well-heeled men in suits. I said hello, but sensed that he didn't remember me, though he certainly tried to be polite. I hope I somehow summoned the courage, during our brief conversation, to tell him what an outstanding manager he had been.

No Records Remain

I, who all my life have been obsessed with saving things, especially copies of work I produced, or that was produced by people who worked for me, and records of employment, can find not a trace of that year at Signetics. For example, I distinctly remember keeping a binder of the data sheets we produced. It is gone. Certainly one of the most depressing aspects of writing an autobiography is realizing how extraordinarily many records disappear with time, despite all your efforts to keep them safe.

Jury Duty

While I was at Signetics I served on a jury for the first and only time in my life, though it was certainly not the only time I had been called for jury duty. But the other times all occurred many years later, after I had moved to Berkeley. There, registered voters were called every year or two. The trials typically concerned murders in Oakland, the largely black city just south of Berkeley. I knew, from hearsay and from reading the papers, that the trials often dragged on for weeks, sometimes months. The defendants were usually black drug dealers or at least blacks with previous arrests and convictions, and I had no intention of spending my time helping the legal system go through the motions with a bunch of incorrigibles. So I found ways of avoiding my civic duty.

But this trial was different: a Puerto Rican washerwoman was suing a vice president of Syntex, one of the first companies, and I think the most successful initially, to market the birth control pill. They had a big office building in Stanford Industrial Park in South Palo Alto.

The woman claimed that early one morning, just after dawn, a car driven by the vice president had struck hers as a result of his carelessness. The accident occurred on El Camino Real, near the Industrial Park. She was asking for a large sum to compensate her for the fact that she could never work again due to the injury her back had suffered.

The trial lasted five days, but I only remember one morning. The woman's lawyer, a nervous type who seemed to have difficulty keeping the yellow pages of his legal pad in order, droned on, occasionally calling a witness. One was a Stanford professor who was also a surgeon. He testified in no uncertain terms that the woman had permanent damage to her spine. Finally, just before noon, the vice president's lawyer took the floor. He was the very essence of a Texas lawyer, heavy build, with a mane of white hair, string tie, deep voice. He said words along the lines of, "Ladies and gentlemen, I know this has been a long morning for you, and I'm sure you're eager to go to lunch, so I won't take much of your time. I just want to bring to your attention a law that is especially important in this case. The law says that it is every driver's obligation to avoid an accident if possible. That even means that if some guy decides to park his car sideways in the middle of the road, and it's a clear day, and you are driving down the road, if you hit him without making every effort to avoid him, the accident is your fault. Not his. Even though he did something crazy by parking his car like that."

The words all but wiped out, at least in our minds, the previous three hours of testimony.

The Texas lawyer had hired a detective — a furtive guy obviously uncomfortable in a courtroom — to secretly film the woman in her daily activities, in particular, her shopping trips to Safeway. We saw her carrying a heavy grocery bag with no apparent difficulty. Then the detective had put a large number of quarters on the pavement below the driver's side door of her car. She saw them, bent and picked them up. Another Stanford professor, a surgeon, testified that there was nothing permanently wrong with the woman's back.

Eventually, the judge summed up the arguments and we went into the jury room. We deliberated for, I think, less than an hour, and found in favor of the vice president. A few pangs of my leftist conscience said that no capitalist should ever be found innocent, but I, and the other jurors, felt that the evidence of the movies, and what the lawyer had told us about the driver's obligation to avoid an accident, could not be ignored.

I always considered my experience on the jury to have been one of the best, one of the most inspiring experiences of my life, and I came away with a vastly increased respect, even admiration, for the U.S. legal system.

Early Morning Radio Comedy

The commute to Signetics was only about twenty minutes: turn left off W. Portola, go down San Antonio to Route 101, then south on 101 to the Mathilda Ave. turnoff in Sunnyvale. Then west on Mathilda to Maude, left onto Maude, and a few more rights and lefts to reach the plant on Arques Ave. During the trip, I would listen to two of the funniest radio comedians who ever cheered the hearts of anxiety-ridden commuters, namely, Don Sherwood (who billed himself as "The World's Greatest Disk Jockey") and his sidekick, Carter B. Smith (the "B" stood for "Blakemore").

Sherwood had a deep, gravelly, chain-smoker's voice, and a lecherous laugh. He also had a drinking problem, and so sometimes he barely made it into the studio, explaining to Carter B. that he was suffering from another bout of "radio sickness". Carter B. (who would sometimes describe himself as "a prince trapped in the body of a disk jockey") was his perfect opposite — his perfect straight man — with a crystal clear, articulate voice and understated manner. They did skits. One of them was called "Just Plain Rosita". After a few measures of soap opera Hammond-organ music from an ancient, scratchy recording, Sherwood would imitate the deep mellow tones of one of the old-time announcers: "Yes, friends, it's time now for... 'Just Plain Rosita'...the story that asks the question, 'Can a woman over 35?' The part of Rosita is played by Luz Morales, the part of Paulo by Lance Boyle. As we join them now, we find Rosita, Paulo, and Uncle and Aunt Fritos, in the breakfast nook." Then, from an even scratchier recording of a Spanish language teaching method, would come a woman's voice carefully speaking a sentence or two. Sherwood, who knew no Spanish, would wing a translation, punctuated by his laugh. For example, if the phrase had the word "usted" ("*oo*sted", you), then later a word that sounded like "Juan" and later a word that sounded like "istore", Sherwood, after careful thought, might come up with something like, "Ah, yes: '[name of character] hoisted him up on one of the hooks outside the drug store". Throughout, what with Sherwood's pauses, as though due to his trying to find the precise words for the Spanish phrase, and his laughs, which conveyed the impression of an announcer at the end of his rope, worn out from years of having to earn a living by work like this, really no longer giving a damn — you couldn't help laughing. A (scratchy) recording of this particular episode of the series can be found on www.bayarearadio.org/sherwood. Another show within a show that they featured regularly was called "Gardening By Mail," in which Carter B. would improvise often hilarious answers to questions ostensibly from listeners. Sometimes, as I recall, an entire episode would have nothing to do with gardening. I know of no existing recordings. In an email of 2/20/06, Carter B. wrote, "Alas, there is not Gardening By Mail material available. I do have some around here, but have never really gotten anything together. The program won an award from the Calif. State Fair for excellence in broadcasting. I started the show [presumably, "Gardening..."] after having a garden of my own for just 24 hours. Just winged it for a long time. Sherwood ... knew even less about the subject than I."

They had an ongoing character, I think voiced by Sherwood, named Seedy Caraway, an aging hippie.

Every now and then, when reflecting on something good having occurred after something bad in one of their skits, or in some anecdote one of them related, Sherwood would remark, "Out of the mud grows the lotus."

And then there was a remarkable real-life weatherman named Parky Sharkey who lived with his mother somewhere along the coast in Marin County, north of San Francisco. Through some strange combination of intuition, attention to the feelings in his joints, looking at the flights of

birds, and God knows what else, he gave weather predictions that consistently beat those of the professional weathermen. He wrote a book that Sherwood often mentioned with his throaty chuckle: *I Seen California Destroyed by Progress*.

It was on this morning radio show that I first heard a song that I still consider one of the strangest, most haunting, ever written, namely, "Show Me a Rose". Somehow Sherwood had gotten hold of an ancient recording with I think Groucho Marx himself singing it. "Show me a rose and I'll show you a stag at bay..." The melody and lyrics make you think of a guy who has always been unsuccessful with women — a guy who lives, say, a few houses down a dirt road from his mother's house, and who works, say, as a clerk in the hardware store in the village, and whose only interest — and only a passing interest at that — is in UFOs. And yet he retains a kind of sweet expectation that someday, somehow, after all these years, it might be possible that She will come along. I have searched for that recording ever since, but have never found it.

Early Married Life

Marcella and I had our jokes. We both got a kick out of the idea of an incubus, a demon from the Middle Ages who supposedly had sexual intercourse with women while they slept, and was occasionally blamed for bringing on unwanted pregnancies. (The succubus, on the other hand, was responsible for men's nocturnal emissions.) Whenever something happened to a woman that could conceivably be construed as having been caused by this being, one of us was sure to nod and say, "I think it was the incubus."

Or she would stand in the middle of the kitchen, holding her arms forward at chest height, and work them vigorously back and forth, repeating, "I must, I must, I must increase my bust", this apparently being an exercise that had been promoted in some of the women's magazines.

There were no jokes about our own sexual life, but she would let me use a phrase I always got a kick out of when referring to the real or possible sexual activities of others. We would talk about a couple that seemed to have become romantically involved, and I would inevitably ask, "Do you think they are ... Performing the Act?" Having met my mother, she fully understood my saying that I couldn't imagine my parents Performing the Act.

We once rented small beige motorcycles and went riding in the country roads behind Stanford, up to —'s, a famous old hamburger stand out in the middle of nowhere. This was a time when an upwardly mobile couple riding motorcycles together was one of the progressive things to do.

Marcella worried about her weight, because of her mother's example. Sometimes, when there was an opportunity to have, say, a piece of cake, she would look at it longingly, and then say, "Nope. If I eat that, it's Fat, Fat, the River Rat." One time, several years after our son was born, she went on a diet, and as Jeff and I were digging into our evening meal, she went to the oven, opened it, there was the sound of a plate being taken out of the cabinet, and then she came back to the table with nothing but a hockey-puck-sized brick of brown meat on it. That's all she could allow herself, she said. We told her how guilty we felt, we couldn't just eat while she was trying to stretch two bites over our full meal, but she was firm.

She sometimes didn't like to be criticized. I once pointed out that she said "drownding" instead of "drowning", and she told me that that's the way she said it, period. One afternoon we were worrying about what we would do if we lost our jobs and couldn't find others. She laughed and said, well, if worse came to worst, she could always become a "cartesian". I asked her why

she believed that becoming a follower of Descartes's philosophy would help our financial situation, and she paused for a moment, and then said, with some embarrassment. "No, not a cartesian. What do you call those women?" I: "You mean a *courtesan*?" "Yes, that's it!" she said, and not even she could help laughing at a blunder like that. She didn't protest when I used her original word for the second when the subject came up in conversation after that.

But certain expressions of mine irritated her. She hated it when I would say, with affected melodrama, quoting Eliot, "Life, what *cauchemar*!"[1] Or, when Jeff and I would sit at the kitchen table, imitating redneck oldtimers on a front porch, I saying, "Yep..." (long pause) "Yep..." (longer pause) "Well..." (sigh, followed by shaking of head) "Yep..."

Out of affection, I started calling her, "Marcy", but she made it clear that she didn't like nicknames.

A skill I thought would be of enormous value in marriage, namely that of being able to hold in memory a half minute or so of the exact words that someone had spoken, turned out to get me in trouble instead. Marcella would be talking at dinner. I would be only half listening, if that, but keeping the tape recorder running. She: "John, are you listening?" I: "Yes. You said 'Jeff, don't eat with your fingers, oh, where is a napkin, here, wipe them, I talked to Mr. — today, he says he can take a look at the plumbing next week, please pass the salt, it looks like it's going to be warm tomorrow, the PTA meeting is on Thursday and I think we should go, Jeff, eat your vegetables...' This little memory feat earned me no points because it in no way proved I was *listening* to her. If I had been, I wouldn't have been able to repeat what she had been saying.

She had beautiful, thick, black hair, but I remember a period when, after brushing or combing it, she would notice that a lot of hair had come off in the brush or comb. She worried aloud about starting to lose her hair. I pooh-poohed the idea, but I thought to myself: "Christ! Suppose it happens? Not only am I going to be bald but I'm going to have a bald wife in addition!"

While we both worked at Beckman, we always had plenty to talk about at home, namely, what was going on at the job. But she went back to school and got her Master's in English from San Jose State during the first two or three years of Jeff's life. Then, when we had put him in Happy Hours Nursery School in Los Altos from age 2½ to age 5 — a move that was a benefit to him as well as to us — she worked at other jobs. I left Beckman for Signetics and then Hewlett-Packard. So for several years our work lives differed and we had less to talk about in that area. However, one benefit of this change, this distance, this drifting apart, was, strangely enough, a cure for her insomnia. At first, I would try to talk to her, soothe her, when she couldn't sleep. Then I hit on an idea which worked every time: I simply told her about my work day, including the details of meetings and of office politics. On the rare occasions when that failed to send her off to slumberland, I simply told her about what I was reading. That always worked. I thought about starting a phone service for insomniacs, in which all I would do is tell them about what I was interested in.

She had absolutely no use for the kind of despair and depression which was the very fabric of my life. I would try to get her to climb down into the pit with me, mentioning some news story

1. "nightmare". From "Portrait of a Lady"

and then using it as further evidence of how rotten the world was, how hopeless it was to try to find solutions to problems. She would say, firmly, but without nastiness, "I don't want to hear about it." When I tried to use her lack of sympathy as further evidence I was right about the general hostility of the world, she would again say, "I don't want to talk about it." I don't know if she learned this technique of not engaging from some book or magazine, but it definitely had the desired effect, namely, of making me shut up.

When I decided that we should start recycling cans and bottles, she sensed the neurotic need that lay behind this decision, and said immediately: "I haven't got time to flatten cans."

She was not shy about protesting things she considered unfair. To protest the cost of utility bills, she would put the envelope into the mailbox with no stamp on it. For a while, the Post Office would deliver these envelopes to the utility company, which would then have to pay for the postage, but soon after, a little rectangle began appearing in the upper right corner of the utility company's return envelope. Inside the rectangle was a terse message: "Place stamp here. Post Office will not deliver mail without postage".

She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment, which guaranteed equal pay and other equitable treatment for women. It was not even discussable whether it was a good thing or not. Fortunately I was for it.

Her mother's name was Ruth. Ruth's family had been homesteaders in Idaho, possibly near Boise, or in Montana. Her father (presumably with the help of other male relatives) had built their sod house. The only doctor was twenty miles away One December, she said, her brothers had been playing with matches and had burned their house to the ground. With winter coming on, she made it clear that, this disaster put the family in dire straits indeed. Everyone had had to race to rebuild before the snows came. She said that sometimes during the winter the family went to Florida for a vacation, but the only way they could afford to do this was by planting and harvesting a crop while they were there.

Ruth had a blunt, horsey, no-nonsense manner, and didn't hesitate to voice her disagreement with some of the things Marcella did in the raising of Jeff. And yet her criticisms of Marcella (or me) didn't make me angry in the way my mother's did. There was no desire to hurt or humiliate in them.

She was overweight, and had a halting walk because of chronic trouble with her legs and feet. She once exclaimed, enviously, on seeing me or Jeff casually kneeling on the floor, or crouching on the balls of our feet, "Oh, how can you do that!"

She had no interest in books or the issues of the day. When Marcella or I would tell her about something we had read or seen on TV, she would simply say, with a shrug, "Yes, well..." in the tone of, "It's all very well for you young people to have time to be interested in such things."

Years later, she had a stroke and lost her ability to speak — to find the sounds to express what she wanted to say, which was still clear in her mind — and this frustration kept her in a state of rage much of the time. I think she could still communicate by writing. Eventually, Marcella had to put her in a retirement home. Marcella's father, Peter, I gathered, merely acquiesced, leaving the details of his wife's care to his daughter. I remember her telling me that the home, which was in Bakersfield, Calif., cost $35,000 a year.

If there was a single thing I can say I did with unalloyed joy in these years, apart from playing with Jeff, it was having what I called a "People Pile". These could begin in any of a number of

ways, for example, he might be lying on the floor, reading, and I would come into the room and shout "*People Pile!*" or he and I might be wrestling on the floor, and then one of us would call out, "*People Pile!*" and Marcella, wiping her hands on a towel, would come out of the kitchen, and join us in the pile. We were happy, our little family, once in a while!

Trips to Lake Tahoe

Marcella's parents owned a little house in Bijou on Lake Tahoe. We would go there to visit, always in winter, it seems in memory. The whole family — her mother, father, sister Tina, brother-in-law John, she, Jeff, and I — crammed into what was essentially a brown wood cottage, and spent most of our time in the living room, trying to make conversation. Whenever I could, I escaped to the gambling casinos because they offered the irresistible spell of the *possibility* of being favored by the world. I would put on a heavy coat, make my apologies and excuses — "Just going to the casinos for a while, don't worry, I won't gamble away the house..." — and then step out into icy air and go crunching off on the side of the dull black frozen streets, under the pines, to the warmth of the casinos. The flashing red and yellow and green lights, the fact that the casinos were open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year round, the green velvet, the smell of tobacco smoke, alcohol, the fact that food was very cheap and that a sexy cocktail waitress would come up to you and ask if you would like a drink as you stood at the craps table, the smell of the carpets and upholstery, that vaguely money smell, the smooth dealers who always had expressions that said they already knew how the game would come out, always set my heart pounding. I played the nickel slot machines, and sometimes the twenty-five cent craps tables and the roulette wheel, watching my every penny, setting a strict maximum to what I would lose (usually $5, once in a while $10). Once or twice over several days I would go stark crazy and put a quarter in one of the big, silver slot machines. I remember winning only one big jackpot, I think of $25 or so, and as the coins tumbled into the tray, I knew that, for a few minutes, I had found favor with something.

My barely controlled gambling obsession lasted for several winters, until, at home, I happened to buy Warren Weaver's paperback, *Lady Luck*. Now this was writing on a mathemtical subject the way I liked it, with lots of pictures, the plainest language, and yet numbers and equations when they were necessary. I knew a little probability theory from other reading, but this book spelled out in the clearest terms what the chances of winning were at the standard casino games, including the slot machines and craps. It showed that your best odds — in other words, your least bad odds — of all the games was by simply playing the Pass line in craps, boring though that was: at the start of each game, you put your money on the Pass line and waited. If someone rolled a seven or eleven initially, you got double your money back. If they rolled a two or eleven, you lost. If they rolled a three, four, five, six, eight, nine, or ten, then that became the "point". If they rolled the point again before rolling a seven, you got double your money back. The book changed my life in that, ever since, a gambling casino has been to me nothing but a gigantic probability machine. I very seldom place a bet on the rare occasions I am forced to be in Nevada, and I am almost indifferent as to the outcome when I do, because I know that if I win, it is not because the world has found me worthy of favor, but that Blind Chance just happened to stumble into me when she was carrying a paper tub full of nickels.

A Trip Back East To Visit R —

Soon after our marriage, R —, the clarinet and alto sax player in my old band, from whose parents' cottage on Fire Island I had fled in 1960 in order to come to California, wrote me and urged Marcella and me to come East for a visit, which we eventually did.

He and his wife, Janet, were living in a converted church in Rockland County (he always said that they lived "in the County"), next door to his parents' house. It was almost directly across the Hudson River from my home town of Valhalla. I remember our drive, in a rented car, through the countryside, I nervously attempting to keep Marcella interested in the prospect of meeting this young man about whom I had spoke a great deal.

The church was on a raised piece of ground next to a macadam road that ran between grassy banks in a rural area. R — told me, during our visit, that the mountain High Tor was nearby, and that Maxwell Anderson's play by the same name takes place near it.

The church interior was warm, brown wood, with a big open space where the pews had been. On a raised stage at one end was the harpsichord that R — was building. I think he played a few notes on it. He had already built several.

He, with his penchant for name-dropping, said that the sculptor David Smith lived nearby, as did the composer John Cage, whom he described as a "nice old queer". Apparently the three of them, and other notables, got together for card games.

During the discussion before dinner, we got to talking about jazz. At one point I remarked that jazz improvisation was largely a matter of stringing together various pieces of boiler plate (idoms, well-known phrases), and he seemed impressed with the remark, but I wondered if maybe he was only trying to do me a favor by letting Marcella see how smart and hip her new husband was.

I think this trip might have been the last time I went back to my house in Valhalla. I am not sure. If I did, it would have been because the house was temporarily vacant, as my mother continued to rent it out as a source of income, since she was then living in San Francisco with her second husband, Emil. In any case, I have a distinct memory of entering the house, which my mother had kept in excellent condition. Everything seemed smaller. At the top of the stairs was the hall closet, with the brass doorknob, and I wondered for a moment why the doorknobs suddenly seemed so low! Then I realized that when they had been part of my life, I had been a lot shorter!

We Decide to Have a Baby

Marcella's birth control pills came in a circular, light blue plastic container. Inside, the pills sat in little holes in a plastic holder, with the day of the week marked under each hole. I remember the snap of the lid after she had removed the pill for the day and popped it into her mouth. Apparently it wasn't enough just to pick the Tuesday pill on Tuesday; there was some other calculation that had to be made, I suppose to be sure you selected the right Tuesday. And yet I vaguely recall dates being written under the name of the day. In any case, she followed her doctor's instructions, and avoided pregnancy until we decided it was time. Up until then, we would use expressions like, "Well, when we get our rug-rat...", "Once we have our curtain-climber...", " When we get our tricycle motor", "When we get our motor..."

In spring of 1967, we decided the time was right: we were ready to start trying to have a baby. Marcella stopped taking the pills, and the ordeal of keeping my wife sexually satisfied now increased, since not only did I have to have an orgasm, but I had to have one that resulted in one tiny sperm making its way the entire distance up the infinitely long channel to the egg. After a month or so, nothing. Two months, nothing. After more trying, she suggested I see Dr. McKenna.

Dr. McKenna asked me for a sample of my sperm. I said that is only possible if — and I never do that (I never admit doing that). I would love to be able to recall how Marcella and I discussed, or did not discuss, this indelicate act. What kind of a bottle did I put it in? In any case, Dr. McKenna got his sample, and a few days later the report came back: my sperm count was below normal, which meant that achieving pregnancy would be difficult. (A man unable to have sexual intercourse without fantasies, a man with weak sperm...could anything else go wrong with me?) I don't remember what else he said, but we kept on trying, I all the while having to do my best to pretend that we weren't trying, that we were making love because we loved each other and hoped that out of that love, a child would emerge.

Apparently the oven got lit around early June. (Jeff told me in late 2003 that Marcella told him that he was conceived on a trip we took to Crater Lake, Calif. All I can remember of that trip is our camping in a grove of pine trees, she busy with preparations for meals, and clearly sensing and not liking that I didn't want to be there, I devoting every spare moment to seeing if I could make a frisbee behave like a boomerang, and eventually finding that I could in virtually any kind of wind or breeze blowing toward me.) Finally, she announced that she was pregnant. I can't remember the words she used to make the announcement, but I seem to recall they were said in an almost matter-of-fact way, as though she were trying not to show too much delight over the fact. I don't remember what I said, but I was very happy. Taking seriously her duty to produce a healthy child, she immediately stopped smoking and had only a sip of alcohol when we went out to dinner. I, equally determined to do my part, began doing daily exercises and running around the Egan school grounds across the street, fully believing that I was somehow making my child stronger. I didn't care if people laughed at me. Marcella suffered from morning sickness and tried to take pills to overcome it. By any standards, you would have to say she endured the pregnancy bravely. I think we stopped having sex around the sixth month or so, so I had a three-month vacation from my marital duties.

She attended a Lamaze class, and I joined her a few times, sitting on the floor, looking at diagrams of the uterus and birth canal and hearing the nice lady explain how everything worked and what the husband should do in this and that circumstance. All very friendly and natural.

We discussed names, or, I should say, Marcella came up with a few she liked, and we made a choice from those: "Jeffrey" if it was a boy, "Jennifer" if a girl, both being among the popular names of the time. Neither one of us had any strong preference regarding the sex of the child, although I was leaning a little toward a son.

Birth of Jeff

We arrived at El Camino Hospital in Mountain View in plenty of time. The date was Mar. 20, 1968. They took Marcella inside, and although she wanted me to be present at the delivery, I didn't have the stomach for it. But I stayed with her in a little curtained-off alcove until she was ready to deliver. It was a long wait. Sometimes I went out into the waiting room.

When she started to develop delivery pains, I held her hand, but it was soon clear that, Lamaze or no Lamaze, she would need a little help from traditional Western medicine. I called the nurse, who seemed to have no interest in her job. The nurse said it wasn't time for the injection. The pains got worse. I again called the nurse, again she refused. I called her a third time, and this time I said, "Look, goddamnit, my wife is in severe pain. She was scheduled for a caudal if this happened. Now you administer the fucking injection or else." After she left to prepare it, Marcella took my hand, looked up at me, and said, "Good. You told her. I'm proud of you," as

though, for the first time since we had met, her hope that there was a real, take-control *man* under my neurotic exterior had been confirmed.

The injection was administered, and soon thereafter they wheeled her off into the delivery room. I sat in the waiting room, which I can still see in my mind's eye: the two closed doors, on in each of two opposite walls, the brown-yellow light, the magazine rack, the soft chairs covered with dark upholstery, the distant sounds of the hospital. I tried to think every thought that should be thought at a time like this. I waited, pacing the floor. I tried to read the *National Geographic* magazines. I may have brought a book, but I doubt if I was able to keep my mind on it. I kept going over the signficance of the event: birth, marriage, the birth of your children, death — what else is there? I kept promising the child in my mind that he (or she) would never be subjected to what I had gone through. He (or she) would know, in adulthood, that he (or she) had chosen the right parents. I even managed a few moments of pride over the fact that, despite being a sexual cripple, and a neurotic of the highest (or lowest) order, I had managed to perform well enough to bring another human being into the world.

No one came out to see how I was doing. Then a nurse appeared and announced, with cheerful matter-of-factness, that it was a boy. (I don't remember the words: perhaps something like, "Well, Mr. Franklin, you're the father of a fine, healthy boy.") They were going to wheel Marcella out. The nurse held one of the doors open, indicating with her hand a little hallway I was to walk down. I opened the door at the far end, heard something going on at my right, and there was Marcella, being pushed in a wheel chair down a little corridor from the delivery room, and holding a baby. Her obstetrician, Dr. Warren (whom she said, many years later, "looked like Nixon") , was walking along with them. I thought: "That's my son!" He had a little wrinkled face, scrunched-up eyes, and an expression that seemed to say, "I'm not finished with my dream. Please stop moving around and let me sleep." For me, it was love at first sight. Marcella looked exhausted, but she was beaming and said several times, "You should have been there!" "I know, I know," I said, and gave her a kiss on her forehead. I kept thinking, "I'm a father! I'm a father!"

I think the birth was by episiotomy, and I remember that for a week or so, she had to sit on an inflated plastic donut, which she carried around the house with her.

Forty years later, in 2008, after watching a "Frontline" program, "Sick Around the World", describing the appalling state of the American health system, I realized I had no idea how Marcella and I paid for our son's birth, or indeed how medical insurance worked back then. I wrote her an email, asking what she remembered. She replied:

"During your working years, you had an administrator (insurance company) that the employer provided. You went to your own doctors, private doctors of your choice. Your health care was up to you and your choice of doctor and your "coverage" was good or bad depending on how much your employer paid. So health care and coverage were separate."

Jeff in Infancy

I remember carrying him around and kissing him, I remember his sweet little baby smell, remember changing his diapers (with no great enthusiasm, after Marcella had called out "John!..."). And then, later on, as I let the stuff tumble into the toilet and I pressed the lever, him standing there and watching and waving at it. "Bye, bye, Gicki. See ya next time!"

(Later, after he was able to go to the bathroom on his own, when he was finished we would hear a voice: "*Wipe...*" (long pause) "*...my bottom!*" Marcella always performed this duty.)

Marcella and I both did our best to minimize any sense of shame concerning sexual organs. And he and I, when he was two or three, when we were about to leave the house to do something together, sometimes took a leak together. Our two streams would cross. He worried aloud once or twice about his not having any hair down there. I: "My boy, when you're a big man, you'll have hair too, don't worry."

He called us by our first names, not "Mommy" and "Daddy". This seemed perfectly natural to Marcella and me, since, after all, that is what he heard us calling each other. We decided to let him continue. I considered it an experiment in child raising, since I knew that many adults, and probably several experts on the subject, would say that he would lose respect for us if we allowed this. Well, here was an opportunity to find out. If he became a juvenile delinquent, then we would have learned something. Later on, when I told certain adults about it, they would raise an eyebrow in a way that said, "If you want to destroy your child's life, that's your business, but such liberalism is one of the well-known signs of the beginning of the end of the Republic as we know it."

When he was little, we called him "Jeffrey". I sometimes called him "Jeffrey-Peffrey". Also "Lumpkin-dumpkin." Around the time of our trip to Mexico, which is described below, when he was about a year old, we were calling him "Small". We often referred to him as our "issue", giving it the upper-class British pronunciation, "*iss*you".

On Sunday mornings he would knock on our bedroom door. "Can I come in?" We knew he had been trying to wait and not to bother us too early.

I: "OK, you can come in."

The door was pushed open, then he was running across the floor in little thumping bare feet.

He, standing on the side of the bed: "I want to get in."

I: "OK, but no wiggling! *No wiggling!*"

He would clamber up on the bed and crawl under the covers between us. I would pretend to go back to sleep, smacking my lips, eyes closed. "Now remember: no wiggling."

For a few seconds you could sense him trying desperately hard to be perfectly still, but soon it was hopeless. A wiggle. Then another. I, in a mock ominous voice, eyes still closed: "Is somebody wiggling in this bed?"

We were never really angry at him for this. I kept visualizing all those young nerve cells firing, all that energy racing through that young body. We gave him kisses.

On one of our Sunday breakfasts, he informed us, "God is the boss of the waffles".

I remember spanking him only once, although there may have been other times. He refused to take his nap, or maybe it was that he refused to go to sleep at night. Marcella and I went in to his room in turn, said the usual parental words about how it was time to go to bed. He needed a drink of water. We got him one. He was afraid something was under the bed. I looked, took him out of his crib so he could look. We partially closed his bedroom door, went back to the living room. The racket resumed. I don't remember the words, but I said, annoyed but not angry, that if he kept it up, he was going to get a spanking. There was a wag of the finger, I'm sure. He kept it up. My impression, let it be said, was distinctly that he was trying to see just how far he could challenge these big people who were in charge of everying. We warned him. And again. Eventually, thinking of that eternal line, "This hurts me more than it does you", and also thinking to myself, "This

is the first time I will strike my son." I got up, marched into the bedroom, and gave him four or five whacks on his diaper-padded bottom, feeling like a total creep in doing it — here was this big man beating a little kid who couldn't defend himself! — but going through with it anyway, because I felt the lesson had to be given.

I don't think I spanked him after that, or had any occasion to. I don't know what Marcella's count was for spankings (if any).

Sometimes I helped him blow his nose. He seemed to have difficulty getting the hang of how much to squeeze the nostrils: too much and nothing comes out, too little and there's nothing to blow against. And yet it occurred to me that it must be one of the most frustrating things in the world to have someone else hold the handkerchief when you blow your nose, because it is very unlikely they will get it right either. I marveled at how strange, how laughably difficult, it was to hold a handkerchief over a small nose and get the various pressures right — not only the pressure against the sides of the nostrils, but against the cloth immediately beneath them — something we do for ourselves without thinking. "OK, blow!" A faint breeze of air would emerge into the handkerchief. "No, harder! As hard as you can!" A stronger faint breeze. "Would you like to do it yourself?" He turned away, annoyed. "OK, let's try again." (I repositioning the handkerchief.) "Does that feel right?" But he had already begun the little exhales through the two round, pudgy nostrils. "No, harder. Blow hard! Here, like this." I got out my own handkerchief, blew a major blast into it, folded it quickly, wiped underneath my nostrils. "See? Like that. OK, let's try again."

He wore these cute little undershirts, his arms sticking out of the leafy short sleeves. I would say, "Oh, look at those cute little arms!" Then I'd put my hand around one: "*Strong!* Here. Make a muscle." He would look at me with casual amusement, no doubt thinking: "What is this funny father of mine up to now?" He hadn't a clue what I meant. I tightened my fist, held it up in the air, rolled my sleeve back and pointed to my bicep. He crooked his arm without, of course, knowing how to make his bicep hard. I would feel his little upper arm.

"Oh! Look at that! *Strong!* What a strong boy!"

Then I would kiss him on his sweet-smelling forehead, and carry him around, he like all little kids looking off into the distance over my shoulder, wondering if there wasn't something more fun that we could be doing.

He called his blanket a "binky", but like most children, he assumed that the grammar of the language he was learning was rational. And so, if you said, "It's raining out," when it was raining, then clearly you should say, "It's winding out," when it was windy. He "foggy", "froggy" ("It's froggy out.") and I am not so sure the reason wasn't that he had somewhere picked up the idea that frogs tended to come out in that kind of damp weather. His word for "restaurant" was "rester-lunch", for "hamburger", "hamburner", and for "ambulance, "ambulamps". . For "butterfly" it was "flutterby", a much better word.

I don't remember at what age he got his first set of teeth, but I remember marveling at how crisp and white they were.

I loved to wrestle with him. We would have mock combats, with me providing the running narrative. "Now, if I can just get this arm around behind him, then...Oh, no, ladies and gentlemen, he's escaped, there seems to be no ... but of course, yes, I'll just grab him and then force down the upper arm while simultaneously sitting on ... Oh, no, foiled again. Well, OK, no more fooling around, this time I'm getting serious, OK. That's it. I'm getting down to business." He all the while giggling, uttering, through his effort, "No You Won't. Ha-ha!" He would sit on my stom-

ach and I would try to buck him off. Later on, when he got stronger, he was really quite good at holding my arms pinned to the carpet. Both of us would grit our teeth to show our fierceness. Sometimes I sat on his stomach (lightly), and he would try to buck me off. Sometimes when he was doing something else, I would — like Cato in the Inspector Clouseau films — suddenly shout, "Attack!" and then come up from behind and grab him. All this punctuated with our sounds of mock extraordinary effort and strain, as when someone tightens a nut: "Mmmh! Unhhh!" I, as he sat triumphantly on my stomach, "OK, ladies and gentlemen, it appears that the father is in danger of losing the battle. It appears, but appearances can be deceiving, that young Jeff Franklin has succeeded in gaining the upper hand but that won't work because... *the father is stronger!*" and I would roll him off and onto the floor and grab his arms. "Aha! Now! I've got you."

I loved to take his little hand when we crossed streets. He interpreted it literally when I said, "Give me your hand," because what he gave me was no longer "his" hand, but a limp hand-on-loan that I could then hold in mine until I gave it back. Around this time, I also learned how much we take for granted when we indicate direction to a child by pointing. I remember standing in the kitchen and telling him to get something, probably a ball or a toy, saying, "It's over there, Jeffrey!" and pointed with my index finger. He looked at my hand and the extended index finger and was clearly trying to puzzle out why I was holding my hand with the finger sticking out in a funny way like that. I moved my hand back and forth in the direction of the pointing finger. "Over there! Look! Over there!" Still his eyes remained on my hand. I think Marcella may then have gotten the ball or toy and handed it to him. I have forgotten how I (or she) went about explaining this highly sophisticated matter of pointing. Later, when he was learning his letters, mostly courtesy of Sesame *Street*, I would sometimes point out letters on the pavement, for example, where workmen had accidentally dribbled some paint. I remember one such dribble of paint on —, next to the house.

I, pointing: "OK, young man, what letter is that?"

He, after a few seconds. "M."

"Very good."

He walked past it, still looking at it, till he was looking at it upside down. He pointed and said,

"W!"

I: "Absolutely right! What a smart kid. Boy oh boy!"

I had a deep fear of his being hit by a car, so I took extra care in teaching him about looking both ways before crossing. As we stood on the side of the street, I holding his hand, the dialogue would go something like:

I: "OK: now what do we always do before crossing a street?"

He, almost automatically by now: "Look both ways."

I: "Why?"

He: "To see if any cars are coming."

I: "Why do we want to see if any cars are coming?"

He: "So we don't walk out in front of one."

I: "Why would it be bad to walk out in front of one."

He: "Because it could hit you and that would hurt a boy very badly."

I: "Suppose a kid throws a ball and it goes over your head into the street. What do you do?"

He: "Look both ways."

I: "Before — ?"

He: "— running out to get it."

I: "Suppose the kid says, 'Go ahead, Jeff, just run out and get it, no cars are coming.' What do you do?"

He: "Look both ways."

I: "OK. Now you tell me when it's safe to cross."

And he would lean forward with great caution, still holding my hand, but tightly now, look all the way up the street, then all the way down the street, and then, seeing no cars, would leap forward, pulling me after him. "Come on! Let's go!"

I also warned him about not getting into a car with strangers. "If they say your Dad or your Mom told them to tell you to come with them, run! If they offer you candy, run! There are bad people who hurt little boys." I had it easy as far as raising him was concerned because I had only one rule: don't do anything to him that was done to you. (Any bad thing.) Marcella had also suffered at the hands of a mother she felt was far too controlling, although we both agreed that mine was far worse. So both she and I felt we had a very clear idea of how not to raise a child.

I felt I had two obligations:

(1) to raise him to have a good sense of humor (I remembered my father taking me to Laurel and Hardy movies);

(2) to introduce him to the good things of life, meaning, in particular, good food and wine. (Strangely enough, I didn't feel any compulsion to try to make him like books or classical music.)

I also promised myself I would never criticize his music, as this had always seemed to me an unforgivable rudeness. I made it a rule in my life: don't criticize other people's music, just ignore it.

Marital Duties

On the one hand, I was proud to have a wife who always looked so good, but on the other hand, there was a price for this good fortune, namely, I had to live up to my husbandly duties, which I soon began to dread more and more. She was this expensive appliance that had to be kept operating with constant care and attention — well, care and attention at least twice a week I was more than ever resigned to the view I had held with grave anxiety (because I knew what it meant as far as my future with women was concerned) ever since my teens: sex is not the kind of thing you do with another human being, and certainly not with a human being you like.

She was the first woman I ever "slept with". I can't remember when I first heard that expression — certainly it was years before. From the start it seemed, like just about everything public connected with sex, *peculiar*. Because you could, in fact, sleep with a woman, and not have sex with her. Why then did it apply only to having sex? I loved sleeping with Marcella, having her by my side through the silent night, touching her leg with mine, smelling her, feeling honored that this woman had chosen me above all men to share the hours of sleep with, the most intimate hours of all! Why did I have play a trumpet solo twice a week in order to have her continue to want to do this? Why couldn't we just...sleep together? The problem was that not only did you have to get an erection and then have an orgasm inside her, you also had to pretend that this was one of the most exciting things you could imagine doing. Two times a week was the maximum I could manage, and sometimes, on the night I was due to perform, I would let slip a sigh at bedtime that was all too noticeable. I developed a routine: kissing, feeling breasts, lots of fantasy talk, then fingers

between vaginal lips, then when she was wet, climb on top, insert, back and forth all the while thinking of some woman in the office or in a magazine, come, lie back, then after she had returned from the bathroom (What did she do there exactly at these times? Wash my come out of her vagina? How was that done?), lying with her head on my arm, feeling quite refreshed and clean, as though I had been walking barefoot on the naked earth. I never allowed myself to go to sleep immediately afterward, because I had read that that is what inconsiderate lovers did. At the same time, I knew what an unexciting lover I was. A couple of times she attempted oral sex, but I turned aside immediately. I couldn't stand the thought of my wife lowering herself to such filthy behavior, and, furthermore, I sensed, rightly or wrongly, that she was only doing it by way of changing the deadly dull routine.

Why couldn't we just have a home life, without having to go through this ordeal twice a week, trying to live up to the impossible standards which the culture had set up as a result of the sexual revolution? I was supposed to be spontaneous and infinitely creative under a sword of Damocles, because I knew that if you stop delivering in this area, your home is gone. My inhibitions were not limited to sex, but also to almost any kind of touching. She several times expressed surprise at this reluctance of mine, half laughing, and without malice, although I never had any problem being physically affectionate with my son. I tried to overcome this limitation. But each time I felt I would have to summon the Supreme Court and maybe the Vatican to tell me if then was the right time. How did you figure such things out? How did you know? What extraordinary gift, stroke of luck, enabled ordinary Americans to know, apparently without thinking, that *now* was a time when you should put your arm around the woman you were with, *now* was the time to touch her shoulder affectionately, *now* was the time to rub the back of her neck a little. It seemed to me sheer genius to be able to know such things.

And yet, and yet — a few times, in the morning, when she was getting dressed, I couldn't help noticing how renewed she seemed to be, the way she would give her hair a toss, and even I couldn't fail to recognize the look of a well-laid woman.

Death of a Cat

And now comes an incident that to this day I can barely bring to mind without almost unbearable self-contempt and hatred. Marcella had found, or bought a little gray-haired cat, barely beyond the kitten stage. I don't remember its name. At the time we had her old VW bug, which I often drove to work. One noon, I came home for lunch, and then, being late, raced out to the garage, opened the doors, climbed into the VW, started the engine and quickly backed out. There was a shriek, I jammed on the brakes, got out, and there, on the pavement behind the car, was the cat, writhing in agony, blood pouring out of its nose and eyes. Apparently it had crawled up on top of the back wheel and was unable to escape when I backed out. Marcella heard the animal's cry and raced out of the house, and saw what had happened. I was beside myself with shame and anguish for the animal. "We'll have to kill it," one of us said. Marcella, tears in her eyes, bent down over it, watched as its struggles diminished, said through her tears, "No, it'll be dead soon." I think she reached out to touch it, stroke its head. I was on the verge of tears, too, and tormenting myself with the thoughts that are all too true: if I had backed out just a little more slowly, if I had let the engine warm up for a few seconds, the cat would in all probably have been able to crawl out of the wheel well and nothing would have happened.

If, after I die, God says that, because of what I did to that cat, regardless of the fact that it wasn't intentional, I am to burn in the sulfur sea for all eternity, I will consider it a just verdict. It was unforgivable.

I have a feeling she never forgave me for killing the cat. Afterward, Marcella got another cat, which she named Califea, after some ancient feminist goddess, she said. We cut a cat door, with leather hinges, in the back door so she could go in and out. I was afraid of this cat, didn't want it near me when I was lying on the living room floor watching TV. In fact, at times I hated the cat, I suppose because I saw it as yet another example of my inadequacy in Marcella's eyes. "See? You are not even able to love the cat which I have bought for myself!"

Sgt. Pepper

There are certain public events that make such a powerful impression on the people who experience them that the people remember forever after where they were and what they were doing at the time; they may even carry visual memories of the surroundings. For me, the announcement over the radio in my parents' bedroom that President Roosevelt had died is one of these events; the announcement of President Kennedy's assassination is another; that of his brother's assassination another; the first landing on the moon is yet another; and for many people, their first hearing of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album belongs in this category. I can recall people spontaneously asking, "Do you remember where you were when you first heard *Sgt. Pepper*?" And the others will nod and begin giving the details. In my case, I was driving in the rain early one night on El Camino Real, listening to Al "Jazzbo" Collins on the radio — the same Al Collins whom Heim and I had listened to in the early fifties. He now worked for a Peninsula radio station (he, like me, I thought to myself, had realized that the West Coast was the place to be). He announced a new album in that unique, laid-back, deadpan voice of his, then played "A Day in the Life". As soon as the music began, I stopped thinking of everything else. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I pulled over to the side of the road and parked. The windshield wipers were going back and forth, the yellow lights of passing cars glinted across the droplets on the windows[1]. I sat there, almost breathless. After the final, magnificent, ascending, all-encompassing, cacophonic chord, I said aloud, though I was completely alone, "*Holy Shit!*" My skin was prickling, I was on the verge of tears. I sat there listening to my heart thump in my chest. After a long pause, Al came on and even he departed briefly from his usual understatement. "Man, oh man..." Long pause, which was completely understandable. Then, quietly, "Now that is somethin' *else*."

The album made history. I immediately bought a copy, listened to it who knows how many times. After thirty years, the only signs of age it shows is the background noise on the record.

Other Examples of Musical Perfection

While we are on the subject of the immortal Beatles, I must bring up the subject of musical perfection. There are pieces that, from the first time I heard them, I was convinced have this quality, and which I listened to again and again throughout my life. Among them are:

the song "Greensleeves",

1. Since the album was released in the U.S. in June, 1967, I must have first heard it in fall or winter of that year, the rainy season in Northern California.

the piece I have described elsewhere[1] as "the first appearance of boogie-woogie in the West", namely, the Aria ala Francese in Alessandro Scarlatti's "Tocatta in D Minor" [2];
Sonata in E minor by Domenico Scarlatti[3]
The Gigue from the Handel Suite II, No. 7, for Piano
The Courante from the Handel Suite No. 8 in F minor
the Bourée from the Bach Lute Suite in E minor (BWV 996) (which I first heard performed on guitar by Segovia in the 1950s);
the last movement of Telemann's Flute Concerto in D Major (which after numerous listenings can still bring me to tears);
Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nacht Musik*;
Beethoven's "Für Elise";
"Von fremden Ländern und Menschen" and "Träumerei", the first and seventh pieces in Schumann's *Kinderszenen*;
the Adagietto from Part III of Mahler's Symphony no. 5;.

and others, of course.

In popular music, unquestionably the Beatles have given us several examples, among them "Lady Madonna" and "Blackbird", both of which I have listened to obsessively[4].

"Lady Madonna" was released in March, 1968, early in the year after *Sgt. Pepper...* When I first heard it I thought immediately of Fats Domino's bent-knee, zoot-suit, droopy-dog sax players I described under "Keeping Going With Music" in the last file of Vol. 1 of this book.Then, during the writing of this section in March 2007, I came across the following:

> "The piano playing on this song was inspired by 1950s rock/blues pianist, Fats Domino. McCartney recalled in 1994, ' "Lady Madonna" was me sitting down at the piano trying to write a bluesy boogie-woogie thing ... It reminded me of Fats Domino for some reason, so I started singing a Fats Domino impression. It took my voice to a very odd place.'
> "The song and in particular the introduction are similar to Humphrey Lyttelton's "Bad Penny Blues"from 1956. John Lennon helped write the lyrics.The line "see how they run" was included after his suggestion (and was a theme that had been used in the previous year's "I Am the Walrus"). — "Lady Madonna", Wikipedia, March, 2009.

Blackbird" was recorded in June 1968, not long after "Lady Madonna", with McCartney singing and playing acoustic guitar.

"McCartney revealed on PBS's *Great Performances* (*Paul McCartney: Chaos and Creation*

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1. See the section, "Additional Thoughts" in the chapter "Music" in the book *Thoughts and Visions* on the web site www.thoughtsandvisions.com.
2. *Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Vocal and Instrumental Music*, The Musical Heritage Society, MHS 1443
3. He wrote more than one sonata in this key (which is not surprising, given that he wrote 550 altogether). The one I am referring to is in slow tempo and is performed on the album *Julian Bream: The Art of the Spanish Guitar*, RCA Red Seal LP VCS-7057, 1970.
4. Unaccountably, and unforgivably, the original recording of "Blackbird" — the one on the album — was removed from YouTube in 2017. Only studio and live recordings were left, none of them equal to the original recording. I am surprised that Paul McCartney has allowed that outrage to go unchallenged.

> *at Abbey Road*), aired in 2006, that the guitar accompaniment for "Blackbird" was inspired by Bach's *Bourrée in E minor*, a well known classical guitar piece. As kids, he and George Harrison tried to learn *Bourrée* as a 'show off' piece. *Bourrée* is distinguished by melody and bass notes played simultaneously on the upper and lower strings. McCartney adapted a segment of *Bourrée* as the opening of "Blackbird", and carried the musical idea throughout the song. The first night Linda Eastman, who would later become his wife, slept over, McCartney played it to the fans camped outside his house. — "Blackbird", Wikipedia, March, 2009.

Other groups (rarely) also have produced works of musical perfection. One is The Seekers, whose "I Will Never Find Another You" (1968) features the irresistible, mountain-stream-pure voice of Judith Durham. When I saw a performance on YouTube in 2010, it was all I could do not to write a letter to her and ask her to marry me.

Glaucoma

I was never particularly conscientious about having eye exams, but in 1969, when I was 33, my then new opthalmologist, Dr. Frank Winter, whose office was on Welch Road, near Stanford University, decided during a routine examination to do a pressure test on my eyes. The pressure was around 22 or 23 millimeters of mercury. "High normal", I heard him say, and then, after soothing words of explanation, he asked if I had a family history of glaucoma. I told him my mother had been diagnosed with it only a few years before. He then said, "We'll have to keep an eye on your pressure". I asked him what normal pressure was. He said between 16 and 20. Upon my immediately pleading with him to tell me what all this meant, he explained that unchecked eye pressure above 21 can lead, eventually, to the gradual killing of the optic nerve. When that happens, the patient has glaucoma. But I was a long way from that, he said At present, all I had was "elevated ocular pressure".

But as far as I was concerned he had told me, "You are going blind", or at least, "Eventually, you will be blind," and I was beside myself with fear. Far better to be sentenced to death by hanging, or to know you only have six months to live. To be blind meant to be fully aware of your inability to finish your life's work, to endure a kind of living death, the blackness of the grave without the mercy of oblivion. My usual state of depression and anxiety now worsened to the point that I didn't think I would be able to go to work the next day. I came home and curled up in a ball on my bed. Marcella came in and asked what was wrong. I told her. Sensing what she was in for, she pooh-poohed my fears, which did nothing to soothe them. She was clearly not about to tolerate yet another excuse for my paralyzing despair. Here as elsewhere, she had very little pity for *worries* she considered unimportant. A few years later, when I was convinced I had a brain tumor, I only dared to mention it as a joke to her: "I think I might have a brain tumor." She brushed the joke aside. And yet I remember clearly the strange tingling in the fingers of one hand, sometimes both hands. I remember standing at the foot of the stairs, wiggling my fingers, looking at the wood panel wall, trying to bring myself to face what I was convinced would follow: the increasing loss of faculties, then the operations, the excruciating headaches, loss of memory, and the barely controlled disgust on her face at this latest development in the loser she had married.

> An author at work is continuously and inescapably in the presence of himself. There is nothing to divert and soothe him. ...Every time a wandering ache runs down his leg, it shakes him like the bite of a tiger. I have yet to meet an author who was not a hypochondriac.[1]

Then began a series of two or three visits to the ophthalmologist each year, the anxiety over what the pressure would be far worse than the anxiety when I went to have a tooth drilled. Eventually, the pressure reached a point that I had to start taking eyedrops — Pilocarpine, then Timoptic — which had to be administered twice a day.

In those first years after the discovery of the problem, I wrote frantic letters to anyone I heard or read about who I thought would be able to help me. I find notes of an experiment with the Adele Davis anti-stress vitamin pill regimen. Other notes carefully record details of my liquid intake over a period of several days — how many cups of coffee, tea, glasses of orange juice, beer, wine. I even wrote to the Palo Alto Society for the Blind, asking how most people handle the news they are going blind and how many suicides there are among the blind. I received a courteous reply from a Ms. Painter, who must have been disgusted with such unwarranted pessimism. I read about a Dr. Neal Miller at Rockefeller University in New York City, who claimed that biofeedback could be used to lower ocular pressure.

At one point during those early years after the high pressure was detected, Dr. Winter had me go to Stanford Hospital for a check of the pressure, I think after drinking no fluids for twelve or so hours. The doctor administering the test was one of those European women refugees who have managed to transfer medical credentials earned in some European backwater into credentials (not at all necessarily an M.D.) that allowed the refugee to hold a prestigious job in a prestigious hospital in a prestigious town in the U.S. She was visibly nervous and preoccupied as she checked the presssure, then had me drink several glasses of water, then checked the pressure again. When she saw the high numbers, she gave an audible exclamation and ran off to find another doctor, who as I recall told me that the numbers would be forwarded to Dr. Winter and that I should be sure to see him as scheduled. Somehow or other, this second doctor managed to convey to me out of hearing of the woman that they had a lot of trouble with her: she had a reputation for not performing the tests properly.

Dr. Winter retired in the seventies (moving to his ranch in Wyoming, I think). His practice was bought by Dr. Louis Roloff, who was a professor of ophthalmology at Stanford. A handsome man then probably in his forties, he had a blonde secretary who was one of those beautiful women who have decided to be kind to the less fortunate, namely, those with merely ordinary looks, and so she seemed to make a point of saying hello to me if we happened to pass on the street on a weekend.

I had enormous respect for Dr. Roloff for two reasons: first, because of his skill in dealing with anxiety-ridden patients like me, and second because of his scientific attitude toward proposed cures for diseases, in particular, glaucoma.

As regards the first: he recognized early on that my anxiety had a definite influence on my eye pressure, and he also recognized that this anxiety was considerably reduced by a reassuring manner on his part — one that said in effect, "Well, you have this problem but there is no need to worry as long as you have these regular tests and take your drops. Nothing to worry about at all." He also recognized that conversation had a major calming effect for me. And so appointment after appointent over a period of some 15 years, he put himself through the exercise of calming me, even though, I am sure, anxiety-ridden patients like me must have been a bloody nuisance.

It is strange that I clearly remember Dr. Roloff taking the eye pressure, and not Dr. Winter. Dr. Roloff came into the little room where the receptionist had me sit. His white coat emphasized his

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1. Mencken, H.L., in The Vintage Mencken, gathered by Alistair Cooke, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1990, p. 168.

ruddy skin — he liked to go hunting in Baha California, I think for wild boar, and he was also a skin diver. He would have my folder in his hand, say a few friendly words, sometimes prefaced ruminatively by "John, John". Then, starting to answer my questions, he would get a small vial of eyedrops, come over to me, tell me to look up, and drop one into each eye, the purpose of these being to numb the cornea so that it did not feel the membrane which would be pressed against it. I would usually blink at the wrong time, he would drop in another drop, then hand me a tissue to wipe the excess from below my eye. Then he would darken the room, and, after a few minutes, swivel around the measuring apparatus, and tell me to rest my chin on a black metal chin rest and lean forward, which placed my forehead against a curved piece of black metal. Then he swiveled down a piece of black metal to cover my left eye, and, talking soothingly, concentrating on adjusting knobs, he would make a circle of soft blue light move toward my right eye, closer and closer, growing bigger and bigger. Then my entire field of vision was immersed in the soft blue. He stopped talking, adjusted knobs. The light was behind a membrane, which I always thought of as a kind of balloon surface and which by now was pressed against the eyeball. The amount of pressure needed to flatten the front of the eyeball some specified amount was a measure of the pressure inside the eye. "OK, nice, deep breaths...", he concentrating. I breathed through my nose, worried if my breath was bad, the sound of my heartbeat thundering in my ears. He, adjusting knobs: "Uh hunh, mm hmh..." the tone of his voice rising on the "hmh", signalling everything was fine, nothing to worry about.

Then he leaned back a little to swivel the apparatus to the left eye, flipped down the covering over the right, flipped up the one on the left, and again looking down it always seemed, as though to see the reading on the table below him, leaned forward, adjusting a knob, "mm hmh".

Again he leaned back and seemed to flip up two levers like the submarine captain at the periscope after he has obtained the bearings of the targe and would say, "OK, well, I'll give you 18 in the right eye, 21 in the left. High normal."

Sometimes, after a little more conversation, he might say, "Let's take a look at that left eye again," and repeat the measurement, which sometimes would be a point or two lower.

He prescribed various drops, the only names of which I can remember being Pilocarpine and later Timoptic. Sometimes he varied the number of times a day I was supposed to put them in my eyes. I think once or twice he had me not put any drops in for a week or so, then come in to check the pressure. One time it was around 28, another as high as 32, which would have been dangerous if left unchecked. The second reason I admired him was that he was genuinely a man of science, as became clear when I told him that I had heard that macrobiotic diets and biofeedback were showing promise as cures for glaucoma. He: "You get me reproducible results and I will co-author the paper with you." And this was exactly a scientist's reply. In succeeding years, in discussions about Western medicine vs. alternative medicine, I would always relate this story. I would emphasize that Dr. Roloff did not comment on the credentials of those who claimed the alternate treatments, much less dismiss either one of the treatments. I would emphasize that the very essence of Western medicine is the recognition that it is essential to *keep track of the failures as well as the successes*! To this day, not a single person among those promoting alternative medicine whom I have spoken with has ever given the slightest indication of understanding the importance of that underlying discipline. At best, it was deemed something that might be good to apply if you had time and the facilities (but was by no means necessary).

I decided to try biofeedback — without, of course, giving up on Dr. Roloff's treatment — and somehow found a Dr. Allen Brauer at Stanford, who was offering biofeedback training — that is probably the best word for it. I went through a series of appointments with him and his beautiful,

tall, blonde assistant. As I sat in a chair, they hooked up a device to my wrists and connected it to a machine that would measure my pulse rate. A beep from the machine marked each heart beat, and there was some sort of indication as to whether the heart rate was increasing, staying the same, or decreasing. I was told to breathe deeply and regularly and to think of pleasant country scenes. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to place the eye pressure measuring device on my eyes because if it remained there for more than a few seconds, it had a tendency to start changing the pressure. So I had to practice lowering my heart rate during these appointments and at home — the blonde gave me cassette tapes of her soothing voice guiding me in relaxing — then see if it had any effect on my eye pressure. It didn't. But I learned how to lower my heart rate a few beats a minute.

Dr. Roloff also carried out research on his own. Around 1990 he discovered that Fourier analysis performed on photographs of the back of the eye that were taken at intervals of months or years could reveal changes in the optic nerve that were not detectable by the doctor's naked eye. (My first task at Hewlett-Packard in 1969 was to write the instruction manual for the first commercial Fourier Analyzer. This will be described in the first chapter of the next volume. By the time of Dr. Roloff's discovery, I am sure the instrument had advanced enormously.)

All my early fears about blindness were unjustified, thanks to the drug companies, and I always point this out when I have to listen to people making a blanket condemnation of these companies, or of the capitalist system they thrive under. Without the drugs these companies developed and improved to lower ocular pressure, I would almost certainly be blind by now. Somewhere I heard — possibly from Dr. Roloff, I am not sure — that doctors were treating James Joyce's glaucoma with seagull urine, and that was in the late thirties — not so many years before Dr. Winter's diagnosis of my high ocular pressure. The drug companies knew that there was a large glaucoma market worldwide and acted accordingly. In the early 2000s, they came up with a drug called "Lumigan" that has kept my eye pressure at around 16 mm., with no side effects[1], and furthermore with a period of effectiveness of some 36 hours longer than any of the previous drugs.

I find a note in 1990 that Dr. Roloff said that in 25 years of practice, caring for some 1,000 glaucoma patients, not one had gone blind. Of course, a principal reason was certainly that his patients were all highly educated. I am sure the figure would have been different had his practice been across the Bay in Oakland. He said that in the U.S., about 4% of all glaucoma patients go blind. In the Third World, he said, the number is 32%.

Yet, strangely enough, on one subject he was woefully ignorant. In one of the conversations we had on the subject of nutrition and its effect on glaucoma, he said, "It is not possible to have a bad diet in this country." I was flabbergasted. I tried to get him to concede that junk food wasn't good for you, but he shook his head and repeated his words. Later, someone told me that, at the time, it was a standard practice in medical schools to give little or no attention to the effect of nutrition on health.

In the early nineties, he retired. He passed me on to a woman opthalmologist on Welch Rd. She always seemed to be in a state of anxiety, and insisted that patients wait fifteen minutes, no less, between the application of the first type of eyedrop, and the application of the second. I couldn't understand the reason for such a requirement, and told her so, since fifteen minutes is a long time. She said something about patients otherwise instilling the drops on top of each other,

1. I never suffered any side effects from earlier drugs, though many patients did, for example, headaches and temporary blurring of vision.

so that the second drop washed the first out of the eye. I asked her why not have the rule be, don't instill so many drops that they run out of your eye. She dismissed the idea.

By then I was living in Berkeley and so had begun using Kaiser doctors. The first was one of those physicians who unconsciously breed anxiety in a patient. He seemed bored with his job, and who could blame him, given the never-ending repetitions of tension checks. In any case, my pressure was always way up when he tested it. I asked for a different opthalmologist, which Kaiser rules allowed members to do, and wound up with a man, Dr. Barry Snyder, who was also an eye surgeon. Without question he was, and is at the time of writing, the best of all the opthalmologists who ever treated me. He had the same patient-calming skills that Dr. Roloff had, and seemed genuinely interested in answering my questions during each appointment.

Time to Leave Signetics

I don't remember exactly what made me decide I had had enough of the integrated circuit business. Probably it was nothing more than the realization that the job was a dead end. So I began again to look for other companies. On top of my list was Hewlett-Packard, which everyone knew had a superb employee policy. It was a place that really could offer you security. I began answering ads, sending in resumes. I had several interviews, was rejected after each one. Although I allowed myself the luxury of complaining that no one ever seemed to be in pursuit of me, I kept trying. I wanted to belong to a big, well-established organization with a management that cared about employees. I realized it was a good technique to say, when I was rejected, or when I submitted a resume, "If you feel I am not appropriate for the job, please let me know someone who might be interested in a person with my qualifications." Since I was in effect giving them an easy out — pass him on to another department — I usually picked up a name or two via this ploy. Then, in contacting the recommended person, I could begin with, "So-and-so in the such-and-such department at such-and-such division suggested I contact you in regard to —" so I immediately stood out from the herd of other applicants.

On July 7, 1969, I finally got a job at Hewlett-Packard.

Art was traveling at the time, but he called the plant routinely to keep track of things. When he reached me, I told him that I would be leaving Signetics to go to work for Hewlett-Packard. He was clearly disappointed, or, I should say, annoyed. "Well," he said, with a bitter laugh, "if you want to take the easy way out..." He then made it clear that his concept of the company was vast floors of open cubicles, something that he, with his private office, clearly dreaded, because everyone was in plain view all the time in what to him was an egalitarian hell. Worst of all, employees were cared for by a paternalistic management, so that they had no real challenges on the job. I thought, "It beats the garment district atmosphere of Signetics," and had no trouble saying goodbye.

Writing

Even though the years were passing, I continued to place all my hopes on writing as what ultimately would save me, despite the fact that I had already begun to detest the female sound of the word and all that the word connoted — the breathless seeking of immortality by those who couldn't cut it in what really mattered, namely, engineering and science and mathematics. I knew that my curse was this: I wanted to write exactly the way I wanted to, but I also knew that this way would never get me anywhere, because in more ways than one it was worthless. I was

still in the grip of the belief that the *sound* of the prose was the central issue. I worked on very short pieces, often less than a page — pieces so light you have to hold on to something while you read them, lest you float away. A couple of brief examples are given below. I have already described, in the first chapter of this volume, the months, years, spent on "The Guardian" (which, however, was only six pages long). Another short piece that consumed countless hours of frustrated, worthless effort trying to make it perfect was titled, "The Thrum", and was about a man who enters a dark hall, sees in the center of the floor a stringed instrument with velvet hanging down the sides, goes closer, hears the sound of the strings, can't tear himself away, is eventually driven mad. Another short piece that, for a while, after months of effort, I had some hope would break new ground, was about a sailplane pilot sitting in a room. On his shoulder was a scrimshaw carving of a sailplane, the plane mounted on the end of a long spar and moving up and down with his movements. Through the window trees could be seen waving in the wind following a rain; the sky was blue, the sun was out, there were rain droplets on the window glass. The pilot then says something that I have now forgotten. Not a trace remains of the manuscripts of these two efforts despite the months, probably more than a year, I spent trying to make the pieces perfect.

I self-published three booklets containing many of the pieces. One was titled "The Guardian and Other Stories", the second was titled "The Piano of the People" and the third, "The Piano of the People, Part 2". I still have a moldy, decaying[1] copy of the first and the third, but all trace of the second, including the original manuscripts and the camera-ready copy I typed up has completely disappeared. And yet on more than one occasion over the years the belief that that copy existed and would always be with me — especially as it contained the sailplane sketch — and that someday it would be part of my immortality kept me from pulling the trigger.

It may be worthwhile to ask just how someone so obsessed with preserving every word he wrote could have been so careless with preserving at least some of those words. The answer, I think, is related to my attitude to back yard kite-flying as a child:

> ... by far the more interesting — the deeper, more mysterious, more *profound* — of my kite-making and kite-flying experience was trying to fly these tissue paper kites, because it was a way to get the universe to talk to me: if a gust took the paper up in the air and made it fly high in a whoosh of air, that meant I had done or thought something right; I knew there was hope for me. But if another gust sent the paper diving into the flower bed, perhaps tearing the paper into shreds, then I had done something wrong. I knew that mine had been a false hope.[2]

On the one hand, I knew that, despite all those countless hours of effort, the pieces were probably worthless; on the other hand, I hoped that I was overlooking something in them, that maybe they had real value, and would contribute to my immortality and so should be preserved. But how to decide which of these two possibilties was correct? Let the universe decide: half-forget them in boxes in a damp basement; if they survived, then they were good; if not, then they weren't.

A person with any kind of self-confidence, even knowing he is not succeeding in a particular kind of effort, will, if he decides to save his efforts at all, for any reason, will save them properly: in boxes stored in dry rooms.

And so now, in old age, I have the universe's judgment as to some of the pieces I valued most.

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1. A result of my utter stupidity in storing many of my papers in the damp basement of my house in the late eighties and nineties.
2. Vol. 1, chapter 3, "Kites"

Per/Se

I searched desperately for a way to be published. In 1966 I somehow heard of a literary magazine called *Per/Se* that was published by people associated with Stanford. I am not sure if any were professors, but I strongly suspected at least a few were graduate students in English literature. Robin White was the editor, and in communications with him, I strongly sensed the Stanford hauteur. Nevertheless, he asked me to write a review of the book *Poisons in the Air*, by Edward Edelson and Fred Warshofsky (Pocket Books, Inc., N.Y. $1.00), which I did. It appeared on p. 59 of the Winter 1966 issue.

"The Guardian and Other Stories"

I decided my only hope with the short pieces was to publish them myself, so in 1968 I carefully put together a 24-page, 4¼ by 7-inch booklet titled "The Guardian and Other Stories", in typewriter text. I have exactly one, moldy, fading copy. The contents are:

"The Guardian",
"Don Jackson",
"A Tale from Machiavelli",
"A Tale from Krafft-Ebing"
"From Readings on Caesar Borgia",
"The Second Coming".

I have no idea what, if any, efforts I made to distribute the copies, although I doubt if I left any on bus seats, as I did my Caryl Chessman pamphlet at Lehigh.

"The Piano of the People"

A year or two later, I tried again with a booklet titled "The Piano of the People". This included the sailplane pilot sketch. Not a trace of the booklet remains.

"The Piano of the People, Part 2"

Then, in 1970, I published (if that word can possibly be applied here) a second part of the previous, this one 54 pages. I have one decaying copy of it. Here, the content was "paragraphs" in the Nietzschean style, though without Nietzschean themes. The first begins, "The One — Now here is a twist on the shift idea, which says, 'You're always standing in the same place, no matter what you do...'" The next begins, "Philosophy is fiction, meaning: it floats above the page..."; the next, "Knowledge in the Western sense —"; the next, "Somewhere is a knower knowing this..." ; and later "The power of the literary disposition...", "The importance of death, the quencher...", "Ships that pass trains that pass —", "Two ways of looking at a window —" ... At the time, I thought the following was one of the best, though it is in fact another failure:

> The sun as a light — was driving home from work, evening, the sun coming over my back, shadows behind objects, and thinking, now that we're in the space age, now that the earth and indeed the solar system is our space ship, have to conceive of the sun as a mere light. Meaning something that, without which, it would be dark. (No one considers night, of course, to be dark, to be a time without sun.) Consider the idea of the sun going out; what that means — The sun too is only a light! Where is the permanent light behind that light!

The Open Cell

Around this time I came across another literary magazine, this one called *The Open Cell*, and published in Berkeley. I began submitting some of my short pieces, some of which were published (which told me immediately that the magazine was not really very good). From the mouldering copies I still have, I see that they published the following ones:

"What Condition My Condition is in", p. 8, vol. 1, no. 7, 1970;
"A Vision in a Lamp", "Stay Alive Out of Spite", p. 8, vol. 1, no. 10, 1970;
"The Sun as a Light", p. 2, vol. 11 (an expansion of the above, to its detriment);
"Probability", vol. 1, no. 13;
"The One", vol. 1, no. 14;
"Pipe and Wig", vol. 1, no. 15;

Milton Loventhal was listed as "Offical Editor" of the magazine. One of the Editors was Jennifer McDowell, and it was her I usually sent my pieces to, since she always seemed unsually kind for an editor. They invited me on one occasion to visit them at their home in Berkeley. I remember a white house on the side of a treeless slope in residential Berkeley. I remember sitting with them in their living room, and listening to Milton talk heatedly and at length about some fact of Soviet history that no one else knew or appreciated the importance of. He seemed to be another of those Jews — like the reporter on the *Bethlehem Globe-Times* — who want to believe, and want others to believe, that they know an important secret that the world is deliberately suppressing. Jennifer was a tall, attractive, quiet woman, I suppose in her thirties, with a grace that put me at my ease. I felt sorry that they treated me with respect and were willing to continue to publish at least some of my work, since I knew it doomed them to remaining on the very bottom of the literary hierarchy.

"Letters to Two Friends in Berkeley"

Despite my best efforts to convince myself otherwise, I knew the short pieces were worthless, even after all the hours I put in trying to make them perfect. Since this was a time when Beat literature was still popular, and I knew that Kerouac had written *On the Road* on a single long roll of paper, I thought that what I should have done is give up the painstaking approach and instead simply trust to the "rush of words". So during these years I wrote a series of letters — thoughts on various subjects — to Jennifer and Milton. I am not sure I actually mailed any of them; I certainly had no desire for them to be published. Later I gathered them together in a binder and titled the collection "Letters to Two Friends in Berkeley". Since I soon lost all hope that these would be part of my immortality, the binder has survived.

For Death who takes what man would keep,
Leaves what man would lose.[1]

I can barely bring myself to read them now: the style is chatty, brash, unbelievably wordy and *voicy* — the rambling of someone without a personality who is trying to make up a personality. It would be years before I arrived at the two insights about writing that changed everything. These are described in the section, "The Light Dawns Regarding the Task of Writing" in the second chapter of volume 4 of this autobiography.

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1. Yeats, "John Kinsella's Lament for Mrs. Mary Moore"

I Throw Out the Journal

Even though I now had a family, and a little son I loved, and a house in a respectable town, and had been able to overcome my impotence, although only through a psychological trick that could legitimately be called cheating, I was as oppressed by my failure to accomplish anything of literary importance as I had been before the marriage. I was an empty being, hoping that by going through the motions of being a good husband and father and manager, I was building up credit in that somewhere where our right to go on living, to have lived, is determined. It was a choking, daily, anguish which I couldn't discuss with Marcella or anyone else outside of therapy groups, and in those groups I could never bring up what it meant to continually want to accomplish great things and be utterly unable to do so, because none of the other people present in the group had similar aspirations. I grasped at anything that offered the slightest hope of ending my suicidal despair, and so one week I decided that I should finally face the ultimate anxiety and follow through on Dr. Riskin's recommendation. I set the day for Saturday. When that day arrived, I gathered together the fourteen volumes of my journal, put them into a brown paper bag, walked downstairs, out the back door, over to the garbage can, and dropped them in. I put the top back on the garbage can, went back inside. The bag must have remained in the garbage can the entire weekend, but on Monday, after the garbage men had come, I told Marcella what I had done. She was in the midst of doing something, and with only partial attention asked if I really should have done that, that the journal had meant so much to me. I said yes, I should, Dr. Riskin always said there can be no growth unless you face your anxieties.

Absolutely nothing changed in my life. A few years later I bought a book containing the following words: "The *Intensive Journal* process plays an active role in reconstructing a life....As it has evolved in practice since 1965, the *Intensive Journal* method has become the instrument for a wide variety of techniques which progressively draw each person's life toward wholeness at its own tempo."[1]

It was without question the stupidest thing I ever did, because even though the volumes may have been worthless as literature, they contained a record which would have made the present book a much better, and a much richer and much more truthful document. For years afterward, I clung to the hope that Marcella had secretly retrieved the volumes from the garbage can, and that on my deathbed she would give them to me. Just as throughout my life I had a recurring dream that my father had survived his cancer.

I find, among my mouldering manuscripts, seven little 3-by-5 inch notebooks, with red covers and spiral wire bindings, apparently from the late sixties/early seventies. So I wasn't able to give up journal writing after all. I also find scribbled yellow 8-½-by-11 inch sheets from the early seventies. I would probably have said, at the time, that all these didn't count.

Slumming with the General Semanticists

Around 1964, I began going to evening meetings of the Society (or perhaps the Institute) for General Semantics which met at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University). The group was nominally headed by S. I. Hayakawa, a professor at the College and author

1. Progoff, Ira, *At a Journal Workshop*, Dialogue House Library, N.Y., 1975, p. 9.

of the popular *Language in Thought and Action*, although he never showed up at meetings. For a long time — because I didn't know that "S. I." stood for "Samuel Ichiye" — I wondered why, at some point in the meeting, the leader would give a report on the latest research and travels of "Sam": "Sam has been investigating...", "Sam gave a talk to...", "Sam is just back from...". But eventually I gathered that this was the name by which Hayakawa was referred to among those in the inner circle.

I suppose I began going to meetings because this was something to do with words — I was still managing the technical publications department at Beckman — but words that were being viewed as more than mere literature, which was for the weak, and for girls. Here, words had a scholarly, official status.

Hayakawa had been strongly influenced by Alfred Korzybski, who was the creator of General Semantics, a discipline that preached the importance of "non-Aristotelian logic", a hot topic in those years. At least in Hayakawa's hands, general semantics had for its basic idea that we need to be wary at all times of language, because it can be used for slogans of fear and hatred, and hence propaganda, and that lying can be used for destructive purposes. That was about it, as far as could tell. Yet another case of the obvious given the status of the profound — of a molehill made into a mountain — by liberal arts academics.

In memory, the meetings were held in a basement room at the College. I can still see the rows of metal chairs, the painted cement floor (green or gray). I can still sense the insider atmosphere. Copies of the Society's journal, *Etc*., were available, the articles (I have a hard time calling them "papers") so void of content that I almost convinced myself they were enormously important.

Hayakawa had been born in Canada, of Japanese parents, and had been a professor at the College from 1955. He had given a series of half-hour lectures on PBS and so I knew what he looked and sounded like. He seemed the epitome of the fastidious, soft-spoken, polite excessively articulate English professor, but in a Japanese way. Since he spoke perfect English without an accent, you had the feeling that you were seeing inside the Japanese soul.

The leaders made an effort, every once in a while, to get someone to speak at a meeting, the subject being, of course, the importance of communication, that vapid catch-all for non-thinkers looking for an intellectual domain they can call their own. One of the speakers was Scott Beach, a local radio personality. (I couldn't believe that they were reaching this far down in the barrel.) He had a booming voice, familiar to all radio listeners of the time, and a balding head (though I think he was already on his third wife, such are the compensations of fame). I remember not a word of his talk although I am sure it was something about always putting your audience first. The only other thing I remember about him was an anecdote he once told, I think in an on-air interview, about how, in his earlier days, he had worked as an announcer at a small classical music station, and that one of the other announcers had no experience announcing classical and so one day announced a symphony by the Russian composer Peter Ilych Tetcha*kov*sky.

I don't remember how long I attended the meetings but I eventually lost interest in them and in the subject. Hayakawa went on to become president of the College in 1968, and then became famous for standing on a car wearing his tam o-shanter and opposing the student riots against the Vietnam War. Later he became a U.S. Senator and was rumored to already be in the first stages of senility.

An Accounting Course

It may have been my frustrations with being merely a technical writer that made me start

thinking about getting a master's degree. In those days, the MBA was practically a ticket to success and wealth, and so I decided to take a course in accounting at San Jose State. The class met one evening a week. It was taught by a busy, stern guy in dark-rimmed glasses. The only homework assignment I remember had to do with a retail store that sold shirts, pants, dresses. We were supposed to fill out the accounting sheets correctly from data given in the text. The work was so indescribably boring and stultifying that I knew immediately this was not what I was meant to spend my life on. I thought, "This is the kind of thing we give to computers." So, no MBA for me.

Linguistics Courses

Possibly as a result of Manny's seminar in symbolic logic, and its message (one of them) that language, too, could be made formal and academic and important, I took three linguistics courses at San Jose State University in the late sixties: the first, English 198, Introduction to Linguistics, was taught in Fall 1968 by Edith Trager-Johnson. Her name on her notes was merely "Prof. E. C. Trager", but she had recently married a famous linguistics professor named "Johnson", and so she now wished to be known by her hyphenated name. She was quite overweight (like her husband, I later found out). She clearly enjoyed her subject and enjoyed being a professor.

The first page of the notes says that the texts were Gleason's *Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics* and the accompanying *Workbook*; plus Trager and Henderson's *The P.D.s* and Rosenbaum and Jacobs' *Grammar 1* and *Grammar 2*. Only the two Gleason books are still in my library.

The most useful thing I got out of the course was learning the International Phonetic Alphabet, in which apparently any spoken language in the world can be represented. I used it to write down my son's first words.

Edith (as we students called her among ourselves and I think in her presence) demanded order and respect in her classes. I remember how she became angry at a woman student who dared to yawn in her class, saying words to the effect that if she found the class boring, then she should leave. But she did a good job of teaching her subject.

The second course was English 172, Modern English Grammar, taught in Spring 1969 by Hanson (no first name or initial appears in her notes). The required texts were Paul Roberts', *English Sentences*, Graham Wilson's *A Linguistics Reader*, and Jacobs and Rosenbaum's *Grammar 1* and *Grammar 2*. Not a trace of these is to be found in my library.

We spent several weeks on Chomsky's transformational grammar, which was all the rage at the time, although it struck me as receiving far more attention than it deserved. (The term "deep structure" remains in my mind even though I have long ago forgotten the meaning.) At the time, I did not know about Chomsky's writings on formal grammars, which had a major influence on compiler writing for computers. I find in my notes an essay written in an exam blue-book. It is titled, "Correctness and dialect", and discusses jazz vernacular and the vernacular of the upper class. One of Hanson's comments at the end is, "This is most interesting and your examples are pertinent and well chosen — the originality of your approach is refreshing."

The third course was Linguistics 201, Phonological Structures, taught in Fall 1969 by Trager-Johnson. The required texts were Chomsky and Halle's *The Sound Pattern of English*. The other texts were Harms' *Introduction to Phonological Theory*, Ladefoged's *Three Areas of Experimental Phonetics*, and Trager and Henderson's *The P.D.s*. None of these books remains in my library.

She required a number of papers of us. I see one dated 11/10/69 and titled "What We Have Learned So Far This Semester" which begins, "I feel I have a better understanding of the difference between phonemics and phonetics: phonemics I see more clearly as the study of speech sounds with affect meaning in a language, which can determine meaning, as /d/ and /k/ in /d b/ and /k b/ [I have long since forgotten the meaning of the symbols], as opposed to phonetics, which studies all the speech sounds in a language (i.e., studies the allophones)..." My term paper was "Understanding the Sound Spectrograph", about a piece of equipment for recording the frequencies in spoken sounds, which I had to watch being used at some lab in the area. I thought the machine primitive, and said so, remarking that, although the machine manufacturer claimed that it incorporated transistors and integrated circuits, "this fact cannot overcome the sight of the whirling drum and the crude mechanical apparatus for supporting the pen, the sparks, and the smell of the smoke as they strike the paper." I worried about saying this, but Trager-Johnson's written comment was: "It does sound like something from an alchemist's lab!"

She also had us listen to recordings of languages, I think Arabic was one, to demonstrate that we literally could not hear some of the sounds in some other languages.

I got As in all three courses.

I find in my Philosophy notebook a set of mimeographed notes for a course in Philosophy of Language taught by Prof. Carolyn Black, but no record of having taken a course. In my mind's eye I see her sitting at her desk or work table, wearing a dark blue dress and discussing the notes before she gives them to me. I am standing behind her, admiring her glossy black hair, and the care with which she discusses the notes. Perhaps I had merely gone to her office to see if she had any handouts concerning her subject, I don't know, but the visual image has remained in my mind.

A Trip to Mexico

When Jeff was still less than a year old, Marcella decided that we needed to take a trip to Mexico. I write it in those terms because I had never felt any need or desire to visit that country. Marcella's mother would take care of Jeff while we were gone. Marcella made all the arrangements, booking us into a small hotel in Puerto Vallarta. I remember the little kids selling stuffed iguanas on the beach, marching up and down through the deep sand, stopping at each group of sunbathers and asking, "Iguana? Iguana?" I remember the contrast between the tourist hotels and the general poverty of the city. The same old story. And I remember how I was affected by living among handmade things, because the walls of buildings, the cobblestones in the streets, the stone walls along the roads, everything had the look of having been made by human hands. For all I knew, the native residents knew the name and family of each of the laborers who had built this house, or had worked on that particular portion of the street. I thought: "We have no idea what we have lost!" Certainly a major antidote to alienation seemed to be living among handmade things. I remember trying to learn a little Spanish, and at the end of the trip having nothing more to my credit than "dos huevos fritos" (two fried eggs) and "jugo de naranja" (orange juice). Because of the way "j" is pronounced in Spanish, I began calling Jeff, "Hefé" (which I pronounced *Hef*-eh), and "El Hefé" for several months after we got back. We went out to the site of the shooting of John Huston's film, *Night of the Iguana* and I was impressed by how empty a place where movie stars *have been* becomes after they have gone.

One day on the beach, I decided to try some of the green chili that was sold at one of the little stands along the back of the sand. I told the guy behind the counter that I wanted the hot version.

He urged me to take the mild instead, because clearly I was an American, and Americans aren't used to food as hot as that eaten in Mexico. Thanks, I said, but I'll still take the hot version, and a bottle of beer. I proceeded to eat the chili. It was in fact so hot that I had to take a drink of beer after each swallow. Soon my face was covered with sweat. Still I persisted, until I had finished the entire bowl or soup plate of the stuff. Within an hour, my life's work had become reduced to remaining within easy walking distance of a toilet, because it seemed that my insides were being flushed out by hot liquid. I couldn't eat for a day or more. Someone later said that the spices had probably killed every bacterium in my digestive tract.

The only other idea I had on the trip was that the first thing I would do if I got power in these Third World countries was install air conditioning everywhere. It seemed abundantly clear to me that no one can do intellectual work in heat like what we faced every day, even granting that it was cooler inside some of the buildings.

The Moon Landing

Knowing how much I was looking forward to this event, Marcella bought me a globe of the moon. On the day of the landing — Sunday, July 20, 1969 — we were sitting in the living room — in memory, it was in the afternoon — which was filled with sunlight, I kneeling on the floor in front of the TV set, the globe at my side. Marcella served me some bean soup. I ate the hot soup as we watched the gray surface of the moon grow pock-marked as the lander descended, the voice of — calling out the decreasing altitude numbers, then the kicking up of dust, then "Houston...the Eagle has landed", and the voice of — from Houston replying, "You got some guys about to turn blue here" [from holding their breaths], then Neil Armstrong climbing down the ladder, making that little, hesitant, soft, jump, and uttering the immortal words, with the pauses, "That's...one step for man, a giant leap... for mankind". We all wondered what the difference was between "man" and "mankind" in this context, only later learning that he had meant to say, or had said, though it didn't come through, "one step for *a* man..."

So I had lived to see someone else do what I had hoped to do when I was a sophomore in Mr. Starr's class at Briarcliff High.