

## **Some musings about New York City, written 2019-03-07, prompted by Eugene Barasch:**

I had an experience with New Yorkers in 1972 in which the artistic director of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center, Jules Irving, showed me around the Vivien Beaumont Theatre so that I could suggest possible solutions to the acoustical problem they were having. When the union house that had the contract for supply and maintenance of that facility heard that I had been given this opportunity, they contacted Jules and told him that if he continued to communicate with me they would 'tar and feather and run ME out of town on a rail' and he apologized and explained that he did not know how they found out but of course he also did not initially tell me that I should not talk to anyone about what we were doing. The reason that house found out was because I called them for a quote for equipment to do the job I was recommending and explained to them that I had reviewed the situation and rather than cooperating or being interested in what I had to offer, they told Jules that they would blackball the Theatre if they continued to involve me at all. Ironically, several decades later, another consultant was brought in and recommended a very similar system which ended up being successfully installed. Because of this experience I decided not to move to New York City, which was a potential career move open to me at that time.

In 1987 the first computerized theatre sound system ever (ours), which was being used at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego to run Sondheim's 'Into the Woods' was so successful that Steve and the entire crew referred to it generically as 'The Richmond System'. But when they wanted to use it on Broadway, the same sound house that dealt with Jules in 1972 prevented it and instead used a different system but they continued to call it 'The Richmond System'. When that system failed miserably blame was heaped on 'The Richmond System' and no one corrected anyone's understanding of what had happened.

In 1989 we were invited to demonstrate our 'Richmond System' at the Audio Engineering Society conference in NYC and the first thing that happened was my Sales Manager's briefcase, which contained our software was stolen by someone at the hotel when he arrived. The next thing was that no taxi would take us to the theatre and we had to walk all our equipment to the theatre where the demo was to take place. When we arrived we discovered that all the repatching of the system in place that would allow us to do the demo properly, which we had requested in detailed drawings would not be done for us, basically making the whole thing pointless. Finally, the same union house that originally threatened me in 1972 was in charge of rehearsals as well as the overall progress of the presentations and they gave us no time for setting up and rehearsing and, despite being told we would be presenting at noon, we were finally given a 5 minute slot at 3:30pm (after some of the the morning presentations had gone for over an hour....) and were basically kicked off the stage in the middle of it.

So that's my experience with NYC and I swore I would never return, although I did again once in 2005 when my way was paid by the US Institute for Theatre Technology, who put me in the smallest hotel room I've ever seen and treated like shit by that hotel.

### **My "Unabridged" memoir follows:**

Some of the stories I know best are really my mother's. I'm not sure if it's because she had such an interesting life, told good stories or simply told them to me over and over again. Many of her stories involved things that happened to me before I was ready to remember them myself. Of course this means that I can now never be sure it's a latent memory of my own or simply her vividly related story taking on a life in my own mind. Certainly the stories that have the most life are ones to which she so kindly provided photographic accompaniment such as 'the first kiss.' This was certainly not my idea nor do I think my friend, Peggy, had much to do with it. It seems to be for the benefit of the camera, actually, since every move and angle was duly recorded on film - something that both endeared me to photographic records and kissing, although I only perfected them both later in life.

Alas, my kissing prowess was not enough to keep Peggy around permanently and we went our separate ways after milking it for all it was worth. Whether the photos were submitted as a screen test, I don't know. But we lived close to Hollywood and there's just as much likelihood as not. Neither of us became famous although I got my start in the theatre as an 11 year old performer in a superb play for a child actor: "The Dark at the Top of the Stairs" But that was far from Hollywood. After moving from Southern California, things picked up but the road was rocky, partly because I was an only child and had no helpful older sibling to guide me nor could I feign bravado with the encouragement of a younger one. Much later, I would decide not to inflict the privilege of being an only child on our first and insist on having a second one. But that was certainly enough!

When I was three, my French godfather, Pierre, sent me a cute little French bicycle which was great for a little tyke on which to scream around the quiet country streets. It was certainly not the macho American style that the big boys were on but it gave me a real head start in the bicycle olympics. Little did I realise that Pierre was in fact much more than just a friend and it emerged in one of my mother's subsequent entertaining stories that he was her Parisian lover before World War II and would have been her husband had not events intervened. No matter: that bike was more manoeuvrable and clearly allowed me to be the sportster of the neighbourhood, much as import cars were starting to run circles around Detroit iron in the 50s and 60s. It was close to the ground, stable without training wheels and gave me tremendous confidence for future cycling adventures that continue today.

In nursery school, I ate graham crackers with Conrad, my current friend of longest standing. There was something vaguely theatrical about that school, which started the chequered careers of so many people in those privileged times in the 1950s. Children of professors and cowboys, future pyromaniacs and eccentrics - all differentiated by their parents' choice to live in an idyllic country setting near one of the most desirable areas in California. And the times certainly strove to be idyllic, probably in denial of the horrors previously visited on the world. Now the two of us still work in theatrical 'industry' - a term much more appropriate than 'business' since it keeps people busy with no particular promise of wealth generation.

The proliferation of television had also begun and our tranquil country setting was not without its influence. We didn't have a TV until I was eight, but that didn't mean I wasn't prepared. I had regular visits to my friend Dale to watch evening shows, of which "Have Gun, Will Travel" was a prime and memorable example. There were specials, too, such as Disney's "The Swamp Fox" - and when I was later introduced to Leslie Nielsen, the last thing he wanted to hear from my lips was that I enjoyed his performance "when I was a kid." Saturday afternoons were enjoyed at Trent's house watching the Mickey Mouse Club. Radio had lots of appeal, too, with Gunsmoke on every week and a standing appointment with my father to listen to it.

But I was primarily a reader, having taught myself how to read comic books by watching my mother's finger as she traced the fascinating words in the bubbles coming from the mouths of Mickey, Donald and their families and friends. In fact, I subscribed to the Donald Duck comic book series for years and knew practically everything about the Duck family and their adventures. In fact, the Ducks featured heavily in a large number of stories closely based on mythology and historical events such as Jason and the Argonauts and the Klondike Gold Rush and much was available to be learned through them. I knew Disney trivia, too. For example, did you know Donald's license plate number is 1313? Did you know that Disneyland's address is 1313 Harbor Boulevard? No? You should because this is all essential information for a true Disneyphile and it greatly impressed a planeload of Disney executives on the way to Miami in 1991. But you won't necessarily get an order from them just on that basis. Nevertheless, Disney participates in such fun when it can such as when they named the three computers that ran Epcot Center when it first opened "Huey, Dewey & Louie."

A friend recently asked me if I felt I had missed anything whilst growing up and I replied that I guessed that missed having a normal childhood. I even went into therapy for a while when I was in University because I realised I had missed adolescence completely. When I was 10 we moved to another town and I basically lost all my friends and tried to start over with a new group of people who already knew each other and I was the outsider....

It didn't really work and I started to do things like act in the local theatre group when I was 11, and start fixing people's TVs and radios when I was 12. I felt shunned by my peers and my parents were completely baffled about what was going on - they really wanted me to be 'normal' but that was impossible. I had a huge crush on a girl who lived in another town and was friends of the kids across the street and I spent a bit of time with her by hanging out with them one summer but it was unbelievably frustrating. I wanted to be an adult but couldn't so decided to just put it off until I was older.

At 11-13 my best friends were adults - first a lady who sold yachts on the wharf in Monterey, then an artist who drew caricatures of people there, then a gay puppeteer who had a little puppet theatre on Cannery Row and finally my best friend - a 45 year old wife of a guy who owned a local boat sales and repair shop, who was somewhat unhappy in her marriage. I learned a lot about life from these adult friends and focused on learning about electronics, engines and other things that interested me. I wrote a diary every day for two years, while I was 11 and 12, and it was an excellent way for me to work out my frustrations and verbalise to myself the difficulties I felt I was having adjusting to adolescence - certainly it was a typical situation and I still have those

diaries. They are quite interesting and enlightening to look at now....

I got a job when I was 15 and then offered a better one at a recording studio and repair shop shortly afterward. I also did sound for a local theatre from the age of 15 to 17-1/2. And had almost no real friends in high school although there were some kids who were in the theatre who were roughly my age, but just a bit too old to be serious with. Had a pretty good time though and went to Europe when I was 17 and discovered how much nicer people were when you could be treated as an adult. Went back to Europe when I was 18 for the summer again and learned even more. Didn't go to the prom or even even a single high school dance. Never went on a single date in high school.

I started to live in university though and began to have a good time, catching up with most of what I missed. But in many respects I still miss not having a normal adolescence.

I was an amateur sound designer at the Community Theatre of the Monterey Peninsula in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, from 1965 through 1967 whose first credited design was for William Gibson's "The Miracle Worker" in January 1965. This, as far as I know was one of the first uses of the term 'Sound Designer' within the theatre world. I built that theatre's first 'sound distribution console' for Miracle Worker with five L-pads and five rotary switches for a total cost of \$25.46 (I kept the receipt...) and later discovered that the Vivien Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Center had a similar, but much more expensive, system installed in the late 60s by Dave Klepper of Klepper Marshall King Associates, who eventually became a good friend.

I was also employed as the repair technician at the ABC Music Store in Monterey, California from January through July, 1965, fixing a vast number of Fender guitar amplifiers in their hundreds of variants. Being an authorised Fender repair facility, we had schematics for all the different models going back to the 1950s, which comprised a metal binder about 1m wide. My most sincere thanks goes to Mike Marotta for trusting me with the reputation of his repair department at the age of 15.

In July 1965, I started working for Meagher Electronics in Monterey, which gave me an opportunity to learn at the bench of my mentor, Jim Meagher, who started the company in 1947 and was always willing to share his knowledge at any time of the day or night, while he was awake. His facility included a recording studio where he had recorded some early demos for Joan Baez and her sister, Mimi Farina and her husband, Richard Farina. Coincidentally, a volunteer fireman from Carmel Valley, acting in Max Frisch's "The Firebugs", attended the motorcycle accident in which Richard died.

Meagher's facility also included a huge, high warehouse space in which literally hundreds of old wooden console radios and phonographs dating back to the 1920s were stacked to the rafters. Jim explained that these had been left by customers who chose not to pick them up instead of paying the repair estimate charges and I certainly hope they became a source for his comfortable retirement. Meagher was also a commercial sound installation company and one of the first Altec Lansing dealers in the country, with catalogues and equipment going back to 1947. He also unsuccessfully attempted to turn a computer data tape recorder into an analog 13 track tape recorder with extremely high wow and flutter.

Once I was 16 and drove, I also did home service calls, repairing everything from Dynakits at the Firestone mansion in Pebble Beach to jukeboxes in a makeshift brothel in Seaside, lugging along a tube caddy that was almost as big as I was - but of course it was very light because it was mostly a vacuum....

Meagher provided the sound system for most of the concerts and live events in the Monterey area, from folk to jazz to Roger Williams and recorded the first gold jazz album, Errol Garner's "Concert by the Sea" in the mid 1950s on a portable mono Ampex 601 tape recorder which remained a prize possession for many years. Much later, in the 1990s, I got to know Errol's brother, Linton Garner, when he was a house pianist and singer at Puccini's Restaurant in Kitsilano.

Meagher also contracted with the Monterey Jazz Festival to provide their sound reinforcement system from the beginning of their existence in 1958 and was extremely conscientious about giving them the best quality sound he could, often using recording quality condenser microphones and custom designed loudspeaker arrays. It was at their 1966 festival that they chose to include a number of groups which could be more properly described as "blues" bands verging on "rock'n'roll" such as Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company. I worked these shows and Janis autographed a blown Altec 802D diaphragm which we had to change during her lung-busting performance.

Meagher also supplied the reinforcement systems for the Big Sur Folk Festivals and assisted Harry McCune Sound from San Francisco, who employed Abe Jacob and John Meyer, who were contracted to provide the sound system for the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, mainly because of their experience in setting up high intensity systems in venues such as the Winterland Ballroom and The Fillmore.

I delivered one of the three valedictory addresses at my high school graduation. Three of us were chosen to share the task by auditioning the top 15 graduates from the over 500 students in the Monterey High School class of 1967. We initially met to see if we could write a joint speech but soon gave up. On the day of the audition, I had forgotten about it and just read an autobiography I had written for English class but went a completely different direction for the actual speech: essentially an anti-war and social tolerance diatribe which didn't go over too well with the audience of largely military families, including my father, who was a "Bird Colonel" in the US Army.

I attended the University of California at Berkeley ("Cal") from 1967 through 1969, majoring first in Engineering, and later in Psychology. I left school ("temporarily") when I was offered my dream job of assistant sound designer at the American Conservatory Theatre (ACT) in San Francisco in 1969. I was promoted to resident Sound Designer in 1970 when Shawn Murphy, who had been filling that role in his spare time, failed to appear for work. I occupied that position at ACT from 1970 through 1972 and in various other theatres in the US and Canada in the early 1970s. My first professional sound design credit was for Shakespeare's "The Tempest" directed by Bill Ball, produced by ACT in the Geary Theatre in 1970. I was a founding member of the "ACT Short People's Club" which met regularly at the bar in the basement of the Geary, alternately at the Curtain Call bar across the street, and whose membership included Shan and Liz Covey and Liz Strong, daughter of the man who invented the "Strong Vocational Interest Blank" -- which appealed to that part of me that studied psychology.

I don't think I operated more shows than the more than 50 performances of 'The Importance of Being Earnest' at the Marines' Memorial Theatre for ACT. This included taking the production on the road, namely to a shareholders' meeting at Almaden Vineyards down the peninsula. Almaden was a corporate sponsor of ACT and so we contributed to their meeting and they paid for us to take to the show there. The setting was spectacular -- with the backdrop of a view over the entire south bay area behind the set. After we struck the show, the cast and crew were treated to a lovely dinner, which of course included some of their best wine. Our table of six were given a bottle of vintage 1936 rose, in a clay (light blocking) bottle and as each one of us sipped the elixir, we looked at each other, amazed, at the delicacy of the most amazing wine any of us had ever tasted. Quite simply it spoiled any other wine, no matter how expensive or 'good' for the rest of my life since I can still even now taste it, the most unbelievably delicious drink in the world. I can even understand the story of a dealer sending back a \$6000 bottle of wine which I heard about in San Francisco many years later. Almaden said it was worth about \$600 but as far as we were concerned it was priceless...

I became responsible for technical design and operation at Aragon Studios in 1970 and supervised the relocation of the original Universal Audio vacuum tube mixing console from United Western Recorders Studio A in Hollywood to Vancouver, Canada. This is the console that was originally installed in 1957 and recorded hundreds of hits by such artists as Bing Crosby, Nat "King" Cole, Frank Sinatra and Ray Charles. The 40 preamplifiers are still installed in that studio, which was renamed Mushroom Studios in the early 1970s and which has hosted a series of hit albums over the years, starting with Heart's "Dreamboat Annie" in 1975 on the resident record label and owner of the studio until 1980, Mushroom Records (not the Australian company but a short lived Vancouver based label). I met Merv Buchanan at Aragon in 1971 where he was a record producer and we are now in 2005 working together again, he as Richmond Sound Design's North American Marketing Development Manager.

I met filmmaker Kris Paterson in 1971 and was field sound recordist, using the Nagra III recorder he owned for this purpose, for two National Film Board of Canada shorts: "Mudflats Living" and "Pleasure Faire". Kris' wife Sally Paterson was the sound editor. I had shared a house in San Francisco with filmmaker Curtis Imrie and knew those people were driven but wasn't quite prepared for Kris or his manic level of intensity nor the concept of being on location at 04:00 and working into the evening till 22:00 in the studio every day.

RSD was started in 1971 as a proprietorship and in 1972 we incorporated and built a custom 12x24 theatre sound console, the Model 1224 for the Stratford Festival of Canada. It was the first company to produce an off-the-shelf theatre sound design console (Model 816) in 1973 and the first off-the-shelf computerized modular theatre sound design control system (Command/Cue) in 1985, based on the Amiga computer. Both were first

installed at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, California.

We manufactured standard mixing desks during the 70s as well and I met one of my best mentors in the process of finding a company to make the front panel work for all these units. Frank T. Coan was a wonderful man who had all sorts of stories about the work he did during WWII making engraved instrument panels for fighters and bombers produced in Canada and England. I was always very pleased to know that we were using an anodised aluminium photo engraving system to produce front panels that were derived from such historic applications.

The first show to use the Command/Cue system was Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods* which, as is commonly done, was premiered far from Broadway then moved there after it had been playing for some time. Ironically, when the show actually moved to Broadway, Masque Sound & Recording was assigned as the official sound designer of record and instead of using a Command/Cue system they used a computerized 'Max' system from Gerr Audio of Toronto, who supplied it free of charge in order to get publicity.

The main problem with this was that in San Diego everyone on the show got used to referring to the computerized system there as the 'Richmond system' (which they were in fact very happy with) and this carried over when they moved to Broadway, even though it was completely different. The Max system was such a huge failure that it got taken off the show very quickly and we did not find out until 1990 that Masque actually seemed to think that it was really a Richmond system that had been a failure, unfortunately. That Masque seemed to tell everyone in New York that our system had been a disaster seems to have had something to do with the lack of acceptance of Command/Cue systems on Broadway during the late 80s.

RSD's corporate offices were co-located at Mushroom Studios until 1999. I received a US Patent for my invention, the "Automatic Cross-fading Circuit" which was also trademarked Auto-Pan, on February 25, 1975 and my daughter Théa was born exactly three years later.

I was in Los Angeles cutting the latest Terry Jacks single "Concrete Sea" at The Mastering Lab and Doug Sax was extremely excited because he had just finished cutting a brand new Carly Simon single and he insisted that it was going to be a gigantic hit so he made us listen to it – of course it was the famous "You're So Vain" about which there is still mystery concerning its subject. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You%27re\\_So\\_Vain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You%27re_So_Vain)

Everyone has a good flying story and I'm no exception. In the late 70s, I got a ride to the Vancouver airport very early because Will was on early shift at the UBC Hospital. I was catching a flight to Toronto that was to leave in over an hour and a half. When I checked in, the desk clerk said 'If you quickly go to such-and-such a gate, you might be able to get on a flight that leaves an hour earlier and you can have breakfast sooner' so I rushed down there (these were definitely the days of considerably less security than now...). When I got there, the lady at the check in desk said 'Oh no! Didn't they get hold of you? The flight to Edmonton has been cancelled.' I said 'but I'm not going there I'm going to Toronto.' And she replied 'Oh... well, in that case, you can sit anywhere because you are the only passenger.'

It turned out that everyone else was only going to Edmonton (which was fogged in) or going from Edmonton to Toronto and the plane (which was a 747..) had to get to Toronto because it was needed in the fleet for more flights there. Sooooo... I sat in first class of course and had two breakfasts, a fruit platter and some champagne, as I was waited on by the 7 stewardesses who were coming back from Hawaii.... As the plane taxied onto the runway, the pilot came on the mic and announced "Good morning sir. Please ensure your seatbelt is attached.... etc." which was quite hilarious. I was also asked if there was anything I was interested in about the plane and was given a tour of the cockpit and the instruments and navigation equipment – boy these days really were before they were more aware of security!

I've got a lot more flying stories such as flying backwards in a Vickers Viscount propjet across the Atlantic from New York to London for 13 hours in 1967 or getting bumped up to a First Class bed lounge on a San Francisco to Sydney flight in 1995 and then finding out that I needed a visa or when I arrived in Osaka in 1995 and Japanese customs were absolutely convinced I had marijuana in my suitcase and would not let me leave until I showed them where it was – that was an interesting standoff for a while! And I even some train stories such as the narrow gauge coal burning train running over the mountains and through numerous tunnels to Dubrovnik in the middle of the night with everyone breathing through their shirts or the time we were in a derailment in Brussels in the mid 70s - but the above was the best in my opinion.

I met Amy Irving at ACT because she was a Conservatory student there and when I was in New York City in

September 1972 displaying the Model 1224 at the Audio Engineering Society (AES) convention at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, I was asked by her father, Jules Irving, who was then the Artistic Director of the Repertory Theatre at Lincoln Center to consult with them about the serious acoustical problems they were experiencing in their performance space, the Vivian Beaumont Theatre.

After reviewing these problems in the theatre, word got to Richie Fitzgerald whose company was the contractor through IATSE Local 1 for all sound services there. Richie phoned Jules and told him he would cause a labor walkout if they continued to talk to me and I called him to confirm these were indeed his proposed actions. He confirmed this and said his objective was to make sure "I would never work in this town again."

Ironically, the only time I ever tried to do anything substantial in NYC after that was for a demonstration of the Command/Cue system at the Minskoff Theatre in connection with the 1989 AES Convention. This was a failure because Richie was in charge of the day's activities in that theatre and he allowed other speakers to take up most of the presentation time allotted to those later in the program and by cutting my presentation short after I discovered that the patches we had requested several months before enabling the audience to hear our show had not been done. This, after the show files were stolen by our NYC hotel concierge ("All goods left at owner's risk") and we couldn't get a cab to take us and our equipment 3 blocks to the theatre. Sheesh! Needless to say, I have not attempted to personally do anything else there since then but Richie and I are still on cordial terms.

My wife and I purchased Mushroom Studios in 1980 and embarked on a major redevelopment of the facility the following year. RSD built a custom console which incorporated the original tube preamps as well as state-of-the-art solid state preamps, and I used to refer to the control room as "RSD's Field Test Station" since it was the test bed for most of our high quality analog circuit designs in the 1980s and 1990s.

Many more hit albums were recorded at Mushroom by artists from Loverboy to Skinny Puppy and Jane Siberry. I successfully adapted the studio to accommodate over 50 musicians in semi-isolated concert format to do film scores for dozens of feature films and movies of the week from Chuck Norris to a redo of The Dirty Dozen and received an award for the film score of Top Gun. In the mid to late 1980s I got to know many film producers, composers and arrangers who still persisted in writing music for real live musicians for companies such as MGM.

Mushroom was sold to John Wozniak of the group Marcy Playground in 1999. At that time RSD moved its offices and warehouse to Richmond, British Columbia, a suburb of Vancouver, thereby truly obtaining its very own "domain"!

I was the first United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) Sound Design Commissioner, serving from 1980 through 1988 and on the USITT Board of Directors from 1989 through 1991. I was the sound design editor for USITT's quarterly publication, Theatre Design & Technology in the late 1980s and its show control editor in the early 1990s. During those years there was a tremendous undercurrent within USITT to keep sound system engineering (and its attendant focus on commercial sound products) and the 'art' of sound design quite separate and I was viewed by some as being in a position of a conflict of interest because I owned a company that marketed largely to the theatre industry. This is a prime reason I stepped down from the Commissionership in 1988.

And this came to a head in Wichita in which an entire parallel workshop, sound display and exhibit area and several days of panels all held in a completely separate room from the rest of the conference (and exhibit area where all 'non-sound' equipment was displayed). This was the first time that such a massive effort to involve sound exhibitors was done and I think it was also the last. At any rate, the Commission planned this for a year in advance, contacting all 'sound' manufacturers they could think of - especially ones who had never shown at USITT - and offered them very special deals to display in this special sound exhibit and to participate in the parallel sound conference which was being organized and a vast number of manufacturers participated, which was very encouraging. USITT even paid for shipping extraordinary amounts of equipment to the demos, as I recall...

I fondly remember one of the speakers at a presentation responding to the question "what should we use for playback of sound effects and music and to move sounds around?": "Well I think you should use one of Charlie Richmond's (pointing to me) sound systems. I think they should have been here at this conference because they make exactly what you are looking for." What he didn't know was that we WERE there. We had not been told about this special event nor had we been asked to do any presentations or demonstrations and we had paid full regular exhibit price for a booth in the regular 'non-sound' area. So did Stage Research as I recall and I think

they were a bit choked about this too, since our booths were practically empty during the whole conference because the program made great efforts to steer sound people to the special sound exhibits only. Of course, we discovered this as soon as we arrived to set up but naturally it was 'too late to do anything' including moving us to the special sound area or even putting a note in the programs.

I was all for leaving the conference then and there but my sales manager talked me into staying. But we never exhibited again at USITT. I had to extract an apology from Rick but no refund, credit, apology, offer to let us display the next year at a reduced cost or any sort of consideration ever came from USITT itself, when they could have so easily made a minimal effort in this regard. And it wasn't that they were unaware of the situation -- they were fully aware but explained that they couldn't do anything like that because it would be seen as favoritism toward us. This attitude simply reinforced the fact that I wanted to have nothing more to do with this organisation and my feeling is that they still owe me more than just a couple of plaques which are nice in old age but don't help me sell any more to the one industry which I have always had the fondest feelings and emotions for. Yes, I dwell in the past but in Wichita, USITT blew it and they have not rectified the situation as far as I'm concerned. Everyone keeps saying that I have to put this behind me and move on but the subsequent avenues that USITT has chosen have simply compounded the problem!

The Command/Cue system installed at the Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular show in the Disney-MGM Studios at Walt Disney World in 1989 showed the theme park industry how the features of a computerized theatre sound design system can be effectively utilized to operate as a live show control system, which is what it was used for in that attraction and many others at theme parks around the world. For a while, we installed so many systems in Orlando, I spent a significant part of each year there.

I headed the USITT MIDI Forum on their Callboard Network in 1990, which included developers and designers from the theatre sound and lighting industry from around the world. This Forum created the MIDI Show Control (MSC) standard between January and September, 1990, but USITT still does not fully recognize that they help create this world standard. MSC is an open, industry wide communications protocol through which all types of show devices may easily interact. MSC was ratified by the MIDI Manufacturers Association (MMA) in January, 1991, and the Japan MIDI Standards Committee (JMISC) later that year, becoming a part of the standard MIDI specification in August, 1991. The first show to fully utilize the MSC specification was the Magic Kingdom Parade at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom in September, 1991.

In 1994, Commodore Computers went bankrupt and the Amiga became an orphan. Lots of existing Command/Cue customers started to become nervous that their systems would cease to have support but we continued to install new systems using reconditioned computers purchased on the web all the way through 2000. There were some users, though, who were talked into replacing them with competitive systems such as LCS, which ironically were also based on a computer that was destined to become an orphan (the BeBox, partially created by ex-Amigans and ex-Macoids).

It was only partly satisfying to receive a call in 1996 from Michael Roth, the composer at South Coast Repertory after their Command/Cue system that had been working quite nicely since 1987 got replaced by Garth Hemphill just before he left the company. Michael reported that the new LCS system had been extremely difficult to get used to, was much slower than ours, seemed to crash all the time and wanted to know what we could do to get our system reinstalled.

The flip side of this was that BC Keller, who took over from Garth called us and asked if we would buy back our 9 year old system for the same price they paid for it! Needless to say, we were somewhat insulted and this has been a sore point between BC and us until we had a very public discussion about it on the Theatre-Sound list and BC explained that it was someone else's idea. One saving grace from all this is that Garth ended up being a dealer of ours and installed a number of AudioBoxes and LCS now seems to be getting out of the theatre sound business since they have been purchased by Helen and John Meyer.

The USITT inducted me as a Fellow of the Institute in 1995 and presented me with a Distinguished Achievement Award in Sound Design in 2000. I started the YahooGroups Show-Control group in 2000, taking over from a mailing list of the same name which was operated on a private server since 1997, and this has been a great pleasure since it is a wonderful forum full of generous people.

Now an empty nester, I split my time between Vancouver, where our kids are, and London and Europe generally, where we do a significant amount of business and where I enjoy the history, art, culture, theatre and

music.

**From the MySpace blog:**

**Sunday, June 18, 2006**

### **Cooking disorders**

Not eating disorders. Never really had a problem with that. Well, other than not really being too fussy about stuff. The only things I can think of that I really don't like are uncooked red and green peppers and Marmite. And I'm finally sort of getting a taste for the peppers because they seem to be put into everything these days. I now eat anything and everything and lots of it. Less than when I was younger but I still have a great appetite. But I inherited my mother's total disinterest in cooking.

My mother taught me how to make one thing from scratch: cakes. The one thing you really don't need to know how to do these days. I used to bake cakes when I was a kid and my mother frequently encouraged me to do it. That's because she had an interminable sweet tooth. These days, I'm into chocolate big time so I kinda know what that's like. It must be something that happens later in life. But she never liked to cook.

Her main cookbook was called "The Way to a Man's Heart" and she got it in the 30s when she realised that was the only way to really catch the guys. Or, rather, keep them. Except for Pierre and Hennessey, I suspect. My father was easy to please in that department, though. Sear a slab of meat, throw a few frozen veggies together. Or not. Maybe just a baked potato. That was supper for him. Every night. I never heard him complain. I quickly learned that all her cookbooks and the recipes she religiously collected were for one purpose only: entertaining house guests in the manner to which they were accustomed.

The quality and variety of foodstuffs around our place instantly expanded by 1000% whenever we had friends over or guests staying. It was amazing, really. There were a whole host of great dishes my mother knew how to prepare in loving and perfect fashion. And her fave casserole was always the same: baked sweet potato covered with a thick layer of marshmallows - melted and with a brown crust finished by the broiler. Mmmmm tasty! And really sweet of course! Not everything she cooked was sweet but most of it was. And most of the ingredients she used other than steaks were frozen.

She had to keep a large variety of frozen foods on hand for emergencies - and my father's meals, other than his steaks. Or, actually, even his steaks. My father died of heart failure. The doctor kept telling him to avoid salty foods but he thought he was. The stuff he ate was just about the saltiest stuff I've ever tasted - especially the soup at his fave lunch hour greasy spoon. My mother entered a competition held by Safeway to promote their frozen foods. She wrote a poem that sang the praises of frozen food so eloquently and so thoroughly that she won the main prize hands down. Or, it may not have been the main prize but it sure was what she wanted. She won a huge, upright, full size freezer that was just perfect for her frozen food addiction.

Most of the time, though, the fridge - and the house - was devoid of fresh foods. Except bananas. Bananas have a lot of sugar, actually, even though they aren't that sweet. As my mother prepared the meals of my father and myself (we were the only other ones) she ate her 'dinner' which always consisted of bananas and cottage cheese. Large curd, eating straight out of the container. A whole container for dinner. Every night. She ended up with Alzheimers and I've sort of avoided cottage cheese ever since. But I do eat my bananas regularly. Oops.

Now the story of what I used to have for dinner back then is a slightly complicated one. I used to enjoy lunch more since I usually ate it in the school cafeteria or out somewhere since I never hung around the house during the day. Those provided balanced meals. Dinner was, well, weird. And what I had varied slightly over the years but was always weird. Except when we had guests and I ate what everyone else did. This apparent contradiction never seemed to register on my mother. I just didn't care any more. It was less of a hassle not to care - or get into anything with these weirdos that were my parents.

See, when I was really young, like up to three but after I started eating solid 'regular' food my mother got used to get all flipped out about the fact that my guts didn't seem to handle it all that well. I won't go into detail here because it's a really messy story but my mother consulted her brother, the junior Doctor Joe I wrote about in a previous blog - the one who got married on Mount Rainier and believed in genetic design even though he was a



Quaker and conscientious objector during WWII. He was 500 miles away from us and didn't have the option of actually seeing or talking to me or checking me over but that didn't prevent him from offering a diagnosis long distance.

And his diagnosis was that I had coeliac disease. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coeliac\\_disease](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coeliac_disease) Check it out if you can stomach it, so to speak. And he prescribed a diet for me of nothing but raw egg yolk (yep, separated from the white, or albumen) and lean, raw, hamburger meat. And that's what I ate morning, noon and night for years. Except when I managed to get myself invited to eat at a friend's house. Eating Italian at Adrienne's (see previous blog) was heaven, obviously, and I really wasn't fazed by any difference in response to that food. It was my mother who was bothered by the whole thing. I couldn't figure out why she didn't just leave me in peace to do my thing but then that would have required way too much discussion and I would have lost, as usual.

Later on, when Doctor Joe came to visit, or we visited him one time, he discovered that I was still being given this diet and that it seemed to be working. But he figured I could move up now to cooked food since I was older. So I started eating cooked egg yolks for breakfast and cooked hamburger patties for dinner. I was fortunately still on my own for lunch whenever possible. Now this doesn't mean cooked eggs - only the yolks. And it doesn't mean I graduated to hamburgers. Nope. Every night I had three cooked hamburger patties on a plate. No buns, no ketchup, no relish, no mustard. Nothing else. It was easier to just do it. But this diet sure didn't engender a great culinary appreciation of the finer things in life.

Obviously, when I left home - and I'm convinced that I skipped second grade just to make sure I could do that one year earlier - I ate quite normally and have not suffered from doing so. Well, there is the occasional time when my stomach gets upset with rich or spicy food but I love it way too much to avoid it. And I never get a pang for the old days. In fact, those old days may have a lot to account for. It always seems amazing to me that I could have possibly grown up normal with such a weird diet and not been hopelessly stunted. Hmmm.. well, I guess this is proof I'm not normal though. And, well, I am stunted but not hopelessly.

One final addendum to this whole experience occurred in Paris, when I was staying with my godfather, Pierre, who was my mother's lover before WWII (but that's another story). I had this mad crush on Martine, a lovely and beautiful Parisienne and I took her on a date when we were both 18. It was one of the very few proper dates I ever had. I took her to a fancy restaurant on the Isle de la Cite and then to the Comedie Francaise to see *La Malade Imaginaire* - very appropriate in retrospect!

We ordered our meals and I attempted to be as sophisticated as possible, eschewing assistance in understanding French food, which was reasonably foreign to me at that point. After I ordered Steak Tartare and the waiter left, Martine leaned over and asked me quietly if I knew what that was. I said I really didn't. She explained it was lean, raw ground round with a raw egg yolk plonked in the middle. I laughed uncontrollably and she got extremely concerned. Then I explained how I had grown up living on just that. She was impressed. I didn't score, though. She was an only child who lived with older, extremely protective parents whom I had to firmly convince I was a really nice guy before they let her out with me.

Unfortunately, she died in an automobile accident a year later and I wrote an extremely sincere and heartfelt letter of sympathy to her parents. Her death was the greatest loss to them of course, and it was to me as well, since I still had a huge place in my heart for her - she was just lovely.

**Monday, June 19, 2006**

### **My mother, the Sal Bug - by request!**

OK! this is something I hoped would happen. Requests. I've got such a friggin jumble of memories to choose from it's always nice to know what people might be interested in. And in this case, something I said in the previous blog made The Future Ex Mrs. Paul Robinson ask for a blog about my mother and my godfather and I'm only too pleased to oblige!

But their entanglement is long and involved and originates with the nature of my bizarre mother - otherwise known as "The Black Sheep of the Family." So, by necessity I have to start the whole story with her and it may actually take a while to get to the point where she meets my godfather. But, we can only begin and see where it takes us. Fortunately, she used to tell me stories from her childhood - and her illustrious past - constantly so I

have them embedded in my brain. Isn't that special? Yes, well, you'll see.

Her name was Alice and the sibling she was closest to was her brother, Joe, the doctor who prescribed raw meat for me. He was one year older and I think he was a perv. I don't mean he tried to molest me or anything - he was into women. He was one year older than my mother. My mother was a bit of a wild one in high school, as was he. Hmmm.... I have her diary from those years - and her high school yearbook. Her name was Sally from a very young age because Joe couldn't pronounce Alice and the nickname stuck. When the family was being really cute, she was "Sal Bug" - dunno if it was because she rolled herself into a little ball though...

She graduated in 1925 which was prime for wild times. She was a flapper - sort of. I have a lot of pix of her and her friends, looking, um, about as racy as you could back then and still be 'respectable.' Of course the diary wasn't private and people didn't say much incriminating in yearbooks either, but you can certainly get the idea of what might have been 'up' with her. If you read a previous blog, you might remember this is the lady who told me when I was a kid that big dicks were where it was really at. OK, then!

Armed with this knowledge - possibly gained from her brother Joe (who I have it on good authority was well endowed, even though short in stature - obviously a result of well engineered genetics) - she left the confines of parochial Tacoma and went to the University of Washington in Seattle. This was just far enough that she was able to release herself from the daily observance of family and their friends and she used it to her best advantage. Some kids go wild when they leave home but my mother went kinda crazy. This was not unknown for the 20s really, even though the straight laced 50s tried to do a full blown coverup.

She met a guy there named Ben Sanders (I give his full name here partly because I have found very little information about him and would like to know more, if someone googles this and knows anything) and soon shackled up with him in a little love nest. She was planning to be a teacher and wanted to learn as much as possible I guess. Now this guy Ben was a pretty hot number. I've seen some pics that managed to escape the shredder and he was tall dark and handsome with a smarmy little smile on his moosh. I think I might have liked him. He probably did the mind fuck quite well. He had a big dick. My mother was short and stacked. They made a nice looking couple.

They lived together for over three years and were getting ready to graduate so they started thinking about the future. I'm pretty sure the family had cottoned on to what was going on now and there was probably some pressure to get married. I'm not sure what Ben thought of this but suspect he wasn't actually that thrilled. I suspect Sally probably thought it was ok but, being the official Black Sheep of the Family might have been a bit concerned about losing her status and becoming a goody-goody.

I have a pic or two of their wedding. My mother kept them because it was a good shot of her bridesmaids, sisters, family and others she still liked. She wrote all over the back of them what a shit old Ben was though. She just wanted to make sure everyone understood that. We do now. Anyway, her family was a pretty prominent one in Tacoma and they definitely did this wedding up right! It was a very big affair. Major effort. Big punch bowls and lots of guests. Writeup in the social columns. I even grew up with the monogrammed silverware and what had survived of the dishes after she threw at the cad. "S" it said on all of them - for Sanders of course. She said it was for the Shit that he was.

Anyway, they settled down to a life of wedded bliss while she planned where to go for her masters and teaching certificate. While she planned this out, he figured out who he was going to screw next, apparently. Some guys just don't take to the married life very easily and it seems he felt kind of hemmed in. I bet he actually did it before they got married and she just hadn't caught him yet.

Or maybe they had an agreement like my wife and I do and he had just kept it all sort of separate. But I don't think so. She probably didn't take being a Black Sheep quite that far - but one can't make that assumption entirely. After all, when I brought my first serious girl friend, Marty, home Sally wanted to know if we were sleeping together and if it was ok. Damn! Those were the kinds of questions I really didn't want to have to answer and the main reason I had avoided bringing girl friends home before then...

So anyway, Ben did something really serious that violated the agreement they had - if they had one. Or maybe, as so often happens, once they got married they just forgot to agree on what's supposed to happen next. I just can't really imagine that, after over three years of living together, Sally didn't actually know what kind of guy he was. I fully suspect she, like so many other women do, expected him to change his ways now that he was

married. He, I suspect, may not have known those expectations - possibly because they didn't discuss it. I really can't imagine my mother not telling him though since she tended to talk first and reflect later most of the time.

Anyhoo... Ben screwed up big time and she dumped him. I have the marriage certificate and the divorce decree. I think they're both signed by the same guy. It didn't last very long - a few months. Sheesh. So now Sally not only needed to decide where to go to grad school, she wanted it to be far away from the scene of the crime(s). She decided it would be Pomona College, a long way away down near Los Angeles.

So she went down there and got a degree that allowed her to teach French, Spanish and English primarily. She was linguistically inclined and a pretty damn good teacher as well. But her accent was terrible! So bad, in fact that she always used to readily acknowledge that she would never speak the foreign languages she taught since she didn't want the kids to emulate her at all. She had someone else do that - or pronunciation records and, later, tape recordings. Good thing, too, since I've heard her speak French and Spanish and it wasn't pretty. She did speak English, however, and not too badly.

After she finished she got a few different jobs, some temporary, some permanent, but never got tenure that I know of till many years later. She met Bette, the mother of Sally her goddaughter, the subject of a previous blog here, when she was teaching at Marlborough School for Girls and they became super fast friends. In more ways than one. The two of them were magnets and attracted guys, especially ones who liked to ride horses, which became one of Sally's greatest pasttime passion and sailing, which didn't. But I have tons of pix of the two of them riding with dozens of different guys and sailing with a few as well.

But none of those guys were good enough for Sally. Hennessey was the one with the big, um, sailboat. And he was a fantastic guy. But he came up short in other departments, mainly health, and that other thing you might have guessed about, too. Plus he was a mother's boy and lived with his, looking after her in her poor health as well. I think he may actually have had a little problem in the passion department since Sally always used to go on about how they never really got it on too well. He definitely did have poor health and died relatively young. But he was definitely a very nice guy. A nice guy who didn't finish last though.

In the meantime, Bette found the love of her live, Lew, and eventually had a couple of kids - many years after they got married. I know they had their problems too, since they didn't last too long. But my mother just didn't really have much luck and wasn't doing all that well in the job department either, having to go to some very small towns to find work. She did seem to be popular with the kids. Perhaps it was some of the stuff she had them learn to become really familiar with the language. I dunno though.

But after a while, in the mid 30s, she wanted to take a break and go on a long trip to try to forget all of the hard times she was having, change the scene entirely and experience some new adventures. She taught French so she thought it would be cool to go to France. So she traveled across the country and sailed to Le Havre, arriving in Europe during some very tumultuous times. Once she arrived in Paris, she fell in love with it, as many do. And before long, she met my godfather Pierre. Of course he wasn't my godfather at that point.

And here I will leave the story until tomorrow, probably, unless someone gets me sidetracked with another urgent request to fill in some blank or other that I created in an earlier blog...

Postscript:

I did actually have someone google the comment I have on a picture in my 4000+ online picture gallery by entering the phrase that was on the back of an identical photo he had in his collection. You can imagine the surprise he had when the exact same photo appeared on the web of his long lost grandfather from the other side of the family. Each branch thought the other was the Black Sheep branch. It's still complicated. Future blog....

**Tuesday, June 20, 2006**

### **Sal Bug meets the Godfather**

I've been looking forward to writing this one, because it's one of my very favourite stories... My mother Sally met the wonderful Pierre in Paris in 1937 or so. He was living on the rive gauche in a the area populated by so many

of those famous artists of the past, in a small flat. He wasn't really anything special except he had a pretty fancy name: Pierre Lajugie de la Renaudie.

His family was a very old one that traced its history back several centuries and had the kind of name that was despised by the Revolution. It wasn't that he didn't support the concept of deposing the king and creating a democracy but he was very proud that his family was noble and managed to survive with their name intact. That, in fact, was a pretty amazing thing in itself. But it didn't buy any real extra respect in the 20th century - it was primarily a novelty.

Yep, it was certainly interesting and a nice talking point. As was the fact that his family had been protestants for many years as well. And this made him even more attractive to Sally, whose family were not only protestants but missionaries to boot. Not that she was really that religious, being the Black Sheep. He was a dark and handsome fellow, although short.

But he walked fast - incredibly fast - and few could keep up with him as he rushed around the narrow streets with Sally in tow, showing her all his favourite places and hideouts. She moved into his small garret with him not too long after they met and they had a cosy little love nest there. She soon forgot about Ben. After all, he was a rare breed. A true romantic French lover, full of passion, with a real beret and mustache with ends that curled up.

They lived a carefree bohemian lifestyle oblivious to the dangers growing around them as Hitler's power increased. And of course her family were fairly happy she was out of sight if not exactly out of mind. But his family was none too pleased about his being shackled up with an American hussy, either. And as war became inevitable, Sally & Pierre realised it would be necessary for them to part but hoped it would be temporary and that the war would soon be over. They parted in tears when the war began since Pierre felt an obligation to join the French army and fight for what he believed in. They promised to write each other constantly.

And they did write but none of Pierre's letters remain. Nor Sally's. For quite a long time they wrote each other religiously and the relationship flourished. But after a few months into the ill fated defense of the French border, Pierre was captured and sent to a prisoner of war camp in Bavaria. As a prisoner, Pierre was only allowed to communicate with his immediate family and of course Sally did not qualify. Pierre continued to write letters to Sally which he enclosed with those he wrote to his family.

But when he got no response from Sally, he then started to write his messages to her parenthetically within his letters to his family. But he still received no answers from Sally. He suspected her letters were being censored or removed so he asked his parents if they were passing them along and they said she had not written anything. He despaired and became extremely depressed.

Meanwhile, Sally stopped receiving Pierre's letters suddenly. There was no explanation at all. The last one was from the front by the German border and then there was nothing. No explanation, no obituary and nothing from his family. She wrote to his family and got no response - but that wasn't completely unexpected since she knew they strongly disapproved of their relationship on several levels.

But what was really happening was that every letter she wrote to them was simply discarded and they never told Pierre she had written. And of course they never passed along anything he wrote to her. They had engaged in a very successful and concerted effort to get Pierre to believe Sally had lost interest and that Pierre had simply disappeared. I have no idea if the family ever felt guilty about this but certainly hope they did.

After the war, when Pierre was released and returned home, his family continued with the charade and never let on what had actually happened so Pierre didn't go through the agony of writing yet another letter and attempted to put his destroyed life back together again. And of course Sally hadn't heard anything for about five years and really had assumed Pierre was long gone.

Then, in 1947, a couple of women who were partners in a drugstore in Claremont and good friends of Sally's introduced her to a really nice guy who rented a room from them, at the back of the store. This guy was a US army Colonel and had been in Europe during the war, in the Ordnance department, supplying the troops. Bruce had been married before the war also and his wife had divorced him while he was over there. Her maiden name was Louise Schorman and I wouldn't mind having someone find this name in a google search, either, since I know just as little about him as I do about Ben right now. They were married in Bradford, Pennsylvania, their

home town.

He had an affair with a Swiss woman when he was told his wife had divorced him - or at least I think that was afterward. Maybe that's what partly caused the divorce but I'm really not too sure. It probably was but it's not the official story, of course. At any rate, here he was in Claremont, single, divorced and in his 40s. And he met Sally, who was 38. Two of the innumerable people whose lives had been completely ripped apart by the war. Wars have a lot to account for, but they never will.

They were both on the rebound and their clocks were ticking like mad. They fell in love within a month of meeting. They told each other of their previous lives and Sally explained that there was a remote possibility that Pierre was still around. My father (because that is who this man was) asked her to marry him but he was not going to be happy unless he knew Pierre was truly out of the way. So the two of them wrote a registered letter to Pierre, ensuring it could only get delivered to him and no one else.

This registered letter informed Pierre that Bruce was asking for her hand in marriage and wanted to let him know that if he had any intentions in that direction that he'd better speak up fast. The letter headed off to post war France - a country in huge disarray and with thousands if not millions of people still trying to find lost relatives and friends. The process of sending letters that were intended for very specific recipients was a well established one at that time and proof of identity before handing them over was taken very seriously.

After numerous false turns and attempts to get the letter returned and refused, it finally found its way to Pierre. Many months later, in fact. And when Pierre received it, he was shocked. It explained that she had stopped receiving his letters suddenly and never got any response from his family. She assumed he was dead and if she got no response to this letter would take it as a confirmation of the worst and she would marry Bruce.

After Pierre recovered, he immediately sent a telegram to Claremont. In it he explained he had just received Sally's letter and would be coming there as soon as possible. He booked the trip the moment he heard. He was going to claim her as his own. The telegram arrived in Claremont in the middle of wedding preparations and Sally sent another by return. But Pierre came anyway. He sailed across the Atlantic and took the train to Claremont, arriving just in time for the wedding.

Pierre met Bruce and they became friends with a most intimate commonality - a woman they both loved. They realised the situation was really out of their control at that point. Sally and Pierre had not seen each other for eight years and a lot of things had happened. It was going to take time to get back in touch, regardless.

It was both a sad and a very happy time for everyone. Most of all, Bruce and Sally were extremely happy to have found each other and fallen in love - and get married. Everyone was happy Pierre was alive and accounted for, even if things had worked so horribly against him - and of course everyone acknowledged that it was Pierre's old fashioned, stuck in the past family that had really caused the worst problem aside from the war itself.

And if Pierre had actually managed to bring Sally back with him his family would probably disown him. If he stayed in California, they would definitely do that. So the overall decisions were all somewhat logical if not exactly optimum. Pierre stayed there for a couple of weeks and returned to France, saying little to his disinterested family about his sudden departure. There was little he would have been able to say that they were interested in.

When I was born, Pierre was asked by both my parents if he would agree to be my godfather and he readily agreed. My mother was almost 41 when I was born and she was extremely lucky to have an uneventful pregnancy and a normal child. Well, one out of two, anyway. She had a caesarian section. My father was 45 and we were of very different eras and generations. Our relationship was not the smoothest but at least it provided the stuff of many interesting blogs.

Pierre eventually married a wonderful lady named Odette and he went into the bicycle business. He sent me a cute little French bike for my second birthday which I loved to scream around on and there are a couple of profile pics here of me with it. I eventually caught up with Pierre and Odette when I was 17 and am still in touch with Odette who is in a rest home there. Pierre died 20 years ago. But that's the subject of future blogs....

Fabrice

Hello,

My name is Lajugie de la Renaudie Fabrice... How amazing life is !!! thank you internet !!!..

Your story seems to be right according my family...

Pierre was a cousin of my father whom first name is Pierre. Even if I was too young to know Pierre (1937 not my father) Odette and Pierre (Dead in 1977) when I was 7 years old, I found your story so lovely

In certain sense you could became one of my cousin if war was not ...

BR

fabrice

Posted by Fabrice on Thursday, August 09, 2007 - 6:55 AM

Bruce Bloggie

I fully agree that the internet is a wonderful thing also and hope we can correspond further on this.... Actually, Pierre did not die till 1985 or 86 and as far as I know Odette is still living in a nursing home in Paris. Thank you!!

Posted by Bruce Bloggie on Thursday, August 09, 2007 - 9:00 AM

### **Friday, June 12, 2020 – Sally & Pierre update**

When my father died in February 1978, my mother was alone in their house with Alzheimers for a couple of days so she packed up a bunch of photos and postcards she had been saving from the Paris months and mailed them to a cousin in Michigan who she thought would be interested in them. She told me this when I arrived to look after her and move her to a care home in Claremont, California. But when the cousin did not receive them, I filed a missing item report with the USPO and they were never found.

Fast forward to May 14, 2020, and a lovely woman emailed me:

I came across this pdf online: <http://www.richmondsounddesign.com/pdf/unabridged.pdf> and I have no idea who wrote it or where it came from but I actually have a series of postcards that I think are from this person's Mother from a trip to France and I thought maybe he would be interested in having them. My grandma must've picked them up at a garage sale in Monterey at some point. Anyway, it's all a case of weird online coincidence so if you happen to know who to pass this e-mail onto please do!

Many thanks!  
Elaine

Needless to say I was amazed and excited to hear this and we corresponded further. Elaine elaborated:

Charlie,  
I have had these postcards for years! My aunt was getting rid of them and I'm sure my grandma, who liked to pick through garage sales in Monterey, had found them interesting and bought them who knows where. Unfortunately this small stack of postcards is all I have.  
I found them again yesterday when I was going through an old box in my garage. I had cherished them when I was younger--they were very romantic and I speak french so this postcard I've attached I loved because it was very Casablanca-esque...

So today I decided to find Sally and Pierre and figure out if they ever reunited. I didn't find anything except just before I was going to quit your memoir popped up and there was a section on your mother. Voila  
-Elaine

And I have now received them and transcribe them below. My mother wrote post cards every day on this trip to Paris, which apparently began on or before July 8 and concluded around mid August, 1938. There were originally at least 61 cards, which she numbered after they were returned to her from the addressees, as requested. There are a number of them missing but I now have most of them as well as a card (#61) with British postage which was posted on the Queen Mary as she travelled back from Southampton but postmarked August 22, 1938, in New York City. There is also a card to Pierre she posted from Mexico in October 1941 while she was working as a wartime censor that was returned as undeliverable. The cards follow below:

**Card #2, July 8, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co. (her mother & family), photo of Paris \_ Notre Dame**

"Took in this yesterday; today church de Madeleine, also Tuileries gardens – talked to youngsters sailing boats there! More fun. My French holds up fine. Also saw Musée de Cluny. Such wonders! Also saw Napoleon's tomb in des Invalides. Most beautiful spectacle possible! My companions are crowding in too much & I intend to re-visit all these things after they go. How can people spend 1 week here & think they have seen Paris? It's impossible. Tonight the men have gone to a risque Eng. play in Eng., by Oscar Wilde. I don't care to spend money on Eng. speaking in Paris. Need to rest & write cards. Think of you all & of Daddy constantly. Dr. Diller says the same things – makes same remarks as Daddy. All the French howl at his poor pronunciation. Dr. Diller's in "Who's Who" Love Sally.

**Card #3, July 9, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Perspective sur la Cité**

I want every card saved for me to collect!! Please send them the rounds & have relatives, people return them! Je n'écris jamais à Andee, à Auntie, à Martie. Ce matin nous avons fait petite visite seulement au Louvre, où nous avons vu la vraie Mona Lisa et des autres portraits merveilleux aussi des statues. Après le déjeuner nous trois sommes allés à Versailles avec d'autres touristes. Quel palais magnifique! J'étais enchantée. Et les jardins formalistes! Oh, superbes! J'aimais mieux les arbres si grands, et les lacs artificiel, de l'herbe si verte en terrain carré. M. le docteur (Dr. Diller) est comme notre père – il aime faire des plaisanteries de même sorte, et il explique la chose en même façon. Il prétend être stupide dans les affaires de monnaies française. Je n'ai jamais rit si beaucoup. Amour – Sally

**Card #4, July 10(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Pont Neuf et Tribunal de Commerce**

La première lettre de ma mère est arrivée hier! Aussi une lettre de Verda. C'est tout jusqu'à maintenant. Aujourd'hui nous avons passé toute la journée à Fontainebleau! Dans un autobus avec d'autres personnes. Le guide a parlé français d'abord, ensuite l'anglais, et puis l'allemand pour les touristes des trois classes! Nous avons donné à manger aux "carps" (poisson) dans le lac du palais de François 1er. Quels meubles! Quelles peintures aux murs! 15 sorts de bois forment les planchers et les plafonds. Nous y avons vu le trône de Napoléon. J'ai très sommeil! M. Lias et moi, nous marchons tous les soirs lentement sur le Boulevard de Clichy devant le Moulin Rouge. Bonne nuit – Sally

**Card #6, July 11, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Pont Alexandre III \_ Petit Palais**

Ce matin nous sommes allés à une cathédrale Russe (Catholique) – c'était très intéressant. Nous avons visité les jardins et le musée de Luxembourg et aussi le musée de Carnavalet. Eh bien-ce qui est le meilleur c'est la Comédie Française où nous avons vu une comédie nommée "Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie" – très, très charmante. Exquise! Quelles couleurs! Quels costumes! Et les scènes qui se changent si vite. Je l'adore. Demain matin, Dr. Diller et M. Lias partent pour Londres et je serai seule dans cet hôtel placide. Je changerais l'hôtel peut-être. Nous verrons. Gardez avec soin, toutes les cartes postales! Toute l'amour – Sally

**Card #7, July 12(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Avenue de l'Opera**

Ce matin, les deux messieurs sont partis pour Londres et je suis toute seule jusqu'à l'arrivée de mon amie du bateau Aquitania, Agnes Keefe, qui arrivera dans quelques jours. Aujourd'hui j'ai dormi plus longtemps qu'ordinaire. Je suis très fatiguée maintenant, ce soir, aussi parce que j'ai marché à l'autre côté de la Seine pour

chercher un autre hôtel plus près des édifices et des musées que je désire revisiter. J'ai trouvée l'hôtel du Pas-de-Calais, Rue des Sts. Pères, ou j'aurai une chambre avec de l'eau (pas toilette), et deux repas le jour, pour 50f. (\$1.50) par jour. C'est bien, n'est-ce pas? Je n'ai en qu'une lettre d Tacoma! Continuez la même adresse: Am. Express. Amour – Sally.

**Card #8, July ?, 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, photo of Cathédrale de Chartres**

Auntie dear – Isn't Chartres wonderful? I can't get over its beauty. Coming down to earth after my trip there, I have peeked into every dime store in this huge city, just for fun, going on Metro from one quarter of town to another. Visiting the cemeteries this week. Love – Sally

**Card #9, July 13(?), 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, photo of PARIS – Place de la Bastille et la Colonne de Juillet**

Auntie dear – Be sure that Mother sends you all my cards (in letters she sends herself to you) because they tell you everything. Oh dear – can you read my French? Anyway, please return all cards so I can save the views of Paris. I love it! Am at a nice hotel where I get wonderful dinner & breakfast, for \$1.50 per day with room included. Hotel du Pas-de-Calais, on left bank. The 2 Pghers have left & I am wandering around alone now. Walk & walk & walk. Louvre tomorrow. I don't go out after dark till my girl cabin-mate arrives here tomorrow from London. Love – Sally

**Card #?, July 14?, 1938, to Mr. & Mrs. Peter Lewis, photo of Paris \_ Panorama sur la Seine**

Dearest B & P – Looks as if I'll have to break down & write a letter one of these days – just to you! There's so much to say. I love the street scenes – you would, too. Spend hours in the museums, cathedrals, & stretching my neck at monuments & statues, but most of all I enjoy what I see & hear every day on the streets & in the parks. More fun! Be patient – I hope to write you at length. Can't wait till I get back because I'll want you to talk then. See? Paris is all that anyone ever said it was. Love – Sally

**Card #13, July 15, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ la Tour Eiffel**

Walked all around and under this today, & for miles over to Bois de Boulogne. Stopped at every monument, big building, statue & park. Holiday today – saw military parade, more colorful than ours, variety of uniforms; horses – lovely! Most elaborate fireworks tonight that I every hope to see. Puts our U.S. Ones to shame. Young married couples, dressed exactly alike as to colors & materials, riding on tandems on traffic & in park. I counted 30 couples. Each man & woman wears plain gold wedding ring. A youngish Frenchman made friends with me & was much amused at my halting lingo. Soon he was making love – in public! I called a truce & he understood. More fun! Will tell you more in Sept. Love – Sally

**Card #?, July 15?, 1938, to Mr. & Mrs. Peter Lewis, photo of PARIS – Le Sacre Coeur**

Dear B & P – Yesterday (holiday) on a crowded street, a youngish Frenchman annexed me & was so highly amused at my attempts to speak good French (knowing no Eng. himself) that we both got to laughing. Had drinks & as with so many Parisians, he insisted on making love to me. I nearly died & tried to explain that we wait till dark in U.S. Not he. I never had so much fun. Smacko! Right on a bridge in traffic, when I wasn't even looking at him! I am making lists of all I see that's different from U.S. If Peter can't get dope for stories after I see you two on a talking jag, to recount this adventurous trip he's not the author I've been telling people he is! Walking my legs off, looking my eyes silly, so can't write letters. See you last of Aug. Love – Sally

**Card #14, July 15, 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, photo of PARIS – La Madeleine**

Auntie Dear – Still having a grand time. Walking my legs off! Can't bear not to walk – afraid I'll miss things. I'm keeping a record of every day & all I see that's different from U.S. Saw July 14" fireworks last night with 2 American elderly ladies in next room. They are nice to me. Miss Keefe, Mich. French teacher, my cabin-mate on Aquitania, arrived yesterday from London so I'll be doing things with her now. She's older & has been here before. I am safe & healthy & very happy. Wish you were here. Expect to join Grants here July 29. How are you? Best love, always – Sally

**Card #15, July 16(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Perspective sur le Louvre**



Riding busses is fun now but Agnes & I often get on wrong, or are going in the wrong direction. We laugh so hard. Took subway tonight for first time. Very interesting. Cleaner & neater than in N.Y. Went to Musée Grévin today – saw all the wax figures depicting history, political persons & comical ones. More fun! Looked so real. I loved it. Window shopping. Feet still tired. Agnes did my hair up like French girl – piled up in back. Right smart. Will get a hat to fit it, maybe & come home that way! Love – Sally

**Card #16, July 16(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Panorama sur la Seine**

Spent a.m. In the Louvre again. Agnes Keefe, cabin-mate on Aquitania called. Just in from London. Tonight we met at her hotel & saw part of parade (still celebrating July 14). Went to street dance in front of Comédie Française, between two love illuminated fountains. Orchestra never stopped playing. More fun dancing! Met young Polish student attending commercial school here. Speaks a few Eng. words. Agnes & I speak only French when we're out so the men ask me to dance & get fooled when they hear me speak a few sentences, then they know the truth! Danced with 3 good dancers but the Polish lad wouldn't give many a chance. His French is excellent. Love – Sally

**Card #17, July 17(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Colonne Vendôme**

Finally riding busses now – stockings are wearing out in the feet & a toe bleeding on each foot! Danced so hard last night & walked all thru a cemetery today with the Polish lad. He takes me for 22! He is 20!! Very sweet chap, & polite as anything. Saw tombs of many famous men, walked thru Sorbonne. Tonight Agnes & I went “slumming” in a clever café better than “Moulin Rouge” - floor show, etc. The Polish boy's name is Zdzislaw L. (Louis) Drbout, and he doesn't go by Louis, either. He corrects my French accent & asks me how to say things in Eng. Very entertaining. We walk some more Monday. So I rest the feet tomorrow. Love – Sally

**Card #18, July 19, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Bassin des Tuileries**

This is the place where I like to talk to the youngsters sailing boats. Yesterday I walked with Zdzislaw (! Polish lad) to Parc Morceau – delightful spot; then to bldg left over from last year's exposition – too technical (all sciences) to mean much, but wonderful demonstrations & slides, etc. In p.m. Went with Zdzislaw to a grand dancing place full of foreigners from all over; few real Parisians there. Got up a 5a.m. To see Les Halles = market street where everyone sells fresh produce for Paris for each day – most fascinating. Letter from home – 3” one. Love – Sally

**Card #25, July 25, 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, photo of PARIS – Les Invalides**

Auntie dear – Am still enjoying Paris to the fullest. It is superb! Have even been places where Americans usually don't know enough to go. Went boating on the Seine near Friel Yacht Club sail boats. Went to des Obliettes where young French people gather nightly to sing old French folk songs. Have interesting discussions on European situation. A young Polish lad, going home today, sees no solution except war; thinks history will always repeat itself & world never get better. Says he won't go to war but wishes he'd never been born! Love – Sally

**Card #26, July 28(?), 1938, to Mr. & Mrs. C. L. Workman, photo of LOGUIVY. – Un coin du Port**

Am camping for 2 weeks with a very nice French girl who has a little auto. The weather is bad, intermittent rain, but we are having a grand time and I am speaking much French (at last). She has all the equipment for camping & we are most congenial. P. Is working again = new job (better) & I'm giving him a rest from me, but I miss him awfully. We are swimming, etc. Have been sailing near Paris, on 2 week ends. Went to border of Germany. Love, Sally.

**Card #38, August 4, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of PARIS – Le Panthéon**

Dear Family – Leaving Tours today after visiting Chateaux, castles, getting to St. Malo & Mt. St. Michel. Writing this in train depot while standing up. There should be a lot of mail awaiting me this week end. Saw a country funeral procession. Saw Paris church wedding on way out. So interesting. Towns have good indicating map on public square for visitors & tourists. Good idea for America. People pay 1 franc to go out to train platform to say hello or goodbye to friends or relatives. We are playing “Beaver” scoring like (??) Love - Sally

**Card #41, August 5, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of PARIS. - La Place de l'Etoile et l'Arc de Triomphe**

Dearest Family – Am at famous St. Malo – regular summer resort now for British & French. Going to Mt. St. Michel today. Back to Paris to see Mil & Gene Sat. p.m. Now more now – Love, Sally

**Card #42, August 10(?), 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, photo of PARIS – Vue vers la Conciergerie**

Auntie, dear – your good letter warmed my heart. You are so wonderful to me! Didn't we have a grand time in Chautauqua? I'll never forget it – never. "War clouds" don't seem to be any worse now than at any other time. These people are marvelous with their lack of alarming conversation. I go to Strasbourg in Alsace next week end, then a 10 day trip through No. & N.E. of France. I love my trips. Won't write till after these 2. Love – Sally.

**Card #43, August 6, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of PARIS. - Panorama des Huit Ponts**

Dear Family – Back from St. Malo which was full of Eng. & French tourists. Looked just like our beach resorts. We went further off farther along coast. I loved it. Saw Grants tonight in their swanky hotel, full of Americans. We all 3 had dinner together. They are weary & saw nothing worth \$56 in Switzerland. I'm helping Mil shop tomorrow. In p.m. We 3 plan to go to opera – Rheingold(sp?) I am sleepy. Good-night & love to all, Sally.

**Card #44, August 7, 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, photo of Paris – Hôtel Continental. - Cour d'Honneur**

Auntie dear – Your nice letter came today. You are so thoughtful. Went to St. Malo & near there, at Paimpol, I rode with a friend in Mr. Joliot-Curie's car, with himself driving!! You know who he is, of course – Nobel Prize winner. I was so thrilled. Will write more in a letter home, soon, which will be relayed to you. I am still writing only cards dear. Too much to see. This one I picked up free – pay no attention to picture. I prefer to stay in Paris. Going to opera with Grants tonight - "Das Rheingold" I'm not going to Eng. with them, sorry. Love – Sally

**Card #46, August 7(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Notre Dame**

At Paimpol, I rode with Pierre in Mr. Joliet-Curie's auto! With himself! He is uncle of Pierre's best friend and room-mate. I was so excited. He's the famous husband of Curie's daughter, you know. Went shopping with Grants a.m. & had lunch. Acted as interpreter for her while she ordered a hat made. I ordered one too! Not like hers. We 3 are going to opera tonight: Wagner's "Das Rheingold". So glad. Grants leave tomorrow p.m. Will explain when I see you, why I'm not going also, to Eng. with them. Hope to see the Eng. teacher (man, N.J.) who was on Aquitania. But fear he leaves tomorrow also. Mail today from Mother. Good! Love – Sally

**Card #47, August 5, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Notre Dame**

Rested most of yesterday till dinner with Pierre, then to a small legitimate theatre when he had 2 free seats to a play written & produced by a friend of his. Home to bed at 12:30 p.m. Waiting to get in touch with Grants today – I know their hotel but time of arrival is uncertain. Why isn't there a position for Pierre in U.S.? He'd go over big with fond mommas & papas of Webb School, for instance. He could handle French or Lit. or Hist. but hasn't right degrees for public schools. Has been salesman for a Czecho. rubber co. He longs to go to U.S. Before war starts here but hasn't the money for trip, & can't go without job awaiting him. He was ardent boy schooler & is Protestant. Love – Sally

**Card #48, August 7(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris. - Hôtel Continental. - Petite Salle des Fêtes – Rez-de-Chausée**

Went shopping with Grants almost all day; had nap. The Grants are mostly buying gifts all thru their trip instead of sightseeing. They saw some of the things I have already seen & love. They leave tonight. Did I tell you that young interne friend of Pierre's took us to French hospital for dinner on Sunday? Guess I'm the first American girl who's done that! No so white & shiny clean as our U.S. Hospitals. Interesting. Love – Sally

**Card #49, August 8, 1938, to Mr. Edwin Van Goens, photo of PARIS. - La Conciergerie**

Dear Van – Back from week's trip into Brittany. Hope to write you a long letter tomorrow. The coast along the

North was picturesque and lovely. St. Malo was picturesque and lovely. St. Malo has become a resort for Eng. & French tourists during the months of July & Aug. Am in another hotel now, near one of the former ones. This is cheapest yet, but service & cleanliness not quite so good. More quiet, tho. You'd approve of that – what? More soon – Yours, Sally

**Card #50, August 9, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ L'Opera**

Tell Auntie that everyone here expects war sometime, but no French speak of it. They only wait & see. To alarms – no immediate dangers. I have seen nothing of active preparations for saving the population. No one knows when but no immediate fears. I got her letter. Paris is still normal & happy. I see or hear none of the contents of newspaper article she sent & I go all over Paris continually among the native haunts. How can I leave here? I adore it, with Pierre. He wants to leave France & longs to find job in U.S.! His Eng. accent is sweet; he knows his history as no one I've ever known & lit. as well. He sings me songs & recites in poetry; reads to me often. He's 28 & is a baron with tiny income. If only this could go on forever. I have learned that such things can't go on lasting. A private boys' school would love to have him on faculty. What about Webb? Oh help somebody. Such companionship I've never known except with Joe & this is plus that. Love – Sally

**Card #51, August 10, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of Paris \_ Jardin des Tuileries**

Dear Family – I've never had so much fun with anyone ever, as I do with Pierre. So, of course, I haven't been so happy for 5 years. I feel as I did as a child. It's good to be alive. But what will I do Aug. 17" when I have to leave! Well – he takes me to all the cheap, cute places in Paris to eat & shows me old streets & bldgs. I would never find alone. Went to museum & he knows all the history so explained details. Yesterday we went to Bois de Boulogne thru all the rose gardens & park grounds of the Bagatelle when Eng's sovereigns were entertained one day. To bed early last p.m. for a change. Agnes is untidy in the room but I don't even care! Love to all – Sally

**Card #52, August 12, 1938, to Mr. Edwin Van Goens, photo of VERSAILLES Le Palais – Chambre de la Reine**

Dear Van – Please save this card for me & all others I send now. Went today to Pantheon, saw tombs in crypt = famous people. Climbed 425 steps to top of tower overlooking city. Visited famous church; went thru Algerian mosque & had mint tea & cakes in its patio tea room, to Morocco music. Lots of atmosphere. Much thunder & lightning for several hours. Read most of a modern French novel. Had dinner with young French couple in real Parisian home. So interesting. No more letters from Paris – will write on boat & send airmail from N.Y. See you very soon after these cards arrive to you. Sally

**Card #54, August 11(?), 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of VERSAILLES Le Palais – Galerie des glaces**

Dear Family – This is the very last I shall write from Paris, because I leave day after tomorrow. Probably this will go to the U.S. On my boat, with me ("Queen Mary"). She has just made her record run. Had dinner in Chinese restaurant with Pierre – only this is Indo-China, France's colony! Not like ours. Also had German food in another restaurant. Went through Catacombs of Paris, saw an American movie with French sub-titles. Now going to country – Chantilly. I'll never forget this trip. You have no idea. Love – Sally

**Card #55, August 11(?), 1938, to Miss Verda Miller, photo of VERSAILLES Façade du Palais**

Dear Verda: I'll never forget this summer. For many reasons! But you have traveled and you know. This is my last written line from Paris. "Queen Mary" has just made her record run & is now ready to carry me back to U.S. Went through Catacombs of Paris – bones & skulls piled high. Went to Algerian mosque for a tour & to Indo-China restaurant. Oh Verda I could stay & stay & stay here. Must come down to earth soon. Oh no you must come with me one day, some summer, or come alone. Adventure awaits if you do. Please save this card for me – will you? Love – Sally

**Card #56(a), August 11, 1938, to Mr. Edwin Van Goens, photo of VERSAILLES Le Palais – Chambre de Louis XIV**

Dear Van – Please save this card for me. I shall write you a long letter on the "Queen Mary" & mail it airmail from N.Y. to you. But this is my very last from Paris which I have loved from the start. The ship has just made her

record run & is waiting to take me back to U.S. Went thru Catacombs Sat. & saw bones & skulls piled high. Also had dinner in an Indo-China restaurant & tea in an Algerian mosque: France's colonies represented. See you soon – Be good. Sally

**Card #56(b), August 12, 1938, to Mrs. J. F. Griggs & Co., photo of VERSAILLES Le Palais – Galerie des batailles**

Dear Family – Be sure to save this card & all others now, after they “go the rounds.” Today went thru Pantheon – famous tombs in crypt, climbed 425 steps to top of tower. Went into St. Etienne church. Beautiful. Went thru Algerian mosque – fascinating. Had tea (mint) in its tea room and foreign cakes – Moroccan music. Thunder & lightning for hours. Read most of a French novel (modern). Had dinner with Pierre at home of one of his friends, with another young couple (French, of course). Pierre took me to all these places today! Do you wonder I hate to leave? Arrive N.Y. Mon. a.m. and I will continue after few hours. Love – Sally

**Card #57, August 11, 1938, to Mr. & Mrs. Robert Durbin, photo of MONT SAINT-MICHEL**

Dear E. & R. - I'll see you almost as soon as this reaches you. Can hardly wait. But I am sorry I have only one more week here. I'm so happy & without a care in the world. It's really more fun being a Latin for a while, than an Anglo-Saxon! I eat what the French eat, where they eat, see their movies, & do what they do, only my clothes, hats & face show that I am a Saxon after all! I can't believe that this is ending so soon. School? There aren't such things, are there? Love – Sally

**Card #60, August 14, 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, photo of CATHEDRAL DE CHARTRES**

Dear Auntie – Have received dandy letters from you. Thank you loads. Am sending only cards as you suggested. Finally visited this magnificent cathedral as you see! Spent 2 hours in it & could have spent more. No wonder you recommended it. Still more to see. Wonder what date Franks will be in Pgh. Will I miss them? Vista school starts Sept. 11 so I must leave East Sept. 5 latest. Love – Sally

**Card #61, August 22, 1938, to Miss Martha B. Griggs, picture of Queen Mary**

Dearest Auntie – Our last day on board, perfect weather. Only one rough day & night = corkscrew motion. Even our stewardess was ill. Bun not Sally! I did stay flat in bed since deck was closed (too wet & windy). Nice church service on board today. I hated to leave Europe. Am lazy about returning to work! Still have 3 days on train & as many by auto to Claremont. Love – Sally

**Card posted 18 June 1941 to M. Pierre Lajugie de la Renaudie, returned undeliverable to Sally Griggs 25 October 1941**

Je viens de recevoir les 25 mots en anglais (de Christiane) permis par le Comité International de la Croix-Rouge, qui disent que vous vivez! Vous et France kel sont prisonniers. Savez-vous ma joie après plus d'une année de silence entière?! Toujours j'ai cru que vous vivez....Christiane n'a pas dit si vous m'aimez encore autant que je vous aime toujours ou si vous voulez que je garde l'espoir et que j'attende la fin de cette guerre-ci pour vous revoir. Comment savoir! J'avoue que la foi en moi ne se fatiguera jamais si (ou quand) je n'ai qu'un mot de vous!! Est-ce possible! J'attends...mon coeur me frappe.. Je passe l'été au Mexique. Votre dévouée, Sally  
Encore et toujours la même.

**Wednesday, June 21, 2006**

**Juvenile scientific experiments**

When I entered kindergarten I learned very quickly that, to have real fun, you had to learn to be a prankster. Before I got there, I had subscribed to Donald Duck comics and got a new comic book every month. This is essentially how I learned to read at the age of three. I was so desperate to find out the adventures of Donald and his friends that I couldn't wait to have it read to me. Donald himself was a prat but his weirdo friends were somewhat more instructive. Much later, when I got to know a lot of people who worked at Disney, I discovered that I was the real expert on the Disney characters and knew all sorts of trivia that they hadn't a clue about.

For example, did you know Donald's license number is 1313? Do you know why? It's because the address of Disneyland is 1313 Harbor Blvd. Put that in your pipe, suckers! Anyway, my favourite character was Gyro Gearloose. This guy was actually incredibly dangerous and that's why they dumped him later on. He doesn't seem to appear in any reissues because they would brand him a terrorist now. He was my hero and I learned all sorts of amazing shit from Gyro - like how to build robots and make stuff that spies on people and how to get machines to do your homework for you. This was not what America wanted their kids to be taught.

So I had an incredible Gearloose complex. It was like a really evil Rube Goldberg - complicated ideas that actually worked and did nasty stuff. But I didn't have a lot of resources out there in Carmel Valley. Hell, even the blacksmith had to come to town to put shoes on the horses. No hardware store. Definitely no electronics store. The electronics store in the medium city got to know who I was as soon as I moved there at the age of 10 though! When I used to call them up on the phone, they would say stuff like, "no we don't have any call for black powder, maam". But I digress.

So I tried to be a junior Gyro and was moderately successful. Only somewhat dangerous but a pretty good study. My first prank was, as I say, in kindergarten. The teacher, a pretty hot babe actually - which is partly why I wanted to do this, had a very cute ass and sat in this beat up old leather seated chair when she read stories to us. The seat had a few cracks and splits in it where you could place something without it being seen too easily. While she was out of the classroom for a moment I decided I would demonstrate to the class how you could put a pin in there pointing up and she would sit on it and get pricked in the bum by it. I was obviously quite advanced in this direction. Freud would be proud.

So the whole class watched me carefully place the pin so it was sticking right up at whatever sat in the chair. Teach came in and sat down. The whole class was holding its breath and couldn't concentrate on the story because they were waiting for the cry of pain. A few kids giggled. The teacher wondered what was happening. Nothing. She finished the story and when she stood up and moved away a few of us cruised over to the chair surreptitiously to check out the pin. It was lying down. OK, so my first experiment was a failure. Back to the drawing board!

Somewhat later, I decided to try something that wasn't exactly a prank. In fact, I really figured I would change my ways and do someone a great big favour. Walt, who lived across the street from us, had this pretty cool little old tractor that he ploughed his field with. There's a picture in the profile pics of him with me sitting in front of him on this machine. I was really into machines. Still am, actually. So my neighbour friend Dale, who was nice but a bit dim was over visiting and we were bored so we decided to cross over to Walt's and check out his tractor.

We played 'drive the tractor' and shit for a while and then we decided it was getting low on fuel because we had been 'driving' it for such a long time and doing lots of ploughing. I spied some bottles with some liquid in them sitting on the ground nearby and figured that's where he kept his gasoline. I was going to show Dale what a smart guy I was and would refuel the tractor. There were a few of these gallon jugs there and I figured I'd demonstrate how you filled the tank till it was at the top of the pipe and you had to be very careful not to overfill it.

Well, damn if that old tractor didn't take every single drop of fuel in all those gallon jugs. And to top it off, the filler pipe never even got close to being full. But after a while, the gasoline started leaking out of the engine slowly. Shit! I didn't really get it. Maybe his tractor was actually broken and we shouldn't have filled it up after all.

After we pondered this situation, I climbed down from the bonnet of the tractor where I had poured the fuel into the open pipe that was sticking straight up into the air and strangely had no cap on it. I made a note to tell Walt he should really get a cap for that or someone might come along and pour stuff into it that shouldn't go in there, but I never did get around to that before noticing that was where the exhaust came out.

In fourth grade, I had a good friend named Scott who was really good in math and science. His dad was a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey and I figured he was just as smart. Except his intelligence was all theoretical and he didn't have all the practical experience that I did. I was so much more worldly. For example, the teacher was out of the classroom for a little while - funny how these things always seem to happen at those times - and the whole class seemed to be discussing electricity. Of course I was the absolute expert on that.

I explained to them how electricity needed two connections to work and unless you connected to both of them, nothing would happen. This sort of went against what most of the kids had been taught since they figured you just needed to stay clear period. And Scott was particularly curious about this 'two pronged' phenomenon. So I said to him that he could try it himself. Just get a big paperclip and try it. So he did.

First, I said, you stick the paperclip in one hole of the wall socket and nothing will happen. Then you pull it out and stick it in the other hole all by itself and nothing will happen. Then you bend it so each end goes into a separate hole and the paperclip will heat up like an electric heater, proving what I am saying. Oh yeah, if you don't want to get a shock, hold the paperclip with a folded over piece of paper.

So he followed instructions perfectly. The whole class was gathered round to watch this amazing phenomenon. When he stuck both ends of the paperclip into the socket this gigantic almighty explosion happened that blew poor old Scott right into the front row of viewers. His piece of paper was charred and smoking. His paperclip no longer existed and the wall socket was completely black and partly melted. The lights went out.

The teacher reappeared very soon after that. The main fuse to the whole school blew and we were admonished that we should never ever do that again. Surprisingly, I was not really punished since it was actually Scott that had done the deed. Yet another lesson learned, obviously, and since then I've always tried to get others to do my dirty work for me. Obviously the bad dirty work, not the good dirty work!

But I wasn't really that evil because there was just one more dirty deed I did during that Carmel Valley era. My intense interest in steam engines (I used to love watching the steam engines get turned around on the turntable in Pacific Grove) meant that when I was eight my main Christmas present was a model stationary steam engine. This was a pretty cool unit that actually worked using solid fuel pellets that you put in a tray and set alight. I had this concept that I could make it run on solar power.

So I ordered a large plastic fresnel lens from the Edmunds Scientific catalog and glued it to a wood frame which I attached to the engine's base so that it focused right down onto a mirror that reflected the heat and light back up into the inside of the boiler chamber, directing it right on the underside of the boiler. It was a neat concept that didn't work. In fact it really didn't get very hot at all. But I entered it into the county science fair and exhibited it there, in Salinas. The judges were very clever and asked me lots of good questions.

But one question I hadn't actually thought through and it took me by surprise. They asked me if it worked. I stammered and punted. Coughing slightly I said that I didn't think the sun was hot enough around there but if I brought it to where it was really hot enough, I was sure it would work. I knew the jig was up. I didn't even get a mention, nor did I deserve one for fudging that so badly. Oh, well! I'm sure it would work now, what with global warming and all!

For the really good pranks though, I had to wait till I was an adult and outside the supervision of those who knew I could be serious trouble. Oh yeah, I got my fingers caught in closing car doors cause I liked to fiddle with those little push button switches that made the interior lights go on and off and figure out how the catches worked but I eventually learned not to do that any more....

**Thursday, June 22, 2006**

### **The Puppet Master**

When I was 10, we moved from Carmel Valley to Monterey where I discovered a whole new world full of interesting new people and a far greater variety of public access to businesses, events and activities. John Steinbeck wrote about Monterey and Pacific Grove in his novels such as Cannery Row and Sweet Thursday, and many of the types of characters he wrote about still populated the area. There was a large waterfront, with two wharves - one focused on the tourists and a working one, plus a railway that brought in hobos and workers.

And there were lots of businesses that addressed the unique needs of this diverse community. I already knew a bit about this since one of my neighbours in Carmel Valley, the Siino family, owned Monterey Boat Works, which had a very large boat building and repair facility just east of Cannery Row. I used to go roller skating with their kids and was given a tour of the place on one of those trips. It hooked me on boats so I used to hang out along

the seashore and on the wharves and Cannery Row.

I used to ride my bicycle all over the Peninsula and explored just about everything. I had a cool new Schwinn with front suspension (yep, they did that back then but with swing arms not telescopic forks) and it could really get around. The only time I had a problem was when I was careening down this really steep hill near my house and a car that didn't see me coming turned right in front of me.

I couldn't stop fast enough so I skidded and then slid along the pavement just in front of the car, crashing into the curb on the other side. The driver was very apologetic and I was not seriously hurt but it was a major case of road rash. The worst one was the result of a bike collision with Dale the dim on a newly gravelled road in Carmel Valley and the huge scar is still quite visible on my left elbow. But I digress.

The first year I explored Monterey was the summer of 1960, when I was 10. One of the first people I met on Cannery Row when I started these adventures was a marionetteer (note: NOT a puppeteer, which is a whole different thing) named Daniel Llord. He had a workshop in which he made marionettes and a small presentation space set up as a small marionette theatre. He was extremely talented and put on some very good shows using extremely complex and clever techniques.

The shows were generally presented in the evenings and during the day the workshop was open to the public to see how they were made. Llord had an assistant name Jones who did the show announcements and narration - Llord operated all the marionettes himself. Jones also answered the public's questions as they toured the workshops and conducted the tours. They seemed to be the only people associated with the operation and they were only there during the summer tourist season, neatly coinciding with my school holidays. They were based in Los Angeles.

I had lots of spare time that summer, as usual, and these two guys were very interesting. They had traveled extensively and had toured their marionettes wherever they could get bookings. The southern hemisphere and more temperate climes provided a tourist season they could take advantage of during the winter and spent lots of time in Australia, New Zealand and central and South America. They were amazing to me, and I provided them with a good audience for what were perhaps rather mundane stories for more worldly listeners. It was great fun and I got to see all their shows, of course.

When they left at the end of the season, they invited me to visit them in Los Angeles, since I explained that my family usually went there for Christmas to be with relatives. So when that time came and we went to Claremont and stayed with my infamous uncle, Doctor Joe, I said I would enjoy going to meet my friends Llord and Jones and introducing them to whomever might be interested in meeting them. I thought everyone would find them as interesting as I did.

The good Doctor was extremely interested in my story about how I had spent the summer in the company of these two partners and, being naturally extremely homophobic, he immediately became suspicious of their motives. I, of course, being only 10 and not really fully conversant in these alternate lifestyles, didn't really understand what the concern might be. I only knew them to be extremely open and friendly people who were also talented and very interesting. Plus they always made me feel very welcome - and never threatened.

My mother, who always looked up to her big brother Joe, hadn't really thought about the possibility that they might have been homosexual pedophiles was convinced by Joe that this was very probably why they were so friendly to me. And to prove it, he offered to take me to their house and find out for sure. So we drove to north LA, near Hollywood - home of the pervs. We parked in front of their house and we both walked to the door and rang the bell.

Jones answered the door with Llord just behind him. They greeted me and I introduced them to my uncle. It all happened in a flash. Joe made an immediate assessment that they were dangerous criminals and not to be trusted, especially by a 10 year old boy and told them that they would never be seeing me again. Then he told me to come with him and we left, leaving them standing agape in the doorway. I sat in the car, stunned. I had no idea what to say. He had suddenly alienated me from the only two people who I really considered to be my friends at that time, even though I hadn't seen them since the summer.

When we got back to Claremont, my mother asked Joe "are they?" and he said "definitely" and then he reiterated that I should never see them again, without going into any detail why. I was horribly confused and

upset but too young to question such a complex decision made by a couple of adults I had to respect. Obviously, I never had any evidence that they were actually gay nor did I care in the least. I also suspect my mother never really wondered or worried about it since I used to tell her all about my experiences with them but she had always, her entire life, done what Doctor Joe said to do. After all, she had fed me exclusively raw hamburger meat and egg yolk on his orders up till then. This was fairly trivial, I guess.

Anyway, it was winter, I was trying to deal with moving to a new town and make new friends, which was quite difficult. I missed my old friends desperately and was trying to focus on a new school experience also. This was a minor setback. Next summer I could find new adult friends. But I had a taste of what being an adult would be like and I was determined to find more people to talk to and hang with and that would happen. Next summer.

But before then, I would play the role of Sonny Flood at the Community Theatre and have another great time, this time even working with adults and gaining their respect. In another environment that openly included gays. And this time it was largely because my mother had encouraged me to do that. I guess she just didn't understand the concerns that Doctor Joe seemed to have. It's very good thing she didn't tell him about this till after the fact because I'm sure he would have again warned us against such activities!

### **Friday, June 23, 2006**

Monterey was a pretty cool place all right. It had lots of intrigue as well - a military spy school (the Defense Language Institute), naval engineering school (the Naval Postgraduate School), army basic training facility (Fort Ord), one of the largest gated communities and golf course (Pebble Beach) and a spectacular nature preserve (Point Lobos) were there, along with the smattering of celebrities who lived there part time, filmed there or were passing through.

One of the films I remember quite well was "The Parent Trap" with Hayley Mills which spent the whole summer there. I used to hang out around the production trailers hoping to get a glimpse of her but it was only fleeting of course. I had a serious major crush on her at the age of 11 and it was one of the very few films I actually went to see at the cinema. I went three times, I think, because I was in lust with the scene where the back of her dress is cut away by her 'twin' and there was this great booty action shot of her in her panties for a minute or so. These days I'd definitely buy the DVD right away....

I have an old friend from high school who told me that Hayley was his passion as well and he used to hang out at the production trailers too. When he met W- he told us that I had 'found my Hayley'.

I even supplied equipment to the aquarium many years later, which was a nice 'return on the investment' \*g\*

Your experience is quite correct for the times. The 50s were a period of serious denial and the 60s hadn't really begun - but were a distinct backlash to the 50s and I do think mother and Joe would have reacted differently later on. In fact, I was provided with relatively complete information with which to make my own decisions later on. I think they just felt that 10 was perhaps too young at that time. But kids always grow up faster than anyone realises. I was certainly released to the theatre world very shortly after that.....

### **Friday, June 23, 2006**

#### **Nan's Boat Shop**

The next summer, I started exploring Monterey again in the search for new friends. I avoided Cannery Row because of concern that I would bump into Llord or his partner and focused on the areas where most public outdoor activities happened - the wharves. I was also completely enamoured of boats and desperately wanted my father to get a boat so I could go water skiing. On Fisherman's Wharf there was a boat sales office. It was really just a broker who sold boats on commission. Just like a real estate sales office, and probably just as manipulative.

I met a woman there who was extremely nice and friendly. Especially since she figured I might get my dad to buy one of their boats. They had a lot of very big old boats and she recommended a 37 foot cabin cruiser that was in our price range - under \$2000. She assured me it needed 'very little work' and could go fast enough to



pull me on water skis. I presented this proposition to my father and he gently informed me of my extreme folly and I never went back there again. Some adults can be such users. I'm dealing with one right now, in fact.

But I did have some pull with my dad. In 1959, he bought a brand new Renault Dauphine because imported cars were all the rage back then and he thought it was better than the VW Beetle - and I think he was right. In fact, the three of us took a car trip all the way to Vancouver Island in 1960 and had a great time - no problems at all. The trip was a bit of a nightmare for me since we stopped at a motel in Redding in the blistering heat and I spent the entire evening getting a sinus condition in the pool and then suffered with it the rest of the trip. But we enjoyed the Pacific Northwest and I got a passion for British Columbia which was only sated when I moved there permanently in 1970. A bit like "Five Easy Pieces" I guess - a film which had its premiere in Vancouver and for which I supplied and operated the sound system.

But in 1961, his mother who was in her 90s came from Bradford to live with us since her big old house was getting to be too much for her to handle. We still have the trunk she came with, complete with the newspaper lining the bottom - the front page of which announced the Spanish-American war. I had met Nettie when we traveled back east in 1959, partly to see how she was doing. I was a total shit on that trip and was so pissed off that my parents left me alone with her while they went to a party that I headed off to explore Bradford on my own. I didn't arrive till the sun was setting - around 10PM and discovered she had called the cops hours before, reporting me missing.

But Grandma Nettie was a bit too big and too stiff to get in and out of the Dauphine easily, since it was truly tiny - so a new vehicle was sought. I was a car freak by then and felt the new Corvair was the cat's ass - mainly because it was such a radical departure for GM and had all sorts of nifty innovative features such as aluminum air cooled engine in the rear (with serpentine fan belt that broke every 20,000 miles) and the first two model years had single-jointed swing axles that made it fling itself off the road at the slightest provocation as detailed in Nader's "Unsafe at any Speed". So we got a used 1960 model with all these features instead of the new and improved version and kept it for a year whether we needed to or not.

Most summers back then a caricaturist named Gall used to set up his easel in front of the boat brokers to enslave the tourists into having him create a charcoal of themselves, looking silly with a fish, fishing rod, life preserver or something typical of the wharf scene. He was quite a character and lived in a mobile home he brought to town for the summer, spending the rest of the year elsewhere in the world, just like Llord.

He was a friendly, easy going sort with a few personal agonies which he would share with me - and we talked about mine, and my weird family. He used to give me encouragement and I drew on my limited experience to give encouragement as well. He was having marital problems and obviously I had little to say on that but became a bit of a sounding board for him, I hoped. When he had no customers, which was the norm, he occasionally would have me model for him and I still have a few of his caricatures. It was always a bit of a dilemma though, since having a subject drew a crowd but it also meant those who wanted a picture of themselves had to wait a while.

I got to know some of the other characters on Fisherman's Wharf such as the touts who tried to get people to go on their cruises of the bay or sport fishing and the snack stand people. I became as much a fixture as they in many ways - a curious figure of 11, chatting with everyone and imagining everyone was my friend.

On the other wharf, known only as "Wharf Number Two" there was much less to see but in some ways was more the business end of the boating community since that's where Curly's Boat Hoist was. Curly had a little coffee shop attached to his facility, which lifted boats off trailers and placed them in the water. There was no boat ramp in Monterey so this was the only easy way to get your boat launched. It was at Curly's that I discovered the source of most of the small pleasure boats there: Nan's Boat Shop, which was on the busy street near the entrance to Wharf Number Two.

That wasn't actually the name of the shop, though. It carried her husband's name, but she was the one who really ran it. She had a little office in the showroom and was the person people met if they didn't want repairs done. Nan knew all about the new boats and motors they sold and had all the literature neatly organized. I didn't have a boat, obviously, so I didn't need to talk to her husband, who stayed mainly in the shop, unless he was curious about what his wife was up to, which happened fairly often - especially when I was around.

Nan also did the bookkeeping, of course and ordered stuff they needed. It was plain to see that she made the

place go and we quickly struck up a fast friendship. I started going to visit her almost every day toward the end of the summer and we chatted most of the day till quitting time. I told my mother about it and she called Nan to make sure I wasn't bothering her - and she said I wasn't, that it was a pleasure. At least I wasn't going to be told not to hang with my new friend this time!

**Saturday, June 24, 2006**

### **Me and Nan-io, down by the boatyard**

Nan was probably in her early 40s when I knew her. It was kind of tricky at a tender age to estimate the age of 'older people' but I did know she was certainly of an age where she would have made the decision to have kids - or not. And there seemed to be no prospect of that. So I was probably more a surrogate kid than a potential 'close friend' and she was like the mother I never had. She was not an authority figure, obviously, and that made a lot of difference to me - and her, too, I guess. Ours was an interesting relationship involving a lot of mutual respect.

She and her husband lived in a poorer area, called Seaside. She didn't talk about it much but I looked them up in the phone book and rode my bike all the way out there one day. I knew they were at work so there was no chance of them seeing me. It was a very small, somewhat rundown place. I could see they were struggling much more than I had realised when I first met them and, like most small business owners, obviously invested everything they had in their operation. This taught me my first lesson about having one's own business. It was a lesson I remembered and is one of the main reasons I resisted going into business later on.

Nan and I used to enjoy each other's company and talk about all sorts of things. When the summer finished, Nan didn't move elsewhere because theirs was a year-round business and continued after the tourist season. So I went to visit after school as well. My mother became slightly more alarmed and talked with Nan about our 'relationship' - I don't know exactly what was said but Nan told me that she had tried to allay Sally's fears that it might become unhealthy. We both laughed about it because we knew that our friendship was probably the healthiest one we could both have at that time.

Nan originally came from California's Central Valley, near Madera and was a tomboy at heart, probably, since she grew up in the country. That obviously changed at some point, once she became a business owner and settled down. But she always wore pants and the fanciest she ever got was a sort of pantsuit kind of thing - checked/striped polyester in those typical 60s sorts of styles, not very fashionable and certainly not expensive.

She was slender and I felt she was pretty classy no matter what she wore, though she could hardly be called pretty. I doubt that she had a skirt or dress to her name. She talked a lot about those earlier days and we made plans for her to show it to me some day, probably the next summer. She liked camping and I said I was game for it, even though I had never camped before.

In the meantime, we spent more and more time together and she eventually invited me to dinner at a pretty fancy restaurant in Carmel called The Pine Inn. She chose it because the community theatre was right near there and she wanted to make me feel special about having performed there. It was to be our special evening. When we arrived, though, the small minded people of that status-seeking establishment refused her entry because she was wearing pants.

We were both naturally mortified by this and realised it was a completely arbitrary decision based on class and money. After all, if Elizabeth Taylor or Kim Novak had made a reservation and shown up in pants they would never be turned away. And I know they used to eat there. It was so typical of those times in the early 60s and a similar thing happened to me at the "Top of the Mark" in San Francisco after I had an argument with my father about not wearing a tie (which I hated and still do).

Anyway, we went somewhere else and it was just fine but she never invited me to supper again and I felt very sorry for her because of it. I was not in a position to invite her out. My allowance was almost nothing - perhaps a couple of dollars a week and I couldn't afford taxis. I suspect I didn't even realise cabs were an option. Shit, what was I thinking! Taking out a 40 year old woman to dinner when I was 11? Insanity, really.

That year, my father broke down and bought an open 12 foot boat and a used 9 horsepower Mercury outboard -

and a trailer - from Nan. This was essentially a small fishing boat but I knew it could pull me on double skis since I was pretty light and two skis were easier to get up on than a single. We put a hitch on the Dauphine and it did a right smart job of towing it.

I got a wet suit made, complete with my nickname (Rick) on it in yellow letters. Rick was my nickname because I was born soon after Casablanca had become such a hugely popular film and my mother had a thing about Humph. I was never called Bruce, which was a family name - I was the fourth one in a long line of fake Bruces. When my father got mad at me, he called my "Junior!" Ugh. I hated that with a passion.

So we used to go out on Monterey Bay, dad in the little fishing boat, sitting at the rear and operating the little fishing boat motor with the twist grip tiller arm and straining to see over the bow. He would jam that sucker on full blast and it would slowly tug me up onto the skis, gradually pulling me through the water and finally up onto a plane and we would slam along at, oh, 12 knots or so. But it satisfied my need for speed at that point and I didn't complain. We also went to more exotic locations where the water was smoother and warmer such as Moss Landing Slough. Wild we were!

I continued to see Nan after school and during working hours - and on Saturdays - but I was starting to get to know more kids at my new school and began to spend more time with them. In fact, I had now some pretty good new friends in Nelson and Peter and spent time with them doing things like building a small rowboat for Lake El Estero. We also liked to take our toy boats sailing there and lost at least one in the reeds, which prompted the rowboat with which to rescue the them!

We also played typical games like Monopoly and on January 1, 1962, I started a diary which chronicled my 12th year - and did it again in 1963. I also tried to stay faithful to Nan but I was beginning to get very interested in Margaret, a friend of the two kids who lived across the street. But she lived in Carmel, which was quite a distance away, and over the top of a major hill so she was difficult to get to know. Besides, it was still school and the summer promised more opportunities.

When summer came, Nan and I went camping out by her old homestead in the central valley. It was the first time I had done that and I was amazed at the beauty and clarity of night skies in the country. We went to a camp site in the foothills of the Sierras on the east side of Madera and slept out in the open with no tent. There was absolutely no ambient light in the area and the stars were crystal clear. I lay there watching them as I went to sleep.

But my little, old cub scout sleeping bag which was left over from Carmel Valley days was way too thin and light to keep me warm so I woke when it got colder, later in the night. Nan's '59 Fairlane (they were Ford people and her husband had a cool matching Ranchero) wasn't too far away, so she let me bed down in the back seat to keep warm. It didn't really put much of a damper on the scene for me since I had few expectations, but I don't think she thought I was much of a camper as a result.

At least I discovered I would need a better sleeping bag before going camping again. And that would happen fairly soon since my cousin Austin invited me to go with him, his sister Marian and his buddy Stan and Stan's girl friend of the time camping for a week up in Kings Canyon National Park. But I never went camping with Nan again. I tried to see her as frequently as possible but I was getting distracted by Margaret too often.

Before long, Nan and I lost touch. I felt really badly about it but my parents encouraged me to stick to kids my own age and I figured that might be a better idea even though they were extremely pale imitations of the various, extremely interesting and thoughtful adult friends I had made over the past two years.

My father finally admitted the folly of the first boat when I moved to a single ski and was not actually able to get up on it unless he did a running start, which was very tricky, sometimes painful and admittedly dangerous. So he traded it in on a 16 foot Glasspar Balboa runabout with a used Merc 700, 6 cylinder 70 horsepower engine.

This was a pretty skookum rig and there was no holding me back now. The old 700 was pretty thirsty though, so he traded that in on a new, 4 cylinder 55 horsepower model which was almost its equal. I think Nan gave him a pretty good deal but my father also never bargained - plus I suspect he figured he owed her something for babysitting - no, make that comfort, companionship and counselling fees.

After some time without contact with Nan, I heard that she and her husband had split up, sold the business and

she had moved back to the central valley. I felt bad but also knew that I was just another one of many factors in her complicated life and silently wished her the best for the future.

It was most likely inevitable from what she had told me about their relatively loveless life together. At least they didn't have kids to deal with. And this even more firmly cemented a decision I had made when I was eight and felt I was the unhappiest child in the world - and would only make my own kids equally unhappy: never to have children!

**Sunday, June 25, 2006**

### **Bruce the Fixer**

When I was 15, I got a job repairing electronic equipment because Jim stole me from ABC Music down the street. I had applied for a job at Jim's when I was 14 but he didn't really think I was quite up to the responsibility yet. But he started losing business to ABC after I became their repairman and he realised the folly of his ways. Fortunately Mike of ABC understood that Jim could also offer me longer hours, which I wanted, so all worked out well in the end. Jim expected me to fix all kinds of things, not just guitar amplifiers. From tape machines and high end stereo equipment to televisions.

My hours at Jim's were from after school till mid evening, depending on how much school work I had. Initially though, it was summer so I worked long hours. Jim was a night owl and I liked to work with him because he was my mentor and he didn't like to work during office hours since there were too many interruptions. He also did most of his recordings in the studio at night because it was quieter and musicians generally liked that better. Jim also provided and operated the sound systems for various concerts and festivals in the area, including the Monterey Jazz and Pop Festivals and Big Sur Folk Festival.

I was helping run the sound for Crosby, Stills and Nash when they announced that Neil Young had joined them. I heard Gerry Mulligan in a drunken stupor very late one night after the performance, exiting the performers' lounge far below me and - not realising anyone was listening - spew a vitriolic diatribe of self hate.

The first time Janis Joplin performed in Monterey with Big Brother and the holding company was at the Monterey Jazz Festival, not the Pop Festival, which happened the following year. Jim wasn't used to such a powerful voice and when she sang into the open mike the first time, she blew out a loudspeaker diaphragm which I had to replace as quickly as possible. I took it to her dressing room to show her what she had done and she autographed the sucker! Jim had that screwed to his wall for many years.

Those were fun times but I also did more mundane jobs as well. In January 1966, when I turned 16 and got my driver's license, I started to do home repair calls. I ranged all over the peninsula, from Seaside, where Nan used to live to Pebble Beach, where I repaired a lowly Dynakit that had been very poorly assembled in the Firestone mansion. I encountered more than my share of lonely housewives, some of whom flashed me or simply wore flimsy nightgowns but none of whom decided that seducing a 16 year old kid with no stubble was worth the hassle. I guess. Then there were the horny dogs that were being kept indoors for obvious reasons. My leg got humped more than a few times.

But the one recollection that always makes me laugh was the call to repair a jukebox. It was in a poor section of Seaside and when I arrived, I knocked on the door. A face appeared at a slot high up and looked down at me suspiciously. "Yeah?" it asked. He looked at the tube caddy I had with me. Back then, most repairs just involved testing and replacing vacuum tubes and I had to carry this enormous orange box - almost as big as I was - with a single handle. It looked pretty awkward most of the time but it was very light since it was not just mostly air, but vacuum.

I replied that I was there to repair the jukebox. He grunted and opened the door. The place appeared to be a fairly normal residence but there were a number of shifty looking guys sitting around in chairs and sofas in the living room. When they saw a 16 year old kid walk in - with this huge caddy - their eyes almost popped out of their heads. The guy led me into the kitchen where I was introduced to a rather rough looking woman who expressed slight surprise that I was the repair person. This was not at all unusual, however, since I was by then quite used to people seriously questioning my ability to repair their 'baby.'

She showed me the jukebox and I said I would have to move it around to get into the back. The doorman gave me a hand and I blew out the cobwebs. I had a flashlight for emergencies and looking into deep crevices but this kitchen was just plain dark since all the windows seemed to be blacked out. I scoped the situation and decided there was one simple thing that would help. I asked if it would be possible to replace the red light bulb with a white one, preferably of higher wattage. This was done forthwith with only a little grumbling and I could even see what was going on in the front room a bit better now.

As I worked on the jukebox, I saw a fairly steady stream of guys coming in the front door. A little while after they sat down and executed a small financial transaction with my lady friend who wanted the repair done, some woman with a skimpy outfit would enter from the hallway, where the bedrooms were, presumably, and take them to the back. Not at all very much later, they would emerge from the back and walk out the front door.

Repairing the jukebox was pretty straightforward but it needed a fair number of new tubes. It was old and had been used pretty steadily most of its life. Madam had been pretty faithful about replacing the stylus so she assured me that wasn't the problem. I replaced everything questionable so they wouldn't have to go through this unsettling process again. Replacing the back and sliding it into its appointed position once again, I prepared the bill and presented it. \$22 - a true bargain for a repair job done efficiently and without complaint or comment. I almost said I would say nothing about what I had seen but decided that just silence was probably better.

She paid me all in ones.

**Sunday, July 09, 2006**

### **Snookered again! or... what we do for friends. Part I.**

Just to assure you that the adventures are continuing despite the lack of recent blogs, here is the story of our latest foray away from London. Not to say that exciting things haven't been happening here as well! More than a week ago now we headed off via Ryanair to Biarritz, France, to attend the wedding of a Canadian lady, M-, whom we have known since she was a child, to B-. She works in the fashion industry in Paris, and travels extensively, so we were expecting this to be quite an affair. I had heard of Biarritz since the 60s since it was the playground of the rich and famous or at least beautiful, such as Brigitte Bardot, but it wasn't exactly as we had envisioned. It never is, though, is it? We comprised myself, W- and G-, our son who had come to Europe from Vancouver to see old friends and attend two weddings. It's starting to be wedding time for many of his friends....

One of the major focuses of this blog is the cost of the trip, since that is almost always a feature of major interest to us when traveling not only because cost is always a concern, but usually because it is almost a complete unknown until one actually arrives and frequently not until one has returned and received the credit card bills! And this trip was no exception, with costs mounting well before we departed. For me, one of the most bizarre aspects of travel these days is that the actual flight is often one of the cheapest parts of the whole trip in this case, literally only £19 each way between London's Stansted airport and Biarritz, way in the south of France. It actually cost the same to get to Stansted and back via the so-called 'Express' train, which is the furthest thing you can really imagine would be identified as such.

And of course, we were given a list of gifts we could purchase for the bride and groom to start their life together. In this case, it was a wedding gift list sponsored by Galleries Lafayette, the venerable Parisian institution. Of course the bridal shop was only offered in French and the field for our telephone number was typically temperamental, requiring many re-entries of our details before it would allow us to purchase the spiffy digital video camera they had requested. But we felt it would be most appropriate for a wedding which they will obviously want to record. They were indeed notified it had been purchased as soon as the transaction was complete but instead of being able to obtain it right away, they would have to wait until after the wedding and present their marriage certificate as proof the wedding had taken place. This seemed a rather odd technicality since the goods purchased were not being offered at any sort of discount. Naturally, we were then asked if we were bringing a similar camera with us. Of course we couldn't afford such luxuries for ourselves so had to reply in the negative. Fortunately they were in the end able to get E-, a gay niece who had all the current high tech toys and knew how to use them properly since she was the technical rep for Toshiba in Germany (even though she was Spanish) to bring her video camera and act as the official recorder of the function.

The wedding was actually going to take place in St Jean de Luz, a smaller town just south of Biarritz, so we

decided to arrive a little early and check out the larger town since we had heard more about it. So we booked a youth hostel there since another friend, B-, who was also attending the wedding was staying there all week to explore the area and we were going to meet up with her. We had been offered a suite in the Grand Hotel in St Jean de Luz by our friend the bride for the bargain price of 360 euro per night or some such figure but we said we would organize our own accommodation. But she then advised us that she could reserve a suite for us in a smaller hotel, the Madison, that was just down the street and was the one that the groom's family had always stayed in as he was growing up. It was only 110 euro per night which seemed to us to be quite reasonable. The deed was done and we felt confident this would be a good arrangement and thus prepared we headed off.

The flight was just under two hours and we arrived in Biarritz with the crowd of surfers who obviously take the summer pilgrimage to the town which is the hot spot on the Cote Atlantique now. But St Jean de Luz was the hot spot of the 19th century, with its more desirable calm, peaceful, warm and protected harbour. Biarritz was exactly the opposite: an open, unprotected, extended beach front with waves pounding the shore direct from the open Atlantic, making it the perfect venue as the surfing capitol of France ever since surfing got big in the 60s. So Biarritz became the playground of the nouveau riche and St Jean de Luz faded into a bygone splendour, with old style, elegant hotels but not new modern ones or youth hostels, especially since youths tended to avoid it. Old money stayed there too, and B-'s parents were old money.

We made a foray into the information centre at the airport and acquired a fine map of Biarritz which showed the location of the youth hostel and it was confirmed that it was only 2 km away, a short walk and easily done, with the exact route drawn on the map by the friendly assistant. W- and I would have normally done this since it would normally take only 20 minutes. But our son begged fatigue and he usually doesn't like to walk too far at the best of times and argued that we could get lost, we didn't really know exactly what the route was, it might rain (it was slightly overcast) and since it was so close, it would be a very quick and cheap taxi ride. I am the type who never likes to take taxis unless I actually know the route they are going to take since my experience has been almost invariably that they almost always tend to extend their trips as much they feel they can get away with to increase the fare. But, I was outvoted plus, I had assumed a new, non-argumentative persona which capitulates at the slightest hint of conflict. So we joined the long queue of people waiting for taxis and watched them arrive and pick up small knots of people now and then. This process took a long time and I was just about to head off on my own since we had been waiting almost as long as the walk would have taken when several cabs pulled up.

We told the driver where we were going and he drove off. In the wrong direction. I looked for the fare meter so I could see what the cost added up to as we went but there was none. The map clearly showed that it was almost a straight run to the hostel except for a turn right at the end. And we would pass straight through two traffic circles. After the taxi had gone most of the way around at least five separate traffic circles I had got completely turned around the sun was behind heavy cloud cover and we could identify no landmarks. Finally, after about 10 minutes of driving around like this, we started to proceed alongside an elevated roadway which signaled we were getting close to the hostel and about 1km from where we started! As we drew up to the hostel, I shuddered at the thought of what this was going to cost us but was pleasantly surprised to be told it was only 10 euro an amount that paled in comparison with what a London taxi would have cost, although, as it turned out, fairly typical for a 10 minute cab ride in that area. I didn't give him a tip.

Checking into the hostel, W- and I were assigned a private room which is more and more common these days in modern hostels. And this one was huge and very new, looking to be only about 10 years old or so. It was very secure and spacious and had its own large modern kitchen which provided breakfasts and a variety of good dinners, which one could order in the bar after it opened at 6PM. And the bar was also rather unusual, with a nice variety of drinks available and a great assortment of people hanging out all evening. In fact, I think it was probably one of the best places to meet interesting types in Biarritz. Certainly it was the cheapest, as G-confirmed since he later went out with Jerry, a loud New Yorker we met almost as soon as we arrived. They shared a room and went out with a group of surfers and backpackers later that evening and hit a number of clubs and drinking establishments in town and Jerry ended up barfing into the gutter early in the morning. They got in about 6AM after dropping way more than our piddling little taxi ride of course.

We met up with our friend, B-, who had been staying there the previous two days and exploring the area extensively and we had tasty, economical suppers, cooked by the large crew of Aussie volunteers who seemed to be ubiquitous in the hostel. No need to speak French there. The hostel was located right near a beautiful lake, surrounded almost completely by a vast nature conservation area. It was a spectacular setting, really, so we decided to explore a bit. We first headed straight to the nearest shore and found an idyllic setting with a couple

of small groups of people a pair of lovers on a bench and a couple of kids in a small rowboat, floating amongst a large mass of water lilies, fishing. The only slightly jarring note was the fancy dirt bike the kids had apparently arrived on, parked on the path. At least it wasn't running. The path didn't go past this point on that side of the lake so we went back and proceeded the other direction. This was more fruitful and it led us along an extensive foreshore, allowing us to look out across the lake at the large attractive houses on the hill across the lake, over looking it.

Besides the wildlife, mostly birds, who were making their typical evening noises and swooping through the trees and over the lake, we could hear the sounds of the highway at the top of the hill far in the background. Also, very occasionally, a train noisily and rapidly transited the high speed TGV segment that intruded into the peacefulness. At that point, we decided we would not want to have one of those houses, located so close to the tracks, no matter how pretty the view was. But another sound which started to become apparent was that of singing a male chorus was heard wafting over the water, drifting in and out with the wind, and it got louder as we walked further. It was deliciously foreign and exotic sounding and seemed to be a large group. We also began to hear applause after each song. Eventually, we could actually see what seemed to be the location of the concert, up on the hill at the other end of the lake, complete with bright lights. We then determined to find out more by following the sound. Fortunately, there were paths and bridges which easily allowed this.

We passed over a small bridge with ornate ironwork railings that crossed a slow moving river which obviously fed the lake and followed the path up the hill. The singing was getting much louder now and the path circled around below what seemed to be a large campground in the woods. It joined a road and doubled back, soon revealing a modern new building with a large balcony facing the opposite side and overlooking the lake. We could just see the back row of the singers, who were all dressed in traditional Basque costumes and singing one beautiful traditional Basque song after another. The way in was further up the road so we proceeded up there to find out what it was. It was very clearly labeled private even though there was no gate and would have been easy to investigate further. The sign also identified the site as the Activity Centre of the Gas and Electricity Workers Union and we could then easily see one of the reasons why the unions in France were so worried about the undermining of their authority and power. Just like everywhere else, but obviously even more so here in the Basque country, being a member most definitely had its privileges.

We went back to the location on the road where we could watch and hear the music more clearly and after listening some time longer and watching the evening close around us, we decided to head back as they faded in the distance. We almost reached the other end of the lake before they faded out completely, wavering in the mists and not really being sure in the end if they had just finally gone out of earshot or were actually finally finished with their long sing song. We made it back to the hostel as darkness fell and cruised back into the bar, where the evening was well underway. Ordering drinks and acknowledging the others nearby, we chatted and watched the big projection screen's presentation of endless loops of surfing, skateboarding, extreme cycling, roller blading, snowboarding and other sports often enjoyed by those hooked on lively outdoor activities. The day's surfing adventures were discussed amongst the gathered masses and compared with other times and places, invariably not measuring up to the great times that had been enjoyed in previous years or locations such as Malibu, Honolulu and Bondi.

After a few Amstel on tap, I was feeling quite jolly and W- and I retired before midnight early for us, which usually means we have even a bit more sexual energy to spare than normal and we sought out our empty room to ourselves. The hostel arranged the two single beds so that one was at normal height and the other quite elevated, like a bunk bed. Presumably for a minimal amount of privacy if the two sharing the room were not good friends. The mattresses were excellent nice dense but soft foam and we put them both on the floor beside each other. This was going to be great! We closed the shutters even though the view was primarily of the woods and hopped to it. I always find it exciting to make love in new locations it's not so much the potential of being interrupted or the strangeness of the unknown. Indeed, it was exactly the opposite in this and in most cases. It was the fact that we had traveled a long way and were in a beautiful new location which we had just explored and became familiar with and enamoured of and where we fantasised about possibly living or at least spending a longer visit or vacation at some time in the future. The potential of such an exotic life and its possibilities are always a great aphrodisiac.

At any rate, without going in the exact details, suffice it to say simply that we were like young lovers again, exploring each other in a new environment, much like we were when we first met, doing some sexual exercises which we had visited recently and spending more than the usual amount of time enjoying, playing, feeling, probing and fondling each other beyond the 'normal' and more mundane day to day humdrum relations we still

enjoy on a daily basis, despite the apparent odds that many younger people here on MySpace often ascribe to older couples these days. It simply proved to us yet again that you are indeed only as old as you feel.....

End of the first day of six....