

Chapter 1: Music Rules the World

01 - HUSTLE AND FLOW

On a humid Saturday in early August 2005, I get past the rip-off tollbooths in the Blue Hen State and cross into southeastern Pennsylvania – I know, America starts here. The AC in an eight-year-old Escort LX is starting to turn lukewarm. I'm maybe 20 miles from Center City Philadelphia, but as I approach the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the land starts turning into ridges and valleys, hiding the horizon in little cliffs of the Appalachians to come. I'm a couple hundred miles from the tunnels I used to enjoy as a boy on family trips.

I weave toward the King of Prussia Mall, and have to memorize my parking location, not recalling ever being there, even in my early 70s days with Univac and Blue Bell.

As I have a burger in the food court, I enjoy the music playing through my head, "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp," from the film *Hustle & Flow*. Indeed, I am here to meet movie stars and celebrities. The content of my "elevator speech" to them will encapsulate what I've accomplished in the past couple decades.

There's nothing special about meeting "movie stars," as I had done it often enough in Minneapolis. At IFP film showings at the Bryant Lake Bowl there, Josh Hartnett had "hidden" in the bar crowd on winter nights with a stocking cap.

Today, the teenyboppers would stand in line to meet WB *Everwood* stars Gregory Smith and Chris Pratt. The two leads from the series would listen to me.

02 – KEEP IT VISUAL

When you make a movie, you do everything visually. If you're making an argument, you have to convey what the components of your "logic" feel like. You can do that with the "inception" approach: sequences of images, not in chronological sequence but in some sort of order related to the logic of what you would argue. You need actors, and most of the time you follow the Law of Three, or the Triangle. A trio – the largest allowable stage ensemble according to Clive Barker (as he opens his novel *Imajica* – is a crowd, and a source of conflict to be resolved.

I gave my "elevator speech" to both actors, about fighting "don't ask, don't tell" and COPA. There's a reason why these issues relate to *Everwood*, which is a way of getting at "The Problem." These matters fit into long discussions or presentations about two self-expressive topics: "gay rights," and "self-publishing." The other big thing that I "accomplished," out of sight today, was a 31-year career in information technology. That deserves its own discussion. A fourth big thing, not completely evolved at the time of this celebrity encounter, was my own experience with eldercare and my mother, which would at least bring up the topic of "unchosen" family responsibility. It's more than that, but that's hard to see here.

CHAPTER 1

Greg and Chris seemed to “get it,” autographed a picture (as if this mall event were a book-signing party) and addressed me as “EFF,” since I was wearing a black and red T-shirt for the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF).

All of this, however, needs to be seen through the lens of my own experience with music. I started piano in third grade, in February 1952, when I wanted and my parents bought a Kimball piano. I was struggling suddenly and falling behind, at least physically, in grade school and not getting along well with the teacher. I don’t know at a conscious level what led me to music, but over a lifetime it would become the “glue that binds.” I developed an ear for the classical repertoire, to the point that by age 16 or so I could recognize most major classical pieces from just the smallest snippet. I had started composing. My first piano teacher (who would pass away suddenly when I was in ninth grade) would insist that music was my life’s calling, and I sometimes believed it. (“If you don’t make music your life’s work...”) She always taught us that music (because it is based on mathematical relationships among the pitches) is a universal language, and that music of a composer (or performer) survives his or her passing, forever. (Female composers like Amy Beach hadn’t quite taken hold yet in the 1950s.)

I can imagine the movie images: private lessons at an upright piano in a dusty basement, an afternoon class listening to old 78s and early LP records, the recitals, the “festivals” where we were “graded” (a “Superior” was the same as an “A”). It was a world, in the 1950s, easier to show than to describe in words.

I would not follow through with a career in music, particularly as a composer and perhaps performer, although in part I wanted to and believe I would have worked hard enough to succeed. The reason for this “failure” becomes an interesting topic generating a lot of discussion, almost the point of the entire site or film. Had I “made it” as a publicly successful artist using the existing system, however, my ego might have been satisfied, and I might have felt more prepared to provide for somebody else (like babies and a family), without giving up myself first.

But, ironically, the WB show *Everwood* bears some inverse relationship to the problem. Gregory Smith plays the prodigy teen pianist Ephram Brown, whose surgeon father has moved the family to Colorado after the tragic accidental death of his wife. Ephram, who is still 16 and is trying to “have a life” rather than “always be right” like his father, gets (probably illegally, according to agent-of-consent laws) initiated into the world of heterosexuality by a 20-year-old Madison, and when Madison gets pregnant, Ephram’s father sends her away and pays for the child, to keep the secret from Ephram. Much of the show has dealt with Ephram’s auditioning for Julliard, but after this blowup with his father, he walks out, and never has his career.

03 - SYZYGY (*musique et jeux*):

My own situation is a bit the reverse, or maybe somewhat the same, depending on how you look at things. A good way to introduce the “problem” is another “image.” One spring Saturday afternoon in 1958, when I was in the ninth grade, I was playing backyard softball two yards down from “The House.” I had actually learned to bat a slow-pitched ball respectably, and our backyards were large! My mother called down that I had earned a “Superior” in this year’s festival. I immediately hit a home run on the

CHAPTER 1

next pitch. At age 14, I had made some progress with my physical athleticism deficit (and I already sensed I had to “pay my dues” this way to be able to do with my life what I wanted), but the other boys, who were mostly three years younger, wondered what she was talking about. I actually had to explain what taking piano was all about. There was, even in our variation of “backyard baseball” and what we called “The League,” some hints as to what teamwork meant, like understanding how to make the force “play at the plate.” It’s significant that the other boys were three grades below me. I was born in July, and had just turned six when I entered first grade, so I might have been younger than average (significant for boys at that age). But the fact that I was barely competitive physically with playmates that much younger says something.

Could I really have made a go of it with a lifelong a career in music and piano? I would have worked hard enough, and believe that I had the innate talent. I did the practicing. Oh, maybe it was boring at first, all the scales and arpeggio. (Hint: C major, with all white ivory keys, is the hardest to play!) But I progressed, as I demonstrated in the festivals.

I quickly developed an ear and memory for classical composition. “We” had an old RCA record player in the basement, and gradually I accumulated some records. By tenth grade, I was familiar with how many romantic symphonies and piano concertos worked on the emotions, often starting in minor and end triumphantly with a “big tune” in major (as with the Rachmaninoff *Second Concerto*, for example). Romantic music, perhaps starting with Beethoven and Schubert, seemed like a technological innovation that could allow people to feel inwardly in their own way without depending so much on others. Maybe not everyone thinks this is for the best.

Inevitably, I thought I could add my own version of emotional mapping, through composition. I wrote two sonatinas at ages 11 and 13; at 16, I wrote a D minor sonata that I thought followed some examples set by Brahms and Rachmaninoff. I entered this sonata and one minuet into contests. (Preparing the scores in pre-computer days was a lot of work; you painstakingly scored them on music staff paper in black ink.) Early in my college years, I wrote a 50-minute sonata that, while a little sketchy, I still think is original enough to make a valid contribution to concert literature if performed professionally. I also have a sketch for a seven-movement choral “song” symphony that I think would actually work (composed mostly in my late 20s).

Once, I had a couple of lessons with a concert pianist named Dr. Hughes over in Northwest Washington, and he thought I was on the edge of having the talent if I worked hard enough, which was a hard commitment for boys to make in the 1950s. He (at 70) knew it.

I did develop likings for other “artistic” things. When I was 11, my cousin and I spent a summer drawing filmstrips, which we called “movies,” and we actually showed them to families and had “Academy Awards.” (I remember a few of my titles, like *The Land of the Bible*, and a couple of horror strips like *Squish* and *Sea Monsters* and a comedy called *Pie Face*.) In school, I liked the sciences, particularly the visual and descriptive nature of chemistry (I would only learn to appreciate the abstraction of physics and mathematics – and the relation to music – later). I also learned to play chess,

CHAPTER 1

and had some basic competence (like developing your pieces and following the simple rules of Fred Reinfield) for the game by high school – don't imagine your King naked!

I lived in a world that seemed rich in its own terms, and at least immediately stable and secure. I didn't have a concept for a "currency" of life, like fiat money in the adult world. In a sense, "grades" in school became the "currency" for me to look at intrinsic worth of people. I did not grasp what it really took to succeed. Teenagers today, at least the most mature teens, do have the advantage of better information as to just what "it's all about" than we did.

For example, even though I enjoyed listening to records, it was a while before I understood what proper record care, given the technology of the times, required. I had sapphire styli replaced with diamonds, had record shops check the needles occasionally (in those days people actually had home "entertainment" devices repaired), and I wanted a stereo with light tracking. My father later resisted my apparent obsession with these "things" (saying "you're married to your records") but probably did not grasp that listening and developing an ear was essential in music. I saw owning a recording (that is, an "instance" in object-oriented technical speech) of a work as "having" (an instance of) the work, and as accomplishing something that, while still a private experience largely speaking, had public significance. Others knew about the record collection. People feel that way about a lot of things, like painting. "Collections held me," I would say to myself.

Ultimately, I was not encouraged to follow music professionally. I think it's important to understand why. (Father said it should be an "avocation" but I could make more money "working for the government.") And this matter of a lost potential career drives all my other political interests.

04 – HIGH SCHOOL IS A WORLD

Life in high school and, for that matter (for me, at least), early college, was a rich experience in its own terms. I grew up during the period of McCarthyism and an exploding Cold War, and the academic environment was sending a message "to get all the math and science you can." Most of my "coming of age" took place between the end of the Korean War and the 1965 escalation in Vietnam, but I was very aware that the academically and scientifically gifted (the nerds, that is), would probably fare much better (and much safer) with respect to the military draft. Academics – math and science – did fit in well in my mind as an extension of music (or maybe generator of it). Conventional "social graces" did not. But I could find my own crowd.

Particularly in my senior year, I did get in with a "good crowd" socially, the Science Honor Society, with the memorable pre-blizzard (December 1960) "initiation" in my own home, followed by the Memorial Day weekend trip to Boston and then Mount Washington, NH, for what amounted to a "senior prom" in a psychological sense.

All of this followed earlier years (particularly in junior high school) where I had been somewhat of a social pariah because of my physical backwardness. So I had developed the idea of the "ideal" man as a young man both "smart" and "strong." The conjunction "and" became mandatory. The teenage Clark Kent of *Smallville* today pretty much sums up what "virtues" a young man needed.

CHAPTER 1

All of that affected my basic outlook. It was important to amount to something as an individual. But I knew even then that some people started out behind in line and never had the opportunity.

Again, there are plenty of “movie” images, some related to “the bod.” As a tween, I went through a period of feeling very modest about my body, and sensitive to the idea that someone could change it, as when “they” put makeup on my hands to perform in the operetta *The Sunbonnet Girl*. (Oh, yes, actors go through transformations all the time. Look at what happened to Ashton Kutcher to star in *Killers*.) Little limerick phrases would ring through my mind, such as my “short-sleeves debut.”

I can remember my piano teacher coaching me that it is mandatory to become a “normal boy,” despite her encouragement of a possible piano and even composition career. I wondered if her advice was self-contradictory.

Two friends from the latest generation have navigated into music and dealt with some of the same issues. Timothy Andres (b. 1985) graduated from Yale (bachelor’s and master’s) and describes his precarious intended career interests as a teen in the notes to his CD album for his mammoth two-piano suite *Shy and Mighty*. They are detailed and worth reading (but buy the album and you’ll have the notes). Andres likes to compose in miniatures rather than large forms, and likes quiet endings for most pieces, inviting the listener to “respond” – somewhat the opposite preference from my own post-romantic outlook. Tudor Domink Maican (b. 1988) had several major works performed (some at the Dumbarton Concerts series in Washington) has studied music and biochemistry at Indiana University.

In my first DADT book, I didn’t cover the brief friendship I had that “lost semester” at William and Mary in 1961 with a student from California who was quite versed in classical music, and had shared my interest in collecting records. He claimed to have composed some symphonies, and actually played a piano reduction of a classical-style piano concerto for me in one of the piano practice rooms at William and Mary. He thought that all “real music” had ended with Beethoven, and claimed that no one should even perform Beethoven until he was 30. His “heart” was with Mozart. I had played one of my early compositions, a classical style “sonatina” (rather like Clementi) for him. When he came to visit me in Arlington (in the middle of a southern snowstorm at the end of January), he claimed to have memorized the piece from one hearing and played it for friends back in California at Christmas break (shortly after my expulsion at the end of November).

Now at this point, I remind “the visitor” that I told my whole story chronologically in my first “Do Ask Do Tell” book, and I won’t reproduce much here; but I’ll refer to the “imagery” of the critical points. Remember how we studied poetry in English class and took tests on it?

That’s right, the first part of your life is “training” to “qualify” for a particular “station in life.” I’m afraid that is how I saw it. It was a “Darwinian” (or “Spencerian”) process. The smart people with good grades were “better” than the dropouts, who wound up getting drafted and be more likely to be sacrificed. This sounds like a downer now, but it did help set up a certain attitude about people and fitting in.

CHAPTER 1

So, imagine how I felt. The world of “competing” to court and protect women and to have and raise babies by them was humiliating. If I could move to a different “dominion” (albeit on the same planet) and do well, and keep a telescope focused on my original home, why shouldn’t I? I wanted nothing to do with that “old world,” at least for a while. I had my own value system.

At this point, I have to say, I break off discussion of the sexual aspects of this – and my whole experience as a gay man, leading to my own “contribution” to ending “don’t ask, don’t tell,” to another chapter. That is, the awakening of the sexual aspect of my own life, *Imajica*-style, perhaps. That leads to another “thread,” but in making a movie, one can jump in and out of various threads (through a virtual “*In Ovo*”) and still present a cohesive argument. Yet in presenting the “intellectual” organization of the argument, one needs the separate threads.

But what I faced is that others were not going to allow me to separate off into my own world, get up on a pedestal, and then kibitz their power struggles with my own opinions as to who owned “virtue” (that is, again, both masculinity and “smarts”). Ironically, I fed their beliefs: masculinity, rather than femininity, represented an achievement; femininity took care of itself. But I was going to have to deal with playing football (at least touch), running the 440 (then the mile), tumbling, and then, yes, wrestling. I got C’s in PE, but the schools didn’t count it in your grade-point average. That’s how it was getting with the Cold War. As a kid, I would get pushed into summer day camp one year, where I would get called “lazybones.” I struggled to ride a bicycle, and to swim (barely dogpaddling, somehow squeaking by in a mandatory swimming course at GW in college). There was no physical explanation given the medical knowledge of the era. There was plenty of coercion, to develop “street smarts” or plain “common sense.”

05 - THE GRAND IMPOSITION (and maybe *La Grande Comedie*)

I got so I enjoyed some of it. I had developed moderate skill in hitting a slow-pitched softball, and took an interest in following major league baseball, especially the losing Senators. Football, I took less interest in, but in those days the Redskins were good some years, and the mechanics of the game started to attract my attention (like the physics of field goals). It certainly catches my attention that medicine has drawn a lot of attention to the long-term effects of football head injuries (which I “bypassed”), to the point that some writers like Malcolm Gladwell say that college football (and then pro football) should cease to exist.

My father preached to me about “learning to work” and “formation of proper habits.” Of course, doing well in school takes some discipline (although it doesn’t take so much mental regimentation as good associational memory), as does the professional workplace. The low-income workplace often is a lot more regimenting (just think about the extremely low-wage jobs in China of the people who make our stuff). It seemed that my father’s exhortations went way beyond what was necessary for school or piano, and had to do with developing real world physical skills required of every man in a community, for the good or survival of the community. I can come up with a whole litany of images here, ranging from my own dress (tying shoes “right,” tucking in shirttails) to the form with which I performed certain manual tasks, where my father’s obsession seemed to be related more to a need to exert and maintain

CHAPTER 1

social authority than actual specific, “rationally based” requirements. (As for tying knots, I chuckled when actor Jesse Tyler Ferguson showed Anderson Cooper how to tie a bow tie by hand; I could never remember all the little mechanical steps!)

But this leads me to one the most important points about the imposition of gender and social conformity on one like me with a less common mix of talents. That is, as Obama’s chosen inauguration pastor Rick Warren says, “It’s not about me.” It’s about a whole community.

Well, rooting for a baseball team like the hapless Senators is an example, however gratuitous, of being part of a community, a shared consciousness or identity. (Yup, I remember that 18-game losing streak in 1959 and, outside a barber shop on a hot late July morning, the *Washington Post* sports page headline “A’s Hop on Pascual Too, 6-1”).

Baseball and softball were interesting in that they mixed team play with individual skill in such a special way. I recall an incident in sixth grade when I didn’t get my “ups” because the boy ahead of me hit into a triple play! Was I better off if I never came up! (Another time, before I had some confidence, I “got out of it” with a walk.) Compare the paradigm to chess, which I would soon take up. (Oh, note well: in football, the defense can score. Not so in baseball. It’s certainly so in chess.)

The real corker, however, is family, and its extensions into a community. And with both family and the surrounding neighborhood, we move from consciousness of our social group to awareness of what each one of us wants to express and contribute “as an individual” and that leads to tricky concepts in defining “the rules of engagement.” (I recall how grade school report cards talked about “progress of the pupil as an individual” and “progress of the pupil as a member of the group.”)

We’ve gotten used to the idea that family responsibility is something you elect by causing a pregnancy. A sizable part of our modern culture sees getting married and having children as an extraneous, private option. But earlier generations understood the family differently, as a community that reaches back in time to ancestors and extends into the future after one is gone. In most societies, one did not have the “luxury” or good fortune of choosing one’s circumstances. People generally grew up with the understanding that they shared responsibility for siblings, especially younger siblings (even though they weren’t “personally responsible” for procreating the siblings, their parents were), and even to be able to step in and help raise siblings’ children (the *Raising Helen* situation).

Responsibility moved out into the community, as young men were expected to be competent and available to protect the community with their physical abilities, such as with military service and often conscription, which occurred “unfairly.” My own experience in the Army (especially Basic Combat Training) provides many skits relevant to this point. These include talks with the recruiter, the mixed responses I got when quizzed about my level of education (indeed, “too much education” – yet during my first hour in the Reception Station I was given a job supervising others stamping plates), the day on KP when I cleaned the grease pit with a toothbrush (just before LBJ’s famous speech about not running again for president in 1968), coaching on the rifle range (affecting my hearing eventually, another “threat” to my music, with a lifelong mild tinnitus in my right ear, a kind of symbolic but useless personal sacrifice), overhearing radio reports about peace talks while on the range, the PCPT (Physical Combat

CHAPTER 1

Proficiency Test), the “sleeping bag” inspections in special training, night infiltration, and the like. Particularly interesting is how I felt my first weekend of “post privileges” and later a weekend pass. (Freedom, again.) The pendulum was swinging, maybe over a pit. (Years later, I would read that some orchestra players lose hearing, too, as part of their “karma.”) When in graduate school, I actually wrote my church and asked about the “morality” of the Vietnam War and how that should affect individual moral compass, given the unequal sacrifice involved. They wrote back that we had to trust our leaders! My friends then, even some in the music world or graduate school, said “We should be there.” If I didn’t step up to duty to share protecting the community, then the risk and personal consequences would pass on to others, who might have to deal with getting others to love them once they were maimed or disfigured. It was a world where pawns were deployed ahead of pieces (like the “Queen-Pawn openings”).

Recently, I looked over some of my grade school report cards, and noted teachers concerned about my need for attention and sometimes depending on others wrongfully. I do remember a habit of compulsively interrupting conversations in class, but I’m not quite sure what on skills I was overly “dependent.” While some of them might have been personal (like, as already noted, tying shoes with “correct” knots that hold), I think they were more like gender-related capacities which supported my being called upon to defend the common good (like eventual military service). I do think that at some point, it could be important to find out if there is a “biological” explanation for my issues, beyond what we could find out with medical technology in the 1960s. This exploration could occur if I delve into the web of medical testing (for example, of my heart arrhythmia, a potent Pandora’s Box that I cannot afford to enter right now).

Perhaps I do misjudge how “elders” in my culture saw things. They were probably concerned about my apparent physical “laziness” and apparent attention deficit, and concerned I that I would not have enough self-discipline or regimentation to hold down a job in adult society. (In the Army on KP, another soldier once asked, “How many jobs have you been fired from?” The answer was zero.) I was even a slow reader and tried taking speed-reading with those mechanical devices that forced the eye to scan quickly. I compensated for my lack of immediate attention with strong associational and mental multi-tasking skills. (Later in my adult life, I would have trouble with the patience it took to win long games in chess tournaments, but my good episodic memory and sense of the game made me a dangerous opponent for much more highly rated players, against whom I often pulled upsets.) But skills in the more “manual” of arts were indeed a fairness issue (otherwise one was depending on others who did dirty work and took risks for him), and could become a survival issue in case of catastrophe or societal breakdown. The old Boy Scout “Be Prepared” motto stands out today, because preparedness and “fairness” are seen as political issues now (with the “fairness” becoming a concern of the far left in the 1960s, the most extreme of which wanted to see Maoist changes that would require everyone to take turns becoming a peasant!) In the 1950s, so soon after the end of WWII and Korea, people saw “dealing with things” more as part of a moral continuum. The military draft, with its deferment system, seemed like the focal point of the moral world in which I grew up, the idea that you live for your family and others before you live for yourself. If you stepped away from that, in the old days, you could be seen as a coward, a nothing. Did that change when Nixon, Ford, and Jimmy Carter, in various steps, took away

CHAPTER 1

the sting of the draft issue? (Carter issued pardons; Ford would have required community service from prior draft evaders.) Should I be judged against the requirements of my own time, instead of today's more pro-individualist values? The basic issues don't go away that easily.

06 – WHO CHANGES YOUR TIRE?

Okay, another visual moment. One day in the spring of 1979, shortly after starting a job in Dallas, I was looking out the window toward Stemmons from the Zale Building when a female consultant asked if I could change a flat tire for her. What, men change tires for women?

I didn't, but maybe that's bad karma. Ten years before, driving back to Ft. Eustis in an old Ford, I had a blowout on I-64 southeast of Richmond. Another soldier in fatigues stopped and helped me put on the spare so I could get to a gas station, open Sunday night (winter – it can actually be cold in Richmond, too) to “buy” my way out. Okay, I couldn't do this in the Mojave Desert, I know. Another time a 1979 Chevette, only two years old, died at a North Dallas intersection. I did use help from other motorists.

Still, in earlier times, people really did change their own oil, and did a lot of other things for themselves that they count on buying as trade services today. You can take this type of thought all the way back to colonial times, when English mercantilism hindered the monetary system and forced even rich colonists to do more for themselves (and that makes a good subject for a test question on a history test – and this lays aside the whole subject of race and slavery). But again, even though we experience emergencies and disasters as exceptions today (and that's changing), earlier generations saw it as an intrinsic part of living.

That's one reason why personal habits seemed so important to my parents. Being forced to live in close quarters with other people, to take them in or be taken in, was just something that happened in a less than perfect world. You might even wind up raising OPC – other people's children, like a sibling's.

As a singleton, I often “outsourced” or rented services – or the availability of service – to cover things I couldn't do for myself. It fit my lifestyle – to rent cars on vacation for unlimited mileage, important especially in western states – and it reassured me to know that help would come (and it had to, at least twice). It may come to be viewed as an individual “abuse” that the environment can't afford in the future. People may have to do more things together again. (Although maybe not so if an infrastructure for electric rentals is sufficient – will the “libertarian” market work for this?)

Because many “chores” were “challenging” to me, I saw being forced to do them as humiliating. That impression roughly corresponded to an attitude where people with lower “worth” or “station in life” did “low work” to support the white collar lives of those who managed them. In a world where I really didn't grasp how society had to work and how precarious our “prosperity” could again become (as elders who had seen war knew), I could indulge an attitude that related the type of work one did with self-worth.

The explosion of the need for eldercare (especially for people with Alzheimer's) during the past decade and a half (ironically, it seems, created by technology, maybe with some unintended social

CHAPTER 1

consequences) is raising the “involuntary family responsibility” question again, with a new dimension: adult children are tested, not just financially, but personally with relationships that as independent adults they would have previously considered unworthy or invalid. Others become part of “one’s family” even when one does not have children. A person in my situation may feel monopolized, as if he were being “assigned” dependents since his own chosen activity did not create any.

When I was working in mainframe information technology (again, another thread jump), I used to think that the worst thing that could happen was to deep-six my career because of my own mistakes. In retirement, and in the current eldercare situation (again, another jump), I’ve learned that this isn’t necessarily so. It can be worse to have your life and your goals yanked away from you, by someone else’s needs – wrongdoing only in a certain perspective, when you didn’t do anything to cause the need, but maybe owe a piece of “communal debt.”

Indeed, the “shared vision” discussed by the “natural family” movement proposed by Allan Carlson and Paul Mero (in their book *The Natural Family*, Spence Publishing Company), is somewhat protective of what otherwise amounts to very unequally shared personal sacrifice, which becomes “just that.” The “natural family” supposes that the family is somewhat of a shared community, where complementarity is expected (not just between husband and wife), and where people are not necessarily judged by the external world’s standard of “personal responsibility.” The “natural family” gives everyone a local value and place, at the risk of some externalized personal freedom and corruption at the top (which often happens with tribalism).

But, I had no interest in progeny. (I cover that more in the next chapter.) I thought I had my own mission within my own lifetime. Yet, that can be yanked away by circumstances beyond my control, meaning I become nothing, merely evaporating (maybe as “Hawking radiation”) and leaving others to ponder their own lack of responsibility. I certainly am aware of the religious implications of this statement. If I don’t think enough of my own constitution to want to pass it on biologically, why should anyone listen to me – that becomes the ultimate existential question. Some of us find other goals confined to our own lifespan (possible in a technological world – true, it could become unsustainable) and find the prospect of having children an unacceptable cost, and, more important, entails unacceptable risk.

I do understand that the nature of family relationships enables a lot of business and sales relationships based on manipulation. I’ve been approached by some opportunities in those areas, and found them unwelcome.

I have developed an understanding of what drives some radicalism: the insistence that everyone be held accountable by one’s own moral principles so one does not have to serve an emotional interest one does not believe, and especially the idea that these principles be constructed so that nobody “gets out of things.” These can get inconsistent; some principles seem to belong to “the common good” rather than to individuals.

In today’s world of individualism, we act as if we expect everyone to pass a “tribunal” (that’s what they called the “rite of passage” in the 1961 freshman class at William and Mary) and prove himself or

CHAPTER 1

herself competitive enough, preferably to continue the human race; but we then have nothing to offer those who don't make it other than social subjugation (or else being left to perish). But, every major religion recognizes that no human is completely on his own, and that a community of people must cultivate interdependence and local self-worth buttressed by complementarity (especially within the family). We wind up projecting the concept to make social contract rules for individual people. It seems that we used have an unwritten rule (or hidden curriculum) saying that, before you gain attention from the world, you are able to have someone depend on you, that your expressions do measurable good for specific people that you are committed to, and that you could answer the unseen sacrifices others have made for you by taking your own share of the risks and dirty work (at the risk of pampering the Maoist idea of perfect justice, perhaps). You pay your dues.

Stable emotional and familial commitments may be harder to achieve in a democracy that purports to value all human life. Why? In a quasi-totalitarian society (say even ancient Rome), it's easy to believe that non-intact people are not "worthy" of emotional commitment from others because they over-consume resources and society cannot afford to support them, and therefore has no use for compassion. Homosexuality is condemned simply because it is "defective," disconnected from reproduction, a biological imperative, and perhaps from taking part socially in intergenerational responsibility. In a democratic society, one seems, through the concept of consent, to maintain the right "not to love," but then the use of expressive rights seems intended to show others up (perhaps as a reaction or retaliation for earlier attacks on oneself); it becomes "the knowledge of good and evil." Homosexuality (I look toward the next chapter), at least in younger men, seems connected to a desire to experience perfection, at least that of others, through upward affiliation, and to be viewed (perhaps not completely correctly) as a refusal to enter complementary emotional relationships. It has gotten connected to the refusal or inability to make promises, not to failing to keep them.

In a few of my "novel" manuscripts, I have proposed that "people like me" wind up in "re-education" academies. Does this sound like Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution? But I grew up with the idea that bringing "everyone down to earth" was important for social stability and security, to prevent a culture from becoming corrupt from within or developing enemies it can't fight off. Certainly this is a specious theory, obviously easy for those who want "power" over others to abuse. But I had to deal with it.

But all of this leads to the final paradox: life cannot simultaneously be perfectly fair *and* free.

07 – CONCLUSION

It's always difficult to get to focus on what you think you will do best, and express yourself with. By high school, I was versatile mentally in science, too – although as an intellectual matter. There was plenty of pressure for boys to go into science – and I thought I was pretty good in chemistry (although clumsy with the lab work already). The year I entered William and Mary, the Berlin Wall went up; in 1962, while I was a patient at National Institutes of Health (as I discussed in Chapter 1 of the first book), the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred. In time, the military draft (for the Vietnam War) with the controversial student deferments would come into play (as discussed in Chapter 2 of the first book). I could

CHAPTER 1

reasonably believe, as I entered William and Mary in the fall of 1961, that it was possible and even desirable for me to pursue both music and science. Others, as I noted, have tried to do this.

Did I lose whatever chance there remained to pursue a musical “career” with the expulsion from William and Mary? Maybe. What matters here, though, is that any such opportunity would have used the existing “system” to perform and get one’s compositions published and performed. It would not have followed the “do it yourself” model of self-promotion now so well-known in the “Internet Age.” I’ll come back to this notion in Chapter 3.

There was ample pressure on me to learn to do all the “manly” things, because other people would need me to do them for the good of the family and community, not so much because I would need them just to make a living. I have an impression that there just wasn’t enough space in my brain (or time to get good at) the practical things like changing a tire or your own oil – and be good at things where, even given the systems of the time, I could excel publicly. Is this what we would call Asperger’s or mild autism spectrum “disorder” today? So, I think, given the moral dilemma that evolved, I should find out. But the medical work, involving extensive heart monitoring at some point and a period of personal disruption, could prove challenging.

There was also pressure to balance my own desire to excel in something with what would be needed in a relationship. After my “second coming” and when I was going to the Ninth Street Center in New York (Chapter 3 in the first book), someone asked me if I would be OK with a relationship in which I “made a home” for someone (I was seen as “feminine subjective” in terms of the “polarities” discussed in Chapter 3) while that person went out and got the glory with his “piano sonata.” (There is no time machine to hook up with today’s “young talent.”) I would say, no: I needed my own voice. I didn’t want to cling to someone. I thought I needed my own public presence and sense of success first. Wouldn’t any interesting partner want this for and from me? Perhaps, not necessarily.

As for my “yielding” (or “yin”) personality, I believed that the emotion I felt when listening to post-romantic music and contemplating the heroes of my world (even at a fantasy level), constituted real “feeling.” One could just stop there, at second base, and let the baseball “bounce over.” (I did get to play Mahler by ear at a chapel organ while in Army Basic!) The world of 60’s Cold War spy novels suggested, to me, that the only thing that mattered was the world of personal “accomplishment”; the emotions involved in building and sustaining a family seemed like an optional afterthought, at most a “private choice.”

Or consider this. I recall, when I was about nine years old, my parents said they were considering adopting a sister for me, about six. But I never heard about this again. But they obviously wanted me to learn “family responsibility” for others **before** I expected to go somewhere on my own.

Being alone and being “together” with someone promised to be an endless cycle, even when I “came out” the “second time.” Because of the way the world had demanded sexual conformity as I came of age, I came to buy the idea that I needed my own independent self first, and it needed a public entry of its own. For years, I thought I would accomplish this “through the system,” that is, “getting published.” Eventually, I would learn that one had to “create the system.”

CHAPTER 1

I had already developed a vivid system of “feeling,” largely from music (perhaps “In the Moonlight”), as an internal experience, before I could actually apply it to people. I was already “who I was” before sexual orientation came into play. It was the “self” that mattered; relational life was an option, an afterthought. The sense of personal expression and intellectual “mission” preceded the affiliating sexual fantasies that would follow (and whose “meaning” would matter so much to some people). That “virtuous selfishness” would sometimes change once I was on my own, but I always needed to keep my own personal Urbana alive. I could never afford to invest all in anyone else. Children or not, the buck would stop with me. Yet, had I been able to make music and related arts my “life work” early through “legitimate” channels (not the Internet self-promotion of this era), I might have become more game for taking care of other people and raising a family of my own – even if the opportunities were more gender-restricted in those days than they are today. Arnold Schoenberg once remarked that in music you could say anything wanted – as a pundit – and get away with it.

08- POST SCRIPT: A NOTE ON THE DOOR

In DADT-I, I had opened with an account of the consequences of a handwritten note on a dormitory room door, for all to see, back in 1961.

One time, in early January 1968, I walked through blowing light snow to my dorm at grad school at the University of Kansas, red-bricked McCollum hall, on top of a 200-foot “mountain” (Oread), and returned to my dorm room, 907, the same room I had occupied since the night I arrived for the first time after the Blizzard of ‘66.

The note read, “He’s done it. On February 22, they’re going to start making him into cannon fodder for the rice paddies in Vietnam.”

Except, I got out of becoming personal ammunition. Too much education. Others, maybe including some “remedial” algebra students I would flunk as an instructor my last semester there, were less fortunate.

