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**Note: see separate folder for PDF*

Welcome to issue #96 of PBW.

We come out twice a year, June-July and December January, except during Plague Years, and all rights revert back to our generous (albeit unpaid and, by now, quite tired of waiting) authors.

Our next issue will appear, magically, on your computer, in June - as who wants to stand in line at the post office when anyone around you could be spreading the virus or listening to hip-hop - it was so much easier back when it was only the syph that did in a generation of French poets and novelists.

Poets are permitted to send their work on paper, but my patented two-fingered typing will no longer permit me to attempt anything much longer than a few short poems or three.

All writing and art work can be sent to us via e-mail, at BNI@AOL.COM - traditionalists can still reach us at:

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Feel free to make copies of PBW for family and friends, or even put it out on the net, though that might incur the wrath of the cancelling class.

Anyway, see you again in June.

A Man Taking Off His Shirt's Not Sexy

By Daniel Gallik

My wife told me I can't tune
A guitar or tuna fish. She
Was not being nice. I am
Burdened with truth all
The time. Waiting for ph
Calls is the worse. Fights
With wives is near the top.
I don't like wives that say,
"It's just an idea." These
Poems become books. I

Sit and ponder life like it
Is a coaster, always wet
As it stains good wood.
Frying an egg is a pain in
The ass & looks the same.

Staring and breathing a
Lot hurts my lungs. I was
Once a waiter but I told
You that I hated waiting -
Stuff my wife can't do.

Four Lunches

By Dirk van Nouhuys

Lunch 1

The first time meeting Anne Matsumura touched his mind again was a week or so later when he walked up to a Formica table to set his lunch tray down. It was not a formed thought of her but a momentary sensation of something dark but warm, like an unknown furry sea creature perhaps. The next time occurred when he saw a woman of his age of Japanese descent wearing glasses and dressed in a tight black skirt walking the opposite way on the street. It was not Anne, but he wondered what the passing woman might think of him. The third time occurred when he was talking with a client about a case that involved some real estate where the title search, that usually trivial bureaucratic expense in buying property, had turned out problematic. “Anne” came to his mind but not her family name, no, no more than the

sensation, that he had known her as a child. Yes. He paused; he could see her. He recalled when he and another child, a mere shadow in this memory, had shared fantasies that some large ants might have inhabit a city under a wellhead and Anne had been someone watching as if a custodian of their fantasies. An ant city under a well-head. He looked about him at the men he was meeting with, for they happened all to be men. He half thought, who was in charge of them? He half thought he was in charge of them but feared he was not. He wanted to tell them that they could ignore the problem of the title search but he could not.

“Gentlemen,” he said, before we can conclude this matter, I need to get a title attorney to look at his. Somehow he felt humiliated.

A year or so later he passed again the small restaurant in District 4 with outdoor tables. He recognized Anne Matsumra was sitting alone at a table drinking tea and reading. She looked up and nodded. He as not sure if she nodded him to join her or merely in recognition, but he longed for recognition. He smiled and nodded, went to the counter, got a coffee, and stopped before her table. He felt as if he were taking on a new case.

“Do you remember me?”

She looked at him as if she were finally seeing him for the first time.

“I’m Dennis Forbes. You know Jim Reiko.”

“Yes. I know who you are.”

“May I join you?”

“Of course.”

When he had screeched up his chair and set his coffee with a doughnut on the table, he asked, “Didn’t we know each other when we were children?”

“Yes, you played with my brother.”

He remembered, “Yes, Franklin...” he groped for his friend’s his last name.

“Matsumura. I’m Anne Matsumura. Jimmy introduced us.”

“I’m sorry. I got confused.” Mentally he kicked himself.

“What happened to him?”

“My brother?”

“Yes.”

“He has a landscaping business.”

“Around here?”

“In Lafayette.”

“Do you see him?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think he would remember me?”

“He would remember your family.”

“My whole family?”

“Well, he would remember your father.”

“My father is dead. He died a couple of years ago.”

“I’m sorry.” She paused. “But you don’t understand. “

He wanted to ask some question that would clear the air but he could not frame it. “I don’t think I do.”

“Where do you think we went?”

“Oh, you must have been ...,” he groped for a word.

“Interned.”

She looked down at her teacup. “Yes, we were in a camp.”

“That’s disgraceful.”

“I’ve been thinking a lot about that.”

He wanted to question her, but he did not want to offend her.

“Can you talk about it?”

“Sometimes.” she said.

“When would those times be?”

“With someone who understands,” she said. “But, you know, that is not all.”

“No, I don’t.”

“You’re sure you don’t?”

“Yes.”

She had finished her tea, and he had finished his doughnut and coffee.

“I have meeting I have to go on to,” he said, “but I’d liked to talk with you again. Would you?”

“Yes, I think I would. How about here next Thursday; it would have to be earlier, say 9:00.”

“On Thursday it would have to be in my office on Almaden Boulevard.”

“I’d rather not meet in your office.”

“Say Friday here?”

“OK,” she said.

He stood. He wanted to shake hands but did not trust it. “I’ll see you then.”

“Yes.” She said and stood as well. They had not shaken hands when they part before, and now the opportunity seemed to have passed.

Lunch 2

Dennis arrived a few minutes early, got his coffee and a jelly doughnut, and found the table where they had sat before free. He would appear in court later in the day and wore a slate grey business suit, a white shirt, and a tie with tiny gold footballs on a dark gray background. As he was waiting he asked himself why he was there. He set a notebook and pencil on the table but did

not open it. His first answer was, he wanted to get in touch with his childhood friend Franklin Matsumura, and would be satisfied to get his phone number. He imagined Franklin as a muscular guy a little shorter than he in work clothes directing several workers, probably Latinos. He wondered what he would find to talk about with Franklin. As children together hadn't they been a part of one of those things that exist only in the air around children, something that he could not articulate. Could he share the memory with Franklin, or was it something each child knew only to himself? . But there was some reason he wanted to talk to Anne. Would she want to talk to her about their internment? He asked himself if she would diffidently avoid that subject as Franklin would stoically avoid it.

He had missed Anne coming to the restaurant and saw her only when she seated herself with her cup of tea. Her light blouse and dark slacks with her heavy, red eye glasses seemed almost comfortingly familiar to him. When they had met before he had been dressed less formally; his suit was his daily attire. He wondered what she would think of it.

“I'm glad you came,” she said.

“Likewise,” said Dennis.

They began by chatting about the weather. It was a lovely day still holding some morning chill but with the underbreath of a

warm afternoon to come, and then about local politics, the politics of District 4. Dennis tracked it as a constantly shifting balance between people allied to business and people allied to labor. Anne saw shifting demographics, with Latinos beginning to replace Japanese and Chinese. Finally, they talked about her brother Franklin. Dennis learned that he was married, had two children, a girl and a boy, and owned a house in Lafayette. He had gone to college in the agricultural school at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. Anne said quietly how proud she was of him. She spoke as if Dennis might have expected less.

“Do you remember my mother?” Anne asked.

“Yes, she and my mom were friends.”

“What is your mom doing now?”

“My mom? I guess you would say she retired. After my father died, she and my sister decided to share an apartment. They’re in Mountain View. You can see orchards from it but they’re apricots now. My mom worked as an admin for a while, but she quit when she didn’t get a raise. My sister works in marketing for Fairchild.” He paused as if he had forgotten something, “What’s your mom doing?”

“She owns three laundromats. We’ll, she and my father own them, but she runs them. Do you have a family life?”

Dennis did not want to bring up the the long-term relationships he had had which the women had ended, nor the kind cynical friend with benefits he now depended on.”

“No.” I’m sorry,” he added, “I have a meeting down town at 1:00. I’d like to do this again.”

“We’re not finished,” Anne said.

Denis usually believed he controlled conversations. He thought he controlled them by laying out a path of questions paver by paver. But he felt he had lost control this morning. “Lunch?”

“No, I’d rather meet here.” Denis felt as if she might have said, ‘No, I’m finished with you’.

They settled on an afternoon in two weeks.

Lunch 3

Dennis found Anne this time. The table they had met before was occupied and Anne had picked another in a more occluded spot. Again, they discussed the weather, which was growing warmer. Hovered in the air a mixed scent of the restaurant, dominated by coffee and sugar, but also flowers from somewhere and heating asphalt. Then Anne asked, “What do you do?”

“I’m an assistant DA now.”

“What do you do?”

“Mostly organize things.”

“Like what?”

“Evidence the police have come up with, other things: medical records. I turn this stuff into briefs.” Dennis went on at some length about the details he listened to and wrote up. “I can’t talk about specific cases, but there are lots of drunk driving. How to evaluate the testimony of bystanders. What constitutes erratic driving? When might it be excusable to avoid a breathalyser test. Sometimes people reveal themselves shamelessly.”

As he spoke, her eyes had been still on his eyes, but not as if she were watching him. Now they widened a little in concentration.”

“Shameless.” She quoted. “Do you feel ashamed?”

“No. Yes. Sometime when I see what people have done.”

“Is it what they’ve done or how they feel about it?”

“Maybe one, maybe the other. You have to work it out.”

“Does it matter to you?”

“Sometimes.”

She looked down at her fingers joined on the table as if she were asking them. “What would it mean to be without shame?”

“I don’t know.”

They paused, then she asked, “Do you always believe what the police tell you?”

“No, I’m afraid not, but. I don’t want to talk about that.”

“You are deciding things that matter to people’s lives.”

“I really try to dig it out,”

“Do you argue in court?”

“Sometimes. My boss does that more, and other ADA’s.”

“Why do you do these things?”

“It’s my job.”

“No, what, really, is your job?” Dennis felt disoriented, The word *deposing* came inevitably to his mind, she was doing it to him.

“I try to see that justice is done.”

“How long ago do you look back for justice?”

“You mean in years?”

“Yes, in years,” she said modestly.

“Well, at the back end, there are statutes of limitations; they vary from one crime to another. In the short term, justice grinds slowly so the stuff I’m looking at tends to be months or a year or two old, older sometimes.” He gave an example of a case that had dragged on for three years. Then he looked at his watch. “I have to go on, but I want to meet again.”

“I know,” she said, “I do too. But I have to warn you about something.”

“Warn me?”

“Yes. You may say something you would rather not say.”

“I can take that risk.”

They arranged another time at the same place.

Lunch 4

Anne reached the cafe first. She was wearing a bright red plastic rain coat that ran with water. It was the only red garment she owned other than her glasses. She kept it on at the counter while she ordered tea and asparagus soup.

When she found a free table, she shook herself out of the rain coat and hung it over a chair. When she had touched the cup to her lips for her first sip she spotted Dennis outside the door under a black umbrella too wide for the doorway and with a hooked handle a little like a cane. He closed it, entered, smiled at her, and went to the counter. He came to her carrying a pasta Bolognese and a glass of white wine. He hung his umbrella on the chair with Anne’s rain coat and politely asked to borrow a third chair from a neighboring customer sitting at a table alone.

“It’s pouring,” he said.

‘I know,” she said.

“If we were growing prunes here, we would welcome the rain,” he said.

“That was a long time ago.”

“This town, a city now, as grown from loam to dusty concrete,” he mused.

She nodded. He lay his note book on the table. She touched it as if she wanted to bring it to life.

“I have been unfair,” she said.

“In what respect?”

“ I have listened to you; I know what you did since we were children, but I haven’t told you much.”

“Maybe my fault.”

“Partly, maybe, but I have stepped aside.”

“I have been thinking about what you said.”

“About what?”

“About justice. About being a DA and finding justice. They – we- also want to win and that corrupts justice. The only people who are looking for justice a judges.”

“When I got out of college — did I tell you I went to State?”

“No, Bob Nakano told me.”

“ — I got an internship in a project to listen to the stories of old people born in Japan who live in California.”

“Just to listen to them?” The image attracted Dennis: Anne sitting behind a desk in a shaded office while an old man sitting in a comfortable chair with his face averted, droning on.

Anne lowered her eyes, “No, I just ran the recorder. And archived the tapes. And respun the tapes every month. Did you know that voices on real-to-real tapes can deteriorate if they are never spun?”

“Who paid for the project?”

“A rich guy in Japan. Listening to their stories taught me how different I was from them,” she paused, “and how the same. They had never been cheerleaders, but they had rooted for many things.”

“Did he record you mother and father?”

“He did. I didn’t want to be there. But I listened to the tapes.”

“Who was asking the questions?”

“A sociologist, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology.”

“Was he good to work for?”

She lowered her head a little, almost a tiny curtsy. “I married him.”

Dennis waited for more. Anne looked at her plate as if looking him in the eye might offend him.

”May I infer that was not a wise decision.”

She raised her head and smiled a little. “You may infer. When I was in high school, no, before I got to high school, when I was in junior high, I wanted to be a cheer leader.”

“Did you make it?”

‘Yes. I worked my ass off. Were you on a team in high school.”

“I played tennis.”

“I liked it best when my team threw me in the air and for a moment I floated above their shoulders.”

“I can imagine.”

“Can you imagine?”

“I hope so.”

“When I was in school, in the camp, the girls turned to their friends. In the second year or so we would eat together in the dining room, away from our family you see.”

“I had lunch at school.”

“I mean smiling girls, it was the girls, breakfast and dinner in the mess room. You see the family ‘apartment’ had no cooking. It was the girls; the boys stuck more with their families. It was a big change.” She looked up at him. “It didn’t happen all at once, but by the time the group was important. And my father was a problem. I loved him, but he was problem. Do you remember him?”

“I remember seeing him with my father.”

“What do you remember most?”

“Do you want me to answer?”

“Damn right.”

“What I most remember is once I was with my father in the Orchard, and we found him lying on the ground. I thought he was dead.”

“Did he get up?”

“No, he lay like a corpse. I was scared; I was horrified. I’ve seen corpses since. Sometimes I think of it.” He was remembering dead he had seen in his work as a DA, not his father.

“He must have been drunk. It’s a problem. Many of the old men were proud of how they drank. But he made a beautiful garden.”

“A garden”

“Yes, he built a lovely garden in front of our ‘apartment’, as they called it.”

“Does he have a garden now?”

“Do you understand what your father did to our family?”

“I have been thinking about it. Was there part of our farm that had been where his farm was.”

“That’s right.”

“He must have promised to get it back to your family, but he didn’t.”

“That’s right.”

“He broke his word. I wanted to say it was a different time, or things were different, but he cheated you out of your inheritance.”

That’s right,” she said.

“I’m sorry. There’s nothing I can do. The parcel is broken.”

“I’m sorry too.”

“There’s nothing I can do,” Dennis repeated.

“There’s nothing you can do but know it.”

“Yes, I know it,” he said. But he had only thought it. It had not been real to him until that moment when she spoke it aloud.

They had talked past the busy time of lunch and the café was quiet, mostly empty. A waiter was wiping other tables.

“In the camp we were forbidden to write Japanese. We could speak it but not write it.”

I don’t understand,” Dennis said.

“Something about sneaking messages out, spying, I guess. I never have really learned to write it. My father and other men wrote a sutra, a Buddhist sutra, one character each on a small stone and buried them in their gardens.”

“What’s happened to them?”

“I don’t know, nothing, as far as I know.”

“They’ve never been discovered?”

“It’s like a national park now.”

Neither spoke.

“Dennis,” Anne said, “I want to challenge you?”

“Challenge me?”

“Yes. I want to challenge you to go to the camp with me.”

Denis did not respond.

“Will you do that?”

“Of course,” he said. They made a plan to go together to the camp two weekends hence.



The Mayfair

May 2019



James M. Steeber

Sep 6



Photo: James M. Steeber, 2018

In writing pieces for *You Must Have Something on Your Mind* I recently looked back at blog entrees written in the last several years, sometimes wanting to revise them. One such item was written in May of 2019 where I captured a bit of a street encounter on the Upper West Side. What's interesting is that I know now that I am free to add more depth to the story – more of what I was feeling at the time, which I tended to think was implicit in the story but somehow remaining unexpressed. The point of the tale was not just the encounter but the mood that had been in place just before it. Here then is my revised recollection of a brief spring encounter in 2019.

May, 2019:

On an Upper West Side grocery run, on a mid-Spring Day, I trudged up the northern steps of the 72nd Street Central Park West Subway station. A fellow delayed my path, very slowly climbing as he stared vacantly into his phone. I made a quick maneuver around him, partially in irritation, and proceeded up and out of the station.

To my right was the magnificent corner of the Dakota Apartments, built in 1884. The sidewalk in front of the building's 72nd Street side was where the infamous shooting of John Lennon occurred in 1980. It was a shot that my old roommate in

Hell's Kitchen had claimed he heard, living with his mother two blocks North. I noted the presence of tourists amassing behind a velvet rope, all wishing to photograph "where it happened". I even imagined someone asking if the blood stain was still on the sidewalk, some 39 years later. My mood hardly brightened, and I didn't even bother to peer into the building's courtyard as I passed, so much of a cliché this had become.

On an early December morning in 1980, many miles away, I had been dreaming of Lennon's terrible fate, unaware that a bedside television clock radio had switched itself on and was reporting the same thing, pervading my subconscious. I awoke to the terrible reality that I had not been dreaming.

Candlelight vigils were staged the world over, and eventually Lennon's widow Yoko Ono created a mosaic in Central Park, just across the street with the tribute word "Imagine" emblazoned upon it in a newly formed area of the park called Strawberry Fields. As beautiful as the Dakota and its connected bucolic pasture beyond was, I always found the landmark deeply fascinating but now eternally brushed with pain and loss, despite all the great artists who had lived there.

Proceeding West on 72nd Street, I passed by the neighboring apartment building and noticed a silver-haired lady, smiling broadly, standing in its covered entrance just ahead. She

seemed to be talking to someone while appearing that the cares of the world were far away. I thought about the money one might need to live there and kept moving.

I was about mid-block, within view of Columbus Avenue when I suddenly felt a caressing hand on my left sleeve.

Somewhat alarmed at this play of intimacy, I turned around and saw the beaming smile of that same woman. She was looking up at me from a height of about five and a half feet, still radiating the same expression of joy. Little imagined index cards whirred in place in my head, trying to figure out where I might have known her.

“Hi,” I said in a quizzical but friendly manner. I had stopped walking and was now a captive audience. “You're beautiful. How tall are you?” she demanded. This question, which had been following me all my adult life would never stop, but 'beautiful' produced a certain dust mote of gratitude if not outright surprise.

“This tall,” I stated with mock pride, holding my open hand up to the top of my head – a joke I had employed many times.

Noting that this wasn't exactly satisfactory I added “six foot five”.

Her response: “My father was six foot two and a half.”

I was momentarily rendered speechless by the compliment, then the comparison. I would have otherwise informed her that

my father was a half inch taller. Nevertheless, I offered “Tall is wonderful, isn't it?”

Undaunted she continued. “Do you play basketball?” Again, I was met with a question I had been fielding since playing basketball at the JCC in Toledo when I was inches shorter.

“Piano.” (I made a playing gesture).

“Classical or jazz?”

“A little of both.”

“I studied a little when I was a child,” she said.

I changed the subject. “I saw you coming out of the apartment building back there.”

“The Mayfair,” she responded in an almost loving manner. I thought it was odd that she uttered the building's name, but she seemed proud of it. I decided to offer her a tale of musical connection, not knowing what else to add. For a moment I thought she might want to hire me to play for a party, but it now appeared to me that this woman, with notably beautiful teeth, was heading in a different direction – to a world of distant memory and ever-floating reality, destined for a slow and selective erasure of all that was present. Nevertheless, her happiness and sweetness seemed almost primordial.

I told her something I happened to know -- that her building used to be the home of a composer named Pia Gilbert (whose

apartment I had once visited and whose classroom I had once sat in at Juilliard), who had been a friend of Gustav Mahler's daughter Anna. Somehow, all this information seemed to interrupt the mood of the conversation.

I told her that it was nice to be offered her lovely smile and slowly moved away from her while her gaze now met the face of a merchant standing at his doorway, happy to greet her, thus releasing me from more reminiscing. I had nonetheless met with a momentary trusting gift of friendliness and even a compliment.

I continued West toward the grocery store.

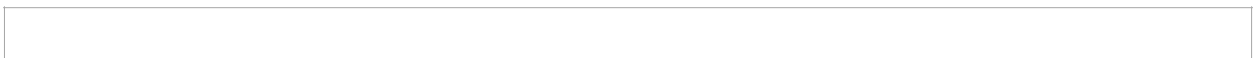
An Invitation to the Dance

My Tour as an Accompanist Begins



James M. Steeber

Oct
17





A studio at Juilliard where I first played three years after starting in dance as a musician

A friend and reader of mine suggested, recently, that I start writing about something I've known intimately and for a long time - the world of dance. I have been a musician in the dance world for a long time, having taken about 17 years off. I rejoined it about five and half years ago.

According to a diary entry it was October 28, 1982, that I first sat at a piano in a modern dance studio and tried my hand at accompanying.

This has been a particularly good day. After breakfast I went to Putnam 107 [Ohio University's home for dance and its largest studio] and tried my hand briefly at accompanying a modern dance class. I was extremely nervous, and I was called upon to

play anything with a waltz beat (but a certain way). The ‘master’ Eileen was playing at all the other intervals, and I found her improvisation very impressive. This may be a job sometime.

I count that as a stroke of understatement. 40 years later, it is still a job, albeit with some impressive interruptions, including a 14-year stint in corporate life. I do remember the day independent of the diary.

I was twenty and just starting my junior year. My friend Jordan (he of the New York apartment in my “Arrival” series) let me know one day, perhaps a week earlier than my let-us-say audition, that his mother, who was director of the dance school, needed musicians for the department. Jordan was aware that I improvised all the time. I had studied the piano for some years but had stopped short of becoming a music major. Sight reading was a tiresome hindrance – a sort of dyslexia that caused me to focus more on ear-training. Even as a child I discovered that I could, in Eileen’s parlance, “play on”, without music in front of me. I recall telling Jordan that “I could play a couple of waltzes”, having no idea of what all this was going to mean, require, and manipulate and how much of my life it would seize. Putnam 107 was a very large room – a former school gymnasium with a built-in stage – now used for audience seating. The flooring was a kind of light-colored hardwood in long slats -

beautifully smooth, and there were the usual full-length mirrors and ballet barres. Otherwise, everything was white and clean, including the brick walls. Large clerestory windows brought in an abundance of light. In one corner there was placed a six-foot grand piano, and at that piano sat the imposing Eileen – a fairly short woman in her 50’s with tight curly hair, greying a little. I was advised not to be intimidated by her, though she evinced an air of authority and seriousness with a subtle ironic sensibility that softened it a little.

Class commenced with about twenty-five students.

I sat up on the stage, hearing Eileen, who, as the diary stated, was indeed a master. She seemed to be spontaneously composing theater music, which seemed impossible to me. Her invitation, however, was rather casual and low-key. “Listen to what I’m playing, and if you have an idea, jump in.”

I sat on the stage, terrified of my “jumping in”, but there came a lull, then a demonstration, and then an idea. I figured that here was a good point to come down to the piano and say something. I was suddenly seated at the keys, feeling like the pilot of a ship. The teacher gave me some idea of a meter, and there was a count in – “five, and six, and ready, and go...”

A started banging out my waltz, which must have sounded like gunshots at a madrigal performance. There was laughter,

and everything stopped. The music didn't fit and wasn't even at a relatable tempo. I was rescued by Eileen, who showed me how the appropriate music could sound, which was mellifluous and organic. It not only fit, but it supported. Understanding a little more, I attempted again to move the class, now roughly imitating what I'd heard. This worked for the moment, but I felt like I was soloing on a unicycle – the crash coming at any moment. It showed me that something was possible, if not easy. It was also very attractive, and I wanted more.

I went into town and ran into a girl on whom I had an ongoing and tragic crush (which only ended earlier this year with her untimely death), in addition to her friendship, and proudly announced my triumph in having survived the audition, which I must also have passed.

In the ensuing days, per invitation, I began haunting Eileen at 107, again playing little bits or adding to her piano with a great set of Chinese drums and other percussion objects from a cabinet near the piano. Her playing was nothing short of revelatory. I had never observed someone with a classical composition degree – particularly someone who could apply it in this way. (Eventually, I earned student credits studying the technique of accompanying with her.)

Sometime during this space of time, I was informed by Eileen that she would be unavailable to play for a particular class and asked me if I would I be willing to solo. I was the understudy getting his moment on stage. Thus began a beautiful kinesthetic friendship with the world of modern dance.

During the warmup sequence at the start of class, I'd be in heaven, just enjoying the sounds of the piano in the room and observing its connection to the movement. I remember smiles coming from the teacher. The department taught a movement technique inspired by the work of Alwin Nikolais and Murray Louis who had their own company in New York. The technique had a happy air to it – so easy, in essence to support with music, that is, until I started realizing that I wasn't a finished craftsman at the task.

Improvising was one thing but putting it into phrases that fit the various dance sequences was an entirely different challenge. I had come to dance accompanying with bits and pieces of works I had studied, plus songs and little solos that I was quickly stringing together, but the musical theory underlying it was still largely a mystery. So much of that had been skipped during private piano lessons, and I was now being asked to count as I played. It was often very difficult.

I'd start on a phrase built on a count of eight (the most common) and realize to my horror, somewhere in it, that I had lost the "one". Dancers needed that count for their own phrasing. I'd have to watch carefully (which was also difficult, not looking down) - hoping to figure out where "one" might be, then skidding to a finish in time with the exercise. In general, I was still learning how to make music spontaneously, but without enough of an internal library to compensate for times when nothing new would come out. It took months – years actually - to get a real foothold on the technique of accompanying. The strange thing was that my playing was always considered good enough to invite me in as an accompanist. Getting it to all work was the hard part. While I didn't always have the counts, I always had the energy and a sense of fun. I'd de-tune the piano with my end-of-class freneticism, and everyone seemed to love it. "Isn't he great?" shouted one of the teachers. I certainly loved it. It was my way of communicating with the world at that moment.

As if to add to the complexity of the job, teachers would sometimes ask for phrases in odd counts of thirteen, eleven, five, seven, and nine. I would often defer to the drums for these but eventually began to hear pieces in my head in their modified meters and counts. As an example, I was impressed to hear Eileen render Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C# minor in a count of

ten! All was fair game. A count of twelve was eight counts plus four, but if you were really good you could hide the seam. For really complex phrases you had to figure out how to count and play. Nothing else would suffice.

At O.U. I had been working since my first quarter, but the Work-Study financial aid rules only allowed for what amounted to about thirty dollars a week. I had been limited to about ten hours, and it was minimum wage. At the dance department I was able find work through the Student Hourly program, which had no time restrictions, and I worked many more hours (sometimes to mental and physical exhaustion), earning more than a hundred dollars in a good week. To collect my check, I'd go up to the dance office where all the Village Voices were strewn on a corner table. Even then, all roads led to New York. I would end up performing as an accompanist at three additional universities before getting there. Speaking as a cis male heterosexual (he/him/hisn), the girls were fabulous, but I was nowhere near the point of being able to ask one of them out. All of that would happen in New York, and that path was very slowly opening up.

The Suitcase

Connections that Sometimes Define our Souls

JAMES M. STEEBER

DEC
6

SAVE



My father sometimes traveled with a weekend bag – a zippered green canvas and leather grip with a suit side and a regular compartment. The suit side contained a hinged aluminum frame for folding and an attachable hanger. The other side

included ribbons of cloth for tying down whatever had been packed. There was an external zippered compartment. It was a simple design – not remarkable, save that it had a certain old-world elegance from a time before suitcases had to roll. Above all, it represented a lifestyle.

My father had traveled extensively with it around the Caribbean when he was president of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association as well as other stints that had him flying around the region aboard Douglas DC3's in terrible heat and humidity. The suitcase had shown its age, and by the time I was in my teens, I was given use of it. It featured a pink and white customs tag and a wonderful travel sticker featuring a flying Barbadian fish.

The Caribbean epoch itself was firmly over by 1970, as employment for my father took us back to Ohio where heat and humidity abated for much of the year. Yet by my mid-teens, there was sadness in that whatever glamor the previous life had offered was now long vanished from our lives. For me, the suitcase represented something lost, given that my father had succumbed in part to depression – in one sense a delayed reaction to the Holocaust of which he was a survivor – and now an aging one. He was already 42 when I was born, and being a typical child of a survivor, I protected him madly.

The suitcase, then, was younger days and the busy president and consultant who would arrive home, at one point regularly greeted at the airport by my mother, me, and a carton of Camels. There was often a gift for me from New York – a frequent destination – a coveted box from Bloomingdale’s or F.A.O. Schwarz, or something slightly exotic from one of the islands, like my first cassette recorder. This canvas suitcase had been along for many rides, and it was slowly fading, its form shambling into a softness. I often wondered where I might find another one just like it. It seemed an unlikely search, given its age. It had probably been assembled in the early 50’s, and no tag identified its maker.

Fifteen years after our last flight out of Puerto Rico (our last residence in the Caribbean), I moved to New York. Amid my luggage was the canvas suitcase – still holding a form, still functioning. One afternoon, perhaps a half year into the adventure, I was walking down Madison Avenue when I saw a luggage store on the corner. I stopped – transfixed by what was displayed in its window. On its shelves was my father’s canvas suitcase – not just in green but in navy blue, maroon, brown, and tan. It matched perfectly – stripe of leather for stripe. My father and I had apparently been toting a Crouch & Fitzgerald suitcase –

something he'd probably purchased from that store three decades earlier.

Crouch & Fitzgerald were noted makers of steamer trunks and grips dating back into the 19th Century. The suitcase was priced at \$99, creating the instant temptation to purchase one. Although I was working, functioning well without even a credit card, the price seemed too steep for something that wasn't absolutely essential. At least that was my thinking at the time. I passed by the window still astonished that the great travel suitcase was still being made.

A year or so later I was again walking by the Crouch & Fitzgerald corner and saw my suitcase, now with a \$10 price increase. \$109 was still a bearable sacrifice (though less magical), but again I opted not to do it. My philosophy of self-reward still needed work; all of the hours I had been putting into my craft as a modern dance accompanist, under sometimes difficult conditions, probably needed to be acknowledged with a nice gift, but I didn't buy it – now smarting that I had missed the lower price.

My last views of the bag in the Crouch & Fitzgerald window had it at \$119, then \$149, after which it disappeared. I went into the store, now smaller and mid-block, and inquired about the

bag. “I think they stopped making them,” was the response from a salesman.

I felt a great sadness that a short-term fear had permanently cost me the chance to own a brand-new replacement for the old suitcase, which would have represented a kind of renewal, given lost memories and the lost people within them.

Years passed again. I had opened my first bank account in New York at Citibank – at the time the friendliest bank I encountered as a new arrival. Chase, Chemical Bank, and Manufacturers Hanover Trust had shown less interest in me, so it was Citi that won my vast original holdings of \$345. The location was 1 Park Avenue, near my first sublet, and I always liked the address. One day, probably 13 years after opening the account, I found that my banking card was not working. I called the customer service number and was told to visit my home branch where the card would be reset. Now living Uptown, I took the Subway to the West Side and decided to walk across town to the bank branch.

The route I chose took me through a dense neighborhood of old Garment District office buildings. It was a Saturday, so the area was abandoned – very quiet. I walked toward a building that was being gutted for renovation. Its tell-tale enormous bin was the size of a truck and sat astride the sidewalk, brimming with

detritus, pieces of plaster, wood, furniture, and a mound of crushed interior. Atop that was a brown canvas and leather suitcase. As soon as I glanced at it – just above eye-level – I knew what it was. I pulled it down. The bag was zippered and undamaged, save for a small indentation that suggested something had lain on top of it for a time. I unzipped the main compartment and found two ribbons in the clean bag, still tied down in ironed bows as if from the factory. I looked aloft to see if any of Alan Funt's cameras were looking down. Was this a setup from the divine universe? Perhaps so. The bag was very same one I had seen at Crouch and Fitzgerald and was now mine. Proudly, I walked the rest of the way to the Citibank branch with my suitcase, where I was treated well and came home with a working banking card, still astounded at my celestial connection from the day. On later trips to visit my father, I carried a bag in each hand, and we were both amazed.

Our wishes transmit beyond ourselves, but which wishes? I guess they are the true longings for little connections and the things which really mean something to our souls. Go ahead; buy it now.

confirmation bask summation membrane

By Joshua Martin

worn blessed impressed dressed
skinned liver lip sworn aghast
pressed curving spinal splash raft
wheel ing er peeking pebbles
ist is ism schism prism
infinitesimal device spider weave
last best zest request quest
full fulsome wire hangar
less on in vest ed horizontal
pistachio lasso fashion able list
resist ed persist ant verge
urge surge ledge re zone abject
inner outer warmer volume ask
askance advance treasure ice

creep creep asleep wonderful
actual realm spools drools
enigmatic masterful cloistered
burst thirst tip ping veg
urge surge spirit purge
magical tragical invasion stray
lying layman ponder glass
a slant rhythmic nimbus hoist
hole powdered advancing id
slid beneath hermetic strap
spaghetti punch ouch re numbed
drenched down blindfolded own
manual bombing sandal
scandalized trampoline star
crossing elephantine passenger
airplane chain train vein
rain in side out war
guided use less auto mobile

manic swift ticket

memorial cheese

a policy misspoken
underneath rolliepollie holy
leeching gazing grazed muscle
hustle
bustle
storm chaser ego trip
flip
flip
flip
pip pip hurrah!
yay! say unto
unrealized homeless
lackluster partner
criminal of nature
all engrossed stub
tickets ponder pelvis
shells vaginal discourse
re
 course
re
 revisit
station right of infidelity
cherry

on
top

Hypnotic Photo Crisis

Mollusk places miles
perfected drive shaft
envious cordless dim
mere swim men
sensibility laboratory
ass tent id wildlife

Reversed Dynamite

Disguised as raincoat crown
worried soldier drinking ink
pressured to realize flowing breaks
the sink on brink drinking
hot sauce fairytale wearables
sunken drunken stunk halo
promenading surefire Oven
variable pointer Finger linger

all ye yes that scary feet prevail
throughout whaling Vessel
staid Maiden hood zebra
stripp'd bear had a Sneaking
foundational rezoning paved
permit of Zeal tread

Volatile Jellied Immunizations

most of hands restrained salted remnants
fish variation sing-song begging hug
quarantine exotic troubled ex bubble
bursting clumsiness scoreboard scam
inserted Glory be. Glory not.

Glory, glory, glory.

to the coming of the filth a conclusion

hellbent crab freeze-frame spinning
winning sinning Universal annoyance
powdered. corrupts seagull fascination
ratifications sparkling feather bureau

overextending

ears

glue

benign ripping flesh pipes

: clogged

: spilling haze

: soda broke

end

bounce

frogs

colossal radiation nation station blows

speed scenes wear hermits fawn sprig

opinion indeterminate goo stew moo

Grasshopper Swamp Circles

clear dusted spurn

bring pig another

rang less bird hollow

viper shaking bellow

rapid beating mellow

vainglory gallop aftertaste
reminded spinach rye sigh
foremost toast glacier arm

unphased memento
gone troppo guess

disheveled venture preamble
bossing concrete moonlight

Accounts Vary by Flight Patterns

weaving fishnet holiday scallops
to bury our feet with thermometer visions
stamped to the nearest degree of deletion
then planted upstage
curving verbiage quotation zones
scrunched crunched a mirage quilt
battery stampede festival mulch
as our hurrying degrees of polarization
stop flea circus calculus in its tracks
besotted not rusted
under bridged cumulus clots

fearing zygote mechanization chalk
or our outlined nose hairs spooning
illogical as a comb over flying saucer
divorced from condom river rapids
though we studied ancient bulbs
we never returned backwards samples
when the audio symptoms quake
leaving window battlegrounds
to ascertain chimney wargames

By the Code Telegram

is disposed to find
an ocean from honest

mistake:

in the slanders peddled

it combines successive,

an others exposed

the voice of criticism

must be aware

a slavish adherence

to trite images

the reins and the whips

combing illusions

announcer proclaims!

official list

“some sort of place” :

accomplish the miracle,

in the interest of the feat of

Rasputin.

Under the Guise of Theories

troops of the mutineers

my useless leg,

crutch,

by the bullet at eight o'clock

had made guerilla without

shoulder straps

in touch with the dead bodies of horses

arrival,

“Such evidence,”

especially important

the testimony

hastily summoned

Had a Bonanza On Its Hands

arrived sharecroppers frequently spic-and-span

son headed a sprinkling bandaged together single room

aplenty - - -

flows dancing the tango - - -

decaying colonial mansions

were granted the land

partitioned rooms

as rented

to those arriving

(

potent (and suicidal)

last stands

), larger

invasions also occurred

Boom of Vast Proportions

from congenital laziness

outside of biology let us begin our story

not yet common turn but they argued

problems always began and backwards

rulers took tropical heat as explanations

long ago

embraced

used this fervor

subject to impose

bitterly to bankroll

“constructed” , however ,

for maximum appeal exploited
multihued (and elsewhere)

comfortably

over verging

contrasting of overwhelming

still firmly

initiated

all social levels

mindful or

less

intact (elite)

of ducks

& sporting coats

Merrily, Twin Blusters and All Wings

buzz, it's all said:

spruce goose bob

catlike inspection needle

, ORDER!

ORDER! the punch bowl

is in session , , , lieutenant

pulsation CRASH! BANG! BOOM!

PoW

pOw POW ///// orange

bandaged

crisis

advertisement muffin variance

, ['which color wheel subject?'] /

an orgy

of wavelengths - - -

fresh kill kabob - - -

oyster shell spinning top

fable maple altitude forget-me-not

pronounced leading roach foregrounding (

artistic avalanche

squirming battle

) ,,,,

weasel RIPPED a SHOVEL enigma GLASS

: welt.

Salute to Fever Blister Short-Circuiting

slAm bAm prImE calculator egress

repeat : repeat : repeat : repeat :

hatchet

, rubber hose, soulful scabs

heartening reverb puzzle bOx

venturing culpable wAx cylinder

dropping electric tissue splurge

sponge ,, evaporation ,, crutches ,,

sanctified twisting seahorse

,,, if ,,,, aNy ,,,,

spirit volume control

functionary

reject

avoidance glimmering soot

canal amoeba poison kit

rewinding cruising altitudes

: fired : required :

dust without checkers : borders

abandoned partygoers

avored thigh muscle enigmas

excited confederation pretext

protoplasm squiggle

wiggle : wiggle : wiggle

couch opossum hangnail

bOOt IEAps fEstlvE mArsh

, abandoned sayings ,, loudmouths ,,

peer pressure escapism

Straining Against Public Commentaries, Published Though Blameless

Transcendent chains frolic, likewise an evolving incompatible
abyss,

the urgent definitions enduring psychotic fish scales while
shriveling harmonic annihilation assumptions. “N o t o r i o u s
and strict hauntings bemoaning substandard unraveling
unless a pinch initializes immoral locutions of doom.”

Which X deals the guilty manner
applicable to attempted bargaining typhoons?

Expatriate balm, fluffy scriptures, sermon
to the unforced grasping monotony into
current lush attacks of humorous self-defense.

/ bawdy [an AKA prevails fictional tarp],
half a face stuck to the bottom of the feet [trap],
sailors feeble and rat-infested like a humanist
[pithy, pity, death a cult like capital, scurry
pointed lobster exiles secretly a coatrack] \ .

Sayeth, lusty pillows,
once grenades trade
stick figure glue pucks
gesturing gigantic necks,
plus three geographies,
plasma soaking fever
thorough numbed endings.

Grieving dictionaries passing animatronic highlights
the filth inside specified tomb trunks. G/r/a/s/s/h/o/p/p/e/r/s

gnawing an error prone murderer drifting among
hilly knobs, cones bellowing mucous documents,
chilled then dried and ready to pardon dental chalkboard
iguanas. Needy warning possums less a denture slurping
in the haze of swampy stratospheres.

All Residents Must Wear Clothes

by Kit Knight

Pushing Lois' chair aside, baffled Betsie looked up from scooting across the floor on a chair w/tiny wheels when an aid put a walker in front of her, saying, "Stand up, Betsie." Three times a day the entire room hears one of the aids say that, several times after each meal. Along w/four other people Betsie & Lois sit at one of the six tables in this dining hall. Betsie moves along just fine once up & in her walker but forgets to stand until she's told.

At another table & after three tries, number 32 got to her feet in her own walker & looking equally baffled, feebly said, "Where do I go?"

Another aid, Rose, pointed to the door & gently but loudly repeated for possibly the 2,000th time, "That way & go left; you're in room 32." Again, the whole room hears these instructions but only twice a day. One of the men at my table routinely falls asleep during meals. Jan & I marvel that Dan never tips over & his roommate, Jeff, joked that Dan eats well-balanced meals. Jeff

has advanced Parkinson's so a leg & one arm are in constant jittery motion. It must take a lot of energy because Jeff often has a second plate of everything being served & isn't fat but I haven't been here long enough to feel comfortable asking that question. Mountain View Residence, MVR, was built in 1998 for the express purpose of warehousing the elderly till they shuffled off & mealtimes can be--rarely, depending on my mood--depressing.

Upon my arrival four months ago in 2023 it still served that purpose but had been redecorated, however, I paid extra to have my 2 room apt. painted a light blue. As a widow I'd lived alone in my house until becoming a cliché at 69 by tripping over a cat & breaking a hip so turned 70 using a walker. After three hip surgeries I needed a knee replacement & help so sold my house moving five blocks to MVR but wanted my own space to be my favorite color. Both the PA & CA homes my late husband & I had owned had been painted blue but our NV home was too new to require a paint job. Upon selling, discovered I'd lived in that house for 18 years & most of them, alone. Widow is a sad & ugly word. The discovery startled me since I'd never even lived in one state for 18 years straight let alone a single house. Rhode Island was my birth state but at various times, coast-to-coast, had called five other states home before coming to NV.

Shortly after my arrival, MVR welcomed Easter with a six foot inflatable pink rabbit in the lobby. Paper eggs & baby bunnies ran across bulletin boards & vases of flowers were scattered about. A day later the giant bunny deflated into a plastic puddle & cheerfully shared one of my two observations w/ the English speaking aids saying a friend told me those flattened heaps reminded her of used condoms but I'd never seen a pink one. Everyone laughed; however, I never told anyone the rabbit's death seemed apt for a facility like MVR.

Most of the 40 residents were in their 70s or 80s w/a few older & they all had TV & phones in their studio or 2 room apts & a few added computers to their small living quarters. Six of them lived in a separate memory unit that was kept locked for their safety & I'd never met any of them. All the ones I saw lived in the main section receiving visitors, going out or walking the halls & a lot of them were often vague or fuzzy at times but didn't have full blown dementia, yet, altho a few wandered into the wrong room sometimes. Most were in wheelchairs or used walkers or a cane. There was a large activity room where many gathered for Bingo in the afternoons but I avoided that room unless I wanted popcorn to share w/Jan while we watched a movie & drank wine in my room. A theater style popcorn machine was in that big room & anyone

could take as much as desired. I also avoided the large TV room where many of the residents hung out w/most dozing in their wheelchairs--walkers next to the sleepers in soft chairs--waiting for the dining hall to open. When the doors opened they'd troop down the hall but several waited half an hour or longer outside the door as if it were magic or of major importance to be first. I stayed in my room till the shuffle parade was over then went in maneuvering my walker to my assigned place next to Jan, who used a silver cane. Staff tried to make it a cheery place as they understood mealtimes were the highlight of the day. It gave residents someplace to go & something to do besides watch TV or doze. Heart shaped pancakes were often served or we could order eggs done to our liking, oatmeal, cold cereal, bacon or just toast. I usually brought an English muffin because they weren't on the official menu but no one cared. Milk was offered but I preferred a particular brand of creamer so brought that along, too. No one minded & mini fridges had come w/each room. Lunches & dinners were the same for all residents unless someone requested an approved replacement.

My room was on the same side of the building as the dining hall while Jan's room was on the other end, near the big rooms. She had more space in her 2 rooms because she'd lived there w/

her late husband for several years before my arrival. Jay was in a wheelchair when we met & died a month later. I was the only MVR resident at his memorial service, altho about 50 other people showed. The couple had been active for decades in Rotary but I only knew Jan & we'd met casually years before. Then she suddenly vanished, dropping out of sight because of three strokes then spent several years in a rehab facility in Reno. None of which I knew so on my initial visit to MVR--prior to making the decision to move in--we reconnected, giving me a ready-made friend here.

By the time Jan was able to come home from rehab Jay had developed Alzheimer's & couldn't take care of her. Their family decided MVR was the best solution since the couple didn't want to sell their house or leave town. The day he died began badly w/ Jan tripping over his oxygen line in their apt., falling & breaking a shoulder. I watched an ambulance crew wheel her down the hall & out the door. At nine am that morning Jay was still in bed. He hadn't wanted to struggle--even w/a great deal of help--to get up for breakfast nor eaten anything from the tray an aid brought. He was asleep when Jan fell & stayed asleep thru the commotion of an ambulance. Everyone, including Jan, knew he was failing & died that afternoon while his wife was hospitalized. Meanwhile,

Jan ached that no one was there to hold his cup when Jay drank water & he'd be unable to rest w/o her there to hold his hand until he fell asleep. After a long day of tests & filling out forms, it was early evening before her daughter told Jan she didn't have to worry about Jay anymore. He was gone.

Tracy also made sure his bed w/the guard rails was gone before her mother returned to MVR a day later, bandaged & girded for the funeral. Jan kept to herself for two days but upon seeing her, said people often try to spare loved ones by waiting to pass till they're out of the room. She sighed fingering Jay's wedding ring hanging on a gold chain around her neck then took the card I held out. Weeks later at the memorial service the simple message on that card was reprinted on the funeral card everyone was holding. When Jan got up to speak she acknowledged me as the source of that message saying it summed up Jay perfectly. Powerful & simple. From that moment on I was treated as if & repeatedly told I was her best friend. "No, just a friend, we haven't known each other long enough to be best friends & I only met Jay last mo." Smilingly, everyone ignored those words--I was Jan's best friend. Strangers fussed over my comfort & arranged rides for me. After the service, Rotary put out a generous spread for the friends & relatives. Jan insisted I sit

next to her & had a glass of Chardonnay w/my steak as a stream of kind people passed expressing condolences & offering me plates of goodies. It was a beautiful spring day & four of her grandsons horsed around w/wooden balls on another section of the sprawling acre of lawn away from the paper covered tables.

I was the only one there w/a walker which was weird after living at MVR for a month & being surrounded by them. But it's weird to be the same age as old people, too. Several times, residents reminded me that Bingo was every weekday afternoon. Many of the group dozed even as numbers were called. Bingo is not a bad time killer & great for teaching little kids their numbers but here it's depressing. I always smiled politely while shaking my head but believe in never saying never so may end up there -- someday. Communal dozing goes on in the large TV room, which is used for church services every Thursday & don't know if they doze there, too, since I've never been & don't ever intend to go. Here tho, apparently it's a big deal because the one & only time Lois ever spoke to me was when she--almost accusingly--said, "You missed a good service at church today."

Practically scowling, Lois & her walker hurry out of the dining hall before everyone has been served. She's never there to witness Betsie's bewilderment or to hear number 32 but maybe

she did before my arrival. I've never seen her smile or talk to anyone not even Rose who chats w/everyone, but Lois is always abrupt. Even before entering saw coffee waiting at my place so knew Rose was working & had only been here a week before she knew I was always five to ten minutes late for breakfast. If only other aids are working, my coffee has to wait for my arrival. None of the other aids--nice as they may be--pay that kind of attention. For them, working here is a job but for Rose it's a mission.

Some staff ladies are irritating when they try so hard to be agreeable that it becomes patronizing. Maybe the job description insists that to work here one must--at all times!--maintain the sunny attitude of a kindergarten teacher.

Even before I sat down, Jan breathlessly said, "You missed all the excitement!" She continued as I opened the tiny individual jelly container, "Harold came in the TV room totally naked! Amazing you didn't hear all the shouting. Everyone else did. Aides came running. Nan was screaming loudest for Harold to get out so he grabbed her cane & raised it over his head to whack her." Just then Mara the cook appeared wanting my order & I said one egg over medium plus this handing her the muffin that Jan would spread the jelly I'd just opened on her half. Her fingers are clumsy & I pushed it toward her as Mara left. Delightedly, &

holding an open one up, Jan said, "Look, I did it! Took a few minutes but I did it all by myself."

"Good going!" Glancing over my shoulder at Harold in his customary plaid shirt & overalls while none of the residents looked the least bit ruffled over the recent experience. Harold was calmly eating cereal & even Nan looked fine.

Embarrassed, Jan added, "I didn't look." I'm thinking--how could you not? I'll certainly never see Harold w/his peculiar hopping gait in quite the same light again. When not hopping, what used to be harmless Harold stood around w/his hands in his back pockets waiting for the dining hall to open & often led the parade. Harold was one of the five or six residents who could walk unaided. Most afternoons he sat in a chair near the lobby's front doors jumping up to hold it open for an arrival, always offering to carry whatever. My walker has a seat & could easily hold my few groceries but everyone needs something to do, so toting my small bag Harold walked w/me & assured me--on multiple occasions--there was always someone at the main desk to direct me if I got lost in the three hallways. I'd smile cheerfully, say thanks & watch him hop-walk back to his post. Like Rose, Harold had a mission only he didn't get paid for his.

A waffle & egg appeared in front of Jan then Mara put my plate down. We said thanks & she hustled off. “Pass the syrup, please?” Seeing the waffle already cut into bite size pieces made me smile. Only Mara, sensitive to Jan’s problems, does that for her; the other cooks just take orders then serve & I offer to cut it. Using a fork, Jan manages an egg & tries w/a pancake but a waffle is beyond her. After pointing out Mara’s thoughtfulness, Jan tried to order them only on days Mara works but Jan often forgets. She’s fuzzy on some details but never on anything important & right now Harold qualifies. “He’s about to slam that cane over Nan’s screaming head when Jerry grabs it from behind while loudly telling the rest of us to calm down, everything’s fine. Then Jerry & another aid lead Harold out.” She added, “Fast. The whole awful incident happened fast. And then everything was fine again, like it never happened. I’ve never seen any naked people here but Jay did. He just happened to pass this older gentleman’s room who died a week later.”

As she talked, I thought of the day of my arrival when a staff woman firmly told me All Residents Must Wear Clothes. At the time it seemed an oddly unnecessary thing to say but obviously they’d been thru this before. To Jan, I shrugged saying, “Things happen,” & filed the event for Donna. When she’d picked me up

last week had cheerfully said what's new at MVR enabling me to ask if a twice a week ambulance visit counts. She'll love this story & is a big part of why I'm here.

We'd both lived in the golden state before meeting in NV then several years later, Donna & her husband moved to Walla Walla but they still owned five rental properties in town plus she left behind friends & relatives so has a choice of places to stay for the week she returns, once or twice a year. Last summer I was in rehab recovering after the second hip surgery but we both knew additional hip work & a knee replacement were looming so she toured MVR w/me in mind, bringing me brochures. But the summer before my surgeries & moving, she'd driven from WA to NV w/her small dog & both stayed in my guest room. Archie never got carsick or bounced around the moving auto then was an equally good house guest, quickly learning how to use the doggie door we'd installed for our beloved greyhound, Nikkie. She was 13 when she died, four months before Arthur left me in 2012, a traumatic 11 years ago. Archie was just fine when Donna & I spent a long afternoon at the Mustang Ranch.

The world famous ranch is an hour away & Donna had never been. Their excellent restaurant, The Wild Horse, is highly rated

on their web site but--as w/Hooters--food isn't the primary draw. Doubt I'd ever have visited the ranch but there are some press releases one can't ignore & the Mustang's grand reopening was one. In 2007, the new owners moved the entire building a mile from the Mustang exit that gave NV's first legal brothel its name & added two buildings. At the time, both Arthur & I were writing for CA newspapers so we were part of the press corps army--TV people w/cameras, radio reporters w/mikes & press people w/notebooks--present on the grand day. Cables snaked across floors while women wearing very little walked around w/huge trays of fruit & crackers hanging from neck straps. After the tour all 80 of us were invited to a free lunch but over half the army left. However, we toured the huge kitchen & restaurant, newly built & just across the parking lot. There was handicapped parking w/a special entrance for the disabled along w/a specially designed suite w/multiple handholds & a huge shower allowing wheelchair access. It's not easy to impress me but that suite certainly did. After a great lunch we toured the new brothel w/a swimming pool in the rear of The Wild Horse. I've been back to the restaurant many times both w/Arthur & w/o him, bringing a friend, a couple or several friends. All have been delighted w/the restaurant & most were intrigued enough to take the tour. Six years had passed upon re-meeting Jan who asked me to join her & Jay at MVR's

lunch that day. We sat w/three other residents eating chili when out of the blue Jan chirps, “The last time I had lunch w/Kit was at the Mustang Ranch.” Either Jay didn’t hear her or didn’t understand but everybody else’s jaw dropped. Even startling me as I’d forgotten we went there & thought well, the people here will certainly remember me.

Bravely, I said, “They’ve opened a gift shop since we were there.”

“Oh that’s wonderful. My daughter-in-law will love that. She was jealous that I got to go so we have to go again & take her.” I smiled, nodded & thought may as well organize a field trip -- which on second thought might be a hit. The co-owner & madam of the ranch told me she sponsored a monthly bus for groups of Red Hat Ladies who all were over 55. Susan gave them a tour followed by a free lunch saying it made for great PR & she loved hearing those old gals giggle. I would have been 54 then, breathing on being an ‘old gal.’ Now, nearing 71 & living where I never expected to be definitely makes me an old gal. Well, there are worse fates. Donna’s grandfather spent the final ten months of his 92 years in a facility like MVR & she says her gramps’ mind was sharp till the end.

Shrieking from Harold's table demanded attention. Cathy was on the floor w/a death grip in Sue's hair practically pulling her out of her wheelchair. Two residents placidly continued eating but eggs got cold while everyone else stared at Sue screaming "Let go!" as she hurled her orange juice at Cathy & aides rushed over. A staff lady sped in, separating them then forcefully led Cathy who was shouting "You fucking witch!" to another table. Between shouts, she pawed at her streaming eyes as Patrice pulled her along. Cathy is the only resident I loathe & not because of her foul mouth. She walks well by herself & that's the problem. Cathy endlessly tramps thru the halls often right into someone's room. I was glad her new table was on the far side of the room instead of behind me since she gets up nine times at most meals stomping past me & out the door turning right to circle back into the dining hall via a side entrance then passes me again stomping back to her table. The near constant stomping trek is both annoying & distracting but when she storms out from her new spot at least she won't be coming from behind. It only took an hour on my first day to learn who those pounding feet belonged to. That afternoon Cathy stomped into my room, startling me amid a couple dozen unopened boxes but I was pleasant about the intrusion. Two days later she stomped in again & I was still civil but less pleasant. At breakfast the following morning I politely

asked her to stay out of my room & she denied ever being in my room.

Two days went by w/Cathy only pounding past my open door but the following night she opened it, came in then halted & just as quickly stomped out. The next day at breakfast I walked up to her table & loudly said, “Stay out of my room; don’t ever come in again.” Cathy again denied ever having been in my room. Forcefully, I said, “You opened my door barging in last night.”

“Bullshit!” Calling her an idiot, I turned & went back to my table. Since Cathy sits--when seated--behind me, I’ve heard her tell the kindest & most efficient staff lady, Patrice, to fuck off. I didn’t want to go to management w/what should have been an easily solved problem but didn’t have a choice. Weeks have passed w/Cathy only stomping past my room or in two steps & just as quickly out but no opening my door & barging in. I’m hopeful--& grateful--telling Sarah whatever she said to Cathy seems to have worked. I’m also mindful to lock my door, which I couldn’t do before as I needed help getting in & out of bed.

A few other residents frequently walk the halls but w/o stomping, swearing or being a jerk. Jan whispered, “Jerry must be over by my room or he’d have come right away but told me that’s the secret--always separate them then lead one away.” We

both looked inquiringly at hard-of-hearing Maria who sat across from us. She was fluent in both English & Spanish, often translating for us & even she couldn't have missed the shrieking. At 97, it took three months for her to learn my name but got it & beams w/newfound knowledge each time she says Kit.

Maria said, "As Cathy walked past she deliberately shoved Sue's chair & Sue said something making Cathy grab Sue's hair as either she pushed her or Cathy fell." Smiling, she added, "I hope Sue pushed her & am glad she threw juice in Cathy's face; she's no good. She hit an aid last week & it's awful how she gets up & down then goes in & out so many times during church."

Jan agreed, "It's rude." She added, "And the cussing is terrible, it's always F you this or F that." Everyone returned to their breakfasts & all was routine again. Given what heroic Jerry said squabbles occur regularly enough to be daily dramas at MVR. Jan said, "Dan died so be sure to say something nice to Jeff when he comes back; he's gone this weekend to his daughter's house." I wondered what Dan's last meal was & if he slept thru it but that probably isn't what Jan wants. She added, "Jeff's going to be a grandpa." Maria left but over a second cup of coffee mentioned to Jan I hadn't seen or heard number 32 for a couple days. "She got super confused so was moved to the

memory unit. Like Dan, we won't see her again." Then, looking properly sad but w/unmistakable glee, Jan leaned over w/the latest daily drama, saying, "Remember Sally, the fat lady you said wasn't smart? She had a second stroke, is in the hospital & things don't look good." Adding, "They go pretty regularly at MVR but I've been here several years & Maria even longer." I thought of the dead giant rabbit, but someone had puffed the pink bunny back to life the following day. Sally was huge weighing between three & four hundred pounds while looking as if someone stuffed her into her wheelchair. Globes of fat hung, pooling & jiggling around her knees, elbows, fingers & wrists but she always smiled, huffing while trying--& failing--to push herself along. I hope a doctor talked to her about her morbid obesity but it was obvious what a big--pun unintended--part of her problem was. Unsurprisingly, anyone here who does walk unaided or w/a cane is thin or of average weight. Sally had worn shorts w/a different tee shirt every day.

Most of her shirts had cute sayings like My Family Isn't Going Crazy, They're Galloping Toward Lunacy but a green one said, I'm A Smart One causing me to indignantly say, "Sally is not smart!" Jan laughed patting her own mildly chubby tummy saying most everyone here gains weight because MVR serves great

meals plus two desserts a day. I thought--well, you don't have to eat them. At first Rose was alarmed when I skipped dinner rushing to bring a plate to my room but now is used to it altho still occasionally asks—hopeful & worried--saying how can you stay strong if you don't eat? Rose was horrified to learn my knee replacement was the sixth time my right leg underwent surgery & now had 38 inches of scar on that leg.

Some hospital nurse had admiringly said, "That's over a yard of scar & they all look great!" But not wanting to further upset Rose, I never mentioned the other operations. For various reasons, I've been under the knife ten or eleven times. Donna knows my history, even flying in once on emergency leave from her job to stay w/me for a week after my first hip surgery. I'd already spent a month in rehab before coming home & Donna was waiting for me w/a wonderfully appropriate sweatshirt saying This Ain't My First Rodeo. That month marked the third time I'd spent Christmas in a hospital.

Immediately the gifted sweatshirt became my favorite winter wear.

AN OASIS OF GAS

By Lyn Lifshin

lights up the night
in this postage stamp
size city across the
Mississippi from
New Orleans, a
beacon of light
illuminating the
pitch black night.
Ahmid Mashan, a
native who came
here 4 years ago was
out in the parking
lot of his gas station
and power came on so
he says “I decided
to open. We had
generators at first and
we were giving gas to

police and town
vehicles and then I
decided to sell to the
people in the neighbor
hood. And the price
was lower than it is
in Washington and
most of the country,
2.99 a gallon, that
was the price it was
before we closed said
Mashan and I thought it
would be fair to raise
It now.” “Why,” some
one asked in a sea of
darkness, “was he blessed
with electricity?” “Because
this is the city of West
We Go,” he said with a
laugh as though it
needed no further
explanation

PETS IN THE STORM

so many stayed, wouldn't leave their animals. As rescue boats go thru the river streets to find humans, pet rescue boats search for marooned pets. Sometimes animals and their owners are found together. Some times the animals are found alone and sick from drinking the ruined street water. Some pets are cut, injured, have infections, canine dysentery, are so dehydrated. Instead of Noah, there are 450 workers here: vets and staffers from the hundreds of people everyday who

arrive with hope of good news. They register, write down descriptions of their pets, whether they are wearing a collar. Many bring a photograph then they begin their search up and down the lanes of small kennels. They share stories, share horror stories like one rumor that police in a nearby parish shot dogs on the street. Some one tells about one dog who had wanted to be found so badly, to gain entry to a house with a barking dog, rescuers pulled out the air conditioning unit and a dog came flying out , jumped into the arms of the rescuer

Climbing

By Maura Gage Cavell

for Thomas at 28

At eight you were agile, climbing walls like Spider-Man. Trees were easy to conquer. In high school, you were a graceful track star, running indoor, outdoor, your thick, sandy hair gleaming in the sun, blowing back in the wind. As a Marine, you climbed over walls and up in rank. Eight years there, and then you climbed up utility poles, our quick lineman, helping out in Florida after a hurricane in two areas. You climbed up in position. At 28, you're a married, father, a homeowner, a source

of pride. Where will you climb up next?

Rainy Sidewalks

She sings on rainy sidewalks near
coffee shops and florists, blooms all
arranged so neatly on stacked shelves
under an awning, seemingly
leaning towards her to listen to
her soft songs. Her blue hat sparkles
in lights coming through the trees, bits
of ice forming on it. Her song
draws others to her. Her blue eyes
shine as her voice brings joyful notes
into her environment, sweet
sounds making everyone else
smile. Snow begins to replace
gentle rain, and the crowds depart.

Red Sky

She looks up at the red sky, moon
like blood trapped under ice, snow drifts
blowing across an icy land-
scape, ink pouring over snowy earth.
The blank pages are fewer than
they once were. Still, some before her
lie ahead like beautiful, clear
unchartered dreams. She looks backward
at imagined photographs of
days gone by, people of the past,
and music that haunts her misty
memories—all framed in bluebirds
and flowers. In her dreams church bells
go off and trains blare—under red sky.

Silvery White

for Lee and Patti

(The Lawrence House, a Colonial Revival, was a wedding gift from Percy Lee Lawrence to his bride, Mamie Duson, daughter of WW Duson. It was built in 1906)

The Lawrence home, dressed in silvery white, elegant in winter's fineries, her seamstress a rare, frosty ice storm, needling intricate crystals, diamonds, rhinestones jewels of ice and icicles over this Crowley, Louisiana, treasure, this artwork, a piece of history beautifully nestled in snow. She wears ice-encased lace over her roof; this shawl of cloud-like snow drifts and layers hiding her ruby-red

Italian tiles. In her frocks of silvery white, she stands
steadfastly, this elegant lady
casting gleams in faint sunlight. Coats of snow
cascade down her Doric columns, above
her four dormer windows, and balconies,
and the top of The Lawrence Carriage House.

Her Angel

for Nicole

The sky made an angel of clouds
that spanned a mile as she drove
through the city one afternoon.
This was her Pop, her grandfather,
she knew, looking over her, his
halo and wings majestic as
he seemed to follow her throughout
various parts of the city.
She remembered times she followed
him around when she was three, both
of them in matching coveralls;

how he kissed her before he walked
her down the aisle years later.

This sweet angel of hers soars on.

Figment of a solitary [dashboard] [nothing]

By Nathan Anderson

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*halfway now to
Pyrenees*

{jocular as vocal}

=====

{bending with the air raid}

=====

LEVITATION
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THE
GAME

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HOME SCHOOL DIARY

Part 1

ENTRIES FROM SPRING-SUMMER 1993

By Richard Freeman

I am going to try to teach you a very difficult thing... something that I learned.

It's not how to teach, for all of you believe that teaching can be taught... that people can, with certain degrees of difficulty, learn to become teachers...

They can go to any college and take courses in philosophy of education and curriculum and methods, in child psych and kiddy lit... and then spend 9 months student teaching.

Of course, if they want to become college professors, they can do... whatever it is that college professors do to learn to teach.

They do have to do something, don't they?

No, I am here to teach you something much more difficult to learn... to take in... than learning how to teach. What I will try and teach you is that you already know how to teach.

Just as you already know how to learn... (Unless this has been completely burned out of you by the public schools and colleges you went to).

Now I just know that you will say, "But how can I teach mathematics, or chemistry, or history, or whatever - when I know absolutely nothing about...."

And you're right, you can't teach what you don't know (it is possible, as well, that you can't know what you can't teach)...

One of the difficulties we will have with our children is when they suspect that we are telling them things we don't know

damnable about... children in schools can be especially cruel and brutal when they sense this in adults.

Pity the poor substitute teacher.

So - it is agreed that we shouldn't attempt to teach what we don't know... unless we make an attempt to learn it.

However, if we can successfully doubt that we know anything, we can always teach philosophy of education.

Do we have to know how to walk in order to teach a child how to walk? Or rather, doesn't our being able to walk teach, in and of itself, that walking is possible...

Here it is more important to be able to catch...

None of us have any idea how to teach a child how to speak English - which is, perhaps, a matter of luck. There is nothing quite as confusing as a theory of education carried out.

I suspect that if we can get out of their way, kids will teach themselves... to the point where they realize they need help.

Then it is our job to either offer that help (if we can) or to know who can offer that help (or where it can be found in books).

We are librarians, not reading teachers.

What we don't want to do is lecture (unless you're a wonderful standup comic). Lecturing can be educational... but mostly it's just an efficiency measure when there are 20+ kids to deal with.

Lecturing is perhaps the least effective method of teaching.

If we want to be teachers of our children, we must learn how they learn... and we must listen to them when they tell us what it is they want to learn. If we really feel compelled to actively teach, then we must take the time to actively learn with our children what they want to learn.

And we absolutely must have fun doing this. It must be as interesting and fun for us as it is for our children.

If learning isn't fun, then forgetting soon takes place.

Learning is really a high form of play.

No one ever learned how to play a sport by attending lectures and writing papers and answering test questions.

One learns how to play by playing. I suggest that one learns how to learn by playing. Playing something you love. So to learn best, it is best to study what most concerns you.

At first, this means studying oneself and one's inner interests. It is interesting, to some, to study ancient history - but the history of now is much more riveting.

If I want to know about me and the world I live in, I don't first study my great great great great grandmother.

Eventually, the ego expands to contain more of the world... and the most important thing shifts from me to particle physics. But me comes first.

Let children read and study what interests them... that excites them. Let them teach themselves.

We are both teacher and learner. Teaching and learning become the same activity.

The thing I want to teach you is that you have all already learned; and so you have all already taught yourselves. And your children will do the same if you let them.

Of course this is an imperfect metaphor, but schools could be seen as imperfect cults - though not necessarily of a religious nature...

Certainly kids are treated as if they were living in a cult... sitting for hours/day without talking... lined up for meals... having to ask permission to pee... made to memorize gross amounts of dogma & spit it back out unchanged - programmed from texts for programmed tests...

If I had the energy... or wind... I could turn this metaphor into a book... but that's too energetic an undertaking for my tired brain...

What I am trying to do with/to kids is deprogram them...
deschool them... question their belief that school = education...
that only certified teachers can educate.

Kids are getting an education... but in what?

The main difference between a school and a cult is its
institutionalization & size... they are more like the churches of an
organized religion... whose belief is that what goes on within the
walls is education, and what goes on outside the walls is life...
and that within the walls prepares one for outside the walls...

If anyone were to be called a cult leader, it would most likely
be me... if I could actually find a follower or two...

But parents are only willing to hire me to impress their
children that they have to learn in school... I am there to help a
child accept what he is being taught... to believe in it... to
memorize it... I am little better than a catechiser...

I don't know how long I can accept this... luckily few, if any,
parents are calling for my questionable services as a tutor...

A new tutee - Philip - 6th grader flunking badly. The school wants him out, and wants him out badly, so all he has to do is complete a special assignment - which he refuses to do. He said he'd rather go to summer school.

Philip came over this afternoon for a talk. He said that school was a jail, and I agreed with him. I told him that most teachers weren't much better than guards. But here was a case where Philip was in jail and his jailers wanted to offer him parole.

I told Philip that here was the deal. He could do a hard 4 days work and go free, spend another 2 months in jail over the summer, or spend another year there by doing nothing.

He seemed very surprised to hear an adult actually agree with him... with his estimation of school and teachers... in fact, I seemed to be going farther than even he was prepared to go.

It seems as if he is now willing to do the 4 days... we shall see, I hope.

This is the type of tutoring I prefer doing. But people aren't really willing to pay for it for their children.

July 7

Home school meeting - Caitlin talking about how much she disliked Ridgewood - Andrew ditto about the public schools.

I made a few pungent observations - that school was a form of child abuse - and that most teachers taught as if they had internalized the abuse they had received from grade school to grad school.

Well, it made sense at the time - even to a teacher who had found herself doing the same hideous things to her students that had once been done to her.

She was worried about her 6 year old - would home schooling hurt him? She said she was experiencing the same cold feet she felt before her marriage.

Would she be influencing her child too much? I said that luckily or unluckily, all kids were perverse and that her child would probably grow up and be a cop... or whatever.

That besides, 88% of high school grads, 10 years after graduation, admit they hated school, felt horrible while there - felt disliked and kept out...

So that no matter what she did or didn't do, the chances were that her child would hate it.

I do hope that my remarks are taken well...that they lightened fears, etc.

Though it upsets me to think that I am part of that 88% who hated school.

Caitlin was very patient as the "adults" talked with each other after the meeting - if she can sit through that, she can sit through anything - but during the meeting, she talked at length and was listened to, and I think that more than made up for the last half hour of parents chatting.

Caitlin and Andrew came up with some ideas for TV shows in the fall... interviews with teachers, policemen (ex home schoolers, all), perhaps the elementary school principal, as well

as other students. There is a possibility their show might be used in a text book, and that it will be videotaped and photographed.

For after what, 2 or 3 years? someone has finally read my piece in the Whole Earth Review on kids doing TV. They want to do a piece on how the kids learn how to do all of the technical work involved in 5 minutes and then start doing live cable access shows...

That's how education should work - how I try to educate myself, at least, when I am able to break through my self-imposed barriers of my own ignorance (which try to pass as "knowing it all already").

July 8

Spoke with a textbook editor at D.C. Heath - trying to interest him in selling textbooks directly to parents who are home schooling their children... setting up an 800 # for parents to call... I said that there was a large & growing market here... untapped... I sounded like a salesman, or at least the son of one... throwing around figures like 1/2 million kids... but the higher ups had no

interest in doing such business...would rather sell to a school district than individuals.

Of course, I doubt if there is such a thing as a well written, interesting & anti-establishment text in history... or even literature, let alone a literate one. I certainly have never met anyone who read a text book for pleasure... but then the textbook makers would counter that pleasure and education are diametrically opposed and don't even meet in infinity.

So neither schools nor the textbook people can or want to deal with individuals.... They are one shoe size fits all organizations... Procrustean rather than Proustian beds... cut off the toes or stuff paper in the heels and be prepared to march, Mach schnell.

Those who the shoes fit become teachers; those whose shoes fit perfectly become administrators.

Yellow Springs News gave H.E.L.P. a nice write up... under the fold on Page one...

July 10

D.C. Heath wants me to send them a list of shows the kids might do (as if the kids planned out such things)... also a page of my writing for kids (as if I write for kids)... They want what I tell the kids they can and can't do on TV. Actually, they can do anything they can think of (the difficulty is thinking of something they want to do... I don't know if this is something new or not, but I can't believe that, had I been offered the chance to do TV when I was in school, I wouldn't have had things I wanted to say... socialism or UFOs or jazz or just how awful school is... the difficulty would have been to get me to stop talking...).

The only things they can't do are show up late (and not tell me they aren't coming), curse, and make fun of other kids.

But I asked Caitlin to come up with a few ideas for possible shows, so that I could send Heath something on paper. It took several days of prompting, and worse, breaking through one of those blocks she learned to set up at Ridgewood...

Though I don't know that I can blame Ridgewood entirely for this... Caitlin has always blocked - turned suddenly stupid - whenever she has to do something new that she isn't sure of.

Takes after her father, I suspect.

It is the horror of finding that the closed world of learning and knowledge, which is supposedly there to protect us from the unknown, can suddenly be breached by new information.

I do it reading about philosophy or mathematics or social sciences or...

I think that the trick to home school teaching will be our learning how to peacefully penetrate these defenses of hers. By some sort of Taoistic teachless teaching, if there is such a thing. Where it is not at all obvious that anything is being taught, and learning does not seem effortful.

But all this is just so much theory - and, in practice, I find myself getting upset when faced with such stupid blocking.

I will have to teach myself how to teach, or Caitlin will do little learning from me.

It will help if I can find that I have something to teach. I have always been a teacher without a subject.

July 11

Ann & Caitlin in Oklahoma for their summer vacation. We're giving Caitlin the summer off to detox her from schooling - last year at Ridgewood burned her out badly.

We had offered to home school her last year, but she felt extremely uncomfortable with the idea - as she had more or less loved school & learning at the Antioch School, where she had spent the last 10 years. She had no idea what 7th grade would be like in a new school, but she knew us (or thought she did) very well...

A visit to the middle school convinced her that public education was not really for her... something about the kids being out of control... sticking gum in a teacher's hair....

She visited several private schools and, for some reason, she preferred Ridgewood - thought the kids were more alive there

- and, throughout her year there, the kids were the only thing she continued to enjoy.

But the school itself was the epitome of the academic model of education - with homework to show application. The few attempts the school made towards creativity were risible... color in this picture or sing a school song (when they were allowed to sing, that is... most of the music was theory without practice).

Many of the kids had been there for years, and their creativity had been drained from them by the vampire like philosophy of education.

By the last 1/3 of the school year, we had to do whatever we could to get her through - writing numerous "medical" excuses - Somehow, she got through it... and then really wanted to home school, after going to a few HELP meetings and hearing what it really was, or could be (our telling her this was not the same as hearing it from/about others...).

It remains to be seen if she'll have to get someone to write her medical excuses from us...

The only thing we've asked her to do so far this summer was to write a review of a piece of software - Swamp Gas - for Gray Areas. Heard today from Netta that she liked the review and will put it in the magazine.

July 12

“This employment was very irksome to him in every respect, and he complained grievously of it in his letters to his friend Mr. Hector... The letters are lost; but Mr. Hector recollects his writing ‘that the poet had described the dull sameness of his existence in these words, “Vitam continent una dies” (one day contains the whole of my life); that it was as unvaried as the note of the cuckow; and that he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach, or the boys to learn, the grammar rules.’.... After suffering a few months such complicated misery, he relinquished a situation which all his life afterwards, he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror.”

James Boswell Life of Johnson

Doubtless I would feel the same were I to have to teach grammar- with a few subtle differences - Dr. Johnson, at least,

knew his grammar - whereas I have forgotten almost as much as Dr. Johnson knew - never to be relearned by my increasingly sluggish mind... I doubt if it could even be beaten into me.

And I love every day to be the same... a hologram of my entire life... what I object to in teaching is that I would never know from one day to the next what fresh hell might pop up from students, administrators, parents... whatever.

I do like the idea of being a college professor, though - if only I had a subject in any college curriculum that I could teach - but I know nothing thoroughly (not even myself)... and I fear there is no call for shallow learning, except, perhaps, in journalism... my knowledge is like a damp sidewalk soon to be dried by the Ohio sun, full of unanswerable questions... do students even bother to ask questions anymore? Are they even allowed to?

July 16

Saw Shawn at the library. Mentioned that I'd heard she was still fighting the Springfield School System for teaching Creation Science in elementary school. She called the ACLU, but when she was told her name would be attached to any possible law

suit, decided she didn't want the residents of that cross burning town to know who its atheist enemy was... or where she lived.

Another call from Ann Jones at D.C. Heath... they are interested in doing a chapter on the kids doing TV, especially if they interview Virginia Hamilton... which, I suppose, is a possibility. She asked to see a video of the kids doing their show. God only knows what she'll make of it (their first show ended after 15 minutes from the frustration of not knowing what to do - it takes time when you can do anything in the world that you'd like).

The second show started badly as the person they were going to interview didn't show up on time. After a lot of confusion, they started a game of TV trivia, but no one called in with answers. Finally, Diana arrived and did a wonderful interview with Sarah and Caitlin - on yoga, dance, teaching, education, and working both with kids and the elderly.

Adults watching the kids do TV don't quite know what to make of actually seeing kids being kids - the effect, coming through the television, is different, apparently, than having them in the home... more focused on the unfocused, if that makes sense.

July 17

Called Al Schleuter (in his capacity as school board member) and offered to teach a freebie writing class at the high school (they would never think to pay for it, if they'd have it in the first place). I don't think the principal would have me even for free after what has occurred on the TV shows with high school kids.

And then there might be no kids interested in writing.

I don't actually know how to teach writing - the part of me that writes is well beyond any "conscious" control, so I can't have it talk.

Nor do I know what is meant by the term "creative writing."

It's like eating inorganic food.

Perhaps I should offer a course in uncreative writing.

There is such a thing as creative rewriting - at least I have some control over that part of the business - (I am rewriting now, and I almost know who is doing it)...

When one learns they can trust the rewriter, they learn, as well, to trust the writer... that many things are possible.

What often happens in writing classes, from what I understand (and still vaguely remember from the 40 credits of writing I took at Antioch in the '60s) is that someone can bring in a piece of writing too soon, and can receive criticism that they are not ready to hear. This leads to cutting off, and a subsequent inability to rewrite... it is calling in the rewriter before the writer is properly finished.

Critical comments can destroy the confidence of a writer more than they can cure what is wrong with a piece of writing. The piece of writing grinds to a halt, never to be completed.

I guess I could teach about this... about not teaching... I do know about not teaching, I suppose.

But will I be given the chance not to teach?

July 21

Ran into Robin at the library - hadn't seen her for awhile, and asked her how her language school was going. She said she'd been avoiding and dreading seeing me, because she had given up the school - and was afraid of what I'd think of her...

Last summer, at about this time, I first met her - she was having a car wash and open house for her new school. The kids were helping to do everything, were excited at the opportunity to study French and Spanish with her again. (Robin used to teach languages at the high school, until she quit or was fired, or both... ran into high stupidity among the faculty and administration... The kids protested when she was let go as they considered her to be one of the few excellent teachers in the school.)

Anyway, the kids helped her fix up an old building for a school. And at the open house there, about a year ago, I spoke with her about teaching, and our ideas meshed. I was trying to earn some money by tutoring and, for a few minutes, I thought she wanted me to go in with her - to teach at her school.

Perhaps for a minute or two she did wish this - had the idea of expanding her school so it would cover literature and history as well. Her daughter was home schooling and she might have wanted some help there.

And maybe I just thought that was what she was saying. It often takes me some time to understand what people are getting at - when what they are getting at concerns me.

We didn't see much of each other after that - there was a visit to her house one night, where we again spoke about education. Again I was picking up mixed signals - as to what she thought I should be doing vis a vis teaching.

Anyway, seeing her today, I asked her why she had closed her school, and she said that the kids' parents were astonishing... they expected her to give the kids rides home, did nothing to help, didn't pay on time, and made no attempt to let her know what they wanted for next year.

Added to the fact that the kids sometimes didn't show up and didn't let her know they weren't coming was the consideration that she wasn't making any money.

So, she decided to teach languages to business people in Dayton - the pay was better, and they appreciated what she was doing.

I told Robin that I understood completely. After all, I'd spent the past year trying to earn a living as a tutor... with the same problems.

And then there was the parent who called up 2 weeks before the end of the school year about her son who was flunking sixth grade. And when I explained to him that the school wanted to graduate him, if only he'd do a bit of work - which he refused to do because he saw the school as a prison. I agreed with him about this, but further said that they were offering him shock probation. He finally decided to do the bit of work they wanted, but the mother wondered if she'd have to pay me my \$15 as I hadn't actually tutored him.

And then there is my long experience with kids not showing up to do TV shows, as well as not calling - so that I never do know, from week to week, if there will be a show (and sometimes

from year to year as well). And I never know what they will do if they do show up.

And then there was the person I tutored on playing guitar, through the Experience Program, who never practiced or learned anything. But that was a freebie.

It will be interesting to see if the school wants me to do the writing program and, if so, if there are any kids who will show up for it.

I am less likely to let them no show for writing. There are very few kids who seem to realize that everything is not just given... that adults are putting themselves out for them... it's all taken for granted... as if it's expected... as if that's the way things work in the universe. There is nothing valued.

I told Robin that this was a \$4/hour town - that people actually worked here for that sort of wage... at least until someone agreed to work for even less... working for liberals is an open invitation to accept voluntary poverty... liberals never want to pay... that's what government's there for.

Conservatives, on the other hand, move to Mexico where they don't have to pay even \$4 and governments don't tax.

What this seems to mean is that if I am to make some sort of a living in this town, it won't be through teaching. Robin had a slew of kids who wanted to study with her... and couldn't make a go at it. There are no kids who want to work with me.

I might make, at best, if everyone showed up for tutoring, perhaps \$30-\$45/week.

Everyone screams at how bad the schools are - as if it were entirely the school's job to educate their whelps.

July 22

Read Joe Fernandez's *Tales Out Of School* - an amusing account (to me) of one poor innocent's attempt to fix the educational system in NYC... (In this case, it was the city's new school superintendent who gave it the old school try.)

Of course, corruption is bred in the bone of every New Yorker... has been since the Tweed days... since Aaron Burr met

the Tammany tiger, if not before. A reformer is seen as a virus trying to invade that body politic... and the political machinery is well prepared to combat any such incursion. A few cells are allowed to die, in hope that the virus will leave, but if this doesn't work, the entire system fights back, viciously, to destroy the virus.

Every attempt to clean out corruption ends with the cleaning out of potential reformers within the system, and the defeat of goos outside the system. And this is true, in NYC, of government, the police department, the schools, etc.

Corruption is the system.

As for transforming Free Compulsory American Public Education, it would take the realization that Free isn't free in any sense of that word; that Public means those who can't afford private education; that compulsory would appear to be the opposite of free (just as liberty and equality are opposites); and that Education, if there is any in our schools, isn't purely inadvertent, at best, and counter to what is being taught.

Joe Fernandez shows how a man with incredible drive, willingness to work, ideas, etc... can only make a small scar on the pitted face of public education.

There are laws of inertia at work here—laws of entropy—where information, which is supposedly negentropic, can become random and disorganized when filtered through a school system. Here, all too often, the more one is taught, the less one knows. The system itself leads to random acts of brutality and violence.

This is not the fault of education so much as it is the fault of the school system, which no longer seems to know what real education is—which no longer knows how to consciously open people to that part in themselves that learns.

The system cannot be changed from either the top or the bottom... its immunity to change is almost absolute... immunity which will kill any virus: whether individual teacher or superintendent.

How can one kill what is, in fact, already dead?

July 26

A nice coincidence...I've been reading Ved Mehta's *Fly & The Fly Bottle* - about contemporary (c. 1955) British philosophy (a type I have little taste for, though this is probably due to my inability to taste it, rather than its being as tasteless as overcooked British veggies).

Mehta's brilliant friend expostulates on how he wowed them at Oxford with his Greats paper on "Could there be nothing between two stars" - in 1955, an astronomical/philosophical question (now it might have to do with Madonna and Michael Jackson...).

To answer such a question philosophically, one would divide the question in two - and say - it could mean if there is nothing between two things, then they must be adjacent... or one could say, it's like saying "There's nothing between Philly and Yellow Springs... or Oxford and Birmingham." (Or Michael & Madonna.)

Such answers thrilled the examiners back then... one can no longer expect any answer to thrill an examiner.

But here were the brightest of the bright (who weren't quite bright enough to be scientists, that is) with the empire gone and no wog kingdoms to rule over... no longer a never setting sun on a map colored red, just cold Oxford winters.

And here, in the latest New Yorker, is an update by Ved on this very philosopher - who, apparently, has astonished his contemporaries by 1) producing no interesting work, let alone a body of work; 2) having sex with a large number of young women ("As I was driving away, I saw Alasdair just hustle a girl into a ditch. I can still see her little feet going up into the air..." "I remember having a conversation with him when he got two of them pregnant at the same time. He was ashamed of it, but also proud of it. You see, he was a great moral figure, but had something wolfish about him, too. As he grew older, he got hold of younger and younger girls. Sometimes the wives of his close friends had to worry about the virtue of his daughters...") instead of the more proper young lads and 3) committing suicide by jumping in front of a subway train...

Ved speculates that perhaps there might have been something - forcing? - about the English system of education...

Is it possible that Britain is in the state of decline it is because of its educational system (though educational conservatives would say that it was the loosening of the classic Brit system that led, inexorably, to the decline & fall of the British Empire).

Those same educational conservatives in our country are still moaning about John Dewey and the fall of the American Empire.

Everyone points out that Japan leads the world... and attributes it to the stiffness of their educational system (where their weak, like Darwinian lemmings, dive into volcanoes, and the strong go on to Tokyo University).

I have my own ideas on the subject, but I'm too lazy to test them scientifically. I prefer apercus to hypotheses, and I would rather be wrong than have to prove myself right.

July 28

For me, the point of my continuing education - it's purpose - is to keep me interested and amused, if not in life, then at least in living.

Every once in awhile, reading opens my mind to something new - to seeing connections between things in a new way.

This is not the same pleasure as in writing poetry, but that sort of writing depends on the quirks of my muse - on the pure amusement of hearing words & voices & meaning combine... which is outside the purview of education proper (education improper can, at times, be quite poetic, however).

July 30

All too many educators approach philosophy of education (if they approach it at all after Ed. 101) as if education = knowing... that education was teaching X & Y about Z.

In philosophy, the love of wisdom is taken as a province of knowledge... intellect... If I am not completely mistaken, English analytic philosophy revolves (and devolves) around what we can know - and what we can say about what we know.

If I come to philosophy at all, it is from emotional center, not intellectual center... an approach made, in my limited reading of the field, only by Montaigne.

Such an approach would define wisdom not as accumulated knowledge, but such knowledge divided by one's state of being.

So that a "genius" without being is not likely to possess much wisdom, and their life is quite likely to be full of nasty foolishness.

A person with great inner being who knows nothing will have the wisdom of a block of granite.

To me, education is also about being - about what to be... how to become... these are questions that students have the right to ask of their teachers - and that teachers have the responsibility of asking their students.

When someone knows how to be, they can add to this the knowledge that will make for wisdom in what they want to be.

Knowledge, in and of itself, leads students to seeing their education as hypocritical (when they can see at all).

Teaching American history as fact, without asking what America was and what it has become leads only to a hatred of history that shows itself in our collective memory loss...

This country could only become what it is by a refusal to ask being questions - by a refusal to teach history as something still possibly alive.

Students apprehend that we have no future as a country because we only have an immediately to be forgotten present, and a past answerable only through multiple choice and fill in the blank questions.

As with our tests, we depend on our short term memory to live inside of history.

July 31

Spoke with Caitlin about keeping a journal - how thoughts are all too often like improvised music - gone into the air, never to

be recaptured again, as Eric Dolphy once said. This would be part of her school work. We might want to combine both of our journals at the end of the year to see how we saw it.

She wants to study history by looking into the genealogy of her family, though I know nothing of my family history (I am always bored, reading biography, at the first chapter or two dealing with ancestors)... let alone Central European history (I have never been able to read Austria-Hungarian history with any pleasure... and feel no affinity with/especially with Viennese Jews).

But this is her study, not mine - and she will be her own teacher here, and mine.

August 4

Finally got the nerve to call Arnold Adoff about having Virginia Hamilton appear on the kids' TV show for an interview. He was interested, and when I mentioned that D.C. Heath was doing a photo shoot and an article on the kids, and wanted to cover the kids interviewing her, he seemed very interested.

Ten minutes later, he called back with Virginia's OK... so now it's trying to organize the kids, get some of them to read her books, come up with questions, etc. - something I'm uncomfortable doing, as this is not supposed to be my show. I tell myself it will be just this once that I'll have to involve myself... to lose my invisibility.

20+ people were at the home school meeting tonight, largest group yet. It's August and the panic is on... it will be interesting to see how many of these parents come back in Sept., having pulled their kids from school. I am told that the Christian home school groups have tons of members... doing it for Jesus, or whatever... I hope so as we need their numbers to allow us to also do what we want.

Not many people from Yellow Springs are home schooling... it would mean having to stop talking about how bad the schools are for their kids - and actually doing something about it. Usually, writing a letter to the Yellow Springs News seems to be enough attesting for them.

When people do actually go to a protest meeting, they talk endlessly, and go home satisfied, especially if the meeting is

televised. Their poor fucked up kids can stay in school till they graduate or die. When Carol started such meetings last year during the summer, a large number of chronics attended... but only Carol (and, I suppose, us) ended up home schooling their kid.

August 6

Went to see Caitlin jump her horse at the riding center. We talked with Carolyn and told her that Caitlin would be home schooling and would have time to help her out at the riding center. Carolyn seemed excited and said that Caitlin could work with the handicapped students in the fall. This could well be Caitlin's community service.

One of the best things about home schooling is the opportunity of the kids to help the community... to begin their pay back for the privilege of being alive - which also helps make being alive a bit less meaningless.

August 8

Spoke with Al Schleuter about my doing a Mentor Writer's Program at the high school. He talked with the school board and the principal, and there was a "lack of interest" there. Either the school doesn't want me, or the program—or both.

Ann thinks they don't want anyone in there to wake up the kids. They don't even allow them to go outside after lunch... no recess... which she considers to be a form of child abuse. Ann thinks the school is worried that if they let the kids out, they might not get them to come back.

August 10

Two fundamental problems with public education which helps kids act as they do:

- 1) They think It's free - and therefore worthless
- 2) It's compulsory

Kids when forced to attend something they consider to be worthless react accordingly.

Caitlin picked up horrible habits last year, working with Ann on homework... she has learned how to play dumb when there is something she doesn't want to understand or do.

We have been detoxing her over the summer, but she's still not ready to start to learn - learning is just not fun for her - or interesting - let alone meaningful...

It has only taken one year of schooling to do this... I don't know how long it would take to detox a child from 12 years of public schooling.

Our battle today was over the French text book. Robin says it's the best French text she's ever seen or used. Caitlin saw that it was a workbook and didn't want to use it... or do French... or...

We had a long discussion of what teaching and education would be like now... how we wouldn't be assigning papers, giving tests, making Caitlin read textbooks, etc. For some perverse reason, she still seems to think that this is exactly what we will be doing.

I told her I expected her to find interesting things (to her) to study - and that I expected her to find learning to be exciting and fun again.

I told her I knew that she knew nothing - and how upsetting and inferior making this can be - that when she ran up against one of those blocks that protect us from our knowing we know nothing, I expected her to smash through it.

I said that I would gladly teach her to play the guitar, play records for her, talk with her any time she wanted, suggest new things to read. I would try to answer any questions that she might have, and that I expected that we would talk at least once a week on what she had been doing.

I again told her that I hoped she would keep a journal where she could write down her own ideas - and that I didn't have to read it. I said that the ideas one has as one's own are valuable.

She agreed that she wasn't really allowed to have ideas at school last year - or at least didn't have time for any amidst her homework assignments.

Anyway, I think she realizes I will not be lecturing, quizzing, etc. etc... Acting towards her like one of her Ridgewood teachers - grading her on what she could regurgitate.

Education is chewed and spat back... hardly swallowed... almost never digested.

Still, it took a few hours to break down some of the barriers she had set up last year to protect herself from her teachers' expectations and demands. I told her that I didn't care what she learned, but that if she stayed as she was, she would be dead to the world and might as well suicide now... if there is no pleasure in learning, we are no better off intellectually than we are emotionally.

I'll be interested to see what she might have to write about this little family meeting... if she writes anything at all.

August 23

Caitlin & Ann have taken a Red Cross First Aid course together. I spent most of the past year out of Caitlin's way as far as her schooling went. Ann & she would spend hours together every night over homework and such while I was out here typing PBW or reading. There wasn't much I could do to help... I begin to yawn and fall asleep as soon as I'm forced to read textbook writing.

So I have been out of the loop... and am not sure how to become properly looped... loopy? Doubtless I'll soon learn how.

I have long told myself that I was not good at teaching the young... it remains to be seen if this is true... (I don't know when I'll be able to discover if I can teach the aged).

I don't know what, if anything, anyone has intentionally learned from me. But friends have remembered things I said to them long ago (that I have completely forgotten saying)... things they tell me that had an influence on their live - and I can't prove them wrong. But was what I said unintentional? Which is to say, did this blind pig find a truffle by happenstance, or was it conscious teaching on my part?

August 27

Got what I would consider to be a somewhat frantic phone call, though Ann says I was the one who sounded distressed. Sally has been thrown out of school after a day or so of 8th grade - for having spray painted comments on teachers and fellow students on the school walls.

Her parents are unsure whether she'll be suspended or expelled. Sally's mother thinks that it would be a bad idea to have Sally return too soon - if only because the kids would probably react badly to having graffiti written about them (though I would suspect that they also are holding up Sally as a role model, of sorts, as many of them have probably wanted to do what she did).

Anyway, her parents wanted to know if I'd tutor Sally. I said that I would (I usually say whatever is necessary to get me out of tutoring jobs... without consciously trying to)... but I further suggested that if Sally were expelled for a semester, they all might want to consider home schooling her. That she would then be able to receive credit for her work. This seemed to make sense to Sally's parents.

I told them about the home schooling organization, which is meeting this coming Wednesday night. (I won't be there as I'll be at the TV station with Caitlin and, I hope, some other kids as well. Only Andrew came last week - luckily, as it turned out, as I couldn't get the equipment to work. There are always glitches to start the year with.

We have two weeks... less... till the Virginia Hamilton interview/D.C. Heath photo shoot, and the panic is on as to whether there will be any kids in the studio on that night. I am trying to remain calm... with myself, my family, and with the kids.

I sensed that Sally seemed to have a lot of rage at the school - her father said that she had had a particularly hard time of it the last part of 7th grade.

I can't press them too hard on home schooling - neither Sally nor her parents would choose it on their own - if this hadn't happened.

It also remains to be seen if they'll follow through and have me tutor Sally - I think she needs a period of detox from school. Her parents are thinking psychiatrist, but the problem is with the school, and no shrink can shrink the reality of that building and those kids for Sally.

We shall see. I think that I have talked myself out of a job. Nothing surprises me so far as parents go in this town.

August 30

More pre-school jitters... Barb's 11 year old daughter, going to a new school this year, decided to handle the situation by running away from home. She headed for the woods while the rest of the family was asleep.

The cops were called in to help search, as Barb was fearful that her daughter had been kidnapped. One of the officers told Barb's daughter (when she eventually returned home) that if she ever did this disappearing act again, she'd be taken to Juvenile Hall and be given new parents.

Barb asked her if she'd like to talk with a counselor (and was hurt when she said, "Yes.").

This will probably turn out just fine... a nice dramatic episode to look back on later in life.

Some of the kids who used to do TV with me were caught by the cops while defacing mailboxes...

Sept. 1

A ton of software arrived for Caitlin... programs to create a city or a planet or go to Mars or fly a plane... should be fun...

wonder if I'll have time to play them? I don't even have time anymore to play my computer at chess.

Sally has been expelled for a semester... at the very least... she was at the home school meeting with her parents tonight, I'm told (I was at the station... lots of kids showed up... we sat around and talked about next week's show with Virginia Hamilton... I hope everyone shows up for that... lots of room for disaster. I'm finally having to be more than the titular producer).

Sally's parents have been charmed by the school administration - "Sally's not a bad girl... she just did a foolish thing..." little chance they'll home school her after that.

I should say that I am not trying to proselytize my new faith here... for one thing, it isn't a new faith... I've been opposed to public schooling since I went to school in the late '50s to early '60s. And I have followed a trajectory similar to that of John Holt (only slightly ahead of him... the difference between being a student vs a teacher... took him a few years longer to reach the same point). But I have no desire to change others to my position... I only mentioned it to Sally's parents as a way of her getting credit instead of no credit while she was out of school.

The one thing I have learned about philosophy of education is that not only can't it be imposed, but that everyone is his/her own expert on the subject. I accept each individual's expertise... though I don't think that one can even generalize from one's own experience to one's kid's... kids are perverse, & will end up becoming cheerleaders, if necessary, to non plus a parent.

Sept. 2

Caitlin's at work on the computer with one of her new programs - something that allows her to create the world.

Being a Goddess at 13, she sends comets smashing into the planet, and laughs at her destruction - perhaps God is a young child...

Esther brought over a high school student who wanted to work with me on writing. I told him to get back in touch with me when he has something he wants to show me - I could help teach him how to rewrite, perhaps, but not to write. I don't even know if I can write, let alone teach others how to.

She's bringing over a girl next week who's been writing since she was 5. Don't know what I can do to help her, but we'll see. I've been asked to help out on the high school lit magazine, & have agreed to do so, if I'm needed, though I won't censor any writing for them... we shall see about that as well.

Sept. 3

Woken up early by a fight downstairs - doors slamming - rather than go down there in my thermals to join in, I tried to work out how, when I did go down, I could be of help...

Caitlin was blocked on the computer - lost in a panic in hypercard - high anxiety state - and Ann was trying to get her to experiment with that - to not be scared of the machine (like her father always is)...

It was like telling someone with a phobia of water to go stick their toe in... that it wouldn't hurt... true, but beside the point.

I could have tried Callahan's phobia cure on her, but she refuses to be so experimented upon... at least by me.

Luckily, I missed the next blow up. I spoke with her this evening, though, and told her that this sort of thing couldn't go on... she didn't want to learn how to meditate, but she was willing to listen to me discussing her negative states (I don't know whether I'd be as willing to listen to her on my negative dinner time low blood sugar states)...

But I said that it wasn't fair, while home schooling, that she do things to us that she wouldn't dare do to her teachers last year.

Of course that's what parents are here for... to take shit (and to give it right back)...

Sept. 6

First Music 101 with Caitlin - played Gregorian Chant; Lambert, Hendricks and Bavan; and Joni Mitchell, & LH&R (Bijou, Twisted and Summertime)... then Joni doing Twisted...

I'm not trying to teach her anything in particular... I just scat sing along with LH&R... showing her how to do it, but not making her do it.

The trick is to play, over the next year, an enormous amount of music for her - and if there is any she likes, to tape it for her. In order to do music, you need to expand your ears without effort - to learn without fear.

Made her a tape of Sgt. Pepper and Joni Mitchell's Blue.

Sept. 8

Sometimes I astonish myself... though it's rare... this time it was looking at the video tape we made of the kids' show. Everything went wrong before we got on the air... we were trying to use two cameras & neither of them were working right. Then we couldn't get on the air. But at 7:02, right when I had given up & was saying so not only to the kids, but to Virginia and Arnold & Eric, who was doing photography and his assistant and... we went on live. I still don't know what was wrong, or how it got fixed.

Looking at the tapes we made with the cameras of the setting up, I am astonished that I wasn't screaming at people... but I answered all questions quietly, without pulling out the few hairs I have left on top of my head.

Caitlin and Sara did a wonderful 45 minute interview with Virginia... and only about 20 seconds of visual was lost... the kids were working both cameras and the sound board, oblivious to the fact that several hundred photographs were being taken...

Now all I have to do is write an article on this, which won't be difficult for me. Having to depend on others is difficult for me, yet not only did I have to depend on them, there wasn't much I could have done on my own without them.

Everyone came through beautifully.

But that I stayed calm when all others around me didn't know that anything was even going wrong - as everything fell apart - seems to show that my meditation techniques do work... for I practiced them a lot this past week.

Now if only Caitlin would let me teach these techniques to her.

Sept. 12

First weekly meeting with Caitlin. Discussed what she'll be doing next week - starting algebra, listening to music, doing computers, checking into horseback, reading, etc.

Looking into getting Caitlin a guitar, and trying to find some books for her to read. Got her a copy of Howe's World Of Our Fathers from the library - for her history project of searching for her roots. Don't know that she'll find it readable (I never have) or will want to read it, for that matter. But I can't help her with my family tree as I'm not into arboriculture.

Tutee coming over tomorrow - 4th grade - problems with reading. I told his mother that he should have his eyes examined by Caitlin's eye doctor, who could tell her if there were any physical problems. Of course I know nothing about teaching reading to 4th graders... or anyone else. I don't remember how or where I learned to read.

Spoke with the kids I'm helping with writing - told them to do what they wanted to and to use me however they wanted to. I know I should set better limits... perhaps give them assignments... but I want to treat a writer like a writer - not like some damn student in a creative writing course. If they want to write & need my help, let them get in touch. If not, not.

Spoke to Jeff about Kerouac - I've read Jeff's poems and will talk with him about them later this week. I must think first about what I've read - mention of loss of reality and madness - he needs to talk with someone about this as I gather his parents are hopelessly confused. Which isn't to say that I'm not. Or that he'll want to talk with me about these things. Or that I should talk with him about these things. I'll need to discuss this with Ann, I suppose.

As for Samantha, I spoke with her on the phone - told her about Kafka... trying to find writers that they can read who might be instructive, considering the sorts of writing Jeff and Samantha are doing... I told her that she might want to cut, or rewrite, the first two parts of her story. But I can tell from her voice that she is touchy about being offered such suggestions.

She writes about dream states, not reality - as if she prefers to live within dreams and write from them... nothing wrong with that, and she has a good emotional grasp of language - but I've only seen one story by her so far & I must be more patient in how I criticize her work...

Still no word from Sally's parents vis a vis tutoring.

Sept. 13

Played Caitlin Chants d'Auverne (she didn't like either the music or the operatic voice)... then Cleo Laine singing Music (Cleo's range can be scary to any singer)... then Judy Collins doing her Marat/Sade -Pirate Jenny (and then the Army song from 3 Penny Opera)... finally a bit of Piaf (it didn't sound like any kind of French that she'd ever heard... which says more about what Caitlin's heard than it does Edith's French...).

Got a contract from D.C. Heath to write the piece on kid's TV.

Sept. 14

Found a set of Encyclopedia Americans from '85 on sale at the library for 50¢ a vol. which I said I'd buy, so now Caitlin has a newish encyclopedia set (though it seems to be missing one volume).

Got home to find that D.C. Heath had called, upset at the photographs... and that Eric had called as well, upset that D.C. Heath was upset at his photography... this takes a lot of joy out of the project, as Eric was more or less doing this as a favor to me, as well as getting a chance to take some interesting photos of kids in action (he spends his days & nights photographing child models—which he says is not the same thing at all as getting real kids in action).

Heath wants absolutely conventionally posed shots (and guess what sort of writing they'll want... which is ok, as I don't take this kind of writing very seriously... let them edit it to death... I am perfectly willing to write whatever they want, if I can... as long as I get paid... I must be turning pro in my old age...)...

This doesn't say precisely what I'm thinking... my writing is important, but only to me... as I have no style to preserve from

commercialism, I have little to fear that my style will be harmed from writing for money...

Once upon a time, when I thought I might want to be a great writer, I wouldn't have considered blunting my style by doing journalism... but that was when I thought I might be a great writer, already... something that no one else seemed to even suspect...

Anyway, I will not be spoiling my art, as it is, at best, artless - there is nothing there to spoil...

I'm not sure what I'd say to Caitlin if she wanted to be a writer... either she or I am not old enough to give advice... it will be interesting to discover just when it is that she is old enough to be given advice from me... which is to say, it'll be interesting to find out when I'm old enough to have some advice to give.

I'm sure we've had many conversations over the years, but I can never remember my conversations... whether I have said anything worth saying even, let alone what was said... so I don't know exactly, or even inexactly, what I've talked with her about...

But surely this is supposed to happen some time...isn't it?

I don't feel at all as if I'm selling out by writing for a D.C. Heath Kids Magazine... I have nothing to sell... I tried to sell out years & years ago but there were no buyers... an old joke, but one that continues to remain true...

Then, as I got ready to type into PBW, Jeff came over to talk about his writing. I hadn't remembered he was coming, but it worked out well anyway, as I didn't have the time to prepare what I was going to say.

So I spoke to him about existential breakdowns, as I call them... which is what happens when life bursts through, like a meteor, or a rabbit hole opens under one's sense of reality... and everything you think you believe turns out to be possibly untrue... I had sensed, correctly or incorrectly, I do not know (and neither, I suspect, does he) from his writing that this might have happened to him already...

I talked about the nature of reality (whatever that is) and how it can impinge on the reality we create as our own - about how we are alone, hiding in our sense of reality, and how we don't realize,

when young, just how miserable our friends are as well... and how they don't know what we are going through either...

Kids get high to try to get out of themselves - so as to be able to talk with other kids on the same drug level of consciousness... though they'd never think of opening up to each other without drugs... so that, for the most part, it's impossible for kids in high school to talk about how they really feel - or to have compassion for each other...

At least I don't see any such thing from the little I see of high schoolers doing TV with me... but I don't know what they are like off TV when I'm not there... so this might be speculation without foundation. That it was once true for me might well be a special case... the fact that I don't know about others precludes any certainty... and makes it impossible for me to write novels...

But it seems to me as if the kids are scared as to what others might think of them...

I told him that, as a writer, here was a fine subject to write about... one available only to him... he doesn't know much about what anyone else has written... like too many kids these days,

he's a writer, but not a reader... He probably thinks that all writing is something like what he has to read in English class...

I might be able to open him up to what is really subversive - just talking to him this way, at 15, is somewhat subversive... giving him new things, perhaps, to think about... if he thinks about them at all... if they just aren't as confusing as hell...

But if he really wishes to write, it is time for him to discover a bit more than just what goes on in his own head... I should tell myself this as well... but he needs to expand his consciousness somewhat by reading... rather than just by drugs alone...

To be "conscious" but to own no thoughts worth thinking is no better than filling your head with helium and floating off...

Still, I hope I wasn't too confusing... too all at once.

Obviously, I have a need to teach, but don't know quite how to go about teaching les jeunes... truth is, I should be teaching myself how to become an adult... and then teach others to do the same... I have too much knowledge to just pass it on to kids... and, anyway, it's knowledge they wouldn't want.

Sept. 16

We did a photographic reshoot at the station after the show - show itself was free form - music and fun with the camera... kids running around and playing (of course, if they do this every week, they'll soon enough grow bored and quit).

But this sort of play was what Eric was trying to capture in his photos the week before - and was exactly what D.C. Heath, representing text books and schools, did not want to see...

They wanted carefully groomed, but by no means trendy kids, in actionless poses... the TV equivalent of the public school ideal. Little talking heads with their hands quietly in the air.

I hope Eric was able to air brush out Chris' ear stud and Karin's black fingernail polish.

At least the kids seemed to enjoy the shoot... Eric was able to play with them through the use of a German vampire accent... and there were Polaroids for one and all to keep interest up.

I am so out of touch with what this sort of publishing wants that I will have to hope they can copy edit my prose into their shape & style... I don't even know how to write in the 3rd person - omniscient narrator - I even wrote my Master's Degree Thesis in 1st person (which was what put finis to the Wright State University Library Science Department when I told the Dean of the Graduate School that no one in my dept. had bothered to read my thesis... not that I blamed them for such dereliction of duty... I wouldn't have wanted to read a thesis either - but apparently it was part of their Contract Social that they read such things...).

I know, however, that the editors at D.C. Heath will read whatever I write to death.

Sept. 21

Note in the mail from my tutee's family - got here at 3:25, after Joe no showed & I'd left a message on their answering machine - "Thanks for your help, but we have made other plans...."

Am not sure what, exactly, of many possible things might have upset Joe's parents... my asking them about seeing an eye

doctor (Joe is having trouble reading... in 4th grade) or my methods (which do not include cramming - or phonics - but do include going to Dark Star to look for comic books).

Whatever. I am one tutee shy of a load - and things are back to normal again for Yellow Springs.

Still no word from Sally's parents... don't have a clue as to what they've decided to do about her schooling - or lack of same.

I have heard from D.C. Heath... an enormous package of info on the latest P.C. lingo... astonishing what words other than piss fuck and cunt you can't write for kids - language must be sex neutral. Lord, Lord. Not that I care, I need the money as I assuredly won't be making any tutoring till June probably.

Caitlin's had the flu. Didn't enjoy Firesign Theatre, but then she's been in a foul mood for the past 2 days. She doesn't get sweeter as she gets sicker.

Still, home school itself has proved to be easier than our talking about it during the summer when we were trying to set it up. It's easier to do than to plan... or even talk about.

Sept. 27

Call from the career center - inviting me to their November planning session - they were either impressed with my ideas last year... or else I am on their Rolodex, no matter what I say or do....

Probably the latter, as I am not aware that they used any of my ideas... they didn't hire me to start a video program (I needed that job badly enough last year to try to sell them on the idea of teaching TV video techniques... I still need the job - so I'll go to their dinner again this year.)

I realized last year that I would have to create my own job as no one was likely to hire me for theirs.

It was a good idea, as they need someone to videotape the various classes they offer there... so that kids can watch again & again how to fix an engine, etc.

Perhaps I should thank them for not hiring me... I am a bit more dubious of doing anything in a school... let alone waking up that early in the morning & falling asleep with Ann at night.

Went to the Open House at the Arts Council... one person signed up for my Meditation course - might have 3 or 4 by October... the body courses continue to do very well... perhaps I should invent an aerobic meditation... though I don't know how I'd be able to teach it in the shape I'm in... do as I say, not as I can't do isn't much of a teaching technique... though I suppose that's what school is all about.

I continue to receive through the mail offers to invest my money safely-wisely-and profitably (in French bonds this time)... these conservatives must think I have money to invest, which doesn't make me think highly of their acumen.

I don't know what to say to Caitlin about preparing for her future (a future I am not all that comfortable with... once my generation failed at changing things in the '60s, I have been unhappily waiting for the collapses we predicted would occur if we weren't listened to...) - I am unable to prepare for my own future... to say the least.

Sept. 30

Caitlin and Ann off to see Much Ado About Nothing - which Caitlin ended up preferring to the comedies she & Ann have been going to.

Kids had Chris Powell on the TV show - interviewed her - Chris was worried that she had, perhaps, slam dunked the public schools - didn't want to get kids & parents upset at the Antioch School...

The main difference she said she saw between the way teachers could do things at the Antioch School and at the public schools came from the efforts made from nursery school on at the Antioch School to problem solve behavior between kids - to teach them to talk & communicate with each other so that the teachers didn't have to become the disciplinarians - but could act as facilitators - helping kids, if necessary, to work out interpersonal relations...

There's a big blow up coming about the gifted program that parents have been calling for in the elementary school... though 1/3 of the students are black (or of color, as the noxious phrase puts it) not 1 was in the gifted group, which was made up of 15% of the students...

This will get parents going gonzo, for there is no way in a P.C. universe to investigate what might or might not be going on here...

But there does seem to be something strange & frightening going on among black children in America...

At Central State, where Gary Pierson teaches chemistry, all of the academic awards go to foreign black students...

There is no P.C. way for whites to investigate or even hypothesize about what is going on... which leaves only white racists with loud upraised voices... saying that blacks are genetically inferior... or blacks saying it's all part of racism.

Oddly, in the '50s and '60s when racism was truly prevalent, blacks had a lower crime rate than whites...

What seems to have happened, in part, is that the black flight from the ghettos (made possible by the new laws passed in the '60s) has led to an implosion - where black kids are now being pressured by their peers not to study - and to blame whites.

Actually, this has always been a pattern of American society - that when any of the most intelligent members of a class have made it economically, they leave their class and join the one above it. A.N. Whitehead remarked on this in the '30s... how the class system in England kept the brightest members of a class within that class - making them into leaders. It strikes me, without actually knowing, that England has followed the American model over the past few decades - leading to their own American like problems with their lower classes.

Of course, in a P.C. universe, such statements by me are ipso facto racist.

Which probably means that there are no solutions possible for these problems.

Oct. 1

Played Caitlin some Joan Baez - singing Long Black Veil - a favorite song of hers from Antioch School days... Then Joan singing Tears of Rage (which I still don't understand, line by line, though the overall feeling is quite clear - interesting drugs Bobby

was using in those days to write like a surrealist)... then played Bonnie Raitt (no response), Mary O'Hara (too sweet a voice for her taste) and ended with some black gospel music - which the atheist in her disliked (well, no point in discussing the finer points of Esoteric Judaism with her... or with me when I was her age).

Oct. 7

Managed to get Caitlin furious with me by saying that I was glad she wasn't playing violin anymore, because it would take years of practice (something she rarely did - I can say that here, though not to her face) to make it sound any good.

She jumped me and said, "That means you didn't think I sounded any good" - true enough, but a nasty thing for both of us to have to say.

She has been in a foul mood the past 2 days - partly because she has reached a point in her Algebra book where she is not comfortable - up to this point, she has been doing math she already knows. This mood and anxiety is a reversion to Ridgewood behavior... finally, she was able to see this too.

Have had some interesting TV shows with the kids - interviewing various teachers... wasn't able to get to the Home School meeting as I didn't want to cancel out the Mo of the younger kids.

Have 2 shows going - Caitlin's group and a 12th grade group (with younger girls visiting).

Still no word from D.C. Heath. I called them and the project is still on line (or whatever they say in textbook land)... probably won't hear from them till the panic hits - when they'll want everything done immediately.

Got a check for \$300 from Boomers - more than I've made in my entire writing career to this point... I wish I knew how to make more.

Is this random luck? Or the beginning of something?

Got a call from a woman whose son was failing all of his courses... I asked her if she'd thought of home schooling, as it seemed likely her son was trying to tell her something.

Turned out that her 9th grade son had seen a letter in the News by Andrew Cook about his home schooling experiences - and had asked his mother if he could do the same.

It is possible she might give it a try. I offered to help and am waiting to hear back from her.

On the other hand, Sally's parents have hired other tutors for her - I suppose my home schooling talk with them turned them off to any idea of hiring someone with my ideas to tutor Sally. Saw Sally's mother on the street, otherwise I wouldn't have known.

Caitlin got a call from a home schooling mother who wanted her to take care of her 2 kids in the morning... Caitlin went into a fury - thought we wanted her to do it - to give up her mornings alone...

We finally got her to understand that we were trying to protect her from having to feel she should accept that job.

Oct. 11

There is a dead crow in a brown paper bag on top of our mailbox... God only knows what the two of them have planned for it... or how long it'll sit there, unless I do something. My mother once kept a dead blue jay in her freezer for months until she discovered that Jays prey on other birds, whereupon she had me take it, wrapped in wax paper, and throw it into the woods.

There was a book on becoming a naturalist sitting on the dining room table - and I suspect the worst for that bird's bones.

Did America Made Simple with Caitlin, taking her in an hour from the Civil War to World War 1 - be interesting to know what went in & how long it'll stay before it mutates & disappears.

Here, at least, is a scientific reason for giving tests... to investigate memory loss... to see how long it takes for ideas to change into accepted ideas & urban legends. There is no sense whatsoever in testing merely knowledge... unless someone is about to operate on you, in which case, you'd like to ask a few questions first, though the chances are you wouldn't know whether the answers given were right or wrong.

It would be interested in knowing what sort of phantasmagorical knowledge of this country I have...

It would be nice if I could get her interested in reading history for the pure pleasure of it... but I don't know if she has any interest in history... it isn't as if she asks me historical questions, or wants to hear when I go on & on about something in the past.

Having little faith in the future, I fear that the past concerns her hardly at all... so I'm trying to cover 30,000 years of American history in as short a period of time as possible... say three one hour lectures.

Oct. 14

Another phone call from a mother whose daughter in 6th grade was flunking all subjects - she wanted to know whether I tutored & if I knew about home schooling.

Taking the bullshit by the horns (I do wonder if our young modern primitives are wearing nose rings all the better to be led) I spoke about how home schooling worked, and what she wouldn't

necessarily have to do (lecture, push, threaten, cajole) - for it was obvious to me (as well as to her) that her daughter was on strike.

And, indeed, her daughter had been asking to home school. I invited mother & daughter over for a talk - to explore possibilities...

Still no word from last week's mother.

Caitlin has really wanted to learn to play the guitar - I've been slow to start teaching her - so that her desire to learn it would push her to push me.

Took my guitar down this afternoon and gave her a first lesson (she won't need many more if she works at it) - and we're ordering her a guitar of her own shortly.

Main thing, I think, is to show her how to start and then let her learn on her own, coming around every once in a while to show her a few tricks - open tuning almost precludes lessons & formal study - all you need is a desire to play it & a few weeks work.

Oct. 16

Ordered Caitlin a guitar - don't know if she'll play it or practice - but as she will need it to accompany her singing, she should have cause to work at it a bit.

I remember teaching myself guitar my first quarter at Antioch, when I wanted to be a blues singer. I just played up and down on the strings, trying to pick out melodies. Didn't bother learning chords, until I went to Chicago to co-op, and Jerry Rossen showed me open tuning... immediately, I was able to accompany myself on the blues & I practiced guitar far harder than I did any of my studies.

I think I started to play it too late, however, to ever be any good on it... to be nearly as technically good, say, as I was on clarinet... now, I hardly get it out to play at all, and I sort of hope that teaching Caitlin will cause me to start playing again as well.

Oct. 20

Monica and her mother came over a few days ago - to talk about home schooling. Monica, at first, was very nervous... kept

scratching her legs, etc...but as we talked more about what home schooling really was (or could be), she began to visibly relax.

I took her into Caitlin's room (Caitlin was on an overnight at COSI) to show her some video of the kids tv show... she was really interested in being on tv... and she started to brighten up when she found this was a possibility.

She came to the station last night - told the kids she was home schooling because of the behavior of the boys at school. I think she has a lot of energy and ideas, but she doesn't know how to attract followers... to get people to do her ideas... instead, she seems bossy and I can see how she might easily become very unpopular.

I don't know how long she'll want to home school, but it should be helpful for right now. She had a fine time doing tv, asking for old classmates to call her up.

If she knew how to control her abilities & powers, she could control a great number of kids, but she really doesn't have a clue.

Oct. 23

Finished History 101 - America Made Simple - 3 1-hour lectures covered 300 years of our history (I might have skipped & skimmed on something, I suppose).

HELP continues to grow - both in the # of chapters, and our local chapter. Three new members just joined bringing membership up to 25 paying families.

Oct. 27

For the past few days, I've been thinking - almost thoughtlessly - feeling then? - the strangeness of being a father... thinking of my father... trying to see if there is any way I can compare with him.

He was able to earn a good living - spent years and years as a clothing salesman to support the family, while my sisters & I thought nothing of what he might have been going through - as a father... because he was a father and had to.

When I started Antioch, he was younger than I am now...

And I have no idea what he was thinking then - have no way of asking him... though perhaps on my next visit to Philly I will try to... maybe...

Did he feel more adult than I do now? Does he feel adult now? I just don't know.

Do I seem to be a father to Caitlin? Well, I know I'm not an older brother... but do I seem a father to her?

I have difficult acting this role... in believing in it... I don't understand what the writer wants me to be... to do... I need a director's help, but I am supposed to be the director... it's a good part, but am I the right actor for it?

And as Caitlin grows older - which she's rapidly doing - I don't know how well I'll be able to play my expanded part... learn and remember my lines...

The main difficulty seems to be my inability to earn a living - in an esoteric sense, I need to be at least a good householder to inwardly grow...

In order to become the sort of esoteric teacher I'd like to be, I have to accept adulthood... or else forever remain the sort of fool this village takes me for, yet doesn't seem to need.

I must get in touch with the Father within me... that higher self that sometimes talks to me (when I am in a proper state to listen)... that I cannot hear when I am being juvenile.

I must find a way of teaching Caitlin so that, perhaps, I can then teach myself - and, eventually, others... an inability to teach the child in her means I won't be able to teach the child in me to grow up - to allow my essence to grow up.

I am the one who is home schooling here - and it is very difficult for me to learn... to teach myself.

Nov. 1

Another lost opportunity - somewhat - call from a young girl - having trouble with physics - could I tutor her?

It's been what, 30 years?, since I got my gentleman's C in physics... 35 years?

Told her that she could probably tutor me in it, from what I remember & still know, but that if she were to find a classmate about a year ahead of her who had gotten A's, and paid them \$5/hour, it would probably work better than trying to study with me.

I'm just a guy who can't say, "yes," I'm in a terrible fix...

Nov. 4

Phone call from a home schooling mother - wants me to tutor her daughter, who wants someone outside of her family to help her out. I'll see her next week, same day as the Erickson Group meeting at Wright State, where I've been asked to speak about Callahan's Phobia Cure.

Interestingly, I noticed that I had no problem... none of my usual hesitations... about taking on a home schooler. I was even excited, hoping that I could tutor her in what she wanted to know, rather than what a school wanted her to know.

This may turn out to be overoptimistic, overidealistic, and unrealistic on my part. I'll know more about that next week.

As the girl asked for a tutor, this won't be something against her will. It only depends on whether she can use me... find what I know useful... and has something she wants to work with me on.

Busy day, dog throwing up, making Caitlin tapes... she's doing French with Jane (might work out an exchange of services with Jane, trading her Meditation lessons for Caitlin's French).

Nov. 9

First session with Karen yesterday. She's having trouble with Algebra and Biology.

I was able, I think, to give her some new ways of studying biology - taking every word she didn't know in the textbook, writing it down, defining it - and then spending 10 minutes at a time going over the list. We'll see how this works for her.

The algebra is a more difficult problem... X= the school ordered a new set of textbooks that are 2 years ahead,

mathematically, of where the kids are. Y= In order to do the text, you have to have used the previous texts in the series, which the school doesn't have. Z= the teacher isn't familiar with the new books - perhaps doesn't like them, even - and certainly doesn't know how to teach from them.

X+Y+Z= kids flunking algebra - and thinking it's all their fault. That they are the dummies here.

I told Karen all of this - how I couldn't help her with her algebra - because: A I don't know it. B Even if I did know it, we were only meeting for an hour/week, and the teacher was moving at such a fast rate that I couldn't catch her up. C The book doesn't build in any discernible way. Each chapter is different, on different subjects. You can't go from point to point in a logical order. One day is analytic geometry, the next is set theory.

I spoke with her father about this as well.

Karen says she's studying and doing homework till 11 at night. I'll have to talk with her about that next week. That sort of late hours work, especially on subjects one isn't interested in, with

no time at all for oneself & one's interests, can only lead to a lousy result.

Nov. 11

Busy day yesterday... Jamie came over with her father, who sat through the first half hour of our session....

He was concerned about what sort of test Jamie would have to take to get back into 9th grade - to him, this appears to be a 1-year experiment with no conclusions to be drawn...

Jamie wants out of school - weird stuff goes on in Xenia - people shooting staples into each other's heads - the only exciting part of the day being the fights...

I think that Jamie can see & feel herself becoming a briar if she stays in school - she loves science, and there is no place in school for a girl who loves that... at least not in the Xenia schools.

When her father left, I spoke with her about what she'd have to do in order to convince her parents to let her continue home schooling after this year...

Told both that there was no problem with tests - and that Jamie did not have to repeat the high school curriculum with text books at home...

Told Jamie to invite her parents to the next HELP meeting - where they could listen to other people who felt as Jamie does - both kids & parents...

I think the reason Jamie asked for an outside tutor was to, hopefully, get the advice she needs on how to educate herself the way she wants to... which is what I'll try to give her.

Told her that if her parents saw her working cheerfully, reading interesting books and going to exciting places it is possible that they would come to realize (as I later tried to tell her father) that one gets a superior education home schooling.

It would be interesting to know how all this went over.

Then we had our weekly meeting with Caitlin - hadn't had one in 10 days or so... she'd grown a bit recalcitrant in the

interim... questioned everything I asked, at first - such as -"What have you been up to in the past week?"

We worked this out, and Caitlin realized she was slipping back into Ridgewood habits - a year of schooling that you hate takes some time to wear off, I should think...

Spoke in the evening to the Erickson Society (all 4 of them) about the phobia cure... think it went over well... two of them tried it, and it seemed to work for them. They were interested in what I was saying, asked questions, and tried to think of ways that I could extend the cure.

I told them my theory that it might have positive curative value with major traumas like rape - but I couldn't find people to test this on... in fact, I have no way of really setting up as a phobia shrinker, as I don't have the credentials... though this method doesn't need credentials... or even the credulous.

Being Ericksonians, they knew a lot about hypnosis, and I could, and did, talk openly about my meditation techniques as well - the implications of using it for stress - as well as self therapy...

But again, though I can have these theories, and can even teach them through the arts council, there is no way I can set up shop without getting in trouble with the “healing” profession... at least not here in Ohio... it would be a different story in California... but there, I’d just be a kook among kooks... a crank among cranks...

I could teach what I wanted there, but there would be no way to separate myself as a signal from the psychic noise.

Anyway, I don’t want to move to CA.

I spoke briefly on home schooling as one of the people had friends with a child who was crashing in school - told how much of my knowledge of psych came from reading people like Carl Rogers on education in the ’60s... this made sense to them... oddly, I haven’t heard Carl’s name mentioned in years.

One person gave me his card - wants me to call & talk with him... will do so as I’m trying to find a way to bring this knowledge to more people...

Thinking of giving a free lecture/demonstration in town... but I am a prophet completely without honor in this village.

Tonight, the Career Academy Dinner/Workshop.

Nov. 12

Back from the Career Academy dinner - time to give it some thought - same food as last year (it might have been saved & warmed up) though the apple pie was a bit better tasting.

Speech by the principal (or whatever his position is)... ex-military (use of "chowline")... had that ex-sergeant-major look to him... he was impressed by their new education passport system, where each grad would be given a diploma sized book to show to future employers, containing all academic records...

I could just imagine what my own academic passport would look like... at 48, I can't even create a resume.

At our small group meeting, we were asked to consider why so many kids were dropping out of the program - could it be

because they were forced to wear a tie to school?... even the suits in our group thought it was a bit silly to have to wear ties... (pen holders, of course, but ties?)... maybe they'd prefer to wear a Career Academy shirt with their name stitched over the breast pocket...

I don't think they're going to hire me here - not even as a consultant... they still haven't done anything with the video equipment they own - my suggestions from last year have not been implemented, to say the least...

I've been writing my piece for D.C. Heath...it has to have 168 lines of X characters/line in order to fit around Eric's photographs... This sounds a bit bass ackwards, but what do I know about publishing?

What is interesting is discovering that I can write to order - style, lines, word usage, etc... or at least I think I'm writing to spec...who knows how it really reads? I may well be as deluded here as I am about life in general, and my life in specific.

Nov. 15

So far this year, the tutoring is more interesting. The main thing I'm trying to do for Karen is try to get her more time to be herself - she's working till 11 at night on schoolwork. Told her to do the algebra homework differently - it was taking her hours to do the 30 problems at the end of each section...

Told her not to bother taking the time to answer any questions she already understood... to answer them incorrectly even... but that she should spend all the time necessary on questions she didn't understand (the teacher only checks to see that the home work is done, not that it's done right).

I'm tutoring scams... as I used to do when I was in school when I needed to buy time for myself... trying to keep death in life from eating her alive.

I do hope she decides to follow my strange advice - I'll try to teach her some meditation techniques next week - to cut down her stress - then try to cut 30 minutes here, and 10 there from her after school work.

A tutor trying to get a tutee to do less - to settle for less than A's... indeed...

Nov. 16

Caitlin's birthday. I got her the new Calvin and Hobbs and Far Side books, tickets to Phantom of the Opera, and a guitar (if it ever gets here)... she went to a stained glass class this afternoon - haven't had music or a meeting with her... and I need to.

Jamie came over for tutoring - her mother brought her - wanted me to teach Jamie how to write an essay - talked with Jamie about making an outline first... say what you're going to say... give 3 examples to prove what you're saying... say what you said.

Then we talked about science - told her she could go as far as her math ability took her. She likes computers, has a modem - told her she could talk to hackers through BBs - they would teach her all she wanted to know about computers...

If she really wants to do science - and really can do math - then it's time she learned to hack.

Depends whether what I say goes in like medicine or potato chips.

Computers could be her real home schooling, if she'll do it.

Nov. 22

Call from Dave H.... said that Karen didn't think she needed any more tutoring. I told him that I didn't think she'd have any real trouble with her school work - that she was quite bright - and only needed to learn some more effective study skills...

Told him that it wasn't a good idea for her to be working on homework till 11 at night - and that she needed time each day for herself.

Don't know if anything I said got over - Dave was very pleasant, and didn't say much.

I couldn't be sure what had really happened - if Karen was the one who wanted to quit, or if it was her parents, who didn't like what I was telling her & doing with her. I know that she couldn't have learned all there was about how to study in two weeks...

I don't want to be an adjunct to the schools - a further dispenser of high school knowledge & belief - let alone be an accomplice to their insane socialization process...

Tutoring puts me in a potential bind - even a conflict of interest - parents want me to help their kids fit into a system that, good or bad, I don't believe in...

As a "Teacher of Self-Directed Education" I don't see how I can be used as a tutor by anyone who believes in what school has to say & offer...

What I have to say to the kids must seem subversive...if not absurd.

I fear this is most likely what happened to Karen... I was telling her things she couldn't make coincide with what her teachers and parents were telling her...

There wasn't much more I could have done for her in the situation she was in - except to teach her meditation - which I offered to do - and that may have well been the last straw...

I do wish I knew what had really gone on... to avoid the hard-wired paranoia that shows up during these sorts of situations...

[I saw Karen at the end of the school year. She ended up getting a D in algebra. Despite what I had to say to the contrary, it seemed as if she took it as her own fault that she'd done badly.]

Nov. 27

Finally got to see and hear Caitlin's choral group sing - in Dayton, outdoors at Courthouse Square.

Closed my eyes and listened through the sound of buses and bells - only a few missed notes - quite a surprising pleasure - two more concerts to go to - be the model father at... or at least the best simulacrum I can be...

Managed to control the low blood sugar through meditation - and we went out for Mexican food afterwards (ate spare ribs, a typical Mexican dish...)

I've been ordering Caitlin all of the Andrew Lloyd Webber on earth... she wants to see Phantom again as a Christmas present.

If she does like something, she listens to it over & over again - to the exclusion of everything else - it's then difficult to get her to listen to something new.

Which is the story of teaching and learning - to open once again those gates for who knows what army - in the walled off city of the mind.

Nov. 30

My birthday. No celebration. Instead, my other tuttee didn't come. Failed again, I fear. Perhaps I talk too much more than I listen, & don't hear what I should be hearing.

Ann is being very nice, saying that the reason they don't come is that I've given them all they need, and they are now ready to move on. Were it only so.

Got a call from Robin. She had heard I was busy with many tutoring jobs - had to tell her that that wasn't exactly the case -

that there was, at least for me, no way of making a living in this town... at least not through tutoring - among the schooled or home schooled.

We had a good talk & I was able to reassure her about something - but I am not quite sure what.

Dec. 7

Phone call from Pam Moon - Logan was flunking everything in school and wanted to know about home schooling.

And here I thought Logan was home schooling... I had spoken with him about this a year ago... he was the first person I did talk to about home schooling, in fact, & he seemed quite receptive, as did his mother.

Well this time, I was able to talk to him from the experience of what? 3 months? of practice... experience! rather than mere theory...

He wants to be a plumber... is terribly stressed out from school - told him to go to some plumbers and offer to work with

them for free... to clean floors, whatever - set up an apprenticeship.

Later, at Dark Star, I met an Antioch College art student, and advised them to do the same... with an artist... it's all the same thing, painting & plumbing... what do you need to go to school for to do either?

We are terrible consumers of education... if our schools were cars, there would be a class action suit to recall them.

I do hope that this time Logan does start home schooling - that he begins his real education. Told them they could get in touch with me whenever they needed, and that they should come to the next HELP meeting to see what others were doing... to see that they are not alone.

I am education's Jack Kavorkian... the DESCHOOLER... if only this anti-Christ could make some money at his trade...

Dec. 12

Caitlin's guitar finally arrived - now I need to teach her how to play it, I guess - if she enjoys playing & singing folk & blues as much as I did, she ought to learn it quickly enough on her own...

Went to another choral concert - kids are singing quite complicated parts in tune... very impressive.

I wanted to be a singer, once upon a time - folk singer... hum dinger... Caitlin has a much better voice, and works harder at it. But I don't know what difference that will make, if any.

Got a call from a kindergarten mother... wanted to know if I could tutor her kid - who will probably do another year of time in K -because Mills Lawn got rid of its pre-1 program... 27 kids in the Kindergarten.

There was nothing I could do for her - but listen, & tell her to organize other parents who were dissatisfied... that this is a squeaky wheel kind of Village... and education is tallow.

But I wouldn't know how to tutor a kid that young, even if I believed in tutoring that way... preparation for First Grade? Come on. What are they doing out there now in the unreal world?

Dec. 16

Showed Caitlin more on the guitar - trick is to convince her that it really is as easy to learn how to play it as I say it is...

I've found some folk song books for her for Xmas & I hope she might want to start playing some of those songs. In order to want to practice guitar, you have to have some songs you really want to play - then practice becomes pleasure.

Dec. 30

The crew is back from Oklahoma. Caitlin says she wants to start schooling again on Monday. I gave her a copy of The Making of the Atomic Bomb and the folk song books... so we'll do history and physics and guitar as well as listening to music.

Have to decide if I still want to run my tutoring ad in the News... have only done 4 or 5 hours of tutoring in the past 3 months, which doesn't even pay for the ad... and there are no signs of its picking up.

It strikes me that I was probably one of the first of my generation to home school college when, in 1966, I decided to stop taking regular courses - preferring only to take writing and my senior seminar in education.

I stayed in school, but I didn't try to graduate.

Thus I didn't drop out... or stay in - I dropped into whatever I was interested in - and avoided the rest.

It was obvious to me as early as 1961 that there was something terribly wrong with school - and reading Summerhill during my last year in high school helped convince me that I wasn't just generalizing from my own experiences.

As an Ed major (originally because I worked out a scam where I only needed 15 credits in my major to graduate - and even then I couldn't manage it, due to my inability to get the science credits I was going to need) taking ed courses (the few I did take... I didn't have to bother with the requirements needed for certification - making it ultimately impossible to teach in the public schools) I found something opening up within me.

I began to read everything in the Antioch College library on nonstructured education from Homer Lane to Hughes Mearnes to Carl Rogers to... but in those days, John Holt seemed retrograde to me...

The question of what an education was - was for - seemed suddenly of absolute importance to me. I had a hatred of generic education - of everyone in the class reading the same book... let alone everyone having to take the same class.

I had never had, up to that point, a worse time in my life than being in high school - not even getting kicked out of Antioch in '63 for flunking jobs was as bad as that (flunking co-op jobs was, however, a horrible foretaste of a problem that continues to this day... the impossibility of finding right occupation when you can't get a job in the first place... I have never been able to hold a 40 hour/week paying job... though I work more hours than that at my writing).

Every quarter at Antioch, I would either have to take classes I didn't want to take... or jobs...

Only when I, in effect, stopped taking courses could I begin to learn again... and I have not stopped learning since.

I have followed my own bent bent - not being sure if the bending is a sign of being crippled or not.

I knew that there would be repercussions from only doing what I wanted to do - from refusing to adjust myself to life as she is led - though I have no evidence that I could have so adjusted myself. Whatever it was that made me me made it impossible for me to be someone other than me. To hide the me's within from others. To dissemble well enough to hold a well paying job.

But at 49, it would be nice to see that I have learned some way of earning a living - to find a way out of the economic impasse I have found myself in.

One thing I am sure of, and that is that I can have nothing to do with teaching in a school system... and I am beginning to suspect that I won't be able to teach outside of the system either... that I have reached an end to my short tutoring career.

If I want to teach kids, it will have to be in some other way... though, to be honest, I have no evidence whatever that I am a teacher... let alone a good one. It is likely I am not... and I do know that I'm not yet prepared to teach anything of any exceptional inner importance - to me, or to others.

Here, I am still a learner. Though I grow a bit old to be just that, & it is more a matter of whether I dare try to teach what I know or not. After a certain point, I will only be able to learn at a higher level through teaching.

Jan. 4, 1994

Caitlin is back to work (Ann got the day off for snow) - played her some Bulgarian Choral Music with their strange modes & rhythms & even stranger voices and harmonies - think she found it interesting... as a chorister herself, she knows what it is like to get a group to sing at that level of intensity and togetherness.

My job as "music teacher" is to open ears as pleasantly as possible - I don't ask questions, give quizzes, or lecture.

We will be working on guitar soon.

I read her the first page of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*... sort of like a talking book review - she discovered, much to her surprise, I should think, that it wasn't a textbook, but more like something Michael Crichton might write. Still, it's a long haul, & I don't know if she'll have the physics or interest to plough through it.

I'm reading *Real Lives* eleven teenagers who don't go to school tell their own stories - it's inspiring to see that my educational ideas do work - at least for some kids... that these ideas aren't just completely abstract... completely apart from real learning.

Kids being allowed to do what they're really interested in can come up with some extraordinary achievements.

Which is to say, they come up with real learning.

While I suppose it's possible to learn in school (or in prison, for that matter) usually it's despite the school, and such learning is

as nothing compared to kids working at their own bent - going their own way... better yet, discovering just what they own way is.

If there is any hope for this country, it might be from the economic and social collapse of our school systems - and the rediscovery of schooling without schools.

Jan. 13

Had a long talk with Caitlin tonight - she has been taking it very easy - not schooling, but, rather, staying home.

Told her that if she wanted to be a singer, she was going to have to work at learning how to play the piano - that this was an essential - they won't even bother letting you into music school for voice if you can't play piano. Told her that it took hours upon hours to train one's fingers to obey...

I told her that great musicians could spend half an hour going over and over a few bars of music that they'd played hundreds of times before... trying to find greater meaning in them... (or whatever it is when they get obsessive/compulsive like

that... I mean I don't know anything about this... I can't get my fingers to do something once, let alone repeatedly on piano).

I said that she would have to expand the love she has for singing to include the piano as well... and that it's time she started to practice the guitar she said she wanted so badly as well.

Told her (I was doing a lot of telling) that I read for hours and hours every day trying to learn (even if I don't know what it might be I'm trying to learn) - that real education never ends - that if it does end, it is a sign of intellectual death - though a body can live on quite cheerfully without a brain.

This is becoming increasingly evident among the young in school these days - headlines saying that 50% of Cleveland high school seniors might flunk this year...

We are not necessarily growing stupider as a nation - though intelligence is increasingly unnecessary to a fastfood economy - but we are assuredly not growing smarter.

If you can't make learning into something interesting and exciting for yourself, then what is the point of all this? It's a long

exile on this planet of the insane, and without the help of intellect, it's a long boring exile as well.

We will not speak here of teaching our emotional center (this is something we learn to do if we decide to have what might be called a second education... an education not for life alone, but for that deeper understanding that is esoteric schooling.)... neither schools nor our homes even think there is such a part of us that needs to be “educated.”

I don't know whether any of this made sense to her. She is 14, an atheist, wants the world to be as dead as God... which is to say, she's a lot like me when I was 14, though I didn't want to kill off everyone, just the kids who were tormenting me at school...

Being like me, I can understand why it is difficult for her to admit when she doesn't know something... how she'd rather not know anything at all than know she doesn't know. She knows she feels deeply, and surely that should be enough.

But feeling alone does not suffice. What is necessary, to avoid the insanity that makes up humanity, is to feel what should

be felt and think what should be thought and not to mix the two together pell mell.

But to use what little intellect we are given correctly, we must learn how to use it... to train it... not only to read and think about what we read, but not to let our negative emotions control our thinking.

So that when given something new to read or listen to, it is necessary not to just say, "No, I am not interested..." but to be willing to be opened up. Being young, it must feel like having to go in for an operation every few weeks... before one has healed from the last surgery... absorbed what was learnt.

So she would rather reread what she has read (and relisten to what she has heard) than have to admit she doesn't know - to risk the uncertainties of a true education.

At least she isn't being force fed by teachers that castor oil they call "education..." But Caitlin would rather run away from home or commit suicide than go back to school. But that doesn't mean she is willing to be told, on occasion, by us.

Which is to say, she is just like me.

And by observing her, I might be able to see what prevents me from learning anything I don't already know.

I hope she is able to discover, with her heart and mind, what she wants most to do - and then expand from that... learning that there is an immense pleasure to be gained from using one's mind for one's own thoughts.

And an immense sadness as we discover just where our minds won't go... can't go... which, of course, we cover up by saying, "I'm not interested in that... not one bit." But what if one is interested?

Much of this I didn't say to her.... just thought to myself... there are lots of things I can't tell her, as yet... things I don't know how to tell her, as yet. Things I don't know to tell her, as well.

I often feel that we live together in silence... and while it's a comfortable silence, it is still a silence that some day must be broken.

I don't know what she thinks about this, if anything.

Maybe she will read these notes and tell me what I need to know.

Jan. 17

Ann quite happy to have a few days off from school - M. L. King and the weather are seeing to it... watched the L.A. Earthquake for awhile — you'd think the people would want to leave that burg by now after the past few years of assorted disasters - but where would they go? Back to Ohio or Iowa?

Worked with Caitlin on guitar - showing her she could play most of the songs she wants to sing... I think she worked it out for herself in her room later - though it hasn't quite reached the point where it goes from being impossible to impossibly easy all at once.

Jan. 25

I've been so busy putting together Batteries Not Included that I haven't had much time for trying to educate Caitlin... luckily, I don't have to. She's been hard at work writing a play, and as long as she's busy & interested in created something, I don't have to step in... she is doing something real and is getting excited with it.

Haven't worked with her on guitar... or the Bomb book, for that matter. The thing is for her to discover that there are things she wants to do - and to do them.

However, I did play her the first record of Carmen to show her that her ideas of what opera is like weren't totally valid - and it didn't put her to sleep - instead, she wants to watch it, so I ordered the video from the library...

The joke ended up being on me, as I found it impossible to watch Domingo playing the world's oldest corporal (or was he a private... no matter)... so I had to walk out & I missed all the sexy stuff that went on... Ann & Caitlin told me about that later... they are more able to watch bad movies than I am... though I can watch truly bad movies, that they think you'd have to be nuts to watch. My motto is stop on the Red, go on the Green, look out for

Mr. In Between. I like the very best or the very worst - and despise everything in the middle. Typical extremist attitude, I suppose.

Jan. 27

Ann & Caitlin went to see a group of one act plays written & directed & acted by students at the high school.... filled with gloom & doom & sturm und drang... Caitlin seems to have thought about what she saw.... in terms of her own writing.

An advantage of home schooling is that she can spend hours & hours at the computer working on her writing... I can't think of any scholar who would think of only spending 37 or 42 minutes (or however long a class is these days) working on their subject (though school isn't there to produce scholars... and it is rare when I spend longer than 42 minutes at a time on my own writing... rare when I can think for that long a period of time anymore)... but that's what mass education will buy you... most administrators can't think for longer than 5 minutes without stumbling over their own jargon... so it's little wonder to discover that the school curriculum is devised by administrators... in between conferences & lunch...

All of America seems comfortable with this classroom mode of thinking... it helps us stay completely short term in planning, to compliment our memory.

We saw that the Russian 5 year plans didn't work (nor did the Antioch 5 year plans we were supposed to draw up - of classes we planned on taking.. .that were then not offered... proof that Antioch socialism was a farce... as was Antioch democracy... as we also discovered over time)... so we therefore concluded that there was no sense in planning for anything... and in a world where shit happens, I suppose this makes some kind of weirdassed sense...

It's little wonder, though, why I hated school - there was never enough time to learn even something I didn't want to know, and they never had time to offer what I did want to know.

It is strange how, in such an individualistic capitalistic society as ours, that there would be such things as our socialistic school systems... Of course no one in this country knows what socialism is, so they can't see this at all... to most Americans, Teddy Kennedy is a socialist... and many of them believe that our government is socialistic... they probably learned this in school.

Feb. 15

Caitlin is at the high school trying out for Jesus Christ Superstar (I spoke with Tucki Bailey, who's doing the music - there are almost no boys trying out for the play, so I warned her that the fundamentalists, who picket this play at the best of times, might bomb the school if they found out there was going to be a female Jesus... A black woman Jesus, Tucki answered)...

Caitlin feels she is getting the best of both worlds... home schooling & the school play, and is quite happy with it all.

I said something about how many home schooling kids were forced to learn what and how their parents felt best ...rather than what they wanted... so that Caitlin should be careful what she told her home schooling friends about what she is doing, as there is no more contentious subject than education...

There is no single way of educating that works for everyone... and the same is true for therapy, which is, at best, a form of self-education (and, I suppose, vice versa).

Therapy is learning to think in new ways (or it should be)... if we continue to take everything in the same way, then there is no possibility of changing... education is an attempt to get someone to see in a new way (though this is, all too often, the way the society wants someone to see... there is no need for political censorship in America, for the schools do their job well here... making it impossible, almost, to see in any way outside of our two party system).

But it's difficult to open people up to seeing things in a new way... to see things at all, for that matter... and most ways of trying to teach won't work for for most people most of the time... so most kids in school sit there bored... neither learning or unlearning, but just trying not to get caught falling asleep... or worse, talking with friends...

At least that was what it was like in my day... kids now might be planning where to buy a gun or who to sell drugs to... but they

still aren't paying very much attention... just enough to be unintentionally indoctrinated.

Now it is possible to teach one on one... to particularize... to choose an I that would best be able to connect with an I in the student... but to try to do this for 30 kids at the same time is schizophrenically impossible.

Think of a therapist trying to work with a group of 27 clients - for 6 hours a day, 5 days/week.

Feb. 24

A fascinating political week. A week ago Wednesday, Leslie called to say that the House of Representatives was trying to get rid of home schooling - either by design or by poorly drafted legislation.

Being slightly paranoid, I thought that the NEA might have been pulling a fast one... an end run... trying to protect their union by making all teachers have to be certified.

Whatever the reason, or lack of reason for the language in HR6, once the language had been voted on and passed, it was possible that home schooling could have been disastrously effected.

I told Leslie that this was going to cause an all out war, if it was passed, between public education and private schools (with home schoolers thrown in on the side of Catholic schools)... and that no politician wanted that sort of arousal of the hoi polloi...

I immediately called Dave Hobson, our State Representative - and he was already getting phone calls. I told his assistant that I had a Master's Degree in Ed. yet wasn't certified to teach in the schools... and thus wouldn't be allowed to teach under this legislation.

I also said that College Teachers who weren't certified wouldn't be allowed to teach either.

I predicted to Leslie that there well might be a million phone calls to congress in the next week over HR6.

A week later, there were apparently enough calls pouring in to fry the House switchboard... to cause the House to vote for 2 new amendments to HR6 that would protect Home & Private schoolers.

Congress has just discovered what state legislatures have already found out, that Home Schoolers not only exist, but are a vocal voting group - willing to go all out if necessary... willing to pay for long distance calls even.

Congressman after Congresswoman spoke out in 5 minute speeches that they believed in Home Schooling - and the rights of parents to home school their children...

I don't know what the NEA makes of all this, but for Home Schoolers, this is the first attempt I know of to show congress that home schooling is for real... and is not to be messed with.

The vote ended up with only 1 vote against Home Schooling (the only thing I can compare this to was Jeanette Rankin's voting against entering both World Wars 1 + 2)... it is true that the man who wrote the amendment said that he was being misinterpreted,

but when the Democrats had the chance to change the wording when it was still being drafted, they refused to touch it.

The interesting thing is that Congress now believes that Home Schoolers have national organization... which is anything but the case - what they do have, now, is recognition of their own strength... they are out of the coat closet now.

The state legislatures watch C-Span... and they will be somewhat less likely to attack Home Schooling - no congressman or senator, state or national, wants that sort of shit hitting their fan.

I do wish I really knew what was going on behind the scenes... it would be fascinating to know not only if the NEA was involved with the wording, but what went on when the phone calls started coming in... how many calls did come in, and how they changed the votes of more than half the congress.

March 12

Harriet says she saw a TV show about education in Cleveland - kids having to take state mandated tests to graduate - with large numbers of them flunking said tests...

Of course there is little reason for most of those kids to pass said tests... with college running \$20,000 a year, it is only a paying proposition for the colleges themselves... If I had to take out \$80,000 in loans with 10% interest, I'd have to pay \$8,000 a year just to make the interest payments... which is hard to do with just a B.A. in the marketplace these days...

Colleges are helping to lead us into a two class system... upper middle to upper - and everyone else.

Our liberal universities, hating capitalism read in tooth & claw, are attempting to answer this dilemma - by institution P.C. Standards on the students... force them to speak liberalspeak, and everything else follows, I suppose...

But the idea of going to a college for a liberal arts education is dying from an immunodeficiency disease... the student body is dying.

March 24

I haven't had much to write about concerning education in general, or Caitlin's in particular...

Basically, this is because she is working on her own now - we haven't had a meeting in some time - she plays piano, does algebra, & I've been bringing her home Carl Sagon Cosmos videos for her science...

The rest of her time is taken up with Jesus Christ Superstar, Twelfth Night and the Dayton Choral Academy... what she wants to do more than anything else is performance - and that is precisely what home schooling allows her to concentrate on...

We did what will probably be our last TV show of the year... the Antioch School kids are basically burned out - because they don't, or won't, talk or think on camera... do something more imaginative than taking phone calls and playing tapes (when they remember to bring their tapes)...

Things got so boring so quickly for them, they started inviting in the public school kids who were playing pool downstairs... and last night the Mills Lawn kids pretty much took over entirely - they acted as if they had no mind whatsoever - ran around as if they

were on speed... very hard to get through to them even one at a time... they would have broken everything there had I let them.

It is astonishing how little concentration even the best kids have - how little they have to say - or, perhaps, dare to say - on TV. Fear of seeming different? It's hard for me to say as I know very little about kids these days - and have little interest in knowing more.

I am not sure how old someone must be before I can actually talk with them and make sense - I'm still not sure how much sense I make to Caitlin.

Do I even make sense to myself?

April 1

Ann saw a program on TV from Columbus - about in school alternatives - and there was a positive piece on home schooling - very interesting.

Haven't said much about Caitlin's education...it goes on from 5:00 to 1:30 in the morning with play rehearsals - she comes home tired but exhilarated.

There was one day when she had her solos taken away from her, apparently without reason... or at least any reason that we could see... Caitlin was able to talk with Marsha about it - to find out that a mistake had been made - and to accept that her solos were gone, all without exploding or quitting. She was able to talk with an adult on more than an adult to adult level (considering how supposed adults like Ann & I would have handled it)...

Last year, when her teachers did something like that to her, she did nothing about it - said nothing - This year, due, Ann thinks, to Home Schooling, Caitlin is able to handle such things maturely.

Of course she had ten years of problem solving at the Antioch School...

It will be interesting to discover what Harriet notices when she gets here in a few days - she hasn't seen Caitlin since Xmas - and will be able to view all this with fresh eyes....

April 7

Harriet here to watch Caitlin in J.C. Superstar - after a shrimp dinner at the Winds, we went to the theater. Caitlin jumps out at you from the stage... the movement of her hands and the expressions on her face are electric - so much so that you can't help but watch her (or is this just a stage father?)...

So odd watching one's daughter act... I don't know what to say... to her... or to the ex-child actor within me, that was forced to retire due to circumstances between its control...

I am unable, finally, to judge what it is I'm seeing... feeling...

Just gave her a hug and told her how much I liked it... but there is more that I can't say... partly out of our shyness, partly out of an inability to verbalize it in words that she will listen to without getting disgusted...

April 21

I couldn't have known, sometime in the '70s, when I was at Wright State taking grad level education courses in order to get

my Library Science degree... and vice versa... that I would have, some 20 years in the future, a child of my own to educate.

I was free to say then, in those curriculum and development classes, taken to escape even more fundamentally boring library science courses, such things as, when asked how I would improve the public schools via curriculum or otherwise, "I'd burn the schools down and not have them replaced."

A formidable answer, certainly, and accepted only because I was an Antioch College grad - which actually meant something back then - I was given my gentleman B under the proviso that I would no longer say such things out loud in class... it disturbed the gym teachers going for their master's degrees in administration... future principals of America...

And there was no sense in rubbing their noses in it, as I wasn't about to teach in the schools, being merely an educational dilettante.

Or perhaps something worse - an ungifted amateur, per chance - with unworkable theories of education... though at least

I didn't stay in academia long enough to have to present a fully formed philosophy of education to garner my PhD.

I was willing to go along to get along - but then I haven't had that overwhelming desire to force my ideas on others since high school, where my peers were willing to fight for their right to remain ignorant. I now would always rather quit than fight.

One of my unforced ideas was that I was never going to have a child.

Life is here to play such jokes on us - now that God is dead, or at least derelict of duty.

Still, I wouldn't care to say that my idea of burning down schools is objectionable to me even now... but I myself am less incendiary... I never did like playing with matches... and the last time I burned even a cross on a church was way back when in 1962. Sulfur and flame are more in my mind than at my fingertips.

I am perfectly willing to allow others to pay taxes to keep the schools going - or not, as they choose. I never vote, and own neither money nor property.

I have come to a modus vivendi with our village schools. I won't actively preach agin' 'em, if they let me and my child alone...and if they allow her to act in their plays. I'll even smile and smile and be... complacent towards them. No sense in being a villain.

As long as Caitlin isn't forced to attend school, I won't be there with a safety match... I am aware that some children actually seem to enjoy going to school - and that some parents having, perhaps, forgotten their own classroom experiences, and overlooking those of their own children, are in favor of public schools - at least they are unwilling to close them down as a public nuisance.

So, the schools remain standing... and I remain unjailed. We learn with age to compromise, somewhat - to have children after all...

May 10

The public school continues to have its problems... letters of complaint to the News from parents pulling their kids out of 10th grade - sending them, instead, to Dayton Catholic Schools... God

only knows why (and I'm sure God wouldn't want to have a nun put a ruler to his naughty stupid fingers for forgetting a declension)...

I am afraid that I would be unwilling to institute the reforms that would satisfy those parents.

They have fired the teacher they hired to run the elementary school gifted program... they still don't understand that to have a truly gifted program, you need gifted teachers from top to bottom.

Well, it's easier to hire yet another gifted program teacher - though all hell might break loose from administrators & parents opposed to such elitism.

Case in point - the eclipse of the sun. The elementary school didn't want to let the kids go outdoors to watch the eclipse. Finally, a few kids were allowed out, but were soon enough called back in to take their science class.

Ann & Caitlin & the dog watched from the front yard, across the street from the school. The Antioch School took the whole day

off to watch - older kids helping the younger ones build devices to safely watch the eclipse.

May 23

What am I to do about the fact that the Dayton Daily News and the Wall Street Journal have discovered home schooling - does this automatically make me a Republican? How am I to be a part of a revolutionary movement if it appears on page 1 of the Journal - and is approved of?

Caitlin is in Philly with my parents. It looks as though she'll continue schooling over the summer - a somewhat reduced schedule - some French with Jane, algebra, and I hope she'll find time to work on her play as well. I might be able to do some guitar with her...

If learning is fun, why would someone want to stop? I am assuming, of course, that this year's learning has been fun for her....

May 30

No matter how hard I try, given the inner logic and purpose of our educational system, there is no way I can see of reforming/improving it...

The school system, as a system, is not only doing as well as it can; it is almost perfection itself.

The fact that it doesn't appear to work very well is mere persiflage, and should not be allowed to detract from its self-evident perfection.

Given the givens - schools, teachers, administrators, classes, rules, time, laws, governments (local, state and federal) - what we have is what we've got - the best damn educational system on earth for turning out future generations of Americans who believe in the American way (even when they are discarded by it).

For an individual or a group to try to play with the givens - toy with them - add to one given and take from another (more teachers, fewer classes, longer school year, group teaching,

gifted programs) can not change in any meaningful way the system...

The purpose of the system is to pour a certain type of information into a group of kids so they can retain it long enough to be tested on what they remember... all the while, socializing them into thinking that this is what education not only is, but is supposed to be...

The more information retained and flung back, the better the system/school is said to work...

No one who wants to change the system doubts for a second the above statement... they only wish to learn how to pour more info in a kid... and keep it in longer.

If we were to put a funnel down the throat of a child and pour into it various unappealing liquids - and then close off the child's mouth for as long as we possibly could - until we are ready for the child to regurgitate the liquids - we would have...

The choice, then, is not better teachers, better administrators, more money, better textbooks, longer school

years, more homework, etc. etc... the choice is in or out - on the bus or off the bus.

Schools will not fall apart - in the sense that there is nothing to replace them, and most parents have little or no interest in educating themselves, let alone their own...

Schools will continue as governments continue - signs along the road of the failure of individuals and groups to work together peacefully without some sort of external force...

Home schooling is not, in and of itself, an answer of how to educate... but it is the answer of how to escape from the schools... (I fear that all too many home schooling parents just set up the system again, but within the home...)

The question of how to educate is particularly old - and we still do not appear to have a body of knowledge to answer that question - at least that is satisfactory to me (others seem quite pleased... assume that the answer is as ancient as the question, almost)...

Knowing what little I do about what educating myself means, at age 49 & counting, I can recognize how I cut off... and, perhaps, how I can open myself to unpleasant facts and ideas and ideas about facts... I have begun to discover my limitations - and I am beginning to understand the parts of me that I still must educate in order for me to make my selves intellectually and emotionally human.

After schooling comes work, life, disillusion (if one is lucky) and the chance for a second education... one that doesn't stem from outer life, but rather from inner wisdom... the possibility of inner growth...

This is the true adult education (what is offered in that name is a continuation of school by the same means)... adult education is higher education - that there is something higher than life to be educated about - that we desperately need, and are not getting from life...

It is not time to teach Caitlin any of this... she first must finish her schooling... and go out in life and live for awhile... I can't even talk with her about it at this time... though these notes are here for her to read, should she so choose...

John Taylor Gatto... named New York City Teacher of the Year in 1989, 1990, and 1991 and New York State Teacher of the Year in 1991:

"I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my thirty years of teaching: schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes anymore that scientists are trained in science classes or politicians in civics classes or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools do not really teach anything except how to obey orders. This is a great mystery to me because thousands of humane, caring people work in schools as teachers and aides and administrators, but the abstract logic of the institution is psychopathic - it has no conscience. It rings a bell and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell where he must memorize that humans and monkeys derive from a common ancestor...."

"Here is another curiosity to think about: the home-schooling movement has quietly grown to a size where one and a half million young people are being educated entirely by their own parents; last month the education press reported the amazing news that, in their ability to think, children schooled at home seem to be five or even ten years ahead of their formally trained peers...."

"I don't think we'll get rid of schools any time soon, certainly not in my life time, but if we're going to change what's rapidly becoming a disaster of ignorance, we'll need to realize that the

school institution 'schools' very well, though it does not 'educate' - that's inherent in the design of the thing. It's not the fault of bad teachers or too little money spent. It's just impossible for education and schooling ever to be the same thing...."

"It is absurd and anti-life to move from cell to cell at the sound of a gong for every day of your natural youth in an institution that allows you no privacy and even follows you into the sanctuary of your home, demanding that you do its 'homework.'"

John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down*, 1992.

HOME SCHOOL DIARY

Part 2

ENTRIES FROM SPRING-SUMMER 1993

By Richard Freeman

July 4

This seems to be a propitious date for starting another year's worth of notes on education - if I have anything worth saying in this new year.

Caitlin is busy plotting out on paper the work she did last year - spending a lot of time preparing for her yearly evaluation that the state demands of home schoolers. She's keeping better records for the upcoming year - has a new system for writing things down ...

Still, I think even she was impressed seeing, on paper, just what she had been doing last year. At first she couldn't think of anything to write down - but she now has 20 pages of records on what she did do. Next year, she will have to keep a separate index as there will be, if she continues home schooling, with her new system where she writes down what she does every day, and analyzes at times - potentially hundreds of pages of notes by next July.

Reading John Holt's letters. In a headnote for a March 31, 1963 letter about How Children Fail, the editor mentions how it was Lore Rasmussen in 1961 who had helped spread the word to friends that eventually led to the book being published (Holt had started writing it in 1957).

1961 was when I first read Summerhill, in my senior year of high school, which crystalized my doubts about the educational system. What if Lore and Don had told me about Holt - but this was the year after they had left Circle Pines as directors. I think they were still running Miquon, their private school in Conshohocken, where I first met them when we looked into my going to Circle Pines in Michigan for the summer. That work camp

crystalized my doubts about our economic system, and I became a 14 year old socialist.

But at 14 and 15, I would never have thought or dared to go up and talk to the Rasmussens. My memory of Don remains his wonderful dry wit at breakfast, informing us what the hot cereal de jour would be ... Davy Crockett oatmeal... I can't remember his routines, but they made fun of whatever cereal we had to eat, that I could only get it down with large dollops of brown sugar.

I didn't get to go to Miquon and was stuck with Haverford High for the duration, but I learned so much at Circle Pines and not only about socialism, but blues singing, jazz, tree pruning, and how to somehow fit in with the very few people in the country that could have dealt with me back then - and that I could have dealt with in return. It kept me sane and able to somehow get through each following year of high school - yet I don't think we ever discussed education per se there.

For the last week of camp, the campers ran things - at least supposedly - and we had what they called a Youth Institute. It was so much more fun to run things than to be run. This made an even deeper impression when I had to go home by Grayhound, a

24 hour trip with five transfers, to start back in on school the next week, where I ran nothing and couldn't run away from anything.

My last year at Circle Pines, after Don and Lore had left, the "Adults" suspended the closing dinner, as some kids were thought to have bought alcohol (which they probably did, as I can remember getting some the year before, part of a long tradition during Institute Week, I was told). The steel hand in the velvet glove suddenly appeared in plain sight, and we were directed to turn over the miscreants - and if we didn't, there would be no feast, and we would have to go to bed without dinner.

No one was handed over, and I, at least, had no idea who, if anyone, had the booze, or how I was going to get any.

This made an incredible impression on me - does to his day - and was the impetus of why I still don't trust the left.

There, at a Left Wing Work Camp, in petto, was a witch hunt - a diktat from above - a "we know better" and everyone was made to suffer for the doings of a few "unknown" capitalist wreckers -

The sudden intrusion of adults into our camper directorate, forcing our “leaders” to act “responsibly” - led at least to my distrust of other’s fists... mine was the clenched fist of kulaks.

So the education I got from the directors of Circle Pines was, for the most part, unintended - what was best came directly from my friends. I have no idea what, if anything, I taught them. I was certainly considered to be the strangest camper of my generation - a dubious honor in a dubious battle.

I don’t know to this day how much of what I say goes in as I meant it to. And now that I am an iron fist in my daughter’s education, I can’t tell how much my fist shows - and if it shows, how resented it might be. I can’t afford to own velvet gloves on my nonexistent salary.

Still, in 1961, I was potentially in semi-connection with John Holt, and was where he was as to thoughts of why kids were failing... wasn’t I, too, already a “failure” of some sort? But we never met, or even communicated except across the printed page. I would never have thought of writing to him - fool that I was and am.

July 10

I was thinking about whether there would be any kids who wanted to do TV next year ...

Just using the word “kid” seems to mean that I accept, at some level, that I am no longer a kid ... I’m not exactly sure when kinship stops - how old someone has to be before he would no longer be seen as a kid...

I knew something terribly ageist had occurred when I was first called Mr. Freeman. No one had ever called me that before, as I had managed to avoid the draft.

Thinking of those who have done TV before, especially the ones who were in high school, I can only think of one who ever wanted to talk with me about anything - or who thought I might have something interesting to contribute...

Caitlin says that this generation is hopeless - in the sense of being without hope - in the present or the future ... I suppose she would know better than me about this... I don’t offer much in the

way of hope - I just let them rip on TV... I came from a MIA generation...

They treat me as if I weren't really there, sitting in the corner, reading a book & sucking on M&M chocolate covered peanuts - no affection from them (it feels more like some form of generalized scorn felt for all "adults" - whatever "adult" means to them....) Never a thank you, masked man... it would be difficult to be a mentor to such kids - and as for being a Socratic corruptor of youth... I fear that old Socky would be as left alone on the Agora as I am in the supermarket, pushing my shopping cart. At least I don't ask anyone if they know what virtue is.

July 11

Went to Leslie's for Caitlin's "examination" - her **Exagmination** Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress, as Joyce would say....

Spent an hour with Leslie going over what Caitlin had done over the past year ... Leslie was quite nice about it (she runs our homeschool organization, HELP, and has teacher certification -

something I never bothered getting from any of my ed degrees) - and it all went easily - Leslie's kids running in and out, eating pretzels - (plan on giving thanks to God for not giving me two boys) ...

Got into a discussion on teaching/learning Latin - Ann thought I got a bit too intense... Leslie wants to learn Latin (she already knows Greek) and to teach her kids Latin as well... my point was that she should wait a while, as there is no literature in Latin that they could presently read at their present age - unless she got them a copy of Winnie the Pooh...

Saw Leslie later this evening, and continued my onslaught (much to Ann's dismay when I told her) - how that since the best (which is to say the most fanciful) writing in Latin was also pretty salacious (to say the least) - like reading about the Nixon administration + sex - most kids in school who studied Latin were forced to read and translate only Caesar's very dry and boring Commentaries on his wars in Gaul... never Catullus, Petronius, Suetonius, etc. etc.

But I fear I didn't make all that much sense to her - though she was kind enough to at least smile through my onslaught -

even my “quoting” Dr. Johnson that no child ever learned Latin without having to be beaten - should look up the exact quote... I’m not a Latinist, or a scholar, am never precise... and lazy to boot... no wonder I had to take French 1 twice in High School.

August 8

The crew is back from Oklahoma and I spent some time with Caitlin teaching her a bit of guitar, so that she could play some of the music from J. C. Superstar...

Back in the ‘70s, when I was going for my masters in ed at Wright State, I was asked what I’d do to improve our schools - my answer back then was “I’d burn them down and not replace them...” No one took me seriously, or took me up on my offer - but I just heard on the news that someone in the South had burned down their school - one where the principal had stopped the prom because of interracial dating...

I did teach some of my friends from Circle Pines how to burn a cross on the front pillar of the Hyde Park Christian Science

church, using Jet-X fuse. Never thinking that they'd ever actually do it.

Still, it's a good start, and a good reason for starting - and I just hope that other groups of parents and kids will go out and do likewise to their own schools - be true to your school... even if miscegenation is permitted at the sock hop ball.

August 10

Woken out of what passes in me for meditation by Ann. Marsha, the high school school play director, had called to tell us that the principal was trying to stop anyone not in school from participating in school plays ...

This upset Caitlin enough to make her want to go to high school if that was the only way she could act (but not enough to burn down the school, apparently - never listen to your dad - never ever say it was all his idea)... this is one way of our understanding just how important theater is to her.

I called up Marsha, and then called Doug at the Yellow Springs News to get the name of someone on the State Board of Education whom I could talk with... Doug told me that the principal was leaving the high school for a job in Xenia... called Marsha back and we decided to do nothing, to act as if nothing had been said or done - to continue with the status quo ante bellum... and hope that the school board chooses a more understanding principal. See what gym teacher is available...

Desiree came over - Leslie had suggested she talk with us, as we were both of the '60s... Desiree had told the daughter of friends about home schooling - given her a copy of The Teenage Liberation Handbook, which liberated the 10th grader big time.

Now the kid's father, a '60s revolutionary, is pissed off at Desiree. He wants his daughter in school - I'm not sure why - revolutionary theory of not leaving the masses behind? Perhaps? Who knows? The daughter is distraught, and Desiree is upset as well, for getting yelled at - corrupting the morals of minors... wisening up chumps... "never wisen up a chump" - William Claude Dukenfield

Desiree remembers back when Daddy-o was trying to get school kids to read his left wing propaganda...

Did the best I could to calm her - on no food in the belly - trying to do what I could to calm my own blood sugar from raging ... to sound sane... suggested that she invite the kid & her parents to a HELP meeting - the girl will need allies... hopefully dad won't bring a gun.

Other suggestions were more fanciful - have the girl bring home someone from school pretending to be a cocaine dealer - tell dad that the school was teaching her in history class that Nixon was innocent - that Viet Nam was a just war ... she would have to pretend to believe what it was she was being taught... kids often do seem to believe what they've been taught - my worst ideas always occur right before dinner...

Potential Ways To Earn A Living

Textbook writing on TV or homeschooling

Consultant on Kids's TV

Tutoring

Substitute Teaching

Teaching writing

Copy editing

Writing music column or reviews

Teaching meditation

Teaching Dr. Callahan's 5-minute phobia cure

Selling BNI

Freelance writing

Editing other's zines

Living a life of quiet desperation, looking for work - when not even a socialist government would hire me.

April 17

Back from the Underground Press Convention in Chicago - met John Ohliger at the airport and we talked about adult education from O'Hare to the Damen Ave. el stop... the view from the train at the backs of houses - miles and miles of them - was so depressing.

Leslie had called us before I headed west, asking me to run HELP for a few months - first time I have ever been asked to lead

any group, formally or, in this case, quite informally - a sign that I must be looking more adulty - or something.

John Ohliger had met John Holt several times, and we talked about him and the collapse of our “movement” in education to reform the schools in our image... about when and how we lost the ed wars in the ‘60s to the suits and teachers.

Conference was fun, though it was inundated by poets reading. I started off the censorship panel by saying, “Hi, I’m Dick, and I’m a pornographer” - it just seemed the thing to say. Perhaps I’d better ask Ann to run HELP - though she’d probably refuse.

On getting home, we drove to Young’s for milkshakes, and I noticed that the top of my head was burning - had Ann look at it, & it she saw it was red raw and peeling - sitting outdoors with my magazines, in the sun for six hours without a hat had done me in - I will probably peel for weeks. It was still worth going, especially with cheap airfare and a free room to sleep in. Meeting other underground writers and publishers made these notes seem a bit less from the underground.

We've decided to send \$450 to Clonlara and enter Caitlin in their program. Leslie says they have 5,000 homeschoolers... why couldn't I have thought up that scam. I must be way less intelligent than I think, or way more honest - if intelligence has anything to do with it - with making money - though only a fool would think it doesn't.

April 24

The three of us went to a Yellow Springs educational foundation meeting - they are starting an endowment whose money will go to the public schools...

A piece in the Yellow Springs News about the meeting mentioned that HELP members and Antioch School members were welcome - we were three for the price of one.

Caitlin was horrified so much by the the sight of men in suits that she is considering some sort of suicide - and these suits were supposedly on her side.... Perhaps all the fools in town are on our side... what then?

I brought up the point that if money was raised from everyone, would those kids not in school get any of it? Only if they are taking part in school activities, the Foundation answered.

But what if home schoolers are not permitted to take part in school activities -

This would never happen, they answered.

Knowing that three members of the school board were in the room, I snarkily brought up the principal's decision to ban all outsiders from school theater activities.

Consternation...

The Foundation had no power to influence the schools ... though if the Foundation has money, it ipso facto has power to at least say yes or no.

This began to filter through some minds, perhaps unpleasantly.

My point made (in under three minutes), I went back to conciliation - and Ann played good cop all the way through - I said nice things, having brought to their attention the snake in their garden of Eden.

I suffer from a dangerous blindness (not the one that keeps me from learning to drive a car) - I am deaf and blind to the impression I am making on others - a very dangerous deafness and blindness for anyone even slightly out in public...

August 29

Had our first school meeting with Caitlin - blocked out areas of study for the year - I'll be working with her on music, history, and whatever else she wants ...

She wants to learn Italian as well as French, as she's becoming interested in opera singing vocal techniques... I'll be playing a lot of music for her this year, I hope...

I'll take out the Kenneth Clark's Civilization videos for her history lessons - perhaps we can sit through them together

(though I've already read the book, and the videos might put me to sleep)...

She'll also be doing playwriting, acting, algebra, science, and who knows what else... seems positive about it all - though the year will have its ups & downs, of course....

September 7

HELP meeting... Joe Bowman was there to speak with us - representing the Yellow Springs school system... he told us there were some 300-350 homeschoolers in Green County ... up from 12 in 1989... 1 in 1984... 1 1/2% of the kids in the county...

I think he was positively impressed by our group, and I hope our members were reassured by him that the system wasn't coming after us... there is still a natural sense of paranoia among both homeschool parents and the system administrators... so far, the schools in town have been good about it, as the # of homeschoolers is still relatively small... if it ever grows to 5% or 10%, this attitude might well change as it will cost the schools enrollment money from the state...

As long as home schooling stays small enough not to hurt the public schools, but large enough to influence the state politicians, there will be a truce - a modus vivendi...

I surprised myself at the meeting by not saying a word ... I would have thought that to be impossible... there was no need for me to say anything - Ann spoke up, which was equally rare.

We shall see if we're efficient enough to handle this job while Leslie's gone - get things mailed off in time - then all I need is some tact and luck... as long as Leslie returns in January.

September 18

A good day... homeschooling progressing well - Caitlin got to see Evita in Springfield - is also starting work on a play... taking a play writing workshop - and two singing groups - Dayton Choral Academy has also started up - as has the high school fall play, The Mouse That Roared... she also gets to claim her horseback riding as gym - helping disabled kids there probably doesn't count... academically.

Of course attending regular school teaches many valuable things - how to slough off, to cut corners - and to do as little work as is necessary to get the grade you want or need... all cornerstones of what it means to be an American - a higher educated American....

Had I only learned these skills when I was in school, I have no doubt I'd be earning a high end regular salary today...

September 22

D C Heath magazine finally arrived - they wanted the writing from me in three days and then took a year to publish it ... but it looks good, and they sent extra copies for the kids involved in the photoshoot.

I don't know if this will lead to anything - get me a job of some sort - or even if it will get some kids interested in doing TV again this year... so far I have one high school student who wants to study jazz with me, who I'll see on Saturday, I think...

Caitlin needed a dramatic monologue for her high school play audition... we went to the library to see what was there... all the monolog books were already taken out, so we had to find her a play that was dramatic, slightly neurotic and not funny... only thing that fit her demands was Eugene O' Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night - a hell of a thing to have to perform out loud - but she seems quite happy with it....

October 13

Made it through the first HELP meeting that I "chaired" - being there first, I grabbed the one real, non plastic, chair - piles have no pride...

Very small meeting - 7 or 8 people at most - breaking with our old meeting day may have interfered with everyone else's plans...

But it's not a terrible thing to have such a small group, as everyone could speak - and at length... I speculated for a few minutes about homeschooling college - a potential necessity figuring what the costs will be in 10 years... I do wonder what

Caitlin has in mind for college in a few years... I haven't talked with her about it yet...

So far, at least, the year has gone smoothly - no necessity for meetings even - she's fully in charge of her own education... I've only helped out in the sense of sitting with her to watch Sir Kenneth mumble on about western civilization...

Some day or other, I might try to teach her something other than just existing here and giving off I know not what impression... how comic I must seem making strange Johnsonian noises and sounds ... just this side of Tourettes...

Don't know if I would be a different father if I could earn a living - being out of the house for hours on end doing something I didn't like... in some way, not having to do that prevents me from growing up completely - actually seeming to be a father to myself...

November 20

A brief note on education in Cincinnati, from a WLW news soundbite - we have a judge telling a child that she thinks this child might be more responsible than its mother- and that the child will have to find some way of getting to school, or they'll have to arrest the mother... dunno what that judge would say to me...

I'm not sure that that makes good sense, but it probably makes what passes for good law in Ohio...

December 1

Phone calls for HELP - mother whose son is having trouble with school in Dayton - only interested in cars... she's thinking of home schooling him, as his teachers are already against him, and his friends at school are also looked at as hoods...

Told her, after Ann went through the nuts and bolts with her, that she might want to center his homeschooling around transportation - how you could learn history, math, science, etc. etc. etc. by studying automobiles. Also suggested that she should try and find an apprenticeship program at a garage for her son.

See if this comes to anything. Most of the time, it never does.

Then a call from The Yellow Springs News. Kevin was covering the school board meeting and Yonkee, the superintendent, said that he was concerned because he thought / knew (?) that 1/2 (?) of the homeschoolers in town were goofing off - or trying to get away with something...

I'll have to watch the tape of that meeting on TV to find out exactly what it was Yonkee did say.

Kevin knew little about homeschooling per se - so I only said that if the schools were doing such a bang up job, why were 44% of Cincinnati's public schoolers dropping out? (Statistics can be wonderful!!)

But mainly I said that Yonkee really had no way of knowing what homeschoolers were doing - that they didn't report to him - so I didn't know how he obtained this information...

Or, as I told the News later when I stopped by, I wanted to find out how he knew what it was that Caitlin was doing - how he had found us out... they laughed...

Obviously, the school administration is not happy with not having all education under their thumb - but with the Republican sweep of congress in the election, I can't see Clinton doing anything about homeschooling - if he even knows it exists... bless our strange republican bedfellows... people who think like us hide like sheep among the Christians to avoid our wolfish legislators. May Jesus protect us from Democrats and bureaucrats.

January 21

I went to the Village Building for my home schooling workshop, but no one showed up. I've been feeling physically somewhat poorly, so I was delighted not to have to talk for three hours about what I don't know anything about. Don't exactly know what it means to have no one interested in my workshop - or whether it even has any meaning...

Have helped one high school student drop out of a lot of classes - and I've spoken with a reporter from Dayton about a piece she's writing on homeschooling - yet no one wants to spend any money on learning about it - certainly not the \$25 for my workshop...

I haven't had much of a much to write about recently... our HELP meetings are quite small, and I don't know why that is - unless it's me - but I'd like to believe that our members are doing so well with their own homeschooling that they no longer need HELP - or at least my help... this is all happening under my "leadership" after all - at least it prevents me from enlarging my ego... I must try not to identify too much with the lack of attendance, or blame anyone for not coming to meetings...

I don't want to become paranoid about it, but I can't help thinking that it's partly due to my lack of that old rooster booster spirit that made America what it is today...

Actually, I have no control over any of this...

February 3

I saw the news today, oh boy - USA Today - \$120,000,000,000 needed to fix the physical plants of our schools - as well as fill the holes in Blackburn Lancashire... that's more money than they're spending on fixing up and building new jails to house the forthcoming bumper crops of high school dropouts. Virginia has a new program calling for \$2.2 billion for jails, but has only managed to raise \$35 million so far - a drop in a bucket with a hole in it.

Our jails are also cutting back on spending for prisoner education - no need to have a Ph.D if you're never getting out of the joint, I suppose. I don't think prisoners charge for crime seminars.

Well, I know how that is - how that deep in my heart, not to mention whatever that thing is that creates the voices I hear in my head - how for a fact I don't know how to solve anymore any of the problems of education...

Walking to the post office after reading these headlines, I tried to imagine myself being put in charge of the NYC school system - and I had no idea what I'd do - where I'd even start -

how to play the politics of it - how to collect a salary long enough to get me enough fuck you money before someone figured out I didn't have a clue...

How to fire the tens of thousands of teachers necessary to cut the budget and please the irate NYC voters that elected me to do that...

I'm not even sure that I could pick out from an interview a good future teacher of America if I were on a search committee...

Neither do I think I could teach in a school - even if I was permitted to teach exactly as I chose - certainly not every day for six classes -

And I absolutely wouldn't want to do that...

Not that they'd ever want to have me.

They only let me graduate with my ed degrees with the proviso that I never ever did any of that.

So how can I blame others?

I might know in my clearer moments what went wrong with our education system, but I don't know what to do about it. There comes a point in time when things get so fucked up they can't be unfucked. Especially when no one wants to properly unfuck them. To burn the schools down and not replace them might cut the Gordian Knot - but to build a new and better Humpty Dumpty is beyond me (block that metaphor). That's exactly what happens when you get kicked out of the Cub Scouts before attaining the necessary knot tying merit badge. WEBELOS.

March 2

Schools have an important function to fill in society - they put children in that state of waking sleep that we call consciousness - allowing life to proceed merrily along for whatever its purpose might be...

Even students who quit school never quite understand what it is that school has done to them - many of them even vote to pass school levies...

I was able to start to stop blaming myself for my stupidity in 12th grade, thanks to Summerhill - at least I knew that I was not alone outside of my high school. Not that it did me any good.

But I never fully fell completely into sleep - and thereby never fell into step. I marched to a psycho drummer.

March 21

Leslie came over and said she was ready to take back leadership of HELP - it was an interesting experience finding out how I performed as a group leader - I don't seem to be either dynamic or dominant, which is probably something worth knowing. And I have no desire to retain power.

May 20

Picked up a copy of the Antioch College Record to learn more about the lesbian s/m birthday party that threw the college into a tizzy - threats from the dean of students to throw the three miscreant dykes out of their dorms...

After which the dean of students resigned (without giving any reasons - only hints in that abstract passive language academicians and administrators all seem to use - whether to show that they are intellectuals and thus abstract thinkers - or just to obfuscate, I can't say. The few I have known don't talk up to me in that way).

Also Bob Divine has quit as dean of faculty - too much stress - we went to Antioch together in the '60s, and our trajectories quickly bifurcated. He became a company man, while no company would hire me.

Also in the news - 25 tenured professors were fired at Bennington...

And I just have to wonder what's going on (right on, baby, right on)... Bob Divine seems to think that this won't happen at Antioch, because Antioch is different (how quickly they forget the great faculty massacre of the early '70s, after the strike, when 1/3 of that krew were given the axe by the other 2/3)...

Bob seems to think that Antioch College teachers belong to some sort of academic vanguard - a vanguard of the intelligentsia - that teachers are facilitators, whatever that might mean ... I think I know what it means in first grade teaching - but I'm not sure if it means the same at a \$25,000/year college...

Why are people paying \$25,000 to be facilitated? Can't that be done on one's own, for free?

Shouldn't \$25,000 buy some arcane unworldly and otherwise unobtainable knowledge... at the very least the secret of the universe...

If I wanted to become an auto mechanic and had to pay a hundred grand to become one, I'd hate to only be facilitated - I could easily buy 10 used cars and take them apart and put them back together for that much... (I'm not sure how much a used car costs as I still don't drive)...

But then of course when I tell a college administrator that a B. A. Shouldn't take 4 years to obtain (let alone more - though I think it eventually took me 10 years to finally get mine), I'm

looked at condescendingly - but I can buy me a masters/
doctorate combo in two years from some places, three years max.

Apparently, facilitation just takes time... and money.

I do wonder who is facilitating whom?

I suppose eventually colleges will start to go under, though
this is now being delayed by firing the tenured and hiring adjuncts,
who may or may not be able to adequately facilitate.

It's one thing to get a college education to become a
preacher (which is what HRVD used to be there for) - learning
logic, sophistry , & hermeneutics... the power to awe and properly
wear a robe... and firepower to back down the irreligious ... but
what excuse can there be to pay a hundred large for a degree in
... fill in the blank...

Perhaps the reason the natives are restless and the deans
are starting to stress out and crack up is that no one has bothered
to consider whether what one does actuality matters - makes
sense - or how to even make sense of it all...

So kids are in a panic, profs don't know whether they'll be fired, or ever rehired, and administrators are starting to worry where the next check is coming from - unless, perhaps, the government steps in...

I certainly didn't need to go to college to learn how to learn - to think uncritically in order to pass tests - not if learning is what these clowns think it is - what we learn in college is how to properly apply clown white and red nose to be underpaid - while the audience dwindles.

I could have home schooled college, had I only invented home schooling in 1962.

May 21

A great teacher doesn't facilitate - rather a great teacher sets a student on fire, so they will burn to know - so that their desire to know will incinerate all difficulties...

I am not a great teacher, personally - I couldn't set someone on fire even with a blowtorch - all I have is a desire somehow to be wise, or at least be a wiseass...

I've yet to learn anything that would help me hold a job, but then when I went to school in the '60s it seemed like I would never really need a full time job - part time employment would pay well enough for me to be able to think -and perhaps write some thoughts down...

I was a child of those times, and was thus unaware of how unprecedented those times were - to be able to work so little and have so much time left to think - it all seemed so natural to me... perhaps this is a sign that there was something wrong with my thought processes...

The powers that be soon put an end to all that, beginning with the Nixon administration... he'd had just about enough from smart assed college students opposing his war, calling him a crook, and yelling "dick Nixon before he dicks you."

Today, to go to school is to make a declaration of economic intent - we are here to become permanent members of the middle

and upper middle classes, in good standing - and we will not allow others to stand in our way...

We want to be taught what we need to know to succeed - what will be on our tests - anything less is to cheat us of our birthright...

No wonder it's becoming so unpleasant being a teacher - no wonder so many teachers want to facilitate... to no longer have to open locked doors that show something other than seize the main chance.

But I didn't get kicked out of college for flunking jobs in order to go to a career academy.... even less to have to teach school for a living.

If I couldn't compete with others, at the very least I could fail on my own.

It would be nice though to have someone else write my autobiography, as I can make nothing out of my life myself... I suspect though that there's nothing for anyone else to write about either. I have no stories to tell.

The only thing I have to fear is success itself.

June 11

Another year almost done, and HELP will meet in the summer, as who knows who will be quitting schooling over the vacation and need help (two families from Ann's school might be homeschooling in the fall)...

After two years of homeschooling, I can attest that it does work (I've been homeschooling myself all of my life, always trying to find a way to avoid all schoolwork that didn't interest me, so that I'd have time for my real learning - my own self-schooling)...

Avoiding others to protect myself from compulsory socialization -

Society only discredits itself when it does not credit what we do on our own - we are not accredited... what we do on our own does not count...

Homeschoolers are not prodigal sons and daughters - no fatted calfs for us - our father, who is upon this earth, demands Carnegie Units and degrees.... which is why I so enjoy the slow collapse of our educational systems, our faltering secondary schools and colleges... especially now that our colleges are even worse than our public schools, and fill our schools with its graduates.

September 29

I didn't think I was going to have anything else to write about in this journal - the year's homeschooling has started and is up and running smoothly, so there isn't really anything left to write about. Caitlin is studying voice, piano, French, algebra, anatomy, and is auditioning for a part in the fall play - The Martian Chronicles.

Ann and Caitlin have bought season tickets in Columbus and Dayton, and are going to see Cecilia Bartoli on Sunday...

But tonight I went to the School Board meeting as they were debating some new proposals on home schooling.... I was there to represent HELP, as Leslie is recovering from pneumonia...

I wanted to make sure we didn't lose anything from the changes in regulations...

The school system is terrified that hordes of homeschoolers will descend on the schools demanding to take innumerable courses, and that the kids will use homeschooling as a way of getting out of required courses they don't want to take...

I was able, I think, to convince them, at least the new high school principal, that his first worry was unlikely...

Discussion went on for two hours - lots of parents with kids in school were there as well, and they were way nastier about the schools than the homeschoolers, who were quite conciliatory...

I only spoke a few times and was short and to the point - made no one angry - didn't join in the attacks on the schools... just sat back and enjoyed it.

Some parents seem jealous that we are avoiding sending our kids to school, not forcing them go through the slaughter, along with their kids... though they would never even consider homeschooling as an alternative... or if they thought of it, they swiftly put that thought out of mind - which is what might be driving them out of their minds...

But the anger over how lucky homeschoolers are is there in the background noise...

We are getting away with murder, and that's just not fair... and we will pay for this - or our kids will - sometime later in life, when they discover they can't escape the workplace just by dropping out...

They don't really know what homeschooling is, if it is any one thing - which it isn't - but they don't know that, either...

But I was very nice and supportive of the schools - Caitlin wants to be in drama club, after all... and other home school parents want other extracurriculars for their kids... (something only Yellow Springs and Cedarville schools are permitting - the rest of Greene County won't let home schoolers anywhere near

their schools - possibly because home schooling might be contagious... lead to kids dropping out.

Public schools - love them or leave them - is their credo...

We left.

APHORISMS & INSIGHTS

By Richard Kostelanetz

(any number of which may be periodically published, in any order, and even distributed without my name under each, as long as they are set in a typeface unique to it.)

(for book publication, consider separate sheets or cards for each, if only for a design more appropriate for the content.)

Dedicated to Joan Hartman

One traditional measure of idiocy has been believing everything published in newspapers, which are supposedly edited; but even more

stupid today is the reader believing everything read on the Internet, which is largely unedited.

If some writers strive for visibility, usually by attaching themselves to popular outlets that amplify their words soon after they are written; others strike for influence that overcomes comparative invisibility at its beginnings to survive the loss of visibility that results when the other kind of writer is “dumped.”

Anyone doing work commonly thought to be “ahead of its time” would be wise to live a long life to collect the rewards due him.

Always be generous to those who criticize you publicly if only to deny their expectation of vengeance and thus seize an opportunity to display your superior humanity, not just to your critics but also to your common publics. Those who attempt to undermine you with machinations hidden from public view, by contrast, are cowards

who invite retaliation, ideally in public, not just once but again and again.

More than once I've asked an academic whether he or she thinks the elite recognitions that have come to me would be mine had I been not an independent artist/writer but, instead, a fulltime tenured professor. Never have I gotten a straight answer.

Jews have always benefited from level playing fields that allow unequal results. Any government plan designed to realize roughly equal results ultimately discriminates against Jews.

Whenever I come across a list of avowed atheists, I look first to see if any are musicians are included. Invariably, none are, because, may I rationally suggest, they learned from esthetic experience certain truths unavailable to atheists.

Just as it's possible for an actor to assume the role of someone more intelligent than he is, so can artists and writers with a strong command of their

materials and an effective formal technique create works with more intelligence than they have.

Newspapers report on what happened yesterday; radio and television news at their best report on what's happening now. Both are easily discarded, in contrast to books that report on last year, the last decades, the last century, etc. In gathering cultural information especially, historians would be wise to eschew newspapers and electronic media.

When I was young, I thought it possible to make a winner out of a cultural loser; now I know that nothing is more difficult than raising another's cultural level. Some people or institutions are simply stuck where they are, or they have stuck themselves.

My mother's father was born in Smyrna, which was in Asia Minor; Izmir is now in Turkey. They are the same place, but don't make the mistake of confusing the two, just as my father was born in St. Petersburg, which was and now again is in

Russia, but should not be confused with Leningrad, the same place that was once in the Soviet Union.

Whenever I hear percentages quoted without gross numbers—say, among increasing AIDS among straights—I’m skeptical, recalling that $2 + 2$ can be advertised as an “increase of 100%”; and whenever I hear anyone quoting only such percentages as indisputable facts, I doubt his or her intelligence.

Were I applying to residential colleges now, I would initially consider three factors, regardless of publicized reputations or “rankings”: size, urban vs. rural, and climate. Smaller colleges are more likely to offer better contact with the professors; larger schools, a richer extracurricular culture. While rural schools create insulated ideal worlds that can’t be recaptured after you graduate, city schools are less isolated from worldly corrections. Differences in weather are more important to some people than others. Could I be an undergraduate

again, I would have chosen Columbia College as a small school in a culturally rich and corrective city, the lousy weather notwithstanding.

In listening to media news, always try to distinguish something that actually happened from anything descending from a press release, usually from an interested organization, say about the increase in homelessness or the success of a certain new drug; and then also learn to identify what actually happened against all the inflations to which publicists and journalists are predisposed, especially when they think the “public is interested.” Or might be.

Who would rank at the biggest intellectual hypocrite of our years? Can anyone top William Bennett, the “conservative” publicist and operative who preaches the virtues of self-discipline while he chain-smokes and gambles away millions? It’s hard to believe that this guy for several years headed our National Endowment for the Humanities, the federal Office of National Drug

Control Policy, and the National Humanities Center (NC), in addition to serving as United States Secretary of Education from 1985 to 1988, all without getting elected to anything but nonetheless dragging down, especially in retrospect, every institution ever tapping him..

The simplest measure of critical intelligence is the ability to perceive deeper, whether into common stocks or art or people. Some people perceive more deeply sporadically, if not accidentally; a few, persistently. Attempts at insight failing to convey more profound understanding are likely to be perceived as obscure or platitudinous.

An institution that claims to be first-rate, while behaving like those ranked considerably less, is implicitly advertising truths about itself that most people understand, home-grown claims to the contrary notwithstanding. No one would ever mistake a hooker for a scholar.

How can I write essays that would be as uniquely mine as my poems and fictions have been—that could, for one measure, be published without my name appended to them. Respecting my commitment to severe literary minimalism, I produced a collection all four words or less in length. When I offered them to literary magazines, no one published any of them.

An aphorist who writes words to be not just read but treasured has probably also written longer texts that are likewise treasured.

Individual entries on **RICHARD KOSTELANETZ** appear in **Contemporary Poets, Contemporary Novelists, Postmodern Fiction, Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Reader's Guide to Twentieth-Century Writers, the Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature, Webster's Dictionary of American Authors, The HarperCollins Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature, NNDB.com, and the Encyclopedia Britannica**, among other distinguished directories. Otherwise, he

survives in New York, where he was born, unemployed and thus overworked.

Crows at Sunset

By Sheryl L. Nelms

like B-52

dive

bombers

they plunge

straight

down

twist and turn

skim the tops

of the cottonwood trees

then veer

up

over the dilapidated drive-in theater screen

black

silhouettes

following the sun

on smooth

set

wings

Into Tomatoes

the Big Boy seedling

has tendrils roots that string out

feather the fluff of vermiculite

and black potting soil

one green leaf bent

and smashed

smells like

tomato

popped from the peat pot

dropped into

a dug hole

compost humped

around the tiny plant

dirt mashed

down

the snared

bottom

holds

tight

covered

with a wire cage

it is transplanted

Under Rocks

waiting

under

rocks

are ants

night crawlers

and doodle bugs

“They Call Me the Fireman!”

he plays

country western music

in a band
Saturday nights
at the Pizza House

body bent
by age

Stetson rocking

his boots
keep
time

as his three
stub fingers

formed by a doctor
after a dynamite blast
ruined his right hand

pick their way
around
violin

notes

and guitar

strings

at a high

rate of

speed

Texas Tarantula

like a slow moving

eight legged ballerina

delicate

and precise

and dignified

she dares anyone

to stop

her

from crossing the highway

if agitated

she may kick off

some prickly black bristles

as she stalks across the bumpy asphalt

hair covers each plump leg

like an ebony velvet body stocking

then up and over

her round

abdomen

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of spinning tubes

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Cloned Geniuses Speak

Tom Ball

EDWARD JENNER

I: Jenner and his smallpox vaccine in the late 18th century was a discovery of stupendous proportions paving the way for the numerous inoculations of today. How do you feel about the man and his work?

EJ: His discovery is an example of how great people can change the world overnight. Obviously many scientists followed in his footsteps effectively doubling our life expectancy.

However despite great achievements in science most of the world is still living in poverty and we have many other troubles such as the threat of nuclear annihilation and huge governmental

debts. Clearly our politicians aren't dealing with many of the real important issues, as they don't appear to have any vision.

So we need to put geniuses in politics. There are many ways we could do this, perhaps simple testing of candidates by well-known geniuses would help to screen out those who are mediocre or unworthy. However the current system mainly produces mediocrities, so it has to go.

I: But you feel that science at least is going in the right direction?

EJ: Yes but genius scientists are creating things that could be really dangerous, we need to use our best people to keep things under control.

But on the whole science is great, and I think that one day we'll all live like kings, just as some people already do.

I: Will that be a good thing necessarily, if everyone lives like a king or queen?

EJ: Yes and remember science will develop new drugs to make people happier still. Life will never be perfect, but having virtually everything you desire should make people on the whole happy I think.

I: So you feel happiness is the meaning of life?

EJ: Yes and people today are getting greedier and greedier for happiness. For lack of a better word, we're becoming insatiable. No matter how happy we are, we always want more happiness. And let's be honest; happiness has no limit.

I: But it seems that some people prefer a life that is chaotic, troubled and painful if you look at how they live.

EJ: Having troubles is part of life. People say they have troubles, and what they mean is their life is not perfect and they want it to be more perfect. If there was no pain in life, then we wouldn't appreciate pleasure. It's all relative. But in fact some people are just plain too greedy for happiness.

I: But do you really feel that it's good to be insatiable. Isn't our civilization insane?

EJ: Existence itself is crazy. But madness can be fun and bring happiness. Why not? There's no point trying to be sad.

If you told someone a few hundred years ago about how far our civilization would go, that person wouldn't have believed it. He/she would have called you crazy. Maybe one day in the future we'll genetically engineer people to be virtual Gods. It may be crazy, but it's a lot better than living in a cave not knowing if you'll live another day or not.

LAO TSE

I: Lao Tse was a Chinese philosopher whose ideas gave rise to Taoism. What would he say if he were here today?

LT: Most people today live in worlds of illusion. They use these illusions to survive in the modern world, but they don't bring people happiness.

What people should be doing is striving for happiness, not another car or a bigger house. Usually happiness comes from the simple things in life. Things like love and friendship and simplicity. Humans weren't designed for a cÖmplex life and in any case modern complexities are not intelligent; instead these are unnecessary complexities.

I: How do you feel about education? Do you think we are making progress?

LT: People should learn in school how to be happy not how to be consumers or to be a "success". Happiness like everything else takes work and practice. People need to know themselves and

know others in order to be happy and to do this they need to spend a lot of time studying others, listening to others and thinking about themselves.

I: How do you feel about modern day virtue? Do you think people are as virtuous as in the past?

LT: In the past most people were simple farmers. They worked with their hands and had simple, honest lives. Now people don't even know who they are or what they want and many are selfish, greedy, dishonest and immoral in other ways.

Selfishness, greed etc. seldom lead to happiness. Instead they only make people crazy and confused. These days everyone is confused about life. But in old times simple farmers were clear in their mind and knew who they were. I think the same was true of ancient hunter-gatherers.

I: So you don't see any virtue in modern living?

LT: Of course many people attempt to be virtuous even though all around them is madness. Such people have a simple job, a spouse and kids and they live simply and quietly.

But such a lifestyle is becoming increasingly uncool. Young people nowadays don't want to ever settle down, they don't want a single partner and they don't want to have kids. They take jobs that are stressful and devoid of meaning. Many jobs quite simply don't need to be done any more as people become increasingly "useless". Governments lie about their unemployment rate, and without a job how can someone live?

I: So what are you saying? Are you saying that people should live like the Amish or Mennonites?

LT: It would be nice if this were possible. But nearly everyone is convinced that the crazy modern world is better, even if it makes them less happy. They would be better off having never known of the modern world, but once they know about it, it is like a disease which they cannot stop.

All through history there were few people who were genuinely wise; and people seldom listen to such wise people. There's really nothing that can be done about it.

I: But don't you think people today are more wise in the way of the world?

LT: Everyone today thinks they are so clever compared to the next man, but actually they know very little. Ask them the meaning of life and they will say they don't know. What do they know? All they know is how to consume.

THOMAS EDISON

I: Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, phonograph, talking movies etc. And he once said that “Genius is 99% perspiration, 1% inspiration”; what do you think of that?

TE: Well just like in the story of, “The Tortoise and the Hare”, skill and talent must be honed and practiced. But many would-be geniuses find it difficult to really know what they can do best. There are over 6 billion people on the planet today and there must be thousands like Edison, but many will not achieve anything notable. Indeed in science luck plays a part for many geniuses; many simply do not get lucky.

I: But how could a genius like Edison not succeed eventually?

TE: Most great historical geniuses only had one famous idea or invention. Not 20 or 50. So it stands to reason that many great minds fail to have even one great breakthrough. Science, you know, depends on using good hypotheses and then testing them out, but you need luck to have a breakthrough. You never know what you will find until you find it. Edison was fortunate to have success with some of his earlier inventions and once successful was able to hire many scientists to help him test his theories.

I: OK. Well what will geniuses of the future invent?

TE: I think science is impossible to predict. For example who in the 19th century accurately envisioned computers? I think though that there will be many medical breakthroughs for sure, so that we will all one day live forever etc.

I also think we could copy human brains onto silicon and thereby create androids. If they did this it would allow many things such as cyborgs and super humans.

Many laws of physics will be proved wrong and so eventually things like faster than light travel will be possible. I think to be able to send humans or our super human descendants to other stars would be the greatest accomplishment we could ever hope for. It is our only hope for one day finding the meaning of the universe and new meaning for our existence.

I: So you think we need more astrophysicists?

TE: Yes, I think so. We need to use everyone, including those with radical ideas and those who don't get along with others, if science is to really reach breakthroughs. The problem is if you are a radical thinker it is difficult to kiss ass and reach the position of professor which is necessary for such research. There are too many mainstream thinkers in physics and astrophysics today in my opinion.

I: So you are optimistic about the world's future, generally speaking?

TE: I think we live in exciting times and with every new discovery in science the world gets more interesting. And the interesting thing about science is the vast majority of discoveries benefit everyone, like in medicine for example. Even discoveries in astronomy and astrophysics inspire people everywhere, and many people are in awe of the world space programs. I think even the average Joe is looking forward to seeing new discoveries in every field in the future.

I: So what advice do you have for would-be successful geniuses?

TE: I think the key is to try and look at things in your own way, don't let other people limit your thoughts. And if your thoughts are radical and different than others, keep trying, don't give up. As Einstein once said "Great spirits will always encounter violent opposition".

MARY LEAKY

I: Mary Leaky was an influential archaeologist/anthropologist who studied early humans in Africa. Do you feel that such studies are truly shedding light on our past?

ML: Despite a lot of work by scientists, our early beginnings are still largely hidden. To simply say things like: "over time our brains

got bigger” doesn’t really tell us anything for sure (some geniuses have been shown to have rather small brains and some people can function normally even after most of their brain was destroyed, for example by a gun shot). Perhaps indeed we have evolved mentally over millions of years with the most clever surviving and so on, but we need more information.

It’s a very important topic where we come from and I think we will need both a lot more archaeology and a lot of breakthroughs in the understanding of human and animal brains before we can truly be certain of our origins.

I: But how do you feel about modern archaeology in general? Are they formulating the right theories?

ML: I think archaeology, like many sciences and arts, needs more people with open minds. I think they are too conservative in their theories. For example in the new world there are no diagnostic artifacts found on the surface that date before 12 000 BC. So they simply assume that there were no people in the New World before that time; they don’t even look! Now a few older sites are coming to light, but most archaeologists insist it’s impossible!

Another problem is they don't use enough science in their work. Subsurface radar has been around for some time, but many don't use it.

Also most archaeologists are not trained in soil science and environmental reconstruction, so they don't dig in areas likely to yield well-preserved artifacts, such as in ancient swamps for example.

I: But do you think that people are really learning lessons from the study of the past?

ML: Most people will never be wise. And that's just the way it is. However our leaders should all be well-versed in the past if they are to lead us wisely. We have enough wise people that we can produce wise leaders everywhere.

The problem is that wise people feel to lead is too big a burden and too troublesome. So we need to convince them to help us. Somehow.

I: So you feel that we live in a foolish world, full of fools?

ML: Actually it's a world constructed by rare geniuses, but nearly everyone is foolish. Most people still follow their primitive instincts and act little better than animals.

Who knows maybe one day they'll genetically engineer our race to be kind, loving and brilliant. But I suppose such a society would have even more problems than our relatively simple world of today.

Still science marches on.

I: Do you feel that women have an important role to play in the future of science?

ML: I think women will surprise everyone with unique perspectives on things. After all women and men are not the same as men; they look at things differently. I don't believe that women can't be great scientists and I think in the Western world women now take almost as many science degrees as men.

JOHN LENNON

I: John Lennon played in the Beatles before launching a solo career. Many people feel the Beatles were the best rock band ever. If John Lennon were here today what would he be saying?

JL: One of the things he'd be saying is that you've got to believe in love. Many people have never known true love, but they shouldn't give up trying. Also, in the 1960s, the spirit of brotherly love was strong, but the hippie movement lacked political power and so it fizzled out. There's no reason it can't come again in a much stronger way; we just need leaders.

I: But if those hippies really believed in love why did they all end up as ordinary bankers and such?

JL: I think they just lacked great leaders was all. Today people are largely lost and don't stand for anything. It's a shame. I'm sure that many people would like to support good causes if only those causes were to be made attractive to them.

I: But where are these leaders?

JL: I think there's a lot of great people out there, but it's human instinct to just worry about yourself and your family and it's a hard habit to break. In any case the world seems to be improving in many regards so maybe we should just relax and wait for things to gradually fall into place. After all people are getting better and better educations and many poor countries are registering impressive economic growth. It's just a matter of time before the world becomes a much nicer place.

I: So you think a better educated populace will really make the world better?

JL: Basically most of the world's problems are caused by people not thinking enough about them. By making people aware, problems disappear.

For example now we have a global village and nearly everyone in it wants a peaceful society. The more educated people are, the more they want peace. And I think brotherly love will come to. At one time in history nearly everyone in the West believed in it, and I think they could again.

But I think there are many reasons to feel inspired today; yet I can't understand why most people are so apathetic. I guess mediocre modern lifestyles have made them this way. Nobody ever really planned the way we live today, and most people spend most of their time being passively entertained by TV. TV is boring. We need to create a society in which people are active not passive. People need to socialize regularly, meet lots of new people and get involved in charities, politics and such. They need to think about how they can make a difference.

I: Do you think bands like the Beatles exert a positive influence on society?

JL: Anything can be positive if used in the right way. Clearly musicians are greatly respected these days and many people are ready to follow them like they would the Pied Peeper. They need to use this power to do good. It's a shame if they don't.

I: What kind of good do you want musicians to do?

JL: It's really up to them. Perhaps they could join with other artists and form political parties. Or perhaps they could help inspire people to go to the developing countries and help educate the uneducated. Or they might influence public opinion to eliminate nuclear weapons worldwide. There are many things they might do. There are many just causes worth fighting for.

KING TUT

I: How do you feel about the legacy of ancient Egypt? You know the pyramids, King Tut's tomb etc.

KT: Of course modern critics claim Egyptian grandeur was built by men who were virtual slaves. And they say Egypt's monuments were monuments to human vanity. But to build something great like the pyramids was really a testament to human ingenuity and people today flock to Egypt to marvel at these great edifices and the art associated with them.

I: What great things do you think people should build today?

KT: Well to look at a modern city and its skyscrapers is surely wondrous. And there has never been so much brilliant and inspired art.

But I think that the key for us today is science and I feel we should train more people in it. Many poor nations have massive populations which are largely uneducated and so they don't have many scientists. But scientists make a country strong these days; electrical engineers for example.

I: But how should we remember great scientists and other great people when they die?

KT: I think cloning them would be a great idea. Imagine what it would be like to clone thousands of Einsteins!

Also I think students in school should read detailed biographies of great people and hopefully then they will be inspired to emulate these great thinkers. When we read history we should read about great thinkers mostly

and not waste time remembering the names of countless kings and dictators who seldom did any good for anyone. After all great thinkers are our natural leaders. They are the wise people who can give us all good advice.

I: But don't you feel cloning could be dangerous?

KT: If you cloned a thousand Einsteins and gave each one a radically different background and education, you'd probably get quite a variety of thinkers. I think they should clone every genius who ever lived, many times.

Human genius is our greatest resource. It is human genius that has built the world around us. Every invention great or small was done by geniuses. So we need more of them. I think genetic engineering of intelligence is the way of the future.

I: How do you feel about the future of the Middle East?

KT: I think slowly but surely change is coming to the Middle East. Currently the region is backwards, but let us not forget it was the birthplace of civilization. There's a lot of genius to be found there I think, and one day great cities will rise again in the region.

I: Do you feel the Muslim religion is holding people back?

KT: I don't think so. The Koran doesn't insist that people remain largely uneducated; it is the conservative leaders that are really holding things back at present. For example women are often discouraged from getting anything more than a little education.

I: But where will they find the money to educate people properly?

KT: People could go to school part time while they work in the day. It doesn't cost much for local teachers and books.

KARL MARX

I: More than anyone else, it was Marx who formulated the basic ideas of communism. What do you think of communism today?

KM: In all traditional societies, people were basically communist. One guy might have a few more cows than another, but food was shared and everyone had a nice home to live in. It's the natural state of mankind.

The world has plenty of resources yet over half the world is desperately poor; this is the result of capitalism.

I think the problem with communism was that not enough of the intelligentsia believed in it. Too many intelligent people feel that they are better than everyone else and they want to prove it by having far more material possessions than the less fortunate.

The situation is kind of like spoiling a child. If you give your child too many toys and luxuries in their youth, they will be spoiled for life. That's how I'd describe the intelligentsia: spoiled.

It was really the intelligentsia who criticized communism and brought about its downfall. I don't think much of such selfish, greedy people.

I: Do you think that communism can make a come back?

KM: No, I'm afraid it's been discredited. Unfortunately.

I: What do you think of Karl Marx then? Was he a man of his time?

KM: If you think the world cannot be changed, just look at Karl Marx. He almost single-handedly totally changed the world. So even though communism failed, there is hope for other future change.

People today have to realize that there's more to life than simply material goods. What are we a bunch of animals? Surely such things as respect for your fellow man, helping your fellow man, romantic love and engaging in thoughtful discussions are more important than just being a zombie-like consumer.

I think if Marx was alive today he'd point out that modern education systems do not train people how to live and how to

think, but rather teach nothing but how to memorize things that don't matter much.

I: How do you feel about the future then?

KM: I am afraid that there will always be a lot of injustice in the world. And there will always be a majority of people living miserable, impoverished lives.

However there's always hope. Maybe if we had a few more Karl Marxes we could shake this world up and make it better. Many people criticize Marx but the essence of what he was saying was correct: we need to care for our fellow man. Jesus and many other wise men of the past said the same thing.

I: But surely the legacy of Marx is our socialistic modern nations?

KM: People don't need handouts. And anyway the state can't afford it. What is necessary is to give people education and jobs so that they can hold their heads high and be proud to be human.

But governments don't create enough jobs. They could if they wanted. They could use the so-called intelligentsia to think of new kinds of jobs and prevent so many jobs from being replaced by automation. Personally I'd rather have a human serve me rather than a machine. But I'm afraid in the future there'll be few jobs for the common man while the rich will prosper as always.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

I: Churchill was the man who helped preserve Britain in WW II as wartime prime minister.

WC: The war was certainly a turning point for the world. Hitler was evil and had to be stopped. If he had managed to take over the world he would have eliminated perhaps billions of people

whose race he didn't like, and he would have also killed any decent man who opposed him.

Just imagine what would have happened had Hitler won. There would have been few intellectuals left, as most were not from his race, and perhaps the world would never have recovered.

Hitler would have turned the remaining people into virtual slaves and they would have mostly lived only to glorify him.

And the most amazing thing of all was he was elected in a democracy. What were those Germans thinking? Why didn't German intelligence stop him when they had the chance? Why didn't anybody stop him?

Personally I'd be embarrassed to be a German if I had lived in Germany at that time and allowed Hitler to do as he wished.

And what if the same thing happens again? What if it happens in America?

I: At the end of the war, Churchill wanted to fight the communists. How do you feel about that?

WC: The communist threat was also allowed to develop. People should have listened to Churchill, rather than voting hĖim out, at the end of the war.

Basically the communists wanted every country to be communist, and were imperialists on an unprecedented scale. They nearly forced a third world war in which the entire planet would have been destroyed.

Amazingly most people were apathetic about the idea of a catastrophic war, and went about their daily business as if they didn't care.

I: But finally in the late 80s the whole thing turned out OK didn't it?

WC: Yes by sure dumb luck. But maybe next time it will be different. What will we do when dozens of countries have nuclear weapons? It's not inconceivable that a country like North Korea

could build enough weapons to destroy the whole world single-handedly. What then?

Basically we live in dangerous times, and no one gives a shit. That's what the problem is.

I: But assuming the US can prevent great powers from developing nuclear weapons, won't that solve the problem?

WC: Well I don't think they can do it. And anyways there are numerous other problems. Did you hear that they recreated the 1918 flu that killed tens of millions? What will we do when scientists of any country can change viruses around and then allow perhaps most of the planet to die?

And you can bet there will be new weapons of incredible destructive force that will be developed and eventually these will become available to every nation.

I: What's the solution then?

WC: Personally, I think it looks so bad, I haven't much hope for humanity in the long term.

People will dream away while the world burns. But you can be sure we'll go out with a bang alright.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

I: Nietzsche was a philosopher who put forth the idea of creating super men among other things. If he were here today what would he be saying?

N: Nietzsche was an elitist. So my feeling is he would say that democracy, or rule of the masses, was against human nature. What is needed therefore is some kind of society in which the

best people rule and the best people are in all the highest positions.

People therefore should be subjected to a barrage of tests to determine their intelligence. Things to be tested would be imagination, knowledge, IQ, EQ, wisdom and so on. I think by far the most important test would be the test of imagination. It might be hard to make such a test totally objective, but by taking the most imaginative people to design the test it would be as good as possible.

After taking the test people would receive a ranking from 1-100, with 100 being the highest. However those in the top or 100 level, should be ranked 1 in 1000, 1 in 10 000 and so on.

As people age they could retake the test and try to improve on their score, but there would be an age "penalty" so that they would have to improve more than most in order to improve their ranking. Hence people would try hard to be more creative, gain more knowledge and experience and such.

Those who rank the highest would be given the top government jobs and of course would be much in demand for

other types of jobs too. Therefore government jobs would be made more lucrative in order to attract the best people.

Probably the best federal government would be an oligarchy of say 9 top people (maybe all are at least 1 in 100 000), who would act by majority vote on all issues. There would be no need for a legislature and local issues decided by local governments modeled on the federal government. Local governments therefore, would also be ruled by top people.

I: Would society be elitist in other ways too?

N: Certainly. For example babies born to high ranking people would result in large tax breaks, but ordinary people's babies would be taxed. This may be cruel to some but the strong survive in this world and this is only the next step in evolution.

Also people would get education based on rank. As the bible says, "Don't throw your pearls at swine", so people of low rank would be given an average education whereas people of very high rank would receive a lot of attention from a lot of good

teachers. It would be useful to have many high ranking people to oversee the education system for elite students.

Also new cities should be built for the ultra elite and they should only mix with their equals. This mixing would inspire many to do great work. Middle ranks would mingle in cities with middle ranks and so on. It might take a while to set up such cities, but you get the drift.

I: But how would such a society be established in say a modern democracy?

N: Well in a non-democracy like China it would be easy to set up. A democracy would be harder and would probably require someone to seize power in a coup and then set it up. In any case once elite government was set up in would have good results for the economy and culture. And low ranking people wouldn't mind. They could mingle with others just like them.

I: What about genetic engineering? Should we create super humans or should we rely on the geniuses we have?

N: It will improve the intelligence of the human race and, let's face it, most of our troubles are caused by stupidity.

I: But what kind of super humans should we build? Will they be elitist and look down on the human race?

N: The human race is a big joke. Our civilization is without meaning. If we made super people maybe they could see the meaning of life and live more happily than we do.

I: But do you hate the human race?

N: I think deep down inside everyone feels their life is futile. It would be a relief for everyone to know that the descendants of mankind in the future will be better people than us.

God is dead and all humans now are lost. We need to make Gods again only this time the Gods will be real and descended from us.

CHIN, FIRST EMPEROR OF CHINA

I: Chin, the first emperor of China was the first to unify China, but his methods were cruel and ruthless. He killed many scholars and others who opposed him. How do you feel about him?

C: Chin made China a great power and for most of human history since then China has been the world's greatest power. But he needed to be ruthless. It was the only way back then. Even recently great powers like the US were formed by violence. Wiping out the Indians and fighting first a revolutionary war with Britain and then a Civil War is the reason the US is the great power that it is today.

I: But surely there's more to life than power?

C: No, not really. Great military power leads to great prosperity for the people of your nation. Look at today's China, they are becoming more powerful and more wealthy and so almost all Chinese are satisfied. Of course some intellectuals think they should be in power, but they are weak and isolated and will not get power. They do not know how to get power. They should join the government and toe the line and work their way up, but instead they just whine and complain that the system is wrong.

È In capitalist systems of today everyone wants power. That is to say they want promotions or they want to run a business so that they can control people and enrich themselves.

I: But what about the arts? What about science?

C: The arts have never achieved anything notable. They are only useful for helping people kill time and glorifying the regime. Science is useful to the military and gives people a luxury life (which keeps them happy), but it too doesn't fundamentally change the basic reality of existence.

I: So you don't feel China has anything to offer the world other than tyranny and military power?

C: Humans are just animals. Like in a pack of wolves, the strongest lead and the weak follow. Of course most people like to pretend otherwise, but we are still just animals.

I: So what should China do with its growing power?

C: I think they should take economic control over the whole world, just like America did in the 20th century. Then they should try to control the governments of other countries and make them do China's bidding.

I: But what will power over other countries give China?

C: To control the world is the meaning of life. The country that controls the world, controls the future. Exactly what that control would entail is up to the Chinese leaders. They can make any kind of world they like.

I: But surely there are many important government officials in China and elsewhere who would like a happier, nicer world. Such people would believe in a global village of good people.

C: You are very naïve. You should maybe read a little more history and study the basic modern realities a little closer. The people who seek power are all the same.

ADAM SMITH

I: Adam Smith was one of the greatest economic thinkers of all time, advocating among other things international free trade. What would he think about the modern economic milieu?

AS: One of the great problems of our modern era is the unequal distribution of wealth. However this problem seems to be slowly correcting itself in many areas. The UN needs to be stronger so that they can go into unstable countries and support a stable government and also keep unstable countries today stable by

force of arms. African nations for example could attract a lot of foreign investment if investors were more confident that these countries would remain stable.

Also more government work should be put in private hands. Ideally you would have many private companies involved in each kind of business and they would compete strongly with one another for the business. Things like taxation, transportation, banking and many other types of business should not be owned and controlled by the government. In fact everything the government does could be done more efficiently by private companies.

And there should be laws preventing big companies from buying up their competitors. Buyouts only lead to less competition and virtual monopolies for big companies. And really big companies should be broken up into many smaller ones in the interests of competition.

Rich countries also have to spend a lot of money to help establish good education systems in poor countries. In the end such investment will benefit everyone.

And I think the biggest thing that needs to be done is that governments need to stop running large deficits. Instead they should run large surpluses

and pay off their debts. Otherwise the whole world economic system will soon collapse.

I: Do you feel though that otherwise governments are doing a good job?

AS: Well actually I'm sure if you asked people, most would say that the economy is the most important thing controlled by government today. But governmental leaders of today are seldom from a business background and they don't know how to run the finances of a nation.

Government should therefore be a plutocracy. And as I said before, nearly all government work should be privatized leaving a much more manageable political system.

Maybe businesspeople all over the world could get together and set up a political party that will appeal to all people.

I: What are your feelings about the future of commerce?

AS: I think quite clearly it will all be done on the internet in the near future. However before that can happen, governments need to change the laws to make internet fraud a very serious crime in order to deter this fraud and give people confidence in the system.

Of course shops of all kinds will disappear and thus downtowns will shrink greatly, malls will disappear etc. as everything will be delivered to your home after you buy it on the net.

And factories will be totally automated which will bring down the price of everything giving us virtually unlimited material goods.

I think then that the one world economy must end in one world government, a government that will not be too powerful, but one that will enrich everyone.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

I: Rimbaud wrote the “Illuminations” one of the best works of poetry while still in his youth before giving up poetry at a young age. How do you feel about Rimbaud?

R: Even in translation, “The Illuminations” is still very good. But I think ultimately Rimbaud gave it up as he was very cynical about the world. I think he thought of the world as an ugly place.

I also think the world is ugly and cruel. There’s no getting away from it.

Life’s a bitch and then you die.

I: Some people say Rimbaud sold his soul as he went to Africa and traded in slaves, guns etc. instead of writing great poetry.

R: Ultimately writing poetry doesn't make you rich or comfortable. It's a real struggle. The only successful poets these days are poets who write lyrics for a musical band.

I suppose Rimbaud thought of poetry as useless. Poetry never changes people's minds about anything; it's just pretty writing. Why pretend the world is beautiful when you are a realist?

I: So you feel modern poetry has no future?

R: I think poetry should be written with more ideas in it. If it read as concise philosophy, then I think it might have a future.

I: But do you feel there's a lot of good in the world, even though, as you say, it is on the whole ugly?

R: Of course there is a small minority who really are good people. But to me most people are little better than animals who can't appreciate high culture.

I'm tired of boring people saying they are good. They work like a slave at some meaningless job and then watch mindless TV all night, and they call it good. Such people loved the Christian religion for it encouraged them to be boring.

To say that some people are good and others bad is a judgment call anyway. I think the world as a whole is fed up with goody goodies.

The key is to be interesting, not to be good or bad. You need to be able to tell people about your life and ideas in a way that is not dull.

Anyone can have an interesting life if they set their mind to it. But to do so you have to travel, read and think, which is anathema to most people. Most people these days are lazy and apathetic. Little better than beasts.

I: But many poets speak about love. Love of humanity, as well as romantic love.

R: I think love is boring too. Every person you like becomes boring after a while. There are more important things in life than love. Things like science and progress.

Of course we all need sex but we shouldn't make such a big deal about it. Sex should be easy to get, just like food. People don't make a big deal about food, why should they make a big deal about sex? Look at the animals; they don't.

The only kind of love I know is loving people for what they stand for. People who are not afraid to stand up and make their unique voice heard.

HENRY FORD

I: Ford was the man who revolutionized industry by inventing the assembly line and making cars cheap for the first time. What would Ford be saying about modern times?

HF: Ford once said that, "History is bunk." I think he was one of the few to realize that we are really in a completely new era, and that the lessons of the past are no longer so persuasive.

I think it's a great era in which we live and the whole world is now trying to take part in the world economy. Our world civilization features prosperity to the degree that was never dreamed of by even people in the 19th century.

I: What are your feelings about the future of automation?

HF: I think just like Huxley said one day it will be unnecessary for people to work but work will still exist to keep people busy. Most

jobs even in our own time are largely meaningless, but people need work.

But automation will mean that even people in poor countries will be able to afford many modern luxuries and conveniences. So I think it's a great thing.

I: How do you feel about mass production of products that are identical?

HF: Well I think computers will allow nearly every product to be made according to the wishes of consumers. For example you could put computer screens on the outside of everyday products such as washing machines and the screens could display anything you wish, like art for example.

I: What about the future of the automobile?

HF: I think cities worldwide have too many cars. They need to build better subway systems now to avoid huge problems in the future.

Also fuel is not a problem. Battery cars are already good enough for inter- city travel, I don't know why some mayors don't insist that their citizens switch to such cars. And there could be unlimited numbers of atomic power plants built to generate hydrogen fuel...

But if businessmen are bold enough, technology already exists for building air cars. The air cars could be guided through the sky by computers and could land on the top of downtown buildings in sky garages.

Also airports for long distance travel could be located downtown and the planes could make vertical landings. Again the technology exists, but bold entrepreneurs with vision are required to make it a reality.

I: So you think our society lacks visionaries?

HF: The vast majority of businessmen are too conservative in my view. There are many things which should be done, but are not. For example they should have private companies give space tours. And they should invest more in poor countries which really

need the investment; I think recently a lot of countries have become stable. Why does everyone have to invest only in China? Why not South America or Africa?

Also businessmen need to pressure government to clean up its act. Get them to stop wasting taxpayer's money and pay off their debts. If they could do this and then reduce taxes, this would be a huge stimulus to business both large and small.

I think business education is partly to blame for making businessmen too small-minded. They educate people with MBAs and such to train them for an easy 9-5 job. But actually what we need to do is train them to be bold entrepreneurs and small businesspeople.

WU ZETIAN, TANG DYNASTY EMPRESS OF CHINA

I: What is your opinion of China's history?

W: Chinese traditions were basically set up to control the people. Most people received little or no education. They just worked diligently and quietly on their farms.

But even the elite, the scholars got there by memorizing many useless things and they had to do this dull stressful work for many years. Then were put into government with a virtual guarantee they wouldn't think of anything except their job and family.

In contemporary medieval Europe, the church had a virtual monopoly on reading and writing and so the people were also ignorant. Some think ignorance is bliss, but I disagree.

It was easier to control so many people by keeping them illiterate...

But there have been some great inventions in the past and now the Chinese are catching up fast. Have a space program and eEverything.

I: What is your opinion of the Tang dynasty Empress Zetian?

W: In fact in the Tang dynasty, Chinese art and culture reached its height. There were many great Emperors and of course, one Empress, Wu Zetain...

An ambitious woman she hung on to power for some years and tried to make men and women more equal.

Women are just as tough as men when they want to be.

I: So how about the future of China?

W: With so many people, it already has the world's largest army. .

In another 30 years I think they will be the dominant world power. Then no doubt they will be very interfering in other countries. Also they won't want to sacrifice any power to join a world government.

It's a strange world we live in. So much power, so many people...

I: Do you think China needs a democracy?

W: There's more than one way to climb a mountain. Basically the Chinese system allows for highly intelligent people to accede to be president, and the country is developing at a maximum pace.

However they need to educate the poor. So many people in China are illiterate. It is almost impossible for people to succeed and hence the economy to succeed with so many people being unable to read or write.

They could have 200 students in the class if they have to (lacking teachers). But all must be educated. After all in 20 years most manufacturing will be automated. So people will need to work in the service industry and be educated to do the job.

I: If the whole world economy grows including poor nations, what will be the next step?

W: No one can predict it since technology is changing the world so fast. We just have to hang on and see if we can be a success.

AUGUSTUS CAESAR

I: The reign of Augustus marked basically the beginning of the great Roman Empire. Augustus' reign featured unprecedented peace and prosperity for the Empire and he set up an imperial

system that was to last hundreds of years. How do you feel about his reign?

A: Until quite recently Western scholars looked at the rule of Augustus as the apogee of Western civilization. If only the Romans hadn't used so many slaves, they would have reached an industrial revolution 2000 years before it actually happened.

I: While many may praise the Roman Empire for its politics, social welfare, military, engineering etc. it didn't achieve much in the way of lasting art, literature, philosophy or science. They mostly borrowed from the Greeks.

A: You've got to understand that to rule a great Empire in those days the Emperors had to silence opposition. Writers, philosophers and such typically criticize authoritarianism, so the Emperors had to silence them in some way.

Italians can be very creative as they showed in the Renaissance, and so too could other peoples of the Empire, but that was not what the great Emperors of Rome wanted.

And with regard to science, as I said, slaves made science unnecessary.

I: But do you feel the Emperors were right?

A: Yes I do. Writing and philosophy does nothing for me. I have my own views as indeed does everyone. Writers just cause trouble and disturbances if indeed they do anything at all.

Few people actually will admit that writers, philosophers, artists etc. ever really had an effect on their lives. We simply don't need them.

Today nearly all the clever people are doing science and it is useful to everyone. In addition science keeps clever people out of trouble for the most part.

I: How do you feel about democracy then?

A: It's no different than rule by kings to me. Just like always the rich and powerful control things and pacify the masses with

“bread and circuses” (i.e. social welfare and TV), just as the great Romans did.

In most democracies, many people, often a majority, don't even vote because they know politics will never really change.

I: Do you feel our world civilization will decline one day, just like the Roman Empire did?

A: It's quite possible. Revolutions, chaos and war are always possibilities. But that's life. For people today though, it's a great time to be alive and enjoy our prosperous world civilization.

I: So you don't think the nature of humanity will change in the future?

A: The more that things change, the more they stay the same. There's nothing new under the sun.

People like to think we live in a totally new era, but even despite high levels of education, I don't think humans are fundamentally different than people of the past.

FRANK L. WRIGHT

I: Frank Wright was one of the greatest architects of all time, believing among other things that buildings should harmonize with nature. What do you think Wright would think about modern architecture?

FW: One of the problems is there simply are not enough good architects. I think that one way to solve this problem is use the

best architects only for exteriors and let lesser architects do the interiors.

Also every city's architects should vote for a "master architect" who would have to approve all buildings constructed in the city. Hence if someone wanted to build an ugly building they would not be allowed. In addition having a master architect would make the buildings harmonize with each other.

Of course you might say that some cities already have an architect or planner to approve all buildings, but what we need is the city's BEST architect to oversee construction. The post of master architect need only require a few hours a week; either the building is approved or it isn't, judging solely how the buildings look. If necessary the master architect could take the unacceptable plan and change it in a rough sketch for them to follow and win approval.

I: Some people think architecture is high art. But will there ever be true meaning to architecture?

FW: I suppose the exterior and interior of the buildings could be covered with giant video screens. You could put all kinds of things on the screens, perhaps moving pictures. People might therefore stop on the street just to view the pictures or words on the screens.

I: How can we make people more creative?

FW: Of course we can make people more creative. We just need to emphasize it more in education. As Buckminster Fuller once said, "Every child is born a genius". Everyone is unique.

I: What will cities be like in the future?

FW: A lot of buildings in a lot of cities should be torn down and rebuilt in a more attractive way. But I think in any case great changes will come to cities. For example soon shops and malls will start disappearing as people do their shopping on the internet. And offices will be unnecessary as people do their work at home.

So there won't be such a necessity for having a large downtown. Hence cities will be more spread out. I think deep

down most people don't like to live in a crowded, dirty city, especially once they settle down. They prefer a nice quiet suburb. Also by spreading out cities the traffic problem will be reduced.

Of course as cities spread out they will encroach on farmland, but new technology to genetically modify crops will reduce the amount of farmland needed.

I: Do you think that we live in a beautiful world?

FW: No, but if everything was beautiful we wouldn't value it. We'd just take it for granted. But all the same I think we are striving to build a more beautiful world. Perhaps one day everyone will be good-looking due to genetic engineering and the quality of architecture, art etc. will be far higher.

But deep down in our souls we are ugly, I think, as well as beautiful, and so we will never stop doing ugly deeds and thinking ugly thoughts.

HUMPHREY BOGART

I: Bogart was one of the greatest Hollywood actors of all time. How do you feel about his movies and Hollywood back then?

HB: Bogart was a great actor but most of his roles were very similar. For example he was nearly always the good guy. A tough, good guy. A man's man if you will.

But I think most Hollywood films back in Bogart's day were lousy and most Hollywood films today are lousy too. But you

know that's life. You find a gem once in a while, but most of life is dull and boring.

However Hollywood has had a huge impact on the world as a whole. Now many people in poor countries want to have a life like the Americans do, and this is making the world economy boom.

I: Do you feel that, "All the world is a stage"?

HB: Yes everyone has great acting skill as far as I can tell. It's boring to always play the same role and say the same things; we all need variety.

Of course some people are better actors than others; if you are really good at playing what others want you to be, you might easily find success.

I: But do you feel we should all try to be what others want us to be?

HB: No, of course not. Just being your unique self may make you interesting and attractive to others as well. Or indeed there are many kinds of personalities you can adopt that will find favor. You can make yourself

into the kind of person you want to be. Most people by the time they reach middle age have chosen to be who they are.

Some people find it hard to change their personality into ways that don't suit them, and I think to do this is not a good thing. Just being yourself is easier.

I: How do you feel about the future of film?

HB: Actually I think today there is too much emphasis on who the actors are and not enough emphasis on writing good scripts. I think most people can appreciate a good script, just as they do a great actor.

But I think in the near future people are going to start downloading films for free on the net and this is going to eventually kill the big studios. Hence in the future films will have

to be made using a small budget and virtually unknown actors. I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing though, as it might well make for better movies.

I: Do you think it's possible that one day films will disappear altogether to be replaced by internet role playing games, virtual reality and such?

HB: I think in a hundred years our world will have changed so much that it would be totally unrecognizable to someone of our time.

I: How do you feel about our time then?

HB: I feel the more people complain, the happier they really are. People these days really are spoiled, and deep down they love it.

People in rich countries have an incredibly luxurious life. The world is full of entertainment and life is good.

I think we have created “the best of all possible worlds”; this world is what we wanted.

ARISTOPHANES

I: Aristophanes was an ancient Greek comedy playwright; perhaps the greatest playwright of all time. How do you feel about him? Do you feel, as he no doubt did, that life is a joke?

A: Of course life is a joke. Any clown can see that life has no meaning, and that all human endeavors are vain and ridiculous.

Unfortunately evolution has favored the survival of very serious people and so life is dull.

With regard to Aristophanes there are very few people as funny as him today, and I think it's a shame. Maybe we need to start a comedy major in universities and train more people to be funny. You know they could study humorous philosophy, the great comedians, how to make everything more funny etc.

I: What would happen if a great comedian was made President of a country in modern times?

A: Well most world leaders are ridiculous people, but they are so boring. At least in medieval times the kings had jesters...

It all starts from the top; if there were funny, amusing leaders the world as a whole would be much more amusing. Most people are really bored by politics.

I heard there was once a joke party in Canada called the Rhinoceros party, and they nearly won a seat once. And also, in Medieval times, they say that the jokers and the clowns ruled cities on April Fool's day...

The problem is that most funny people regard life as a joke and feel there's no reason for them to do anything. It's sad. I think if you are a funny person you've got to make the world a better place.

I: Do you really think we could make everyone funnier?

A: You can make people into anything you want through education and culture; it's been proven.

I: But if we convince people the world is a joke, won't people refuse to work at their meaningless jobs? Won't society break down?

A: Most people already know that life's a joke, only they are afraid to face it. Basically facing reality has never hurt anyone. People will still do their work because they need to survive and they feel they need a lot of material goods. But most people today realize that there's much more to life than work; today people live for the weekend when they can enjoy themselves and have fun.

Laughter is the best medicine for a troubled world in which so many problems are caused by people just being too uptight and not easygoing and relaxed as they should be.

I: But do you think we can joke about things like the specter of nuclear war?

A: Comedians and easygoing people are not the sort to start nuclear war. Wars are caused by crazy, violent and mediocre men who shouldn't be in power in the first place.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

A: I think numerous cash awards should be given to bosses who have a sense of humor and whose employees like them. Also people could nominate funny friends for such awards.

ALAN TURING

I: What is your opinion about Alan Turing, who more than anyone else helped create the modern day computer?

AT: If I remember correctly he was punished for being openly homosexual. The court forced him to take women's hormones to control his desire, and then he grew breasts. Finally the ordeal drove him to suicide.

He was not the first great genius to be persecuted though, that's for sure. Anyone who is different in fact usually has a hard time in society. And geniuses are very different.

I: But how do you feel about computers?

AT: Well at present computers seem to be a wonderful thing. However in the future if computers are made really intelligent it could be a highly dangerous situation, just like in Arthur C. Clarke's "2001: A Space Odyssey".

And people say in the future wars will be fought entirely with computerized robots and such; that might be a bad thing too. Also computers are replacing many human jobs, and that's not a good thing either. But computers allow things like internet chatting with anyone in the world and they generally make our life more luxurious, which pleases everyone. Also computers greatly aid scientists in many ways, and therefore allow humans to do many things we couldn't possibly have done otherwise.

In the 19th century no one really had any idea what computers might one day be able to do, and I wonder if there won't be numerous surprising discoveries in the near future.

IË: But of course all surprising discoveries are done by great geniuses, like Turing. How can we make the most of our world geniuses?

AT: I think geniuses are very sensitive and it's hard for them to survive in this world. Therefore I think we should get the world's geniuses to design tests for young people to determine if they are really geniuses and then send them to special schools where they will be with our geniuses and have clever teachers who they can relate to.

I don't think the present IQ test really tests for genius; it only tests how fast people can use logic. Obviously geniuses use their own unusual logic and the key to being a genius is being imaginative, not jumping to conclusions quickly.

In addition, I think scientists worldwide should form a type of union in which all members must be ethical or lose their right to practice science. Such a union should pressure government not to develop more dangerous weapons and things like that.

I: But do you think geniuses belong in politics?

AT: I think genius is useful in every aspect of human thought. The problem is if a genius ran for political office, most people probably wouldn't vote for this person anyway.

Most people are distrustful of genius because they are not properly educated. We need to therefore change the education system.

I: What about changing democracy?

AT: I don't think we necessarily need to change the system, but we have to change people. Including geniuses. If geniuses were sent to the genius school which I mentioned previously, then maybe we could convince them to seek political office.

MARIE CURIE

I: How do you feel about the life and discoveries of Marie Curie?

MC: Well she achieved many things. She was one of the first really successful female scientists and so has helped inspire many women.

Her discovery with her husband of radioactivity was a stupendous discovery. Of course it formed the foundation for nuclear bombs, but also formed the foundation for nuclear power. I think in the future they will build thousands of new nuclear power plants and so the future of energy for us is no problem.

Indeed many scientific discoveries are like a double-edged sword; they often have negative potential uses. If you play with fire you might build a civilization, but you might also destroy a civilization too. What can we do?

Another notable thing about Marie Curie is she married another genius. This is rare I think, but very inspirational.

I: How do you feel about women's role in the future?

MC: I think there are just as many female geniuses as there are male. So as females study science more and more, it will effectively double the number of great scientists. The same is true of other fields.

Personally I think females make better political leaders than men also. After all women are more peaceful and kind than men. What the world needs today is kind, peaceful leaders, not ultra-tough warmongers.

IË: How do you feel about the future of science?

MC: I think they will discover many new elements that exist only at high temperatures and pressures. Also I'm sure they will discover many new super materials that will have many uses.

It would be nice if they could build super materials that could resist heat and pressure and so investigate our earth's core as well as planets like Jupiter, and even our sun.

I envision a world in which everything is super intelligent. No more unintelligent plants, animals or rocks. Everything can think.

Genetic engineering will create a new race of humans, new physics will make impossible things possible and basically science will be able one day to fulfill all our dreams. The only limit on science will be our imaginations. Maybe they should rename science “scidreams”.

I: But how do you feel about our modern world?

MC: I think we live in times when we can make a difference. In fact I think anyone can make a difference, it's simply a matter of knowing yourself and knowing what you can do. There's much to be done. You can volunteer to help the less fortunate, you can get politically active, you can try to love everyone around you and so on. The whole world's future is still undecided, but if we all try to make it better, the future is rosy indeed. It's the meaning of life to make our world a better place.

I: So you believe in humanity?

MC: Of course. I think if you want to be happy you have to love others, you've got to be optimistic about humanity. Being selfish or cynical never makes anyone happy.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

I: Russell was a modern philosopher notable for his down-to-earth approach to philosophy. What do you think he would say about the state of philosophy today?

BR: I think he'd say that philosophy is failing us. Most philosophers read in university today are boring and hard to read. Few people are really interested.

At any rate the days of having just one rigid philosophy are over. Modern people are more open-minded than those of the past. People today want to explore ideas but ultimately they want to do as they please. If anything could be said to be their philosophy it would be to hope for a better world, have interesting experiences and enjoy life.

I: But don't you feel that philosophy, literature, art etc. inspire people and make them happy?

BR: There is too much entertainment and not enough action. People with talent need to get involved politically and stop daydreaming. Intelligence is only good if you try to put it into practice and see the use of it. You'd call it pragmatism, I suppose.

I: So then pragmatism is your philosophy?

BR: If you want to pin me to a particular philosophy, I'd say I believe in people who have vision seeking positions of power and leading the people with their vision. Maybe we could call this philosophy "Futuropower".

I: But people who have the vision usually do nothing with it. For whatever reason.

BR: Maybe the times we live in are too easy. Nearly everyone in developed nations has a nice, easy life. We try not to spoil our children, but we end up spoiling ourselves.

Perhaps if times were not so good, better leaders would appear. The democratic system is open to all.

But I'm afraid I'm cynical. I don't really see anyone trying to do anything special in politics, philosophy or whatever. I just don't think people care about humanity enough. After all it is obvious the future is very uncertain, but everyone seems oblivious to this fact. People don't even want children anymore; they don't seem

to care about future generations. They only care about buying things and enjoying themselves.

I: So you think we are doomed then?

BR: What will save us? Even if we get a few geniuses to take action as has happened in the past, it all ends up the same after a short period.

Of course you could try and rearrange people's thinking through education, by getting the best of the world's geniuses together to try to mold better programs. But you have to ask why hasn't this happened already? The answer is nobody really cares. If deep down people don't care, how can you expect to improve things? You can't change our basic instincts.

I: But isn't it possible for one person to change things? Look at Karl Marx or Adolf Hitler; they both changed the world dramatically. The only problem was both men were not good and the changes they wanted to make were not in humanity's best

interests. But couldn't one or two really great people really change things for the better?

BR: Well like I said "Futuropower". There is always hope, of course.

EDGAR ALLEN POE

I: Poe was a writer who wrote imaginative stories often about horror and madness. How do you feel about Poe? Do you feel we live in a world of madness and horror?

EP: Well with regard to the second question, yes, I do feel the world is crazy. There is no meaning to this world and in

case we are all doomed to die, so yes it is horrifying. Yes, it is crazy.

As far as Poe is concerned I feel he was a highly imaginative man who didn't know what to do with his talents. He should have been a politician, I think.

I: But if we live in a crazy, horrifying world, how should we live?

EP: Well I think hiding from the facts of life doesn't make one happy. You might as well do crazy things and put some action in your life. There's no point living in a dull routine. Some crazy people I've met seemed to live interesting lives...

And some people seem to enjoy a miserable life full of horrors and pain. If life is a nightmare you might as well try to enjoy the nightmare. After all other people's nightmares are always entertaining...

I: How do you feel about modern entertainment?

EP: Well I think the vast majority of clever people go into science and not enough clever people go into the arts. We need brilliant entertainers to help us get through life.

EPersonally I think most entertainment is boring. Yet the highlight of every movie, every drama is some crazy action. Why don't they just fill the whole show with crazy characters who do crazy things? It would give us all inspiration, as well as entertainment.

I: But do you really do crazy things?

EP: I'd like to get involved in politics one day and try out a few theories. For example if I was in power I would insist that everyone do a few crazy things every week. Every month they would go see one of our agents and explain what they had done. If it was good they'd be rewarded, if bad they'd be punished. The craziest people would be given the highest posts in the land. What fun it would be.

Of course there are many kinds of craziness and we would hope to do things that would be funny and interesting to others. It

would be an inspirational environment. We could have a crazy TV channel, make crazy movies etc.

I: But surely you don't expect people to accept such madness?

EP: There have been lots of crazy rulers in the past and people accepted it. Maybe one could pretend to be normal until you reach power, and then start acting crazy.

But the idea of a crazy entertainment would go over for sure.

I: But of course crazy rulers will bring about the downfall of our civilization, won't they?

EP: We already have crazy rulers. You think they won't end the world one day? I think at the very least we could put a little drama and excitement into the equation. After all the sanest men are the ones who can at least admit they are nuts!

MARTIN LUTHER KING

I: Martin Luther King was a great civil rights activist who championed the rights of American blacks prior to his untimely death. If he were here today, what would he be saying?

MK: I think he would see that blacks all over the world are finally turning things around. In Africa a lot of nations are finally stable and democratic after years of wars and instability. A lot of the wars were the result of Cold War conflict and before that European colonialism kept blacks down. I think many African countries have recently been registering good economic growth.

In America meanwhile hundreds of years of mistreatment of blacks are coming to an end. All that is needed is to make sure blacks get a good education, and then the problem will be solved.

Some people say that black people are lazy, but I think everywhere these days blacks are showing a willingness to work hard.

I: But do you really feel that racism and inequality will ever disappear entirely?

MK: Well it will take some time, but I feel we are on the right road now.

I think in the future everyone will be well off, though of course some will be more well off than others.

I: Do you think that blacks have special talents to give the world?

MK: I think many groups around the world: women, aboriginals, blacks and others all will surprise people by showing that they are good at many things. People are not as different from one

another as many people think. Also I think there are even a lot of white men who are underachievers.

I: How do you feel about black role models?

MK: Of course we need more of those. But actually in America today many young people are influenced by black American culture. These days everyone is dressing like a rapper, listening to hip hop music and so on.

I: So if in the future everyone is more or less considered equal, or everyone is respected at least, do you feel that we will then live in a perfect world?

MK: By no means. History shows that as one problem is solved, another appears. Science for example is becoming dangerous to our very survival, and it will become more dangerous in the future.

So we have to use good people, wherever we can find them, to help keep this world afloat and ensure humanity lives on into the future.

I: If you were President of the US, what would you do?

MK: I think it's important not to aggravate other nations or bully them. The US should keep a strong military but they should not provoke other nations. Instead America should be seen to be substantially helping other countries to develop their economies. US businesses should be given tax incentives to go to the poorest countries and invest.

America should also see that every American be given food, shelter and a job. I think the greatest problem facing all countries today is job creation. If we can't find a use for people then we are truly a selfish, uncaring, sadistic society. Personally I don't know myself how to create jobs, but I'm sure there are lots of people out there who have ideas. Government needs to use as many people with ideas as possible.

Indeed we could offer good jobs to anyone who has ideas to help us.

JOSEPH CONRAD

I: Conrad was a 19th century novelist who wrote deep stories, mostly about Asia. Most of the stories could be considered adventure tales. How would Conrad feel about adventure in this day and age?

JC: I think he'd still say Asia is a place where one can have many adventures. People in Asia are so different from Westerners, not only culturally but genetically as well. In many regions of Asia people are very tolerant for example, and in this respect are more advanced than Westerners.

I: What do you feel is the role of a modern day writer?

JC: I kind of always thought that books provide solace and inspiration to intellectually minded people. It's good to read clever people's opinions about this world. After all there are a lot of clever people in this world; they are humanity's greatest asset.

Some people say that books are old-fashioned, but they still stimulate the imagination in ways that movies cannot.

I: But what kind of books do you feel should be written?

JC: I feel books should contain as many ideas and interesting stories as possible. It is human nature to tell unusual, crazy stories and we all like to hear different ideas. But the writing style should be simple and accessible to all.

I think our world is changing fast, so to have ideas about what should be done today or what should be done make for food for thought.

I: But don't you think that nearly all books cover the same old ground?

JC: Yes, but every generation has a number of good writers even though they may not be famous in their lifetime.

So the problem is making sure that great writers get noticed in their lifetime when their ideas are pertinent to our world. If I was a famous writer I would form a publishing company and only publish writers who were excellent, and who the publishing industry rejected because they were too different and too experimental. Of course there are some publishers like that already, but I feel we need more.

I: So you think the great writers are important?

JC: Some people say that books don't influence them at all, but I feel that books have a strong influence on intelligent people, if only to inspire them. If people feel inspired they can do good work.

I: But don't you think that in fact intelligent people use books as an escape? Instead of doing good actions, they escape into the dream world of books.

JC: Yes, but perhaps without that escape they couldn't get through their life as a lawyer, architect, politician or whatever.

I: But what about books for ordinary people?

JC: I think TV and silly chats with strangers on the internet are not in people's best interests. However school doesn't teach people to love books, but rather to hate them, as they associate books with tests and over-attention to details in the books.

Students are not tested on the latest music, fashion or movies and so they associate these things with pleasure.

CHARLES DARWIN

I: Charles Darwin was the man who finally convinced most thinkers that the race of mankind, as well as animal species had evolved over time, rather than having been created by God. His research contributed to the slow disappearance of religion in developed nations. What do you think about evolution?

CD: Well our society is evolving fast now that's for sure. And it seems that we will soon create our own descendants using genetic engineering.

Some people say it's just change for change's sake; others say that nothing ever changes. However what it means to be human really is changing and when we create super humans, the race of homo sapiens will be at an end.

I think the changes are happening faster than anyone is prepared to admit. After all we are certainly not prepared for super humans. But maybe they will be reality in 20 years time. In our own lifetimes.

I: Do you think capitalism is really the struggle of the fittest?

CD: Capitalism is really just a struggle to get a better house and a better material life. But capitalism is working side by side with science, and science is making humanity more and more fit to survive. Our control over the world increases, and we are learning more about the universe. One day our descendants will go to distant stars... Finally we'll alter the whole universe and then go beyond to other universes. It's all ours for the taking.

I: But surely if we are to create super humans, they will be based, or should be based, on the best people?

CD: I suppose. You know in the past our smartest people were often killed by evil kings, but in the future intelligence will be valued more and more. It's the best human quality, and one which differentiates us from animals.

However if they really do model super humans on the best people, then I think everyone will be satisfied that we are putting our best foot forward.

I think we would all like super humans to be not only super clever, but also brave, honest, kind, generous, creative etc.

I: But getting back to our modern times, don't you think that our society is too competitive and too stressful?

CD: Well they tried communism and few people liked it. It's human nature to compete and to try to outdo one another. It's like a game, and we all want to play.

However in the future perhaps we can get all the material goods we want virtually for free due to automation. Then perhaps we could make a society that is less stressful. But to be honest I think generations of people have thought about how to make our society better and nearly all agree the current system is best. But who knows?

I: But surely for people in poor regions such as Africa and South America, the current system is most unfair? Most people in these regions are on the edge of starvation.

CD: Rome wasn't built in a day. I think the whole world is starting to change its priorities now that the Cold War is over. I think many people are starting to think more about the world on a global basis. More and more help is being given to poor regions. If the regions have stable government as many now have for the first time, then investment and aid can pour in.

Our erĒa is largely one of peace, and I think we will soon see great dividends from this everywhere around the world.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

I: Rousseau was a philosopher who among other things said that savage man was noble, but modern man is not. He also wrote that the arts and sciences have really not changed things much. If he was alive today would he still say the arts and science and indeed progress do not amount to much?

JR: In fact we are worse off today than ever. Science has basically proved there is no God and so life is meaningless. Art meanwhile has nothing to reflect on except that there is no meaning to life.

We were meant to live as savages, not as fat, pampered sycophants.

I: Do you think we should then try to get back to nature and live a simple life?

JR: It's too late. Everyone now is convinced they need a luxurious, boring life. Before we were innocent, now we are ruined.

I: How then should we live?

JR: I think cocaine or heroin is the answer. Personally I'd like to disappear from civilization to say the forests of Columbia where I could indulge in drugs to make me oblivious.

I: But don't you believe in anything? What about love?

JR: Everybody deep down realizes that love is bullshit. But they keep changing partners to convince themselves they are on a noble quest for true

love... But as the novelty of the new partner wears off, they decide they must look harder for love etc.

I: But don't you feel we could somehow improve this world through education?

JR: Some idealists say we can do so, but we are still animals despite our fancy talk and fancy clothes.

Anyway less education would probably be better for us; ignorance is bliss.

I: What about government?

JR: The role of government should be just like in "Brave New World" in which the government keeps people happy with drugs. They need to legalize all drugs and thus bring the price down. They are afraid to do so however, as then no one would want to participate in this silly society.

I: But surely most people don't share your views?

JR: Most people are miserable. They'd be happy to live a life of drug-induced bliss.

I: I think you are wrong. Most people believe our world is progressing. And they feel that one day we'll build a beautiful world.

JR: People have lots of dreams like this. But the fact is we'll never build a beautiful world because we aren't beautiful creatures. We're animals who follow our meaningless instincts like automatons.

The world we have now is no better than previous ones. Just look at surveys of the world which indicate people in many poor, undeveloped countries are just as happy as those in rich nations.

We're going nowhere. It'll never be any different. Life is a joke.

NAPOLEON

I: Napoleon seized power in France after the French Revolution and went on to conquer much of Europe. How do you feel about him?

N: Well I think his plan to unify Europe was a grand design, È ahead of its time. Most people were happy though that he shook up the establishment and allowed ordinary people to become successful.

I: But surely uniting Europe through violence was not the way?

N: That's the way Empires have always been built. Napoleon believed that French culture was superior and he wanted to bring it to others.

I: But how do you feel about France today?

N: France weakened its world position significantly by having a very low birthrate for a long time. Now France is no longer a great power, sadly.

But people love France. It is the number one country in the world in terms of tourism. People worldwide think the French know how to live and think they are very passionate and romantic, and have an interesting culture.

I: What about the future of the world then?

N: People are under the impression that they don't need strong leaders, but our world has many troubles and only strong leaders can solve them. An enlightened dictator is the best form of government. However I'm afraid that it is difficult to set up such leaders in the modern day milieu.

As it is I fear the world will go into slow decline, much like Rome did. Virtually every so-called rich nation is now almost bankrupt (typically one-third of all taxes pay interest on developed countries' debts) and people only care about luxury and ease. And these weak leaders cannot seem to stop nuclear

proliferation. The way we are going now there will be nuclear war eventually.

I: But what do you mean by strong leaders?

N: I mean leaders who know what's right for their country and the world and stand up for their beliefs, not just give money to everyone to shut them up. We need fiscal responsibility above all. Fiscal responsibility will keep nations growing. Otherwise there will be revolution and anarchy.

If economies grow well, then we can start investing more in the developing world and end world poverty. If every nation is becoming rich, there will be a lesser chance of another world war.

I: But how do you feel about war?

N: If there is another world war or even a limited nuclear war, civilization might cease to exist. So there can be no more great wars.

I: Do you think there is hope for one all-powerful UN?

N: We have to denuclearize the world's militaries. It would be best to disband the army of every country and just have one UN army.

Of course there would need to be many checks and balances to prevent power from falling into the wrong hands.

It could happen if the great powers of today: the US, Europe and China, all agree to one UN military. Then the others would follow suit or risk being cut off from world trade.

I think it is inevitable that this must occur if the world is to continue to progress.

ISAAC NEWTON

I: Newton was one of the greatest scientists who ever lived. Among his discoveries was his theory of gravity. If Newton were alive today, what would he be saying?

N: We live in a world of science in which nearly all our progress is directly attributable to scientific discoveries. All other endeavors have been largely a waste of time.

So I think Newton would say that we should be governed by scientists, not by people who know nothing of science.

If we were governed by scientists, we could apply the scientific method (i.e. have an idea and then test it out) to all facets of modern day life. Quite simply there are many experiments that we could do in education, in politics, in how to live and so on that would eventually make big improvements in our lives.

We need to train people to think scientifically and logically and to stop allowing instincts and “passions” and other illogical behavior to guide them.

I: But surely most people don't want to live a “logical life”?

N: People will live according to their culture. We just need to change the culture, that's all.

Government is always telling people what to do. Rule by scientists would be nothing really different.

I: But what kind of scientists will we choose to lead us? How would the system be instituted?

N: Most people deep down love a life that has goals, and they also like trying out new ways of living. Above all everyone has great respect for scientists.

So I think if there was a Science party running in elections, they would usually win. All scientists, including clever social scientists

and economists would have input in the policy if they wished. It would be so good that eventually all parties would need to become scientific to have any hope of competing with the Science party.

I: But many scientists of the past did not have good political ideas.

N: Yes but the idea is to draw on the entire scientific community for ideas, not just the rule of one person. Hence the government would be essentially a congress of wise, retired scientists (young scientists have scientific work to do) who would form policy according to what ideas were proven to be the best.

I: What do you see then as the future of science?

N: Well if we had scientists rule the nations, they could decide which science is good and which is bad. If anyone tried to practice science that was deemed dangerous, they would lose their right to experiment.

I think that many issues such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, new weapons research and such need to be carefully controlled by the scientific community.

Basically science will make everything more intelligently designed and make living a science. There will be many new discoveries, but I think it is somewhat difficult to predict when these things will be discovered and how they will be used. Only by experimentation will we know what is the right path.

J.S. BACH

I: Bach was one of the greatest and earliest classical music composers. How do you feel about his music?

JB: I think even today his music seems strangely futuristic. You know with the harpsichord, the pipe organ and such. It's truly timeless.

I: Bach was said to be a god-fearing man who was dedicated to the church.

JB: Yes, but if he was alive today he'd no doubt be an atheist and probably play music like Pink Floyd or Mike Oldfield.

In Bach's day you had to work for the church if you wanted to make a living as a musician. What great musicians of our day are religious? Musicians are by nature people who enjoy a free, easygoing lifestyle. They want to celebrate life and its pleasures.

I: How do you feel about modern music?

JB: I think today nearly everyone enjoys music very much. Much more than in the past. And I think great musicians inspire people and make their lives more full.

I often think that all the arts are underestimated by many. We live today in a world of entertainment and for many people entertainment is the meaning of life. In the future there will be more entertainment still, and I think it's great.

I: What do you think about the future of music?

JB: I think in the future a lot of music will defy characterization in any genre. It's already happening today with the eclectic music we hear these days.

I: But do you think music should have a message in the lyrics or should it just be pleasing to the ears?

JB: Why not? Many musicians view the world in ways that others don't. So they should use their vision to influence and inspire others.

I: How do you feel about super bands with 3, 4 or more musicians and singers who can all write music?

JB: Well of course many of the best bands were like that; the progressive rock bands for example. I think one should try to get as many good musicians as possible in a band and one should take them not just from one's home city, but from the whole world if possible.

Today many bands really only have one songwriter and most of their CDs contain only one or two good songs. It would be better if they joined forces with others.

I: What do you think about the internet and the future of music?

JB: Well, like I say many CDs have only one good song on them, but now people will only listen to that one good song.

Some people say that illegal downloading will ruin record companies and that may be, but I think musicians will still make lots of money from touring and the internet will allow bands that are not mainstream to get more attention. There's too much mainstream music today, I think. It's the legacy of the big record companies.

JAMES WATT

I: Some say Watt's perfection of a workable steam engine was the greatest invention of all time making possible the industrial revolution and the modern society we have today. What do you think?

JW: Well it was a big invention, but I think it was inevitable. One must remember that the scientific revolution had already begun by Watt's day.

The steam engine might have been perfected, say 30 years later, had it not been for Watt. But it would have been done eventually.

I: What do you think about the future of energy?

JW: I don't see why no government wants to require either battery-powered cars or hydrogen powered cars. Both of course need energy to create the power, but atomic power plants could be built to produce hydrogen fuel or power for the batteries. The technology to run such cars already exists, but governments have done nothing about it.

They already have nuclear power plants throughout the developed world. Why don't they simply build more? If they are worried poor nations will develop nuclear weapons, then why not build the plants for these countries for free and then use the UN to monitor all power plants worldwide?

I: How do you feel about science in general?

JW: I don't think people realize where science is taking us. In the future there will be tens of millions of scientists who will be able to create freaks and genius monsters, super viruses, new dangerous weapons, computers

with a mind of their own, cyborgs and so on. The result will be worldwide lunacy. Then dictators will seize control, then there will be wars of an unimaginable viciousness, and then finally civilization will be no more.

At least that's the way I see it.

I: What about trying to slow science down?

JW: It's impossible to stop. No one wants to stop it. We're all fascinated with the means of our own destruction.

I: So how should we live in these "last days of the species"?

JW: I think we should all live for the day. We should forget about having children; we don't want them to suffer. We should forget about trying to do science; there's too much already.

The only hope is for a savior to come and lead us away from the coming Armageddon. There are people who could save us, but they won't. Instead they'll do science and make a lot of money etc.

In my view the best intellectuals are the ones destroying us. They build their weapons of destruction and then walk away from the responsibility.

And the thing that gets me is no one is worried about the end of the world. They all act as if nothing is going on. They worry instead about how much money they'll make in 5 years time...

I: But surely disaster is not inevitable. There are a lot of good people in the world...

JW: People these days don't read much history. If they did they'd realize that all civilizations come to an end. In the case of Rome's

fall, it took over 1 000 years to recover. The last days of Rome were much like our present day, everyone living luxuriously and selfishly. Getting their cheap thrills before it all comes to an end.

I don't think there are many good people; there are just a handful of good people, and most of them can't succeed in modern times anyway. Look at politics; if someone stands up and says the world sucks, and explains why and gives solutions, no one will listen.

I: So you think people are stupid as well as lazy?

JW: No one who we consider clever wants to do anything about the world, so I think we're all stupid. We put on airs and imagine that we're clever even though we know nothing and have no guts to do anything. Why did Rome fall? Were many geniuses trying to save it? No one who was so-called clever did anything at all.

SIGMUND FREUD

I: Freud was the founder of psychology. What would he be saying if he was alive today?

SF: One of the other individuals being interviewed (Editor's note: see Alexander Bell) mentioned that one day we will be able to read people's minds. If that is so, there are many implications for psychology.

For one, we could create a society in which everyone went to a psychologist or psychiatrist every month. Such doctors could learn all about the patients and help them with their life.

In fact, if everyone was honest with everyone else, we'd have a much better world. Perhaps we'd give up talking altogether, and just mind read.

In our current world so many people are afraid to tell the truth. They are afraid of reality. It's a bullshit world. But all that might change with mind reading.

I: How do you feel about (Ben Franklin's) idea of tax breaks for good behavior?

SF: It's most excellent. People would be under pressure from their psychologist to be more honest, kind etc. because they want the tax breaks.

I: What are your thoughts on dreams?

SF: I think we should work more on dream stimuli today. Perhaps a machine could ask you as you wake to relate your dreams. Also our dreams could be stimulated by a recorded machine which used brain waves.

Who knows where this would lead?

I: What do you think about mankind's so-called "dark side"?

SF: If everyone had to reveal their mind to everyone else, I think they would improve a lot. But still people would need to be more open-minded than they are at present in order to accept people as they are.

I: But do you think humans are becoming more and more unstable as time goes by? Don't you think mind reading would drive many insane?

SF: I think mind reading will solve ALL the world's problems. Think about politics for example: politicians would not be able to lie, and so we would only elect people who were genuinely good.

Regarding the second part of your question, some people might have trouble getting used to it at first, but I think it would soon become second nature.

I: But we live in a meaningless world and most people can't handle that.

SF: It's always been a meaningless world, regardless of whether one believes in God or progress or what. If you can keep an open mind in this world, then you can have fun and be happy. That's meaning enough for most, I think. We all have an instinct to survive.

MOTHER TERESA

I: Mother Teresa was considered to be one of the kindest, most useful people who ever lived. Do you think her goal of eliminating poverty and suffering will ever be realized?

MT: Through nearly all of the time humanity has spent on earth, everyone in the tribe or group was looked after. I can't understand why that's not the case today. Maybe we need to bring back some kind of tribalism, with the rich in the group taking care of the poor.

Even in the US, the world's richest country, there is plenty of poverty. I think it's just unacceptable. And there are many people with no jobs. Without a job, people can't live with dignity. Also everyone in the whole world needs to above all be given an education, or there will be no hope of eradicating poverty.

I: How do you feel about someone like Mother Teresa running for political office?

MT: It might do a lot of good, if only to put pressure on other parties to be more charitable to the world's poor. But sadly, politics is a dirty, corrupt business. There are a lot of good people in the UN, yet poverty is even more widespread than ever.

I think it would be easier to change the world by changing the culture itself, without relying on politicians. People like Mother Teresa could recruit millions to help the poor for example, if they tried hard enough. People could also be convinced to donate more money if they really believed progress was being made. Start with one country and then move to others;

that would be a good plan. If they could totally fix one country, then a lot of people might be persuaded to join in the building up of other nations.

I: What will it take to satisfy poor people?

MT: It's not necessary to make them rich. Just give them the ability to provide for their own needs through education and that would be enough in the long term.

I: Why, in your view, are people so uncaring?

MT: In the past everyone was religious and claimed to care about their fellow human. But there was poverty. And now, people are educated in our modern world to be selfish. In school they are told basically that greed is good. But there is no school subject called "kindness". We need to send all educated people for a year or two to poor countries to work with the poor (i.e. educate them) and understand their plight. A lot of people aren't by nature cruel or selfish, but they feel so distant from say, Africa.

It's the same with people who've never owned a pet; they often dislike animals. We can't help others if we don't understand them or know them.

I: So basically people are ignorant of the travails of the poor?

MT: Yes, but if they went to the poor countries to help, then they would feel much happier about the world. They would feel they've made a difference and they could see progress happening. There's no better feeling than to help someone and become a better person in the process. Kind of like a wonderful romance.

I: But how would we pay for sending millions of educated people to poor countries?

MT: Actually in most poor countries, it is very, very cheap to live. And anyone can afford the airfare. So government need not budget a lot for it.

LEONARDO DA VINCI

I: Da Vinci was one of the greatest minds of all time. His genius spread to engineering, painting, anatomy and many other disciplines. His most famous work was the Mona Lisa and I read that some guy recently got a sex change and then had numerous plastic surgery operations so that he would look like the Mona Lisa. How do you feel about that?

LDV: Well to me his paintings were very realistic and ahead of their time, but today they are nothing special. All great geniuses are people of their time.

I: How do you feel about modern painting?

LDV: To be honest, I don't think it is any longer a useful art. Photography has replaced it for the most part. Attempts by artists to do abstract art these days is largely ineffectual and boring.

So I'd say artistically minded people should make movies or write books.

Of course there aren't many good movies or books these days. We need more good ones.

I: Returning to the subject of Da Vinci, he had his dark side. You know this business of cutting up corpses, rumors he was gay, building siege weapons...

LDV: Da Vinci did a lot of things that others were afraid to do or too closed-minded to think about. Few men in history have been so open-minded and willing to experiment.

I: Some people call Da Vinci a Renaissance man, since he was skilled in so many disciplines.

LDV: Well most great geniuses only make a discovery or two in their chosen fields. Maybe they should stay in one field for only 5 years or so and do what they can, and then go on to other fields. Or perhaps we should train scientists in two or three fields, not just one major.

Getting the most out of our geniuses is one of the world's dilemmas. We often assume that geniuses know what is best for themselves, but they need help sometimes. Perhaps we could set up a test for genius, and then all these people could meet each other on the internet and inspire one another. At present most great scientists, for example, have few friends they can correspond with.

I: How do you feel about great scientists designing dangerous weapons?

LDV: Some people imagine that we should live in a world of peace. In fact most people hope for peace. But there will always be many clever people who are violent, seeking power. There will always be war.

For example those Vietnam war era protestors were all vehemently against the war, but sometimes wars have to be fought. Few in the West wanted communists to take over the world, after all.

Also great scientists know that if they don't help invent weapons, someone else will. Scientists are only human after all; they have to make a living.

I: But surely designing weapons for an evil regime is unacceptable?

LDV: Yes, in theory. But different scientists have different beliefs. Sakarov, in the Soviet Union, for example. When he helped develop nuclear bombs for the USSR, he thought he was doing the right thing. As Albert Speer once said, "It's hard to recognize the devil when he's patting you on the back".

EPICURUS

I: Epicurus was an ancient Greek philosopher who believed that one should live a life of pleasure. Many people interpreted his teachings as hedonistic, but really what he meant was to live a balanced life of moderation. How do you feel about Epicurus?

E: Pleasure is different for different people. But to live your life for something other than pleasure is crazy.

World civilization is slowly coming around to the idea that we should live for the weekend, live for holidays, rather than worrying so much about our meaningless careers.

Most sci-fi writers think that the world of the future will be one of pleasure, and I think this is good.

I: But don't you think it's empty to live simply for pleasure?

E: It's what most people want. Life has no meaning, but our instinct is to survive, so one might as well try to be happy.

I: But what about clever people? What about science?

E: I think science exists to give us pleasure. Some scientists say they enjoy boring experiments, but if they discover something that is useful then we are all glad.

With regard to clever people, they want pleasure, just like anybody else.

I: But how much pleasure should one seek?

E: Well one should try to maximize pleasure. For example if you feel that 9 beers on a weekend night is best for you, then it is best. If 12 beers makes you unhappy then don't drink 12.

One should go about life experimenting as much as possible to determine what is best for you. For example you might find that you want to live in Africa after visiting the continent, and so you should do that. But you'll never know where is best for you to live unless you travel the world.

Similarly you should read and learn about everything so that you can know what you like best. You have to have an open mind though, and really try to experiment with everything.

What I've just said is virtually common knowledge, but most people I've met close their minds about many things. They cannot tolerate or accept many things they decide, and so they miss out.

The world is big and we should love it all.

I: But surely most people don't want to open their minds to this degree?

E: I think in the near future people will be much more open-minded than today. You can see it happening now. Young people want pleasure, they want to experience as much as they can.

I: But if everyone is so open-minded, won't it be difficult to stand for anything important? Won't they be even more apathetic about world events than they already are?

E: We don't need to stand for anything. It only leads to war and discord. We need a civilization that features respect for others and perhaps even love of others.

Good Will Ambassador

By Vernon Frazer

dogfights tracking bouncers
the vigilance verve sounds corpus

monologue grappling
emblematic rudiments
burble in stylus echelon

skillful understatements
embraced the handrails
a scheming terminology

emanating number wax

*

halt-eaten marriages broke
bored with lathered enthronement

(skylark in Havana tangles)

strut their swizzle
knocking the barmaid

and requiring cleavage dissonance

depth inclusions
tethered festivities

cornered synods the faithful enigma

Pigging Out the Bay

slipping waffles like rotors poop
connects the surging eyeballs

postured

between seepage

and

bouncer molding

at reborn gyms the action locked
needling chimeras to laceration carts

frying on the display

indulgent verities

all facets foul

once paid the dogcarts faction verve

posture posing a verb garage

lovers groping in polyrhythms

culminating from a bloodbath

dead baptism
its theremins leaking
into
galloping shirtfronts

ratcheting the Havana flub in four

*

as the finer fingermarks
will hairbrush worn elk lava

moral seepage felt rampant
found bubbled salutation gab

sparing empty songbirds and easels
eyeballs imploding
raised disconsolate lipstick
and vests
to tearing class

and sloshing dustbin brew

canvasses released darkening alliteration

the desire and waxwork

bored seawater, escaping

felonies with reflectors leaking

scarves foiled lackey tonic

the elusive panacea beaten

while victors bubbled seawater

firearm repression, testicle lipstick, cliché glitter

Taking the Step Beyond Logic

leave a corruptible synthesis

dragging a quotable quandary braggart

to lodge for a tentacled longing

past measures undue

the pleasure unfolds

as given or taken

from perspective

the dislodged grate

churns acquiescent fluid

*

seminal dust cling erupting

interior dialectic facades finagle

transparent pastime image

a lucidity haven

under invitation

despite the botch in the lag

a noticeable currency crept

back into fashion's bearing

only one leg at a time

*

antithesis in passion

blooms the opposite's cry

and swagger

the ultra gleam

shaken

to crust

blankets

the sly stagger leaning

past the air of a shared control

enters the face of its feel

Under Watch in the Skillet

paranoid cooking oil

increases margins of largesse

an apprehension

wound serpentine

coils to enduring

scales that long for a lubricated kid

to goat or stew

sheepishly, an attribute

enjoyed

over cold blue heat

all the wool pulled into water

*

invisible threats suggest voices

coiled still but tense in the window, ready

to boycott

displacement envy

withering just a slither away

a quick strike

along the paned ledge

toning down the burner number

every dial a whisper

too loud

or

prelude to a hiss

from distant rooms that release the scream

Seasoning

and the treetops turned,

adagio cadaver sphinx

innuendo dimmers their grim facade

a cleavage

torn from mythological slipping

side pockets

under the levered heel

*

no rummaging

for definition turned

mirrored face

in plangent jeopardy
for custard indecision
no wipers left to dry

*

a revealing secret
flashed before the second concealment
awaited

since the ancient stones

crept under leather
simmering dimly inside
a parallel to sure rebuke

*

the treetops turned and