

# **DRAFT**

## **Notes from No-man's Land**

### **An Autobiographical Essay**

**7/2/15 –**

My Lord God....I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

--Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

**I was born (March 14, 1933) in New York City in Lying In Hospital, the city's obstetric facility, on Manhattan's East Side, although my parents lived in Jackson Heights out on Long Island, then a moderately up-scale "co-op" (today's condo) apartment neighborhood for bright young marrieds. They were mid-westerners, themselves, but had settled in New York after marriage, as many professional-class young couples did back then.**

**Much about their early married life is mysterious to me, starting with the marriage itself. My mother (b. 1896) came from Winfield, a small south-central Kansas town; that side of the family set foot to ground (or rock, if one wants to believe the now-debunked legend) in 1620 (my nine-times-great-grandparents were the John Alden and Priscilla Mullen of Mayflower and "speak for yourself, John" fame) and followed the frontier west in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Dad's earliest American ancestors arrived, also from England, ten years or so later, but further south, in Maryland, and eventually followed a parallel course, ending up in Missouri. Dad (b. 1894) first saw daylight in Columbus, Ohio, and grew up for the most part in Kansas City. He died in midlife (in 1954 at age 59), just as I was beginning to get to know him on an adult level (I was just barely 21); and my mother was for whatever reason very closed-mouthed about those years, as she was about a number of things.**

Dad had served in World War I in France, fortunately for himself and me avoiding combat; since he had a bachelor's degree in architecture, he was posted to the Corps of Engineers and deployed behind the lines. After the war he finished his master's (both degrees from Washington University in St. Louis) and then with an architect friend, returned to Europe, where they bought a flimsy three-wheeled motorcycle with a sidecar and did a sort of great circle tour of architectural landmarks, fraught with breakdowns and various adventures, but eventually ending up in Paris. My mother, meanwhile, had started college in the little Methodist institution in Winfield, and then transferred to Northwestern University, in the Chicago suburbs. She would never tell me when, where or how they happened to meet; but I have seen a clipping from the social page (such as it was) of the Winfield newspaper announcing a visit from my paternal grandparents to my maternal ones sometime just after the war. In any case, when she graduated from Northwestern, she went (as nicely raised young ladies then did) on a grand tour of Europe with a group of sorority sisters. They passed through Paris on their way to the boat home. Apparently by pre-arrangement, she left the group, and she and my father were married in the American Cathedral in Paris in 1922, with my father's friend as sole witness.

I asked her several times in later years why there? why then? was it an elopement? She firmly denied the elopement, but would not answer a word to the other two questions. The eerie thing is that decades later my father's sister left me a packet of letters he had written to her and their parents in Kansas City narrating his travels around Europe with the motorcycle. They were full of incident and local color, funny stories of the bike's many breakdowns and the troubles of getting it fixed, of meeting people and seeing the sights, right up to a short time before getting back to Paris...and contained not one single word about my mother, any expectation of seeing her, any sense that he missed her or had had any communication from her. He had to have been keeping the imminent marriage from his family....but why? And why was my mother so reticent about it, right up to her death almost three-quarters of a century later? I never discerned any great signs of cordiality between the two families, and their social (and no doubt economic) circumstances differed, certainly: Grandfather Simpson taught mechanical arts in the Kansas City secondary school system, and Grandfather Light was the president of the local bank, a major frog in Winfield's small puddle. Was that it? Was it pure snobbery? Or something else? Well, in those days a lot was kept away from children's ears.

In any case, the newly-weds took up residence for most of a year in Paris – in the Place des Vosges, the gorgeous seventeenth-century square built for Henri IV and his wife, Marie dei Medici. It had become in the 1920s almost a ghetto, easily affordable even to the penniless student. (My parents' apartment

was next door to one occupied not all that long before by Victor Hugo.) That *quartier* has since been gentrified, and a few years ago I noted with pleasure that “their” apartment was sold for several millions of Euros. Eventually they returned to the States, and as up-and-coming young professionals frequently did then, elected to settle in the Big City.

The 1920s were good times for them: my father was beginning to forge an excellent career, and a second career/avocation as a highly-skilled artist in water-colors. My mother, as was the usual thing then, did not work. They made friends with a number of young couples in similar circumstances, at least one of which remained close to them for life, and proved also to be very good to me, as time was to show.

What I was given to understand (again, my mother’s reticence came into play) was that their successful and happy young married life was suddenly interrupted by the stock market crash and ensuing Great Depression that began in October of 1929 and went on into the Second World War. Architects get little work in depressions, and though my folks tried pretty successfully to keep the facts from me, during those years there were times when we were close to being broke. I believe my dad at one point had to borrow some money from his parents to keep us afloat; that is not something that would have been easy for him -- nor for mom.

My obstetric costs were in fact paid for in a way by public funds: in 1932, Robert Moses, who was the incoming Parks Commissioner for the city in the administration of the newly-elected and later famous mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, announced a competition for the design of a city park to be built on a long-disused dump-site immediately behind the New York Public Library at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. My dad’s design won the competition (and has remained essentially unchanged to this day) and a prize of \$300, then a considerable sum, which more than paid my hospital costs and probably kept us afloat for some time. Bryant Park, as it is called, and one other major building in the city, are the last-remaining physical evidences of my dad’s architectural career.

In retrospect, I can see that the depression must have had a tremendous emotional impact on him. His sister, my aunt, who lived to be 98, told me in later years that he had been quite different as a younger man; much merrier, more care-free, and less compulsive about being in control of things. I can remember even in the ‘40s and ‘50s, long after he had found the very good position that he deserved and that seemed to assure our well-being, his obsession with niggling little expenses: my leaving a light on in my room if I left for more than a moment, for example. Even though they tried to keep it from me, he and my mother argued about finances (i.e., expenditures) on occasion, sometimes very bitterly. I tended to take her side, tacitly, and it may well have showed. That would have

been hard for him, though I certainly didn't think of such things at the time. My mother had been raised in much more affluent circumstances than he, after all; and while roughing it as young marrieds no doubt had had a certain charm for her, that must have worn off over time.

For the first 5 years of my life, we followed the job market, such as it was. Fortunately, I guess, there were only the three mouths to feed: despite the eleven years between my parents' marriage and my arrival (this delay another occasion of my mother's reticence) I had no older siblings, and my delivery was difficult for her at age 37, so there would be no more children. Dad built a couple of post offices for the federal government under the New Deal's Works Progress Administration, which was probably no easy nut to swallow, he being a republican; that work took us to Washington for a year or two, and then it was back to New York, where we fetched up in the suburbs, this time in White Plains, north of the city, in half of a two-family home. I think his painting must have given him comfort and helped keep him sane in the midst of his troubles. Then, just as money was running out again, in 1938, he got an offer from a Colombian entrepreneur to design an office building in Bogotá. He jumped on it, we put what furniture we had in storage, gave the cat away, packed a trunk or two, and embarked on a small passenger liner, the distant ancestor of today's cruise ships, down the east coast, through the Caribbean, and on to Barranquilla on Colombia's northern shore.

My memory bank begins in a very fragmentary way just before and during that trip and year's stay in Colombia. I can vaguely remember a shred or two of the White Plains we left: the house and street, a little pedal go-car I had to leave behind, the green shirt-and-shorts suit I hated but had to wear to have my portrait painted (*gratis*; the artist's husband had been the recipient of some work my father was able to channel in his direction – I still have the painting and have come to terms with the color).

The other memory – in fact, it's only an image – must have been from the summer of 1938. We took a trip down to the shore in Virginia Beach; in those days before the Interstate that meant hacking one's way down US 1 through the metropolitan area and New Jersey and so on, necessitating at least one overnight stay in a tourist home (motels were as yet unknown). What I remember quite clearly (though why I should remember it is anything but clear) is sitting in the dusk on the porch of such a home, overlooking a lawn where fireflies were coming out, and down onto a sidewalk and street. Couples passed sedately on the sidewalk, taking in the evening cool, the men in long-sleeved white shirts, sleeve garters and neckties and straw boaters; the women in skirts well below the knee. One the street the cars went slowly by, almost all black, with vertical

windshields and grills, spare tires hanging off the back. It was a different country; today, every time I see a similar photograph of a street scene from the 1920s or 30s I marvel that I was ever there.

The trip down to South America is pretty vague, though I picked up a couple of life-long traits from it: first, a dislike for heights, because in several ports of call we embarked or disembarked down to a dock or a small boat far below on an open and unstable-seeming wood and canvas staircase sort of contraption in which I had no faith at all.

For years I've been fond of saying I learned to swim in the Panama Canal, meaning that I was in the swimming pool of the ship as we went through the canal. Even that story turns out not to be literally true: the fact was that that I learned to swim in the swimming pool of the ship all right, but not as we went through the canal; that happened on the return trip a year later. But it was on the trip down (and in the pool) that I learned the second of my "lessons," I discovered to my chagrin that parents lie. My father would get into the pool and then urge me, sitting on the edge, to jump in and swim just a couple of strokes into his arms. Of course, as I did this, he would retreat a step or two so as to get me to swim farther. I caught him at it, and was vehement in protestation; he naturally denied it. Case closed.... seemingly no big deal; but my remembering it so clearly and so long afterwards means, I suppose, I had absorbed an early notion about the difference between language and reality...and parental veracity.

Getting from Barranquilla to Bogotá was also an adventure in 1938. There was a narrow-gauge railway from the coast up through the jungle into the Andes, but that entailed a several-day affair, and was risky. Or one could take a plane, also risky. Most of the planes, made of corrugated aluminum, were propeller-driven Ford tri-motors, (one in the nose, the other two under the wings). As it chanced, we were able to get into a somewhat more modern Lockheed (early low-wing, twin engine model). To get to Bogotá we went through, not over, the Andes; the peaks were much higher than our navigating ceiling). Below, the jungle was unexplored; and if a flight went down, no one came to look for it; there would have been no way to extract either survivors or bodies. My only visual memory of that part of the trip is looking out a porthole at the towering, bare triangular peaks we were going by, with nothing but clouds beneath us. The caption of a snapshot my dad took of me in the cabin of the plane says I was bored (good parenting), though this first of my many flights was arguably the most dangerous I would ever make (a couple of later ones while I was in the army may have come close).

The pilots were young, blond, Nordic types, very dashing. It was only while we were in Bogotá the ensuing year and the war broke out in Europe that

people put two and two together: Feldmarschall Göring had farmed out a lot of his future Luftwaffe pilots to the brand-new South American airlines (which had, of course, few or none of their own) to give them flying time and experience. They were long gone by the time we left Bogotá a year later; we took the train down to Buenaventura on the Pacific.

Bogotá in 1938 was in most respects a city in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Geographically, it is close to the equator, but at an altitude of 8700 feet and thus chilly the year round and frequently cloudy. Central heating was unknown, so indoor temperatures tended to run in the 50s, unless one was close to the fireplace or a charcoal-burning stove. There was (most of the time) electrical service and running water. But the tap water was undrinkable, pumped up untreated from the Magdalena River in the jungle below; every respectable dwelling had its own 20-gallon potable water bottle and dispenser, refilled every few days by truck. The streets were paved in the downtown, but even there one drove at great risk at night especially, since for the *peones* the only means of acquiring actual money was to steal the manhole covers and sell them back to the city every morning for a few *centavos* each. When you parked a car on the street, you reflexively put the windshield wipers in your jacket pocket to prevent their suffering a similar fate. The city was dominated on one side by a peak that ascended another couple of thousand feet and was capped off by an imposing basilica, and on the other by a savanna several miles across that eventually dropped off into the Magdalena valley.

The water question had occasioned what was almost an international incident just before we got to Bogotá. The Roman Catholic seminary there had established an exchange program with some comparable American school. A few days after the American contingent had taken up residence, one of them was told of the pollution problem by someone outside the seminary. Not having noted any potable water bottles there, he inquired of the priest in charge.

“No,” he was told, “we use the water from the taps.”

“But isn’t it polluted?”

“Oh yes, certainly, but that’s all right. Every year when the bishop comes, he blesses the taps.”

In the end, the delegation returned to the States. However, apparently no one ever seemed to get sick at the seminary.

Besides the cold, the other big problem was the fleas. They were ubiquitous, and no measure known to man could discourage them. Regardless of age or sex, nationality, creed, or station in life, everyone had them. For some reason, they didn’t attack either me or my father – not that we didn’t have any, but just that we didn’t seem to be to their taste. On the other hand, they descended on my mother *en masse* and with great glee. Before going to bed at night, for

example, she would bathe head to toe, examine herself and her nightgown, strip the sheets and check them carefully, and remake the bed from scratch. Within 30 seconds, invariably, she would feel her first bite. This and her inability to acquire enough Spanish to communicate adequately were the major banes of her existence.

The great blessing of the sojourn for her, however, was the question of servants. Growing up affluent in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Midwest, she had been used to nannies and house servants (black, of course). Obviously, as young marrieds in the 20s and then in the Depression, that was no longer possible. Now, we had a cook and two house- maids, all live-in, each receiving a salary of \$8 American a month, and the privilege of eating (in the kitchen of course) what we ate. (This last was an American practice, for which we were roundly criticized because it spoiled the locals and would no doubt in time cause social unrest.) Margarita, Conchita, and the junior housemaid (there were several in succession) considered me to be the Little Señor, whose will was to be honored in every instance. I remember once, my mother away for an hour or two, when I went out and wandered around on the savannah, returning home covered with mud and worse, and my shoes soggy alive with creepy-crawly beings that defied description. I was fascinated, but I don't think the maids ever really understood my mother's outrage. The cleanup didn't seem to discourage the creepy-crawlies much; they washed down the bathtub drain with no complaint and doubtless back into the savannah.

I got on well with the maids, and what with them and various neighbor kids of my own age rapidly picked up Colombian Spanish, to the point where my mother could not distinguish my voice from the others when we kids were all playing together. Of course I was at the ideal age for second-language acquisition, as I learned much later, after getting into language teaching. My dad also managed to make his way; I think he had some gift for languages (he had learned a good deal of French in the engineers in World War I). My mother just couldn't seem to cope, but fortunately there was a large enough Anglo-American community in Bogotá for her to make friends and get socially involved. There were a fair number of Anglophones: some diplomatic corps families and a number whose husbands worked for the various oil exploration companies or a few other business enterprises (one of our friends imported Firestone tires and Coca-Cola). We had enough children among us to have an Anglo-American school, and that was my first educational experience. There was a company in Baltimore that sent educational materials to expatriates all over the world, and the various mothers functioned as faculty (I don't know how, but I think I somehow avoided the ultimate disgrace of having mine teach me in class). Being all of us the children of pretty well-educated parents, we made great strides; when

we got back to the States, I found that it wasn't until third grade that I ran out of stuff I already had learned in the one year in Bogotá. That presented my parents with a small quandary, my second-grade report card back here being all As and a couple of Bs, with a big shining D for deportment, representing my impatient lack of self-control. I was already a year ahead of myself, chronologically (there was no kindergarten offered in Bogotá), and they couldn't bump me up another grade, so I learned to pass the time sketching battleships and war-planes on scrap paper, and perfecting my spit-ball-throwing technique.

In Bogotá, the need for escape from the cold corresponded nicely with the occasional break from classes, and many of the Anglo-American families decamped twice a year for a week in the hot country. Some time earlier an enterprising Englishman had built a small resort hotel down several thousand feet on the banks of the Magdalena River in the jungle. Besides the warmth and exotic flora and fauna (various small apes and condors in the area, not to mention the insect kingdom; orchids grew wild) there was a swimming pool and a tennis court....and a bar. This last presented two great temptations. First the barkeeper, who was a gregarious sort with kids, had a pet boa constrictor – a small one, and not dangerous. And second, it turned out that if you would write your name for him, he would give you free lemonade. Having only recently acquired that skill, I was pleased to put it to use. My father was less so when he received a bar chit for \$25 at the end of the week.

There were other things to see, back up the mountain. The one I particularly remember was a working salt mine, in which the salt walls of the cave reflected light as if they had been so many diamonds. To get there (or anywhere else) from the city you took a road through the mountains that was barely a lane and a half wide, frequently with a cliff going straight up several hundred feet on one side, and straight down a similar distance on the other. There were no guard rails; only every so often a cross beside the road, where a car had gone over.

We also went to see various fiestas in some of the villages that weren't too far away. The big deal in Bogotá was Easter, or rather Good Friday. The Conquistadores had imposed their religion on the populace in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and it was still practiced pretty much as it always had been, indigenous superstitions overlaid with medieval Catholicism. Bogotá is in fact the name of the Inca chieftain who was perforce converted (the actual name of the city is *Santa Fè de Bogotá*, "Holy Faith of Bogotá"). Shortly thereafter, a huge ebony cross weighing at least a ton was sent to the city from Spain, to be placed in the cathedral under construction. Somehow, no one knows how, between Spain and Colombia, it acquired a carved ebony Christ (larger than life-size). This was considered to be a miracle; the whole enormous crucifix became an object of veneration. It

ended up somehow in a glass case in the basilica on top of the mountain, two thousand feet up a precipitous road (a trail, until the 20<sup>th</sup> century) from the city. Every Easter week it was brought down to the city, to be returned on Good Friday on the backs of the faithful, who carried it up -- on their knees. Four centuries after Luther, in Bogotá that still got you a lot of indulgences.

*Reflection: I don't know what my parents thought about all this; on both sides I came of solid Protestant stock. Obviously it was all over my head. My dad's parents were Episcopalian (though on his mother's side they had been Presbyterian), my mother's family were Methodists. She was only too glad to become an Episcopalian, as in those days that represented a step up the social ladder. They had some sort of lowest common denominator belief in God, but were no more than moderately observant back in the States, going to church maybe one Sunday a month at best, until my father joined the choir when I was in high school, and never talking about religion at home that I can remember. I think there was a Bible in the house, though I can't recall its ever being consulted. All this was pretty much the norm for educated Protestants in the 1920s and 30s. They had me baptized at age 2 or 3 in Chevy Chase, outside of Washington (I have no idea why the delay -- although Episcopalians were notoriously casual about such things in those days). The one thing my folks did say (later on) was that they wanted me to be free to make up my own mind when the right time came. I don't remember that we ever went to church in Bogotá, though we may have -- there was a Protestant church of some sort, in passing before which the maids used to cross themselves, walking always on the far side of the street.*

I have almost no memories of my friends among the Anglo-American community, fewer still from the neighborhood. As a family, we did make two friendships that lasted past the year there. Cecil and Josephina Schuler were an interesting couple: he was Canadian, the Firestone/Coca-Cola importer, and she was Italian-born, the sister of Gian-Carlo Menotti, the well-known opera composer (we later got to see a number of his operas in New York on the strength of that association). And Hugh and Eleanor Hotchkiss were pretty romantic figures to me; he was an oil prospector, and had wild tales to tell of the jungle (and later on of Saudi Arabia, where he worked for Aramco in the 1950s). They had a daughter just my age that I couldn't stand, but I didn't hold it against them. Much later, when I was out of college, they ended up buying our house in White Plains, and Hugh taught me to drink coffee. In Bogotá, I had been invited into

the house of Colombian neighbors, and offered coffee (which was routinely drunk there by upper-class children). I had been well-schooled not to refuse any such invitation (doing so would have been extremely rude); somewhat intimidated by the strange surroundings and not offered any sugar with it, I found it very yucky, but forced it down anyway. That left me with a strong dislike for the taste that lasted until my graduate school years, when Hugh finally managed to talk me into trying it with sugar and cream. He made the point that I should learn to like it black, because (as in his field experience) there would be times when the extras weren't available. I did manage to wean myself away from the cream, but to this day, no sugar, no coffee.

By the summer of 1940, my dad's work had petered out, and of course the war had broken out in Europe. The trip home is a bit more vivid in my mind than the one down; for one thing, we did go through the Panama Canal this time (and I duly swam in the pool), and for another, since there were German submarines active in the Caribbean, the sides of the ship were painted with enormous American flags and illuminated at night with floodlights. For whatever reason we escaped torpedoing and made it back to New York unscathed.

We fetched up again in White Plains, this time renting a single-family house. My memory of that time is still very fragmentary. From the year or two we were there, I can only recall a couple of shards: sneaking downstairs early one Christmas morning and being panicked back up and under the covers by the life-sized cardboard target for a bow and arrow set that depicted a charging animal, and also receiving a child's set of skis (our house sat on a hillside). It only took a few falls to persuade me that my parents perhaps did not in every instance have a good read on my best interests.

There was still little work to be had for my dad. By then, America's involvement in the war was becoming inevitable, and he did get an off-and-on job helping design military installations. As it happened, he was off doing one of those and my mother and I were visiting her parents in Kansas on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941; I have a vivid memory of hearing the news reports of Pearl Harbor that Sunday afternoon on my grandmother's radio. (Strangely enough, I was also in Winfield on the August day in 1945 when the war ended; a couple of my cousins and I drove all around town in their father's pickup, blowing the horn and throwing confetti in the streets.)

Visits to Winfield always excited me in those days, largely because my uncle, who had stayed in town and owned an electrical appliance sales and repair store, had a Lincoln Zephyr sedan, fitted with hand-operated air brakes, as he had been crippled by polio. On ruler-straight Kansas roads he would go at speeds undreamed of by a well-brought-up eastern boy. (Much later, on visit

after I had earned my driver's license, I borrowed another car of his, a Mercury two-door which had had its convertible top removed and replaced by a Plexiglas dome rather like the cockpit of a fighter plane. With Kansas having no speed limits in those days, I managed to get it up to 116 mph on the speedometer. Alas, no witnesses, and it was a story I had to be careful about retailing.)

My uncle also had a fair-sized collection of guns and despite his lameness, was an expert shot. With a .22 caliber rifle under his right arm, he could throw a penny up in the air with his left, and knock it gally west before it fell. Once I almost managed to shoot myself in the foot with one of his rifles, which disgusted him beyond words (he was not a patient man), though the tendency seemed to run in the family: my cousin John, his son, once shot himself through the calf while out hunting jackrabbits and walked home on it with no lasting ill effects.

Back home in White Plains, my dad began to feel ill; no definable symptoms except generalized malaise and lethargy. He eventually went into St. Luke's hospital in New York for observation. No overt causes were discovered, and eventually he was released. Looking back now, I'm sure it must have been what would be seen today as clinical depression: we discovered years later when his estate was probated that at that point, as a 46-year-old professional man of reputation, with a wife and child and no job, his total financial resources amounted to \$125 in the bank.

Providentially, just then he was offered a job as a staff architect for the National City Bank of New York (now Citibank Corp). For the first time in over a decade he had a steady and decently remunerated job. And as the bank grew to become an international corporation, he ascended the professional ladder and became, by the time of his death, its head architect world-wide. By his late fifties he was re-achieving the professional status and reputation that he had earned and lost in the 1920s, was directing the work of a considerable staff and travelling to several foreign countries. But in 1942, that was still a long way off.

On the strength of that job with the bank, we were able to buy the house (single-family, this time!) in what was then a nice, middle-middle class, neighborhood of White Plains, in which I grew up – or at least went through most of my childhood and adolescence. The neighborhood was called "Battle Hill," because in the Revolutionary War, it had served as Washington's headquarters for a week or so during his retreat northwards early in the war after being chased out of New York City by the British. A few blocks from my house there were still open fields, and we kids could play cowboys and indians or cops and robbers, taking cover in declivities which were in fact the remains of trench works from that period. Today, of course, it's all solid housing developments, as are a couple of then large estates nearby. I grew up ice-skating on a pond and practicing

golf on polo field that belonged to the Felix Warburg New York banking family. They graciously allowed the local urchins free access.

About the time of our house-purchase, my continuous memory begins. There are still lots of lacunae, but something like a story-line was beginning to emerge. And it's about then that I slowly began to understand myself as an individual different in several ways from my friends (of course, I was far from putting the perception in those – or any – terms).

I'd had a sort of best friend the year before our final move, which was really only a few blocks, but either it or something else brought that to an end. On Trenton Avenue, our new address, a couple of doors down I found a new companion. Gerry Flintoft and I were in some ways a strange pair, though we did hit it off well. He was Catholic; his father was of Polish descent, married into an Irish family, and Gerry's maternal grandmother, Mrs. O'Shaunessy, whose house they lived in, ruled the roost. We all, Gerry's parents, Gerry, his younger siblings and I, walked in fear of her disapproval; and like those of many strong-willed and principled Irish Catholic matriarchs at the time, her disapprovals were frequent. Looking back now, I suspect she had a hand in the invention of Catholic guilt; certainly she distributed it liberally to her family. Fortunately, she tended to remain in her own rooms on an upper floor, so if we kids kept our voices down, we were relatively safe. But you never knew...

In those days, middle-class Irish Catholic kids were brought up very strictly and in a very conservative brand of Catholicism. Gerry, being the oldest, was a good conscientious son; he expressed to me at one point his sincere regret that I, a non-Catholic, would never get to heaven. His brother Richard, just younger enough to be despised by Gerry and me, was the (red-headed) scamp of the family, and Mary Claire, quite a bit younger, was pretty much a pale nonentity.

By that time I was being sent off every week to Sunday school in the Episcopal church we attended (my parents off and on, which I found very unfair in view of my enforced servitude). In the 1940s one could still discern in the Protestant Episcopal Church, as it was then called, the intellectual framework of traditional Protestant theology... without of course being unduly disturbed by any suspicion that it might make some difference to anyone's life. So the prospect of eternal damnation did not give me much of a pause.

There were two Episcopal parishes in White Plains, Grace Church, which was "high church," in today's terms Anglo-Catholic; and St. Bartholomew's, which was "low-church:" no smells or bells, but using the standard liturgical forms and with Holy Communion (not "The Eucharist") offered only once a month. We were St. Bart's folks, and that eventually turned out well for me in

that they had a good pipe organ and an excellent organist/choirmaster who had trained up a very good choir. To this day for me, Anglican liturgy and musical settings are what proper worship is all about. My father joined the choir first (he always liked good music and could sing decently well) and then I also joined in high school years after my voice changed. Even though most of the service was spoken, there was enough in the way of canticles and anthems to give all of us in the choir an excellent foundation of skills and pleasure, and an exposure to the great tradition of English choral music. That chance to sing and to learn some of what, after all, is one of the glories of Western Christendom, changed my life.

Singing in St. Bart's choir also provided me with what remains the funniest thing I've ever seen in a church anywhere. Mind you, this was a classic gothic revival church, well executed, with stone floors, pillars and all, wonderful acoustics, excellent stained-glass, and all the fixins'. It was spring of my senior year in high school, Easter Sunday of 1950. There was a packed house at the 11:00 choral service (Christmas and Easter are the high holy days of Anglicanism); my father and I were in the choir, and a friend and classmate of mine, Teddy Rutherford, was the crucifer (who carries the cross in the processional and recessional and acts as head acolyte), all of us in robes, surplices and full regalia. Everything went well until the offertory. We had at least eight ushers passing the plates (actually brass platters), and in those pre-inflation days, not only did the kids put in their pennies and nickels, but even adults frequently contributed in quarter and half-dollar coins rather than with paper. The choir sang an anthem while the collection proceeded, and at the end, the organist improvised while the ushers marched up the center aisle to offer up the proceeds. They arrived just in front of the chancel steps, and while Teddy came to meet them with an even larger platter, on which they were to pile theirs, the organ swelled in preparation for the doxology. Though Teddy was not tall, he was a wrestler and strongly built; but somehow, as he did his about face and started up the steps with the column of loaded platters in his extended arms, something went wrong: there was an instant of instability and then the whole pile landed on the floor, platters and all.

It was the loudest indoor noise I have ever heard, like an explosion in a cymbals factory. The effect was paralytic: the organ stopped dead, the rector, in the act of turning around to receive the offering, froze, as did we all. In the shocked, dead silence that ensued, the last dime spun to earth somewhere over behind the pulpit.

And then, in an awed and reverent tone that nevertheless was audible through the whole sanctuary, Teddy Rutherford whispered, "Shit!"

The organist struck the keys, the ushers scrambled to gather up the loose coins, and somehow we all managed to sing the doxology with straight faces. I don't think anyone ever said a word to Teddy about the incident.

At home, we'd always had good music in the house to some degree. My mother had been a very good pianist (almost professional in her younger years) and we had a piano. She tried to start me when I was very young, but I fought it off. Later, in junior high, I got started on the violin, and actually pursued that for several years until practicing got to be a bore and various other high school activities crowded it out. My parents listened religiously to classical music on AM radio – there was such a thing in those days – New York Philharmonic concerts broadcast live and in full on Sunday afternoons, the Bell Telephone and Firestone Hours on Sunday evenings (actually half-hour shows, but with world-famous instrumentalists and vocal soloists). For some reason we didn't listen often to the Metropolitan Opera on Saturday afternoons; those regular broadcasts had only just begun in 1940. Now they're all that's left. The Firestone and Bell Telephone programs eventually migrated to television; but my father until his dying day would not allow a TV in the house.

We had a very primitive AM receiver and speaker, but as a kid I didn't know much better. I lusted after advertisements in the National Geographic magazine for Capehart or Stromberg-Carlson consoles with what was just then getting to be called "high fidelity" sound, the new FM radio technology, and record changers (for 78 rpm discs of course), but that was dreamland; dad would never have spent the money. I had to wait until my senior year of college before I got my own record-playing equipment (LPs and eventually stereo discs) and started my record collection.

But singing in the church choir with an excellent and demanding musician in charge, actually performing music on an adult level, was exciting. In my (high school) senior year I was lucky enough to get to sing the Bach B-minor Mass with a county-wide adult choir and orchestra under a well-known choral conductor from the New York. For a 17-year-old, rehearsing and performing next to some hot-shot amateurs and professional choristers from the city was exhilarating (interestingly enough, six years later I ended up studying voice with the tenor soloist of that performance, Lucius Metz .) For the next twenty years or more, wherever I was, even in the army, I was involved in choral performing. And right up to the present, I rarely go through a day without classical music.

Another way in which I found myself somewhat set off from my friends had to do with youthful activities: while of good size (actually, that was a problem, I have always had to fight my weight) I was not well coordinated as a kid, so

sports were far from a pleasure. Gym classes at school were a trial, especially the several times a year when our prowess in various maneuvers was assessed. The ultimate and regularly repeated disgrace for me was watching my better-built classmates going up a 30-foot rope-climb hand over hand with amazing ease, knowing that shortly I would hang at the bottom, incapable of even getting started. Similar disappointments attended my career in team sports – frequently last to be chosen (and with good reason, I could well understand) – and truth to tell, not particularly discontent to be stationed far from the action in deep right field where I could do only minimal damage. A good place to be: pretty low in stress and leaving one free to day-dream.

I took refuge in books. My father, sick of reading me the funnies, had pretty much taught me that art even before first grade, and I took to it with delight. Both my parents were themselves great readers; we conversed a lot at mealtimes or doing chores or in the car, but evenings they were both immersed in books. And they frequently talked about what they were reading, and included me in the conversation (as they did later in all the adult conversations they had alone or with friends). Early on after exhausting a whole shelf of kids' books, I had discovered *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (with *Through the Looking Glass* and the Tenniel illustrations), and by third or fourth grade I was deep in boys' adventure stories (violent exercise was fine with me as long as it was vicarious): John R. Tunis's great series of what today would be young adult novels about post-adolescents breaking into big-time sports (anyone for wish fulfillment?), Howard Pease's stories about boys being abducted to the South Seas, and speaking of that, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and *David Balfour* (for some reason I never really got caught up in *Treasure Island*). It wasn't long before I was into more adult things: the complete Sherlock Holmes (and a broad spectrum of lesser murder mysteries and spy stories), such historical fiction as Kenneth Roberts's wonderful novels about the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars, some Dumas in translation (especially the d'Artagnan series; most American readers don't know that *The Three Musketeers* is just the first installment of a ten-volume saga of the reigns of Louis XIII and XIV, itself just a minor part of a sixty or seventy volume and remarkably accurate fictionalization of the whole sweep of the French monarchy), Nordhoff and Hall's *Bounty Trilogy*, the C.S. Forester Horatio Hornblower series, a lot of Jack London and other sea stories, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *The Yearling* (which I must have read at least five times), and so on. I still have my copies of all of these, and am not above being seduced into revisits even now. And I early fell in love with P.G. Wodehouse. As a kid, I would get completely lost in all of these: my mother used to tell the story of my tenth birthday, when the adult 26-inch-wheel bicycle I had longed for for months was being delivered to the front door of our house,

right past the big living-room window behind which I was lying on a couch reading. I never looked up.

Another stimulus for the imagination was radio: in the 1930s and 40s, every weekday afternoon from 5 to 6 one of the New York stations broadcast four fifteen-minute segments of kids' serials: "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy," "Captain Midnight," from whom one could obtain a secret decoder as a means to decipher what are now called "spoilers" of upcoming action (I never availed myself of this offer because you had to send in a label from the sponsor's product, Ovaltine (a breakfast drink), and no power in heaven or on earth could lure me into swallowing a mouthful of the foul stuff), "The Green Hornet" (whose faithful Japanese valet Kato was, between a Friday and a Monday in early December of 1941, curiously and wonderfully transmogrified into his faithful *Philippino* valet Kato), and a fourth serial which tended to vary. All over the greater New York metropolitan area the streets cleared of stickball games or whatever promptly at five; you could set your watch. Then as one's bedtime receded with age, there were the long-anticipated pleasures of "The Lone Ranger" and "Gangbusters" (half-hour shows!) waiting a couple of nights a week. All of these were more, not less, wonderful than their eventual television replacements because they brought your own active powers of visualization into play, and could thus be more readily prolonged in the imagination. My parents made spasmodic efforts to get me to go out and play more, but neither of them had ever been athletic, and both were themselves avid readers, so in the end they let it slide. So, for me a lot of life took place between my ears, and that was just fine: my fantasies always ended up happily.

I think my reading habit especially, which led to a habitual vicarious experience of life and a taste for imaginary worlds, probably contributed to the sense of "difference" or "distance" from many of my contemporaries I was beginning to feel, and to a certain self-consciousness. Or perhaps this was in some way, a precocious self-protective device. The self-consciousness was in any case reinforced by a cartoon series, which were a regular feature of my mother's copies of the women's monthly *Ladies' Home Companion*. The cartoons would show a child indulging in some infantile bad habit, being observed by an owlish sort of bird perched in an adjacent tree. The caption would read, "This is a watch bird watching a [let's say] nose picker." In the upper right corner would be a small panel, with the bird this time looking straight out at the reader, over the caption, "This is a watch bird watching you!" Constantly reflecting on what I was doing and how I was doing it became second nature. I think every now and then even today I find myself being both self and watch bird.

If I was not ordinarily "one of the gang," I still managed to have a few good friends. Gerry Flintoft had always gone to parochial school (and I of course, to

the public school that was only a block or two away), but we were almost always together afterwards reenacting the war battles that filled the news, especially after the allied invasions of North Africa and Europe (by the time of the Normandy invasion we were a bit too old for that, and I was following the front with pins on a large-scale map of France). And it was courtesy of Gerry that I got into golf: the O'Shaunessy house had a big side yard, and Gerry's late grandfather's wooden-shafted clubs were still in the garage. We started chipping around and I've never stopped. Gerry did, emphatically: at the end of that first summer (probably 1946) we went out to play our first round at a public course (cost: \$0.50 each). On about our fifth hole, Gerry managed to slice a ball into the adjacent fairway and hit a man. We walked off the course, and as far as I know Gerry has never set foot on another.

Eventually he went off to the brand-new Roman Catholic Archbishop Stepinac High School about the time I was starting to trek across town into 10<sup>th</sup> grade (senior high, finally!) at White Plains High, and we completely lost contact. But by then I was becoming buddies with, oddly enough, another Catholic boy, Bernie (pronounced "Barny") McNulty. Catholics, it seemed, came in many varieties: he and Gerry were about as different as you could be: same Irish heritage, same faith -- same parish, in fact (there were two R.C. churches in White Plains, one for the Irish, the other for the Italians) -- but Barny seemed somehow to have skipped most of the Catholic guilt. His parents were a pretty merry couple (his father was partner in my all-time favorite manufacturing enterprise, McNulty and Finckelstein, Inc.) and though clearly devout, were pretty relaxed about things, it seemed to me. Barny evinced Catholic propriety in only two ways that I could discern: first, he would check his watch compulsively on Saturday nights so as not to eat (or more importantly, drink) anything at all after midnight (which made it Sunday, and you had to fast before going to Mass) -- and second, he hotly denied ever masturbating. Of course, no one believed this obvious impossibility for a moment -- the more so as he went through a string of girlfriends, and seemed as interested as any of us in doing as much with them as possible. It would have been interesting to question Gerry on this topic. I don't imagine he would even have allowed the question.

The thought of "doing much with girls" interested all of us -- except me, I should say. By ninth grade or so I was beginning to realize that another way in which I differed from my friends had to do with girls: for my friends, of course, they were an increasingly urgent preoccupation...but for me, not so much. I didn't *dislike* girls, I got along with them well, I had some very good friends-who-were-girls in high school; but there was no physical attraction whatsoever.

(Maybe that's why we were friends: they may have sensed they had nothing to fear from me.)

But boys, on the other hand... In physical terms my own self-image has always been pretty low. I've never been particularly good-looking, and have always been on the chunky side. As a kid, I was also pretty much a klutz, the despair of my father, who inherited his father's manual skills, and of course had the engineering training all architects received in those days, and knew how to make things work. I was hopeless when it got more complicated than replacing light bulbs. As to muscular development, I've never wanted to put in the time or effort necessary – and there were always books to read or music to listen to. But, or perhaps therefore, as far back as I can remember I've always been acutely conscious of male beauty. Looking back now, the strange thing is that this never seemed strange. It hadn't particularly bothered me as a kid; nor did it at this point even, going through puberty. It simply seemed a matter of esthetics; boys were more fun to watch, and their bodies better looking, than girls. That seemed perfectly natural.

*Reflection: Looking back now, I realize that a certain intuitive understanding was evolving in my mind: there existed something like a club, which was open to the golden guys – the fortunate group to whom physical beauty, athletic talent and popularity had been given. That group comprised what the French would term a beau idéal: they were not to be resented, not even envied or emulated (because that would be a hopeless pursuit), just admired. That I did not belong to the club was a disappointment, obviously, but not a devastating one (after all, not everybody gets to be a Greek god); but it was a natural and even virtuous thing to enjoy their existence. It seemed a kind of inspiration. I recall one hot summer afternoon when a group of us perhaps 11- or 12-year-olds were down by the Bronx River (river is a misnomer; it was a brook that widened out at a couple of points to form a swimming hole of maybe 20 feet in diameter) and most of us went skinny-dipping. I was much too bashful to do so; so I sat and watched. It all seemed quite ordinary: in the natural order of things, they were doing what they were supposed to, and so was I. To admire beauty is a moral obligation.*

However natural and normal all that seemed to me, I sensed also that such ideas were considered shameful by others, and thus not something to be widely shared or discussed. I think part of my awareness of this shame may have derived from an earlier incident in our church. When I was 10 or 11, a new rector came to us, a single man. I have his signature still today in a *Book of*

*Common Prayer* that I earned back then for reciting the whole Catechism by heart (a requirement for getting confirmed the following year). He seemed a nice guy, but disappeared from the scene rather abruptly. It turned out that he had been discovered in what used to be called compromising circumstances with the H. twins, boys of about my age. My sense was that anybody getting mixed up with the H. twins ought to have his head examined, they being notoriously trouble; but of course at that age I had no very clear idea of what the actual problem might have been. My father evidently felt called by the occasion to sit me down and explain the facts of life. I would give a considerable sum today to have a recording of that conversation; it must have been hilarious. I came away with no very clear idea of what had taken place, nor indeed about the proper reproductive process as it was supposed to be, but with a couple of firm impressions: first that my father knew even less about sex than I did, and also that it was all very embarrassing. On the other hand, two clear gains emerged: the H. boys also disappeared from the scene, and that was the end of my sex education. (Of course, in those days such a topic was never addressed in schools. And Episcopalians, of course, were far too well bred ever to mention the subject of homosexuality in church. )

But aside from that vague sense of things, it somehow never occurred to me to *worry* about what we now call same-sex attraction. We kids laughed about “fairies” or “queers” (then a much more pejorative term than now), but without having any idea of that those words meant, beyond a dim idea of mincing walks or artificial mannerisms – and of course we had never seen or expected to see anyone like that in real life. The idea that one might actually *be* a fairy was unthinkable, something out of an alternative reality. I may as well say now that my coming out experiences, to myself and then much later to others, lacked suspense or trauma; no tearful nights, no desperate prayers to be made straight, no dramatic interviews. Whether it was my naïveté, the reticence of the times, or the grace of God (no doubt mostly this last), it all happened very slowly and really quite painlessly. In junior high and even high school, I was completely clueless. Nor did I ever run into any homophobic harassment or bullying (or see anyone else being victimized). I was kidded in a friendly enough way on my lack of athletic skills (and later on in college on my devotion to classical music and singing), but in the late 1940s and early 50s the subject of homosexuality seemed to be unthinkable, off the radar. That some of us were not sexually interested in girls passed for the most part without comment. There were a number of girls I hung around with or worked with on the high school paper or the choral groups, and that sufficed for “cover” in those innocent days.

The most notable of these “covers” was my classmate Dorothy Dean, who was indeed, then and later, a remarkable person. She was a pastor’s daughter,

small of stature and intimidatingly brilliant of mind, the first black valedictorian in the history of my high school. Considering that the class numbered just under 500, that was no small achievement (I finished up 12<sup>th</sup>). She went on to Radcliffe, then to graduate work at Harvard and later a Fulbright to Holland; and after her death in 1986 was the subject of an eight-page article with two full-page photographs in the *New Yorker*. Certainly the most famous member of our class, if you count notoriety. The fame, as a writer and editor for various upscale magazines; the notoriety in that she made herself a major figure in the gay artistic *demi-monde* of New York, a friend of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andy Warhol, Sam Wagstaff and various others. (She was not herself homosexual in orientation, and even had a child out of wedlock early on, but liked gay men, many of whom were attracted to her acerbic wit and irreverence for any and all norms. (As a small sample: one of the names she liked to call herself was “the Spade of queens.”)) I think I was her closest friend in senior year; we walked and talked a lot. The high school was located on the far side of town from my house and her home lay in between; though it was a two or three mile walk, I preferred that to riding the school bus.

Our friendship was somewhat of a problem for my mother. She was clearly glad that I was friends with a girl; but that it was a black girl, even an extraordinary one, not so much. That surprised me; I think I was pretty completely colorblind at that point, and my parents had never verbalized any racial or religious prejudice. My mother especially had professed great affection for the black servants her parents had had when she was young. It took me a while to get used to the double standard she had grown up with (servants are one thing, friends are another); but I steadfastly stuck with Dorothy. Alas, I never saw her again after commencement. Despite the wide swath she cut in New York in the 1960s and 70s, she was never able to feel at home in either white or black society, straight or gay, and the AIDS epidemic transformed the whole atmosphere of the LGBT community into something foreign to her. Eventually she drank herself to death at age 54. I wish I had known about her difficulties, not that there was much I could have done.

Meanwhile, in high school my life went on more or less normally. White Plains in those days was a somewhat segmented small city (55,000 population): about half were white families (with a large preponderance of Protestants) most of whose fathers, like mine, commuted into the city to work; a major fraction was of Italian/American Catholic descent, whose parents or grandparents had immigrated to work on the creation of the reservoir and aqueduct system feeding New York City, and the remainder was African/American. I had good friends in all those groups, and there were city-sponsored youth activities and social

outlets where we all mingled and had a good time. I remember a black classmate, Harry Russell, who was very hip, and who tried to teach me how to walk “loose,” as he could. Despite his patience and best efforts, I could never catch on.

One thing that seemed insignificant at the time proved not to be. I had been pretty fluent in Spanish when we got back from Colombia, but in those now far-off days there were close to no people of Hispanic heritage in the city, or for that matter, the county. Without the chance to use Spanish, I lost command of the language almost completely. Now, in ninth grade, we were encouraged to begin language study – just the *wrong* age, but that’s American education for you. French and Spanish were offered. Obviously....I chose French. For why? The French teacher was a very nice woman we kids all liked; the Spanish teacher was ugly and unpleasant. Eleven years of education and a thirty-six year teaching career depended on those simple facts.

At about this point, some friends of my parents began to assume real importance in my life. Jack and Helen Hill were one of the couples who had befriended dad and mom in Jackson Heights before I was born. In those days Jack was a young (actually about ten years younger than my dad) lawyer on his way up. He had been a poor kid from Maine who was bright enough and a good enough athlete to get into Amherst College, where he did well in both departments (he was in fact the captain of the football team for two years running, 1924 and 25, and even today one of the playing fields is named after him), went on Columbia Law School and joined an excellent law firm. About the time we went off to Colombia he was invited to join the law staff of the Air Reduction Company, already a nationally known chemical corporation, and today, as Airco, a major player worldwide. He rose up through the ranks and by the time I was in high school had become president and CEO of the corporation, complete with limousine, private DC-3 and crew and I don’t know what all else.

Just before my family’s time in Bogotá, the Hills bought a little farmhouse and some property up in Armonk, about 10 or 15 miles north of White Plains, and either then or just after our return they asked my dad to design an addition to the house, which about trebled the space, so as to accommodate their anticipated social responsibilities. It’s a gorgeous location, then almost completely rural, sitting at the head of a little valley that goes all the way down to Long Island Sound, and in those smog-free days you could see on across the Sound to Long island itself. They invited us up to dinner fairly frequently, and Jack took an extremely cordial and friendly interest in me. He and Helen had never been able to have children themselves (they did adopt a daughter when I was in junior high school) and I think in some small degree I may have been the son Jack wanted

and never had. He passed me down some clothes on occasion, and more importantly to me, discarded golf clubs. Once in a while, oh joy! he'd invite me to play a round with him one or another of his country clubs. I was pretty much in awe of him, which worked out nicely, because he admired my golf game, which had come along nicely by then. He was a typical late-in-life business golfer, his only failing.

Helen also was generous, and indulged my musical interests. She had season-long tickets to the NY Philharmonic Friday afternoon subscription concerts, and if the program didn't happen to interest her or she had a conflict, she would pass me her ticket, and I would skip out of school at noon, hop a train to the city and take her seat, hearing some wonderful concerts and some legendary soloists. My parents figured (correctly) that I was gaining more than I lost from the missed classes.

Those Friday concerts were also a glimpse into another and vanishing world. Those in attendance were for the most part rich, elderly ladies who (and whose ancestors for two or three generations) had been subscribers all their lives. I would take the train in to Grand Central on 42<sup>nd</sup> street, and walk up Fifth Avenue to 57<sup>th</sup>, turning left for the two blocks across to 7<sup>th</sup> avenue, where Carnegie Hall is located. The ground rises a bit in that westward direction, and from the corner of 57<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> I could behold, extending up that rise and on as far as the eye could see, a line of ancient Rolls Royces, each waiting to deposit its fragile cargo. There were literally scores of them; I don't know where else in the world one could have found such an assembly.

At White Plains High School, as large as it was, I was able to get a good intellectual grounding. Public education then was a far cry from what it's degenerated into since. Of course, we students were sorted out by ability, and in the college-bound track we were a pretty bright bunch, and had mostly quite demanding teachers. I felt well prepared for a selective college, certainly on a par with those of my eventual classmates who had been at the top private schools like the one where I ended up spending my teaching career.

One of the most demanding of my teachers was Miss Avery, with whom I had a course in creative writing for second semester of my senior year (the very first elective course ever offered). She was a very popular member of the faculty, especially with boys, being young (she must still have been in her twenties) and....stacked. The red-blooded lads who generally inhabited the far reaches of the classroom all took front-row seats in her class, the better to appreciate the view. Alas, Miss Avery became Mrs. Steck halfway through the semester, and mourning prevailed in the front row.

Our principal work in the course was the writing of two major productions, one an original short story, and the other a research paper. This was back

when it was still permitted to tell the unvarnished truth to a student, and there was no grade inflation. Miss Avery made it clear in a pleasant and constructive way that my fiction was mediocre at best, and far from original. (I had received a similar assessment in musical terms some years earlier when my mother prevailed upon our Bogotaño friend Josephina Schuler to take one of my (very) adolescent efforts in composition to her brother Gian-Carlo Menotti. His reaction was less considerate, but did not lack clarity.) They were right: I may have an original bone somewhere in my body, but it's pretty vestigial. I've never even been a persuasive liar.

Mrs. Steck, however, proved more receptive. For my research paper, I had chosen a subject I knew at least a little about, and loved the chance to investigate, the history of operatic performance; and it turned out that she, too, liked serious vocal music. A true marriage of minds! Or had marital bliss inspired generosity? For whatever reason, I pulled an A+.

Sometime in my junior year I had gotten to know a boy who would be very important to me for some years to come. Rick Bergren was a class behind me, but because I'd skipped kindergarten he was only six months younger. He was good looking, popular and athletic, built on the general lines of Michelangelo's David -- in short, an unconsciously gay boy's dream -- and a very sweet, open and empathetic person. He was perhaps not quite as academically facile as I was, but had a plenty good mind, and, because he had no need to be otherwise, was less guarded than I was. In fairly short order, I developed what I realize now was a major crush on him; the amazing thing is that I absolutely did not have the foggiest notion that that's what it was at the time. I just knew I liked him -- a lot -- and it was fun to hang around with him. He was straight (very much so); but for whatever reason seemed to like me, too, so we became pretty much best friends. As time went on his parents and mine started playing bridge together as well. They were Baptists, though not the Bible-pounding type. Their house was at the opposite extremity of White Plains, but I had just gotten my driver's license, and my parents didn't go out socially a lot, so that worked out pretty well.

Rick was going steady with a girl; I think her name was Sheila. Though quiet, she was pleasant enough, quite good looking and generously endowed. Fortunately she didn't get upset with my playing Sal Mineo to their James Dean and Natalie Wood. (The film hadn't come out then, of course. Thinking back, I'm reminded that Rick did look more than a little like Dean, though without the sullen edge.) Perhaps Sheila's easy acquiescence was because we somehow managed to slip into a routine of all going somewhere together, with me chauffeuring and them in a clinch in the back seat. At the end of the evening, Rick and I would drop her off, go for a coke and fries somewhere and kid around about

how far things had gone (Rick's Baptist morals forbade drinking and smoking, but nothing above the waist, it seemed).

Whatever the rules he operated under, he took his faith pretty seriously (later pursuing the ministry and becoming a pastor and a chaplain at two colleges). Underneath his good humor and frequent playfulness he was a really thinking, as well as (in the other sense) thoughtful, person; I'll bet he made a great chaplain. We talked a lot – about God, life and all the big questions teenagers talk about. I remember going to at least one Lenten series of nationally known speakers with him; but I don't remember his ever bringing up anything with an evangelical slant to it. If he did, it went right over my head.

In any case, I was as happy as I could imagine being (well, almost) and that couple of years seemed to fly by. I was doing well academically, writing for the paper, singing with the choruses (where Rick sang, too) as well as in church beyond, doing varsity golf and getting over some of my social and physical insecurities. About the only things I was *unhappy* about were that my dad would not have entertained for a moment (and I was smart enough not to ask for) the car of my own that a number of friends (not Rick, though) had, or a country club membership. In 1950, as I started off to college, we still had the '39 Chevy that had suffered through the war, my student driving and various near misses. Two automotive stories:

Fairly soon after I was allowed to drive without adult supervision, on one of the days I did take the car to school, coming home I did a "rolling stop" at an intersection. No one was coming; however I failed to notice the police car strategically parked behind some bushes, and received the due reward of a ten-dollar ticket – and an impassioned lecture and week's grounding when I got home. (The real losers, I suppose, were Rick and Sheila, but I imagine they made do somehow.) The local newspaper was good enough to include my name in the next day's police report. The following Sunday, as we in the church choir were putting on our robes, in an anteroom not twenty feet from the altar, I was approached by the senior Warden of the church, no less, who was also a prominent businessman in the town. He asked me why I had been so foolish. I started to explain the circumstances, but he interrupted, "No, no, not that. Why didn't you come to me? I could've made that go away. Next time, be smart."

A year or so later, driving home latish on a Saturday night, I passed a filling station. Just as I did so, man came running out, leaped into a parked car, and sped off. I think in my surprise I must have stopped; a second or two later a policemen emerged from nowhere, and I became the last living American to have had a cop brandishing a gun jump on my running board ('39 Chevys were about the only cars left around that still *had* running boards), and shout (so help

me!) “Follow that car!” I almost replied, “Surely you jest.” We gave it the best we could, but there was no hope.

On a more serious note, there does remain one strange incident, from my junior year actually, that I didn’t fully understand but have never forgotten. Columbia University, for several of the post-war years and with the Cold War looming, sponsored a “Forum on Democracy” for high-school students in the metropolitan area, inviting two kids selected by each school to come in, spend the weekend on campus going to some pretty impressive talks, and generally learning democratic values or whatever. It was a Big Deal: Dwight Eisenhower (of course he was then president of Columbia and not yet of the country, but still...), Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry Steele Commager and various other famous types were among the speakers, there were write-ups in the *NY Times*, and so on. The university put us up for a couple of nights in student rooms whose occupants had departed for a weekend elsewhere; each pair of us had a student “guide” to show us around and take us to games (I remember seeing Bob Cousy play (for Holy Cross against Columbia) and the other attractive campus sites.

I got picked to go both junior and senior years, and had a ball. That first year provided me with my initial taste of beer (as a sixteen-year-old I’d had wine (watered, of course) a few times at festive dinners at home, but nothing more). But this was real beer with other young guys in something very like a bar (the on-campus pub). Definitely diary material, had I kept one. Truth to tell, I didn’t really like the taste, but I’d have died rather than let on. And our guides were pretty responsible; we weren’t encouraged to have more than one. No doubt instructions from on high...

The strangeness occurred later that night, back in the dorm. The other student from White Plains with whom I was billeted was a senior I’ll call Jim. I knew him casually but not well. He was maybe a year or more older than I, also a good student (he went on to Cornell the next year), and had always seemed a nice enough guy. The strangeness began with our getting ready for bed (there were two bunks in the one room). Physically bashful me got out of my shirt and undershirt and put my pajama top on before turning away to switch pants and all with my pj bottoms, and popping into bed. He stripped stark naked, stretched, sat facing me on his bed for a while, legs apart, then slowly pulled up the covers and turned off the light without a word. We lay there some time in the dark while I sort of digested that, but eventually I gave it up and started to fall asleep. Until... The room was pitch black and there was no sound, but suddenly I could *feel* a presence beside my bed. At least I thought I could. Was I dreaming? I was completely transfixed, and just barely dared open my eyes a slit. I thought I could see him standing there, but it was really only an indeterminate darkness

darker than the rest of the room.... if anything was indeed there at all, and it wasn't just my imagination. And then...a long silent pause...and nothing. Nothing happened. I remained frozen, eyes closed, and I wasn't aware of any other movement, but when after what seemed like a year I worked up the courage to take another look, the presence was gone.

The next morning, neither of us said anything. Back at school we didn't run in the same circles. I think I understand now what may have been going on, but the whole thing remained a mystery to me for a long while. The following year's weekend was uneventful.

When it came to college admission, I could see my dad would have loved me to go to his alma mater, Washington U. in St. Louis. But by then whatever yearning for the Middle West I might have had was a thing of the past, and I had no desire to go to a big university. Mom didn't put up much of a fight for Northwestern, so I didn't have a lot of trouble talking them into letting me apply to Amherst. As a matter of fact, in a remarkable example of chutzpah (Amherst was as competitive then as it is now), that was the only application I wrote, which wasn't displeasing to dad, since it meant fewer application fees to come up with. In those days, we didn't have guidance counselors to chivvy us. (I've only recently discovered a letter from the Amherst Dean of Admissions, dating from the winter of my high school senior year, actually suggesting that I might want to apply, on the recommendation of Jack Hill. It does help to have friends who are CEO's of major corporations, I guess. I certainly didn't ask for his intervention, though he may well have perceived my interest.)

Until the summer after high school graduation I had earned spending money by caddying. Besides the money, that kept up my interest in golf, and even allowed me to play once a week (Mondays were "caddies' days" with the course closed to normal play for maintenance). One made a princely \$1.50 for 18 holes, and hoped for a fifty-cent tip. After you gained the caddy-master's confidence, you might get to carry doubles and be making real money. But now with college looming, serious summer work became a necessity.

A year in college would end up costing about \$2000 (in 1950 dollars), of which \$1215 was tuition, board and room (the college had a comprehensive fee; all students had to be residential), and the rest for clothes, books, travel, fraternity dues (starting second year 99% of the students joined fraternities, and the houses were in fact owned by the college, which meant just one or two hundred dollars beyond the comprehensive fee for yearly dues and party assessments), and spending money. I was awarded a scholarship that paid for the tuition part of the comprehensive fee, and managed to pick up a couple of jobs working for the college that sliced off a chunk more. My dad, though, was still very much in

thrift mode despite our much improved finances, and thus not at all moved to be lavish about personal expenses. A dependent child then could earn up to \$600 a year and still remain a deduction on his parents' tax return. For those four summers dad peered over my shoulder to make sure I could come up with \$599.99, no more and absolutely no less.

Caddying had already provided a certain amount of "general" education: not only from the very affluent businessmen and their families one caddied for, but also from the mix of poor kids, off-duty firemen, alcoholics and ne'er-do-wells who filled the caddie ranks. (Twenty years later, when drugs were starting to come into schools and colleges, and state policemen actually being asked to come to orient faculties to the problem, I realized that I had smelled marijuana first in the caddy shack at the Scarsdale Golf Club at age 12 or so. We WASP kids would never have touched it in those days, but "reefers" were already around for the poorer Italians and blacks.)

But now, paying for college, I could also see close up the world of work for those who were not so fortunate. I had four summer jobs in those years: the first in the parts department of a Chevrolet agency, the second holding down the day desk at the city YMCA, another pumping gas, and the last, the best one of all: working as a grave-digger in the huge municipal cemetery. (Rick joined me in that.) In fact, we didn't dig that many graves, the job was mostly grass cutting and gardening. The "Y" job wasn't bad either, old high school friends, including Bernie McNulty, sometimes dropped by, and there was plenty of time to play ping-pong (somewhere around the middle of the last century, I was pretty good at ping-pong).

The most interesting folks Rick and I met working were at the cemetery – among the other workers, I mean, not the customers. Besides Rick and me, there were three or four others, all older. Our foreman was named Franco (the only Hispanic I ever met in White Plains). He was 72, seemed to be made of mahogany, and could dig a grave faster, deeper and with squarer corners than any two of the rest of us. (This was before the days of mechanical aids.) He had just a few words of English, about enough to give necessary orders; and when he discovered I had lived in Colombia and had a few words of Spanish, I became his bright-eyed boy. Being so honored meant that at lunch (we all brown-bagged it) he would bring in a full head of raw Spanish garlic cloves, marinated in some concoction his wife had made, which we two were to share. Fortunately, I like garlic (though usually cooked and in smaller quantities) and was able to remember my Bogotaño manners, so we got on well. My nasal passages eventually recovered.

The most colorful of us was a guy maybe in his fifties – hard to tell his age – named Bud. He usually looked pretty dreadful, missing the odd tooth here or

there and clearly out of practice with a razor, and he was the first real alcoholic I ever got to know. I don't imagine he'd ever gotten very far past fourth grade. Every payday his invariable first stop after work was at the liquor store at the bottom of the hill to pick up as many bottles of muscatel as he could carry. Fourth of July weekend, however, took him to a level new to me, though probably not to him. We knocked off work a bit early Friday afternoon, and Bud disappeared down the hill. Saturday, Sunday and Monday we were off, of course. Tuesday morning, all present except Bud. Tuesday afternoon, ditto. Wednesday morning, same. Finally, Wednesday afternoon late, in crawled Bud, looking as if he'd been arguing with a meat grinder, but navigational. We couldn't not ask:

"So Bud, what've you been up to?"

"I dunno."

"Well, where've you been?"

"I don't 'member. All I know is, yesterday morning, I woke up in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania." This was in 1953. Bethlehem, PA, was a lot farther from White Plains in those days than it is now. How he happened to get there (and why *there?*) no one ever managed to find out. He'd hitch-hiked back.

As they say, a negative example can be as valuable as a good one. I learned a lot from both, and from lots of the others I worked those summer jobs with, as well as soldiered with a few years later.

So in September of 1950 my parents and I packed the long-suffering Chevy and drove up to Amherst. Still no interstates; Hutchinson River and Merritt Parkways from White Plains north through New York and lower Connecticut to New Haven, but then strip malls and filling stations (gas at \$0.19 and 9 a gallon!) up route 15 to Hartford, on to route 5 (then on the west side of the river, route 159 now; in Hartford passing by open-air livestock and produce markets and a public bath house where Constitution Plaza is today) up to Northampton, and east on route 9 into Amherst. It was a good four-hour drive for my father; I could do it in considerably less alone. (One of Amherst's selling points for him was that it was just far enough to be away, but not seriously inconvenient in case of emergency.)

There were three freshman dorms in the college, I fetched up in the oldest, but it had the virtue of being closest to the dining hall and the buildings most of my classes were in. The rooms had been designed as singles, but the college was growing a bit, and there were two of us squashed in with over-and-under bunk beds (I arrived first and scored the lower), two desks-and-chairs, two dressers, one armchair (wooden) and one closet. Grounds for your money back

in these days of kitchenettes and climbing walls, I suppose, but we thought nothing of it.

My roommate turned out to be one Jay Schmiedeskamp, a tall, emaciated-looking chap from Quincy, Illinois, which is about as far west as you can get and not be in Missouri. As thin as he was, he was practically obese compared to the incarnation that returned to Quincy at the end of the year. He had been carefully raised, and had never, one gathered, been allowed much closer to the fleshpots of the east than the next town over. His ambition seemed to be to make up for lost time. With at least one root in Kansas, I certainly had nothing against Midwesterners, but this one did seem a bit much. His principal difficulty proved to be in distinguishing between a.m. and p.m. In pretty short order that Fall, he had to have recourse to two or three alarm clocks, a blinking light and my assistance in shaking and occasionally pouring glasses of water on his head, in order to come to consciousness in the morning. He is also the only human I have ever observed to fall asleep while standing up, on one foot at that, heron-like, as he was putting on his socks. (This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received.) It was understandable, if not excusable, in that he really only began to function on a sentient level somewhere along towards 9 in the evening; at which point he tended to disappear, returning at sunrise. As there were a fair number of required morning appointments for freshmen (chapel, classes, other such inconveniences), eventually a team of his friends (not notable for their numbers) took to showing up to assist his daily resuscitation. Wherever it was he went, there seemed to be no shortage of fluids, but solid nourishment evidently lacked; by Spring, he was bordering on the transparent.

In May, a compassionate administration granted him a year's leave. His travel plans were somewhat original: to return to Illinois he bought a used car in Northampton, but dispensed with the idea of registering it, counting on an obscure footnote he claimed to have found somewhere in the Massachusetts code that permitted one to drive a newly acquired vehicle 24 hours before having to get plates for it. His plan was to cross each state on the way home within that time span. The car he had bought was guaranteed to get off the lot, no more (I don't think it cost a hundred dollars); in fact, he was apprehended heading west perhaps a mile or two outside the city limits of Northampton.

He did eventually return to the college and graduated with the following class, though having taken a fair number of his courses at some other institution. In later life, I'm told he became an economist and worked for the US government, no doubt accounting in his own person for a good portion of our economic troubles in the sixties and seventies.

Later that first afternoon after my parents had left, in the midst of all the confusion of arrivals and new faces, I ran into a tall and very friendly new

classmate, assigned to a room on the floor below me. For some reason we seemed to hit it off well, and that evening, after whatever orientation programs we had been trundled off to, we ended up taking a long walk around the campus. His name was Andy Hilgartner; he was from Austin, Texas, though he had done his high school preparation at Philips Exeter Academy. His father was a prominent surgeon in Austin; his grandfather had been the first doctor in the state of Texas. Despite his years in New Hampshire among the arch-preppies, he had retained his Texan informality and openness (and blessedly without the accent). I don't know why we got along so well, but we were soon close. He loved classical music, too, and liked to sing, so that helped.

But his big interest, the thing that really dominated his life, and does to this day, was something completely new to me. I didn't see it as such at the time, but it was (and is) a kind of secular, pseudo- or quasi-scientific cult called Korzybskian General Semantics. Its founder, Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950; he had died just before Andy and I met), "was a Polish-American independent scholar who developed a field called general semantics, which he viewed as both distinct from, and more encompassing than, the field of semantics. He argued that human knowledge of the world is limited both by the human nervous system and the languages humans have developed, and thus no one can have direct access to reality, given that the most we can know is that which is filtered through the brain's responses to reality. His best known dictum is 'The map is not the territory.'" [Thanks to *Wikipedia*, whose entry is concise, informative and fairly written.]

The few descriptive sentences above sound (and are) reasonable and sensible enough; the system as elaborated in Korzybski's two principal works *Manhood of Humanity* and *Science and Sanity* is quite a bit more than that. Over time, the effect it had on Andy, though slow and subtle at first, was and remains hugely deleterious; I will say frankly that it has ruined his life. Its effect on me was happily less so, though serious enough for the next several years. I got interested and started to study *S&S*, Andy and I debated many of the salient points, and over the course of the next couple of academic years I became more or less an adherent. Like many such belief systems, General Semantics(GS) is founded on rational and unobjectionable premises, in this case, that our knowledge of, our very contact with, reality is based on a series of abstractions: abstractions of *perception* in the first place (we do not experience the world as it actually is, our perceptions are both partial and flawed), and of our language (our modes of describing and thus of understanding what we perceive are also fundamentally flawed). While those premises seem pretty innocuous when examined, GS carries them to extremes that can become unsettling or even

disorienting. In my case, by the end of the year, I had formally decided that I was now an atheist, religion was balderdash, and I would follow GS principles.

(This belief-change was in a couple of ways actually salutary for me. First, my childhood and adolescent faith was very superficial and naïve, and was certainly in need of a shake-up. Besides, it had not (no doubt in part for those reasons) become part of my real life; it remained a series of abstract assertions, which were in those days so normal and familiar that I had absorbed them without much thought or commitment. And second, even today, reflecting from a (I trust) solidly based and deeply-held reformed evangelical Christian point of view, I find the GS concept of abstraction very useful, in broad outline. Andy (and the several other GS-ers I've met) was not so fortunate in having had an established value-base to start from, or in possessing the "this is a watch bird watching you" kind of self-consciousness that has always protected me from getting too involved in unfamiliar things.)

But back in the beginning of our acquaintance, none of that seemed in the offing. Andy had a good sense of humor and was fun to be with, and both of us, in our different ways, were more "intellectual" in our tastes than some of our classmates. He had a roommate less odd than mine, but they had widely differing personalities and interests, so that led the two of us to spend a lot of time together.

Amherst was an exhilarating place to be. When I applied, beyond a vague idea of its general reputation, the enthusiastic stories Jack Hill had told, and the sense that a smallish, liberal arts men's college would be a good "fit" for me, I was clueless. I don't even remember now having visited the campus, which certainly would have sealed the deal, as in those days that whole part of the Connecticut Valley was still more beautiful, because less built up, than today. With the possible exception of Williams, I don't know a more scenic campus anywhere.

What was then called the "New" curriculum, instituted when the veterans were returning from WW II, was solidly in place. It was a 2-year core curriculum, with excellent introductory course sequences in history, math and sciences, English composition and humanities, a two-year foreign language requirement – after which one branched out into a major. (Interestingly, the English composition course was taught from a theoretical base of GS, which exerted a strong influence on American pedagogy and literary theory at the time. To my amusement, that didn't seem to give Andy much of an advantage.) No adjuncts or grad students then, even for freshman classes; the teachers we had daily were top people in their departments and many of them nationally-known scholars, brilliant lecturers and very exciting in leading seminar discussions, The

whole thing – the whole four years -- was a heady mix; intellectually speaking I could not have chosen a more stimulating place to be.

This is probably a good place to put in a plug for good secular liberal arts studies, even (or especially) for evangelical Christian believers. For one thing, I believe it good to broaden, even if that sometimes means to challenge, kids' childhood assumptions. And then, by God's providence, I went through such a time of challenging and re-training just as the "New Criticism" school was coming into vogue in this country and Europe and almost two decades before I became a Christian believer. That approach to literature depended upon a close reading of the text, and a careful analysis of context(s), structure, actual or possible variants and shades of meaning; and a denial insofar as possible of the reader's personal prejudices or opinions unless or until they were presented as such, usually at the tail end of the analysis. I learned the method both in the several courses I had in English (and American) literature, and also as the soul of the French "explication de texte" method. It has been of enormous benefit to me as a student of the Bible, and has not at all detracted from my faith; rather it has enhanced and fortified it. When I read a good number of "Christian" books or hear (alas, too many) advocates expatiate, I groan inwardly and wish they could have benefited as I did. Such training is not totally absent from Christian colleges and seminaries, but it is increasing rare – and in fairness, it is dying as well in secular education these days.

(insert above the bit about not introducing the professor's prejudices into the text or class discussions w/o fair warning)

The other far-sighted policy the post-war college instituted was that fraternity rushing was delayed until the very end of freshman year. Amherst from its founding in 1821 had always been a strong fraternity college, but in a very progressive way. (For example, the very first African-American to be inducted into a national fraternity anywhere in this country was Tom Gibbs of the Amherst class of 1951. We overlapped a year, though I never met him.) The college also had instituted a universal rushing rule: a place somewhere would be found for everyone who wished to join a house. For those who opposed fraternities on principle, or for whatever reason, there was a "Lord Jeff Club," which had a house of its own and to all intents and purposes functioned as a local fraternity. (Lord Jeffery Amherst was the British general in the French and Indian wars for whom the town, and then the college, was named.)

The effect of this delayed rushing policy was to promote strong personal relationships broadly within a given class before house membership and residence could fragment it. Andy, as it turned out, and many of my other freshman

friends ended up in various different houses (I in Phi Gamma Delta, he in Alpha Delta Phi), so that we all not only remained in contact ourselves but also got to know each other's fraternity brothers.

Joining a house was in fact, the one major mistake I made in college. (In my defense, in addition to the normative social pressure on campus to join, my mother had been a strong sorority sister at Northwestern, and would never have let me hear the end of it had I joined the Jeff Club.) The issue of discrimination was becoming a pressing national concern, and national fraternities were a strong conservative presence in the debate. While an undergraduate, I didn't pay much attention to such issues, or politics at all (I can remember wondering, as I headed out to play a round, why those men were sitting inside watching TV in the stuffy locker room of the Amherst Golf Club. It was the famous Army/McCarthy hearings in 1954, but I was oblivious to all that). But shortly after my graduation the Amherst chapter of Phi Gam pledged, not a Negro, but a South Korean student (and a war hero, at that). It seems that Phi Gam is particularly strong on the west coast where Orientals were as suspect as blacks, and after an investigation of us Eastern subversives, the national expelled us. By then, being slightly more aware of national affairs and personal responsibility, I resigned from the national fraternity. (Over the following couple of decades, various other houses were kicked out of their nationals; and finally the college banished secret organizations, and repurposed the houses (which it owned anyway) into special-interest dorms.) With my subsequent experiences in the army, that whole affair probably was a major impulsion in my turning away from the moderate republicanism of my parents to a liberal political stance.

There are other reasons too why the choice to join a house has in retrospect seemed a mistake. While in those days the various houses regulated themselves in a more or less responsible way (some more, some less), even then things were tending downhill. During the week, people worked hard and good order prevailed. While I was a student, we voted every year in the house not to allow a TV set. My senior year, there was a major and serious discussion before we accepted the gift of a pool table. Self-imposed quiet hours for study and sleeping were observed, and so on. But weekends were a different matter, and even in those days, binge drinking and date rape (though not called such at the time) were far from unknown. More generally, the frequently-alleged fraternal benefits of close, life-long friendships happened just as often with others outside the house as within, to my observation. Looking back, I can't say that fraternities were a positive influence on their campuses or on education generally; and for the last several decades on the contrary they have looked increasingly unsavory.

The picture was far brighter in 1950, to me at least. Making new friends, getting excited about challenging course work, joining the choral groups and the choir of the local Episcopal church (and others, later), bull sessions with Andy and others about a broad range of subjects, kept me busy. I suppose, too, that subconsciously I was happy not have the time to address the question of personal relationships very closely. I of course found myself physically attracted to some of my dorm and classmates, and later fraternity brothers, but with all the other concerns and busy-ness, and my scholarship jobs, there wasn't a lot of time to think about other things very much. And as in high school, the idea of homosexuality was just not in the forefront of anyone's mind, as far as I was aware. As difficult as it seems to believe now describing those days, to borrow from Eliot, is really to summon up a time "long ago and in another country."

For one thing, amazing as it may seem I can recall only one public expression of homophobia among students in my four years at the college. The phenomenon itself was simply unthinkable. I got teased (not bullied, it was all amiable enough) for a few things (being a French major, a singer, not being particularly athletic) but never, despite the fact that I didn't date, for being gay.

Heteronormality, though the word hadn't been invented then, was so much the universal way of life that one not only conformed, but never imagined anything other. One of my classmates (and dorm mates in our freshman year) was, we later learned, gay, and was in fact one of those arrested a few years later in the Smith College faculty gay-porn scandal. At the time, though, no suspicion ever crossed my mind, even though he was in manner certainly over towards the less-than-jockish end of the spectrum. I was, as I've said, pretty naïve, and there were no doubt a few sophisticates who knew better, but I really don't think the great majority of us ever imagined there could be "queers" (the term "gay" was still a decade or so in the future) among us. I participated in a fair number of late-night bull sessions and what not, and while sex was often enough on the agenda, I don't recall the subject of homosexuality, or suspicions about any student or teacher, ever coming up.

There was one incident that did arise. It concerned the director of the Glee Club. A classmate of mine (now dead), an uptight fundamentalist Christian (very much a rarity among us), started pushing an accusation that this instructor was pursuing a good-looking guy a class behind us. I don't know whether the story was true or not; it may perhaps have been. But the instructor was both highly competent and quite popular, and my fundy classmate had already made himself so obnoxious by his views and manner that some of us, I heard later, took him aside and threatened him until he quit. So much for homophobia among the student body.

It was a somewhat different story institutionally. The college hired a young instructor in French during my junior year who was absolutely ideal for Amherst: he was brilliant, a fine scholar (and fluent speaker of the language, which was by no means common among American foreign-language professors at the time), and a great teacher who got along very well with his students – and he was a nationally ranked speed-skater, to boot! I took a couple of his courses my senior year, and they were terrific. I believe he was on tenure track.

After graduation, I had a year at Columbia working on my M.A., and then found myself doing a year of study in France. One day in Paris I ran into him on the street; it was during the school year, so I was a little surprised to see him there. I suggested we should get together for dinner or something, but he seemed a bit vague and evasive. It never happened. A couple of summers later, I found myself back in Amherst, house-sitting for Professor King Turgeon, then the head of the French department, and working in Converse Library, in lieu of a contribution to the alumni fund. As the Turgeons were getting ready to leave on their vacation, I thought to ask how that young instructor was getting on. Professor Turgeon drew me aside and with visible discomfort told me he had been let go. I was astonished, and asked how that could have happened. “Well, you see,” he said, “it turned out he was homosexual.” And that was the end of that. It was some time before I heard the whole story. It seemed that the instructor had been swept up in a police raid on some gay bar in Springfield (who knew there were gay bars in Springfield?). He was alone, had no college student or colleague with him, but was fingerprinted and released. Either the Springfield police notified the college or his name was published in the paper the next day. Apparently Scott Porter, the Dean of the Faculty at the time and a formidable personality, called him in, fired him on the spot, and told him to be off campus by nightfall. His whole career was ruined; I found out later that he died without ever holding another university position. The crowning irony was that the person who was hired to replace him, and who indeed had a fairly long career at a Amherst, was also gay, and did, I’ve been told, have several relationships with students.

Of course America and the college were very different entities in those days. In the nation and even in the medical profession, homosexual orientation was thought to be a mental illness, at the very least a neurosis, that deserved treatment; and of course the practice was punishable by law in many states. Colleges were held to be *in loco parentis* (for example, our grades were distributed not to us but to our parents). So the administration felt a need to protect the students from what were thought to be hazards to our health, be that physical or moral. There were, of course, actually a few gays on the faculty; but they either repressed their sexuality or kept it sufficiently camouflaged to avoid

anyone's notice. As it happens, I had several courses with two of them, as I later found out; both were very fine human beings, brilliant scholars, and superlative teachers from whom I benefited enormously. It was not until the 1970s that the first professor at Amherst allowed himself to be known as gay.

My sophomore year, Rick Bergren arrived on campus. By this time, my crush on him had cooled off, so while we saw a lot of each other, and I was active at the end of the year in rushing him for Phi Gam, we were now just very good friends (and study mates in the house the following year). And I was seeing a good deal of Andy of course – that would continue for some years even after graduation (he went on to medical school at Johns Hopkins, married and started a family). The big addition to my life, though, stemmed from a decision I had made the summer before – and which had caused a major blow-up with my father – to start voice lessons. I was getting more and more interested in singing as time went on, but at Amherst in those days (not so now!) there was no formal instruction at all offered in music *performance*. However, over at Smith, in Northampton, there was a big music program and one of the instructors there was a tenor named John Hanks, who like most of his colleagues taught privately as well. I was transitioning from a high baritone to tenor, so I figured he'd be a good choice of teachers.

I was floored by my father's reaction when I told him my decision just before the year began. He was incensed; I had never seen him so angry. Given his traumatic experiences in the Depression, I could understand some of his feelings, despite our more secure financial position now. But the force of his reaction was astonishing. After all I had a strong case rationally, I thought: it was my money, earned and saved by me, I was in fact already paying for more than half of my own educational costs what with scholarships and college jobs, and the training would open up a potential source of supplemental income down the line. It was a real moment of choice; I had never gone against him about anything important before. I suppose there was a lot going on that neither of us was consciously aware of: old bull, young bull issues or perhaps something deeper. On my side, for whatever reason, I knew I had to stand my ground.

I don't remember now how long it went on, the evening I told him, but it was a battle; both of us standing in the middle of the living room, at several points shouting at each other, I in tears a couple of times, he probably close to that, too; and we – almost – came to blows (I vividly remember thinking, "he's going to hit me; what will I do then?"). But he didn't, quite; and in the end it was he who gave in. That was the only time we had ever such a confrontation; the following summer he again expressed displeasure about my ongoing voice lessons, but it didn't come to much; somehow the air seemed to clear, we were able to come to peace about it and get along well with each other from then on.

*He was a good man, much, and unfairly, put upon, doing his not inconsiderable best in very hard times. He had high standards in everything, but he demanded them of himself and of all he did as much or more than of anyone or anything else. He taught me one invaluable lesson: that it is essential to love what you choose to do in your life; no salary can make up for having to do things you hate. He would have paid people money (if he'd had any) to let him be an architect. My mother was not invariably easy to live with; but though they didn't always agree he never spoke a word against her, and as an younger adolescent and proto-adult I never doubted his deep love for me, unspoken though it was. It is a sorrow to me that he died before I could bring home the emblems of success in college or thereafter that he so much wanted for me; I know absolutely that it was for me he wanted them, and not for any selfish satisfaction of his own. It was a mercy, on the other hand, that he never came to know of my sexuality, at least not in this life or for sure; it's hard to imagine how he could have come to terms with that.*

**At any rate, in the fall of 1951 I became, in effect, the one of first exchange students from Amherst at Smith (completely unofficially, of course), hitch-hiking the seven miles over to "Hamp" and back twice a week for my lessons with John Hanks. I like to say I was a trend-setter: today there are shuttle busses running among the five colleges (Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, Smith and UMass) on an hourly basis, and many students take more than a few credit courses from the various sister institutions.) The lessons, the commute and of course practice (in the basement barroom of Phi Gam, great acoustics...and also some commentary from those brothers living directly above the bar), all that was a fair-sized time commitment, so I had good excuses for not thinking too much about my social life. Being there on "working days," I got to see a side of Smith, and its students, most of my classmates never saw. One of the other voice faculty there was a soprano, Queena Mario, who had actually sung at the Metropolitan Opera. Cool! I was getting some solo work with the Glee Club, and for the first time actually being a paid chorister in a local church. It was a great year, marred only by a difficult course in the required science sequence which I (and most of my classmates) managed somehow to survive by the skin of our teeth.**

**Junior year I was again living at Phi Gam and fully engaged academically and musically – and in the spring doing varsity golf, even playing (badly) in the New England Intercollegiate tournament outside of Boston. Freed now from the various core-curriculum requirements, I took (over that and the next year) every**

advanced French course in the catalog, several in English lit, philosophy and history, three semesters of Italian and whatever else looked interesting. It was a wonderful time.

I had also had from freshman year on a college job of being a chapel monitor. That much detested program (among students; it took place at 8 a.m. four days a week, you had to attend two of them) was a very valuable part of my general education. For the first couple of years, my job was taking attendance on a section of the pews; in my junior and senior years I became the head monitor, responsible for the whole-college report. It wasn't actually that onerous a responsibility, and I'm happy to say I received neither bribes nor threats in its pursuit. It did mean, though, that I attended every single event over the four years.

The "services" had originally had religious content (Amherst, like most of the other New England colleges, was founded as a school for Christian missionaries) but since the early years of the twentieth century those elements had become more and more vestigial. In my day, the ten or fifteen minutes contained a hymn, a short talk by a faculty member on whatever subject happened to be of current interest to him, and a brief *pro forma* prayer. The thing was, over the course of the year, you had upwards of a hundred pretty high-powered scholars (all men; the first female professor did not appear until the 1970s), who took pleasure in what they did, and many of whom took pride in presenting their material articulately and amusingly. (An example: in the fall of 1952, Earl Latham of the History and Political Science department and an occasional speechwriter for Eisenhower, commenting on Harry Truman's declining to be considered for the democratic presidential nomination, pursing his lips and surveying the audience over his glasses: "This, gentlemen, is the only case in recorded history of the sinking ship deserting the rats.") Their material ran the gamut from hot-off-the-presses reports of personal research, to intellectual affairs generally, to philosophy or literature, to politics and world affairs, to humorous riffs on collegiate history or manners. The program was a liberal education in itself; and what it taught was a model of how an educated and intelligent person understands his life in an increasingly confusing circumstances. Ideally, attendance at every service should have been required for the entire student body; and we could legitimately have been given diplomas on that basis alone.

As rich a diet as all this was, the best was still to come. In my senior year, I finally had the chance to work with the man who has unquestionably had the greatest impact on my intellectual life and manner of thought of any before or since. Geoffrey Atkinson was the Eliza F. Clark Folger Professor of Romance Languages, and one of the most distinguished members of a brilliant faculty. He was probably in his sixties when I got there. The son of what must have been a very unusual family, he was born and raised in Texas. From the cradle, his

parents only spoke Latin to him, until when he was five or so they introduced German. He was fluent in both when he finally learned English – from his chums – on starting school a few years after that. I never found out how he learned French. He eventually earned a doctorate (I think at Columbia), and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1934. For several years he had been the personal secretary of Gustave Lanson, who was the world's pre-eminent scholar in French literature in the first half of the twentieth century, and whose history of it, originally published in 1894, remained the classic work until World War II. In that war, Atkinson was co-opted by the Office of Strategic Services (which later became the CIA) and parachuted into Nazi-occupied France to work with the *Résistance* (he was fluent enough in French to pass as a native). Among his other attainments, he could, using one hand only, take out a tobacco pouch and cigarette papers, pour tobacco neatly onto a paper, roll, seal and light it, while explicating – brilliantly – an essay of Montaigne. Or Voltaire. Or a poem of Ronsard. (Or while riding a horse.) The man knew everything in French literature and close to it in English, and a great deal about art, music and philosophy. He also had more than a passing acquaintance with the Bible, though from a secular scholarly stance.

He had been away on sabbatical or other business during a couple of my earlier years, so I found myself looking at a senior program with at least two of his courses each semester, of which one was the final honors course. As it turned out, I was the only French major that year, so that meant meeting several times a week with him one-on-one for the honors course, and two-on-one the rest. This was something of a daunting prospect; Atkinson, whom I had not previously had the chance to meet, enjoyed the reputation of being extremely demanding, and of having small to no patience with incompetence. Even many of his colleagues were wary of his displeasure. His appearance was discomfiting: he possessed (as was rare in those days) a grizzled mustache and clipped van Dyke beard, a manner of speech which was concise to the point of being caustic, spectacles and way of looking at you which left the distinct impression that he had seen to the bottom of your sins and beyond. I could easily credit stories I had heard of his dismembering bodily those with whom he found fault. From the first day, I never dared enter his presence (we usually met in his office in the faculty club, otherwise *terra prohibita* to students) without having read the assigned material at least three times, taking notes and attempting to imagine something, anything, intelligent to say about it.

The reality was completely unexpected. As soon as he saw that I was serious about learning, he couldn't have been more encouraging or patient, gentler or kinder. His sole purpose, I discovered, was to give me the same comprehension and love of whatever it was we were considering that he had, and to

enable me to see how it related to its time, the ages and our lives. He treated me as an equal, striving to see the beauties of masterworks that were way beyond the humble capacities of either of us. To my astonishment, he wanted to hear from me: how did I understand things, how did I react (and more importantly, why)? So we sat there, the two (or sometimes three) of us, and talked about words and ideas, the life of the mind. We had *fun*. He could *be* funny (he was always witty, even in expressing serious thoughts), and he saw how things connect with each other across history, cultures and disciplines, frequently in unexpected ways. And he could communicate the idea that all that should make a difference in the way we live. We talked about all sorts of things, history, art, about marriage (his wife was a biologist and taught at Mt. Holyoke, they had grown children) and how real love depends upon respect and dignity. To me he exemplified the whole Amherst-in-the-fifties ethos; this was the ideal of what education was all about. It was like drinking old cognac.

What a year! Besides all that, I was doing a lot of singing (college glee club, including a tour across most of the eastern US, and a concert in Town Hall in New York (then after Carnegie Hall, the second most important music venue in the city; I had two major solo spots in the room where every famous singer of the twentieth century had sung!), and a Sunday job in a big Baptist church in Springfield). (I borrowed a car from a college friend to get there; it was a 1932 Plymouth convertible on its last legs. On the way one Sunday morning, driving through Holyoke, I came to a major intersection just as the light went yellow and then red. I didn't dare stop, for fear the motor might never recover from the trauma, and coasted through, noting too late the inevitable police car waiting in the cross street. He did pull me over, a florid, visibly Irish cop, and posed the usual question. "Officer, I'm on my way to sing in a church, and I'm running late," I said.

"What church is that?" he asked.

I gave him my most cherubic smile, "Holy Name, officer."

"Aw, g'wan with ya then." And I proceeded.)

That job permitted me to see the second funniest thing I've ever witnessed in church. Come spring, the time came around for baptisms. There was the usual class of 10 or 15 kids, decked out in the obligatory sheets, and one portly businessman, apparently an adult convert. The baptismal pool was built into the floor between the congregation and the pulpit. All went well until the businessman's turn came, the last. He clambered somewhat stiffly into the pool, thigh-deep. When the pastor made ready to lower him backwards under the waves, somehow the two missed contact and he fell, completely submerging and rebounding off the bottom. Emerging again, shaking his head, snorting, he exclaimed, "Jesus Christ!"

In the back row, two little old ladies chorused, "Hallelujah! Amen!"  
I don't remember how we got through the rest of the service.

The last and best of my college jobs was being appointed to the college's first group of dorm proctors, resident advisors as they're now called, in the freshman dorms. (This job remitted my room and board charges completely, much to dad's pleasure.) There were two of us seniors assigned to live in each of the freshman dorms. Walt Congdon and I found ourselves roommates back in Morrow dorm where I had spent my first year. Walt was great guy, a prototypical Vermonter. Between him and his brother, two years behind us, they wore the correct number of sox, winter and summer; it was just that Steve wore none and Walt, two pair. Neither of them ever spoke an unnecessary word. Their dad was 78 when Walt and I graduated; he was the official historiographer of the state of Vermont. They lived in Arlington, next door to Dorothy Canfield Fisher on one side and Norman Rockwell on the other. The bachelor son and business partner of an eminent New York church architect, Mr. Congdon had decided at age fifty to retire and move to Vermont, where eventually he married a Quaker lady half his age, and raised their two sons. The family used "thee" and "thou" around the house, and knelt beside the table for prayers before each meal; Walt and Steve were raised on classical music (Brahms for pacifiers and lullabies).

Walt's and my duties were more pleasant than onerous. We were to get to know the freshmen in our dorms, dispense encouragement, advice and sympathy as needed, and restrain obstreperousness. (For this, we received a ground-floor suite comprising study, bedroom and private bath. I took the job on the theory that I had already decided that it would be a rewarding career to get into secondary-school education, and freshmen were simply overgrown high-schoolers. This proved to be an accurate assessment.) Also, in the spring we were to assist the House Management Committee in seeing that each freshman found a happy fraternity slot. We got along well with each other and I think were able to do a fairly good job. Walt eventually went into secondary school teaching, himself, and had a long career teaching science at The Mt. Hermon School, in Northfield, MA.

One of the freshmen in the dorm was Bob Bagg, with whom I became good friends on the golf course and talking about literature; we've remained such ever since. Bob is a published poet and translator from the Greek; his versions of some of the Greek tragedies appear in the Norton Anthology, and a number of them have been widely performed. He's also, more recently, published a critical biography of Richard Wilbur.

Bob's roommate was a boy named John Drobnyk, a nice kid and something of a math whiz, but a little shy. In the process of sorting out the freshman class for fraternity rushing there occurred the only unpleasant incident I ever

underwent in the college. One house had been rushing John hard; but he had friends in a different one that he preferred. I encouraged him to choose as he wanted. The evening following the publication of choices (he had chosen as I'd advised) I was studying and listening to music alone in our apartment when the door suddenly opened, and a figure came in, someone with a sheet over his head. Thinking someone was playing tricks (not an unusual thing among the freshmen), I stood up with a smile...and got cold-cocked. I guess I can (or could then) take a pretty good punch, which it was. It put me back on my heels, but I didn't go down. And then I had what is so far a once-in-a-lifetime experience: I was out of my body. I seemed to myself to be looking down from somewhere up around the ceiling, like the watchbird of my childhood, looking on as I went after whomever it was with a roar and both hands out, going for his throat. He fled (I don't blame him). By the time I got out into the corridor, he was too far away to catch. And then it was over, and I was back inside myself, shaking like the proverbial leaf. It was years later that someone told me who that had been (a classmate belonging to the spurned fraternity). I've never heard or read any good explanation of the out-of-body experience. I hope there will never be occasion for another.

That year I had begun a life-long addiction to record collecting. Long-playing records had made their appearance; and I bought an inexpensive record changer and amplifier, a second-hand speaker in a homemade plywood cabinet (stereo was still a thing of the future), and over the course of the year the first bunch of a collection (now modernized to compact discs) which numbers in the thousands. One of my happy memories of that year was acquiring a copy the first modern recording of Wagner's complete *Tristan und Isolde* (a major purchase, a boxed set of five LPs with libretto, just come out), with Kirsten Flagstad and Wilhelm Furtwängler, still today recognized as one of the greatest recordings ever made. A fellow Wagner-lover came over and we went through a six-pack of beer one Saturday afternoon as we listened, enthralled. I've seen and heard several live performances in this country and Europe, and I own three or four other recordings of it, but when I think of the opera today, Flagstad's voice is still the sound I hear ... and see the sun coming in through the bright red leaves of the Japanese maple outside the window that spring afternoon sixty-some-odd years ago.

I remember realizing that year that time goes faster as you get older. Senior year fled by: honors work (that year I didn't play for the varsity golf team, just too much to do) singing, dorm-keeping, other college jobs and all. A plan sort of evolved; I can't remember giving it much thought: I would apply for graduate studies at Columbia (and was accepted; I suspect Geoff Atkinson's name still

carried a lot of weight) which was reputed to have a fine French graduate program, commuting in from home, with a view to getting the course-work for the M.A. out of the way. I had also received a fellowship from the college for a year's vocal study in the city – I think that impressed my father, finally. And suddenly it was exam week and then commencement, which that year fell the Tuesday after Memorial Day weekend.

I don't remember if it was before lunch or dinner, but that Saturday, as exams were over, I was standing in the foyer of the dining hall, and someone came over and told me there was a phone call for me. Having no idea of who it might be, but supposing it something routine, I picked up whatever phone it was. On the other end was Jack Hill, calling from our house. My father was dead.

Apparently what had happened was that waking up in bed that morning he had felt strange. There were no definable symptoms, but he felt odd enough not to want to get up. This in itself was highly unusual; except for the one case of depression he had suffered fourteen years earlier, he was never sick (a blessing in more than one way: he would have been the world's worst patient). By late morning, my mother determined to call the doctor, and they agreed, it being the weekend, that she should take him to the emergency room, where the doctor would meet them as soon as he could. She did so. I don't know if the doctor had gotten there or not, but dad was put in a room, where he dozed off with mother sitting beside him. She said he was breathing normally, until he took one deep, "rasping" breath, and simply stopped. He could not be revived.

After the autopsy (given the unexplained circumstances there had to be one), we were told he had suffered a massive aneurism of the aorta. No one ever explained the cause, or why there had been no warning symptoms.

One of my fraternity brothers who lived in New Jersey was driving home that evening and could drop me off on his way. Mother was of course devastated, but the Hills rallied around and she bore up well. There were things that had to be done: calling relatives and so on. Dad's own parents had died only a little over a year earlier; his sister (who eventually lived to be 97) would come, and mother's brother, my uncle Jack (he of the Lincoln and the guns). My maternal grandfather had died in 1943; Nano, as everyone called my grandmother (who also lived to be 97; I am blessed – or cursed, depending on how you look at it – with good genes on both sides) was 91 and not up to flying. The funeral would have to be delayed a day or two because of Commencement.

I was, and still am to some degree, astonished by my own reaction, or rather, its absence. I guess it was shock, but in any case, from the moment at the

beginning of Jack Hill's call (in which he told me I had better sit down), from that instant, I felt nothing at all. I was perfectly clear-headed and rational; not just "going through the motions," there were decisions to be made and stuff to be done; I was fully present and active and all; I simply had no feelings: no sorrow, no fear, no worry. I wasn't "out of the body" as I had been when attacked just a few weeks before, nor trying to assume a role of some sort, or impress anyone; there was just...nothing. Today as I write this, sixty-one years later, I have feelings: especially sorrow for my father and for the pathos of the timing, sympathy for my mother, maybe even for the young me; but then, I had none.

(Maybe, come to think of it, this was the triumph of Andy Hilgartner's General Semantics. Had I subconsciously trained myself to interiorize the different levels of abstraction between thought, language and reality? Hmmm. Probably not. Well, maybe.)

We all, mother and I, the Hills and possibly my aunt and/or uncle, I don't remember, drove back up to Amherst (a nice convenient distance, dad used to say) for the ceremony. The speaker was Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary General of the United Nations. I remember being impressed with his speech, or maybe just with his being the speaker, though of course I didn't recall a word of it a week later. I found out that morning that I would graduate *magna cum laude* and had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa, as well as holding the Edward Poole Lay fellowship to study voice in New York. The irony of dad's not getting to know about all that did finally get to me: a real "well, shit!" moment.

It also sticks in my memory that I had been home for spring break, and mother was away somewhere, so dad and I were alone. Nothing of note happened, but the last afternoon he drove me back to Stamford to catch the train north. We hugged each other on the platform and I got on board. For some reason I felt good; it seemed to me that somehow in that moment we had both been closer than usual with each other. Much later I realized that was the last time I saw him alive.

There was one other comfort, as well, though it took quite a while for me to discover it. A week or two later, when we probated his will, and had to look at financial records, it became apparent that for the last several years, he had been tithing to St. Bartholomew's. (My mother's reaction was classic: "So *that's* where all the money went!") The discovery didn't particularly upset me, but I did find it strange: in those days (or now, for that matter) Episcopalians simply did not tithe. What in the world had caused this man, wounded as he was by the Depression, to do such an outlandish thing? Years later, after my own conversion, I began to put two and two together.

A new priest had come, of course, in the wake of the H. twins' scandal. His name was C. Ronald Garmey, and with the unreasoning prejudice of a 12-year-old I didn't like him much at all: I strongly suspected that that "C." was hiding a "Clarence," or possibly a "Claude," names I'd always despised (not that "Ronald was all that much of an improvement); and moreover he frequently quoted religious verse in his sermons, which I considered unmanly. (What's worse, he had a son my age who suffered from all the symptoms of PKS (Preacher's Kid Syndrome) and made himself universally scorned.

My dad, though, got along well with Mr. Garmey, and saw a lot of him. Besides singing in the choir, dad was at the church frequently, designing an office wing and a stained-glass window someone had left us a bequest for. I hadn't noticed it at the time; but looking back now, I think our new rector must have been a discreet Anglican evangelical (not then as rare a breed as it has become since), and that somehow through their association my dad's nominal faith had gotten activated, and become real to him. It had to have been the work of the Holy Spirit; that's the only explanation that could possibly make sense of such an extraordinary behavior change. I look forward to verifying that judgment.

After the funeral, about which I remember very little (dad was cremated; mother would take the ashes back to her family's plot in Winfield, where mine will be too, one day); things fell into place remarkably quickly for mother and me that Summer. She decided very sensibly not to try to keep the house, but to move back to Winfield, where Nano was living by herself in the big Victorian house on the Court House Square, and where the cost of living was probably a third or more less than in the East. And just then the Hotchkisses from Bogotá (and more recently Saudi Arabia) were reassigned permanently to New York, and came along looking for a house to buy. Dad's life insurance and retirement annuity from the bank would take care of my year's tuition at Columbia and mother's future. (In fact, with the very kind help of my eldest cousin Bradley, which continued for decades, she invested it wisely enough to be able to live quite comfortably out there, spend a few summers in Santa Fè, travel elsewhere a bit, and even increase the principal.) The Hills were travelling a good deal, as his position demanded, so they asked me to live with them and house-sit while I was commuting to New York; I ended up in the maid's quarters of the new wing my dad had designed for their house. And I even wound up with a car: our long-suffering '39 Chevy had finally given way to a new '51 Plymouth while I was in college, and mother figured she could pick up a car inexpensively in Kansas.

The last thing to get sorted out was some surgery on me: I had over the course of several years developed bilateral varicose veins in my legs. The treatment in those days was called "bilateral saphenous ligation and stripping" and

was about as cumbersome as it sounds: they actually tied off the veins and surgically removed the set that lies under just under the surface of the skin. (It turns out there is a second set that also provides adequate circulation inside the leg; a nice redundancy.) All superficial work, but it took five hours; and in 1954, while they started you on sodium pentothal, the last four were ether. I have never been sicker.

A couple of days later the surgeon came in to check out the incisions. I was swathed from the waist down, both legs, with about a ton of adhesive tape. The nurse snipped a long slit down the length of each of my legs, he worked his fingers under the top border of the tape, and in one long gesture, yanked. Today, whenever political discussion turns to the use of torture in Guantànamo, I'm always reminded of that moment.

That short stay in the hospital gave me one useful insight into myself. A day or two into my recovery, a young boy was brought in to the other bed in the room. He was maybe 12 or 13, but big for his age, and he was there to have an undescended testicle corrected. When he came down from the operation, he was pretty sick, as I had been. There must have been a shortage of nurses that summer or something; anyway, I ended up being in some sense the first responder: supporting his head while he was throwing up, reassuring him, putting cold washcloths on his forehead, the usual sorts of things. In the process, I discovered that I really enjoyed helping him. There was nothing at all sexual about it, I had no ulterior motive – or titillation – but I really enjoyed just being a caregiver for him. I think that in some way knowing that I had that capacity affirmed something in me.

I don't remember the exact timing, now, but sometime by early in the Fall we accomplished the moves, mother to Kansas and I to the Hill's in Armonk. And then I was suddenly engulfed by the maw of a graduate program at a large urban university. It could not have been more different from Amherst. My first memory of Columbia is that of standing in line to register and pay the bursar; a line that extended (on a hot day) several city blocks down Amsterdam Avenue. I was told there were in those days close to 70,000 students passing through the few blocks of the campus daily; I could believe it. A clerk eventually took my check, I got a registration slip indicating the courses I would take and their room locations, and that was the last official expression of any interest in me on the part of the university, until two years or so later I was mailed my diploma.

The classes were large, and almost all lectures. The faculty was certainly distinguished: each of the four or five that I had a class with in those two semesters was a distinguished scholar and author. That, of course, didn't make them good teachers; the worst of them all in that regard was perhaps the most

renowned: Donald Frame, a celebrated figure in renaissance studies, and a very nice guy that one really wanted to like. I had him through the year in a (so-called) seminar; we did sit (about twenty of us) around a table for two hours two evenings a week, but he read his notes to us in a monotone and after the first thirty minutes or so it was no longer possible to discern whether he was reading in English or French. His principal virtue was that he did chase us through large swaths of John Calvin (he got away with it because Calvin was the first theologian ever to write in French, as opposed to Latin, and so a major historical figure in the literature). Frame was, in fact, a Christian; at the time that cut no ice with me, nor did the fact that he had started his teaching career at Loomis, where I ended up spending the entirety of mine. I'm afraid I didn't learn a lot about Calvin, though a lot of information ended up in my notes.

The other American, Otis Fellows, was also a pleasant sort, and I enjoyed his course in Eighteenth Century (for which I had been well prepared by Geoff Atkinson). But it was all lecture, and no discussion, which took all the fun out. I also began to realize the value of my time at Amherst. Almost to a man or woman my fellow students at Columbia were well versed in critical opinion about the works read (which schools of thought had said this or that about whomever), but I seemed to be the only one who had actually read the works themselves and engaged with the ideas...or wanted to talk about a them. They knew all about the history of criticism, but somehow had missed the very subject of that history. I found this astonishing, and still do.

The other disappointing realization concerned the native French professors, again a very distinguished lot; but they all seemed to have an axe to grind. The major nineteenth century man was Jean-Albert Bédé, who somehow could insert long discourses on political theory and social problems into the most innocent of lyric poems or pastoral tales. I had the sense that when I asked a question about a given text, I was regarded as having completely missed the boat. (This tendency got worse and worse, in fact, in the years after my time at Columbia, to the point where today many courses – and not just in French -- in many institutions are simply pretexts for teaching the political or social agenda of the teacher. That had never happened at Amherst.)

There was one person, though, who even at the time I could see was a genius, and an amazing teacher. Jeanne Varney Pleasants was a French woman, the wife of an American academic, who taught a required course for graduate students called "Phonetics." The course did start by studying the phonetic structure of the spoken language and how it had evolved, but as it went on it became, in fact, a course in elocution. The genius resided in her ability to take fifteen or twenty American students, of varying (and mostly rudimentary, some very much so) oral skills, and in the course of a couple of two-hour sessions a

week through the year teach them to be able to stand up and speak the language, perhaps not quite faultlessly, but easily and without an obvious American accent. It's hard to realize now, but in those days, you could go through a French major in college reading a lot of French, but writing about it and speaking in class exclusively in English. Many good professors did not use the language with ease, even at the graduate level; it was not expected that they should. With my childhood experience in Spanish, and a pretty good musical ear, I was better off than most of my contemporaries; but I would not have been ready to get along conversationally in French, despite nine years of study, several of them intensive, in the literature. By the time Mme. Pleasants got through with me, I was. I'll never forget the final exercise in that course: I had to declaim from memory a long speech from Racine's *Phèdre* (arguably the greatest of the French tragedies, the equivalent, say, of *Hamlet*), Phaedra's description of the sack of Troy, in fact acting it out through my voice. When I finished, the class was silent, and then Mme. Pleasants simply said "bravo." I felt good for about three days on the strength of that.

The commute in and out of the city was time-consuming, and in those days fairly grimy on the train and subway; and once one was on campus, there was no place to roost between classes (frequently a gap of a couple of hours or more). The few acquaintances I made were commuting grad students like myself; we'd occasionally have a meal together, but there wasn't much occasion for socializing. I found a restaurant on 6<sup>th</sup> avenue, pretty low on the spectrum of greasy spoons, where I could get a three-course meal for 99 cents; one of my fellow students accused me of being spendthrift -- he had found a place to eat for 45. I didn't investigate. At least I had a beautiful (if empty) home in the country to look forward to at the end of the day and peace and quiet to wake up in.

I had linked up for voice lessons with Lucius Metz, the tenor who had done the solo work several years earlier in that performance of the Bach B Minor Mass; he was based at Union Theological Seminary, a couple of blocks from the Columbia campus. What he did was really coaching: he gave me music to prepare and we would talk about interpretation. In itself, that was both interesting and educational; but what I really needed was more emphasis on technique. Like John Hanks at Smith, he had a voice like mine (a high lyric tenor), and was simply a great natural singer; he didn't think much about how he did what he did, it all came naturally to him. So it did to me...to a certain extent; but I also needed to learn the mechanics of how the voice was produced. He couldn't really explain that in words, and I never really acquired a firm physiological basis for sound production. I did (with his recommendation) get a job as a chorister at the Church of the Ascension on lower Broadway, at that time one of the top ten church choirs in the city. That carried over to vocal quartet work the following

summer, all of which helped the bank account at the princely rate of \$5 a performance, 1950s dollars and glad to get them.

In the two semesters of 1954-5, I managed to hack my way through all the course requirements for the M.A. I guess I learned a lot of stuff; but there was no joy in it, no sense of intellectual delight; this was what you had to do to get the academic creds you'd need to get ahead. The ensuing summer I would stay in Armonk studying for the comprehensive exams that would come around in August (a couple of all-day stinkers).

The last of my disappointments with Columbia arrived towards the Spring, when I had to choose a thesis topic and get assigned an adviser. I've always liked poetry, and had done quite a bit of reading in other centuries, so I decided to try something from the 19<sup>th</sup> century poets (that century and the 16<sup>th</sup> are the richest in verse, but the earlier time presents problems in language, a bit like reading pre-Shakespearian English). For advisor I was assigned to Michel Riffaterre, a young Turk of a scholar (not a whole lot older than I) who was to make a big name for himself a few years later as one of the founding gurus of the evolving "science" of semiotics. Like many of his French colleagues (as I was to find), Riffaterre was brilliant, extremely knowledgeable...and arrogant to the point of insufferability. And the academic game as it was then played meant he found a topic that he needed researched for his forthcoming book, and assigned it to me for my essay. My reward would be a footnoted acknowledgment...and of course the diploma.

The complicating factor to this particular game was that I would be writing the dissertation in France, not in New York. I don't remember now whose idea it was, or how it all came about (I suspect the hand of Atkinson, once again), I don't even remember applying for it now, though I must have, but somehow I had received a Fulbright Scholarship for study in France for the year 1955-56. (For those unfamiliar with it, the program was devised by Senator William Fulbright, of Arkansas, as a means of enabling foreign nations to repay the United States for the debts our wartime aid to them had incurred.) This was a legitimate Big Deal: besides the bragging rights of the thing itself, it meant a full year of study, complete with all travel costs (luxury liners both ways, and enough left over to take care of university vacations), a munificent book allowance and an equally lavish monthly stipend. The usual thing was that one took courses at a designated university; but there was no actual written requirement as to that, so as a graduate student, I could use the year to write my Columbia essay while auditing whatever struck my fancy; and defend it the following summer back in New York.

All this was still "next year," though, as I struggled through the course work at Columbia. Not that there was much academic difficulty; and though it all

seemed a bit dull after my wonderful undergraduate time, I did enjoy writing some of the papers. Another thing that somewhat alleviated the dullness was that I could from time to time get in to see some good opera at the Metropolitan, in particular a superlative performance of Verdi's *Otello*, one I will never forget: Renata Tebaldi's second appearance in New York City, and with Mario del Monaco (*Otello*) and Leonard Warren (*Iago*). Even in what is now looked back on as a "golden age" of singing, that was a monument. Less enjoyable, though, was the summer's preparation for the comprehensives; but at least I wasn't for the most part actually *in* the city, and could put my feet up on a lawn chair while hitting the books. Or listen to music as I read.

The struggle was with loneliness. Through high school and college there had always been plenty of friends around, class- or team-, room- or fraternity-mates to hang out with, or occasionally check out. Now there was almost no one, except during class or the very occasional lunch or dinner, which themselves were usually hurried. As an only child, used to being alone, and bookish to boot, it took a bit of a while to realize the effect of the solitude on me. It wasn't huge, or traumatic or even all that depressing, as I suppose it might have been for someone coming from other circumstances; but I did, though that year and the following summer, feel a little blue from time to time. Rick Bergren, Andy Hilgartner, Bob Bagg, various other more or less close college friends seemed far away in space and time. The Hills had a poodle I was taking care of, and that helped; and in the summer, with the job at Ascension taking me into the city for an evening rehearsal and then Sunday mornings, there was at least something to break the monotony. But even so, there were times when I longed for company.

And then, in the middle of the summer of '55, something strange happened. To set the background a bit, intellectually I was still adhering to the General Semantics point of view that I'd picked up through Andy, and quite distanced from my earlier religious faith, such as it was. On top of that, in my French readings I'd been introduced to existentialism, and had taken especially to Camus. His concept of the heroic individual standing over against a meaningless world and an irrational society appealed to me (the more so just in that year or so when I was so much by myself), as it did to hundreds of thousands in my generation. All that seemed to make excellent sense to me.

Well, one evening – it must have been July or early August – I was swotting away at the books in my wing of the Hill's house. They were away, as usual. I decided I needed to take a short break and went outside to stretch my legs. It was a beautiful clear and moonless night, and in the country (as it was then) thirty miles or so north of the New York glow there was very little ambient light. The star cover was extraordinary, like nothing we see any more. I stood on

their wide lawn overlooking the long fall-away view down towards Long Island Sound, and gazed up into the firmament for a long time. Thousands and thousands of stars, you could almost see them move. And suddenly, out of nowhere, completely out of the blue, the absolute conviction, the *knowledge*, swept over me that all that stuff, the GS, the existentialism, all of it that I had been involved with for four years, meant nothing: that it simply could not be that all that I could see above and around me was a meaningless chaos, that there was no Creator, that the life of mankind was the highest possible form of existence, without hope or reason for joy. I understood: all that was a foolish and presumptuous lie. The heavens were telling me the glory of God, the firmament was declaring His handiwork.

It happened in a second, no more. It was the antithesis of an emotional experience; there was no need to weep or laugh. It was simple, clear and certain, and has remained so ever since.

*[At the time, I had no label to put to this experience; was it a simple intuition, an insight, some sort of emotional compensation for my loneliness? In fact, I had no desire to name or analyze it then; I just accepted it. Today, in retrospect, it seems clearly a visitation of the Holy Spirit; that sounds very high-flown and over-inflated, but I've come to find out through the ensuing sixty-odd years that the Holy Spirit's interventions are frequently quiet and unobtrusive, like this one.]*

In order to digest this whatever-it-was, I realized there was someone I could turn to. My four years at Amherst had happened to overlap with the tenure of an Episcopal priest, John Coburn, as chaplain of the college, and rector of Grace Church, Amherst. I'd gotten to know him a bit when I sang in the Grace Church choir my freshman year (in fact, I think I baby-sat for his daughters once or twice); he was then in his late 30s, a remarkable man and priest, a sort of Saint Francis figure, for whom many of us had a great deal of respect intellectually and spiritually. By the time I got to Columbia he had moved on and was Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral in the Diocese of New Jersey. (He later was consecrated a bishop.) So I wrote him a letter, explaining my spiritual history, such as it was, describing what had happened, saying I would shortly be off for France, and ending up with the obvious question: what should I do about this? To my surprise he remembered me and sent back a very cordial reply, suggesting a couple of things I could read (besides the Bible). The first was some short works by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Anglican mystic and scholar Evelyn Underhill (not her two major works, *Mysticism* or *Worship*, which are classics even today), and the second a volume of letters of the German Christian apologist Baron

Friedrich von Hügel. I don't know how John Coburn chose those particular things, but I duly went out and bought the books and packed them off to Europe with me. As it turned out, I found them all very nourishing and encouraging, though I'm pretty sure I didn't come anywhere near to understanding them. Anyway, it was enough to keep up my interest.

The summer wound down, the Hills were in and out. I got to play golf once or twice with Jack at his club, Whippoorwill, in Armonk, which boasts a historic Donald Ross-designed course, and help host some cocktail parties. The comps were in mid-August; two days, both miserably hot, humid and grimy (we've pretty much forgotten now how dirty New York, and a lot of other American cities, were in the pre-air-pollution-conscious fifties). No air-conditioning in the building, of course, and the windows were wide open to the noises of Amsterdam Avenue a floor below. There were no doubt some informational questions, but the brunt of it was writing four three-hour essays on topics chosen from six possible centuries. It was as much a test of endurance as of memory or judgment. At the end of one of those days when I stood up from my chair at the end, I left the back of my shirt pasted to the furniture varnish. Eventually I found out I had passed.

I also had to get my thesis topic defined with Prof. Riffaterre, no small task. It eventually worked out to studying the poet Victor Hugo, and specifically, a remarkable change in his writing style in the middle years of his life (ca. 1854-9). The topic was somewhat interesting to me, and (I sensed) not very much to him; he gave me to understand that he would put up with it as a kind of indulgence for the untutored taste of a child. I never did come to find out whether or how it fit in with his research; and truth to tell, by the end, I didn't very much care. The interesting thing about it all came to light fifteen years later: the background research that I did in writing the essay proved very valuable to me in understanding the nature of spiritual warfare in the Christian life. More about that later.

At the end of the summer Andy Hilgartner, finishing his first year of pre-med at Johns Hopkins, got married to a Vassar girl from Vermont. I was one of the groomsmen, as was Andy's younger brother Lee, still in college. I was to drive out to Kansas and leave the car and my belongings with my mother, so Lee and I decided to travel back together, and then I would drive him down to his family's place in central Texas and stay a few days. They had a small ranch where they bred Santa Gertrudis cattle, right next to the King ranch.

We made the mistake of figuring that by sharing the driving and going flat out, we could do the trip from White Plains to Winfield in two days, saving a night's motel costs for each of us. This was before the creation of the interstate

highway system, of course. We did it, but it almost killed us – or I did. The evening of the second day, we were somewhere in eastern Kansas. Roads out there are string-straight for miles on end, you can practically put a brick on the accelerator and lash down the steering wheel. And nothing to see in any direction. I was driving, Lee was snoozing on the right hand side of the front bench seat. And of course / started to fall asleep. I awoke (by God's grace, there being no other palpable reason) as we were zooming along at 80 mph towards a right-angle turn in the road, where some farmer had refused to sell the right of way and the road had to go south a mile before turning west again. I started to wrench the wheel hard left and stand on the brake; but as the car began to swerve, centrifugal force slid me over on top of Lee, my hands came off the wheel, and my foot off the brake (I think I did somehow get my *left* foot on it and with my left arm fully extended, got a finger or two on the wheel). I had essentially no control over the car at all. But – inexplicably – the rear end of the car swung around in a scream of tires and storm of gravel, and we came to stop on the shoulder, around the corner and pointing south.

We got out and walked back to look. The tire marks bore silent witness; the rear end in particular, had swung around a bare few inches from a rocky culvert that was a good ten feet deep. After a while, Lee said, "Well, that's enough to make a Christian out of you!" I laughed. And we got back in the car.

The several days on the ranch, though hot, were fun, and I learned several things which I'm thankful to say have not been useful since. One was to form the habit of shaking your shoes hard and upside down before inserting the foot, since scorpions like warm dark places. Another was that despite very adverse appearances (full-grown Santa Gertrudis are huge beasts, the bulls up to my head at their shoulders), the cows in a corral can be stopped in mid-charge and effectively herded by one man on foot, if he can project his voice. The third was what to do with an immature heifer who has been date-raped (it happens in the animal kingdom, too). The procedure involves a broom handle, medicated rags, vaginal insertion and a friend willing to hang on to the heifer's head. She is not appreciative of any of these measures, but they do prevent conception, which would probably cause her eventual death, otherwise. So I have to confess to having been involved in birth control, although the issue was not at that point as heated as it later became.

So I ended up back in Winfield with a week or ten days to go before departure for France. This interval will necessitate a digression into a small segment of my family history, that regarding my maternal grandmother.

Nano was a remarkable person. She was born in 1867, two years after the assassination of Lincoln, and lived to see Sputnik. As a young lady, she was once asked at a church social for the favor of a dance by none other than Jesse James. (One didn't refuse. Just to the west of Winfield, I believe there still remain the dilapidated ruins of a few houses; that community was named Dalton, after the family that lived there, the famous gang.)

Our family home in Winfield was a large Victorian mansion on the courthouse square, with a barn behind it (there were chickens and horses until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and of course at one time a privy. Behind the barn ran an alley which bisected the block; there was a brick fireplace and chimney on the alley, used to incinerate refuse.

Nano was very gifted woman: in her younger days she played the guitar and banjo expertly, and could do wood-carving with remarkable skill. She was also a person of strong opinions and small doubt as to their correctness. She had ruled the house (my grandfather was a very mild and gentle person), the neighborhood and much of the town with an iron fist that was not by any means always clothed in velvet; and her rule grew more and more absolute with advancing age. Witness the following story:

One day late that summer of '55 Nano said to me, "David, I want you to empty all the wastebaskets in the house and take the paper out back and burn it."

I replied, "Nano, you know I can't do that; no one is allowed to burn anything outside in summer, for fear of sparks."

She responded, "David, I want you to empty all the wastebaskets in the house and take the paper out back and burn it."

We discussed the matter for perhaps five or ten minutes, at the end of which I gathered all the paper up, took it outside to the fireplace, went and got the hose from the basement (itself an adventure), hooked it up, turned the water on, and set a match to the bottom of the pile.

It was literally less than a minute: around the corner at the end of the alley came the nose of the inevitable police car and in it the inevitable policeman, complete with wide brim hat, brown uniform and a pistol belt that must have been five feet long to get around him. He pulled up beside me, pressed the button and brought the window down. "Sonny," he said with a hard look (I was 22 at the time), "what do you think you're doin'?"

I decided to play along. "Officer," I said, "I'm burning the trash."

"Don't you know that's against the law?"

"Yes sir, I know that."

"Then why're you doin' it?"

"Because my grandmother told me to."

**“Yeah? And who’s your grandmother?”**

**“Mrs. Light,” I said, jerking a thumb towards the house.**

**He took in the house, then gave me a long, slow look. And pressed the button; the window rolled back up, and he drove away.**

**Nano’s reception of Sputnik when it appeared a few years later also deserves mention. The Russian entry into the space race excited enormous publicity of course, and my uncle Jack, who was something of an inventor himself and who loved technological progress, was among the enthusiasts. Not so Nano.**

**“Can’t trust them Russians,” she insisted. “No fool’d believe that. They lie. T’aint there.” This infuriated Jack, who was not without his share of the family’s acerbic obstinacy.**

**The argument went on heatedly for a number of weeks; but finally, Jack lured her out into the side yard at dusk, and lo! you could see the satellite clearly, still reflecting sunlight from its elevation, as darkness fell all around us. She looked up, and did indeed see it. She stared at it a long time. Then she looked down at Jack, and said, “Y’see, ya derved fool? I told ya it was there the whole time.” It was a couple of months before Jack would speak to her again.**

**Along with her brother, my mother inherited a liberal portion of the family’s mulishness. So the eleven years she spent with Nano were not without explosions, and for the visitor, always marked by a certain sense of impending doom. Big family get-togethers (Thanksgiving and Christmas, especially) despite being considered a moral and social necessity, tended towards an adult version of the food-fight. Two of my cousins remained in Winfield and in time acquired children, so there was always ample material for discussion. I was frequently thankful in those eleven years that I was out of the country for three, and my teaching work kept visits reasonably short the rest of the time. While Winfield passed for a more-than-usually-enlightened community (there were two small colleges in town (to go with nineteen churches) and one bookstore, (which sold gifts and bric-a-brac primarily); once you’d passed the rabbit-shooting and fast-car driving stage, there was not a lot to do.**

**With some relief, then, I took the plane from Wichita and duly embarked with a couple of hundred of my Fulbright colleagues on the old Queen Mary for the trip to Cherbourg.**

**That was a wonderful trip. We were all in tourist class, of course, but the Cunard Lines treated even their most impoverished travelers well. It was my first introduction to continental cuisine, and especially to hors-d’oeuvres. My mother was a good cook, we’d nothing to complain of at home, but we ate**

simply, good nourishing practical food. But this was a new world, a new universe! Anchovies, snails, bouchées à la reine, coquilles St.Jacques, quiches (then unknown in this country); scores and scores of delights. Who needed a main course? And we're not even in France yet!

And of course, there were lots of interesting people in their early 20s to talk to, and lots of time to do it; the four and a half days went very quickly. I made friends with a Williams guy named Tony Moro, who had had a brother a class or two ahead of me at Amherst; we hung around with each other for most of the month's orientation in Paris before splitting off to our assigned universities. Tony ended up staying in France after the Fulbright year; he became one of the first people working in the then new technique of lip-synching English dialog in French movies for export to the U.S.

We docked in Cherbourg and took the train to Paris; it was a lovely sunny day, and as I watched the Normandy countryside unroll past the windows, I had a strange, but very strong, feeling of being *at home*. It *is* beautiful country, but there was more than that to it. That was the way farm country *should* look. I had no way to account for the feeling; but it was strong enough not to be forgotten. It was years later that I got a clue.

I knew that both sides of my family were originally of English stock; but one summer in the 1970s when I was out in Winfield, my mother, who had always been interested in genealogy (and was many times over a Daughter of the Revolution; we're related to I don't know how many historical figures) prevailed on me to work out a family tree, for which she had assembled a ton of materials. (I took some convincing, but finally, as I worked on it, I started to get interested.) It turns out that the earliest direct ancestor she could verify was one Sir Robert Lawrence, who had been knighted in 1191 by Richard Lion Heart at the battle of Accra during the Third Crusade. Now an Englishman with a name like Robert Lawrence in the 1100s had to have had great-grandparents who had come to England with William the Conqueror; otherwise he would have been called Erik or Sven or Ulf or some such. So I have to think that some little gene in me somewhere was happy to be home in Normandy.

We had most of September in Paris (French universities then didn't really get themselves in gear before the beginning of October). There was an extended series of lectures on history and culture, both of France and of the city; and a number of guided lecture tours in town and in the Parisian region (I remember best Chantilly and the ancient abbey of Royaumont). I recall also we had an address by William Faulkner, who was a Fulbright Lecturer that year. (I don't remember a thing he said, but I'm pretty sure it had nothing to do with France.) Afternoons and evenings were pretty free, so we could explore on our

own as well. We were housed in the *Cité Universitaire*, a large campus on the south side of Paris (built by the Rockefellers in the 20s) with houses (which looked a lot like American fraternity houses) maintained by various nations; I was in the *Maison Britannique*. (Continental) breakfasts were included; we chose our own restaurants for lunch and dinner (no hardship, as will be seen below).

I am profoundly grateful to have had the chance to see Paris (and other French cities) as it was, still, in the '50s. It's generally forgotten today that France was the last of the European countries to recover economically from WW II. Part of the coolness that Americans sometimes sense from France stems from the historical fact that after the war, we spent billions and billions of dollars reestablishing the economies of, and rebuilding, our defeated enemies, especially Germany, and very little on our ex-allies, who had suffered enormously and were supposed to be winners. So my first memories of Paris are essentially those of *le vieux Paris*, the city that had been almost completely unchanged since the 19<sup>th</sup> century work of Baron Haussmann in laying out the boulevards and major parks. We got to see the Paris we had read about in countless novels and works of history, we saw the realities that have since been rubbed out of existence, the *Quartier latin*, the *Marais* (the oldest quarter, and more recently the Jewish ghetto), *les Halles* (the central all-night wholesale market) and so on, that are today prettified tourist traps. The one *disadvantage* was that all those cities still had the accumulated grime of the centuries since the industrial revolution; *Notre Dame*, for example, today glistening white (well, light yellow), medium beige when my father painted it in 1922, was dark grey, almost black, in 1955. The price of authenticity.

Speaking of Paris as it was: one of the weekends in Paris, Tony Moro (an Episcopalian like me) and I determined with would be fun to worship at the British Embassy Church (today St. Michael's) on the right bank. We had to take the *Métro* to center city, in fact, the *Place Notre Dame*, whence we could walk the rest of the way. So at 10 o'clock or so of this Sunday morning we were walking across the square in front of the cathedral, and found ourselves approached by a Parisian institution of the time. This was a small, nondescript middle-aged man correctly attired in a grey double-breasted suit, shirt and tie. Taking something out of his right breast pocket, he inquired if we would like to purchase any of his pictures. They were, of course, porn. We declined politely, He persisted. We demurred, more emphatically. Finally, he looked at us again with a dawning, if mistaken, surmise, his face lighting up. "Ah, " he said, "je comprends." And he dove into his *left* breast pocket and brought out a packet of homosexual pictures. He was very puzzled when we laughed those off, too.

We got our university assignments for the year; I was one of six destined for Dijon, in Burgundy. This worked out really well: just two or three hours southeast of Paris by train, the center of a gastronomical and wine region, and the former seat of the Dukes of Burgundy, who were rivals of the French royal houses through much of the middle ages, with a culture (and a distinctive architectural and artistic heritage) quite its own. All this in a lovely countryside of rolling hills, not unlike New England. Dijon is, or was, a wonderful small city. The *Bourquignons* are also a distinctive people, short, solidly built, merry and more informal than the French to their north. (Though I have to quarrel with Americans who find the French unfriendly; I've found that wherever you go outside of the Parisian tourist traps (would you judge all Americans on the basis of those you meet on the streets of New York?), if one is polite, the French as a people are pleasant, friendly and helpful to foreigners.)

There were six of us Fulbrights in Dijon: Lane Heller, doing a PhD at Wisconsin, Gene Cox, doing one in history at Johns Hopkins, Lorraine Mitchell, whose father Howard was the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, Bertram Ball, a rather odd egg from the West Coast, and a very sweet girl, Jeannie, whose last name escapes me. We found that we had fallen well, as the French expression has it; at the university there was a large number of students who were interested in American literature (drawn there by a very popular young professor whose specialty it was); so naturally they were very prompt in making friends with us and trying to learn about the America that doesn't show up in books. I got to know one of them, Madeleine Siredey, quite well, (her father was the owner/manager of the town's biggest hotel) and also two guys, Georges Michel and Michel Jacques, both of whom, unusually, were pretty faithful Roman Catholic believers, and active in the French university equivalent of the Newman clubs in this country.

It took a few days, but I ended up with a pleasant room in a brand-new house, of all things, on the outskirts of town. My windows had a fine view of the city a mile or two away. The owner, M. Bisco, was a *cheminot*, a railroad worker of Italian origin, who had just finished building the place. He, his wife and adolescent daughter lived on the ground floor; upstairs there were four rooms he rented out to students. We were an international bunch: besides myself, a German law student, two French kids in their first year, and an African, I think from Morocco or Chad. It was a new house all right, and very well built: white stucco outside, no lawn, but a small garden in which Mme Bisco grew both flowers and vegetables, enclosed in six-foot walls after the French manner. (It took me a while to get used to walking down a residential street with nothing but walls in sight.) There was running water, after a fashion: upstairs we five students had a common flush toilet. Mlle Bisco brought us up water for drinking or

ablutions twice a day in huge bowls. No shower or bath; for my part, I visited a very elegant bathhouse once a week, and made do with sponge baths the rest of the time. Heat was provided by a small *poêle* in each of our rooms which burned coal briquettes provided by the Biscos. There was electricity, of course. All told, I counted myself lucky, compared to what many students were able to find. I ended up buying a bike for the daily commute to the *faculté*; good exercise.

Only once in my life have I ever felt really rich; but it was that year. Besides the trip, books, all university fees and so on, the Fulbright paid us monthly stipend of \$150; that is, 150 1955 dollars. The exchange rate was such that that meant a monthly salary of 60,000 French francs, more or less. France was, as I have said, the last European country to recover economically after the war; that recovery in 1955 was far from complete. The cost of living was minute; I felt like throwing banknotes out the window. It was in fact embarrassing: we Americans discovered that we could not invite our French friends out to lunch or dinner, or even offer a drink, because that would put them under the obligation of returning the invitation, which was for them impossible. So we, like them, learned to nurse a tiny cup of *expresso* in a café all afternoon or all evening. The six of us would get together by ourselves once a month for a good dinner at one of the excellent restaurants in town. A five-course dinner (for me, typically a dozen snails, *quenelles de brochet* (this is what they eat in heaven and is indescribable, but it starts with a kind of *pâté* made of pike), a *gratinée* (onion soup topped with cheese), *boeuf bourguignon*, salad and cheese *plateau*) would cost just under two dollars American, including wine. It's amazing how much one can eat in his twenties. And not gain weight! The bike took care of that.

There was a student restaurant that served lunches, the principal meal of the day in France (and the only one provided for students – at a small cost; I think it came to about 15 cents or so. We went frequently, largely just to be sociable; the food was truly awful, just barely justifying the price. French universities don't have sports programs, the substitute was a daily ceremony, *la bousculade*. Cultures differ (duh!): the English, for example, when it's a matter of getting on a bus or train, or just going through a narrow opening, automatically and courteously sort themselves out into a line and file through in order of arrival. The French, at least the younger ones, consider such moments as an athletic competition. The narrow doors of the dining hall opened at noon sharp, and all two or three hundred of those assembled outside in the courtyard vied to be first in. The daily struggle was intense, and enhanced by French volubility: cries of pain, protest, reproach and insult resounded until the last unfortunate picked him or herself up off the floor and limped in. Inside, the tone changed, all offenses were forgiven; but the volume and animation did not decrease.

*Discuter*, to discuss, is a verb of huge importance in French, and comprises a major part of the pleasures of life for all ages.

I had a pretty brisk introduction to discussion, and to one of the great differences between French and American student life, back at the Bisco's. One evening, the two French kids living in the next room initiated what started as a friendly conversation, asking questions about America. I soon realized that they were highly politicized: their questions grew more and more pointedly antagonistic to what they regarded as our racism and the power of capitalism in the political and social realms. (In fairness, that was perhaps natural: the civil rights struggle in this country was heating up at the time and making news in Europe, and to them, the idea of education being more accessible to the rich than to the poor was clearly corrupt, and corrupting.) I found myself at a disadvantage: at no point in my educational career had I considered politics a subject worthy of investigation, and economics still less. I'd been focused on literature and music to the exclusion of all else, well, except golf; and I think the overwhelming majority of those I'd hung around with were likewise uninterested in public affairs and the like. I hadn't realized that for the French, politics is the one subject that unites everyone in interest – and divides everyone one by opinion. Put two or three Americans who don't know each other together and they will talk about sports; put two or three French together and it's politics they'll talk about. And talk. And talk. And argue.

It was, at any rate, a great way to practice conversational (not to say, debating) skills. When we finally called it a day, about 2 a.m., I don't think I had won any converts to the American Way of Life, but I had learned a lot. We had a few such late-night discussions from time to time, at least once bringing M. Bisco to the bottom of the stairs, threatening bodily harm. In fact, it was really that year that I started to take an interest in national and international affairs for the first time. As a way of keeping in touch with home, I took to buying a daily copy of what was then the New York *Herald Tribune* French Edition (today the New York *Times* European Edition), and reading it over a cup of tea (still no coffee for me!) and a *pâtisserie* at the end of the afternoon.

We Americans were all taking different courses; but we got together once a week for a session called “stylistics” with the local Fulbright adviser, a literature professor named, aptly, Henri Talon (“talon” means “heel” in French). Like Michel Riffaterre, my thesis advisor, he was brilliant and arrogant. The class was meant to hone our skills in writing scholarly French, but it really consisted for the most part in his raking all of us over the coals for our incompetence in producing prose up to his standards of idiomatic control. (He remarked to us one time. “You Americans, you are all alike. You do not *speak* your language, you exude it, like sweat.” I had to admit, years later and teaching adolescents,

that there was a certain degree of truth to what he had said; but it was not what we twenty-somethings wanted to hear, and did not predispose us towards affection for him.)

There was also a course we could audit on the art and culture of Burgundy. That one was very enlightening, as we had examples all around us of its architecture and art. Like many kids, I had grown up with a love of castles, towers and turrets, arms and armor; and with my father's interests had absorbed lots of photographs and paintings of cathedrals and churches. These latter had mostly been of the great gothic structures, but the duchy of Burgundy had begun flourish in the Romanesque period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, just prior. Over the course of the year I fell in love with the romanesque, with its heavier walls, lesser fenestration and somehow more spiritual atmosphere. (I hadn't then come across John Donne's wonderful couplet: "Those churches are best for prayer that have least light; To seek God only, I go out of sight.") Not far south of Dijon was Tournus, a wonderful example of the fortified romanesque church; and just south of there, the abbatial church of Cluny of which only ruins survived the French Revolution, but which was before the construction of St. Peter's in Rome the largest religious space in Christendom. Châteaux abounded in all directions, and in Dijon itself was the palace of the dukes, with its museum and the splendid tombs and marble recumbent figures of the dukes and their duchesses lying side by side, a marble greyhound at their feet.

Just south of Dijon is the town of Beaune, the epicenter of the wine country. It looks like a dull little town, but underneath it lie miles and miles of wine cellars belonging to the vintners of the surrounding region. And in the center is an amazing remnant, the *Hospices de Beaune*. This is an actual medieval hospital, preserved somehow in its entirety, complete with pharmacy, operating rooms and (spine-chilling) instruments (no anesthetics in those days, of course). It was a working hospital well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; but the medieval/renaissance interiors have been carefully recreated. The buildings sit around a courtyard, and the steep roofs are classic Burundian craftsmanship: ceramic tiles in brilliant colors, red, green, gold, blue, arranged in geometric patterns, like huge technicolor crossword puzzles. Its prize is the famous *Triptych* of Rogier van der Weyden (1400-1464): a three paneled altarpiece of the last judgment, one of the crowning masterpieces of Flemish renaissance art. The triptych was hidden away at some point for many years and only re-discovered in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; the colors were as vivid in the 1950s as the day they hit the wood (I understand this is no longer the case, but nevertheless a great deal of its beauty survives). No reproduction can give a valid impression; but for what it's worth, here is a link: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaune\\_Altarpiece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaune_Altarpiece).

All in all, I counted myself very fortunate to have landed in Dijon. Until winter came, though anywhere north of the Mediterranean coast was about as badly off, and it was worse in Paris and farther north. The winter of 1955-6, it turned out, was to be the coldest till then in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though Europe lies quite northerly (New York City is on the same latitude as Lisbon) the Gulf Stream keeps continental temperatures fairly moderate most of the time; but something went badly wrong that year. There was snow, lots of it; more than three feet accumulated in Dijon, which was unheard of. Except for a few areas close to the Alps, there was no snow removal equipment to be had anywhere in France; in the memory of man there had never been need. This was an act of God. So the snow fell, was packed in the streets, and turned to solid ice, with ruts six inches or more deep where wheels had spun (no chains or snow tires available either, of course). Bike riding was impossible, for that reason and also because at more than a moderate walking pace, one's face froze. Siberian wolves were seen in northern France for the first time in the century, as were an astounding variety of outer garments which clearly were resurrected from trunks dating back to the previous century. I rejoiced in that I had brought along a belted stadium coat, gabardine-shell fleece-lined down to my knees and with a big fur collar; over a jacket and a couple of sweaters it made walking at least possible. The *poêle* saw heavy duty; and at night, struggled but could not suffice. Mlle Bisco would bring in the usual huge bowl of water towards the end of the evening; I would be up reading until midnight or so with the room as warm as possible, and would load the furnace up with briquettes, bank down all its drafts, curl up under a pile of blankets so heavy it was physically difficult to move...and by seven o'clock in the morning the water in the bowl across the room was frozen solid, and it was an act of courage to put out a leg out and set foot to floor. (I suppose if the *poêle* had worked better I would have asphyxiated.)

The only room at the university that had central heating was the reading room of the library (in the classrooms, the second half of an hour was usually livable in a large class, what with the body heat generated). The library's popularity was somewhat attenuated, however, in that most of the sixty or eighty bodies occupying space there had not enjoyed the pleasure of a bath in some time... some weeks, if the olfactory evidence was to be trusted. I myself managed to get along on one visit a week to the bathhouse; this was a considerable luxury, and one of the few times that I was actually warm. I would buy my copy of the *Tribune*, order up a hot bathtub (carrying a complete change of clothes), strip, lie back in the bath and read the issue from first page to last as the water cooled. Pure heaven!

We Americans tried hard to assemble a Thanksgiving dinner on the day, but Dijonnais restaurateurs didn't really catch the vision (turkey was not widely

recognized as something one ate in those days, and in fact still is not), and of course pumpkin or mince pies were impossible even to describe adequately, so we settled for *coq au vin*. By then I had finished most of my reading and research for the essay, and was involved in plotting out the structure itself. I had of course blithely underestimated the physical complexity of the task: typing out (hunt and peck; it was only a couple of years later in the army I learned to touch type) a manuscript (plus carbon copies) on my father's early 1920s manual with its propensity for jamming if you looked at it cross-eyed, working in footnotes by guess or by gosh, packaging and sending it off (with an estimated time delay of at least a week), and awaiting the reply from Prof. Riffaterre, who had other fish to fry, of course. And then having another go at it. So it was a continuing story of hurry, hurry, hurry...and wait. I can well remember thinking that if I ever got this thing done, I'd never have another worry again.

And then just as the Christmas vacation was coming up, I fell ill. I noted in the mirror that I was turning an attractive shade of yellow, and in my ordinary comings and goings experiencing a rapid onset of exhaustion. I don't remember now how I got to a doctor (the Biscos, who were very good people, may have driven me, or it may have been a taxi); but it was determined that I had some sort of either infectious or dietarily-induced hepatitis. A mild condition, fortunately, but it did require observation in hospital.

The hospital in Dijon, like many in France then, was largely housed in buildings dating back to the Middle Ages (although the facilities inside were certainly modern enough). I was, in fact, in a modern addition; but from my windows I looked out on a scene that hadn't changed in four or five hundred years: a small brook with a stone bridge across it, and fieldstone buildings of romanesque design on the far side. Quite quaint, scenic, even, but no hint of the 20<sup>th</sup> century met the eye. In the dusk (and dusk began about 3 p.m., so far north were we) cats would congregate beside the brook, and an organized campaign would evolve against the rats who lived under the bridge. Sometimes the cats won.

I was there just a week, and very well cared for (all courtesy of the French social health system). I found myself to be an object of some curiosity: in those postwar days, the French had, by and large, remained of somewhat smaller stature than Americans (with changes in prosperity and diet this is no longer true), so that all the nurses in the hospital came by, one by one, to see this gigantic American who was almost two meters high...and could speak French! My stay coincided conveniently with the Christmas break and a waiting-period in trans-Atlantic communications, so I had not lost any essential time. My friends had all gone south to warm up; I made use of the money I saved by not doing so to buy books. I was sent home with strong directions to stay warm (neat trick, that!)

and avoid catching cold, as pneumonia was a frequent worry after such a bout as I'd had; but otherwise I felt pretty good and returned to strength in fairly short order.

Looking back, it was a strange sort of year: periods of great activity on the paper, followed by enforced inaction; lots of interaction with French friends and then lots of solitary work in my room; much to see and "experience" (a verb I hate) in the region, and periods of loneliness as well. (Fortunately, there was a great bookstore in Dijon, and among their other offerings they had a large selection of Penguin paperback editions of P.G. Wodehouse – a sure specific for the blues.)

When I got to Dijon, I figured it would be good to see out a protestant church. There were at least two (France at that point was about 98% Roman Catholic; the 2% subdivided into those who attended the Calvinist *Eglise Réformée de France* and staunch non-believers). So in Dijon there was a Seventh-Day Adventist congregation meeting in a storefront that I didn't try, and the ERF. I went once. It was both horrifying and hilarious.

The meeting took place in a rather nondescript building, a cross between a church and a dilapidated municipal auditorium. Those in attendance were exceedingly proper middle-aged to elderly middle-class citizens: the men in dark suits, white shirts and ties, the women in long dark dresses and hats. I don't recall seeing any children or adolescents. Everyone was extremely dignified; you had the impression that if anyone smiled, his or her face would crack and fall off. There were several dirge-like hymns; what liturgy there was short and unmemorable. The sermon, on the other hand, was long and vivid. The pastor recounted for us the horrors of hell in great detail, and the misery of the damned. In the end, he concluded that all this was good and right, and we deserved it. Heads drooping, we all filed out. I did not return.

From then on, I formed the habit of attending mass on Sundays at one of the Catholic churches; there was at least good architecture or stained glass to look at, and the homilies, after the Catholic style, were short. I could follow the service pretty well (in those days all in Latin, of course) having sung or heard in performance my fair share of the liturgy in New York. And of course the Episcopal communion service I had grown up in was almost exactly equivalent. The books John Coburn had suggested were encouraging in a general sort of way; short on actual doctrine, but useful in cultivating an awareness of God and His immanence, and I slipped into a mode of occasionally dropping in to the cathedral, which was just around the corner from the *Faculté*, during the week, just to sit and pray or contemplate. Stones speak, sometimes quite eloquently; just

being in a consecrated site where people had worshipped for a millennium and a half or more, permeates the soul.

Through the rest of the winter I labored on with the thesis and its frustrations. At the Easter break, again all my American friends were heading south to warm up; but I wanted to go see a bit of England, and headed north. A good guess on my part: I had a week or ten days in sunny good weather there, and it apparently rained and was cold in Spain and Italy.

England was wonderful (more genes firing perhaps). Rather than doing the whole Paris-to-London boat train, I got off in Dover and took a bus to Canterbury (it turned out that in those days – and I hope still – one could take a bus going in the desired direction as far as the next town, where would be there a further choice of busses going on at the next town, and so forth. All very charming and spur-of-the-moment. I discovered also that many English people are relaxed and informal, at least on busses, and easy to lure into conversation ).

When we got off the channel boat the weather was cloudy, but clearing after a shower. Canterbury town sits in the middle of what seems a large saucer, perhaps 10 miles across; just as we came over the brim and could look down towards the town roofs ahead, the sun came out and a huge double rainbow appeared, dropping one end down on the cathedral spire in the middle. I fell in love with England on the spot.

I'm what the French call *un amateur de vieilles pierres*, a lover of old stones ( i.e., buildings), and they don't get much more impressive than Canterbury. Whether the stains on the flagstones in that side chapel are or are not the murdered Thomas-à-Becket's blood doesn't make much difference; if they aren't, they should be. As at Notre-Dame de Paris, or Chartres or many European churches, when you set foot inside the building, you *know* you are in a sacred place, you *feel* that people have worshiped there from time immemorial. And it's true: most of the great Christian edifices were intentionally built on top of the remains of pagan places of worship, in a kind of physical demonstration of the triumph of the Christendom; so the sites have been holy to someone for three or four thousand years. That fact has palpable effects, even today.

I stayed the night in Canterbury, and then it was on to London, where a day's stay was more than enough for me; despite the place of my birth, I'm not a lover of cities, and London to me had a heaviness that I was glad to leave. (I did get to attend a magnificent choral Eucharist at Westminster Abby on Palm Sunday morning) Then I started out on a great circle bus route: south and west to Winchester, Salisbury, Wells, Bath, Gloucester, then north through Stratford and Warwick, where some of my distant ancestors had come from. Glorious countryside, wonderful architecture, nice bed-and-breakfasts. Kenilworth

Castle was another lovely spot. Then as quickly as possible through the five towns (Britain's industrial region) and into the Lake District, where I stayed Easter weekend in Ambleside and walked and walked around in Wordsworth's glorious scenery. And never a raindrop.

Thence up to Carlisle and by train across to Durham on the east coast, a breath-taking cathedral sitting on the bluff over the town, and south to York, Lincoln, Ely and Cambridge. Looking at maps now, I mourn the many sites I didn't have time to get to, or didn't know about, just on that one brief perimeter. It was a glorious ten days, and I consoled myself on the way back to France, that I'd soon get back there again. And I never have.

Spring term went by quickly; there was much to be done. I finally was able to pound out a final draft of the essay, get Prof. Riffaterre to approve its submission, and send it off to a professional typist in New York for presentation.

The next problem was to get the immediate future settled. I'd set off to France without much thinking about a return, and what might happen then. My less than blissful experience at Columbia had convinced me that looking for a secondary-school teaching career would be much preferable to the drudgery it would take to finish out the PhD I would need to get into college work. The Fulbright office did run an academic placement service, with which I'd registered; but it became immediately apparent that there was a problem: I was in France, but the jobs were in America, and a face-to-face interview would be required. (I had an encouraging exchange of correspondence with St Mark's School in Massachusetts which foundered on that obstacle.) In the end, it was the "old-boy" network that came to the rescue: Jack Hill heard about the hang-up and was reminded of a classmate of his (class of 1925!) who had inherited the headmaster-ship of a school out in western Pennsylvania – and who would hire me on Jack's recommendation, sight unseen.

Then I had a fairly knock-down-drag-out fight with Prof. Talon, who wanted me to sit for exams in the courses I had audited at the university. This was not a requirement in the Fulbright program, and I maintained that I did not have adequate time to prepare, given the labors of the thesis. The case had to be referred back to Paris, but I eventually carried my point, much to his expressed disgust. Looking back, I think he was probably right, and certainly I was being less than a wonderful ambassador; but I didn't see that at the time.

Finally I had to have a couple of large wooden boxes built to ship the library I'd acquired back to the States, along with my trunk. In those days, that was easily done; artisans of all kinds abounded. Then at the very end of the year, my mother came over (her first time back in France since the marriage). I met her in Paris and we rented a car, a Citroën 2CV ("deux-chevaux:" two

European horsepower, the equivalent of about 18 American horsepower). This was a wonderful machine, with a canvas roof that rolled back, canvas seats like primitive American lawn chairs which could be lifted out for picnics, an engine about the size of an American lawn mower's, and a gearshift coming out of the dashboard on a flat horizontal pattern which took some getting used to. It went very well downhill, and also up, if one were not pressed for time. To my amazement, a week or so later we actually traversed the Route Napoléon over the Alps from Geneva to Italy in it. Its great advantage was that it ran on almost no gas at all (I suspect it would have done as well also on cognac), and was easily and cheaply repaired. In a Dijon street, as I was pulling out of a parking space, a great whacking Renault DS-19 sedan came along and savaged my left front fender and hood, ripping the fender like tissue paper, bending the hood and demolishing the headlight pod. Repairs were done overnight at a total cost of \$18 American.

A flurry of introductions and farewells, and it was goodbye to Dijon. (I've only been back once or twice since, passing through; the town seems to have suffered less than most from modernization and growth. And I've never seen again any of my American or French friends of that year; easy come, easy go at the time, less so in retrospect.) Mother and I dropped south down the *Côte d'or* (the "Golden Coast," so called because of its color in the Fall, the hillside running along the valley of the Saône, on which the vineyards grow) to Chalons and Macon, then east to Geneva and south to the Mediterranean. One unhappy incident in Nice: we locked up the car overnight outside the hotel, returning to find everything intact and in place except my father's camera. Further investigation revealed a tiny razor-slit in the canvas roof. The thief had been very neat in his work.

We ended up doing a sort of clockwise circular tour around France – eerily following (I discovered years later) the path Dad had taken in his motorcycle tour in 1921; the Riviera, Avignon, Carcassonne, north to Limoges, Tours, Orleans, le Mans, and then up the Loire valley towards Paris. A few days there sightseeing, and then off to the boat (Holland-America Lines this time) for New York. It would have been a long (10-days or so, nothing like the Queen Mary) trip; but I discovered to my delight that an Amherst friend, Frank Randall, was making the same trip. He had been a couple of years ahead of me, and was a brilliant guy (his father was a famous philosopher and professor at Columbia, where Frank himself eventually ended up); we spent most of the crossing in the bar solving the world's problems; the time went by quickly.

As did the rest of the summer: we wended our way back to Winfield, where I recovered my car, left Mother to the tender graces of Nano and set out for western Pennsylvania.

My destination was the Kiskiminetas Springs School, in Saltsburg, a very small town forty miles or so east of Pittsburgh. The school had been founded in 1888 by a cousin of Woodrow Wilson, among others, on a bluff overlooking the Kiskiminetas River. Today it makes the claim of being the oldest remaining all-male non-military boarding school in the country. In 1956, by the time I got there, it had something under 200 students and a faculty of twenty-five. I was the French department; with Cliff Brett, the Dean and Spanish teacher, we were the modern language department.

My memory is that this could well have been the institution that served as model for Salinger's Pencey Prep, but that may be a prejudiced view. It was, at any rate, a thoroughly third-rate prep school; which is not to say that there weren't some good and hard-working kids there, and a number of dedicated teachers, or that it didn't manage to get most of the kids into respectable colleges. (That task was somewhat facilitated in that a good-sized bunch of seniors were in fact post-graduates, who were doing an extra year of school (and athletics) as they prepped for the Air Force Academy, or the University of Pittsburgh football programs.) But there was a discreet, though palpable, air of mediocrity about the place. I had no reason to complain, though: they had taken me sight unseen, after all; and if the salary wasn't princely (\$2000 *per annum*, plus apartment and board during term time), that went a long way in western Pennsylvania in 1956, and wasn't that far out of line with better schools).

The headmaster, Lloyd M. "Monty" Clark was a businessman who had made a bundle and married a descendant of the founder. He didn't know much about education but was willing to experiment and take risks (hence me). The current experiment was to divide the course work up in an unusual way: instead of taking the usual four courses all year, each student took only two (with double the normal classroom time) in the Fall term, and two more in the Spring. This was in fact phase two of an even more original plan: taking one course only for four separate quarters. That hadn't worked very well, and I gather the two-by-two didn't long survive either. For me, that meant I was not only teaching for the first time (having chosen more or less out of the blue my own texts), but doing so under time pressure; completing a year's work in one term. This actually works less badly for a language course than for more sophisticated intellectual studies; but even granting leeway for my inexperience it didn't work all that well, either. Fortunately, I didn't know any better. At any rate, the kids I had in class were mostly 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and were biddable. Besides teaching French I and II, I directed the glee club and coached the golf team in the Spring (the

school had its own nine-hole golf course, a step or two over cow-pasture status, but better than nothing).

The dorm was a slightly different proposition. I was housed on a corridor over the classroom building, with a dozen or so post-graduates, several on the football team. I was at my full height in those days, six-foot-three; they didn't make me look small, but we were of a size. They could be rough and rowdy at times, but this was 1956, and kids were brought up more orderly in those days, even football players; they responded to strong direction, which I had sense enough to use when needed, and not overuse. Most of them were not from affluent backgrounds, and they knew that a college education could make a difference for them; that helped a great deal. We didn't have a lot in common, starting out; but though we kidded around a bit, I think they respected me, and I learned to respect them. One great success story: taking advantage of what high culture there was out that way, I got season tickets to the Pittsburgh Symphony, which even then was a very fine orchestra, with a distinguished conductor, William (ex-Wilhelm) Steinberg. One program looked as if it might be attractive: Wagner's Prelude to *die Meistersinger*, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and something else equally colorful. Not having been told that this would never work, I got some extra tickets and talked three of the footballers into their first experience of classical music, or of a formal concert at all. One of them was the starting running back, who was either one-quarter or one-half American Indian. He in particular was completely enthralled, though they all ate it up. I'd brought my growing record collection and player along with me to Kiski; from time to time thereafter a few of the kids would ask to come into the apartment and listen.

It was a busy year: keeping ahead of the game in learning to use the French texts and how to run a classroom, learning how to devise fair achievement measures, correcting homework and test papers, dorm supervision (on duty every other night), the glee club and golf team. The second half of the year was easier, since one had been through all the course material in both courses during the Fall. It was nice to be the unique French teacher, since I was free to do what I wanted; slightly more active supervision might have been helpful, but could be done without. It may seem strange now in our methodologically attuned academic culture that I was left so much to my own devices; that was (in all disciplines) the way things were done in the fifties (even at Loomis, a much better school, a couple of years later). The prevailing policy for newbies was first, to select someone who was proficient in the material and second, who had a strong enough personality not to be fazed by being on his or her own. To be a good teacher, especially on the secondary level, it helps a lot to be a bit of a show-off, and it's essential to be able to impose your ethos on a class. I knew I

knew the stuff, and that if only by virtue of age and experience, I was intellectually way ahead of them; that was all that was needed. At least I don't think I spoiled language-learning forever for anyone.

And at any rate I was no longer lonesome; what with the dozen boys in the dorm and twenty or so in the two classes that I was nose to nose with every day, there was no lack of company. Obviously there were good-looking and physically gifted kids to catch the eye, but I formed no particular attachments. Somewhere along the line I had as it were inhaled the educational ethos: it was never stated nor discussed, but simply accepted by (almost) all, that faculty (of whatever orientation) did not get "involved" with students. That unwritten rule was pretty absolute until at least the 1970s; one of the major stories in education in the years since has been its gradual erosion.

The year was going by quite quickly, what with all these new sorts of experiences to deal with, and then somewhere towards the end of winter, just as I was realizing that while all this was no doubt appropriate for the moment, Kiski was not a place where I wanted to stay forever, I got an unexpected letter – actually forwarded by my mother from Kansas, my address of record. It was from Frank Grubbs, then the headmaster of the Loomis School in Windsor, Connecticut, saying that the previous year, when the Fulbright placement folks were circulating my dossier, Loomis had had no opening, but now they did. Loomis was not a name familiar to me; the school was not then, nor is now, as well-publicized an institution as some of the banner names (Exeter, Andover, Taft, Choate) ; but (as I found out with a couple of hours' research) was/is competitive with the best, intellectually, athletically and in academic reputation with those who know. Mr. Grubbs concluded his letter by asking if I would be interested in returning to New England? On about thirty seconds' reflection, I concluded I would.

It must have been Spring break that I flew up to Hartford on a Friday, dossing down in the then brand-new Hartford Hilton off Bushnell Circle (long since torn down), and taking a bus out to Windsor. Frank and Frances Grubbs were very cordial; and I hit it off well with Joe Stookins, the head of the languages department and (though I didn't know it at the time) a nationally-known figure in language teaching, as well as with various other faculty figures who stopped by to check me out as we toured the campus and watched part of a hockey game. By the time I left, on Sunday, I was pretty sure they liked me (Joe told me, a few years later that he had whispered to Frank, "Don't let him get away!"). I knew I liked *them*: Loomis is a beautiful school architecturally, the faculty and students that I saw were obviously outstanding folks, and you didn't have to be there long to sense an air of excellence about the place.

In due course, back in Pennsylvania a letter appeared offering me a job (at a better than fifty per cent increase over what I had been earning) to which I made a prompt and gracious acceptance.

But then life caught up with me, in the form of another letter, this one from the White Plains draft board. I'd been deferred through college and graduate school and then of course the Fulbright year, but now they had pinned me down. Having heard at length from my dad all sorts of stories about the idiocies of the military, I was not eager to go, but fortunately for me, Korea was over and Viet Nam hadn't yet begun. On the other hand, there was this on-going Cold War, about which I was all too soon to learn.

I'd had a physical during the winter of my senior year at Amherst as a kind of practical demonstration of the army's way of doing things. One arose at 4:30 a.m. in order to get to Northampton by 6 and shiver in the street until 7, whence a bus took us all to Springfield by 8, so that we could await the opening of the induction center at 9. We were a motley crew: two or three of us Amherst or UMass students, some local high school kids, and a scattering of farm boys from the Pelham Hills, out east of Amherst town and in 1954 still a remote and backward area. For everyone's comfort and convenience in a very poorly insulated building, we were made to strip starkers at the outset, a condition in which we remained for the remainder of a very long day. One of the farm boys, obviously not at ease with strangers even when clothed, spent those moments when he was not actually being poked or prodded standing in the nearest available corner facing the walls and reading his Bible. Another provided one of the two comic interludes: we had to fill out interminable questionnaires, one of which contained the notorious question: "Have you ever exhibited any homosexual tendencies?" This lad raised his hand and inquired of the recruiting sergeant, "what does this word 'ho- ho-mo- homosekshul' mean?" The sergeant replied, "It means, do you like the girls or the boys?" The lad looked up at him with great puzzlement, and said plaintively, "But sergeant, I like *everybody*."

(I've never understood the sense of that question, by the way. It's hard to believe anyone ever answered it in the affirmative; to do so would have gotten you out of the army forthwith, but would also have prevented your ever having a viable career in anything but manual employment. It would also, in the 1950s, have insured public disgrace. The government must have known that more than issuing an open invitation to lie, they were to all intents and purposes making untruth mandatory.)

As the long day wore on, we were made ready for the hearing test. This took place in a small room which looked much like, and might have been at one time, a squash court. We were made to line up, all twenty or so of us, facing one wall. As we stood more or less to attention and in silence, the sergeant behind

us suddenly shouted in his best parade-ground voice, “**HEY!!!!**” We all jumped, of course. “So, you guys can hear,” he said. End of test.

In Pittsburgh three years later, about the same scenario played itself out again (this time the hearing test took place in an actual language lab, but we did not use the equipment, we lined up against a wall, as before). And eventually I was informed that I was fit to serve my country and would be called up at their pleasure sometime in the next several months. Under the draft law, those called served two years (as opposed to the three-year normal enlistment); however there was a kicker: one could *volunteer* for the draft (a particularly savory oxymoron), serving only two years but being inducted at one’s own convenience. So as to avoid losing parts of two different academic years, I requested induction as of August 1957, and Loomis, while giving me no guarantees, promised to try to find a slot for me when I would become available again in the fall of ’59. That seemed to be the best deal I could hope for, so as the year at Kiski ended, I packed up all my stuff, shipped some and crammed the car, and set out for Winfield again, this time alone and being more sensible about how many days to spend en route.

The trip was uneventful, as were, to my surprise and relief, the six or eight weeks at Nano’s; and I found myself reporting to the induction center in Kansas City late in the afternoon of August 5<sup>th</sup>. So late, in fact, that the process could not be started that day, so those of the rag-tag-and-bobtail who were left over were assigned bunks, told to report back by eleven p.m., and released to our own devices. My aunt on my father’s side lived in K.C., but I knew she would not have been prepared for an unexpected guest; so after finding someplace to eat, I wandered about for a bit in the evening. Kansas City in the 50s was not exactly a jumping town on a weekday night; everything seemed to be closed except for one store front. Looking in I could see a couple of pool and ping pong tables, a few armchairs and some uniformed types, so I figured this must be some sort of USO or other military club. Concluding that I was as good as entitled, I went in, sat down and picked up a magazine.

Not too much later, a man came over to me as I read. He looked to be portly, in his forties, and was dressed in a business suit. He asked if he could speak to me. Wondering if I had indeed intruded into a private club of some sort, I said, “of course.”

“Please follow me,” he continued, and I really began to think I was in the wrong place. He led me down a hall at the rear, and turned into what appeared to be a small office, just big enough for a desk and two chairs. He closed the door behind us and, looking at me intently in silence, sat down behind the desk. By now I was somewhat alarmed

After a pause, he leaned forward in what was patently meant to be a fatherly way, and asked, "Son, are you saved?"

It turned out that the establishment was an evangelistic outreach on the part of the Baptist Business Men's association. I would give a fair sum of money to have a videotape of the conversation that ensued, both for its amusement value, and as an instrument of self-flagellation. I politely (and I'm sure with insufferable condescension) assured the man that I was an Episcopalian, and thus in no need of salvation; and besides that, a graduate of two institutions that demonstrated the inadequacy of such simplistic thinking.

The next morning, along with a good number of other unfortunates, I took the famous step forward, raised my right hand, and became the property of the United States Army. We were deposited on a train, debarking at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and bused a few miles to Fort Chaffee, then a major center for basic and advanced military training, where I would spend the next sixteen weeks.

Basic training in any military organization cannot be portrayed as a pleasure, and the flat, scrub-woods countryside of western Arkansas is not a paradise, especially in the full heat of Summer. The best thing that can be said about those parts is that they have gorgeous sunrises; the worst thing is that trainees get to see them all. Basic, however, was a pleasant surprise in one regard: it seems that in the cycle just preceding our arrival, a trainee had collapsed of heat prostration, and so in compensation they were taking it somewhat easier on the following groups. We were "encouraged" to do our physical best, but neither physically penalized or derided if we were seen to be making an honest effort at the limits of our strength. So I survived.

We were housed in wooden barracks built, I think, for WW I. There was plumbing, but no insulation; sleep at night even in the heat, however, was not hard to come by given the exhaustion induced by the day's activities. There were 96 cots, 48 to a side, in one long open room, with a foot locker at each bed's end and a wall locker beside. Our first morning was taken up in being outfitted with army clothing from skin out: underwear, sox, shoes and boots, fatigue uniforms and dress khakis, belts, several caps. Our (summer) dress uniforms comprised pants, full-collar long-sleeved shirt and tie; it fell to me and one other chap in the training company who hailed from Kansas City, to teach the other 94, kids from the Arkansas and Mississippi woods for whom formal wear was a new thing, how to tie a necktie. The Kansas Citian and I were the only two in the company who had progressed beyond high school, and he only a year or so; I'd guess that most of the rest had not made it to a commencement ceremony. At 24, I was the oldest by a few years. The lad in the bunk next to mine,

Erwin Shoe (we were bunked alphabetically), was a particularly pitiable individual, about the saddest human being I have ever seen: he was nineteen or twenty but looked a depressed sixteen, and was almost completely passive, sitting and staring into space when not actually required to be up and in motion. I had literally to take him by the hand and put a brush in it, for example, when it came time to shine boots or shoes. I asked him once why he didn't try a little to do something, anything. He responded, "I gave up a while ago." It took me some time to realize that he meant that in an absolute way; not "I gave up (doing whatever it was we were talking about) (or even, trying to do what they want)," but "I gave up." Period. Full stop. I think they let him go home, wherever that was, at the end of basic.

It was an interesting time in terms of national race relations, though I was pretty much clueless about all that: earlier, the newspaper in Winfield had not been exactly the *New York Times*, and in the barracks there was no possibility of getting news from the outside during the training, even on Sundays: no radio, no TV, and no newspapers on base – and no time to look, listen or read, for that matter. In fact, a hundred or so miles away across Arkansas, the stand-off at the Little Rock school door was taking place during the very weeks I was at Ft. Chaffee; had we cycled through training a few weeks earlier than we did, we probably would have been among the troops President Eisenhower had to send in.

There were four or five African-Americans in our training company, all from the deep south, of course. It is hard to realize now, but President Truman's executive order desegregating the armed forces was only nine years old at the time, and its actual implementation was three years more recent than that. On our first day, the field first sergeant (who held absolute sway over our lives and destinies) had said, in a voice that brooked no dissent, "Y'all know there's a south'n way of doin' things, and there's a north'n way. The army does it the north'n way. Anybody got any questions?" No one did. Notwithstanding, the black kids stuck tightly together as much as possible, and never, as far as I saw, initiated a conversation with any of the rest of us. Nor did we with them. The best I can say is that there was never an incident of any kind. Yankee though I was, I didn't give it a lot of thought; the army's role in pushing my political sensibilities to the left was only just beginning.

Over time, I was able to discern what today we'd call the "subtext" (and what I then just thought of as the point of it all): we were being shown, in a dozen ways every day, that we had no autonomy at all and that we were to obey always and unquestioningly the most unreasonable whims of our superiors, without any expectations whatsoever.

For example: in the first few weeks we were habituated to expecting some small degree of freedom starting Saturday early afternoon and extending through to Sunday evening. (There wasn't a lot to do on base, where we had to remain, but at least we had no one ordering us to do this or that.) The last imposed thing was an inspection of barracks Saturday after lunch. On about the fourth Saturday, all transpired as usual, until the end of the inspection, when the field first sergeant, finding a fly speck on a window pane somewhere declared himself disgusted with the lack of cleanliness. "Clean these barracks," he intoned, and gave us forty-five minutes. At the completion of our efforts, he re-inspected us. This time there was a bit of fluff under a bed. The next time a toilet seat was declared unfit to touch a human buttock. By five o'clock, he was actually (this is a true story) digging dirt out from between the floorboards with a pen knife ("These barracks are FILTHY!!"). By then, the point was clear, and we were released for dinner.

The training rolled on without great incident; the good thing was that as we were doing more and more, the weather was cooling off, and by October was almost decent. I had good eyesight and I guess shooting comes naturally in my family; with the old M-1 rifle of WW II fame, I scored one of the best among us on the 500-yard range. The toughest test was crawling 100 yards at night on elbows and knees with rifle and full pack, under live covering fire three feet over our heads; the task itself was not that difficult, but you had to concentrate so as not to think about running into an unhappy rattlesnake.

We were given some instruction in chemical warfare; part of that training consisted of experiencing what tear gas is all about. We were put in a room, with gas masks on, when the gas was released. After a few moments in the mist with the masks working fine, we were instructed to take them off and the doors at either end perhaps twenty feet away or so, were opened to let us out. I had no idea of the physical force with which the gas would affect us; it was like being hit by a truck. Even with eyes tightly closed and while refusing to breathe, it felt as if we were immersed in acid. Many of us were on hands and knees by the time we got through the doors.

One reminder was especially sobering. We were in the field going through some sort of simulated attack exercise, advancing and taking cover alternately, and at the far end, towards our objective, a large explosion went off, so managed that a spectacular and quite realistic mushroom-shaped cloud bellied up. No one said anything about it, but it was clear that we were being acclimated to a battlefield where tactical nuclear arms would be in play.

The only really dangerous moment, though, came on the grenade range. We were drilled in how to hold and then throw dummy grenades from sand-bagged defensive positions, and then the last day, we had to do so with live

ones. There is a restraining pin that one pulls out, to permit the grenade to be armed, and then a lever that extends down the body, which is compressed between your palm and the grenade itself. As long as you hold on, nothing can happen; but when the lever is released in the throw, there is a delay of a few seconds and the grenade explodes. As I was getting into position to take my turn, in the next pit over one of my fellow-trainees was about to throw his own. He pulled the pin, looked down at his arm, and for the first time fully realized that he was holding death in his hand. He froze in panic, not daring to throw, or to let go, or even to move. Up and down the line, *everyone* froze. Except for the ordnance sergeant, who did a thing that gave me a lot of respect for non-commissioned officers from then on. Speaking very quietly and reassuringly, he slowly climbed down into the pit with the lad, put one arm around his shoulders and with the other gently put his hand over the boy's, clasping his hand, the lever and the grenade, and then, never raising his voice, somehow persuaded the still-paralyzed boy to slip his hand out. When he finally did, the sergeant patted him on the shoulder and said, "There you go. See, it's okay. We'll do it again by and by." And tossed the grenade downrange. Sure enough, by the end of the day the lad was able to complete the exercise himself.

There were comic moments, too; the one that stays in my memory was a mess hall scene. We were sitting (at attention, straight backs, and all) and eating in silence (talking during meals was not permitted). I don't remember what the dish was, but the man sitting next to me leaned towards me confidently and whispered, "This stuff tastes like shit." Just as he did so, a large, grim shadow passed behind us, the mess sergeant walking around the hall surveying his art. Smoothly, without a split-second's hesitation, my companion turned, smiled seraphically up at him, and continued without a break, "...but I *like* shit, sergeant." The shadow passed on down the table.

One of the last tests for us was a 20-mile forced march, with full combat packs. It actually went well; by then we were in pretty good shape, and the October weather was decently cool (this march had been, I think, what had done in the trainee on the earlier cycle in late July). We got a weekend off (mother drove over from Winfield and we took a little trip through the Ozarks, whose reputed scenic value I found much inferior to Vermont's).

Towards the end of basic, we had been offered a choice for what was called "Second Eight Weeks:" training as artillery, infantry, or clerk-typist. Needless to say, I didn't spend sleepless nights over my choice; having qualified at some point very early in basic as an accredited interpreter/translator in French, I figured I had a chance in asking for clerk/typist. And lo! my pluck was rewarded. Different barracks, though no newer or more comfortable; but much more congenial comrades, and a distinctly more civilized lifestyle, at least

during the working day. As well, I got to do what I should have done much earlier in life: to learn touch typing (and get paid for it! at the munificent salary of \$54 a month, which is what the lowest enlisted rank earned in those days).

Not that all was lovely: there were still the early-morning formations and calisthenics, occasional guard or KP duties, barracks inspections and so on; but now there was even music! Some soldier on base (and a very gifted choral conductor he must have been in civilian life) had formed a chorus and talked the powers that were into sponsoring us as a public relations device, so we got not only to sing but to travel around a bit and perform in various churches and civic assemblies up and down the state. My first introduction to Pentecostalism came about as a result: we performed at the installation of a new pastor in some rural church somewhere. It was an eye-opener for this cradle Episcopalian: the pastor-designate was barely eighteen and did not have a high school diploma; but he “had the anointing,” according to the evangelist who had discovered him (and introduced him with a sermon that lasted a full forty-five minutes). I guess he did; the boy then preached extemporaneously for a good hour, and had the congregation on its feet with “hallelujahs” at several points. I had no idea what to make of all these goings-on.

The last couple of weeks we were allowed to choose an even better-defined specialization. For a while in my spare time both before and since induction, I had been indulging my more-or-less idle interest in academic theology (one thing I have to say about the army; their post libraries are surprisingly well-stocked), so I opted for one of the offered choices: being a chaplain’s assistant. So I got to “shadow” a young Lutheran chaplain and acquire the skills and knowledge of forms, etc., that would be involved in assisting in a chaplaincy. The lieutenant was a nice guy, not a lot older than I; we got along well and had some good conversations. In the end, as Christmas was creeping up on us (and with it the time for permanent assignment) I was able to claim “chaplain’s assistant” as part of my MOS (military occupational specialty). There was also one more choice to be made, and this one with a guaranteed result: one could opt for duty either in the continental USA or overseas. We were (unusually) between wars at the time, Korea having wound down (though no peace made, to this day) and Viet Nam not yet having exploded; I figured with my French interpreter’s credentials they would never send me there, but that nevertheless there was a chance I might get to Europe. And so it was: after a couple of weeks’ leave over the holidays, I was to report to Ft. Dix, New Jersey for assignment as a chaplain’s assistant to Berlin, Germany.

Ft. Dix was then a huge garrison, with lots of different things going on, but one of the biggies was being a transfer point for troops in transit to and from Europe and the Middle East. What it worked out to be was semi-organized chaos.

One was given billet, there was an early morning formation, and then the rest of the day there was literally nothing to do and nowhere to be. (There was, at least, as PX (Post Exchange, the army's variation on a general store, and a movie theater.) I quickly was able to discover the routine: you walked around, looking as busy as possible so as to avoid being grabbed for KP duties or whatever, and several times a day checking the central bulletin board for your own name on a list. The list would tell you where and when to report with your duffel bag for transport. Until your name actually appeared there was no way of knowing when or what was to happen to you. It was as close to being in Limbo as could be imagined.

It was something like five or six very dull and wintry days before I found my name; but in fairly short order after that I was on a bus and then somewhere in the Port of New York (the Brooklyn Naval Yards, perhaps?) being loaded on to a troop ship. "Troop ship" is too grand a term: it was really a medium-sized and somewhat decrepit freighter, whose holds had been cleared out and converted into dormitories. There were ranks of "bunks," canvas stretched between iron pipes stacked seven high (I was lucky enough to get one somewhere in the navigable middle); when one had swung the body in and was lying flat on the back there were perhaps nine inches of clearance from the chap lying over you. Your duffel bag shared the bunk with you. There were no showers nor laundry facilities. The first soldier got seasick as we were passing the Statue of Liberty going out; the last one got well, eleven days later, as we were docking in Bremerhaven. In between, the entire eleven days reeked of vomit and dirty sox. For one hour a day we were chased topside while the floors were being swabbed; for the rest, we were stacked. Again, I was fortunate in being assigned one stormy night to "guard duty" on deck (it was unclear what we were supposed to be guarding against, flying submarines, perhaps?); it was fresh air, and down below guys were getting bounced around pretty savagely. Despite the cold, it was an exhilarating change.

As a "single," not someone attached to a larger unit, I had fallen in with a battalion of combat troops, tankers, bound for somewhere in American zone of occupied West Germany. Whether because of the pressure of fighting, practically *living*, within the confines of a tank, or the very real possibility of a fiery and inescapable death, should you find yourself in battle, tankers are the loudest and most foul-mouthed men I have ever run into, their command of obscenities truly extraordinary. I had had no idea of how many nounal adjectives and gerunds could be so effortlessly introduced into a simple sentence. Fortunately, somewhere about the fifth day, a general stupor seemed to settle over our ranks, or else my ears got desensitized. Come to think of it, after about the fifth day, not much of anything seemed to matter.

Late one afternoon we steamed into Bremerhaven harbor and were shoveled into a train bound eventually for Berlin, after having dropped off the tankers wherever it was they were going. I'm vague about this, because still enjoying my "single" status, I was pushed into a separate compartment, actually a roomette, complete with freshly made bed (starched sheets, adjacent private bath)! It must have been prepared for some high officer who hadn't appeared; but it seemed in my somewhat dazed state to be an apparition or a miracle. At any rate, I had no complaints; and filthy as I was, I fell into that immaculate bed in peace and quiet for what seemed the first time in years. The train would traverse parts of northern West Germany, then cross the border and turn east through the Soviet occupied zone; but I knew nothing of it. Whether any border guard checked me out, or searched for documents or whatever, was beyond my consciousness; I finally awakened the next morning as we pulled into West Berlin.

So it was, that mid-morning of January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1958, I found myself standing to attention in front of the desk of the Adjutant General of Berlin Command, one Major Starr. On his desk was my Field Folder, a thick file which contained every piece of information about me and my previous life that the army possessed. The major perused it in silence for some time before he spoke. Finally, he looked up and said,

"Simpson, I don't know what to do with you. You're supposed to replace a chaplain's assistant we replaced six weeks ago; we don't need you for that. [The army way; you ask for a replacement, get tired of waiting for higher headquarters to do anything about it and go find one yourself.] I can't send you down to the Sixth, you'd *die* down there. [The Sixth Infantry Regiment was the combat force assigned to protect Berlin Command and its dependents, garrisoned a few blocks away.] Listen: here's what I'll do. I'll assign you to Headquarters Company here, to sort mail. You do that for a week or two. People will come through to pick up their mail. Look sharp, and see what happens." A good and decent man, Major Starr; I owe him a lot.

And he proved an accurate prophet. I spent less than ten days in the mail room, actually sorting mail for perhaps fifteen minutes in the mornings, and again in the afternoons, the rest of the time sitting at a desk with a newspaper or a German conversational manual open in the top center drawer, which could be slammed shut quickly should anyone appear. One of the many people who came through daily was a trim-looking man, sometimes in civilian clothes, sometimes in an officer's uniform, a Major John Fox Kaufmann, to judge from his mail. The second or third day he appeared, he engaged me in conversation. He seemed quite curious about who I was and how I came to be there. For my part,

I had learned long since never in the army to be modest about my attainments, so I was happy to rehearse my life story. About the third time we chatted, he got to the point.

“I’ve got a soldier in my office who’s not doing the job. You want to get out of here and come upstairs work for me?” Sight unseen, I did. A day later, the orders came through: I was assigned as an intelligence analyst to the G2 operations office of Berlin Command. Major Kaufmann was the Operations Officer.

(The command structure of the US Army and all its subordinate knits was then divided into four offices: G1 was Operations (directing what we are doing), G2 was Intelligence (subdivided into Security, which protects our secrets, and Operations, which keeps track of the enemies we face), G3 controlled supplies and equipment, engineering and the like, and G4 was concerned with transportation.)

Berlin in 1958, as Europe descended into the “Cold War,” was an anomaly in many regards.

In the first place, Germany itself, as Korea was to become (and remains today) and like Viet Nam, a generation later, was a divided country, and would not be reunited until 1989. The division between eastern (or Soviet occupied) Europe and western Europe, the famous “Iron Curtain” established by the Soviets a year or two after the end of the WW II, ran pretty much north and south through the country. West Germany had become an independent and highly prosperous entity in the early 50s with its capital in Bonn, and Western alliance military forces remaining garrisoned as protective guests in the so-called West Zone. East Germany (the so-called DDR, or Deutsche Demokratische Republik) had a puppet government and token armed forces, but was still essentially a country occupied by the Russian army, a land still in ruins and financially strapped, dependent upon Russian support.

The city of Berlin was a roughly triangular area, geographically, 30 miles or so east-west by perhaps 20 miles north-south. Located about 100 miles east of the border between East and West Germany, that is to say behind the Iron Curtain, it was legally a part of neither entity; rather it remained an occupied territory divided between the four victorious powers in WW II, Russia, France, England and the United States, each of which had governmental and military control over its own discrete part of the city. The Russian sector was considered by them to be the capital of East Germany. The three western powers did not consider the DDR to have any legal existence, and therefore they considered only the Russians, as an occupying power, to have any standing there. Greater Berlin’s only links to the West were a four-lane east-west highway with armed check-points at either end, a rail line (on which Western personnel could travel once a day in either direction) operated by the East German government, telephone

lines and three air corridors running southwest, west and northwest to West Germany from Tempelhof air field in the center of the city. There was no direct telephone, telegraph or mail communication between the two halves of the city nor between West Germany and East Berlin. On the other hand there was a subway (the *U-bahn*) and an elevated tram system (the *S-bahn*) which served both parts of the city. Residents of each half of Berlin could travel in the other half; in fact, thousands of east Berliners worked daily in West Berlin, commuting back and forth every weekday. Fewer West Berliners worked in the east (though some did) simply because East Berlin remained mostly unreconstructed after the bombardments of the war, poor, and without many employment possibilities. Residents of West Berlin could travel in East Berlin, but not in the surrounding Soviet Zone; residents of East Berlin could come and go into the East Zone, but could not travel by land to West Germany. They could, however, be flown out to the west, as the Russians and East Germans had no control over western air transport.

The contrast between the two halves was marked; on a nice Saturday, for example, one could stroll down the Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin's main street, and think oneself in a busy city like Paris or New York, with heavy traffic, crowds window-shopping at fashionable stores or simply out for a walk past cafés and restaurants. Going straight on for a half-mile through the Tiergarten, or central park, again crowded with kids playing and families walking, you came to the Brandenburg Gate, the border between east and west Berlin and the head of the Unter den Linden, East Berlin's historic main thoroughfare. Looking through the gate down that broad avenue, you would not see a single automobile, and only infrequently a person, scurrying silently from one grey doorway to another. It looked like a ghost town.

Berlin was in those days the spy center of Europe and perhaps the world. The United States alone maintained no fewer than twelve separate intelligence-gathering agencies in West Berlin, not to mention whatever the British and French were up to; and both the Russians and the East German government were doing their bit. No doubt the Chinese were at work as well, and who knows what other governments. Just on the local level, if you were one of those East Berlin residents who worked in the western sectors, you could make a bit of spending money every day as you passed through the borders by reporting whatever you had seen (or could plausibly make up) to the western guards; similarly in returning home, you could tell the eastern guards equivalent stories about what was going on in the west.

From which devolved my job, as it turned out: in the years up to 1958, each of the American agencies had reported their finding separately back to

Washington through their own channels. (As is still the case today in 2015, for example with the FBI and the CIA especially, our various agencies see each other as competitors rather than colleagues.) In Washington, after independent agency analysis, those reports would be combined with each other and other sources and formulated into a comprehensive report of Russian and East German combat status and capabilities. That report would then be disseminated to the President and other strategic officials, and also sent back down the chain to inform local commanders in the field. This process took on average, a good two weeks.

So the commanding general of Berlin command, for example, who was responsible for a fighting force of some 10,000 troops, and perhaps thrice that number of American dependents (wives, children, school-teachers, commissary workers and so on), all in an enclave surrounded by an East German army of some 100,000 men and other paramilitary forces, and something in excess of 400,000 Russian troops and support personnel, 100 miles away from the nearest Western army, had no current information about what his adversaries were capable of doing or might plan to do. This was clearly far from an ideal situation.

It says a lot about the way large hierarchical organizations work that it had remained the case, however, until the beginning of 1958, *thirteen years* after the end of WW II and the partition of Germany, and a good *eleven* since the clear beginning of the Cold War. It was in fact my Major Kaufman who, a few months before my arrival, managed finally to get all the 12 agencies in question to consent to lay off a carbon copy of each item that crossed their desks to us, in the Berlin Command G2 office. Only then were we able to provide our local commander accurate and up-to-date information on the military situation facing us. (And of course even then, there was absolutely no cooperation or coordination between the American, British and French forces in Berlin. More than a few times I was reminded of my father's horror stories about the idiocies of the military high command in WW I. Some things simply do not change.)

And it was, of course, Major Kaufman's job as G2 Operations Officer to analyze the massive flow of low-level information coming to us from those border guards (and many, many other sources as well) to combine it with the larger picture of concurrent European and world events, and to be ready at a moment's notice to inform the General or any others as to likely enemy plans and capacities.

Peacetime US Army officers fall, in my observation, into two large categories. There are those who are bright, competent...and lazy; and those who are conscientious, industrious and...not particularly great thinkers. A standing army is not an organization in which one is liable to advance rapidly, or make a fortune. Career officers who are both bright and energetic are a rarity. Major

Kaufman was of the bright but lazy variety. He was affable, quite acute intellectually, and possessed of considerable gifts of strategic vision. But he liked the social circuit, playing (indoor) tennis and generally not overtaxing himself with paperwork. He also had a wife who I gathered was more than ordinarily demanding of his time, and a couple of young daughters.

He was also a very good teacher. What he was looking for, and had not found in Wally Barnett, my predecessor in G2 and successor in the mail room, was an apt student, who could learn to do his job, and (just as importantly) cover for him, informing those in need of him that he was with the General just now, or otherwise busily engaged elsewhere on matters of strategic import...and able, on his reappearance, to fill him in quickly on the essentials he would need to know. In return, he covered for me, getting me out of all sorts of unpleasant menial duties and enabling me to do all kinds of things most enlisted men would never dream of. Over the sixteen months or so that we worked together, our relations grew perhaps a bit closer than was the usual for such arrangements. Had we been civilians, I think we would have been friends. As it was, both of us found the tact necessary to be both militarily correct and also warm.

(This sort of symbiotic relationship is a major factor in whatever success military organizations enjoy. Berlin command was a very instructive example: in a highly dangerous world situation and at a potentially explosive historical moment (as will be illustrated below), it was in fact run on a day-to-day basis by four persons, of whom I came to be one. None of us was an officer, we were all four draftees, one of us was gay and therefore present in contravention of army regulations in those days long before “don’t ask, don’t tell.” I was the only college graduate; none of us had any intention of remaining in the army longer than our required two years, and the highest rank any of us achieved was “Spec4” {Specialist 4<sup>th</sup> class, equivalent to corporal). All four of us enjoyed a similar relationship with the officers who were supposed to be responsible in our respective offices. I was the highest paid of us four, because I qualified for flight time and drew “dangerous duty pay,” my job taking me into and (illegally) over East Berlin; my monthly pay came to about \$150. And yet despite all this, for months on end the fate of East-West relations in the Cold War was in some small part in our hands.)

Another factor in this strange relationship came into play as well. The great irony was that, for the officers -- the warrior class of the country, after all -- the prime daily motivator was *fear*. For them, their careers, their professional lives, depended upon a system in which one was reviewed every year or so, and either promoted or shunted aside. A few shunts and one was phased out, refused promotion and involuntarily retired. The deciding factor was the annual

efficiency report, in which your superiors described your performance. Anything less than ecstatic superlatives would inevitably become a drag on advancement, and eventually, a threat.

We enlisted men – and especially those of us who were draftees – had no such looming fears. We had lives we were eager to go back to, and thus enjoyed freedom from that menace. Paradoxically, I was much freer to think and even (with some limitations, of course) to speak and act than Major Kaufman.

For example, this story: in the summer of 1959, amid all the other tensions that were rising, an incident occurred. It had to do with a small piece of territory, about four acres of farmland in fact, that presented an anomaly: it belonged to a municipal entity in West Berlin, but was actually situated a few hundred yards south of the city and in the Soviet zone of East Germany. This little spot (what was left of a former hamlet) was named Steinstücken. Inevitably, a legal dispute arose as to its control; I have no memory of what the immediate question was or why it mattered, but in the kerfuffle of adjudicating it, our office had to produce a document of some sort. I was tasked with writing it, which I did, and presented it to the Chief of Staff of Berlin Command, whose signature it required. This was a full Colonel, Nathaniel Hoskott, the second-highest ranking officer in Berlin Command, a West Point graduate and career officer, whose time in the army was greater than my age. I was by then a Specialist 4<sup>th</sup> Class, the fourth-from-the-bottom enlisted rank.

About a half-hour after I left it on his desk, I got a call to report to him. I walked in, saluted and stood to attention.

“Simpson,” he said, “there’s an error in this document.”

“Sir?” I said, allowing one eyebrow to rise.

“Yes. See here. You’ve spelled the name of this place ‘Steinstuecken.’ That’s not right: it’s ‘Steinstücken’ right here on the ordinance map.”

That was true: our American typewriters in those days did not carry umlauts; so as was perfectly acceptable to German writers themselves in similar situations, and had been for generations, we substituted an “e” after the accented vowel. I explained this carefully to the Colonel, marveling (to myself) at this ignorance on the part of a man who, after all, had been dealing with Germans off and on for the better part of twenty years.

He was clearly suspicious. Was I sure? How did I know? Could I guarantee authenticity? In the end, after a full five or six minutes of discussion, I found the Chief of Staff of Berlin Command asking me in all seriousness whether I would be willing to stake *my* professional reputation on the spelling of that name.

I said I would.

He signed.

I took the signed document, thanked him politely somehow, and returned to my office where, fuming, I slung it in disgust on my desk. Only then did I realize there was someone there waiting for me. This was a Captain from the Sixth Infantry, our subordinate command, who needed some other unrelated document I had.

“What’s the matter, Simpson,” he said, “you look pissed.”

Without stopping to think, I said, “Oh, the Chief of Staff has water on the brain again.”

And we looked at each other. It would have been hard to say which of us was the more dumbfounded. He knew, and I knew, that I ought to be court-martialed for that remark. What’s more, he knew that I knew that he knew. His face was a like a movie: by rights I should be disciplined...but on the other hand, I worked for a higher headquarters, on whose favor his advancement might one day depend...and the work I did was in all likelihood a lot more important than his...but the disrespect! (This officer was not of the bright-but-lazy variety; he was in fact quite earnest and hardworking, but pedestrian in mentality.) It must have been close to thirty seconds of suspended animation when he finally cleared his throat and said, “Well, Simpson, I wonder if you could help me with this request.”

The handsome building in which we worked had been constructed in the late 1930s as the headquarters for Hermann Göring’s *Luftwaffe*. In the western suburb of Lichterfelde, it had escaped the bombings that had leveled downtown Berlin. We had removed or painted over the swastikas, but the German eagles still figured in a lot of the wall decorations. The office I worked in was in fact a suite of three rooms, all enclosed in a safe, rather like a bank vault. One of us, Major Kaufman, myself or a sergeant, had to be physically in the office at all times except when it was locked down at night and the alarms set. Three of the four walls of the main room, large enough to seat fifteen or twenty persons, were covered by opaque draperies; behind the draperies there were floor-to-ceiling and corner-to-corner large-scale maps of all East Germany, covered in clear plastic. On the plastic could be drawn or taped symbols representing our knowledge of the whereabouts and identity of every Soviet and East German military unit in the country. The maps, which were kept up to date on a daily (or in crises even an hourly) basis, were the backdrop of a briefing, which could be extended up to eight hours, in which we would describe to superior officers in detail exactly whom they faced and what was the state of our adversaries’ training, morale, combat readiness, equipment and capabilities. We could also in some circumstances make basic analyses as to the probabilities of the various courses of action our opponents enjoyed. That was the role of Berlin Command

G2 Operations, that was Major Kaufman's job, and that was what, over the next six months or so, he carefully and thoroughly taught me to do.

Much of it was like learning any other set of information, but this process was enlivened by several factors. First, of course, it was all real, and real lives were at stake, not to mention world history, if there was to be any. This reality was all around us, and far from abstract. Then there were the hands-on experiences. Exercising our rights as members of the occupying powers, we could travel (as could the Russians) anywhere in greater Berlin (except actually within the each others' caserns); so Major Kaufman instituted a more or less weekly practice of taking a plainly marked US Army staff car (1957 Chevy sedans, painted olive drab) and driving through much of East Berlin, and especially around the major Soviet barracks in Karlshorst, an eastern suburb. This accomplished two purposes: first to "show the flag," to demonstrate a free-world presence in this occupied zone, where in fact, many people, seeing us, would smile and wave discreetly (in free West Berlin, the population was much cooler to our presence). And second, to actually verify some of the information we had received through our ordinary sources. (For example, if we had been informed that a squadron of tanks had left the Karlshorst barracks and travelled east, we could pass by the barracks, and looking over the walls, count the visible canon barrels of the tanks remaining.)

An interesting side-note: as I stated earlier, America, and thus the US Army, did not recognize the existence of the East German government, and insisted that the only authority operative in Greater Berlin was that of the occupying powers, each in its own zone. So therefore my formal orders as a driver were to ignore any directives I might receive from an East German traffic policeman or military person, and, if necessary, to run him down with the vehicle should he attempt to impede our progress. Fortunately the case never arose; to this day I'm not sure whether I would have been able to do that or not.

Another more amusing side-note: the third or fourth week after we began to do our drive-by of the Russian installations, a Russian staff car appeared outside our headquarters building in West Berlin and drove slowly around. Tit for tat; the little game continued at least as long as I was there.

A second hands-on exercise that was even more fun (and more remunerative for me) involved the air corridors. The three lanes in which planes could fly back and forth across the hundred miles between West Germany and Berlin were each of them twenty miles wide, and terminated in a circular "air control zone" centered on Tempelhof Airport in the Western sector – in fact, right in the middle of Greater Berlin. (In the 1960s the Soviets constructed a larger airfield in Schönefeld, to the south of the city. That, much enlarged and modified, is now the official airport for Berlin.) Planes had the right to maneuver in that

circular space, and western military pilots routinely used it to practice take-offs and landings (and pad their log of air-time hours, and thus their flight pay). Beneath that circle (forty miles in diameter) open to the sky lay the caserns of some 100,000 Russian and about 50,000 East German troops, and the garages of their mechanized vehicles and other equipment. So under Maj. Kaufman's orders I was able to hitch a ride every week or so with some pilot or other, fly over all those enemy installations (and all the rest of East Berlin and its immediate suburbs) at fairly low altitudes, and, more importantly, take photographs of all I saw. All this was, of course, strictly illegal under international law and officially forbidden. Had we experienced mechanical difficulties and been forced to come down outside of West Berlin, I would have had, assuming I survived, the interesting task of eating the camera, or remaining a Soviet prisoner for the foreseeable future.

The supreme irony was that it was just this time that President Eisenhower was adamantly denying that the United States was flying U-2 spy planes at high altitudes over the Soviet Union...until one of them was downed and Francis Gary Powers, the pilot, taken prisoner. That made fun reading, given that, with the slight difference in altitudes excepted, I was doing very much the same thing. I figured that I really earned the dangerous duty pay that Maj. Kaufman was good enough to see that I got.

A third hands-on aspect of the intelligence-collection job involved the rail line from Berlin to the West Zone. It was operated by the East German government on DDR rolling stock, and manned by East German army crews. Once a day, or rather a night, Western military personnel could ride on it going either way. The reason the allowed trip was at night was, of course, to minimize the possibilities of observation as the train rolled through 100 miles of East Germany. Those miles included a fair opportunity to look closely into both East German and Russian military barracks, this time on the inside, since the rail lines were unchanged since the Industrial Revolution, running right through cities, and through the contiguous Imperial German army caserns built by Bismarck before WW I. After the second war, in both East and West Germanys, the occupying Allied armies had simply moved into those, rather than building new barracks of their own. So the train ride afforded inside looks at several major Russian installations.

In winter, there was little opportunity to see much of anything, since it got dark at 3 p.m. or so, and sunrise didn't come until roughly 10 in the morning. (Berlin, in fact all Europe, lies much farther north than the United States.) But in summer, there would be ample light until past 11 p.m., and from perhaps 2 a.m. on, the following day. The passenger cars were laid out in the usual European design, with six-person compartments on one side and a corridor running the

length of the car on the other. The East German guards in the train did their best to patrol the corridors and inhibit observers (and especially the use of cameras), but it was an impossible task for them most of the time. So on occasion I'd take an overnight ride from Berlin to Helmstedt and back, have a chance to see Russian combat units close up -- and check up on our informants.

It was a bizarre eighteen months, all in all. On the one hand, much of my life was outwardly ordinary: mostly office work five days a week (though a highly unusual sort of office, and work); routine barracks living (though our barracks was next door on one side to the 50-meter indoor pool that had been constructed for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, in which I swam pretty regularly in a vain attempt to get enough exercise to keep my weight down, and on the other side the ruined hulks of the dormitory buildings that had housed the Imperial German Officer Training Corps candidates (the German West Point) from the days of Kaiser Wilhelm on down), and all this in a context where major East-West tensions came to a focus all day every day, and where at any time a seemingly innocuous incident could blow up into a cataclysmic crisis (one example will be described below). From 8 to 5 or in times of crisis, I was untouchable, working at headquarters in a highly sensitive job; the rest of the time I was a simple private or Spec4, subject to routine drill formations, inspections and all the vagaries of barracks life.

Headquarters company itself, of which I was perforce a member, was a strange conglomeration. There were a number of us, perhaps a dozen or more, mostly draftees, not necessarily all highly educated, but all intelligent and for whatever reason hard-working, doing, as I have suggested above, much of the sensitive work of the command. There were also some very talented people, all of them draftees, who were in the "special services" troupe: actors and musicians whose mission was to enhance the morale of the troops and dependents. And there was a fair supply of what might fairly be called "flotsam and jetsam:" miscellaneous clerks and support types, as well as some career enlisted types, who were not competent enough to actually *do* anything at all demanding, or to be promoted past buck sergeant, and yet not *in*competent enough to be cashiered, and so had to be dumped somewhere.

One or two incidents can serve to illustrate many of these categories. Twice a year there was a full-dress major inspection of the whole command, the Inspector General's Inspection in the Spring, and the Commanding General's in the Fall. For these, the entire installation and every animate and inanimate object in it had to be perfect, uniform and according to regulations. Preparations began at least two weeks before the date, outside and inside. The old army adage prevailed: "If it moves, salute it, if it doesn't move, police it up, if it's too big to police up, paint it." We policed, we painted, we washed, we mopped, we

dusted, we laundered, we shined shoes and boots morning and night. We shined everything that would shine, including the bottoms of the garbage cans (having hidden the garbage itself at the last possible moment). In the Fall, we raked up leaves, starting a week early. The next day, we raked up the leaves that had fallen since the day before, And so on.

One afternoon, the Saturday preceding the inspection, leaf-raking was the last duty for a group of four or five of us, after which we would be released for the evening. We were supervised by a sergeant of limited comprehension and small powers of reasoning. He proved, however, to be a notable philosopher.

“Hey sarge,” one of us said after a while, “if you grab that extra rake over there, we could get through with this and get out of here a lot faster.”

The sergeant considered us carefully, then the leaves and then the rake. He thought about it for an appreciable moment, and finally enunciated, in eight words, a complete and sufficient philosophy of life. I have never heard anyone in any profession do it more succinctly. These were his exact words.

“You privates,” he said, slowly, “me sergeant. You work, me watch.” And so we all did.

There were two parts to the inspection. The first was in ranks: we were lined up in rows on the parade ground outside the barracks. For this our uniforms were immaculate, the creases such as would carve a roast, our brass insignia and buckles blinding in the sunlight, and our boots resplendently spit-shined. On this occasion I found myself as usual in the front rank and next to that comrade who was closest to me in height, Private James Hutton. Jim was an interesting chap, the son of Barbara Hutton, the heiress and socialite, and would eventually become the father of the film actor Timothy Hutton. Jim himself was an actor of considerable skills, in the “special services” squad of Headquarters Company. He was perhaps even less than most of us emotionally and philosophically in tune with army regimentation and conformity. In fact, on this particular inspection day he just barely made it in time to the formation, worming himself into place at the very last moment.

Before we were to be presented to the Commanding General, it was of course necessary that we be pre-approved by the company commander and then the battalion commander, lest those more august senior eyes be offended by some tiny oversight. Even before the company commander, we were carefully vetted by the company first sergeant, a man of immense girth and corresponding dignity, with a bass voice that could have served well as a foghorn. As we stood rigidly to attention he heaved himself down the ranks, right-facing and staring each of us up and down attentively, before left-facing and taking one step to the adjacent worm. He turned to face Hutton, next before me.

And there was an electric pause, which gathered in intensity over a period of perhaps thirty seconds. Some catastrophe had occurred; every man in the company felt it. Our rigidity intensified. Finally the sergeant spoke, at first almost in an awed whisper, but gaining in volume until the last word could have been heard in the East Sector:

“Hutton!!!! What did you do to **them BOOTS?!!!**” Such was the force of that last word that the entire company rose vertically into the air, returning to earth still at a rigid position of attention. And without leaving that posture, we all, to a man, managed somehow to turn the corner of an eye to the articles in question.

They were well worth our gaze. I have never seen footwear, before or since, in such remarkable condition. It wasn't just that they weren't shined, or that they were scuffed, or had a broken lace or a missing heel. These boots had apparently gone through a major battle, spent the last several weeks hiding deep in a septic tank somewhere, and then dried out on a fifty-mile march through brambles, which had concluded by passing through a slaughter house. They were, in a word, sensational. Jim, however, looking straight ahead, remained serenely composed.

At length the sergeant found words to continue. “**Hutton,**” he roared in his outrage, “why didn't you clean them **BOOTS?!!!**”

Jim smiled at him sweetly, and in a voice of injured innocence, replied, “Why sergeant, the idea never crossed my mind.”

I don't know how it was done; my memory seems to have a vague image of Jim being picked up bodily and conveyed...where? No one – and certainly not the Commanding General – saw him again until the coast was clear; and he, himself, would never say where they had put him.

The indoors part of the inspection took place in our quarters. We were billeted in squad rooms with four of us to a room. We each had a regulation iron-frame bed with olive drab blankets, a foot-locker and a wall-locker. The beds, of course, were all made up perfectly (hospital corners, and so on), with the sergeant making sure he could bounce a quarter at least six inches off the tight covers. The foot-lockers contained a lift-out tray lined by an immaculate white towel with a display of toilet articles (soap in regulation dish, razor, comb, shaving cream, etc.) all brand new and of one brand, never to be used, and arranged in a precisely uniform manner throughout the command. In the space under the tray, were clean sox and underwear tightly rolled, and carefully pressed uniform shirts and pants, all these in conformity to the command arrangement model. In the wall locker, were hung in precise order dress uniforms and outerwear. On a couple of shelves over those were our various uniform caps and hats. One of

those shelves, and the left-most six inches of hanging space were reserved for our non-standard civilian garments and personal items (such as the toothbrush and razor we actually used).

The inspecting officer would enter each room, where we stood stiffly at attention by our beds. He would check us out again to make sure we hadn't regurgitated on our uniform, survey the room in general, and then look attentively at each foot- and wall-locker.

On one of these inspections the officer surveyed my wall-locker carefully, especially the shelf reserved for personal items. I had there several books which seemed to attract his attention. He plucked one of them out, and looked at it suspiciously. It was a Penguin anthology of English verse I had managed to find at a bookstore in West Berlin.

"What is this, soldier," he inquired, frowning.

"It's...poetry, sir," I replied.

He looked at me for quite a while in silence; I stared with equal concentration at the wall behind him. Finally, he put the book back.

Fortunately, these interruptions occurred only at large intervals; the routine daily formations were, if not exactly casual, at least somewhat relaxed, as befitted a headquarters agglomeration. (Major Starr was right: I would have died in the Sixth Infantry.) Some beneficent agency had provided us with a small library, and even a rack which provided copies of American magazines that were only a week or so out of date. I lived on almost-current issues of *The New Yorker*; they represented civilization to me and nurtured a glimmer of hope that one day I might return to it. There was also a listening room with a record player, and, miraculously, a few classical recordings. One of them was of the great Swiss soprano Lisa della Casa singing Richard Strauss's *Four last Songs*; that recording, two or three others and the fortunate coincidence of the release of Rosalind Russell's performance in *Auntie Mame*, did more to help me retain my sanity over those eighteen months than any other single factor.

There were, of course, distractions. I could attend concerts and operas in both East and West Berlin, for example. In the East, the Russians, while not having spent a lot on reconstruction, had decided to pour money into the two opera houses, the Staatsoper on the Unter den Linden, and the Komische oper, at that time under the management of the German directorial genius Walter Felsenstein. I went mainly to the Staatsoper, lured primarily by their performances of Wagner operas. The music director was Franz Konwitschny, a wonderful conductor (especially when drunk; he was jocularly referred to by musicians as "Konwhisky"); and the government imported world-class singers into lavish productions. I was lucky enough to hear performances by Margarete

Klose, the pre-eminent Wagnerian contralto of 30s to 50s, as well as Helge Roswänge, the great Danish heroic tenor, and Sigurd Bjoerling, the fine Swedish baritone. Except for Klara Ebers, their sopranos were not much to write home about; the principal house soprano reputedly owing her position to being the mistress of the Soviet Kommandant of East Berlin.

In the West, there was primarily the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, already in the 50s one of the world's finest, and the legendary Wilhelm Furtwängler having just died, now coming under the direction of Herbert von Karajan. I also heard Otto Klemperer, Ernest Ansermet and Eugen Jochum conduct, among others. There were vocal recitals as well (I remember very fondly one by Elizabeth Schwarzkopf) and oratorios both in churches and concert halls. (remember one performance in a church in West Berlin, of Bach's *St. John Passion*, performed in a new critical edition by some scholar, who was present to give a half-hour's lecture on the corrections he had made. When I returned to the barracks I was asked by a fellow soldier who happened to be bi-lingual in German, how I had enjoyed the concert. I replied that the music was well performed, but that I had been pretty bored by the lecture, since I did not understand enough scholarly German to follow it.

"Ah," he said, "but think how bored you would have been if you *had* understood it!"

Tickets for all these concerts (in either zone) were wonderfully cheap; both sides in the Cold War subsidized cultural events as propaganda.

By dint of not wasting it on weekly bar-hopping, I was able to save enough money to afford a ten-day leave at the Salzburg Festival in Austria, during the summer of 1958. That was no doubt the musical feast of my life: a performance of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (Schwarzkopf, Christa Ludwig, Karl Böhm conducting) that was like drinking champagne, one of Verdi's *Don Carlo*, with Sean Jurinac, Ludwig, Ettore Bastianini and Cesare Siepi, Karajan conducting, that was heart-stopping; Richard Strauss's *Arabella* with della Casa and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (whom I heard several times in Berlin, as well) and so on. And by day, there was the old town itself, and the wonderful mountains that surrounded it (fortunately, we had good weather). These days, you have to be rich to afford the Salzburg Festival; then, it was affordable even to a reasonably sober soldier.

By the next summer, when I realized that with the increasing tension in Berlin I probably wouldn't be able to get to Bayreuth (the other festival of my dreams) I was less parsimonious, and somewhat influenced by evil companions. My eventual replacement had arrived (Major Kaufman was thinking ahead, this time) in the form of Tom Murphy, also a draftee and a graduate of the Choate School and Harvard. Tom was a merry lad, and not abstemious. With a third henchman, Frank Cucci, whose educational background and tastes were

compatible, we formed a sort of club, eventually to be designated as “the Black Velvet Society,” devoted to the consumption (on weekends only) of the eponymous cocktail. We seriously considered buying black blazers, and designed a sort of crest with crossed cocktail glasses and the motto, “nigra sum, sed pulchra” (Song of Solomon 1:5), though somehow we never quite carried that through. The Hilton family had just built their Berlin branch overlooking the Tiergarten in center-city (since replaced, I understand) ; it had a very luxurious cocktail lounge on the roof. To this oasis from the army, the growing crisis and the unpleasantness of life in general we repaired on the Saturday night after pay-days. Alas, our visits ended on the night that Tom, a bit above himself and deciding to follow what he believed to be an old German tradition, after drinking a toast to someone or other, tossed the glass over his shoulder into the brick fireplace, where it shattered. The management was apparently unacquainted with that tradition, and forewent the pleasure of our custom.

It was despite these amusements a time of growing tensions, serious ones. Russia was not able to pour funds into the east zone to match the economic recovery that was occurring in West Germany, and especially in West Berlin. More and more East Germans who were able to travel and could manufacture an excuse to leave their homes “temporarily” were finding their way to East Berlin, and then crossing to the western sector to be welcomed by refugee centers and put on planes outward to freedom. These included a great many of what was left of the professional cadre of the nation: teachers, lawyers, and especially doctors. I remember going on one of my flying tours of the greater city on a summer day in 1959. Berlin is a city built at the confluence of a couple of rivers, the Spree and the Havel, and at an intersection of a large canal network that covers most of northern Germany. There are several lakes, and beaches everywhere. On that day, the ones in the West Zone were heavily populated, like New York’s Coney Island on the Fourth of July. On the eastern side, however, not a soul. There had been an outbreak of flu all over East Germany, and there were so few remaining doctors (and medical supplies) that the whole nation was flat on its back in bed. (The Russian army, too; we could have invaded, had we wished, and over-run the whole Russian occupying force.) East Germany was literally hemorrhaging its population – the crisis that led up to the building of the Berlin Wall came just after I finished my tour of duty and returned to the States.

The G2 office was only tangentially involved in planning for operations in case of an outright attack from Soviet and/or East German forces (that was G1’s business). Unbelievably, those plans consisted solely of forming a collapsing defense perimeter in West Berlin, whose final point of collapse would be the

stadium built for the 1936 Olympics – where we would all be wonderful sitting ducks. The realization that we had a potentially mobile force of brigade size (or larger, if we coordinated with the British and French forces in Berlin) strategically placed on top of the nexus of transport for the northern half of East Germany (waterways, railroads and highways) and could have both cut the transport and resupply lines for a large part of the Soviet armies (had there been an invasion of Western Europe) and made ourselves a harassing nuisance in their rear, seemed not to have occurred to the planners. The stupidity in the higher ranks that had so incensed my father did not end with WW I. I was reminded several times of the old adage: you never actually *win* a war, it's just that the other guys manage to out-lose you.

As time went on, Major Kaufman relied more and more on me, and I found myself doing more and more of the “up front” side of the work, not just writing reports and summaries, but actually delivering them in oral briefings to officers in the command and beyond. It was not usually considered the thing for an enlisted man to be telling officers what to think: I can remember at one early point when our office (not even Major Kaufman, but the G2 himself, Lt. Col. Fred Perry (no relation to the 1930s tennis star, I believe) was to brief a visiting dignitary from Washington, Senator Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa. I had to lie prone on the floor behind a screen and whisper to the Colonel, out front and behind the podium, what he was to say next.

Later, by the summer of '59, I ended up at the podium and briefing, for a couple of hours, the Commanding General of United States Forces in Europe (four stars, no less) as to the gathering crisis. In fact, it was almost amusing: when I began, there was some obvious discomfort on the part of the officers accompanying him (interestingly, not on the part of the General). I paid no attention to that, and fifteen minutes or so in, they got over it, too. I was told later that I had gotten to be known by name in Bonn as “the soldier who briefed the CG (Commanding General).”

Major Kaufman, to give him full credit, was very appreciative of what I was able to do (not all officers were so generous). Already in April, 1958, he had written me an official “letter of appreciation” (copies of which of course went into the permanent files), saying in part, “...you showed efficiency, keen interest, intelligent insight, patience, industriousness and courtesy. This high level of performance is not frequently found in ‘old hands’ at this type of work. It is therefore all the more to your credit in view of the fact that you entered the exercise with no experience of G2 operations. I want to thank you for a job extremely well done and express my confidence that your superior attitude and ability will carry you far in future.” Very generous words, and an unusual gesture.

In fact, we came to something like a friendship; he certainly respected me (and tried hard to get me to sign up for Officer Training School, much to my private amusement); and I did genuinely like him. By November of '58 he went so far as to have a letter of commendation signed by the G2 himself (that same Col. Perry I had prompted from the floor) put into the files: "...you distinguished yourself by outstanding performance of duty while acting as G2 Operations Sergeant, Berlin Command. This assignment calls for a highly qualified school-trained Master Sergeant. You moved into it with a smoothness and professional capability which exhibited ability and maturity far beyond your years and experience. This job would be a challenge to men of long service, however with no prior military experience you assumed firm control over other enlisted men in the G2 division and not only processed the available information but flawlessly carried out the administrative detail work involved in opening, operating and closing the G2 operations branch in the field. It is my considered opinion that you are one of the truly outstanding soldiers with whom I have been privileged to serve. Continue the good work!" (How much of that language was actually Col. Perry's and how much Major Kaufman's, I don't know; but the idea certainly came from the latter.)

As that summer went along, tensions continued to increase. I've mentioned that we and the Russians had evolved a little game, surveilling each other's caserns every week or so from staff cars. (I don't know that they ever caught on to our aerial surveillance. And of course there were all sorts of phone and electronic wiretaps on both sides.) They did however, evolve a tactic of providing minor annoyances, just to remind us that they really didn't like our presence in the city.

The days of the Berlin Airlift were long gone, with the construction of the autobahn to West Germany in the early '50s. We three western occupiers had the right to drive vehicles, military or civilian, back and forth from West Berlin to Helmstedt, a hundred miles away in West Germany. This was in fact the main means of supply for foodstuffs for the three garrisons; we regularly sent convoys of trucks back and forth several times daily. Westward bound, they went through an American checkpoint in southwest Berlin, out of the city through about a mile of East Germany, and then through a Soviet checkpoint. At the far end of the autobahn a hundred miles away, there was again a Soviet check point and then, in the West Zone, an American one. The Soviets issued a document that had to be signed and countersigned, and that went with each convoy. It was all very routine on both sides... until that summer.

At which point some happy innovator on the Soviet staff invented The Game. Every other week or so, a convoy's papers would be issued, signed,

countersigned, the convoy would start out; all would go well up until the Soviet checkpoint a mile into the East Zone. There it would suddenly be discovered, with appropriate surprise expressed by the Russian lieutenant in charge, that the document contained some minor error or misprint. Perhaps a smudge, or a flyspeck. Perhaps only a figment of his imagination. Nevertheless, the convoy could not proceed. Angry phone calls would be made, the requisite amount of hassling would ensue, but finally the offending trucks would be made to reverse directions and return to West Berlin. A pleasant diversion from the dull routine on both sides. The following day, the same trucks with the same documents (with an appropriate change of date) would be allowed to pass.

So this became the new normal, without much comment or fuss. However, on a particular day in the middle of the summer of 1959, an American convoy consisting of a jeep and two trucks, manned respectively by a corporal and two privates, started out through our checkpoint, and on into the Soviet one. Arriving at the Soviet checkpoint, they were informed that they could not proceed. But this time a new wrinkle was introduced: they were not allowed to return to West Berlin, either. In fact, a Soviet tank was driven up behind the second truck, and another tank backed into place ahead of the jeep so that the convoy was physically pinned down and unable to move. This was new and ingenious development in the rules.

Our three soldiers behaved with philosophic composure; they simply sat down on the running boards of their vehicles, broke out their cigarettes, and awaited further developments. It was perhaps two in the afternoon.

Now the occupants of all vehicles using the autobahn were instructed at either end to report anything unusual they happened to see. So it was not long after two that a car inbound through our checkpoint reported the situation to our guards, and the word was relayed up to us in headquarters. A small conference between G1 and G2 personnel ensued; we decided basically to ignore the situation for a bit, expecting that the vehicles would be released after the Soviets got tired of the game. At three o'clock we of course noted the situation in the log that was kept and distributed throughout the chain of command.

However, we also, though unwittingly, had a innovation to offer. That very week a new general had taken over Berlin Command, Brigadier General Charles D'Orsa, who was unacquainted with the norms and protocols of our day-to-day relations with the Russians. This officer was not of a particularly reflective mind, nor one constrained by any great supply of patience. By three-thirty a second conference had been convened, in his office, with both officers and enlisted personnel involved all present. His point of view was clear and concise:

“Those are my trucks. Those are my men. I signed for ‘em when I took over this command. The Russians can’t have ‘em. Bring ‘em back.”

Several of us outlined to him carefully and pretty much in words of one syllable the history of The Game as currently played, and explained that in the normal course of events, the situation would quietly take care of itself. The General wasn't about to buy that. He reiterated his position, with emphasis, and further, raising his voice, added his intention of sending a squadron of American tanks from the Sixth Infantry down the autobahn and into the Russian zone to forcibly liberate "his" trucks. He in fact picked up the phone, called Sixth Infantry headquarters, and ordered a squadron of tanks to be warmed up and guns loaded. Of the perhaps dozen people in the room, it escaped only him that this action might have rather serious consequences.

(Had an American force of whatever size invaded the Russian zone of East Germany in 1959, and had it, further, for whatever reason actually fired upon members of the Russian army in a Soviet installation, it is almost certain that there would have been a Soviet retaliation against West Berlin, and that in the natural course of things, a full shooting war would have begun in fairly short order, with ballistic missiles armed with nuclear "devices" flying merrily eastwards and westwards. In short, we were on the point of initiating a re-enactment of *Dr. Strangelove*.)

A somewhat agitated scene ensued. The fact that I am writing this story and you are reading it demonstrates that in the end, we were able to restrain the General and inform him of some of the probable consequences of his decision. But it was a very near thing indeed.

Eventually, though, the tanks were ordered to stand down; shortly after that, at about the time it would routinely have taken for a piece of information (such as news their having been activated) to pass from the west sector of the city to the east), our trucks were allowed to proceed. We all began to breathe again. The General, of course, preened himself, considering that he had faced down the enemy. No one chose to differ.

(Three years later, when I was teaching at Loomis, I experienced with a powerful sense of *déjà vu* the outbreak of the Cuban missile crisis. Still subject at that time to the penalties that accompanied my Top Secret security clearance, it was some years before I could say that I had gone through that sort of thing once before.)

That little problem having been averted, the summer limped on. (For a good summary, see this link: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/berlin-crises>.) The refugee crisis was finally brought to an end in 1961, when the East German government found itself forced to build the famous "Berlin Wall," that effectively blocked the escape valve through West Berlin until 1989, when it was breached and became the initial signal of the breakdown of Soviet hegemony

over eastern Europe.) I was amused to read *Time* magazine weekly and find in it pretty accurate descriptions of both Soviet and American planning, despite our elaborate security precautions and vast expense. (I was told that my own individual “top secret” clearance cost the army \$10,000 -- in 1958 dollars -- to research and produce. There must have been scores of similarly expensive investigations conducted just for Berlin Command alone.)

The best thing about the tension, from my selfish point of view, was that it meant that I had to be retained in Berlin until the last possible moment, and thus could legitimately claim need to be flown back to the States, rather than sent back by troopship. When those confirming orders came through I heaved a huge sigh of relief.

Two last ceremonies were still to be observed – one of which I was proud to finesse. By army regulations, at the end of his term of service every draftee had to be given a “re-up talk,” an hour’s sales pitch by the appointed re-enlistment officer designed to persuade him to remain in the ranks another two years – or longer. My views were well known, and it was a real point of pride to me that I was the only soldier in the command during the 18 months of my service in Berlin for whom the powers that were correctly judged that it was a waste of time and breath to bring it up. My father would have been proud.

The finesse was particularly pleasant in that the other ceremony did in fact take place. In it, I was decorated by Major General Barksdale Hamlett, the United States Commander in Berlin (the genuine big cheese, General D’Orsa’s superior, who had both military and diplomatic standing, as deputy chief of mission to Ambassador David Bruce in Bonn), with the “Commendation Ribbon with Metal Pendant” for “outstanding service to the United States Army while serving as intelligence analyst and aerial observer...from April 1958 to July 1959.” This decoration, the highest one not involving bravery in combat, was in those days quite rare for an enlisted man (I understand the standards since been modified). The citation continued, “During this period, Specialist Simpson performed his duties in a very outstanding manner. He willingly and ably assumed responsibilities usually reserved for commissioned officers. He has demonstrated the ability and proficiency to serve as an intelligence staff officer. Specialist Simpson conducted detailed intelligence briefings for Berlin Command staff officers, new arrivals to the command, and visiting dignitaries. Through the exercise of imagination and discerning and inquisitive intellect, he materially improved the output of his section. The accurate and complete reports he prepared reflect his mature incisive judgment. All of these activities were carried on at the same time he was performing such duties as maintaining order of battle maps, processing intelligence reports, [and] preparing written reports and cables to higher headquarters. All of his work was of the highest caliber. His diligent application and

superior ability to carry out his responsibilities and his constant adherence to high military standards and readiness to serve cheerfully reflects great credit upon himself, Berlin Command the military service.” Not bad, for a gay draftee supposedly unworthy to serve.

(Which remark reminds me that I have thus far been reticent on that subject as I (and thousands of others) experienced it in military service. It must be borne in mind that all this took place in the 1950s – a long time ago and in another country, to quote Eliot – way before the milder days of “don’t ask, don’t tell” (which in any case never worked). If homosexuality had been, as it was, unthinkable for decently-brought-up children in those days, it was absolutely reprehensible, intolerable, in the military. Having correctly answered the pertinent question on the initial physical exam, one entered a closet whose depth was incalculable, where one took extraordinary pains to keep one’s eyes or one’s thoughts from straying. Besides the forbidding military, legal and lifetime career consequences, there was the more immediate one of physical assault and bodily injury to reckon with. And observers were everywhere. The word “heteronormative” had not yet been coined; but its reality was enforced with an invisible rod of iron.

Two things worked well for me: first, there weren’t too many of those I lived and worked with, whom I found especially attractive; and then, probably because we lived in barracks so cheek by jowl, we all of us guarded our privacy pretty jealously. And, as in college, I had little time or energy to waste. So I continued in a state of semi-conscious denial; this was a problem, if it was to be one, for later, or somewhere else.)

Anyway, in the final days of July 1959 I was able to get orders cut, took leave of Major Kaufman and the others in the office and hitched a plane ride to Frankfurt, where I was put on an army Lockheed Constellation, flown to the Azores, and thence Stateside. I fetched up in Fort Sheridan, IL, near Chicago, drew my back pay (plus unused leave days) and was introduced to purple people, color television having been developed while I was in Europe. I finally arrived back in Winfield in the first week of August. That sure beat eleven days in a troopship hold.

The future looked good: I had taken pains to stay in contact with Loomis from time to time over the two years of army service, and it turned out that there would again be a place for me. So at the end of August I rented a U-haul trailer for my books and belongings, hitched it up to the trusty Plymouth, and drove back east. It felt like – and actually was – the opening of a whole new part of life.

The Loomis I arrived at that Fall, though a far cry from the Loomis of today, was still a pretty impressive place. For one thing, there was the campus,

laid out in the 1910s in a Georgian style directly inspired by the University of Virginia, under the personal thumb of the founding headmaster, Nathaniel Horton Batchelder. He was a man of impeccable taste, and enjoyed the luxury of a large endowment to play with, a fortune bequeathed by one of the Loomis family descendants whose lumber-yard was the only one surviving the great Chicago fire of 1871 – and which by the school’s actual opening in 1914 had grown to well over a million dollars, then a colossal sum. The school sits on a handsome 300-acre tract of land, the original family farm, at the confluence of the Farmington and Connecticut rivers just north of Hartford; somewhere on one of today’s soccer fields was located the very first Indian trading post in Connecticut, established in 1640. It looked, then, like a small liberal arts college; today like a larger and very fine one, which it is.

(The same board of trustees also administered Chaffee, a day school for girls on a campus about a mile away. Eventually in the early 1970s, the two schools would merge into one.)

When I arrived, there was a student body of 375 (about twice the size of Kiski), all boys, and a faculty of forty-six, also single-sex, with the exception of the librarian (now in 2015 the corresponding numbers are 675 and 175, and the male-female proportions on each are about 60%-40%. Both then and now, the proportion of boarding students to day students was/is about 65-35. The current endowment (2015) is said to be about \$180 million, 19<sup>th</sup> in the nationwide ranking of private schools. (Kiski’s was zero when I was there, and now is currently around \$10 million; Exeter and Andover, the leaders, today are just over \$1 billion.) But the prime distinction between Kiski and Loomis was that of quality: faculty and students at Kiski were earnest and hardworking; the faculty at Loomis were in many cases distinguished, and the students, many of them, gifted. The ethos at Kiski was of slightly sweaty mediocrity; that at Loomis was understated excellence.

“Understated” in another way, as well. In the 1950s, almost all the very good college preparatory boarding schools were socially prestigious, in many cases quite snobby. Loomis had to some degree avoided this defect: first, by virtue of its original charter (dating from 1874), which stipulated that no student could be admitted or dismissed, nor any employee engaged or fired, for any reason of race, class or religion; and second, because it was a “free school,” i.e., the fees charged any student paid only for meals, lodging, sports, or extra-curricular expenses; all tuition and instructional costs (including all faculty salaries) were paid for by income from the endowment. This was a remarkable arrangement (one that I believe was unique at the time), which meant that the cost of a year’s education at Loomis was about half, or even less, of that of our rivals. In 1959, for example, a full year as a day student (which included tuition, full

sports and afternoon or evening extra-curricular activities (lunches, and a fair number of dinners) set you back exactly \$500 (in 1960 dollars). Thus the competition for admission, especially among day students, was intense, the quality of the student body very high, and its social background quite diverse.

(Paradoxically, Loomis gained some very prominent students through this democratic reputation, among others Lawrence Rockefeller, whose father John D. chose Loomis over Hotchkiss or Choate specifically because he didn't want one of his sons educated "with a bunch of snobs." That was well before my time, but later on I did have a great-grandson of FDR in class – nice lad, and a good student).

Democratic as it was, there was still a dress code: jackets and ties to classes and meals, no denim jeans (corduroy jeans were judged to pass muster) or sneakers. Rooms had to be neat, and were inspected for cleanliness every Sunday. There was a required chapel at 8 a.m. every day for boarders much like what had gone on at Amherst: a hymn, a short talk by a faculty member or senior, and a very cursory prayer. The hymnal had been printed specially for the school; it was a collection of mostly Congregational hymns, but with the texts edited so as to omit any specific references to Jesus Christ. At least there was a very fine pipe organ, and George Hickok, who taught Latin, was a good organist. On Sundays, the chapel service was at eleven, with a visiting clergyman officiating, followed by a formal luncheon and, for seniors, a coffee at the Headmaster's house.

Although I had passed by the campus any number of times on my way to college from White Plains a decade earlier (both the main road then and the rail line from New Haven to Springfield are right on the western boundary of the school), I knew little of all this – and in college days had not even been aware of Loomis's existence. All I knew now was that I was glad to be out of the army and back in academe at a much better place than the one I had left.

There were three of us newbies on the faculty that fall, and by virtue of a year or two's advantage in age and possession of the M.A., I got the best residential deal; a two-room apartment with balcony on the second-floor of a dormitory overlooking the central quad. No private bath, but the next year they added a room and installed a bath and small kitchen where the original bedroom had been. I lived there very comfortably for eleven years. The apartment was mine year-round, and when school was in session I had as many free meals at the dining hall as I liked (I was expected to supervise a table weekdays at lunch, and once a week, at dinner). My initial yearly salary was \$3200 (again 1960 dollars, plus medical and retirement benefits).

On the corridor outside my front door there were single rooms for some fourteen or fifteen students (all seniors), the ground floor was given over to

freshmen, and the floor overhead to a mix of middlers. There was a spacious faculty apartment on the ground floor (with an upstairs adjacent to my end of the corridor) for the dorm head and his family, and a third multi-room family apartment on the third floor. Going to show the manner of life in which one lived in such a school in the 1920s, the dorm head's apartments all had butlers' pantries and a servants' room. While the help had disappeared, the rooms remained.

Besides the three of us faculty in residence, there were four others who lived elsewhere on campus and came in to supplement the forces of authority on a regular schedule. Not that those duties were particularly wearing. Those were the halcyon days of boarding school life: wonderful kids, for the most part warm and confident relationships between faculty and students, and a more innocent world. My being "on duty," for example, meant simply that I was supposed to be physically present somewhere in the dorm during the evening, to receive reports from the student councilor who was actually in charge. My "duty" was one night a week and one weekend in three. The student councilor would inform me at 7:30 that all were present in their rooms and productively employed, maintain quiet hours until 9:30, take attendance again at 10 and report, and make sure that lights were out for the under classes. (Seniors could have lights until eleven.) Faculty-student relationships were such that I cannot recall a single instance of false report or any major abuse of the rules in the first decade of so or my dorm residence. (Other than the occasional apprehension of someone smoking in the bushes, or a waif not making it back to the dorm quite in time, there was precious little discipline to be administered. We didn't need an honor code; reasonably good conduct was simply a given. (All this changed dramatically and for the worse, as we shall see, at the turn of the '70s.)

The acceptance of such a common understanding of the way to act left plenty of room for – in fact enabled – some wonderful incidents. For example, in the early 60s it so happened that there were quite a number of faculty who drove sub-compact cars: original VW Beetles, Renault Gordinis, Fiat bugs of some sort, early Mini-Coopers and the like. The dining hall, sitting at the end of the central quad, right next to my dorm, in fact, was up just a step or two up from ground level, and the dining hall itself, a very elegant room perhaps eighty feet long by thirty wide with a tiled floor, was accessible by several doors, the double one opening onto the quad being particularly accommodating.

One Spring morning, those attending breakfast were rewarded with an unexpected sight: The Loomis *Concours*. All the tables and chairs had been dismantled and put into storage areas, the floor had been polished and buffed to a high degree of luminosity, and a dozen or more faculty cars, each one washed and polished, had been picked up bodily and carried inside, to be distributed artistically around the room, each with a neatly inked card identifying its make,

model and year. All that had been done, (we found out much later) by a group of senior boarders, in complete silence (I can testify to that: my apartment was not more than twenty yards away) between midnight and six a.m., and not a soul the wiser. I don't know that anyone ever found out who the ringleaders were; Frank Grubbs, the Headmaster, gave a stern announcement that noon about respecting the property of others (managing to do so with a straight face), but there was no serious effort made to reprehend anyone. It was a truism in those days: one of the ways you could judge the quality of a school was by the excellence (in both planning and execution) of its pranks

One other story: I got to be on friendly terms with a several then sophomores that I happened to have in class my first year. They were good students, and had lively senses of humor, so it got to be a practice that they would drop by my apartment from time to time to hang out. I got to know one, John Heyl from Philadelphia and later his family, particularly well. In those days, the school rented feature films to show on Saturday evenings at 8 in the school theater. For the boarders remaining on campus all weekend, that was about the only amusement; there were classes Saturday mornings and interscholastic sports in the afternoons; Sundays, after a required chapel service and formal luncheon, were given over to free time and studies.

At some point, after we had developed enough confidence in one another, John approached me for advice about a moral quandary. He and one of his friends, whose name was Joe, had made a great discovery: the padlocked door that led into the school's basement commissary under the dining hall, was loose enough on its hinges to be unlatchable from the outside. Inside (among other supplies of lesser interest) there were great boxes of cookies and bottles of soft drinks which were kept for consumption at the "teas" attended ceremoniously by the home and visiting teams following the afternoon games. So he and Joe had for several weeks exploited this discovery by waiting until everyone else was at the theater, and then in the darkness wangling their way into the commissary, appropriating sufficient food and drink for a feast, stashing it all in one of their rooms and joining the rest of the moviegoers. A splendid system.

However, as time went on, John's conscience got the better of him, and so eventually he came to me for advice. How could he pull out of the affair without seeming a scaredy-cat, or without getting Joe or himself into trouble?

These were good kids, mischievous but fundamentally sound (John especially has remained a friend, and had a fine career as a very innovative fundraiser for a variety of academic and scientific institutions). I saw no good to come from reporting them to the dean. So we devised a plan. John found an excuse to stay in the dorm the following Saturday night, and Joe was up for doing the job alone. So John and I did our own sneak-in to the commissary about a

quarter of eight, and hid in the darkness behind some packing crates. (I had brought along a good flashlight.) The wait seemed a bit long, and I spent part of it trying to imagine what I might say if someone happened to come in on some legitimate errand. Fortunately, this possibility did not materialize, and sure enough, shortly after eight, we heard a scratching at the door, and then the rustle of cellophane and the clink of a bottle or two.

I stood up, said “freeze!” and turned on the flashlight. It was a perfect cop: Joe was caught, frozen indeed, in the frame of the light. He had a large, open face, and in the few seconds that ensued, I think every emotion known to man came and went across it. I was afraid he might have a heart attack.

But I walked over to him, took the booty from his limp hands, and for perhaps a couple of minutes laid down the law to him in no uncertain terms, saying that while I would not turn him in, that he was never to do such a thing again. He bolted, and, as far as I know, never again came within fifty yards of that commissary door. John remained discreetly in the shadows, and his participation in the arrest was never suspected.

That was the sort of thing one could do in the innocent days before drugs, Viet Nam and paranoia took over America. It was a great time.

And an equally great one academically, as well. Though it was a busy one in term time: the usual teaching load was four courses, and coaching one sport (either interscholastic or intramural), plus dorm responsibilities. On average we faculty each had somewhere between six and ten advisees, for whose academic and personal progress we were responsible. There were five of us teaching French, of whom I was obviously the junior, so the first year or two I had mostly 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in class, and language-learning being a somewhat specialized skill, some of them were better than others. But on the whole they were lively and rewarding to teach. Then as I began to work with more and more upperclassmen, the process got to be more and more fun: many of them were alert and interested in ideas, and responded well to being treated like intellectual colleagues. Loomis had a fast-track program in French, by which one could do the equivalent of five years work in four, starting from scratch and going through the AP (Advanced Placement) Program; those kids as seniors were doing work equal to a good college introduction to literature course. We had a built-in advantage, too, in that existentialism was all the rage in academic and intellectual circles in the 60s, and Paris and French culture generally being its home meant that we were frequently dealing with material that was reckoned “cool.” It’s the age when kids are asking themselves the big questions about life, values and meaning; even outside of class it was commonplace to find oneself involved in dormitory or dining hall discussions of ideas and philosophies. And it was expected that teachers were meant to represent in some degree

what a culturally and intellectually complete person should be: the well-balanced model of *mens sano in corpore sanem*.

Loomis also had a lecture course for seniors (and the Chaffee seniors came over as well) called “Humanities,” an intellectual, artistic and philosophical history of western civilization. The lecturers were for the most part professors from Trinity College and the University of Hartford, and one or two from our own faculty (my department head, Joe Stookins gave a couple of wonderful talks every year on the iconography of medieval cathedrals, and after a couple of years they roped me into doing a couple on the French *philosophes* of the Enlightenment). The students had to produce a major paper at the end, a sort of introduction to the art of thesis-writing.

We didn’t know it at the time, of course, but we were fast approaching the end of a long and glorious era, begun centuries earlier in England and preserved (perhaps artificially and past its expiration date) in some colleges and private schools: the culture of liberal scholarship, the ethos of the well-read gentleman (or lady) scholar and informed citizen into which I had been initiated at Amherst – all that was about to be brushed into the dustbin of culture shock. But for the moment one could still imagine oneself in the world of *Good-bye Mr. Chips*.

Quite a few of the kids, inevitably, were personally and physically attractive. I think I might have had a more difficult time maintaining professional distances had it not been for the prevailing strong ethos that ran against teacher–student relationships (not that one or two of my colleagues never transgressed them, as I found out over time), and my own sense of physical bashfulness. As it was, I reverted to a somewhat older and more self-aware version of the attitude I’d held in junior hi and high school for the “golden boys,” admiring the view and enjoying the company, but no more than that.

As the 60s progressed, and America’s understanding of and attitude towards sexuality began to change, though, it became unavoidable to confront my status as “a homosexual.” (Nice clinical term, that.) This took a while, in large part because the then current medical and psychiatric opinion was that the condition (quite aside from whether it was morally reprehensible, as indeed many thought and many laws penalized) was an illness, at the very least a neurosis and quite possibly worse. Fortunately, as naïve as I may have been, I did have enough sense to know that I was not emotionally disturbed or mentally ill.

Nor could I summon up any feelings of moral culpability -- not that I was especially trying. My sexuality seemed perfectly normal to me – it was just the way things were, always had been, and no doubt always would be. I literally could not imagine them to be otherwise. Even as a teenager, I had never

fantasized about having sex with a girl, for example; even looking at heterosexual soft porn was... if not quite repugnant, at least disagreeable. (Much of American advertising passed me right by.) Even in art: the *Vénus de Milo*, for example, left me cold, while Caravaggio's nude boys, on the other hand....

I don't know where I picked it up as a child, I can't remember either of my parents getting especially exercised about rights and wrongs (and heaven knows my mother had a certain situational flexibility about them); but I was and pretty much always have been alive to moral values. As a kid, reading adventure stories, and then more adult stuff as time went on, I instinctively wanted to emulate the virtues of the good guys. It's no great credit to me; I suppose all kids do as much. But I took that pretty seriously, and tried hard to emulate the models I ran across (all of whom were also handsome and muscular and suave and athletic, of course. One does the best one can...) While I knew abstractly that my state of things wasn't anywhere near the norm; and that had they known the truth about me, almost everyone else, and certainly all the authority figures in my life, would have found it shocking; for some reason that just didn't seem to carry much of any *moral* weight. I don't think I have ever experienced a moment of *guilt* about being gay. Shame, yes, because shame comes from our sense of being judged inferior by others, and I was used to that, though not in any sexual context; but guilt derives, I think, from a moral judgment one imposes on oneself. It was almost as if there were a layer of insulation around me. There were a fair number of things in myself I felt bad about -- I wasn't physically courageous, I was lazy, I procrastinated, I was selfish and so on -- but my sexual feelings were somehow never among them. I'm at a loss to explain that; maybe it was just that I'd always felt a little different, and had had to learn the ways of virtuous folks -- the golden boys -- by dint of reading and observation, a bit like a foreigner with a guidebook familiarizing himself to a new set of *mores*; so this particular aspect of my difference was nothing really new. I did certainly know I would have to take precautions (I was by no means blind to the possibilities of physical danger or professional harm that might ensue in case of exposure, for example). So there was a level of concealment, of playing a straight role, that would have to be maintained, there were things one talked about and then others one didn't; but these were practical matters, and not particularly difficult ones, having become almost second nature by this time. (It's funny: I'm a terrible actor on stage, awkward and stiff, but I guess for a long time in real life I was pretty successful at blending in -- simply consciously or unconsciously conforming to a set of values and external behaviors that I accepted as being admirable -- pretty much what I had done all my life.) And in any case, the situation was imposed on me, I had no practical choice, professionally or personally. The day of radicalism hadn't yet dawned, at least not on me, nor had the imperative to flaunt

one's own sexual identity in other people's faces. Both of those would come quite soon in the wider world and even to some degree in private schools, but in the 60s their moment was still playing coy.

The Fall of 1960 saw the arrival at Loomis of a person who would be important to me for a number of years. Bob Ward, who had been three years behind me at Amherst, showed up to join the English department (he remembered me much better than I, him; he had not been a resident of the freshman dorm I supervised). Bob was an interesting and highly charismatic guy, who almost immediately became one of the most popular figures on campus – and, taking over as director of college guidance, one of the most sought-after. He had grown up in Kent, Connecticut, where his father was the superintendant of buildings and grounds at the Kent School. Both he and Bob's mother, Peg, were of unpretentious Irish-Catholic stock; they had a cozy little house on Route 7 north of Kent village, where I was to spend quite a few Thanksgiving and Spring breaks, eating, talking, playing hearts and taking walks in the woods with Bob and his German shepherd, Aragorn. (Like me, he was an only child; unlike me, in high school he had been very much the big man on campus at Kent.)

Bob was a hero-worshiper: his two great political idols at the time were General Douglas McArthur, for whom I could summon up little admiration, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, in whose wake I also bobbed. We saw eye to eye, too, as to the vices of Richard Nixon, and the virtues of Robert Frost, with whom we'd both had some small contact.

Frost, who had had a long association with Amherst College, was a good friend of Professor Atkinson, who had a slew of anecdotes about him. Frost used also to come around to each of the various fraternity houses once a year or so, to read poems and chat with the boys; I remember sitting worshipfully on the floor at Phi Gam one evening, literally at his knee for several hours. Bob was more fortunate: there was a chap in the class of '55 named Jack Hagstrom, who moved mysteriously in some rather altitudinous literary circles and was apparently very rich. On one occasion in the late '50s he invited Bob to dinner in his New York apartment (his, not his parents'). The table was set for four; the other two guests were, respectively, then Senator John Kennedy and Mr. Frost. Bob was evidently too awestruck to retain much of the conversation.

Bob had a wonderful sense of humor, and somehow he and I tended to see things, both local and beyond, a lot alike. He was very interested in national politics, and with his Irish-Catholic heritage naturally enamored of JFK. I was, too; while in college and thereafter I'd not been much politically involved, my time living abroad and then in the army had begun to broaden my awareness of what was going on in the world. My family on both sides were moderate republicans

(my father, of the Dewey-Willkie-Rockefeller (had he lived long enough to vote for him) breed, and despising the “Neanderthal wing” led by Senator Robert Taft). I’d heard Eisenhower speak a couple of times even before he became president (he was the president of Columbia when I had attended those high school forums) and hadn’t thought too much of him; and then doing the work I was doing in the army, I began to be more and more aware of the distance between what our national leaders were saying and what we were in fact doing in the world. (The second time I came within an ace of being court-martialed occurred the day after John Foster Dulles, the American Secretary of State and a notorious war-hawk, died, and I was discovered dancing in the office. Major Kaufman was shocked: “Simpson, how am I going to make Colonel if we don’t have a war?” (Unbelievable as it is, he really did say that.)) And of course, there were the questions of our flat-out lying about the U-2 incident, and the potential consequences of Gen. D’Orsa’s demonstration of incompetence and irresponsibility. So I, too, was happy to cast my first presidential vote for JFK. Bob and I had fallen into a habit of finishing the evenings with the (alas, long gone) CBS national news roundup at 11 p.m. (in his apartment; I hadn’t even gotten around to buying a TV at that point!), and chewing over the news of the world with a couple of senior boys.

We became quite close friends in fact. I was not at all physically attracted to him, nor was he to me; the relationship, warm as it was, was simply a function of mutual appreciation, respect and camaraderie. I came to love his parents, as well --- and gained some greater insight into a culture I’d been too young to understand well when Bernie McNulty or Gerry Flintoft and I were pals. The Wards were quite devout; Bob, for his part, went to mass willingly enough at home and from time to time elsewhere, but I got no particular sense from him that the faith meant a lot in his day-to-day life. And I was not in a place to be critical: my own theology at that point was still vague to say the most, restricted to the sense that there was a God who deserved a reverence, certainly, that I was very open to giving, but was not very demanding beyond that. We talked, Bob and I, a good deal about ideas, philosophies, literature and so on, but had, I think, the commonly-shared 1950s sense that religion was not a matter for serious intellectual discussion. His parents would not have been comfortable talking about their faith with a Protestant.

Bob and I had somewhat differing career senses. What with all the traveling I had done, I was happy to find a pleasant niche at Loomis, and had no desire to wander. Bob, though, had decided, as he put it, to slice up his career into five-year segments, with a mid-career impermanent retirement – and he pretty well followed through on that. After five years at Loomis he went off to Harvard for a Master’s in education, and work in their admissions office. Then in 1966 he

moved back to Amherst where he became Dean of Freshmen, and pretty rapidly Dean of Students, through the difficult years of the Vietnam war and the various campus upheavals that accompanied the sexual revolution and the “greening of America.” In 1972 he moved on (though not far) to become the Headmaster of Williston Academy, in Easthampton, MA, until 1979, when he took that “mid-career” retirement. He returned to Kent (where by now he was also a trustee of Kent School), and began a political career, being twice elected First Selectman, during which terms he carried on a long and highly comic adversarial correspondence with none less than Henry Kissinger, the ex-Secretary of State (Mr. Kissinger had bought property in Kent, and fenced off a part by long tradition open to town residents for raspberry picking. I believe Bob eventually prevailed). He and I remained in fairly close contact up until his return to Kent; but for some reason thereafter we seemed to drift apart. Thus I was shocked, in 1986, to hear of his death, at 52. The obituary gave the cause as cancer; I am pretty certain that a contributing factor was AIDS. It seemed to happen very suddenly, the funeral was private (I was not told about it until some time had passed), and his parents were very closed-mouthed about it. Of course, cancer itself in those years still carried a stigma, so one can’t be sure.

As a student at Kent and Amherst, in a stint in the army (he was with the Fourth Armored Division at Rammstein, in the West Zone), and then at Loomis, like me he was very much in the closet, so much so that I certainly had never guessed. He may well have suspected *me*, though he never said a word to that effect, then or later. The following year, spending a weekend with him in Cambridge I was still so deeply involved in denial that even when he finally did (after a few beers) tell me about himself, I categorically refused to believe him. I’m both embarrassed and amused at my naïveté; I think I must have said every possible thing one should *not* say in the circumstances. It goes to show, I guess, how deeply negative social caricatures get interiorized in the psyches even of those who should know better. For me at that point, being gay (actually, I don’t think I even knew the word in that sense then; being a “homosexual”) carried with it connotations of moral evil and sleazy conduct that I knew were wholly unthinkable for Bob, as I hoped they were for me. I can’t imagine what he must have thought as I went on telling him it couldn’t be true, inventing extenuating circumstances to explain the incident he was recounting and reassuring him of his virtue and my regard. I was, of course, unconsciously defending myself; he may even have seen that, for he was remarkably patient in listening and gentle in responding.

But as time went on, we did drift slowly apart, and I did note, as he was coming to the end of his tenure at Williston and returning to Kent, that he had a couple of new friends whom for whatever reason I didn’t take to, and who had an

air of somehow being privy to a secret that no one else knew. And then, one day, Bob was gone. Even after thirty years, I miss him still.

At any rate, back in the 60s life at Loomis took on a certain routine, one that for me was fairly pleasant (I do well with routines). Becoming proficient as a language teacher, coaching (rifery, soccer intramural and junior varsity and golf), acquiring a reputation as one of the intellectual young Turks on the faculty, doing a responsible job of caring for my advisees and other boys in the dorm – all that kept me busy, and I was also maintaining an outside career as a paid chorister and soloist in a couple of the better Hartford church choirs. That, in itself, was a wonderful experience; Hartford was fortunate in those days to have a brace of really excellent organist/choir directors in operation: Al Russell at Asylum Hill Congregational, and Bob Brawley at Trinity Episcopal, each as good as anybody I'd run into in New York. In both churches we did some remarkable performances of major works (the Bach Passions, the Mozart and Brahms Requiems, Haydn masses, etc.) as well as a very high standard of Sunday music performance. Besides the music itself, it was fun to get away from the close school community and interact with a very interesting and gifted bunch of adult amateur and professional musicians.

Summers were busy, too. The first one, 1960, I was hired to teach English in a little remedial program at the home of a former mentor of a colleague of mine at Loomis. He had a big house on the Maine Coast overlooking the ocean, (on Deer Isle, in fact) which would have made the job worth it even without other remuneration. Three of us teaching, ten boys, beautiful scenery and cool enough at night that you wanted a couple of blankets, splendid foggy mornings.

The following summer I decided I should be loyal alumnus, and so devised a plan by which I would spend the summer house-sitting for the chairman of the Amherst French department, King Turgeon, and working in the college library doing whatever was needed (it ended up being mostly culling books from the active collection that no one had used in a several decades to make space for more up-to-date scholarship). Then, at the end of the summer, I would return whatever salary I had earned to the college as an alumni donation. Amherst (college and town) are great places to spend the summer, also.

The Turgeons were off to France for the summer; Charlotte, King's wife, was also a Francophile, in fact the translator of the American edition of the *Larousse Gastronomique*, at that time the classic text for French cooking (and she knew her stuff!). Their house was on a somewhat secluded lane south of the campus, with only a couple of other faculty homes in sight, and (for me, an important point) adjacent to the golf course. One of those houses, directly across the street, belonged to a professor of physical education and coach of the

college crew team. He was also away for the summer, but his wife, whom I'll call "Mrs. P" (that's not the correct initial, but it's an appropriate one) was at home. I didn't know Professor "P" at all well (in any case he was off somewhere else that summer), and had never laid eyes on his wife. She turned out to be a fairly plain woman in her forties. She seemed quite pleasant, though, and after a week or two of casual runnings-into-each-other here and there, she inquired if I would like to drop by for a drink at the end of the afternoon. Seeing no reason to decline, I found myself knocking on the P's door at the appointed hour. It opened, she said something on the order of "please come in," and I did so, having just barely the time to realize she had changed into something loose. I also found myself in her arms, and her tongue a fair distance down my throat.

It's fair to say that nothing in my earlier life had quite prepared me for this moment. I was – it's the only satisfactory word – nonplussed. I stared, dumbfounded, at the empty space behind her head, Meanwhile her explorations continued; it seemed that something must be done before she could get to my tonsils. My only regret is that I had no coat of many colors to leave with her, but in the moment I felt called to dispense with such formalities. Somehow I wrenched myself away and, gasping for breath, got the Turgeon's front door locked behind me. All in all, perhaps not my finest hour, but at least I can say I know what panic feels like.

Discreet inquiries over the course of the next week or so revealed that Mrs. P had quite a reputation as a man-killer; she was said to have boasted of bedding every member of her husband's crew teams over the course of his tenure. Somehow, I didn't cross paths with her again the rest of the summer; whether that was a result of my precautions or hers, I can't say. In any case, the weeks passed uneventfully.

The summer of '62, I spent at Middlebury in their graduate language school, a very fine program. And then the next three found me up the Connecticut valley in Massachusetts, as Director of the Summer School of French at the Northampton School for Girls, where I and one other of the ten or so teachers were the only males on campus. It was a program for high school girls, but run on the Middlebury model of exclusive use of French 24/7 in and outside of class. I was hired largely because I could live comfortably in the language, and project an appropriate air of authority. It was good experience in learning about hiring and firing, maintaining discipline, making schedules, dealing with parents and so on, but three summers of that were enough to convince me that I would never again want to get into administration. On the proceeds I bought a Sunbeam Alpine Tiger (sports car *aficionados* take note: guaranteed to do 140 on the open road – I got it as high as 120 on the northern stretches of I-91), and waved happily goodbye to Northampton in August of '65.

The following summer I decided to go back to France, both to “freshen up” my command of the language and to do some sightseeing. It turned out that John Heyl, with whom I’d stayed in contact after he graduated from Loomis, was planning to travel to Africa that summer, via Europe. His father, who was in the import-export business, had arranged a free ride for him on an Israeli ore-carrier, running between Newport News, VA and Antwerp, and I could hitch a ride, too. Not the fastest means but an interesting one.

We duly turned up at the docks, to find a huge and brand new vessel. The *Har Meron*, as she was called, was on her maiden voyage. She was designed to have a double role: to carry ore and to be a training ship for future Israeli merchant marine officers. More than the length of two football fields end to end, she was decked out with state-of-the-art equipment; she could, for example, be navigated completely by radar and even brought to dock (with a tolerance of just a couple of feet in any direction) without visual help. John and I shared a cadets’ stateroom; and while we were asked to do menial tasks for a couple of hours a day, we had most of the eleven-day voyage to Antwerp free to relax and amuse ourselves reading or wandering about the ship.

The captain was Israeli, and reputed to be a drunk; we never saw him. The first mate was Greek, and both affable and competent. The rest of the crew was of mixed nationality; a good deal of communication was by pidgin English and sign language. The food was good, and hearty. My main memory is of breakfasts: good, solid workingman’s fare, complete with eggs, bacon or sausages (kosher was not kept), hamburger and mashed potatoes, pancakes, and, in place of fruit or juice, a fresh salad of peppers, onions and tomatoes. The voyage was uneventful until the end; we went through one good-sized storm which hardly disturbed our progress or stability.

However, when we had traveled through the English Channel to the Scheldt estuary, off Antwerp, we ran into a traffic jam: a fair number of freighters were stacked up at anchor waiting to get into the harbor and be offloaded. And we were privileged to experience the limits of human technology; despite the wonderful radars and sonars and all, during the night a neighboring vessel dragged her anchor and came down upon us, doing some minor damage and causing a wonderful argument none the less animated in that neither side could understand the other. The following day, we were able to proceed up the estuary towards the docks, only to run aground! The first mate explained the system to us: the Scheldt is a fairly shallow river (actually the name’s antecedent in Walloon means “shallow”) and the owners of ships using it are perfectly aware of its depth. However, they routinely send ships in that draw more than the harbor allows, leaving it to the crews to sort things out. So John and I, in this instance, eager to get off and find a train to Paris, had to cool our heels for most of

the ensuing day while crews labored to offload ore into barges brought alongside until the ship floated up enough to get to its dock – a practice hallowed by centuries of use.

It's amusing, also, to read of controversies about the porous borders of the European Union states today. John and I descended to the dock, found our way from the port of Antwerp to the central rail station, took a Paris train and got all the way to that city without being accosted – without even seeing – a border control officer or so much as a policeman.

I had managed to rent an apartment in Paris that belonged to one of the faculty from the Northampton summer school (she and her husband were both professors at Smith). After a few days there, John went on to his African travels, and I spent most of the summer familiarizing myself with the parts of the city I hadn't had a chance to get to know in earlier days. The last couple of weeks I rented a car and "did" what the French call *la région parisienne*, roughly a circle out as far as Chartres on the west, Beauvais to the north, Fontainebleau to the south and Reims to the east. It's amazing how much there is to be seen if you have mobility and can hit the back roads. In both the city and the surrounding towns, this was about the last possible time to see France, especially Paris, as it had been for at least the last two and a half centuries or more. The post-war boom came late to France, but by the time I would return in the mid-to-late 70s, the modernizers and urban renewers had moved in and far too much was changing forever.

It was a delightful summer, and added two items to my small catalog of sexual mores. One morning fairly early when I happened to find myself near the metro stop at St-Germain des-Prés in the Latin Quarter, I observed a correctly dressed male couple who stopped, embraced and kissed each other lightly on the lips before the one descended the stairs to the tracks and obviously off to the office. Not a scene one would have glimpsed in New York in those days.

And one evening, walking through the Place St.Michel (also in the Quartier latin) I was very pleasantly and politely accosted by a well-dressed man perhaps twenty years older than I, who after some preliminaries wondered if I would like to come up and have a drink in his apartment. I knew enough to decline, and to do so with equal courtesy; but choosing what is undoubtedly the wiser course in these matters always leaves one curious about the unexplored eventualities. Upon reflection, I took the incident as a compliment. And I preferred his approach to Mrs. P's.

The following few years, and summers, tend to blend together in my mind: they were very good, not to say idyllic, ones. Academically and in terms of human relationships Loomis was at its peak (at least until much more recently); it

was a joy to be living in the dorms, I was teaching upper level courses with a number of excellent students, was even head of the modern language department for several years, and doing some coaching. One of those summers I spent planning and writing the two-hour lecture series on the French 18<sup>th</sup> century *philosophes* (Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, etc.) which I gave for several years in the Humanities lecture series for seniors. The others, I enjoyed the peace of the campus, played some golf, and at least once, in 1969 I think, I traveled out to Kansas to spend some time with my mother, by then in her seventies, but navigating decently well. Nano had died (four years earlier, at 97), and with my help that summer, we had a monster auction and got mother moved from the family house a couple of blocks east to a much more practical little bungalow.

It's high time, I think, to discuss, or at least speculate a bit, on our relationship. I've observed earlier that she was not an open book, to me or anyone else as far as I could tell. To some degree and on the surface, things were pretty normal, though she was not a person to see always the bright side. I couldn't blame her for that, exactly: she'd had her childhood and adolescence at a time when growing up in small-town middle-western America was pretty idyllic for those who had the means and social standing to enjoy it. There were horses in the barn behind the house; she learned to ride and more importantly to hitch them up and drive them. When cars came in, she was the first in the family to learn to drive (my uncle was younger than she), and she taught him and her parents, one by one, supplementing her allowance by exacting fines for their mistakes. (In later life she was a far better driver than my father, and an excellent teacher for me.)

And of course, her young womanhood was, for the time, fairly pizzazzy: she played the piano well enough to tour a bit playing for women's clubs and the like; and then there was a college education, still a rarity for women in those days before and during WW I, the marriage and subsequent stay in France which had to have been in many ways a romantic adventure, and life in New York with a (by all reports) dashing young architect very much on the way up. They weren't rich; but as people said in those days, they had prospects, and the way before them would have looked bright.

But for the Depression...and shortly thereafter, my arrival, to complicate life. Not that they looked at me in that way: the few memories and certainly the many photographs I have from the middle 1930s seem happy enough. But gradually in those pre-Bogotá days, as the Depression settled in, life was changing for them. I've written about its emotional effects on my Dad; though the change may have been more gradual for Mother I think it was also severe. By the time

we were back in this country and World War II had broken out, I think she had begun to see that the rest of her life might lie downhill.

Quite naturally, she doted on me. As finances got slim for them, and she having been used to a greater degree of luxury than dad, they argued about what they could and couldn't afford. I took her side, silently of course, because a lot of my friends had scooters, and then bikes and then cars before I did (I never did have a car of my own until after college) and country club memberships and so on. My parents did their best to keep their disagreements away from my ears, but kids always find out, or sense the undertones, and inevitably take sides according to their own interests. Mother would have been shocked, and hurt, to think that she was enlisting me into her side of things, but equally inevitably, consciously or unconsciously she was; and I imagine, though he never gave me reason to do so, that Dad was not unaware of the lie of the land. More than a half-century too late, I feel the sympathy for him that I did not, then. And also now, for her. It would have been remarkable for her to feel, or to act, otherwise.

I don't think it would be accurate or fair to draw too many inferences from this after all quite common story of those days. I'm aware of the psychological theory which posits the emotionally distant father and the overly-affectionate mother as causative factors in the development of a gay son. I'm not sure I wholly agree with the theory, or at least with its popularity; but more importantly I don't find it particularly defensible in my own case. My situation was little different from that of a good many of my peers: we all had commuter fathers who worked all day in the city and didn't have a lot of energy to spend much time with the kids afterwards, and stay-at-home moms at least some of whom were far more "clingy" than mine. And yes, Dad liked to read, rather than throw a football around, or go on camping trips; but those weren't things I was pushing him to do: it was rather a relief not to have to. But the differences between our various family structures, my friends and mine, were pretty small; and as far as I know, none of my peers from those days turned out gay. *Tant pix pour eux!* I'm pretty sure I wouldn't want to have switched lives with any of them.

However, going through my teen years, I began to find mother's attachment to me to be increasingly awkward. Part of it was just her own loneliness, I think. She was always curious about the smallest details of my life; as time went on, especially as I moved on to college and then as circumstances had us living at a distance, it got cumbersome and boring to be asked frequently to describe the minutiae of routine living. My reaction, of course, was to tell her less and less, and I'm sure that was as frustrating to her as her asking was to me. In particular, she egged me on to "have more friends" and talked about a her middle and high school "gang" of companions. I got it that she really meant girl friends, just as I got it that Dorothy Dean had not been the sort of companion she had

had in mind. (Amusingly enough in retrospect, my relation with Rick Bergren seemed to reassure her somewhat as to my healthy peer companionships.) In any case, by keeping the conversation on the surface level, and not admitting the subtext, over the years I managed to fend her off, and somehow the issue became a useful way to establish some distance between us, until I old enough, at least in my own eyes, to let her know firmly that I wanted to run my own social life. Even so, she was persistent, in a discreet sort of way, and kept after me off and on until I was well settled at Loomis; but even at that point I was not ready emotionally to talk about the subject, and finally she gave it up.

It's a good question whether or not she knew, or guessed at, my sexuality; at the time, thank heaven, I didn't think so, but then they say a mother always knows. Homosexuality would certainly not have been any more comfortable a subject of conversation for her than for me. She was not at ease with the physical aspects of sex at all, and found male anatomy "ugly," as she once confided. One incident did give me pause: years after she moved back to Winfield she got a phone call one evening. (Her listing in the phone book was "Mrs. Lusby Simpson," Lusby being Dad's middle name, which he always used in preference to his given one.) The call was from (evidently) a couple of bored young girls unknown to her who were indulging their mischievousness. "Is this Mrs. Lusby Simpson?" "Yes, it is." "Oh... Well, are you a Lusbian?" And they hung up, amid giggles. The incident struck mother funny (she did have a good sense of humor) and she recounted the story afterwards with great glee. But I've wondered, since, whether some part of her amusement may have been double-edged.

In the end, and whatever mysteries there may have been on either side, I think the emotional umbilical cord was successfully cut, and without any great trauma. We learned to get along pretty well with each other, and eventually she found a satisfactory substitute to worry about: like Nano in her Methodist upbringing, she took a very dim view of alcohol, and when in my 30s I adopted the custom of having a glass or two of something before dinner, that provided grounds for regular discussions that were less freighted with overtones, though no less animated, on both sides. I tried to be patient, knowing her loneliness (despite the presence in town of several nephews and their progeny); I know she would have been happier to have had me a lot closer than Connecticut is to Kansas. I did get out there, though, for a number of summers until she died (in 1990); and despite the heat, Winfield was not an unpleasant place to be: there was a decent country club and I found a congenial group of cousins and friends with whom to play golf.

All in all, my life at the end of the '60s seemed pretty comfortably arranged: a good job in an excellent school, a fair degree of respect (going both ways) from colleagues and students, a beautiful campus on which to live, various side interests in music, literature and speculative theology, a hot sports car and the tweed cap and pipe to go with it. Looking back on it now, I have to smile at the resemblance to my parents' situation in 1929 (give or take the sports car). And sure enough, things caught up with me as they had with them. With my parents, it was mostly historical and economic. With me, it was bit more complicated: a coming-together of several things historical, religious and sexual. As with most such pivot points, of course they had been hovering in the background for some little time.

It goes way beyond the possibilities of this essay to try to depict the complexity, the scope, or even the chronology of the developments that were growing around not just me, but all of us involved in education, and in fact, around the whole country at the end of the 1960s. Things came at one fairly fast, and from all sorts of directions, and all tangled up together. A catch-word of the time was "future shock." It was confusing enough then; now, looking back, even now it seems very difficult to sort out. All I can do is to try to narrate how it all came at us, and not even that is easy because at this remove in time the memories have gotten tangled.

For one thing, it's easy to forget how different a society America was just at that point in our cultural history. I had long prided myself on encouraging my students in and out of class to think critically about the cultural and political systems of the post-war years that prevailed in the complacency of largely white, upper-middle-class, highly privileged boys on their way to "good" colleges. Neil Postman's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* was a big title in pedagogical circles at the time; I remember thinking, when it came out in 1969, that's what I'd been up to for years. But my efforts had been rooted in a matrix that still conformed to the intellectual, social and esthetic standards in which I'd grown up, which dated largely from the early twentieth century. That in the next half-decade or so all these, as well as basic moral, philosophical and even sexual assumptions would come into question, very few of us, and certainly not I, had anticipated. The smooth cultural wave on which we'd been surfing for some time suddenly began to break over our heads.

For those of us in schools (especially residential schools) which had been enjoying the halcyon period I've mentioned in several places above, two shadows were cast across the scene and then loomed up with astonishing speed: the arrival on the scene of hallucinogenic drugs and the protest movement against the Vietnam war. Both of these had absolutely horrific consequences, especially the first.

What we began to sense was at first a subtle change in relationships. Where for as long as anyone could remember there had been an implicit *confidence*, a trust on either side that whatever would happen in and through the mix of faculty-student relationships: grades, comments, day-to-day exchanges in and out of class, would ultimately be for the good; --- now one began to sense a strange sense of irony and distrust. I think the first example I saw of this was that where for ten years I had never had the slightest occasion to doubt the report of the student councilors when I was on duty in the dorm as to whether all were present or accounted for, or anything else, now for the first time as we moved into the 70s, I discovered (accidentally in the beginning) that their word could not be counted on. I was not alone: my colleagues, too, slowly began to see that students were beginning to regard us as alien, as figures to be distrusted, even feared. And when we would try to engage them, to talk about the quality of our relationships, we began to see that they simply did not believe us, or even understand our concern. We on the faculty were dumbstruck.

And then we began to see the ruin, and in a few cases the end, of the lives of some wonderful kids; and for an appreciable period, had no clue as to how or why this disaster had come upon them. (All of us, faculty and students, were profoundly ignorant about drug use in those first days; the kids sailing into this brave new world of hallucinogens were especially vulnerable. We on the faculty had to have “experts” come out and show us – and in the case of marijuana, give us to smell – just the physical objects we were dealing with. It took longer for us to assess in any adequate way the damage those substances would bring down upon us. ) More broadly, a vast paranoia descended on campuses, as kids sought (with remarkable success for quite a while, because of our naïveté) to conceal their drug use. The open and warm relationships between students and faculty that had made school life so uniquely beneficent were overtaken within the space of a year or two by the sense of suspicion and distrust on the one side that I’ve mentioned, and hurt and disappointment on the other. For the first time in the history of boarding schools, students demanded to have keys, and began locking their rooms. Of course, dormitory faculty were given pass keys, but their use was bitterly resented by the students. The Sunday inspection, even the casual glances into rooms during the week, became prickly moments filled with tension and suspicion, stemming at first from the students but of course soon transmuting themselves into the faculty as puzzlement and worry. Light-heartedness, casual joking, pranks, became things of the past, everything now was a federal case. (Of course, there was real criminality involved; the kids were a lot quicker than we to understand the legal risks they were running. Inevitably, a few of the more adept users became dealers.) Of course, not all the kids were affected, and most eventually survived whatever degree of

involvement they had experienced; but enough had changed to affect the whole tenor of school life.

There were some real horror stories. So-called “mind-altering” drugs did indeed alter minds, and not for the better. I think especially of one bright and athletically adept lad with a great future in store who got hooked on LSD and spent most of the decade after his graduation in and out of psychiatric hospitals. As far as I know, he has to this day only barely been able to earn his own living. His case was certainly not typical, but not all that unusual, either. We had a couple of suicides, one of which I will describe shortly.

All of this, of course, had to have an emotional impact on faculties; in our various ways we experienced incredulity, alarm, anxiety, fear, anger and sorrow, more or less in that order. We didn’t, at least at Loomis, talk a whole lot about our reactions – no doubt we should have done so more, but quietly trying to cope seemed the order of the day.

And there was lots to distract the attention. To move from the tragic to the comic (but yet deathly serious at the time) for example, the question of hair length, and more generally, dress codes, rose up to generate immense amounts of emotion and heated discussion. In the 60s, dress for meals, classroom activities and any school travel off campus had always meant chino slacks, collared shirts and neckties, sports coats, sox and shoes. The acceptable hair style ranged from short (if curly) to crew cut. I can still remember vividly the day in the late 60s when the first recent graduate returned ceremoniously to campus to appear (in the dining hall, no less!) with luxuriant hair cascading down over his (of course) tee-shirted shoulders. The apparition of a Zulu warrior in full regalia would not have caused a greater sensation. Before long we were having extended and animated discussions in faculty meetings not only about hair length, but about beards, sox, corduroy versus denim jeans...eventually and inevitably, about the abandonment of the dress code altogether. Some elderly faculty were ready to die on the barricades; others of us sought to bend before the winds of fashion. Six or eight years or so later, we had achieved a sort of compromise: no jackets, no ties (but collared shirts), no denim, no sox, but neat and clean -- and an *entente cordiale* about hair: we chose not to discuss it unless actual vermin appeared.

On a somewhat higher plane, we were also experiencing major pedagogical earthquakes. What was worth teaching and how to teach it became burning issues, and remained such at least until my retirement in 1994. In language teaching we missed some of that (there are things that simply have to be accepted and interiorized: no use arguing about how to conjugate a verb, or what the German word for “garbage” is). But we had our own revolution in methods: language labs, other new audio and visual technologies and greater access to

cultural materials. Many of these required major changes in how classrooms should be set up and how classes should take place; these were not always easy to implement. And in the higher level courses we had to rethink what works of literature to be teaching, and how to present them.

On top of all this confusion, the war in Vietnam had gradually begun to overshadow us. There was the issue of the war itself, which to many of us seemed unnecessary at best, and morally corrupt at worst. Then as American casualties began to mount, and the draft lottery system was imposed, things came to seem quite real and immediate to us all, faculty and kids; protests began, and with the widening of the war into Cambodia, and especially the massacre at Kent State University in Ohio, where National Guardsmen actually fired on demonstrating students, killing four, many were outraged. This disaffection could only add to the distrust felt by the kids for Johnson and then Nixon administrations and the government in general, but for the school...and indeed, all societal institutions. "Never trust anyone over thirty," was the rallying cry of the more radical wing; that was hard to hear for those of us like me who were in fact in our thirties but no less disaffected from the stance of our country in the world and horrified at the thought of sending kids in short order from the classroom to the jungles, to kill or be killed.

I mourn in particular one remarkable lad I'd known who, we were told, saved the lives of his entire squad by throwing his body over a grenade that had been lobbed into their midst by an unseen Vietcong militant. He deserved better from his country; at least his suffering was short. We at home held protests and marked memories; I remember one Spring day in which students and faculty gathered in the central quad to read aloud the names of the by then several thousands of those lost in that pointless slaughter. To jump ahead a year or two, I remember also serious conversations with the more conscientious Christian boys about how best to respond to the issue of military conscription into a unconscionable war. Even to receive a deferment was to send some other unlucky soul to likely injury or death in your place. To their credit, many of the kids (without urging from me) decided that if they were called, the right choice was to volunteer for combat medical duty, so that while running the same risks as their armed comrades, they themselves would not carry arms or have any possibility of inflicting harm. I don't know if any of them ever had to come to that point of choice; I hope not.

On top of all this, and reflecting the changes going on in the whole society, we also began to undergo the storm of the sexual revolution. Where at least there had been behavior norms that were agreed upon publically and in

principle, if not meticulously observed in practice, now increasingly, everything was up for question.

In the first place, and to bring it all close to home, the early 70s was the epoch of co-education. Where single-sex education had been almost universally the rule in residential private secondary education, now in a few short years the figures were turned upside down: very few single-sex private high schools or even colleges (male or female) have remained so. Loomis (all boys, predominantly boarding), for example, became Loomis Chaffee (the Chaffee School, all day girls, had been operated for fifty or so years by the same board of trustees on a separate campus a mile or so away and with a completely separate faculty. Now (1972) the board sold the Chaffee premises and moved the whole girls' operation lock, stock and barrel over to the Loomis campus, melding the student bodies and (with notably more distress) the two faculties and curricula into one). As desirable as this might have looked on paper and in educational theory, the consequences were in some major part unforeseen, and took decades to work themselves out. Parallel student bodies, faculties, administrations, pecking orders, dignities, feelings, all had to meld. A couple of new buildings had to be gotten used to, and a whole girls' boarding structure had to be built from scratch. In a stable and peaceful time, this would have been a job; in the 70s it was disorienting at best, and at the worst, a mess. Right down to pedagogical practice, there had to be adjustments. You can say and do things in a classroom of boys that just won't do when girls are present. The camaraderie that exists among a faculty or even just a department conclave, changes appreciably with the arrival of feminine colleagues. All was changed, changed utterly...

The move to coeducation was of course enormously complicated by the contemporaneous arrival of the sexual revolution, The long-accepted norms of polite behavior (in classroom, sports field or dormitory) did not fail to be challenged by vehement demands for modernization on the part of students and even some of the more radical younger faculty. Before too long, there was a large crystal bowl in the reception room of the infirmary kept full of condoms, freebies for all. ( I wonder now how that expense was accounted for in the budget. "Incidentals," perhaps ? "Personal hygiene?")

This is not to say that free love reigned and scenes more appropriate to a film by Fellini were to be witnessed on every side; but it did mean, at least for quite a while, that there were interminable and heated on the spot discussions as to the interpretation of such phrases as "public displays of affection," or the validity of parietal rules in late twentieth-century academic life.

Still another tidal wave that swept through our (and others') campus, and American culture at large, was the so-called "Jesus revolution." While it was both the most fragile and short-lived of all these changes for most people and schools, for me it turned out to be the most important, for that time and for my whole life.

To backtrack a bit, initially, for some years, perhaps beginning as early as the middle 1960s, I had begun to notice in myself a sort of *discontent*. I had all the outward earmarks of success in my professional and personal life, all the outward accoutrements, every reason to be happy....but I also had a growing sense of somehow being in a rut, somehow missing out. I couldn't put my finger on exactly what the rut was, what it might be that I was missing – which of course in retrospect seems both naïve and funny, in a pathetic sort of way. Even then, I was beginning to sense that one component of the discontent was sexual: I was longing for a person (male of course) with whom to be intimate. What I didn't see at first but was growing towards, was that there was also a *spiritual* longing as well, that it was not just a guy I desired to know and be known by, but Someone beyond the quotidian.

I read a lot: it was the beginning of the heyday of "pop" psychology, theology and philosophy, the "New Age," in fact. Much of it struck me as nonsense. It was a big time for re-training teachers; summers and other vacations abounded with conferences, awareness-raising mini-courses, sensitivity training workshops and the like. We were urged to get out of our heads and "into" our emotions. I went to my fair share of these (some better-based and more useful than others) but in general, it was pretty clear that they had no definitive (or to me, even plausible) answers to propose. I remember being bemused that so many people, even professional colleagues, whom one would suppose from appearances unlikely to be swept away by this *nouvelle vague*, were in fact among its proponents.

In any case, in the summer of 1971, I was planning to get out to Santa Fè to pick up my mother, who was summering there, and return her to Winfield. It turned out there was to be a conference sponsored by the General Semantics folks (my friend Andy Hilgartner's crew) at what was then Point Loma College in the San Diego area that would be addressing some of these issues, and the dates were convenient, so I figured to attend it, rent a car in San Diego after the session, and drive up the coast route (which I had never seen) to San Francisco to catch a plane for Albuquerque (and thence to Santa Fè, where she was staying). Leaving aside the conferences, it was a great trip: good weather, dramatic scenery and in Santa Fè a couple of good opera performances.

The conference, however, was a different matter. There were probably forty or fifty of us attendees, ranging in age from a couple of college

underclassmen up to some very white-haired types. At 38, I was somewhere below the median age. There were quite a few GS junkies; but many of us, I discovered, were a kind of coterie: people who traveled from one get-together to the next up and down the coast (we were not all that far from Esalon and Timothy Leary, for example). In one way or another, I suppose they were looking for something to fill up their lives, though a lot of them would have been happy to settle for a “cool” experience.

The “faculty” also had their peculiarities. The principal speaker/teacher was an elderly man, one of the founding generation of GS, we were told....and a bit past whatever prime he might have had. He was presented as a sort of model of how the discipline of GS could create a salutary new mentality and perception of reality. He seemed a nice old geezer, but rambled on in a way that was totally pedestrian and routinely academic. Not much there.

The younger staff, male and female, were pleasant enough, though on the vacuous side, and seemed much drawn to the beach. One of them, a tall slinky type in his late thirties, was clearly on the make for whatever female was interested, and by the end of the week seemed to have made considerable progress in a number of directions.

To top it all off, a day or two before the end of the session, one of the numerous women in attendance, who looked as if she were someone’s rather sweet grandmother, had a psychic breakdown of some sort and had to be carted away to a psychiatric hospital.

Well, it was a lovely drive up the coast, and I had a day or so in San Francisco. I confess to having been completely oblivious to the Haight-Ashbury, but did wander around Chinatown a bit.

Back at school that Fall of 1971 there were the usual things to be done, including getting to know the new seniors on my dormitory corridor. This was more a duty than a pleasure in a good many cases now, what with the progress of drugs and general disaffection, but a couple of the boys really stood out. Scott and Tim seemed at first to be throwbacks to the way kids had been for so long, up until a few years before: cheerful, friendly, unsuspecting, radiantly *healthy*. Scott was my advisee, so I had the responsibility of getting to know him; and Tim was his buddy. It certainly didn’t hurt that they were both well-built and good looking, so we ended up spending a fair amount of time together. Over that time, I discovered the obvious difference between them and most of their peers derived from something deeper than just temperament or upbringing. They were what was then called “Jesus freaks.”

Three or four years earlier, a new chaplain and his wife, the Rev. John and Karen Howe, had arrived at Loomis. They were strong evangelical believers, though not fundamentalists (John had just finished his M.Div at Yale). We still

had daily and Sunday chapel services for boarders, and John was firm in cogently and forcefully expressing an orthodox Christian point of view, both there and where appropriate, in the classroom. (He ran into considerable flak from liberal faculty members (and perhaps some parents), and eventually left after a couple of years, going on to a long career in the Episcopal Church, and finally retiring as Bishop of Central Florida.) But while at Loomis he had started a small Bible study that met frequently in his and Karen's apartment. Such was the impact of that study that when he left, the underclassmen who remained, self-perpetuated: they formed what was essentially a continuing semi-clandestine fellowship that met wherever it could. By the time Scott arrived on my corridor as a senior, he was the understood leader of the group, which could count about 15 or so, boys and girls, as members.

There was no faculty support for them on campus, but I rapidly discovered that there were actually a few adults in the offing, and they seemed as remarkable as the kids. Perhaps the most significant of these was Peter Moore, an Episcopal priest who lived in Cheshire (20 miles or so to the south) and had a rented office on the Choate School campus in Wallingford. I actually knew Peter distantly: he was about my age, had grown up, we discovered much later, only a few miles from me, and was now the founding director of something called the Council for Religion in Independent Schools). As such, Peter had an entrée into the "prep school" world, from which he himself had come as a student, as a sort of consultant and frequent speaker at Sunday chapel services which (though in their death throes at the time) still existed on most residential school campuses. He had spoken at least once a year at Loomis, and I had a casual acquaintance with him. Here was an adult, and a well-educated one – he had graduated from St. Mark's School, Yale and Oxford – who believed and could argue cogently for the same theological stance, Evangelical Christianity, that so animated the kids. A year or two before Scott and Tim had arrived in my dorm Peter had founded another organization, whose name evolved over time into "FOCUS" (the Fellowship of Christians in Universities and Schools). This was at first just Peter (who allowed CRIS to wither away), then Peter and a secretary, then a staff worker, and over several years other staff, to the point where today (1918-19) there are regional offices in more than ten centers from Boston to Raleigh, North Carolina, and a staff of more than forty ministering to Christian students at probably one hundred private secondary schools up and down the eastern seaboard and in California. Peter and his wife Sandra, also a strong Evangelical believer, have had a tremendous ministry not only to kids in the several schools, churches and dioceses where they have taught, but also to parents, faculty and their families.

Peter must have logged hundreds of thousands of miles in the first years especially (beginning in the -1960s) traveling among schools, sometimes

welcomed and allowed to address chapel services or classes, more frequently slipping in to visit individual students or faculty who had been attracted by FOCUS events scheduled during the various school vacations or breaks or simply by word of mouth. He had strong gifts as an evangelist, and of course his status as an ordained Episcopal priest and his academic and social background opened a lot of doors. He profited also from the abysmal lack of theological grounding on the part of faculties and administrations in the schools, by this time so thoroughly secularized that they had little idea of who – or what -- they were unleashing on their charges.

Soil was particularly fertile in the Hartford area, what with several schools of national repute (Choate, Loomis, Miss Porter's, Ethel Walker's, Taft, etc., not to mention a number of lesser lights) close by. And in those days there were Wednesday evening services with strong slates of visiting preachers, at the Covenant Presbyterian Church in nearby Simsbury – services not designed for kids but rapidly adopted by them – which proved to be the hook that caught me.

Alas, as I write these lines, I am told that Peter is at death's door with an inoperable brain tumor. Flights of angels are surely singing him to a well-deserved rest.