

A NATURALIST IN SHOW  
BUSINESS

*or*

I Helped Kill Vaudeville

*by*

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## PROLOGUE

In the two academic years 1934-1936, I was a student at Texas A & M College (now Texas A & M University), and music was an important hobby alongside of zoology, my major field of study. It was at A & M that I realized that the songs I most loved were called “folk songs” and that there was an extensive literature about them. I decided forthwith that the rest of my life would be devoted to these two activities--natural history and folk music. The singing got a boost when one of my fellow students, Rollins Colquitt, lent me his old guitar for the summer of 1935, with the understanding that over the summer I was to learn to play it, and teach him how the following school year.. Part of the deal worked out fine: I developed a very moderate proficiency on that useful instrument—but “Fish” Colquitt didn’t come back to A & M while I was there, and I kept that old guitar until it came to pieces several years later. With it, I performed whenever I could, and my first formal folk music concert came in the Spring of 1936, when Prof. J. Frank Dobie invited me to the University of Texas in Austin, to sing East Texas songs for the Texas Folklore Society.

The field of zoology was in no way neglected. I continued activities that had begun when I was a high school student in Crockett, supplying east Texas reptiles of various sorts to scientists in New York, Chicago and Washington DC. My chief professor at A & M,. Raymond O. Berry, hired me as a sort of lab assistant and illustrator through the Depression-generated NYA (National Youth Administration) at 35¢ an hour, and he found space in a unused greenhouse in which I could maintain a stable of some 30 poisonous Water Moccasins whose venom I sold to the Sharpe and Dohm Laboratories in Pennsylvania.. But the greatest zoological boon was accorded in the summer of 1936, when I worked for the Federal Bureau of Biological Survey. This was under the

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leadership of Dr. Walter Penn Taylor, a top scientist with the Bureau. The Bureau had earlier sent Dr. Taylor to College Station, where A & M is located, and he and his family had immediately become very important to me.

Pleasantly brisk and almost infinitely knowledgeable, he was nevertheless unfamiliar with the East Texas biota, and permitted me to expound to him with my limited store of information. His black-haired daughter Elizabeth was 17, about a year younger than I, and a perfect delight to be with;. We could talk about poetry and music, and she shared her father's and my fascination with the world of natural history. The whole family invited me to meals and to such social events as Sunday picnics, Sunday being one of the few days on which cadets at A & M were not required to march to the Mess Hall in strict military formation for every meal. All of the Taylors— Dr. Taylor, Mrs. Taylor, Elizabeth, her older sister Harriet and younger brother Benton — were unfailingly kind.

In May of my sophomore year, Dr. Taylor told me of a possible summer job with the Biological Survey. It would entail camping out for the whole summer, making a study of the fauna of Walker County, Texas, and would pay \$50.00 a month plus expenses. This sounded, to put it mildly, like heaven, and I lost no time in filing my application.

But I was not accepted.

So, early in the summer of 1936 I joined my Mom and Dad and my two younger sisters, Nell and Ann, in Livingston, in Polk County. They had just moved there from Crockett, in Houston County. (The city of Houston, just to keep things straight, is in Harris County.) Dad, a civil engineer with the Highway Department, was able to

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wangle a job for me (not easy to do during the Great Depression ) as a laborer on a road crew, digging culverts for the improving of a highway.

Even on the operator's end of a shovel, it was good to be outdoors. Polk County is the locale of the Big Thicket, which, although not yet dedicated as a State Reserve, was widely known to be teeming with wildlife. And there was plenty of that wildlife to be seen along the road where we worked. We often saw and heard Pileated Woodpeckers, locally known as Gawdamighty Birds from their call, and there were lots of the armadillos which had begun migrating into Texas only 30 or so years earlier.

During the lunch break one day, I caught a large Diamondback Water Snake (*Natrix rhombifera*), and proudly displayed it to my shovel mates. They insisted that it was a deadly Water Moccasin, using the local term "Pied-ed" Moccasin to distinguish it from the rather drab, though truly venomous, Cottonmouth. To prove its harmlessness, I screwed up my courage and persuaded this non-venomous creature to bite my left forearm, which it did quite enthusiastically with its fish-grabbing teeth. This made some scratches, and drew a little blood—but it proved nothing to my shovel-mates other than that I obviously had some sort of a charm against its poison.

This job lasted only a couple of weeks, and its ending had all the elements of bad theater, but I swear it really happened that way. I mentioned to the foreman one day that I was a sign-painter, enlarging quite a bit upon my limited expertise, and he immediately arranged for me to exchange my shovel for a paint brush. The next morning, armed with my own brushes and the Highway Department's paint, I was set to lettering a large caution sign warning of the culvert work. The bare wooden sign had been erected, and all I had to do was to paint it flat white and put in the required red and

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black letters , including the heading "Drive Slow." (I wondered aloud if it shouldn't be "Drive Slowly," but the boss, wisely, didn't want to talk about it.) The sign was to bear those large words plus some smaller letters at the bottom saying something about the Highway Department and the relation of this project to an over-all plan.

The culvert crew was working a mile or two away, back toward town, and after driving me past their workplace to dump me at the sign, they returned to it, leaving me alone at the blank signboard. The sun, which can be fierce in an East Texas summer, was especially hot that day, and as soon as I had painted in the white background, it was reflected direxclly into my eyes.

By the time the whole thing had been laid out and painted, the glare and the heat, coupled with the smell of the paint, had upset my stomach and given me a first-class headache. Quitting time couldn't have come too soon.

Quitting time finally came, all right, but the personnel truck didn't. My comrades had forgotten me.

Finally realizing that nobody was coming, I picked up my brushes and walked home in a grumbling dudgeon. On that five-mile walk, only a few cars passed, and none of them answered my pleading thumb. The family home lay on the far side of Livingston, and upon entering the town at its near side, I finally got a ride for the last half-mile or so. The driver was curious about me, and when I told him my name and home address he stopped the car in astonishment, exclaiming that he worked for Western Union, and was in the process of delivering a telegram to me! He handed it over, and although his job was thereby accomplished, he was kind enough to continue the journey and take me the rest of the way home.

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On the way, I read the telegram, and headache and disgruntlement were no more:

Dr. Taylor was telling me that one of the selected candidates for the Survey job had backed out, and that the job was mine if I wanted it! I should telegraph my intentions if I wanted the job, and to report to him in Huntsville as soon as possible!

I have no memory of how I quit the highway job. I guess I just left, and Dad made my apologies and signed off for me; before the end of the following day, I was long gone.

Dr. Taylor's Survey crew consisted of four of us summer boys, plus Dr. Taylor himself, camping out in several successive spots selected by Dr. Taylor. The work was a preliminary biological exploration, using the standard techniques of that period. The idea was to collect and preserve specimens of all the animals we came across. We each had a 20-gauge double-barreled shotgun, with an auxiliary adapter in one barrel to take a .22 rifle cartridge loaded with graphite dust shot; the other barrel had a regular 20-gauge shotgun shell loaded with small bird pellets. We spent our days tramping the fields and streams, shooting birds and lizards and anything else we saw moving. The technique was to get very close to our selected prey, and try to use the dust shot so as to do minimal harm to its skin; if that missed, we could try the right-hand barrel with its bird-shot. We also put out long trap lines for field mice and wood rats and other small mammals, and special traps for gophers. We caught and preserved every mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and fish that we came across, and made notes about the vegetation. Evenings were spent by the light of a Coleman gasoline lantern, making study skins of the mammals and birds, preservng reptilea and amphibians, taking a number of standard

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measurements, writing permanent labels with Higgins's "By-the-Eternal" India ink, and writing up notes in our journals.

Study skins constitute an elementary form of taxidermy. They are preserved skins, prepared with no attempt to make them lifelike, stuffed with cotton or tow to round them out. (Some people prefer making them flat, but that was not Dr. Taylor's way at that time.) Skulls were tied to the skins, on the outside, and sometimes the stomach contents were separately preserved in formalin for laboratory analysis back in Washington.

Today, all this killing seems cold-bloodedly cruel, but that was the way science surveys were carried out in those long-ago days. And such surveys did lay the groundwork for today's ecologists, who rightly believe that studying animals by killing them is unthinkable.

We camped at several locations that summer. One camp had to be moved after two days because it was in a grove of wild magnolia trees, and the constant smell of magnolia blossoms became oppressive.

Another camp was near a farm house occupied by a black tenant farmer. He visited us frequently, and taught me several wonderful songs, including a powerful version of "Tell Old Bill" ("This Morning This Evening So Soon") that is still an important part of my concert repertoire. This farmer had a small flock of free-ranging chickens which regularly visited the camp. The second-in-command at our camp was Dan Lay, an A & M graduate student in poultry husbandry. And Dan was good at it. When several of our host's birds became very ill, Dan at once diagnosed the problem. It lay in our methods of making study skins, and Dan knew how to solve it.

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In preparing such specimens, pulling the skin off a dead bird or mammal is hard to do when your fingers are slippery; traction is greatly improved when the fingers are frequently dipped in a large bowl of yellow cornmeal. The skins, after de-greasing, were preserved by rubbing their inner surfaces with powdered arsenic. Dan realized that a mixture of arsenic and cornmeal had fallen onto the ground around the work table, and that the chickens were eating it; As a poultry husbandry specialist it didn't take him long to realize that arsenic wasn't good for them. But Dan did more than realize; he volunteered to cure them, and he did, surgically operating on every one. He opened each crop and scraped the poison out, doing it all so skillfully that the hens not only survived the operation, but immediately became healthy again.

Our host—who was never told what was wrong with his birds in the first place—was so grateful that he kept us supplied with farm produce during the remainder of our stay. We ceased our careless poison-scattering, and the chickens got along fine on cornmeal in the absence of arsenic.

Several years later I was to learn that for this sort of taxidermic preparation, powdered borax could be used instead of arsenic, providing good preservation without the danger of poisoning the preparator (or any stray chickens).. This method was pioneered by taxidermist Leon Pray at the Chicago's Field Museum and later at the San Diego Natural History Museum.

Music was not totally lacking in the camp. I had asked Dr. Taylor whether I should bring my guitar, and he thought it would just get in the way. But in spite of the fact that my guitar was back home in Livingston, and portable radios had yet to be invented, we did have music; everybody sang something once in a while. Dr. Taylor often sang as he

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worked. His favorite song was to the tune of "Marching Through Georgia". I didn't recognize that melody, however, because my Deep South upbringing had never exposed me to that hated Yankee tune. It wasn't until years later that I realized where Dr. Taylor's music had originated. His words went like this:

"Hurrah! Hurrah! My mother-'n-law's gonna be hung.

Hurrah! Hurrah! She spoke with an evil tongue.

She said they should have strangled me when I was very young:

That's why I'm glad they're hanging Mother!"

(He sang only one verse. Many years later I came to know Tom Paley, then a member of the New Lost City Ramblers, and Tom had several additional verses, even worse. One was something like this:.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! My Uncle's gonna be shot!

Hurrah! Hurrah! The wicked rum-soaked sot!

For he made very free with me when I was just a tot:

That's why I'm glad they're shooting Uncle!"

Tom Paley was a mathematician as well as a musician, and left the Ramblers in 1962 to do graduate work in that field; he eventually went to live in Sweden, and now lives in England. His place with the New Lost City Ramblers was taken by Tony Schwarz, another excellent fiddler, and the group -- Tony, John Cohen, and Mike Seeger -- was an important one in the days of the Folk Music Boom.)

Dr. Taylor had several other old college songs. I especially enjoyed the one about a "Cookery Maid", to the tune of "Vive l'Amour," and still sometimes use it in programs today. It tells of a maiden who made a pie that killed a burglar who unwisely ate it.

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“There once was a maiden to cooking school went,

Vive la Cookery Maid.

On dishes delicious her mind was intent,

Vive la Cookery Maid!

Her cap and her apron were both very neat,

And she really looked most distractingly sweet —

But the things she concocted a goat couldn't eat.

Vive la Cookery Maid!"

And so on. . . .

Dr. Taylor also sang “Gaudeamus Igitur” in Latin, but I didn’t learn it myself until many years later.

We did our own cooking in camp, and at times it became highly experimental. One day I caught a four-foot alligator (they were not then terribly rare in East Texas), and after we preserved its skin and skull, someone said he had heard that alligator meat was edible. Dan Lay, a very versatile young man, made slices from the tail meat, parboiled them, then fried them. We all approached this meat very gingerly, but it was great, and Dan had to fix up another batch.

Dan showed another side of his versatility when I was afflicted with a buzzing fly in my ear. It had worked its way in next to the ear drum, and its frantic buzzing was almost unbearable. Dan found a can of sardines in oil among our stores, strained the oil through a cloth and poured it into my ear, eventually washing out a bedraggled fly.

One of the summer boys (it wasn't me!) had a sleeping-bag, while the rest of us used plain old blanket-rolls. Dr. Taylor felt that sleeping-bags were only for softies; real

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field biologists got by with bed rolls. Since then, every field scientist I have met has held firm opinions about such camping gear. Edmund C. Jaeger, for example, was an inveterate camper in the deserts and mountains of California, and he thought sleeping bags were fine, but scorned anyone who used an air mattress. Dr. Raymond B. Cowles of UCLA loved his air mattress, but believed it should be inflated by lung-power, and not by one of those effete new foot-operated air pumps, like the one used by ornithologist Dr. Loye Holmes Miller.

One of the fondest memories of that Texas summer is of introducing Dr. Taylor to the glories of a frog chorus in a southern swamp. His research had been primarily in Arizona and coastal California, and swamps were new to him. I showed him how we could wade out to the center of a shallow pond, and stand or sit on the bottom with only our heads out of the water so as to lessen exposure to the mosquito hordes. Then after we had been still for a few minutes, the frogs all around us would start in again, and sing and chirp and bellow until the sound seemed to be inside our heads. There's nothing quite like it. I don't know if such frog choruses are still to be heard, for in the last few years there has been a mysterious dying off of amphibians throughout the world— probably a reaction to poisons in the air and water — and I'm really afraid to try to learn how these East Texas populations have fared. I'd rather just go on thinking that such pools still exist and that the frogs are still in full voice.

There was more to our work than killing, of course, and our journals were an important part of the project. We made rough maps of our daily rambles, holding a click counter in the left hand and depressing its button each time the left foot hit the ground. We had memorized the length of our individual typical strides, and counting them this

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way gave a rough approximation of distance between points of interest. (The counter was not clicked while we deviated from straight walking so as to turn over a log, or stalk a bird.) We were expected to write down every observation, even when no specimen was taken.

Dr. Taylor taught us how to write these notes in a standard format. Each species observed was allotted a page in a small loose-leaf notebook; the entry showed the name of the species, the date observed, the location ( e.g. "approx. 3.5 miles NE of camp along the power line" ), with a crude map where necessary, and a descriptive account. Subsequent observations of the same species could be added to the same page, with a different date-and-locality heading. I was an indifferent record keeper, but managed to turn in something every evening.

The journals of that survey were sent to the Bureau in Washington, along with the study skins and preserved specimens, but the journal-keeping habit remained with me, and it continued, albeit in an often-desultory manner, even after that memorable summer was over. There is nothing of any biological value in those later notes, which are still in my possession, but for me today they constitute a body of powerful mnemonics, each one functioning as one of T. S. Eliot's "objective correlatives." Looking at one of these pages brings to my mind a whole host of memories, some in connection with that page itself, others of similar events long before and still others of events that came later. Each chapter of this memoir is headed with a page from the Journal.

3,392 words

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Cyanocitta cristata*

BLUEJAY

Riverdale, Maryland, ca. 4 miles S, on Anacostia River

January 1, 1937

Four individuals seemed very curious about my small campfire, and stayed near me for about an hour. They were in constant movement, but while not as noisy as bluejays usually are, they kept up a running conversation in a wide variety of small intimate sounds. They seemed quite unafraid of me, but would not let me approach too close.

•••••

The map made it look like a nice day's hike—about ten miles from Riverdale, Maryland, where my folks lived, down the north and east bank of the Anacostia River to its junction with the Potomac. My plan didn't involve going quite all the way to the Potomac—just getting within sight of it, and crossing the Anacostia on one of the bridges into Washington DC proper, and making my way home from there. The country along most of that route was pretty undeveloped, and even within the District itself, there was open country around the fringes of the city. The Pentagon had not yet been built, nor had the Jefferson Memorial.

The weather was cold and dismal, but I needed something to do. My Christmas seasonal job as an Interior Display artist at Woodward and Lothrop's department store was finished, and I thought I deserved a day off before setting out to find another job. So Mom packed a New Year's Day lunch for me—my usual five sandwiches—and my plan was to eat it somewhere close to the Potomac. After the bridge crossing, the Washington Monument was just a couple of miles up the road, and from there I could walk or take a bus or two to get home in time for supper.

But it didn't turn out to be all that easy.

After a couple of hours' walking, staying always close to the Anacostia River, I had become all too intimately involved with a freezing swamp. In East Texas I had sought out and loved swamps, but there was nothing lovable about this icy Yankee swamp. Instead of friendly soft warm mud, the ground here was barren and frozen hard, with small ice-covered pools in every depression.

. My feet slipped off the ridges and into the hollows, breaking through ice at almost every step. My ankle-high hiking shoes were filled with numbingly cold water.

Both the weather and I got colder as the day went on. All this floundering made for slow progress, and it soon became obvious that this was no way to reach the Potomac. The word "home" sounded better to me every minute. But turning back and retracing my steps through several miles of that frozen swamp was not an appealing prospect.

On the far bank of the river, on the western side, was what appeared to be a glorious dry haven, a wild wooded slope. The bridge was still several miles ahead of me, so there was only one thing to do; making jacket, shirt, shoes, and lunch bag into a bundle, and holding it up out of

the water with one hand, I broke through the ice at the edge of the stream, gritted my teeth, waded in, and swam one-handedly over to the opposite shore.

Close at hand was a windfall of dead trees forming a private and sheltered nook, and there I set up housekeeping. In my pocket were matches in a waterproof container. One of my most prized possessions, this container was made of knurled metal, with a magnetic compass set in one end, and was about the size and shape of a 12-gauge shotgun shell. A cheerful small fire was soon crackling away. Rigging holders for my wet clothes and socks so they could dry at the fire, I sat back and ate my lunch, while the bluejays kept me company.

On that civilized side of the river, walking home after lunch was no problem. I had only been in the DC area for a few months, but knew my way around pretty well.

The home family at that time had narrowed down to Dad and Mom and the two girls, Nell and Ann, and, temporarily, me. Our big sister Mary Jo had married artist Jon Gnagy and moved away from home; our brother Allan had died in 1934, with his new wife Hattie Belle, in an automobile accident brought about by an unrepentant drunk driver near Liberty, Texas. In 1936, while I was doing my sophomore year at Texas A & M College, the Highway Department had moved Dad from Crockett to Livingston, over in Polk County. There he took a Federal Civil Service exam for civil engineers. With the highest scores ever posted at that exam site, he was immediately offered a job in Washington, DC with the Department of the Interior, and the family found a house to rent in suburban Riverdale, Maryland.

Dad's position was a fine one in those days of the Great Depression, especially when compared to his Texas Highway Department job and its meager salary. I had finished my first two years as a Zoology major at Texas A & M College, and there were several reasons for not

going back for my junior year. For one thing, I was disenchanted with its military lifestyle, and juniors were automatically made non-commissioned officers, with a whole raft of military duties. For another, juniors had a quite different uniform, with cuffs on the pants-legs, and I couldn't see where the money to buy one would come from. And anyhow, the college didn't offer very many more zoology courses that I really wanted to take. Most zoology majors were pre-meds, going on to medical school after the first two years, and most of the upper-division (Junior and Senior level) biology offerings had a strong agricultural emphasis. (I had taken one upper-division course in Game Management, and it was great, but as it was offered by the Poultry Department, it was not accepted for academic credit at UCLA a few years later.) Furthermore, Dr. Taylor, for whom I had worked through the summer of 1936, didn't have any more jobs in the offing, and was not very encouraging about my future in his sort of biological work. At one point he had even suggested that I not try to become a biologist. I never knew whether that was because his personal experience had shown him how limited the salaries were in the fields of biology, or because of my own personal qualifications, and I was frankly afraid to try to find out what he meant.

Finally, enrolling as a junior at A & M would require a rigorous physical exam for the mandatory upper-level Reserve Officers' Training Corps. I was worried that a small private physical disability might keep me from passing, and that my being rejected would result in a lot of public explanation. This disability was a congenital one, in no way my fault, but in my youth I felt somehow guilty about it. (Later rejection as "4-F" by both the wartime Navy and the Draft Board bore out my misgivings.) So I decided to postpone my college education for a while, and hitchhiked to join the family at their new home in Riverdale, Maryland.

Ah, the District of Columbia! So many things to do, so much to see! At the top of the list was the United States National Museum (a branch of the Smithsonian Institution) and its Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians, Dr. Doris L. Cochran. I had been in correspondence with her since early high school days, and could hardly wait to meet her.

I had never seen a major museum, and that first visit to the National Museum of Natural History was overwhelming. The sight of the great *Stegosaurus* skeleton near the main entrance was almost too much to bear, and I had to duck into the men's room to get my voice and tear-ducts under control. (Incidentally, I later had time to become familiar with the wonderful acoustics of that men's room. At a fast tempo, you could whistle an arpeggio and the reverberation would give back a full chord. The only similar acoustic marvel I have found was in the stairwell of the Loewie [now the Hearst] Anthropological Museum at the University of California, Berkeley. My daughter Leanne earned a BA in Anthropology at Berkeley and became quite familiar with that stairwell. Now, with a PhD in linguistics, she is a full Professor and Chair of the Linguistics Department on that campus, specializing in American Indian languages.)

Leaving the acoustically enchanting men's room, I found my way to Dr. Cochran's office in the basement, and she exceeded my every expectation and hope.

Bless her heart, she remembered me, saying "Oh yes! The boy from Texas!" and this meant a tremendous amount to a 19-year-old kid fresh from a small Texas town. (Her gracious feat of memory was to be repeated a year or so later by Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt at the Field Museum in Chicago. I concluded that there was indeed something very special about museum herpetologists, and nothing since has changed my mind.)

My immediate concern was to find a job, and while Dr. Cochran had no regular position that needed filling, she offered me \$3.00 a week for drawing pictures of snake scalation. She knew that I was familiar with the standard format for diagrams of this sort, for in our correspondence I had sent her a number of such drawings, showing East Texas species. She had taught me to do this by sending me a photostatic copy of a plate depicting the Mud Snake, *Farancia abacura*, copied from *Crocodilians, Lizards and Snakes of North America* by Edward Drinker Cope of the US National Museum. She had hoped I could find a specimen of this snake in East Texas, and send it to her. (I could, and I did!)

Three dollars was not a great deal even then, but three hundred could scarcely have made me happier. I felt like a full-blown colleague, although now I am almost certain that my salary came from her personal purse and not from official Museum funds.

We quickly worked out an arrangement of flexible hours. I was to spend as much time as necessary looking for a regular job, while her office was always to be open to me. She gave me permission to go into her section at any time the Museum was open, even in her absence. Several jars of snakes preserved in formalin or alcohol were left on a corner of the big table, and I was to take a specimen from each jar and make scale diagrams of the top and side views of the head, and a side view at the mid-point of the body. Each drawing was to be labeled with the Accession Number, the Museum Number, the scientific name of the specimen, and the locality in which it was collected. There were strict rules governing the care of these precious museum specimens, requiring that they be kept moist at all times, and that the museum labels were never to be removed or mixed up.

I don't know that she ever used, or even kept, any of my drawings. They were certainly not of first-class professional quality, and all were of common, well-studied species. But they did ME a lot of good, and I shall never forget the hours spent in that magical room. One of Dr. Cochran's friends was a pet Brazilian Star Tortoise that didn't live in a cage, but wandered about the room at will. It had a regular beat, circling around and around right next to the wall. After all these years, any sound of regular clicking brings to mind the sound of that tortoise's claws on the concrete floor, and I can almost smell again that heady atmosphere of formaldehyde and preserving alcohol.

Dr. Cochran helped me in innumerable ways, always with the overriding thought that it was best for me to earn my way. When I expressed a wish to experiment with drawings and paintings in color, she told me that she had tried, and given up, water-color painting, and had a lot of idle expensive brushes, and tubes of high-grade water colors. Some of this trove she gave me in exchange for my washing her car.

She was great at having me meet people, and was always setting up appointments for me. One such meeting was with Dr. Leonhard Stejneger, then Curator of Biology at the Smithsonian. He was around 86 years old, a special Presidential Order having exempted him from the usual mandatory age-related retirement. With co-author Dr. Thomas Barbour he was responsible for the frequently updated *Checklist of North American Reptiles and Amphibians*, usually referred to simply as "Stejneger and Barbour." Herpetologists were said to use this publication as The Book on which to swear when taking a solemn oath. To me, meeting him was like a divinity student securing an audience with Jehovah

He was thoroughly approachable, however, demanding neither obeisance nor burnt offering, and set me at ease by just chatting, remembering the old days. One story was about the observational powers of Spencer Fullerton Baird, whose eye, he said, was so dependable that he had stolen a march on another biologist, prepublishing him with a formal and accurate description of a new family, genus and species after no more than a pirated glance at a jar of preserved lizards. This had happened in 1858, when Dr. Stejneger was only eight years old, but he had heard the story like this:

János Xantus, the celebrated Hungarian-born collector, had sent from Fort Tejon, California, a jar containing a number of pickled small lizards of a species new to scienc. Dr. Baird, the story goes, walked into a colleague's lab, picked up the jar, gazed at the lizards, commented upon their unusual appearance, and asked where they had come from and who had sent them. He then went out and wrote a perfectly accurate description of a new genus and species, *Xantusia vigilis* —known in the vernacular as the Yucca Night Lizard— belonging to a then-new family, Xantusiidae. This formal description was published in the *Proceedings of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science* in 1858.

Baird was at the Smithsonian for some 37 years, during the last nine of which, ending in 1887, he was the Secretary. And at the Smithsonian, "Secretary" means "Director."

Dr. Stejneger asked what herpetological literature I had used in Texas, and upon hearing that my major source at A & M College had been *Crocodylians, Lizards and Snakes of North America* by E. D. Cope (Report of the United States National Museum for 1898 ), he proceeded to recount some similarly wry observations about Edward Drinker Cope at work, especially in paleontological competition with O. C. Marsh.

The taxonomy of lizards in the family Xantusiidae, by the way, owes a lot to the Smithsonian. The family Xantusiidae, the Genus *Xantusia*, and the species, *Xantusia vigilis*, were described by Spencer F. Baird of the Institution, as related in Dr. Stejneger's story. The next species recognized by science was the Island Night Lizard, *Xantusia riversiana*, described by Edward D. Cope in 1883. Then came the Granite Night Lizard, *Xantusia henshawi*, described by Dr. Stejneger in 1893. How do I now know all this? Why, naturally, from the revision of Stejneger and Barbour's Fifth Edition of the *Checklist of North American Reptiles and Amphibians*, skillfully brought up to date in 1953 by Dr. Karl P. Schmidt, and published just after Dr. Stejneger died.

Dr. Cochran also gave me letters of introduction to two herpetologists in New York City: Raymond L. Ditmars, author of *Snakes of the World* and Curator of Reptiles at the Bronx Zoo, and Dr. G. Kingsley Noble at the American Museum of Natural History, with whom I had been in correspondence for some time. Dr. Noble had paid me a nickel apiece for live East Texas lizards of the genera *Anolis*, *Eumeces*, and *Sceloporus*. Without writing for appointments, I hitchhiked up to New York to meet these two scientists. Dr. Noble was away, but Mr. Ditmars was available. He was patient and kind, but didn't offer me a job.

I had somewhat better luck back in Washington when Dr. Cochran sent me to meet Dr. William Mann at the National Zoological Park; he accepted me as a volunteer helper in the reptile house, where I entered realms of glory by being allowed to help clean the cages of some of the non-venomous snakes. I remember being careless in moving an Emerald Tree Boa, which promptly and justly bit me. Rather proudly I showed my bleeding hand to Dr. Mann, who unsympathetically said "Now you know why they call it *Boa canina*!"

All this time I was looking for a regular job, getting to know Washington and reveling in its tremendous resources. For example, newspapers and *Time* magazine were talking about a fabulous folksinger named Huddie Leadbetter (“Leadbelly”), who had, at the direction of folklorist John A. Lomax, just made some recordings for the Library of Congress. So I went to the Library to find out if I could hear them. The clerk at the desk said he didn’t know about those recordings, but suggested I ask Professor Lomax, who was right in the next room!

Professor Lomax was affable but busy, and introduced me to his son Alan, 22 years old, who had just returned from a folk music-collecting trip to Haiti. Alan was all hospitality, even taking me to his apartment, where he and his wife introduced me to my first root beer float—a glass of cold root beer containing a generous scoop of vanilla iced cream. Back at the Library, he let me listen to the aluminum discs of Leadbelly's songs, and we had several happy sessions discussing Texas folk music. He invited me to record some songs for the Archive, but my rather sudden departure from Washington, when I went “on the road” with the Major Bowes Vaudeville Units, delayed this until eleven years later, by which time Dr. Duncan Emrich had become the Curator of the Archive.

I didn't meet Huddie Leadbetter in person until a good many years later, in San Diego, not long before he died..

On our 1936 weekends in Washington, Dad would take Mom and the two girls and me for a drive. He liked to turn corners at random until we were thoroughly lost, then haul out the map and find the way home. And once, when Mom wasn't with us, we happened to be standing next to the White House gate when President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself came through in the back seat of his black limousine. When we got home we lost no time in telling Mom about it. Dad,

according to plan, said "One! Two! Three!" and the four of us chanted in unison "We saw the PRESIDENT!"

One of the things I found time to do was to enroll in and complete a Red Cross course in First Aid, securing my qualification as an Instructor. This course was taught by Commodore Longfellow, an energetic and voluble retired Navy physician. And as a volunteer I taught one evening class in first aid to a group of intercity bus drivers.

My two younger sisters, Nell and Ann, joined me in forming the Texas Trio, and we did quite a bit of performing. Dad arranged for auditions and appearances on several radio programs.

Most weekday mornings, however, were spent in walking from one business establishment to another, seeking work. This was intensely frustrating, and I seethed with anger at the people who didn't have sense enough to hire me. I found that after a morning like this, a visit to the Washington Monument and a quick run all the way up the stairs to the top left me not mad at anybody! Or, if I was too tired for that, a quiet visit to the Lincoln Memorial would help; gazing at the heroic-sized face of the seated statue seemed to render my own troubles insignificant. Then the afternoon would be spent in the restorative calm of Dr. Cochran's lab, or in getting to know other parts of the Museum.

Finally, the job-seeking bore fruit, and a full-time temporary job came through, with the Woodward and Lothrop department store taking me on as a seasonal employee — decorator and show-card writer for the Interior Display department. I was not without experience in this field, having been the only sign-painter during my teen-years in Crockett, Texas, and having installed window displays in Perry's Five-and-Dime store there. By making the most of this experience in my interview I persuaded Woodward and Lothrop to take me on. They paid me

\$13.00 a week. President Roosevelt's National Recovery Act (the NRA) had just been declared unconstitutional by the "nine old men" of the US Supreme Court, and as a result there were no restrictions on working hours. Most of my weeks amounted to more than 60 hours for that \$13.00, and there was never any mention of overtime pay.

My first assignment was to decorate the shelves in a big glass counter in the Notions Department. Remembering how we had done the windows in Penny's dime store back in Texas, I set up a wide variety of "notions" in symmetrical piles and swirls, and hand-lettered a lot of small labels. The labels were OK, and the whole thing looked pretty good to me, but Mr. Herndon, my boss, didn't think much of it. "Hinton," he said, "the idea is NOT to cram as many items as possible into the space you have!", and I had to do it over. The second time was a great improvement.

Much of our decorating work had to be done when the store was closed. Late one night, while we were setting up Christmas trees, one of the career decorators, Leo Grasso, disappeared for a long time. He finally returned to the work group in great hilarity. He had had to use the restroom, and, it being the middle of the night, had ducked into a women's room, because it was the closest. He was sitting there peacefully when suddenly the room was invaded by a horde of young women who had been working late in Accounting, and were tidying up to go home. Leo had been treed in his stall with its door locked and his feet up for nearly an hour. Mr. Herndon was not amused.

Our working day at the store began at noon, and wore on to an indeterminate time, usually around 10:00 or 11:00 PM. We worked six days a week, with Mondays off. This gave me most mornings for the Museum, with Mondays for the Zoo.

Cities were not the same as they are now, and I had no qualms about walking the streets of Washington at any time of the day or night. It was often pleasant to leave work about midnight and walk the seven or so miles to Riverdale, taking a different route each time.

In December, 1936, there came a crisis at the Museum. A very old giant Aldabara tortoise at the Zoo fell ill, and was brought to Dr. Cochran for some tender loving care.

The poor creature seemed to have trouble breathing, and it was decided that oxygen should be administered every hour or so. This meant that someone had to keep watch throughout the night, and I volunteered for the graveyard shift.

I loved those long nights in the silence of that great museum. The night watchman dropped by occasionally, but most of the time it was just the poor old turtle and me. My job was to administer oxygen when its breathing seemed to become labored, and to feed the turtle whenever he looked receptive. I remember on one sleepy occasion carelessly slipping a finger into his mouth along with a piece of banana; he started to bite down, but on feeling the different texture of the finger, the sharp jaws sprang open, and I wasn't injured.

Sometimes after feeding or holding the oxygen mask, I would spend a few minutes roaming about the museum, with the permission of the night watchman.

There was then an extraordinary collection of traditional musical instruments on the mezzanine surrounding the rotunda, and I had spent many hours there even before this night experience. Most of the instruments were behind glass, but one of them—a six-foot African slit-drum made of some dark hardwood—lay right out in the open. This sort of drum, which is used in Africa for signaling, is made from a single log, painstakingly hollowed out through a narrow "H"-shaped slit. Striking the wood at various points along the slit produces tones of different

pitches. In the dim night quiet of the museum, the mere flick of a fingernail would send a hollow echo shivering through the whole rotunda. A minute or two at the drum would send me back, renewed, to the tortoise watch.

The poor old tortoise finally died, and for an autopsy we lugged it over to the Smithsonian building across the Mall, where there was an osteology lab in the basement. (The Smithsonian then lacked a certain order in its arrangements: musical instruments in the Natural History Museum, osteology in the Castle!) Dr. Cochran rounded up all the men, strong and otherwise, that she could find, and we spaced ourselves around the heavy corpse. When the tortoise first came in, a sort of bed had been made for it by covering a large, stout box with a big canvas tarpaulin; the reptile was placed on this throne, with his legs hanging down. This was to keep the sharp edges of his shell from cutting off the circulation in his legs, although in retrospect I think it was this unnatural weight on the plastron (the lower shell) that caused the breathing problems. In any event, the poor creature died in this position.

I was a member of the funerary corps of corpse-carriers, and we picked up the canvas by the edges, which pushed the dead animal's legs upward and inward, causing the air in the lungs to be expelled with a loud lugubrious groan. Startled, we nearly dropped the body, but quickly recovered, and manhandled its 200 pounds through the secret passage (full of pipes and conduits) running under the Mall.

Mr. East, the osteologist, conducted the autopsy, and quickly found what was wrong. He confided to me "After half the world's great scientists have spent weeks worrying about this turtle, his problem can be summed up in three words: He Couldn't Shit!" The remark was not intended for delicate feminine ears, but Dr. Cochran overheard it, and said "Oh! Was it

constipation, then?" And that's what it was; the poor turtle's intestines were packed solid and hard.

In February, Nell and Ann and I made a radio appearance on the Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour in New York, and I was sent immediately to join one of the Bowes Vaudeville Units in Danville, Illinois. I wrote to Dr. Cochran from there, explaining why I had left; then almost 11 years elapsed before I saw her again. At that later time I had been hired as the curator of the Aquarium-Museum at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California. Scripps was getting ready to build a new public aquarium, and the Institution's Director, Dr. Harald Sverdrup, had sent me out to get ideas from aquariums and museums all over the country.

Dr. Cochran was as she had always been—warmly interested, supportive, and helpful. We even found a new bond between us; in my new job, the work was entirely with animals of the sea, and I had developed a keen interest in marine invertebrates, especially the crustaceans. On hearing this, Dr. Cochran dug out a copy of her PhD thesis, which was about crab musculature.

As ever, she wanted me to meet interesting people, and immediately set out to arrange a session with the Museum's crab expert, Dr. Waldo L. Schmitt. Dr. Schmitt's 1921 work—*The Marine Decapod Crustacea of California* (“published by the University of California Press with permission of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and the United States Commissioner of Fisheries”)—had become my *vade mecum* in that subject.

This later visit was in 1947, and by that time the Smithsonian had an interoffice telephone system, which Dr. Cochran used to set up an appointment for me with Dr. Schmitt. . "Dr. Schmitt," she said, “we have a visitor—one of our young men who has gone out and made good. He's with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography out in California, and they're building a public

aquarium. He is traveling all over the country, getting ideas about aquariums, and would like to meet you."

Knowing that Dr. Schmitt had a hearing problem, she spoke distinctly and loudly into the phone. He replied in kind, and as Dr. Cochran had to hold the receiver away from her ear, I could hear his voice quite clearly as he replied.

"He's an impostor! They already HAVE an aquarium at Scripps; I've BEEN there!"

Gentle Dr. Cochran was flustered, but managed to explain that Scripps was planning a *new* aquarium to replace the old one, and Dr. Schmitt finally agreed to see me. He was interested primarily in the academic program at Scripps, and most of our conversation was about how important it was to make sure that every PhD candidate could read and write the German language (which was, indeed, a requirement at Scripps at that time. French too.).

I have visited the US National Museum several times since then, but Dr. Cochran is no longer living, and it's not the same without her. Everything else has changed, too; I understand that now, after closing time, guards with fierce dogs patrol the premises, and there can be no more kids sounding the slit-drum in the middle of the night. And anyway, those instruments on the balcony are no longer there.

4,961 words

## FROM THE JOURNAL

*Coluber flagellum flaviventris*

BLUE RACER

Danville, Illinois.

Feb. 22, 1937

One quiet individual found under an old wooden packing crate in the vacant lot across the alley behind the Fisher Theatre. She made no attempt to escape or bite, remaining docile in my hand while I drew a quick scale pattern of head and body. I released her under the same packing crate.

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"Oh my God! Tex got a SNAKE!"

Louise didn't usually come to the theater until the mandated half-hour before the afternoon show, but for some reason she was early that day. Several other cast members were early, too, and had gone to the dressing rooms. My habit of looking under every available piece of debris had turned up a nice snake in the vacant lot across the alley behind the theater -- a two-foot Blue Racer. Holding this unusually docile creature in my left hand, I sat down on a box close to the stage door, and started drawing a scale diagram of her head. Louise's scream startled not only

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me, but brought several cast members— and Unit Manager Bill McIllwaine—to the stage door.

Bill was not pleased.

"What in God's name are you trying to do?" he hollered. "Get that damn thing away from here! I've had nothing but trouble with you since you got here!"

That wasn't really fair. I'd given him only one bit of trouble on the day before, my first day with the Major Bowes Transcontinental Revue in Danville, Illinois. And that wasn't bad trouble — just a little mix-up about the time of my arrival, and it was due to forgivable ignorance, certainly not to any malicious intent..

I had been sent to join this unit after appearing on the Major Bowes Original Amateur Hour. A weekly hour-long program, this was one of the most popular shows on radio, and was broadcast "from coast to coast." Edward J. Bowes (the self-appropriated title "Major" was apparently from his having had a commission in the US Army Reserves during World War I) had been the managing director of New York's Capitol Theatre, which, from the date of its construction (1909) had carried on the old tradition of the Amateur Night. He introduced the "amateur hour" concept to radio in 1934, with immediate success.

The radio program was a variety show, with pre-selected so-called "amateur " performers competing for the listeners' favors, which were bestowed by telephone voting and mail. Each week some U.S. city was selected as the "Honor City." On February 18, 1937, that honor city was Denver, Colorado, and folks there could call Main 3181 to vote for the "amateur" of their choice. New York residents could vote by calling Murray Hill 8933 as could anyone away from New York or the Honor City, so long as they didn't mind paying for a long-distance call. And in the Honor City, one could pick up mail-in ballots at the local Chrysler dealership. (Chrysler Motors was the sponsor of the show.)

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The Major's opening chant—"The Wheel of Fortune spins: Round and round she goes, and where she stops nobody knows"—was a familiar phrase to practically everyone in the country.

Getting "on the radio," even as a unpaid performer on the Amateur Hour, was a great goal for aspiring entertainers, and for a while prospective participants were streaming in to New York City from all over the country, with no means of support once they got there. Their plight brought forth criticism in the press, which prompted the Major to issue a rule that all applicants must have a local address. Even Washington DC was too far away, but our wise Dad, in correspondence with the Bowes people, used a supplementary address, that of his Aunt, Rosa da Ponte, who lived in New York City.

(My great-aunt Rosa was the sister of my father's mother, and to me she was the very personification of sophistication and mystery. Family lore has it that while she was still Miss Rosa Solomon, and touring in Egypt, she was abducted by "the Sultan of Egypt" as an addition to his harem. With the help of the American consulate, she got out of that scrape, and came home to marry Durante da Ponte, a direct descendant of Lazarus da Ponte, who had been one of Mozart's librettists.)

Some of the winners of the weekly amateur hour were sent out to become admitted professionals, joining one or another of the touring Major Bowes vaudeville units. Vaudeville itself was in the process of dying, and where it survived, it did so in partnership with the motion pictures that were largely responsible for its moribund state. While some theaters had double-feature movies, others showed one movie and a feature-length vaudeville show. Some even had the double feature AND the vaudeville show, but there were almost none left with pure

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vaudeville. There was no more "big-time" vaudeville, which featured advance sales of reserved seats for the original one-a-day show, which had later changed to "two-a-day."

The old vaudeville circuits, through which individual acts had been booked on country-wide tours, were just about gone, and what vaudeville remained was almost entirely in the nature of unit shows. With them, each theater manager could correspond with an agent and arrange for an entire show with one contact and one contract.

Some critics hoped that units such as these could re-vivify vaudeville, but it didn't work out. These Amateur Units were on their last gasp. At one time, Major Bowes had as many as a dozen units on the road, but by 1937, when I joined up, there were only four. Each unit had a relatively short life. Starting with a fanfare of publicity, a new unit would be sent out to play one-week stands in the big theaters of the larger cities, along with first-run movies. The new troupes that year were playing with "Captains Courageous," or "Lost Horizons," or "One Hundred Men and a Girl." As time went on, the unit played in smaller theaters, with "Grade B" or second- and third-run motion pictures, until finally the circuit was exhausted and the unit disbanded. Some cast members were then let go (with train fare provided for the journey home), while others were transferred to other units.

Before one unit died, others would have been formed. Each new one carried some seasoned troupers and some new talent whose recent "winning" on the radio amateur contest made them at least a little newsworthy. In my case, though, this world opened to me without a lot of fuss; I was neither a headliner nor a seasoned trouper. I hadn't won first place, so had not been considered for the top unit. But there happened to be a vacancy on the Transcontinental Revue, which was traveling in the midwest, playing out its fading life in one-night stands, along with older and less-popular movies. So they sent me to Danville, Illinois, where, fortunately, not much

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was expected of me. This gave me a chance to develop a little stage presence, and in general to polish my act. The act did performe get better, and when the Transcontinental Revue closed, I was transferred to a newer unit. This happened several times, and in my second year the management had me traveling with new companies playing week-long stands in such theaters as Chicago's Oriental, with "You Can't Take it With You" on the screen.

In the beginning, I hadn't won even second place on my own. Nell and Ann, my two younger sisters, had joined me in forming the "Texas Trio," and we had been singing semi-professionally around Washington, DC, doing folksongs and turn-of-the-century popular songs. A lot of our material was from oral tradition, while some of it was from sheet music that Mom and Dad had kept since their marriage in 1907.

Our loyal Dad thought that Major Bowes couldn't get along without the Texas Trio. He wrote the necessary applications, giving Aunt Rosa's address as ours, and did all the correspondence. Then he drove us up to New York for the audition. We passed that, and were booked for the 101st weekly performance of The Original Amateur Hour.

During the interview after the audition, it came out that I played a number of other instruments beside the guitar. Dad drove me back to Riverdale to get my harmonicas, accordion, penny whistles, and the ukelin, and after a second solo audition, another spot as a single was made for me on the same program.

All the pre-show interviews and auditions were conducted by Bessie Mack, a large and pleasant woman who was related in some way to the Major (and to Ted Mack, whose show I came to work with later, and who still later carried the Amateur Hour format into television.) The radio show was billed as "unrehearsed," but the colloquy with Ms. Mack was in fact a way of working out an informal and unwritten script.

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"Okay. Now here the Major will ask your names, and you, Sam, will tell him. What are you going to say?"

"We're the Texas Trio — Sam, Nell, and Ann Hinton."

"Do you really come from Texas?"

"Yes; our home was in Crockett, Texas, but now the family lives in Riverdale, Maryland.

Right now we're visiting our Aunt Rosa here in New York."

"All right. Now what do you do?"

"Well, we sing folksongs."

"I'm not sure everybody will understand that. Can you put it another way?"

"How about saying 'old-time songs?'"

"That will be all right. "

And so it went. In the interview for my solo portion of the act, we discussed some of the instruments used.

"What do you call this instrument?"

"It's a ukelin."

"It looks like a Hindu fakir's bed of nails. How do you play it?"

"Well, with your right hand you use a violin bow to play a melody on these upper strings, while your left hand picks chords on the lower ones. "

"Where did you get it?"

"The proprietor of a second-hand junk shop in Beaumont, Texas, gave it to me. He knew my grandfather, Judge Duffie." (The proprietor of this run-down pawn-shop had seen me gazing at the instrument in the window, and had asked me if I was Judge Duffie's grandson . Upon hearing my affirmative answer, he made me a present of the two-dollar ukelin.)

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"And what is this one, that you just took out of your pocket?"

"It's a tin whistle — we call it a fife. "

"And where in the world do you get hold of a fife?"

"You can buy it at the fife-and-ten-cent store. "

"Oh! That's good! We'll use it on the show — but YOU won't say it; the Major will."

And he did.

(A story widely circulated among the various units told how Ted Lester, whose real name was Teodor Litwinski, had not followed the prepared script. Ted played an astonishing number of instruments, and played them very well. Included among them were two violins. According to the informal script worked out with Bessie Mack, the Major was to say

"Who made your violins, Ted?"

And Ted was supposed to give the name of the New Jersey lutanist who had, in fact, made the instruments.

Then the Major was to say archly:

"Well, who made your bows?" (pronounced, of course, "Who Major Bowes?"), and laughter from the audience was expected to drown out any response that Ted might make.

But Ted's command of English was not sufficient for him to get the joke, and, always trying to be helpful, he gave on the air a full answer that took care of both questions at once.

"Who made my violins? It was Bill Williams of Orange, New Jersey. He also made all my bows."

Then there was a long silence.)

All the contestants were supposed to be in great fear over the possibility of "getting the gong," a somewhat gentler version of "getting the hook" in live amateur contests. As far as we

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could tell, however, the gong was part of the script. An auditioner might be told "You can go on if you want to, but the Major will hit the gong, and you'll have to stop. You'll still have the satisfaction of having been heard on a coast-to-coast broadcast." Early in the program's history, gongworthy contestants were not warned in advance, and there were tales of broken hearts. Later, in almost every week there seemed to be at least one act willing to be gonged off. That night — February 18, 1937 — nobody got the gong, but the program was otherwise pretty typical of the Bowes' hour. Lew and Paul played harmonica and guitar; the Major read a long panegyric to Denver, the Honor City; Mercedes Bonger was a lyric soprano; Kenneth Brown was a five-year-old player of a 12-bass piano accordion, doing "Anchors Aweigh;" next came the Texas Trio, singing "When We Gonna Marry?" Then there was James Bennet, tenor; Florence Winston, Soprano; Charlie Johnson, tap dancer (and very good!); Mary Ignatovich and Angelo Donato, yodelers; Fred Travelena, lyric tenor (whose son is now a power in Hollywood); Lucille Williams, blues singer; then I came on again as a novelty instrumentalist; the closing act was the Gospel Light Quartet.

( I would never have remembered all these details, and didn't write them down at the time, but learned about them more than 50 years later. My friend Joe Hickerson, then the Curator of the Folk Music Archive at the Library of Congress, discovered recorded transcriptions of the program and arranged for me to get a taped copy. What an Archive that must be! )

Well, both the Trio and my solo were well received, and the phone calls to that well-known Murray Hill number, and to the Denver number, eventually showed the Trio in second place. And during the program the Major announced that there was a place for me as a single with the Transcontinental Revue in Danville, Illinois. I had never heard of Danville, Illinois, but an instant

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picture formed in my head of a veritable Xanadu, a vale of romance toward which everyone on earth must surely aspire.

At the close of the show, Ms. Mack talked to us about going on the road. Nell and Ann, 17 and 13 years old, were thought too young to go without parental supervision, but it seemed possible that I, about 6 weeks short of 20, and with two years of college behind me, might be able to take care of myself. The pay was to be a princely \$40.00 a week; all I had to pay for was meals and hotels, and the Bowes office would furnish transportation. Somewhat earlier, the press had spoken of cruel exploitation by the Bowes management, but actually, \$40 a week was pretty good pay for the 1930s.

I'm ashamed to admit that at the time I took no thought at all about the disappointment that my sisters might have been feeling. Neither of them, however, was of a jealous temperament, and nothing happened to mar my ecstatic preparations for this wonderful opportunity. Photographs were taken, some with all my instruments, and "Texas Sam Hinton, Folksinger and Novelty Instrumentalist" was launched onto an unsuspecting stage. Ms. Mack gave me a train ticket to Danville, and all sorts of motherly advice.

"Now here's your train ticket to Danville; you be careful with it, and don't lose it! And here's a twenty-dollar advance on your first week's pay. Have you got a wallet or something to carry it in? When you get to Danville ask somebody how to get to the Fisher Theater, and when you get there, you report to Mr. Bill McIllwaine. He'll probably have you just watch the first show, then rehearse for a while with the emcee and the piano player who will accompany you when you are actually on stage. And oh yes — you take the subway from here to Central Station. And remember — your first train goes only to Chicago, and there you have to change trains. You have a three-hour wait for the Danville train."

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What I didn't understand was that this wait in Chicago involved changing not only trains but train stations as well. It was widely known to experienced travelers — but certainly not to me — that the railroads could carry hogs straight through Chicago, but that people were not so highly regarded.

Loaded down with a suitcase, a guitar, a small 12-bass piano-keyboard accordion, a ukelin, and a bagful of books, harmonicas, pennywhistles, and jawharps — and with no cases for any of the larger instruments — I reached Chicago, and settled down to wait for the Danville train. As its time approached, I went to the ticket window for information, only to learn that my train left from another station, 'way across town! I don't remember how I got to that other station, but however it was, it was too late. That train was long gone, and there was no other until the next day.

Ms. Mack had given me the phone number of the theater in Danville, so I expended part of my store of coins on a phone call to Mr. McIllwaine.

"What the hell am I supposed to do? " he shouted. "Here they send you out, and I plan on you being here for tonight's shows, and you don't show up. What the hell!"

Well, it was still early in the day, so I thought I'd better do my best to get to Danville, and hitchhiking proved to be quite successful. I got there in plenty of time for the first show of the evening.

But this didn't appease Bill.

"What the hell am I supposed to do? First you tell me you can't get here, and then you DO get here. How can I run a show that way?"

This was just Bill's way; he hollered a lot, but I was soon to learn that there was not much real malevolence in him. He had me go on in the first show that evening, and Howard Mott, the

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pianist, without any rehearsal, followed along as if we had practiced for months, demonstrating the remarkable skills of the good professional accompanist.

So I settled down in show business. Our show lasted about an hour and a half, and contained the mix typical of such stage units. Dave Barry was the emcee who introduced all the acts and performed a solo of his own as an impersonator. The headline act was The Mimicking Melodiers, three young men with four or five instruments, who imitated the orchestras and solos of Wayne King, Henry Bussey, Ted Lewis, Guy Lombardo, Clyde McCoy and others, and were the biggest hit of the show. "Windy Jack" Veltri brought forth complex rhythms from spoons, and recognizable tunes from balloons, fire extinguishers, and tire pumps. Johnny Jewell was a fantastic plectrum tenor banjo player. Frances Berk was a lovely New York girl of about my own age, who sang and impersonated the stars of stage and screen. (A year later, Frances was with the Ted Mack Precision Rhythm Revue when I joined up with them, and still later she married into the Baruch family in California, becoming a sister-in-law to the famous Miranda of the Marais and Miranda team. Before her untimely death, she became one of the best-loved story-tellers in Oakland, California.)

There were others, too, but my memory doesn't provide the details. There was a dancer named Louise (who roomed with Frances Berk), and probably another impersonator or two.

We did three to five shows every day, usually including at least one afternoon matinee, and most of our engagements were one- or- two-night stands. Here is the first schedule I sent home to Mom and Dad and the girls:

Feb. 21-22, 1937: Fisher Theatre, Danville, Illinois.

Feb. 23-24: Empress Theatre, Decatur, Illinois

Feb. 25: Palace Theatre, Peoria, Illinois

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Feb. 26-27: Majestic Theatre, Bloomington, Illinois

Feb. 28: Waukegan Theatre, Waukegan Illinois

March 1: OPEN

March 2: Tivoli Theatre, Michigan City, Indiana

March 3: Jefferson Theatre, Goshen, Indiana

March 4: OPEN

March 5: One day with the Anniversary Unit in Hamilton, Ohio

March 6: Civic Auditorium, Grand Rapids, Michigan

And so on, through Aurora, Elgin, Galesburg, Kankakee, La Salle, Springfield, Streeter, and lots of other places in Illinois, Michigan, and Indiana. It was mostly easy work, although I remember an Easter Sunday near Gary, Indiana, where we arrived early in the morning after an all-night bus ride, did a benefit at a local orphanage, a rehearsal with the house orchestra, and then five shows! We were all pretty tired.

I had never been in the midwest, and everything was new and wonderful. Many of the birds, reptiles, and plants were new to me. There were fascinating people, too. In one town (I think it was Waukegan, but don't remember for sure) I heard that poet and folksinger Carl Sandburg was booked for a lecture-recital, and was staying at a certain hotel. I got up enough nerve to visit him there, and was graciously received. He autographed my copy of his "American Songbag", then asked me to sing a song or two. After that, he himself strummed a bit on my guitar. (His was packed away, he said.) I played my guitar with reverence after that, and for some time was reluctant even to re-tune those hallowed strings...

I loved being on stage in front of an audience, but I also loved those OPEN dates. Many of the towns had historical and natural history museums to visit, and the urban areas were small

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enough to be left behind by a short hike into a countryside far different from any I had known before. Plants and birds abounded, and every stone or other object begged to be turned over, promising—and often delivering—something different and exciting in the way of reptiles and amphibians.

The Transcontinental Revue was disbanded in Evansville after the performances at the Coliseum on May 6, 1937. In 43 days I had done my act more than 150 times, and was beginning to learn some of the rudiments of show biz, and to develop a modicum of stage presence. So the office sent me to join the Sunshine Unit.

Bessie Mack continued her motherly attentions by mail. The company that made ukelins was still in existence, and they wrote to the Bowes Office: I was the first person, they said, to have played a ukelele on a coast-to-coast radio network, and they rewarded me by sending me a fine new one! It even had a carrying case. Mrs. Mack forwarded it on to me, along with a letter instructing me to be sure and write my thanks to the company. I did so, but did not notify Mrs. Mack, and she sent two follow-up reminders before I finally wrote to her that it had been done. I still have that ukelele.

(By the way, in Puyallup, Washington, a young man came to see me with a ukelele that he had electrified. There was a microphone pickup in the round sound-hole—this in 1938, long before electrically amplified instruments had become standard. Amplification didn't change the timbre much: it was, as always, pretty bad.)

In the theaters, the backstage areas were fascinating. These old structures had been built for live performances, and the stages were equipped for the quick changing of scenery. Some of the curtains were "travelers," which opened out from the middle. "Teasers" were fixed curtains at each side, almost parallel to the front of the stage, angled and arranged so as to hide the offstage

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wings from the audience. In a few theaters they were fabric-covered wooden frames. Other curtains were "drops," and had to be raised and lowered; this meant that in the better theaters there was a "fly" — an area above and behind the proscenium arch. The fly had to be high enough to hide an unrolled drop in its raised position.

All this was controlled by a forest of ropes, sometimes with an elaborate counterweight system, and the fly itself was never lighted. Standing on the stage and looking up showed ropes and curtains disappearing above into a mysterious darkness .

Sound movies were only ten years old at the time, and the loud-speaking Vitaphone or Movietone horns were not built in, but were mounted on rolling scaffolds. Stagehands pushed them off into the wings to make room for the stage show. These stagehands were just as interesting as their domain. The spider webs of ropes and pulleys were superficially similar to the simpler parts of the rigging of sailing ships, and in the '30s many of the hands were retired seamen who had worked under sail. They were nearly all kind to me, answering all my questions, and showing me how to tie a clove-hitch to ensure that bridled lines wouldn't slide inward along the bat. Where there was no built-in counterweight system, they showed me how to make a bowline-on-the-bight to fasten sandbags as counterweights on the vertical lines, or if there wasn't enough slack in the rope for this, how to use a clove hitch to tie a smaller rope to the main line. I'm sure that practically all of these veterans of the days of sail are gone now, but their influence is still felt. For instance, some of today's much younger stage workers on Broadway apparently refer to the stage as "the deck."

Bill noted my interest in all this, and soon gave me the job of Stage Manager for the unit, which meant mainly seeing to the props and the baggage in use and in transport, seeing that the whole cast was in the theater half an hour before curtain time, giving the general "Five

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Minutes!" call at the right time, and personally notifying each act five minutes before his or her scheduled appearance on stage.. It made me feel pretty important, and also carried a raise of ten bucks a week. This position and its resulting total of \$50.00 a week went along with me to the other units.

We were paid every week, in cash, and while there were no withholding deductions, the management was apparently paying into that new institution, Social Security. I found that I could live quite well without using up all my salary, even buying a few books, and each week I was able to send home a Postal Money Order for a few dollars. This money was to be placed in a savings account toward resuming my college education, or spent as necessary by the family.

We usually had a chartered bus to take us from one theater to the next, and these trips were often at night. Once the bus was loaded, it was quite a relaxing time. I had a cigar box containing a disarticulated cat skeleton, left over from my National Youth Administration job at Texas A & M College, which had involved helping prepare all sorts of things for the zoology labs. It was very pleasant to drift off to sleep in the dark bus while handling the bones and learning to identify each one by feel.

We often got to the next town in early morning. The show's advance man would have arranged everything at a hotel, and we were permitted to sign in before the posted check-in time, without having to pay an additional day's rent. As a money-saving ploy, most of us paired off in sharing hotel rooms, and on my first unit, Bruce Warnock was my roomy. He was the trumpet player in the Mimicking Melodiers, and we got along fine. Today, about 70 years later, he lives in nearby Del Mar, California, and it is my pleasure to see him occasionally. Although now confined to a wheelchair, he still plays trumpet in a local band. The hotels we frequented in 1937 and '38 cost \$1.00 or \$1.50 a night, and some of them were pretty run-down. Bathtubs and toilets

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were down the hall, one on each floor. But what the heck? We were in Show Business, making forty bucks a week (fifty for the Stage Manager!), and seeing the world. Who could ask for more?

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4594 words

**CHAPTER 3-HORNED GREBE AND THE VAUDEVILLE SHOW**

FROM THE JOURNAL

Colymbus auritus

HORNED GREBE

Everett, Washington, 3 miles south, on Puget Sound.

November 1, 1937

Small flocks of these little birds were quite common, keeping fairly well to themselves, away from other sea birds. They dived, both when alarmed and when feeding, with so quick a motion that it could not be clearly observed.

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There's nothing quite like a west coast bay or estuary in the late Fall, when shorebirds and sea-birds in their incredible numbers fill the air and mud flats with their ceaseless activity. Great shadowy flocks rise up, wheel about in unison, change color as the sun catches them differently in their banking tuns. They usually made a running landing on the beach a few yards farther on. On the water, grebes and loons and scoters alternate sedate swimming with sudden dives, while phalaropes spin madly about in small endless circles. An occasional

heron or egret, standing still or stalking in stately slow motion, provides a focal point of quiet amidst all the frenetic activity. The human observer can sit on the ground in comfort, even if in some dampness, watching through binoculars, and perhaps is granted a quick glimpse of a shy Sora Rail among the reeds.

From the theater in Everett I didn't have to walk very far to get into the shorebird country, and that was just as well; there wasn't a great deal of spare time. The Ted Mack "Precision Rhythm Revue" was doing four shows a day, and I was pretty busy in all of them. As a token orchestral guitarist I sat on the stage except when doing my solo act or, as the designated Stage Manager for the unit, helping the local stage crew. My seat in the orchestra was on the stage-right end of the upper tier of risers, and it was easy to slip away, take off my orchestral white tie and dinner jacket and don the blue jeans and checked shirt of my solo appearance..

There was often quite a bit of staging to do in these shows, and several productions required simultaneous activities. If the theater's crew didn't have enough stage hands, I was often permitted to work with what they had. The fact that we belonged to different trade unions didn't seem to make any difference. I was with the AFA (American Federation of Artists, later to be incorporated with AGVA, the American Guild of Variety Artists) while they were with the National Alliance of Stage Employees (which later became the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and is still going strong.)

In one number in the Ted Mack show, a large semi-transparent gauze curtain (called a "scrim") had to be lowered at the front of the stage and a set of bar chimes, attached to a regular batten, had to be lowered from the fly to chest-height, just behind the scrim. At the same time, two blue-gelled "olivets"—large lights on portable stands—were to be turned on in the wings

at both sides of the stage, while the other stage lights were dimmed. Three members of the orchestra stepped down from the first row of the risers, picked up mallets, and played "In a Monastery Garden" on the chimes in "hocket" fashion (each player being responsible for only two or three notes of the scale, after the manner of Swiss Bell Ringers), with orchestral background. The blue lights from both sides, plus the softening effect of the scrim, gave the romantic appearance of a mysterious moonlit night.

In Everett, there weren't enough stage hands to do all this at once, so I was detailed to lower and raise the chimes. This theater had no built-in counterweight system, and those chimes were heavy, so I improvised counterweights by tying sandbags to the descending side of the endless control rope. I partly tried this out well before the first show, and it seemed to work fine; it was evident that hardly any force was required to raise the chimes up into their resting place in the fly, out of sight above and behind the proscenium.

When it was time for the first performance of that number, I slipped offstage and manned the chime ropes, and on cue lowered them into the playing position. At the end of the piece, I started pulling down the line to raise the chimes again, and found that my lack of real stage-crew experience was showing: I had tied on too many sandbags, so that the counterweights were heavier than the chimes. Of its own volition, the line started running downward through my hands as the chimes made their swift ascent. I should have reached across the large vertical pulley and stopped the upward motion by grabbing the upward-moving part of the endless rope, but didn't think of that. Instead, I stupidly watched the rope run down faster and faster through my hands until the descending sandbags thumped onto the top of my head.

This knocked me to the floor, dazed. When my senses returned, the band was just re-assembling after having scattered into the wings in panic as the chimes crashed noisily into the high grid to which the upper “sheaves” (pulleys) were attached. The chimes didn't fall, but the band members told me that it sounded as if the whole theater was coming down. That was a great moment in the history of the American Theater, and I have always regretted having been unconscious for the climax.

Another number in that show was less complicated, but involved having a man in the balcony in front of the main spotlight. Fortunately for the well-being of the theaters, I was not permitted to do anything electrical, but the electricians said it was OK for me to twirl the "lobster" while they handled the spotlight. The lobster is a slotted wheel with the axle extended to form a handle; you hold the handle in one hand while spinning the wheel with the other. When held in front of the spotlight, it gives a flickering effect, very much like a jerky old movie. (Today, the effect would be obtained with strobe lights.) The orchestra stood up and played "The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down" while bending their knees to move up and down, some going up while others were going down, like the bobbing horses of the carousel, in movements made to look jerky by the flickering of the lobster-modified spot light. I never made any big mistakes as the lobster spinner, but it was hard to get from the stage up into the balcony so as to arrive in time. In most theaters, the only way up into the balcony was through the lobby, and the quickest way to get there was to go out the stage door and around to the front of the theater, entering at the box-office. At every theater where I was the delegated lobster operator, I made myself known to the box-office attendant and the ticket-takers, telling them that I would be needing to come through that way. I was quite conscious of the

story of the stage magician who disappeared from the cabinet on stage, and was then to come running down the aisle in the audience part of the theater. On one occasion, however, having gone out the stage door in the alley behind the theatre, he was denied entrance at the front of the theater, and the climax of his trick just sort of fizzled out.

Incidentally, I asked and asked, but have never found out why the lobster was called that.

The finale of that show also called for several things to be done simultaneously, but as I was on the stage sharing in the bows with the other acts, my contribution to those stage effects had to be done before the show. One job was to pass ropes through sets of harness rings stitched to a large split curtain, part of the impedimenta carried by the show, and placed behind the band. If I had strung it up properly, a stagehand's pulling of a single rope caused the curtains to open in a "butterfly" pattern. This revealed Miss Florence Hin Low, our diminutive Chinese contortionist dancer, looking serenely at the audience with her chin on the floor of her platform, her back bent almost into a circle, and her feet in front of her head—all this on a high platform that had to be constructed anew at every theater.

The hardest work of the stage manager was to pack all the show's gear without damaging it, get it safely onto the bus or train, and unload it at the next stop. That 40-foot scrim was a headache, because it had to be folded so carefully; this could be done only by spreading it out on the floor of the stage, and THAT involved a careful prior sweeping up of the whole area. Less delicate, but heavy and bulky, were the large backdrop and the set of butterfly travelers, as well as Lou Webb's crated Hammond organ.

When we traveled by train, loading was easier than on the bus, for the unit's advance man would have made arrangements for two pickup trucks and drivers to get everything to the

depot. The two truck-drivers and I would have little trouble in lifting the gear into the trucks, then transferring it to baggage carts at the station. But when we had a chartered bus, it was a harder job, for the stagehands would have left after having taken down all our curtains, leaving only the bus driver and me to do the packing. And some of the heaviest things had to be stowed in the outside racks on top of the bus.

The heaviest item was Lou Webb's Hammond Organ, which, in its crate, weighed in at about 200 pounds. Sliding this crate up the hand-rails on the sides of the ladder and onto the baggage rack was really hard for two men, and I had the bright idea of making a portable derrick to ease the work. With the unit manager's OK and cash, I found a blacksmith who cut and threaded a lot of 2-inch galvanized pipe to my specifications. The idea was to have these pipes lying in the aisle inside the bus, then to assemble them into a three-legged derrick, attach a block and tackle, hoist the organ into its place and back the bus under it.

Unfortunately, I never was able to assemble the cursed thing. I still don't know if my instructions were wrong or if the blacksmith didn't follow them, but in any event I couldn't make it go together in any useful way. Dick and Leota Nash, a cowboy and cowgirl rope-and-whip act, used to prepare and peddle a "Unit News" typewritten paper, and they listed "Hinton's Derrick" along with other highlights of history such as the San Francisco Earthquake and the Johnstown Flood.

That problem was finally solved in a much simpler way that should have occurred to me earlier. Most theaters were on the ground floor of a multi-story building, and every one had a fire escape in the alley, near the stage door. I found it easy to shin up to the first landing of the

fire escape, attach the block and tackle, raise the organ, then drive the bus under it. One learns a lot in show biz!

With some of the units the handling of the baggage presented special problems. On one of the Major Bowes shows we had a young woman who tap-danced — upside down! She stood on her head with her feet tapping against a platform extending horizontally from a cast-iron pedestal. This contraption was heavy and awkward, but nevertheless had to be stowed on top of the bus. Much to my gratification, she was with our show for only a few stands.

These chartered buses, together with hotels and theaters, constituted our home, and in some ways the bus was very homey. Jumps between shows were usually relatively short, often made late at night. For those hops, the cast members brought their personal luggage to the theater at the afternoon show on the last day of that engagement. The bus would park in the alley by the stage door, and during the afternoon the driver and I would stow all their gear in the baggage compartment, through doors on the outside of the bus, opening to provide access to the storage space beneath the inner floor. Then when the last show was done, most of the cast would go out to eat, while the stagehands and I would take down all the show paraphernalia and get it ready for travel. Then the bus driver and I would move it all into or onto the bus. The other cast members would come back, put their makeup and overnight cases in the inside overhead racks, and settle down for the trip to the next stand.

These shows were Variety Shows in the true sense of the term. In my mind they all run together, and it's hard to remember which acts were in each of the units. But the "acts" are unforgettable as individuals....

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"Windy Jack" Veltri made squeaky music on balloons, tire pumps and fire extinguishers, and complex rhythms on a pair of spoons. Jack had lived in a New York City orphanage until he ran away at 12, then, until he joined the Navy at 17, he scrounged a living all by himself, sleeping on park benches or in the foyers of apartment houses. I don't know where he picked up his music. Easy to get along with, Jack was nevertheless something of a cynic. While the troupe was playing in Oregon, he joined a bunch of us in taking a tour of the Grand Coulee Dam then under construction. His reaction was typical: "I didn't see nuttin much; just a big hole and a lot of doit!"

Windy Jack didn't sing as part of his act, but he knew a lot of songs — some of them in Italian. There was one in English that he repeated to me quite often, always saying that I should learn it, as it would fit very well into my act.. He sang one stanza over and over for me:

"Great Granddad, wenna wes' was young,  
Barred his door wit' a wagon tongue.  
Twenny-one days wen he didn' look out:  
'Boomalacka, boomalacka!' shotgun shout!"

(I later learned that the whole song "Great Granddad" was a poem by Lowell Otus Reese which in 1925 had appeared in the Saturday Evening Post , and immediately passed into the oral tradition as a song. John I. White recorded it in 1929, and wrote a sequel about "Great Grandma." It, too, became a folksong.. There are lots of versions of "Great Granddad," , but I never met anybody but Jack Veltri who had the "Boomalacka" lines.)

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Another natural musician was Theodore Litwinski, whose name had been changed by Major Bowes to Ted Lester. A dark gentle man of Polish background, Ted came on stage in top hat, tails, and swirling scarlet-lined cape, with a silver-headed cane in his hand. The cane turned out to be a flute in disguise, and underneath the cape was a whole arsenal of other instruments, which he played with great skill. Ambidextrous, he played the violin both right-handedly and left-handedly, switching from one to the other without missing a beat.

He was the one who had confounded the Major by not following the informal script on the radio show, thus spoiling the Major's planned little joke.

Ted was a brooding sort, and often felt that nobody liked him. Once in Denver he and I stepped out the stage door only to meet with a strong gust of cold wind, and he said:

"You see that, Tex? Even the wind's against me!"

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Some of the stage names bestowed by the Major were, in my opinion, unfortunate. Adrienne Morin, who really was French, spoke with a French accent and sang, in French, the "Bell Song" from Lakmé, but the Bowes office sent her out under the name of Ruth O'Neill.

"Skip" Hanlon had a rugged mischievous Irish face like a leprechaun, but his name was changed to Johnny Jewell. In retrospect, I think it likely that some of these performers had established themselves in professional show business before appearing on the Amateur Hour, and the Major, anxious to preserve the fictitious "amateur" concept, insisted on a name change.

I don't know Johnny Jewell's background, but he was certainly the best plectrum banjoist I've ever heard—at least as good as Eddie Peabody. He was older than most of the members of our unit, and made pontifical pronouncements about any subject that came up in

conversation, and he didn't relish my arguing with him on some points (He said "The deeper a deep-sea diver goes, the more weight he has to carry, or else he'll get part way down and just float around there.") and when he autographed his picture for me it was with the written admonition "A little aging and you'll make a fine man!" I've had a LOT of aging, and hope he was right.

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One of my best friends was Frances Berk (née Frances Rabinowitz), a singing mimic who sang songs as they would be sung by Fanny Brice, Katherine Hepburn, Mae West, Edna Mae Oliver, and other female notables. She was with the first unit I joined, and later also with the Ted Mack Show. Frances was interested in matters other than show business, and in our conversations we solved most of the world's problems. She later married into the Baruch/Pardo family, which boasts a number of fine musicians ("Miranda" Marais, wife of Josef Marais, being probably the best-known), settled in the San Francisco Bay area and became a skilled and popular story-teller.

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Marshall Rogers played on glass goblets. With meticulously de-oiled moistened finger tips, he rubbed the rims of his glasses to produce sweet pure tones. Most such sets of goblets require the addition of water in order to tune to precise pitch—the more water in a goblet, the lower its tone — but Marshall had collected a two-octave chromatic set that was perfectly in tune without needing any water. He even had spares of every pitch. He mentioned one day that he had only one spare of the middle B-flat, and would feel safer if he had another backup. The manager of the unit saw in this a great "news" opportunity, and set it up.

The city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (and maybe the whole state; I don't know), had a "blue law" that forbade live entertainment on Sundays, and shows such as ours were often booked for a Sunday engagement in Steubenville, Ohio, just across the Ohio River.

Steubenville, of course, is famous for its glass works, and an arrangement was made for Marshall to visit the factory on a Friday morning, carrying a B-flat tuning fork and searching for a goblet of that pitch. (Tapping a glass lightly produces the same pitch as stroking it.) An appropriate goblet was duly found, and formally presented to Marshall, while a brace of news photographers recorded the historic event. Then Marshall set up his set of glasses and gave a short program for the factory personnel.

I well remember this program, for I was privileged to play with the maestro! There was no piano accompaniment at this site, and two players could produce more harmony than one. We played "The Missouri Waltz," having practiced that a few times backstage. On the well-attended Sunday matinee back in Steubenville theater, however, with an accompanying piano, Marshall reverted to his solo performance.

Incidentally, the washing of the fingers was quite a chore; you had to use soap to remove all skin oil, then get rid of every vestige of soap by repeated rinsing. I've always hoped that Mr. Rogers, quite a bit older than I, lived to see the advent of detergents, for they make the job a whole lot easier.

These fragile musical glasses had to be very carefully handled, but this didn't add to my burdens as stage manager, for Marshall did the whole thing himself. He packed them away in specially fitted wooden cases, and personally saw to their loading on bus or train. There was a story that a manager of one of the units before I came aboard had played a "joke" on Marshall.

Stagehands always carried the table containing the glasses off the stage while Marshall was taking his bows. This idiot manager had prepared a cardboard box full of old jars and bottles, and while Marshall was still on stage making his “thank-you speech” to the audience, he crashed this down on the floor in the wings. Marshall is said to have thought that the stage hands had dropped the table, and faltered in his gracious speech. Then he came into the wings and fainted, crumpling to the floor amid the broken trash glass, and later having to go into a hospital for observation. I never asked Marshall if this was a true story.

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There was another novelty musician who played tuned sleigh bells. He played well, but his intelligence was not of the highest, and he was often the butt of jokes. One such operation had some of the cast members (not me, honest!) fill his suitcase backstage with the large iron weights that are used in built-in counterweight systems. When the bell master tried to pick up his suitcase, it proved to be extremely heavy, and instead of investigating the reason for this, he used all his strength to pick it up, and tore out the bottom of the case.

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I've forgotten the name of the saw player. He had a special musical saw, bright and shiny, with no teeth, made expressly for musical purposes by the Sandvik manufacturers. It was so resonant that he could play the whole first section of "Little Sir Echo" with only four strokes of the bow. He was very serious about his art, and loved to talk about it.

"People often ask me if I could play on a regular carpenter's saw," he said, "and I tell 'em 'Yes, of course. And Fritz Kreisler could probably play pretty well on a two-dollar fiddle. The saw I use is more like a Stradivarius.'"

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Tex Gilmore, animal imitator, did not pretend to be an amateur. A comfortable, middle-aged "country" person, he was quite proud of having worked behind the scenes in movies, his biggest role having been in the sound-track for "All Quiet On the Western Front." In one scene, Lew Ayres, as a homesick young German soldier, looks wistfully skyward as a flock of wild geese passes over, out of camera range; the wing-beat sounds and the honks were made by Tex Gilmore. He really was good, an expert in making more than one sound at once that would merge into a realistic sound of nature, and he was quite willing to teach me the art. Sing a sharp high tone while making a lip "raspberry" sound, and you have the Canada goose honking. For the crow, do a sort of quack in the corner where your cheek meets your molars, and at the same time say a high-pitched "Aahh!"

This started me practicing my humming and whistling at the same time—repeating the process of first making the sound of a train whistle, and later doing "Frere Jacques" as a round in two parts, and still later doing a quodlibet with "Swanee River" and "Humoresque" at the same time. I occasionally added this to my act whenever we played a house with a microphone, which fortunately for the audiences was not often.

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Another old-timer was Cy Landry, who had been in vaudeville for many years, and was a walking encyclopedia of vaudeville routines. Some of his stereotyped antics were always good for laughs. One was walking off the stage behind a waist-high opaque representation of a horizontal balustrade, bending his knees more with each step so that he appeared to be

descending a staircase. On the last exit, some real steps had been slid into place and he went UP.

His tour de force was a Parisian "Apache" dance with an imaginary partner.

Cy was a small man of delicate build, and wore moderately elongated clown shoes. One day I set my No. 13's beside his costumed feet and Cy said "My God! And he ain't kiddin'!"

If Cy didn't get the right kind of audience response, he would fall back on some other vaudeville clichés. Staggering to the apron of the stage, hands extended as if to feel his way, he would say to the audience "Is the curtain up?" Or sometimes it was "I know you're out there! I can hear you breathin'!"

Cy told us that once when he was out of work and hungry, he passed a restaurant with a big glass window. Through it he could see a large woman devouring a large steak, with juice running down her many chins. "Boy," said Cy, "did I wish I was her lavalier!" (This may have been Cy's rendition of some other vaudevillian's routine: I don't remember.)

I've often wished I had talked more extensively with Cy, to get what is now called an "oral history" of the great days of vaudeville.

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Jimmy Edmundson had an unusual act; he could talk, read and write backwards. He had a large blackboard on the stage, and would ask for words from the audience. No matter what word was given, he could pronounce it backwards, then write it on the board from right to left, starting with the last letter. He often arranged to have a couple of shills planted in the audience. One would shout the place-name "Punxsutawney", which is hard enough to spell

frontwards. Another would holler "Ex-Lax!" and Jimmy would pronounce and write it, then say "Perhaps I should warn you, sir, that this show still has an hour to go!"

He concluded his act by singing "Show Me the Way to Go Home" backwards. His pronunciation was based on spelling rather than sound; for example, the sibilant "sh" really has the same sound both ways, but he pronounced it backward by making it into a simple "s" sound. The song "Show me the way to go home;/ I'm tired and I want to go to bed." was sung as:

"Woess eem et yaw oot og emo;

My derit dna I t-naw oot og ott deb..."

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Every show had to have at least one impersonator. One of them — I think it was Joe Higgins — used to close his act with an imitation of the then-popular radio comedian, Joe Penner ("You wanna buy a duck?"). After some Penner talk and quacking, he would sing a song, starting it by singing a long "Ohhh — " after which the piano or orchestra would come in, right on pitch. I once asked Joe if he had perfect pitch. He didn't know what that meant, and I explained that his "Ohhh..." was right where it should be for the key he was to sing in. And I felt pretty guilty for bringing this up when that night, he started his "Ohh..." in a wavering uncertain tone, and the pianist had to cue him with the right note before he could go on.

(I experienced this sort of self-consciousness myself when Frances Berk asked me about the tin whistle. Noting that it had only six finger holes, she asked what I did with the pinkies, and I didn't know. For some time after that, no matter how I placed the little fingers, it didn't feel right, and for a few shows I had to stop doing "Nola" and substitute something slower.)

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Every MC had an act of his or her own, and most of them were impersonators. I don't know where they got their material, but they seemed to share a common stock of gags. Nearly all of them "did" Wallace Beery, for example, as an old boxer ("The Champ," starring Wallace Beery and the child actor Jackie Cooper, was then a current movie known to everyone.) And the impersonator would have Mr. Beery reminiscing about some boxer he had met:

"He was just a little fellow, and only came up to about here—" (raising the back of his hand to the level of his chin) — "but"— (and here the hand would turn over and stroke the chin) "he came there so often!"

There were lots of standard MC one-liners that didn't involve impersonation.

"My hotel room is so small that every time the bell boy turns the door knob, it re-arranges the furniture! I had to train my little dog to wag his tail up and down; there isn't room to wag it sideways! And in there I can't laugh 'ha! ha! ha!' " (with wide-spread mouth) "but have to laugh 'Ho! ho! ho!'" Some of these jokes are still around.

Ted Mack, as MC, would pretend to forget the name of the next act. "Now let me present someone whose name has become a household word. Help me welcome....0....ahh... umm... You know, my mother had a way of remembering things like this. She would say 'Well, first we lived on Fourth Street, and then we moved, and then they found us, and then Helen was born, and then we got the radio, and after that we got the refrigerator--no! that's not right! Helen came BETWEEN the radio and the refrigerator! Then we weaned Helen--I remember that, because she went off the bottle just when Uncle Bill went ON.... Oh yes! help me welcome Sam Hinton!"

A couple of years later, when I was doing a casual show at the old Jonathan Club in Santa Monica, another MC—a well-known movie comedian—also did a shtick of pretending not to remember my name. "Now it is my pleasure to present Mr. Sam — ah, Sam — what IS his name? Tuchus! That's it! Sam Tuchus! No, wait, it's Hinton: Sam HINTON!" (Both "tuchus" and "hinten" are Yiddish words for "butt" or "bottom.")

Jokes are a serious business to these folks. You can tell a good one, but don't expect them to laugh; instead, if it's really worthwhile, their faces will become serious, and they'll say something like "Hey! That's good ! "

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My own act was music with just a little telling of tall tales about Texas. With guitar in hand, I ran onto the stage, and started. The closing number was always "When We Gonna Marry?" done in two voices, a falsetto for the woman's part and my regular voice for the man. The tin whistle number was always pretty straightforward, even if not performed very well. At one time or another, I would add "The Chicken Reel", played on a harmonica and a 12-bass piano accordion, with one end of the harmonica inserted into the mouth so that hands were not needed for it; or I might play "Massa's In the Cold Cold Ground" on four harmonicas in different keys, two in each hand, switching from one to another as the piece called for a tonic chord, a tonic seventh, a dominant seventh, a dominant major, a subdominant, or a double-dominant. (supertonic seventh). On occasion I would do "Show Me the Way To Go Home" in three-part harmony on two tin whistles and a slide whistle, the slide of the latter hooked into a belt loop. When there was a sound system, I would sometimes do the humming-and-whistling

duet. It was the singing with guitar that drew the most applause, however, and most of the instrumental tricks were gradually discarded.

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One very pleasant memory is that of meeting another performer, a maestro who doubled as his own stage manager. The show I was with at that time, the Major Bowes "Rodeo Rhythm Revue" had just finished a one-week stand at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles, and was bound for San Diego. The show was traveling by train, and the other cast members had already gone to the station, while I waited in the back alley, with all the show's worldly goods, for the trucks to arrive and pick them up for transport to the railhead. And at the loading dock I met another man waiting for his incoming truck to arrive and bring in all the paraphernalia so he could set up his show, which was to open that night. This stage manager was not just a cast member, but the star; he was the legendary jazz pianist "Fats" Waller, and he chose to be responsible for setting up his own show. This great man received me as an equal, and we spent what was for me a perfectly delightful half hour, sitting together on the steps of the loading dock, discussing music and sharing with each other the problems of baggage and props.

I love Mr. Waller's music, and have a number of his recordings, but will always think of him primarily as a warm human being willing to share his ebullient personality with an inexperienced youth.

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CHAPTER 4. SHREWS AND SCIENTISTS

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Blarina brevicauda brevicauda*

NORTHERN SHORT-TAILED SHREW

Crawfordsville, Indiana

April 29, 1937

One specimen found under an old iron stove on the sunny side of a deep hollow, halfway up the bank. When captured, it tried savagely to bite, and emitted loud, short squeaks.

The specimen was identified at Wabash College by one of the professors..

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This professor at Wabash College, whose name I regrettably didn't write down and promptly forgot, was typical of a great many of the scientists I have met — passionate about their fields of study, and patiently sympathetic to a layman who shared their passion.

The secretary in the office of the college president (a presidency later to be carried on by my niece's husband, Thaddeus Seymour), didn't know whether or not there was a mammalogist on the staff, but told me where all the zoology people were located. And there was indeed a mammalogist.

He identified the shrew on sight, asked where I had found it, and turned down my offer to make it into a study skin for him, as the college collection already had a pretty good series of this species. We agreed that the best thing was to release the animal where it had been captured.

This professor said he would come see the show that night at the Strand Theatre, and we parted good friends.

Scientists are like everybody else, of course, many of them with feet of the drabest clay, but as a group they have always been imbued in my eyes with an aura of glory. I've been blessed with meeting a good many of them. In my early days in Tulsa I didn't know any scientists of world fame, but was privileged at least to see one of them. This was Roy Chapman Andrews, who had recently discovered fossil dinosaur eggs in the Gobi Desert, and was on a lecture tour. When he came to Tulsa, Dad took me to hear him speak.

I didn't actually meet him personally until many years later, but just seeing him at a distance was exciting.

Still in Tulsa, when we had moved to our new house in the Houstonia Development out on 55th Street, someone told me that a neighbor, Mr. C. L. Dewey, had been a colleague of Carl Akeley, one of my distant heroes. I had found Akeley's book, *In Brightest Africa*, in the public library in Beaumont, Texas, and had reveled in it. Mr. Akely had died (in Africa) in 1926, but it was a heady experience to meet someone who had actually known him.

Mr. Dewey, a mechanical engineer, had been Akeley's assistant in exhibit preparation at the Field Museum in Chicago. Their taxidermy problems in mounting a group of African Elephants had led to the development of a plaster gun, which led in turn to the "shotcrete" process of concrete handling, now used very widely in the cement industries. It is a rare

residential swimming pool that is built today without it.. Akely referred to the special spraying mixture as "gunite," and today this term has come to stand for the whole process.

I was about 11 years old when I introduced myself to Mr. Dewey as he was mowing his lawn. On that first visit we talked for perhaps 10 minutes, walking back and forth as he pushed the old muscle-powered lawn mower across the grass. Our later meetings had the same sort of informality, and he told me a lot about Mr. Akeley and about the workings of the great natural history museums.

My chief scientific influence in Tulsa was Miss Edith R. Force, a dynamic science teacher at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School with a contagious love of her subject.. I didn't do very well in her class, neglecting the proper organizing of my mandated insect collection, but was active in the extracurricular Field and Stream Club, of which she was sponsor. (My activities there were as a visitor, a hanger-on, for I did not actually belong to the club. Students were limited to membership in a single club, and I had chosen the "Know Tulsa" group— not because of its subject, but because I had a crush on the sponsor, Miss Fanny Nowlin, who was also my French teacher.)

Miss Force's classroom housed a large and friendly Bull Snake named Adam, and I was permitted to help feed him on two or three important occasions. She also took us on several field trips, and was the first adult I knew who shared my sympathy for the box turtles we met in the road; she would stop her car and get out to remove them to the relative safety of the roadside ditch. Most drivers simply ran over and smashed them, often deliberately.

When my family moved from Tulsa to Crockett, Texas in 1929 or '30, a whole new world of natural history opened up to me. Reptile collecting in that pine-and-swamp country was

magnificent, no fewer than 15 species of turtles being available within a ten-mile radius centered on our home. Most of the wonderful reptiles were new to me, and I had a hard time identifying them. Crockett High School offered no course in biology, and there was no public library in the town. So I turned, via the post office, to Miss Force back in Tulsa. Drawings, written descriptions, and sometimes live specimens accompanied my letters, and she patiently answered every one.

She also gave me names and addresses of scientists who might be willing to provide further information, notably those of Dr. Doris L. Cochran of the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, Dr. G. Kingsley Noble of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt of Chicago's Field Museum. Soon I was thinking of myself as a real professional right up there with Carl Akely, Alfred Russell Wallace, and Frank Buck, for these busy museum scientists were kind enough to give serious answers to my queries, and even to ask for my help in securing certain kinds of reptiles.

Dr. Noble wanted lots of lizards and offered a nickel apiece for all the *Anolis*, *Eumeces* and *Sceloporus* I could get, which were sent alive through the mail. Dr. Schmidt was interested in Coral Snakes, and I sent him two living beauties, one of them nearly 30 inches long. He referred me in turn to his colleague, Dr. Howard K. Gloyd, who wanted Pygmy Ground Rattlesnakes. With the help of one of my Dad's surveying crews, I collected a series of about 80 specimens for him. He gave them a new subspecific name, calling them *Sistrurus miliarius streckeri*. Later he told me that the size of my contribution had led him to consider *hintoni* for the subspecific name, but, upon the untimely death of Dr. Strecker of Baylor University, had decided to honor his memory. (I have been actually "honored" in this way only once, having my name attached to

a large louse that lives upon Red-Tailed Hawks in East Texas. I was involved because a wounded Red-Tail in my care at Texas A & M College was infested, and I took specimens to the Entomology people.)

Dr. Doris L. Cochran of the U. S. National Museum in Washington, DC, was the one to whom I wrote most often, and she was unflinchingly encouraging. She asked me especially to locate a specimen of the Mud Snake, *Farancia abacura*, and to help make sure I knew what I was looking for, sent a photostat of a plate from Cope's *Crocodilians, Lizards and Snakes of North America* showing the standardized way of diagramming scale patterns of the head and body. I immediately set out to make similar drawings of my snakes. The Mud Snake, with a blunt spine at the end of its tail, is thought by many Southerners to be the fabled Hoop Snake, said to put its tail in its mouth and roll like a hoop. The blunt tail-spine is wrongly thought to inject a deadly poison, and one vernacular name for it is "Stingin' Snake." I didn't know much about Mud Snakes, but knew that these stories were untrue, for in the public library in Lufkin, Texas, I had found a Boy Scout Merit Badge Pamphlet on Reptile Study, which said there was no such thing as a Hoop Snake, and that no snake stung with its tail. I managed to collect a nice big specimen from under a damp rotting log, and after drawing its scale patterns, mailed it to Dr. Cochran. She thrilled my very soul by writing that the snake had been turned over to Dr. William Mann at the National Zoological Park, and was on display with a label naming its captor!

(A few years later, that species was divided into a couple of subspecies. In retrospect, I'm pretty sure that what I sent was what came to be called *Farancia abacura reinwardti*.)

Mr. Robin Burns, a teacher in Crockett High School, was a gentle and talented young man from Virginia. I took his classes in chemistry and bookkeeping, the latter being one of the two

optional courses offered at Crockett High. (Typing would have been much more valuable to me than bookkeeping, but Mr. Burns didn't teach that. ) He said he wanted to teach biology, but it was not offered at the school. For me, however, he did something almost as good: he lent me a copy of his college textbook, the classic *College Zoology* by Hegner, and I entered the heady world of comparative anatomy and scientific nomenclature.

Mr. Burns stood nervously by to see that I didn't kill myself backstage at the Crockett High School Senior Play in 1934. The play was a mystery drama, and there were supposed be moments of lights dimming in a sepulchral sort of way — but our little stage had no dimmers. So another student and I made one. We plugged into the stage light circuit through the fuse box and ran two wires to the lower tips of two wooden sticks. These sticks were suspended with their tips immersed in a galvanized tub of slightly salted water, and as they were moved farther apart, the resistance rose and the lights dimmed. Mr. Burns didn't make us stop, but he did insist that we put a regular fuse in series with the setup.

Somehow we did not electrocute ourselves, but there was an unexpected phenomenon at the dress rehearsal. The third act was done entirely under dimmed lights, and the salt water in the tub began boiling. I have never been clear why this started the lights blinking on and off, but that's what happened for a few minutes until Mr. Burns's fuse blew. So for the actual performance. the third act was done under full lights, and it wasn't too bad. We had some sound effects that didn't require electricity, and they helped create the proper mood.

As I remember it, there were eleven male parts in that play, an only ten males in the graduating class, so there was a fair amount of doubling up. I not only did the lights and sound, but played two bit parts.

By the way, that stage was once used for an interesting dramatic performance of a special kind. There were in those Depression days several organizations whose units traveled from town to town, each unit consisting of a director, several sets of drama scripts, and costumes for each of them. A local service club or Chamber of Commerce would hire this unit and choose a play; well-known local people would constitute the cast, and the traveling director would organize everything into a production presented usually as a charity fund-raiser. The one they brought to Crockett had three acts, each taking place in a different time period., The third act was laid at some time in the future. A Houston County Deputy Sheriff played the part of a policeman in each act, and his third-act costume was a riot of color— somebody's jovial idea of a police uniform in that distant future time. This deputy was almost prostrated with stage fright, and was especially concerned about that outlandish third-act costume. On the night of the performance, prohibition laws notwithstanding, he imbibed too much liquid fortification, and became confused. The highlight of the evening occurred when he appeared in the second act, supposed to be taking place at the present time, wearing his third-act costume!

In the Fall of 1934, when I had entered Texas A & M College as a Zoology major, Dr. Cochran sent me the name of Dr. Thomas Githens of the Sharpe and Dohm chemical laboratories in Glenolden, Pennsylvania, together with reprints of some of his papers on snake bite and its treatment. His work consisted primarily of supervising the production of “Serum Crotalidae,” the anti-venin serum used to treat victims of all the poisonous snakes of the United States except for the Coral Snake. This serum was produced by injecting repeated small, but gradually increasing, quantities of snake venom into horses until the animals had developed an immunity to it: then a portion of the blood serum from the immunized animals was used as the basis for

the anti-venin. Correspondence with him led to his expressing a desire for venom from the Cottonmouth Moccasin, and “my” professor at Texas A & M College, Mr. Raymond O. Berry, found an unused greenhouse in which I could lock up a small stable of the snakes. In the next two years I earned close to \$50.00 from several shipments of their venom. Mr. Berry even let me use his lab equipment to clarify the liquid venom in a hand-cranked centrifuge, yielding a clear yellow liquid that crystallized and fetched a price of \$20.00 per ounce. (It took about 60 "milkings" of as many snakes to make an ounce. I never had anything like 60 snakes, and a six-week recovery period for each snake was required between milkings, so getting a whole ounce was a slow process.)

Mr. Berry was of tremendous help to me in many other ways. For one thing, he was my boss. I was his Laboratory Assistant, paid by the National Youth Administration (35¢ an hour), and my duties included the checking of shipments of lab supplies as they came in. Once there was a shipment of preserved Lamprey Eels, ingeniously packed in a formalin-filled wooden keg. I was given the job of counting them so Mr. Berry (we didn't call him Dr. or Professor) could sign the delivery receipt. Taken out of the keg, they filled every dissecting tray in the lab, and it didn't seem possible that I could ever match the original packing job and get them all back into the keg. But I made the effort, and after several tries, had them all neatly packed away and the keg closed up — but I had forgotten to count them! Mr. Berry, who had a reputation as an absent-minded professor, said I'd better not make any more jokes about him in that respect.

Later, as a student in Mr. Berry's Comparative Anatomy class, I had the pleasure of dissecting one of those Lampreys.

Once he had to go to bat for me against the military establishment. Texas A & M was at that time completely military — we lived with our ROTC unit in the dorms (I was in Battery C, Coast Artillery), wore our uniforms all day every day, and marched in formation to almost all meals.

Military Science was taught by regular Army officers, with some of the introductory sessions managed by non-commissioned Army personnel. I remember our introduction to basic artillery equipment by a barely literate sergeant: "See them wheels over there? Them ain't wheels: them's *'limber'*"

Our dorm rooms were subject to surprise inspections by the Army officers. Lieutenant Reieron (he was Captain Reieron in my Sophomore year) was the regular-Army commander of the Coast Artillery ROTC), and on one inspection tour he demanded quite heatedly that I immediately get rid of the White-Necked Raven, the young alligator, and the various inhabitants of my terrarium. This was obediently accomplished, but some time later, a mother possum died in the science lab, leaving me with nine babies to try to raise. Mr. Berry and I made up a schedule of medicine-dropper feedings, some of which had to be given at night. I went to the Commandant of the whole military administration, and got written permission to have those babies in my room. Unfortunately, it didn't occur to me to tell the Commandant that Lieutenant Reieron had forbidden my having any animals there.

Still more unfortunately, Lieutenant Reieron chose that time for another inspection. When he saw the baby possums he was furious, but I didn't know what fury really was until I showed him the Commandant's note. I had violated every military principle, had gone over his head, had bypassed the military chain of command, had disobeyed his direct orders, had jeopardized the

entire military structure, etc., etc. Of course he complained to the Commandant, who sided with him: he and the Lieutenant seriously discussed having me expelled from the College. But Mr. Berry begged for leniency, and somehow the whole furor died. Unfortunately, so did the baby possums.

Another zoology professor at A & M was Sewell H. Hopkins, who later completed his PhD somewhere and became Director of the State Fish, Game, and Oyster Commission in Virginia. Mr. Hopkins was usually a rather quiet, retiring individual, but he unbent occasionally, as when he taught me the song "It's a Long Way From Amphioxus," which he had learned at Wood's Hole, Massachusetts, and which he declaimed with much dramatic fervor.

My respect for academicians at Texas A & M was by no means limited to the scientists. One of my favorite professors there was Dr. "Spotty" Thomas, named for the two tufts of hair on his otherwise-bald head. He taught a writing course, and it was a pleasure to write papers for him. He actually read them, and along with a grade wrote a remark or two on every essay. When we were told to write an autobiographical sketch, he wrote on mine "You sling it!" Another time, he gave me vast encouragement by remarking "This is more than merely correct writing: it is almost literature."

I enjoyed his comments even when they contained no praise. A short piece, complaining of the unfair treatment accorded to snakes in literature and in real life, was entitled "The Serfdom of the Serpent." Dr. Thomas wrote "Alliteration at any price, eh?" And when I got bogged down trying to explain, in another paper, the advantages of socialism, he commented "It's very plain you don't know what you're talking about!"

Dr. Thomas Mayo, the college Librarian, was a friend and advisor regarding my writings for the campus newspaper, *The Battalion*. His domain, The Library, was a store of almost unimaginable riches.

Dr. Walter Penn Taylor was not a professor at A & M College, but a scientist working for the Federal Bureau of Biological Survey, and temporarily stationed in College Station, the little town that had grown up around A & M. He and his family had a profound influence on my life.

After leaving A & M and in 1937 going on the road with the Major Bowes Units, I went to the Field Museum when we played in Chicago, and looked up my old correspondent, Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt. When I introduced myself, he said "Sam Hinton of Texas? Coral Snakes?" thereby becoming my lifelong idol. This was only the first evidence I had of the magnanimous nature of this great man, and my opinion of him rose with every subsequent contact.

More than ten years later I spent several weeks at his Museum, sent there by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography to study taxidermy and general museum preparation, and his cheerful kindness and consideration had not abated in the least. I was staying at the Sloan House YMCA Hotel on Wabash Avenue, and on one bitter blustery day had a bad cold, and decided to stay in bed. There were no phones in those rooms, and Dr. Schmidt was worried about my not showing up at the Museum, so he walked all the way over to the Y to see if I was all right.

He and his family had me as a dinner guest and overnight guest at their home in a Chicago suburb, took me to concerts, and did everything they could to make a lonely young married man feel less lonely. When, years later, he died from the bite of an African Boomslang, the world lost a unique human being.

Another warm and concerned scientist was Dr. Loye Holmes Miller of UCLA, known to everyone as "Padre." When I met him, I had just left full-time traveling in show business in order to go back to school, and wanted to get into UCLA. UCLA, however, wouldn't have me until I made up a couple of failing grades in algebra, earned at Texas A & M, so I enrolled first at Glendale Junior College. A few of us from there took an unofficial weekend field trip to the desert, and there, quite by accident, met a field trip group from UCLA, led by Dr. Miller. Birds, both living and fossil, were his specialty, and he patiently answered all my questions. As we parted, he invited me to come to the Los Angeles County Museum for a meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Society. The meeting, he said, was at the Museum on the following Wednesday evening, and he offered to propose my name for membership.

On the afternoon of that Wednesday, my show-business agent called to say he had a ten-dollar singing job for me that night, and I couldn't afford to turn it down. Not knowing how to reach Dr. Miller, I glumly felt that my not showing up would spell the end of a promising friendship, but that's not the way it was. Padre not only proposed my name and got me elected to membership; he also paid the \$5.00 membership fee for me! I was later to learn that this sort of action was thoroughly typical of him. He, Dr. Karl P. Schmidt, and Mr. Raymond Moremen, director of the UCLA Glee Clubs and the A Cappella Choir where I met my Leslie, were the most universally and deservedly loved people that it has been my good fortune to know.

Passing the algebra course (third time's a charm!) got me into UCLA the following Fall, and I enrolled in Padre's ornithology class, and loved it. Also took his Vertebrate Paleontology class, which was just as exciting. Padre was a great imitator of bird and animal sounds. In the paleontology lab, we students drew pictures of fossil bones—most of them from the Pleistocene

of Rancho La Brea, in Los Angeles—and were charged with handling those bones very carefully. He worked at his desk in front of the room, and if a thump indicated a bone's being set down too hard, he would emit a ferocious canine growl, but would not embarrass the miscreant student by singling him out.

He was ill for a part of one semester, and his place at the paleontology lectern was taken by a professor borrowed from Cal Tech; this was famed paleontologist Dr. Chester Stock, and getting to know him was another rare privilege.

Dr. Stock had a dry humor about him, and I shall never forget some of his comments. In discussing honorary scientific names, he said:

"When you name some creature after some human, it not only doesn't mean anything — it often sounds like hell! I found some fossils of a four-horned antelope and thought they belonged to a genus with a perfectly good name —*Tetraceros*, meaning 'four horns.' But then my 'friend' Eustace Chase had to put it into a new genus, and he named it *Stockoceros*. *Stockoceros*. What the hell does that mean? *Stockoceros*! Now I ASK you!

"And even when parts of the names have some translatable meaning , I don't know where the honor is. I found some bones of a Pleistocene turkey , and what do you think they named it? *Meleagris crassipes stocki* — Stock's Flat-footed Turkey!"

My chief UCLA professor, and best faculty friend, was Dr. Raymond Bridgman Cowles, herpetologist. He hired me, through the National Youth Administration (the NYA), as a scientific illustrator and general helper, and I did much of the work now usually assigned to graduate Teaching Assistants. His office became practically a club room for a group of undergraduate would-be herpetologists.

One member of that group was neither student nor faculty, but one who spent quite a lot of time with Dr. Cowles at UCLA. This was Adrian Vanderhorst, who came as close as anyone I have ever met to deserving the sobriquet "Renaissance Man." A native of the Netherlands, he had spent many of his early formative years in the Dutch East Indies with his father, who was manager of a traveling Dutch opera company. This led to an early interest in natural history which never abated. Back in Holland, he grew up to be a respected cinematographer and graphic artist, but gave up a good job to go back to the tropics—just for the purpose of making a marvelous set of still photographs of the feet of various species of geckoes.

While visiting UCLA, he obtained a grant from the Capels Foundation in Indian Springs, Nevada, for the making of a film on the treatment of snakebite, in which I played the chief supporting actor, the victim. (The star was a five-foot Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, *Crotalus atrox*.) The most memorable thing about the final film was the closeup view of the big rattlesnake, coiled and rattling. The snake was supposed to strike at an invisible object just out of camera range, and the picture would then cut to me as I straightened up with the snake hanging by its fangs to my forearm. (We had blunted the fangs, and I wore a couple of layers of inner-tube rubber wrapped around my arm under my sweater.) But the snake refused to strike. So a couple of us knelt down, out of both camera and striking range, and blew into the poor snake's face until he finally relented and made a halfhearted strike at us. But the picture just before the strike presented a strange phenomenon: blades of dried grass around the animal were bending and straightening in a most unnatural and rhythmic way, because of our coordinated blowing.

In later years, Adrian became a professional performer and teacher of Flamenco and classical guitar, calling himself "Arai", a name given him by Spanish Gypsies. He had an

upstairs home and studio in Olvera Street, the popular Mexican section of downtown Los Angeles.

Adrian finally came down with an incurable cancer, and removed himself to Spain, where, he cheerfully told us, the national health system would take care of him until he died. The last time we heard from him, his postcard said that he could no longer walk, but got around satisfactorily in a cart drawn by a donkey, the latter wearing a straw hat "with holes for his ears cut through the brim."

Dr. Cowles was patient with everyone, and many enthusiastic but ill-informed fanatics who sought an audience at the University were turned over to him. I remember one excitable elderly gentleman of German background who had a theory of global ecology, and wanted to convert everyone to believing it. "De *erde*," [the earth] he orated, "is a livink beinks! Africa is de kidneys; de Nile River—" (in a confidential whisper) "dot's de urine!" The earth was suffering, he said, because we were removing petroleum : "Der oil is der grease in de lungs, and when der grease is removed, de *erde* can't breathe."

Dr. Cowles acted as an adviser in every aspect of my life, and was one of the few adults who fully supported Leslie and me in our wish to be married before I had graduated — an unusual act in 1940. He said "I think a wife is a better incentive than a goal," and I agreed. (At this writing, Leslie and I have been married for more than 61 years, and I can only say that she continues to be the most delightful incentive any man ever had..)

Dr. Cowles also recommended me for a position as Director of the Palm Springs Desert Museum, my first good job after graduation, and that wonderful job in 1941 opened up new opportunities of meeting scientists.

One of these was the late Edmund C. Jaeger, for 30 years a professor of biology at Riverside Community College, and a member of the Advisory Board for the Desert Museum. He had been a school teacher in Palm Springs many years before, having moved away to nearby Riverside in 1917 because Palm Springs was getting too crowded. (!) He loved the desert, especially its plants, and his 1941 book, *Desert Wildflowers* (Stanford University Press) has been through numerous revisions and, and is still available in either paperback or hard cover. His field trips to the desert and its surrounding mountains were in the nature of pilgrimages, as was his annual fall trip to the desert mountains for the gathering of piñon nuts. He took me on several of these weekend camping trips. One thing he particularly enjoyed was getting out in the wild where we could divest ourselves of clothing, so as to enjoy the sunshine all over. I was pretty well tanned, but where my shorts covered me the underlying skin was pale, and he spoke of that paleness as "the shameful mark of civilization." (Later, in San Diego I saw ads for a "nudist colony" that said "Our motto: leave no stern untuned!")

Mr. Jaeger said that in the early days of his desert botanizing, the desert was lonely enough to allow him to wander freely, dressed in nothing but his shoes and a hat, with his vasculum, plant press, clothes and camping gear on the back of a patient burro. Once, in this nude state, he came upon a desert prospector so suddenly that he had no time to stop and dress. The prospector asked what Mr. Jaeger was doing, and upon hearing his explanation, looked him up and down, from head to toe, and said:

"So you're a botany! I always wanted to SEE what a botany looked like!"

Mr. Jaeger was very much interested in Latin and Greek roots as used in scientific terms, and his *Source Book of Biological Names and Terms* (Thomas, 1944) is very useful and a lot of

fun; The 6th printing of the Third Edition may still be available from Charles C. Thomas, Publisher (Springfield IL.). He appreciated a term I coined and he used it to sign several letters: "Your friend, the Gymnopheliophile." (I meant that word to mean "naked lover of the sun," but given my ignorance of Latin grammar and Greek root,s, it may mean "lover of the naked sun." Mr. Jaeger was too kind to correct me!)

.Dr. Jaeger died in 1983 at the age of 96. A branch of Riverside Community Collge was set up in Moreno Vally, and there in 1991 the Edmund C. Jaeger Desert Institute was established and named.

Professor T. D. A. Cockerell was a biologist from England, a dear old man whose knowledge of entomology and many other aspects of natural history was unending. He had met Charles Darwin, and, as he told me, had "known Alfred Russell Wallace very well indeed." He and Mrs. Cockerell came to Palm Springs and became co-curators with me at the Desert Museum. This was during the early days of US involvement in World War II, and I had taken a second full-time job as a civilian lab technician at Torney General Hospital (US Army), and the Board of Directors took on the Cockerells for much of the day-to-day operation of the Museum. I was to continue leading the weekend field trips, presenting evening lectures, preparing and labeling all the museum exhibits, and writing and illustrating "Hammada," the weekly nature column for the *Desert Sun* newspaper.

The professor often surprised me with the breadth of his knowledge and expertise. After leaving Palm Springs and moving to San Diego, I was invited by the museum's Board of Directors to return to Palm Springs one weekend to lead a nature walk. I was full of my newly "discovered" world of marine natural history, and that became the subject of a conversation with

the Professor. I was especially enthusiastic about the beauty of a tide-pool nudibranch (a brightly colored shell-less snail), talking about it with the mistaken idea that Professor Cockerell had never heard of it.

"I believe that would be *Chromodoris macfarlandi*" he said. "I know the creature well; I described it in 1917!"

In technical terms, to "describe" a species is to present it to the world of science by publishing a formal paper giving it its scientific name, and he told me about the name he had bestowed. He was visiting the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla (at that time called the Marine Biological Association of San Diego) and collected a specimen of this beautiful lavender and yellow mollusk. At about the same time, he received a letter from Dr. Frank MacFarland of Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Laboratory at Pacific Grove, near Monterey, California, saying that he had found a specimen of an unnamed nudibranch. His description showed that it was the same kind as the one in Professor Cockerell's possession.

However, Dr. MacFarland said that unfortunately a lab assistant accidentally poured his specimen down the drain before MacFarland could formally "describe" it.

"I really should have sent my specimen to MacFarland," said Professor Cockerell, "but I did not, and went ahead to describe it myself. In order to ease my conscience; however, I did at least name it for him." And the animal is *Chromodoris mcfarlandi* to this very day.

In 1944 Leslie and Leanne and I moved to San Diego, where I went to work for the University of California Division of War Research, as Editor/Illustrator. Most of the scientific staff of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (which had been a part of the University of California since 1912) had joined this facility. A couple of years later, when the war had ended,

the Institution took me on as Director of its Aquarium-Museum. Leslie and the kids, now numbering two, and I lived, for the first dozen years, in the primitive cottages right on the Scripps campus. The place was full of scientists, and we became socially, as well as professionally, acquainted with them.

The Director at Scripps was Dr. Harald Ulrik Sverdrup, who had, as a young meteorologist under the leadership of Fritjof Nansen, carried out Arctic hydrographic research on Norway's wooden vessel *Maud*, while it was purposely frozen in the arctic ice for more than seven years.

Dr. Carl L. Hubbs, world-famous ichthyologist, was a neighbor and friend. He was a man of energetic enthusiasms, both at work and at play. He loved to romp with our kids Leanne and Matt, and if this happened in the evening, they became so stimulated that it was very hard to get them to sleep afterward.

Carl's knowledge of his field was, to put it mildly, encyclopedic. Once Laurie McHugh, a graduate student, collected a rare small shark, which washed aboard the research vessel *E. W. Scripps* during a storm. Laurie preserved it, but wanted to identify it before showing it Dr. Hubbs. He spent weeks going doggedly through the literature until he finally found it. It was known to science by a single specimen, collected when it washed aboard a French research vessel in 1884, and had been assigned to a new genus, *Euprotomicrops*.

Finally armed with this knowledge, Laurie proudly took the little preserved shark in to show to Dr. Hubbs, who leaped from his chair shouting "My God! That's *Euprotomicrops*, known only from one specimen washed aboard a French ship in 1884!"

One New Year's Day, Leslie and I were having lunch with the Hubbses when a phone call came in; someone had reported a dead porpoise "or something" on the beach at Imperial Beach,

down close to the Mexican border. The four of us hopped into the Hubbs car and drove down at supra-legal speed, with Laura watching out the back window to report any police cars. We drove to the end of the road near the reported site, and as we got out of the car could see in the distance a few people, standing around what was to me an unidentifiable lump on the beach. But it wasn't unidentifiable to Carl.

"My God!" he shouted, "it's a Pygmy Sperm Whale—that's only the third specimen ever reported from the Pacific!"

We arranged for a pickup truck and brought the little dead whale back to the beach at Scripps. There Leon Pray, preparator from the San Diego Natural History Museum (with whom I had studied in Chicago), let me help him make a plaster cast and model of it. At this writing, the model still graces a wall at the San Diego Natural History Museum.

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6,157 words

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CHAPTER 5 - WOOD FROG AND LIFE ON THE ROAD

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Rana sylvatica*

WOOD FROG

Brandon, Vermont, 1 mile southeast, on hillside.

June 1, 1937

One medium-sized specimen was captured near the top of the hill, at least  
a half-mile from any water.

When pursued, the frog hid itself by squirming under the dry leaves, and  
was captured when a double handful of the leaves was picked up with the  
frog inside.

This frog was sent to Dr. Doris L. Cochran, of the National Museum, for  
confirmation of the identification.

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Back home in East Texas we had lots of kinds of frogs, but the Wood Frog was not among them. Somehow, though, it had come to my attention, and was on my long mental list of things I wanted to see in my lifetime. So finding this one was a delight. I sent it to Dr. Cochran in Washington mainly in order to share this pleasure, for there wasn't really any doubt about its identification. (I might have sent it to Dr. Karl P. Schmidt of the Field Museum in Chicago had

I known he was working on the species, and was about publish a paper establishing two subspecies of *Rana sylvatica*.)

Probably every naturalist has in mind a list of creatures he'd like to meet some day. My own list is not primarily composed of rarities, but of species common in their homelands. It was a real thrill to see some creature on my list, and perhaps an even greater thrill to see something I had never thought of listing. Nothing I had read, for example, prepared me for my first large Alligator Lizard (then known as *Gerrhonotus scincicauda*, now as *Gerrhonotus multicarinatus*.), which was found in a vacant lot in Glendale, California.

I've been very fortunate in realizing a large proportion of my lifelong wish list. I've seen whales—in fact, worked quite closely among Gray Whales in their breeding lagoons in Baja California, Mexico I've met Elephant Seals and Sea Otters, both of which, in my youth, were thought to be extinct. Ospreys and Western Diamondback Rattlesnakes have become my friends, as have the northeastern Horseshoe Crab, the Desert Tortoise, the neotropical Sally Lightfoot crab, the Frigate Bird, the Black Skimmer, the Saguaro Cactus, the Spiny-tailed Iguana, the Gila Monster and the Whale Shark. The Puma and Bobcat have allowed me only glances, but I can still call them acquaintances. I still haven't met Tigers and Polar Bears and sloths and macaws and Bushmasters and Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes and elephants in their native homes, and haven't eaten durian fruit or breadfruit, but I am comfortable in recognizing that there is a limit to what a single lifetime may encompass.

Fulfilling a wish-list of this kind requires traveling, and that's what we were doing on the Major Bowes Units: traveling. It was a great joy to find myself in "new" states, in new environments and habitats, and meeting animals and plants I had not known in Oklahoma and

East Texas. And life on the road provided free time to get out into the countryside —in the 1930s, this was never a problem in the small towns in which we usually played. My bedtime was usually before midnight, with an alarm clock set to allow me eight hours of sleep, after which I was free until the afternoon show. Also, there were usually several hours between the matinee and the first evening show.

Most of us had only the vaguest knowledge, however, of the country through which we were traveling. We knew the names of the towns we visited, and we knew the name of the town next on our itinerary, but what lay around and between these towns was rarely even thought about.

Any decent atlas was too bulky to be carried with me, but road maps were available at most filling stations.. When we traveled by chartered bus, I enjoyed going with the driver to gas up, and to pick up road maps at the filling station. (Remember when road maps were part of the free service at the service stations?) Thus I could gain some idea of where the rivers and lakes were located, and could at least know in which direction to walk to get out of the downtown area.

In general, our knowledge of current events was on a par with our knowledge of local geography. We were happy as members of a self-sufficient community, with only the most tenuous ties to the "civilian" world. All sorts of fascinating things were going on in 1937 — sulfanilamide was first used successfully in this country to combat infection; President Roosevelt worked out a plan for reorganizing the Supreme Court, only to have it soundly rejected by Congress; the American Medical Association recognized birth control as a legitimate concern of physicians; many politically liberal American writers and would-be writers were going to Spain to become fighters in the Loyalist cause in the Revolution there — but we knew almost

nothing about such things. Not many of us bothered to read newspapers, there were no portable radios, and, of course, no television in our hotels or anywhere else. Practically the only news that got through to us was in the newsreels showing in the theaters where we were playing. And some of the news items there were seen over and over; the terrifying movies of the burning and collapsing of the great dirigible Hindenburg at Lakehurst, New Jersey, were shown in every theater we played in for months after the event.

The show was all-important in our lives. That's where our friends were, and our whole existence had to be planned around the show's schedule. Memories of each of the towns visited were usually couched in terms of the theater at which we played. We were all concerned for each other and for our acts, for our schedule of bookings, for payday, and for mail from home, but the state of our theater dressing rooms was much more important than the state of the Supreme Court.

We roomed in cheap hotels, and ate, for the most part, in diners and low-cost coffee shops. Excellent hamburgers, cooked to order, rarely cost more than a nickel (sometimes 7 cents with cheese), and full meals in small restaurants were comparable. A full breakfast, with bacon and eggs, home-fried potatoes and multiple cups of coffee was usually about 25¢ plus a nickel tip.

New food experiences were almost as important to me as new zoological and botanical experiences. The two quests—new foods and new biota—were really quite similar. In both cases, my desire was to go beyond the regional foods and plants and animals of my home, and to meet new ones. This did not mean any boredom with the foods and biota of East Texas, but simply a wish for new experiences. I think every young person wants to break away from home into

something not yet experienced, and I would bet that in areas new to me, there lived folks who would have loved to experience things that were old to me — a live armadillo, a mild East Texas jambalaya. It's a question of wanting to make a temporary exchange of one regionality for another.

In regard to food, I had grown up with a regional southern cuisine, slightly augmented with a touch of the gentler Cajun recipes, and Mom was an excellent southern cook—even though her mother never admitted it. (Once when I was in high school, we visited Mom's mother and father — “Dearie and Judge”— in Beaumont, Texas, and Dearie wasn't feeling at all well. Mom offered to fix dinner, but Dearie struggled up from her sickbed to do it, saying “No, I can't afford to have the food spoiled!” My easygoing Mom was more amused than insulted.)

But, in common with all really regional customs, southern cooking was limited. My boyhood friends and I thought of garlic as something that only “common” people, such as Italian barbers (none of whom we had ever met) could stand. Steak was a staple at home, but it was round steak in thin pieces which were fried; “fried steak and rice”, with a delicious thick brown gravy, constituted our most frequent Sunday dinner. (There's a southern proverb: “If it ain't fried, it ain't food.”)

We ate well at home, with goodly variety, but no experimentation, no “foreign” foods. On the road in the 30's, one could find many sorts of food that were highly localized, and even in the low-priced restaurants that we frequented, it was a pleasure to have new gastronomic adventures — red flannel hash in eastern Washington state, broiled whitefish near Lake Erie, baked beans in Boston, real scrapple in New Hope, Pennsylvania, a New England boiled dinner in Terryville,

Connecticut, terriyaki in Seattle, buñuelos in Flagstaff, carnitas and biría in Tijuana, reyfleisch mit Spatzele in northern Germany, and so on.

Some meals were wonderful, while others suffered in comparison with Mom's cooking. My first thick broiled steak (in Chicago) was a revelation, although the side dishes would have benefited from some of Mom's brown gravy. I gave up on hot biscuits pretty quickly, for none of them could touch Mom's, and her chicken and dumplings were never even approached in any restaurant.

My chief memory of certain towns is gastronomic. For instance, I never think of, nor visit, New York City without remembering how I went into a delicatessen there in 1936, and, unable to recognize anything written on the menu, asked the proprietress for advice. She graciously took me under her motherly wing, and prepared the sort of dinner that she thought I should have. There was rye bread (a first for me), followed by a heavenly chicken soup with farful and kreplach, then a couple of large potato knishes, and a plate of thick slabs of tender corned beef, with a side of such a potato salad as I had never even imagined. My hostess even advised me on the proper precautions in the use of her fiery horse-radish sauce, which, in spite of her warnings, made me feel that the top of my head was about to blow up.

In 1947, when I was casing public aquariums and museums for the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, I went to Greenwich Village in New York, to visit Nobu's, a Japanese restaurant run by Genie Clark's mother and stepfather. (Genie was then at the Scripps Institution, and was staying with Leslie and Leanne and Matt while I was touring the country.)

I had never eaten in a Japanese restaurant, and ordered a number of delightful dishes. Dinner over, I made myself known to Mrs. Nobu and relayed Genie's greetings, whereupon she

and her husband hustled me off to their private dining room to stuff me with some REAL Japanese food. Fortunately, I was not fazed by the prospect of two dinners, and did substantial justice to a wonderful meal centered around fish.

And I'll never forget a section of Vancouver, British Columbia — an Italian neighborhood, where by chance I came upon a second-floor establishment, the Railroad Cafe. There they gave me a magnificent platter of Spaghetti Caruso that turned me into a lifelong fan of Italian cuisine. (The waitress also gently told me, without laughing at my gaffe, that in Canada one should ask not for a "napkin", but for a "serviette" unless a baby's diaper really was what you wanted.)

Such words and phrases, often highly localized, were fascinating. In many parts of New England, "regular" coffee was coffee with sugar and cream. In the south, especially in the smaller towns, the word "milk" was interpreted by the waitresses as meaning "buttermilk;" if you wanted sweet milk, you had to ask for it by that name.

New York kids played hopscotch by tossing a "potsie" onto the desired square, and New Yorkers waited ON line rather than IN line. Soda pop around Boston was "tonic."

I was familiar with the idea of linguistic localisms, having spent so much of my childhood in Beaumont, Texas, where many French words have entered the East Texas vocabulary— usually pronounced with an East Texas disregard for the rules (if there are any) of French pronunciation. A major hospital in Beaumont was the Hôtel Dieu (House of God), generally pronounced "Hotel Dew." That same "ew" diphthong was in the name of the common Coot, which in French was "poule d'eau" (water-chicken), pronounced in Texian "PULLdew." "French toast" was "pain perdu" ("lost bread" or "reclaimed bread.") Mom knew how to cook it

very well indeed, and called it "pamperrydew." That was her own attempt to pronounce the spoken French term, while most of the other mispronunciations of French were based on a misreading of written words. A great number of cowboy terms are derived from spoken, rather than written, Spanish -- "Buckaroo" from "vaquero," "hoosegow" from "jusedado", "lariat" from "la reata," "cavvy-yard" from "caballado", etc.

In Crockett, Texas, scorpions were called "stingin' lizards," and a genuine lizard, the Blue-Tailed Skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*), was known as a "scorpion." Salamanders in general were called "water dogs": or "mud puppies", while ground squirrels were "salamanders."

Another entrancing localism in Crockett was in reference to having a date: one did not TAKE a girl to the movie, one CARRIED her there.

In 1960, while doing a series of programs for American Army Schools in what was then West Germany, it was a delight to go into the southern part of the nation and hear people greeting one another with "Grüss Gott", and in the open country between towns, to see the different techniques of making haystacks.

Back to show business in the '30s: the typical work day would have three or four shows, those in the evening (after the matinee) costing the customers 35 or even 50 cents; the matinee was usually a quarter. This schedule left me most mornings for hikes into the countryside, or seeing sights in the town, being sure to get to the theater about 40 minutes before show time. As stage manager, I had to start calling the hotel to arouse any cast members who didn't arrive by the half-hour check. It was also my job to give the standard "fifteen minutes!" and "five minutes!" calls, and throughout the show to see that the next act was in the wings, ready to go, well before the preceding act had ended.

This was strictly "small time" vaudeville, and to the best of my knowledge "big time" vaudeville was completely dead by that time. The star acts of the Big Time had made as much as \$1,000 a week, a fortune in those days. But we did very well with our little old \$40.00 or \$50.00 weekly wages. It wasn't enough to make anybody rich, but if we worked almost every day, our yearly take-home pay of more than \$2000.00 was substantially greater than the average school teacher's pay of \$1,367.00, and almost exactly half the average income of physicians.

Our wages were paid in cash, and a \$40.00 salary meant a take-home amount of \$40.00. There was no withholding of any sort, although the Bowes office was paying into the new Social Security program for each of us, and none of us even thought about income taxes. Cash was the medium of exchange; most of us had no checking accounts, and credit cards had yet to appear.

My reaction to one lack rather surprised me. I had not realized how much it meant to me to have a few simple hand-tools available, but I started missing them right away, and set out to provide myself with a modest traveling tool kit. In it were pliers, a hammer, a couple of screwdrivers, an "egg-beater" drill, and a coping saw. All of these proved very useful, especially around the theaters.

There were also uses in the hotels. Wash-basins were usually right in the bedrooms, although toilets and tubs were down the hall, sometimes even on another floor. The water faucets in the lavatories were nearly all of the kind with springs that kept them in the "Off" position, so that one hand had to hold the faucet open in order to get any water. This made it difficult to wash both hands at once, or use them to wash the face.. My portable rig made use of coat-hanger wire, some stout cord, and a scrap of 1 x 3" lumber, providing a foot pedal that would turn on one of the faucets while leaving both hands free. I had to make several of these for my colleagues.

There was a genuine glory in being on the road with a show troupe— even a troupe advertised as amateurs. To our audiences we were performers with an aura of romance, and I think every one of us relished that role, and we built on it to the best of our abilities. It happened occasionally that I would be recognized on the street or in a restaurant, and hailed with wistful admiration. Admirers often hung around at the stage door or in the outer lobby.

I well remember one deflating occasion. Walking past the front of the theater, I noticed a bevy of lovely high school girls standing near the poster containing, among others, a picture of me. One of the girls recognized me, and smiled and waved, so I graciously joined the group and began signing their autograph books. After several books had been signed, one of the girls got courage enough to say "We really didn't want your autograph; we're waiting for the accordion player!"

The accordion player was Jimmy Erickson, and he was really very good. He had an expensive 140-bass accordion (with a whole row of augmented chords) made by Dalapé, and his "Carnival in Venice" was a sure-fire show-stopper. And as if that weren't enough, he was a very handsome young man.

I said "Oh! You mean Jimmy. He has to wear a lot of makeup, and he's still in the dressing room taking it off. He'll be out in just a minute, I'm sure." Then I sauntered away with what I hoped was great nonchalance.

My personal preparation for the show itself was extremely simple, involving almost nothing in the way of makeup. My costume was blue jeans and a checked shirt with a bandanna around my neck; there were two of each in my wardrobe, and there was no problem in rinsing one out and letting it dry while I wore the other one. Shoes came from the ubiquitous Thom

McCann Shoe Stores, and cost \$3.15. And I could usually count on some size 13s being in stock..

For makeup, I did use a little tan powder to kill the shine on my cheekbones, nose, and forehead (made higher by a receding bhairline), and that was it . One of our managers shyly suggested that I used too much makeup on my eyebrows, and was embarrassed to learn that I used none at all. (One of my few regrets about growing old is that my eyebrows are now gray, sparse, and grizzled, and don't form a black line straight across the bridge of my nose as they used to. Ah, youth... !)

Some of the acts had to spend a good half-hour on makeup and costumes, and there were other kinds of time-consuming preparations. For a short time we had a Danish juggler who did remarkable things with eight-inch rubber balls in an act influenced by a well known juggler named Bob Ripa, also from Denmark.. These spheres had to be trued up by warming them, so the air inside would expand to the juggler's desired pressure, and he did this in front of his small electric radiant heater in the theater dressing rooms. He was not tremendously proficient in informal English, and it was considered a great joke to dine with him between shows; he would excuse himself early, and someone would always say loudly "Oh, can't you stay a little longer?" just to hear him answer

"No; I must go to the theater and warm my balls."

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3,344 words



**CHAPTER 6—PAINTED TERRAPIN and DAYS OFF**

## FROM THE JOURNAL

*Chrysemis picta picta*

Painted Terrapin

Boothbay Harbor, Maine

June 13, 1937

A good-sized specimen was given to me by a gentleman who said he had caught it about a mile west of town, near a small freshwater lake.

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June 28, 1937. This individual was given to the Dallas Aquarium, near the Texas-Pan-American Exposition.

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One member of our troupe, fishing from a boat out of Boothbay Harbor, Maine, caught a Sea Robin. I launched, as was my wont, into an unrequested and misinformed lecture about it.

“That’s a Sea Robin,” I said, “They don’t have bony skeletons like most fish. Their skeletons are made of cartilage.”

The whole Bowes troupe was being treated to a fishing trip. Members of these Units often complained of low pay, inferior hotels, drafty railroad cars, smelly buses, and second-rate cafés, but we really were treated quite well. In fact, some of the performers had found that the careful attention of the Bowes central office had earlier reached an irksome level. By the time I joined

them, restrictions had been relaxed. Some of the old timers, such as young Bruce Warnock of The Mimicking Melodiers, told me that my hitchhiking activities on off days would not have been tolerated a year or two earlier. No Bowes people, Bruce said, were allowed to do anything dangerous, or anything that might in any way reflect badly on the whole enterprise. (For Bruce and his fellow members of The Mimicking Melodiers this might have been because they were younger than I was. They had interrupted their high school education to go on the road, while I was a grown man of 20, with two years of college behind me. In any event, I was left free to spend days off as I wished.)

It was not unusual for a unit manager— probably at the instigation of the home office— to fill gaps in the show schedule with some sort of excursion for the whole troupe.

This fishing trip was just such an excursion. Our Unit manager arranged for a charter boat to take us all out fishing for bluefish, during a "dark" day in our itinerary. Not quite everybody went on that trip: our company soprano, "Rose O'Neill," became seasick the moment she stepped onto the dock, and went back to the hotel. But the rest of us had a fine time and a good catch of fish. Several of us took two of the larger bluefish to a restaurant and had them cooked to order for dinner.

When I made my foolish pronouncement about the Sea Robin, a member of the boat's crew, a tall red-haired and red-bearded young man who was cutting bait, heard me and responded quietly:

"I think" he said, "you'll find it's a Teleost."

In those days bony fishes were assigned by most taxonomists to the Class Teleostei, while the cartilaginous fishes, such as sharks and rays, were in the Class Elasmobranchii, and in a more vernacular way they were referred to respectively as Teleosts and Elasmobranchs. (That "ch" is

pronounced like a "k".) These terms have since been formally replaced by the even less pronounceable Osteichthyes and Chondrichthyes.

He was right, of course; the Sea Robin is indeed a Teleost. I don't know how I had arrived at the completely erroneous conclusion that it was an Elasmobranch.

This crewman turned out to be a congenial and generous friend, a medical student at Canada's McGill University, spending the summer working on the Boothbay Harbor party boats. He had a house in the town, and he invited another Bowes performer and me to use his spare beds for the several days of the show's stand, plus the two-day layoff before we moved on to the Opera House in Waterville. His hospitality made those days memorable. He was deeply interested in natural history, and in literature as well, pointing out the house in which Edna St. Vincent Millay had stayed while writing her "Renascence." We could easily locate the vista she described in that poem's opening lines:

"All I could see from where I stood  
Was three long mountains and a wood:  
I turned and looked another way  
And saw three islands in a bay."

I remember his name, perhaps wrongly, as Howard Earling, and he lent me his canoe for exploration of some of those islands in the bay. On one of them was a great Osprey nest at the top of a small dead spruce tree. Landing the canoe, I climbed the tree, and found that some of the sticks composing the nest were large enough, and planted firmly enough, to hold my weight. I sat on the edge of the nest for some time, regarding the three eggs contained within it, while a pair of adult Ospreys wheeled about overhead screaming their displeasure. This didn't worry me, for I had read somewhere that Ospreys will not attack a human. It was very soon after that, however,

that the *National Geographic* magazine ran an article describing how one of the Craighead brothers had his scalp laid open by the attack of a nesting Osprey.

My notebook for that brief stay has many other entries—Harbor Seals, several kinds of gulls, Fish Crows, Black Skimmers, and others..

This period in Boothbay Harbor was one of the most pleasant few days of my life. Years later, when I was doing some concerts in the east, Leslie and I took a week off and went there — one of the few non-working vacations we have ever taken. It was still an attractive place, but I couldn't find any trace of my friend Howard Earling. I must have misremembered his name, or made a mistake in assuming him to be a permanent resident of Boothbay Harbor; none of the old-timers I asked could remember anyone matching his description or name. I do wish I had kept in contact with him.

A few weeks before my first Maine excursion, the Bowes unit had taken another kind of boat trip, non-fishing, out onto Lake Superior. We were out of sight of land, several miles from any shore, when a small garter snake swam laboriously by, appearing to be in trouble. I immediately stripped to my underwear and dove in, rescuing the little snake and bringing it back aboard. For some reason this was talked about quite a lot, and from then on, members of one or another of the Bowes troupes would say, with no signs of admiration, something like "Oh ! You're the guy that swam all those miles in a storm in the middle of Lake Superior to catch a goddam snake!"

Another well-remembered excursion was arranged in Colorado to fill a layoff of several days between bookings. That was done with Ted Mack's "Precision Rhythm Revue and Parade of Youth," an offshoot of the Bowes units. In the Fall of 1937, when there was a week's gap between bookings, we were treated to several days at Roamer's Rest, a dude ranch near Sedalia,

Colorado. We stayed in a pleasant central lodge, had bounteous meals, western-style riding lessons, and saw lots of wildlife. And there were some genuine cowboys to talk to.

One of these cowboys was a singer and guitar-picker reputed to know a whole lot of songs, and on hearing (probably from me) of my own reputation in this respect, he challenged me to a contest. So after dinner one night we took turns singing, to see who would be the first to run out of songs. The result was inconclusive. After several hours, our repertoires had not been exhausted but our audience had been, and our voices were showing strain. So we shook hands, called it a draw, and went to bed.

Most of my time at Roamer's Rest was spent hiking about the countryside near the ranch, climbing up Long Scraggy Peak, and the journal contains pages listing Swainson's Hawk, Red-Shafted Flicker, Steller's Jay, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Yellow-Crowned Night Heron, Garter Snake, Mule Deer, Mountain Lion (parts of a dead body only), Raccoon (tracks only), and Big Brown Bat. All this wildlife filled me with a burning desire to help everyone enjoy it, and as usual I talked too much. On our first day, as we all stood outside the lodge, a hawk flew over.

One of the band's trumpeters said "Hey, look! It's a eagle!"

And I missed another glorious opportunity to keep my young mouth shut. "No," I plonked. "That's a Swainson's Hawk."

The trumpeter, whose name was Paul, snarled "Who's talking to you?" And from then on he would say, whenever someone made any kind of identifying remark, "No! That's not what it is, it's a Swillson's Hawk!"

Short layoffs between bookings were fairly common, and these provided an opportunity for me to get off by myself to see some open country. Some of the longest of these "open" periods occurred when one unit was folding, and I would be shifted to another one, with a number of

days in between. There was no pay for these days off, of course, and pennies had to be watched pretty carefully.

Such an event happened in Chicago, where I was scheduled to join a troupe at the Oriental Theatre. Before the new Unit arrived, I played one day at the Oriental, as a sort of "coming attraction", along with the vaudeville troupe then playing — the Olson and Johnson company. I had seen the show before, and like everyone was delighted with all the zany things going on both onstage and in the audience. (One lucky member of the audience was awarded at each show with an unwrapped 25-pound cake of ice.)

This made me a little nervous, wondering whether something would happen during my first performance, and sure enough, something did. A woman planted in the audience chose that time to stand up and rush up the aisle toward the lobby, screaming "My God! I left the baby in Walgreen's!"

( Several years later, the Olson and Johnson show, under the name "Hellzapoppin", had a long run on Broadway in New York. )

Except for that one day at the Oriental, I was not on any payroll, and while I had hoarded some money against this enforced layoff, it wasn't enough. When the old unit disbanded, I had immediately moved to a cheaper hotel, but after a few nights there, found a flop-house down in the Loop where I could stay for 25¢ a night. There was an old-timer there who took me under his wing, and gave me some serious instruction:

"There might be somebody here who'd bother you , and you gotta know how to take care a yourself. You get yourself a big bar a P & G soap — cost you about a nickel — and put it down in the toe of a sock. That makes a good blackjack, and if anybody comes at you, you can just hit him over the head. And it won't leave no disfigurin' marks!"

Nobody came at me — which was just as well, for I hadn't prepared the defensive weapon.

I was in the flophouse for only a couple of nights, for at the Field Museum I fell in love with a portfolio of gorgeous prints of paintings by Louis Agassiz Fuertes. The collection was called *Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals*, the paintings having been done by Fuertes in the course of the Field Museum / Chicago Daily News Abyssinian Expedition of 1926-27, and were among the very finest works of that great artist-naturalist. The collection cost about \$6.00, I think, and of course I had to buy it — but that took just about all of my cash, and there was no way to pay that two bits at the flophouse if I wanted to have a meal or two, so once more I moved into cheaper quarters, spending the last two nights free of charge in the walk-in refrigerator of a burned-out grocery store in north Chicago. It was worth it; those paintings were—and are—beautiful!

When my new unit got there, I was able to draw an advance, and my lodging moved up the social scale by several degrees of magnitude, for the whole cast was housed, at a very special rate, in the Hotel Morrison. (One of our Emcees had a joke about the restaurant at the Morrison: "A steak there costs \$18.00. Twenty-three with meat on it!" That was in the days when \$2.00 was more than enough buy the best steak in almost any restaurant.)

These layoffs were quite welcome, as they gave me a chance to see something of the country. In late October, 1937, we were playing in Tacoma, Washington, and a few days without a show provided an opportunity for a hitchhiking journey to Mt. Rainier. There were lots of birds along the way, including beautiful Yellow-Crowned Night Herons near Snoqualmie Canyon. I had heard that there were inexpensive accommodations, barracks-style, at Paradise Lodge, well within Mt. Rainier Park, and after several rides and a lot of walking, arrived there on foot in the

late afternoon. It had been a miserable day, with a freezing drizzle most of the time, and my lips, stiff with cold, were practically useless for talking. But I had to address the man at the desk.

"How nguch," I asked with dignity, "is your cheafest roong?"

Somehow he understood me, and answered my question. I don't remember the figure he gave me, but there was no barracks: I'd have to have an individual room. No matter. I thought I had enough money for one night — but my money was gone! It had been in the form of several silver dollars which had apparently rolled out of my pocket during one of the rides.

The young man at the desk was sorry, but there was no way he could grant me credit, so there was nothing to do but turn back and start walking westward toward Tacoma.

By that time, a thick fog had joined the drizzle, and there wasn't much vision past the edge of the road. But I did spy a path that appeared to zigzag up a small east-facing hill, and, wanting to experience some part of the Park aside from the road, I took it. Half a mile or so along the path was a great tree with a burned-out hollow at its base, and as this appeared dry and warm, I crawled in and sat down there, facing eastward, to gather strength for the rest of the return journey.

Suddenly I was blessed with a sight that no one else on earth could have seen at that moment: a break in the fog revealed the snowy peak of Mt. Rainier, looming there impossibly high, impossibly carmine in the sunset light. I'm sure I didn't blink, and probably didn't breathe, until the fog closed in again.

I walked back down the path to the road, and doggedly took up my walk toward the cities. Night fell and became about as dark as a night could be. Keeping on the road was possible only by looking straight overhead, where there was a very faint difference between the tops of the bordering trees and the sky. Nobody else was on the road, and I had to walk the 11 miles or so to

Ashford before getting a ride. But the glow of the mountain had produced a glow within me that stayed the whole time, and was still there when I got to the hotel in Tacoma. I had seen Mt.

Rainier!

A couple of weeks later, a layoff in central California permitted a trip to Yosemite. Rides were forthcoming, and the only adventure *en route* was spending the night in a cheap hotel in Mariposa. This turned out to be something other than an ordinary hotel, and I had a hard time convincing the woman at the desk that I did not want company for any part of the night. Later, there was a knock at the door to my room, and a woman's voice called pleasantly "Are you sure you don't want any company?" I said "No, thanks!" and got safely away early in the morning, arriving at the Park that afternoon.

The last ride into the valley was in the company of a black chauffeur working for a physician who lived in the Park for most of the year; the doctor had left the Park to spend the rest of the winter at his home in Merced, and the chauffeur was coming back alone to close up the house. He pointed out all the landmarks, and remarked about one "You see that big old rock up there? They call it 'Half Dome', but I call it 'Half Gone!'"

This was a fine trip, with lots of wildlife to see; my notebook has 12 pages, treating of such creatures as the Modoc Hairy Woodpecker, California Woodpecker (now known as the Acorn Woodpecker), Willow Downy Woodpecker, Western Blue-Bellied Lizard, Gray-Headed Junco, and Hoary Marmot.

This time there was a barracks-like accommodation, and I had assiduously husbanded my cash. There was just enough to pay for a night in the barracks, where I saw my first Ring-Tailed Cat (*Bassariscus*) — a half-tame one, prowling among the rafters. I left early the next morning,

after being treated to the sight of Bridal Veil Falls and some of the others that had frozen over during the night.

It was a pleasure walking down the road, but my thoughts were very much on getting back to the hotel in San Jose where I had secreted a few dollars, and getting something to eat. The hotel and the barracks had used up all the money I carried with me, and there had been no food since breakfast the day before. But the gods were with me, for in the middle of the road was a fine big bunch of carrots which must have bounced off a produce truck.

Their taste was wonderful as I walked along, and then in the distance another such bunch could be seen in the road. At the same moment, I saw a Red-Tailed Hawk (definitely not a Swillson's) soaring above the road in the same direction, and although I certainly knew that a hawk wouldn't be interested in carrots, at that moment I saw it as a competitor, and began waving my arms and shouting, running to reach the vegetables first. The hawk was too dignified to respond in any way, and that second bunch of carrots was as good as the first. There were several more bunches later, but by then I couldn't eat another carrot, and left them for the hawks or whatever....

Even when I was with my troupe, and not hiking off into the wilderness, riding in our chartered bus between towns afforded many glimpses of wildlife. I saw my first Yellow-Headed Blackbird only briefly, as it flew across the road ahead of us. And my journal has several entries such as the one devoted to a Cardinal seen at a service station 31 miles northwest of Scranton, Pennsylvania, where the bus had stopped for refueling.

Working every day did not deny me opportunities for observing wildlife between shows. In those days there was a lot of green open country within easy walking distance of the small and middle-sized towns where our troupe was playing. We played for two days at the Rex Theater in

Casper, Wyoming, and on one of those days there was a magical dusk on the outskirts of the town. The prairie came right up to the city limits, and it was an easy matter to take a twilight walk to where two Prairie Chickens scared the heck out of me by thundering into flight almost at my feet.

Especially memorable is an early May day near Vincennes, Indiana, when the woods and thickets along the Wabash River were bursting with the full glory of a midwestern springtime. One's entire being is involved in a day like that. The green of the bushes and trees seems to be right inside your eyes, the chorus of Leopard Frogs, birds and insects seems to come from within your head; the very air is alive with tastes and smells, and one takes long deep breaths, so as to participate more fully in that vibrant air. The birds seem less shy than usual, and their bright colors seem to gleam with a light of their own against the green background.. (Oh! those Indigo Buntings!)

This was a day of being aware of nature as a whole, and it seemed almost sacrilegious to separate, identify and log in the individual kinds of birds. Only ten species were accorded separate journal pages, then I gave up trying to write anything that would do justice to the magic of the day, and simply made a list of the birds seen.

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3,536 words.

## CHAPTER 7 -- GREEN SNAKES AND A VERY YOUNG NATURALIST

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Opheodrys vernalis*

SMOOTH GREEN SNAKE

Westerly, Rhode Island, 1 mile W, near Pawcatuck

River

June 22, 1937

One specimen found under a well-cover, lying coiled up on the brick edging around the well, which projected about 6 inches above the ground.

A few hundred yards away, three much larger ones were found under a piece of linoleum. From their plump appearance, it seems likely that they were all gravid females. They thrashed about furiously when caught, but made no attempt to bite.

•••••

It was exciting to see animals and plants I had never seen before, but there was a different sort of excitement, perhaps nostalgic, in seeing familiar creatures in a new setting. That's how it was with these Green Snakes, which, although of a different species, were superficially very

similar to the Rough Green Snakes ( *Opheodrys aestivus* ) I had known so well back in Oklahoma and East Texas.

In a way, it was that innocent Texas serpent that almost got me in trouble in Crockett high school. One of our regular teachers was ill, and her place was taken by a Houston County official somehow connected with the school district office, an unschooled man best known (behind his back, of course) as "Jelly Belly.."

In this class, he had no lesson plan, so just talked to us, and chose to regale us with tales of local natural history. Many of his statements made me squirm, and finally I spoke up when keeping still would have been much wiser.

"Any snake that's colored green is poison," pontificated Jelly Belly; "It's the poison makes 'em green!"

"But Mr. Root!" I burst out; "The only green snakes we have around here are completely harmless, and there isn't any green snake in the whole United States that IS poisonous!" (I was very young then, and didn't know about *Crotalus scutulatus*, the Mojave Rattlesnake, which IS poisonous and often IS kind of green.)

Jelly Belly didn't deign to debate. He just loftily assumed his most fearsome visage (which was pretty fearsome), and said "All right, that's enough of your sass; you get out of here right now and go to the office and wait there till I come." I went to the office and told my friend Mr. Jordan, the Principal, that Mr. Root had sent me there, and why. "He says I sassed him." Mr. Jordan gave me a chair, and I waited, terrifying myself by imagining the punishments Jelly Belly might inflict upon me, and wondering what egregious superstitions he was pouring out upon the class in my absence. But he never showed up. When school was out and nobody was left except

the Principal and me, Mr. Jordan told me I could go on home. Mr. Root had apparently forgotten about me that day, and I heard no more from him on subsequent days.

Reptiles have fascinated me all my life. Some of my earliest, and most pleasant memories are of going fishing with my grandfather, and encountering reptiles and amphibians as well as fish. For as long as I can remember, I spent as much time as possible in Beaumont, with Mom's parents. Her mother — our grandmother — was called “Dearie”, and the grandfather was “Judge.” His full name was Matthew Samuel Duffie (and my full name is Sam Duffie Hinton; my son is Matthew Sam Hinton.). A practicing attorney, Judge had actually been a Judge by Appointment for a while (during World War I in Gatesville, Texas, but he preferred being just an Attorney and Counselor. He had also been the mayor of Gatesville for a couple of years starting in 1889 (one year after my mother was born.). His father-in-law, Isham Bailey Hardy, had also been mayor of Gatesville, ‘way before that.. After moving to Beaumont in 1902, where lawyers were needed in connection with the Spindletop Oilfield boom, Judge gave up all political efforts. But his nickname persisted, and everyone called him Judge Duffie. His law partner had a similar nickname, and I knew him only as Judge Brooks, who was well known for his magical ability to cure warts.

My grandfather was something of an outdoor sportsman— a freshwater fisherman and a duck hunter. He occasionally took me hunting, but I vastly preferred the fishing trips. The most exciting part of fishing to me was the capturing of live bait. Judge had an eight-foot seine, and taught me how to hold one end of it, where the net was attached to a four-foot vertical wooden rail. The intended prey, found in small ponds and creeks, was minnows— small Redhorses and other kinds that would be used for bait in the river or in a larger pond — but the net was always full of other fascinating creatures. There were turtles of many kinds, garter snakes, crawdads, and

an occasional giant "Congo Eel". These were often a yard or so in length, and looked like very stout eels, but they were actually amphibians, and as members in good standing of the salamander group, had four legs, albeit very tiny non-pfunctional ones. Much later I learned that these creatures are formally known as *Amphiuma tridactyla*, but Judge called them "Congo Eels," a local term derived from the unrelated Conger Eel. Judge was mortally afraid of them. He would flip them out of the net with a stick, claiming that they would bite and hang on until killed, and that their slime was so poisonous that a mere touch could mean death to the toucher. In actual fact, they are completely harmless.

Judge was a good hunter and fisherman, but his formal education was along classical and legal lines, and his lack of scientific training made him subject to a lot of erroneous beliefs. As much as I loved and admired him, I came to realize that his comments on natural history were not always accurate. He was convinced, for example, that the harmless Hog-Nosed Snake (*Heterodon platyrhinos*)— which, in common with most Southerners, he called a "Spreadin' Adder"— was deadly. On one of our fishing trips, he got out of the car and almost stepped on a Spreadin' Adder. The snake made a feint, brushing against Judge's pants leg without even pretending to bite— but Judge paled and almost fainted. He had to sit recovering on the running-board of the car for quite a while before we could go on to the river bank.

Dearie too had her quota of untrue beliefs, but I regarded these as interesting folklore rather than mistaken facts. She had one story about wildlife, regarding the Dragon Fly. She called it a "Devil's Darning Needle," and assured me that if I ever told a lie, a Devil's Darning Needle would come and sew my lips together. I didn't believe this, but thought of it as part of her Southern lore, like her stories about Epaminandus, the Southern American personification of the Literal Numskull. (When his mama set some pies to cool on the front steps, she said

“Epaminandus, you be careful how you step in them pies!” And he was very, very careful: he stepped exactly in the center of each one.)

One of Judge’s tales was hard to believe, even when a little research in the books showed it to be completely true. This was about the drab Ricebirds whose great flocks hung around the flooded fields of growing rice. Judge told me that these plain little creatures were in Texas only for the Fall of the year; in the winter, they went farther south, and in spring and summer they went up north where their plumage became brighter, and where they were known as Bobolinks. He had learned this through his interest in poetry, having been intrigued by William Cullen Bryant's poem, "Robert of Lincoln." Judge knew the poem by heart, and quoted parts of it whenever we saw flocks of Ricebirds:

"Bobolink, bobolink,  
Spink, spank, spink!"

Judge loved poetry, and that was one of the many bonds between us. Bryant was one of his favorites — perhaps because Bryant too had started adult life as a lawyer. Judge was also very fond of Sidney Lanier, another lawyer who had made good, with additional points for having been a Southerner. Both Lanier and Bryant were a little heavy for me, but Judge and I agreed on another poet: we both loved Robert Burns. He gave me a book of his complete poems, and was delighted when I memorized several of them. He would often ask me to recite "To a Louse", and would murmur most of it right along with me.

At home, Mom was really quite interested in my animals, although she had reservations about some kinds. Once I found a baby possum, and putting it into my shirt pocket with only its head exposed, went in to show it to Mom. She immediately said:

"Sam! You get that rat out of here!"

I said "But Mom, it's not a rat; it's a baby possum. "

And Mom said "Oh! Isn't it *cute!*"

Poor Mom; I was surely a trial to her in lots of ways. She tried to get me interested in various things beside reptiles, wanting me to collect butterflies, or to raise gladioli. I tried all these things, but didn't stick with any of them.

My family moved to East Texas in about 1929 when I was 12 years old. Crockett was a pretty small town, and while there was not a very big circle of acquaintances from among whom I could choose my friends, some aspects of its smallness were delightful. The telephone system, for example, was a simple one. When you removed the receiver from the hook, a living operator said "Number, please"— unless she had recently set off the central fire alarm. On those occasions, instead of asking for a number, the operator would say something like "Fire at Miz Crosley's house out on Highway 38." This would continue until there had been plenty of time for all the volunteer members of the fire department to lift up their phone receivers and find out where they were needed. Then she'd start asking again for your number, which was a simple three-digit affair.

Once Dad tried to call home from the Highway Office. The operator knew his voice, and said "Mr. Hinton, if you're calling Mrs. Hinton, she's not home: I saw her go into the beauty parlor across the street just a few minutes ago."

My favorite wild place near Crockett was what we called Hurricane Bayou, using the Texas pronunciation —"BYE-oh"— of the French word (which the French had Gallicized from the Choctaw "bayuk".) This wasn't really a bayou in the strict geographic sense, but a creek. Whatever it was, it was a fascinating place. A three-mile walk along the Missouri-Pacific railroad track brought one to a trestle crossing this stream, and here was my favorite collecting ground.

The banks, both upstream and downstream from the trestle, were covered with thickets of brushy Willow, Redhaw, Possum Grapes, cane, and thousands of other plants. A little beyond this brush, out of the usual reach of the annual floods, were bigger trees, such as Sweetgum, Locust, Cottonwood— some of the latter with trunks five or six feet in diameter— and wild Persimmon. Still farther beyond lay fields of sugar cane or cotton, often bounded by hedgerows of Chinaberry and Bodark, our pronunciation of "*Bois d'arc*" ("Wood of the bow" ) trees. But most of the magic lay right along the Bayou itself.

The Bayou ran roughly westward, and one of my unrealized ambitions was to spend however long it took in a back-packing hike along its twisting banks all the way to its debouchment into the Trinity River—about 15 miles as the crow flies, and probably at least five times that as the Bayou wanders. But I never got around to it; none of my friends wanted to undertake the venture, and Mom didn't want me to do it alone. I did make a number of turtle-collecting expeditions to the Trinity River, but got there through mundane hitchhiking along the highway.. I never saw where Hurricane Bayou merged with the Trinity River.

The Bayou at the railroad crossing close to home was an ever-changing scene. At one time, in the spring of the year, I might cling nervously on top of the trestle, feeling it vibrate as I peered down between the ties at the violent flood rushing past. Then a month or so later, I would stand below on the banks beside the quietly flowing stream, looking up to the chaste skirts of debris deposited by the flood on the creosoted trestle piers far above my head. Still later, in late summer, the stream would have quit flowing, and dried into a series of shrinking ponds, with the dried mud between them developing a pattern of cracks reminiscent of the spots of a giraffe. At the edges of these pools the mud stayed soft, and bore fascinating tracks of armadillos and raccoons and possums and feral pigs and other shy nocturnal inhabitants of the area. In some

ways, this would be the most interesting time of all, for each pond might hold a concentration of living creatures; there were Alligator Gars, Diamondback Water Snakes and Cottonmouth Moccasins, and turtles of several kinds, including big softshell turtles and snapping turtles. There was even a kind of rough sorting, so that each pond seemed to have a preponderance of one kind of animal. These species were to be found throughout the year, but it was only in these ponds that I ever got close to the bigger turtles.

There was one Alligator Snapping Turtle that tried to hide in water not deep enough to cover it, and I was able to grab its tail. Then it tried to bite, so it had to be held out at arm's length to keep its wicked jaws at a safe distance. Walking all the way home with it was one of the most trying journeys I can remember; the tail was tapered and slippery, and it took all my grip to keep it from sliding out of my hand. And the turtle was heavy, probably around 20 pounds — not at all impressive for this species ( probably *Macrochelys temminki* , reliably reported to reach a weight of at least 200 pounds), but enough to make the necessary arm's-length stance very tiring. I had to cross my left arm over my chest and support the right elbow most of the time, and there were frequent rests. We finally made it home, and I put the turtle into a fenced pen containing a concrete pond, my pride and joy.

Fearing that the snapper was big enough to climb over the low fence, I secured it by boring a hole in one of its overhanging posterior carapace plates, stringing one end of a stout wire through and attaching the other end to a deeply-driven stake. And it worked — except that during the night the turtle crawled to the extent of the wire, which just allowed it to reach the fence. It clawed at the fence, in an effort to climb it, and this repeated clawing tore the fence down. By morning, the big snapper was still there, tethered to the wire, but most of my other turtles had

scampered away. Fortunately, turtles don't scamper very fast, and I was able to recapture a good many of them in the vacant lot adjacent to our house.

Anyone who spends any time outdoors is bound to run into something he's not equipped to understand, and that happened to me at Hurricane Bayou. On arriving at the trestle one day, as usual I looked down from the trestle to see what was happening below, and saw an extraordinary sight: a large softshell turtle, probably *Trionyx ferox*, of a brilliant blue color! I crept down the sides of the bank, keeping an eye on it, but it went into the water and disappeared long before I got to it. I still have no idea how the creature could have been of that color.

Snakes were as fascinating as turtles, and I was never without several kinds in the backyard cages at home. In fact, my early life can be divided into three distinct periods. First came the time in Tulsa when Mom would permit my keeping none but very small snakes, then when she rather reluctantly allowed larger snakes, and finally when she surrendered and didn't object to my keeping poisonous kinds so long as I didn't tell her about them.

Most of my years in Crockett were while I was in high school, and had graduated from the small-snakes-only period.

The area around Hurricane Bayou was home to any number of species, and I caught several pretty rare kinds. One was the Mud Snake, *Farancia abacura*, collected at Dr. Doris Cochran's request and sent to her at the National Museum in Washington, DC. Also there I found two very beautiful Coral Snakes, *Micrurus fulvius*, which were sent to Dr. Karl P. Schmidt at the Field Museum in Chicago.

The canes that grew in groves along the bayou were like small bamboo, and I earned a little spending money by taking some home and preparing them for use as fishing poles. The garage at our house in Crockett had a gabled roof, and I rigged a 4" x 4" beam extending out

from the peak. The small end of the cane was tied to this so that the cane hung vertically, with its larger end close to the ground; and on this larger end was hung a heavy weight, such as an old dead automobile storage battery. After a month or two, the cane would be dry and straight, and at the local hardware store, I could get a quarter for it. This was a very slow way of making money, because the beam would support only two canes at a time.

My natural history hikes were not always made alone; I had a few good friends at Crockett High School, and one or more of them often came with me. Cecil "Spotlight" Bradley was one of my best friends, but often had work to do at home on weekends and holidays. "Lope" Faris was my most frequent companion, with Bob Towery often completing a trio. Bob was our age, but far behind us in school; he was always cheerful, and was one of the strongest people I have ever known. Having read somewhere that an egg could not be broken by squeezing it from the ends, I tried it, and it was true; even with both hands, I couldn't break it. But when Bob tried it with one hand, he smashed it, and looked at me reproachfully as he wiped raw egg off his hand and arm.

Bob was given to mild *petit mal* seizures, and would pass out when he got over-excited. This happened once at Scout camp, attendant upon the capturing of a Copperhead snake near the campfire site. I sat beside Bob's cot as he recovered. He used to love having me draw pictures for him, and when asked if he wanted me to do so then, while he was still resting, he said yes.

"What do you want me to draw?"

He grinned and said "Nekkid women!"

I had never drawn nekkid women for him, and don't know why he asked for them at that time. Brother Berglund, our Scoutmaster and Pastor of our Methodist Church (South), was

standing nearby. Diplomatically pretending not to hear, he withdrew from the scene. I don't remember what I drew for Bob, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't nekkid women.

Later, Brother Berglund insisted that I kill that Copperhead.

Longfellow's "*Song of Hiawatha*" was one of my favorite books, and sometimes I called Bob "Kwasind," after one of Hiawatha's friends, always mentioned as "...the very strong man, Kwasind." I secretly fantasized that someone would name me in honor of Hiawatha's other best friend, "Chibiabos, the musician, He the sweetest of all singers," but my friends either didn't think of me as a sweet singer, or had never read *Hiawatha*, or both.

An occasional companion was Arthur Lee Cunningham. I remember one hike with him toward Lovelady, north of Crockett, along the railroad, and in the rock ballast surrounding a power pole we unearthed the longest Coachwhip snake (*Masticophis flagellum*) that we had ever seen. I got it into my hands just as a train came by, and held its seven-foot length up in triumph to show the engineer, who waved congratulations. We also caught a good big Cottonmouth Moccasin, and learned a lesson: don't believe what people tell you about handling snakes! This Moccasin was put into my snake bag, which Mom had made for me out of pillow ticking, and I slung it over my shoulder, having been told by some adult that a snake wouldn't bite through a bag in which it was held. But when the bag brushed against a sign-post, the Moccasin bit at it, and two large drops of venom rolled down the outside of the bag. From then on I handled laden snake-bags very much more carefully!

Arthur Lee and I represented Crockett High School as its Debating Team. The rules had each team prepare both positive and negative sides of whatever proposition was assigned, and which side was argued by each team was decided by the toss of a coin. That year, the assigned proposition was something like "Resolved: That lobbying in the national capital should be

abolished." We were provided with printed materials that would help us prepare to argue either side, but I was convinced that the positive side — that lobbying SHOULD be abolished — was moral and right. At the County Meet we were given the positive side of the argument, and we won the debate. Later, at the District Meet, we again had the positive, and again were victorious. But at the next-higher meet, in Huntsville, we got the negative, and our opponents, the positives, won. I interpreted this as unarguable proof that the positive was the "right" side, and that lobbying should indeed be outlawed. Somewhat later I was shocked to learn that in spite of our having pointed out the dangers, lobbying was still going on in Washington. Those people just didn't listen!

I think I really preferred making my collecting trips alone, or with no company other than my old dog, Buster. In this way I could conjure up imaginary companions, and hold extended conversations with them. In the Beaumont library I had read *Green Mansions*, and its author, William Henry Hudson, was one of my frequent imaginary friends. I could imagine his joining me in a circuitous route around a clearing occupied by ground-feeding Mourning Doves so as not to disturb them, and in other ways showing a fellow-feeling that I didn't always get from living friends.

The Depression was then in full swing, and I tried in every way to make a little money. When this could be coupled with my passion for natural history, it made me feel like a real professional naturalist, and I innocently engaged in one practice that I now know to have been shameful: I caught baby turtles and sold them for a nickel apiece to the pet section of Kress's five-and-dime store in Houston. There these innocent reptiles were sold at retail as pets, almost surely to die of malnutrition and neglect within a few months.

(Commercial traffic in these turtles was later forbidden by law, as they had been shown to be a reservoir for the harmful Salmonella bacteria. But in those days, they were very popular as pets.)

These were the young Red-Eared Turtles, *Chrysemys scripta elegans*, and to capture them I used to hitchhike over to the Trinity River at the Centerville road, and seine for them. Travel to the river and to the store in Houston was accomplished by hitchhiking. This began very early in my high-school years. The customs and social situations of those days allowed boys a great deal more freedom than was possible later. I know that when I grew up, I would not have given my teen-age son Matt permission to do this sort of traveling -- although Leslie and I did give permission—and we worried—when he bicycled alone for almost the full length of Baja California, or from home in San Diego to Seattle, Washington.) On my turtle-catching forays in the early 1930s, I carried my 8 x 4 foot seine (a gift from Judge), folded and packed away, and at the river bank I could cut wooden brails as needed. One brail was made longer than the other, with the long end projecting past the lower edge of the net. This brail would be stuck upright in the mud at the very edge of the water. I could then wade out with the other end of the seine and bring it back to shore in a sweeping arc. If I had chosen the spot correctly, and if the season was right, the net would contain a dozen or so of those poor little innocent turtles.

The road from Crockett to Centerville crossed the Trinity River at a point where there was no town, and no dwellings. It never took very long to get a ride to that point, and I'd ask the driver to let me out at the bridge.

The river banks were quite secluded, and there was no problem in doing my seining in the nude, clad only in shoes. Clothing would be bundled up and hidden high on the bank underneath the bridge. Once, while waist-deep in the river, and in this naked condition, I saw right before me

a gigantic Alligator Gar, which seemed to aim its menacing eyes just below my waist as it slowly sank out of sight in the murky water. I lost no time in scrambling out, with a hand covering what I thought might be, to the gar, a most tempting morsel. But the gar was gone, and after a while I cautiously ventured back into the river.

At another time I returned to the bridge only to find that a family had parked their car up on the road and were having a picnic lunch in the shade of the bridge. In my bare state, it was of course impossible to reach my clothes. I tried making a "grass" skirt of willow twigs and leaves, but didn't have nerve enough to use it. There was nothing to do except hide in the distant bushes until the family packed up and left.

The method was to spend all day collecting, say, 50 turtles, then hitchhiking home. The next day would see me hitching rides down to Houston, only 120 miles away, to sell my catch.

Once, while hitchhiking with a suitcase full of the turtles, I made an interesting contact with a carnival attraction. A blindfolded mind-reader was holding forth on the midway while his assistant wandered through the standing audience, selecting various objects which he identified, using, they said, his techniques of mind-reading. It's actually done through a spoken code, of course; the assistant can say "What is this?" or "Tell me about this object," or "What have I here?" or any number of other coded comments or questions, each with a special meaning. For very common objects, one question might be enough: "What have I here?" could mean a fountain pen, or perhaps a pocket knife. For less common objects, a series of questions and answers would get more and more specific until they narrowed down to the selected item. For really unusual objects there was a code of spelling, and that must be what they used on me. But it was a good code, for it took only a very few questions to arrive at the answer — "A suitcase full of live turtles!"

I was so impressed that I stopped by the carnival on the way back from Houston, and after that visited it several times while it played in and close to Crockett. I made friends with the mind-reader and his assistant, who was also his wife, and they hired me to help out on two or three occasions, at one time trusting me to assist him in his greatest memory feat — the apparent instant memorizing of the local telephone directory. This was really a simple matter of having an offstage assistant, invisible to the audience but visible to the performer.. The assistant had an identical phone book and a blackboard, and he (on one occasion I was that assistant!) could write on the board the name and phone number when a member of the audience called out a page and line number from the phone book.

I was sworn to secrecy as to his method, but since this method was published a few years later in *Popular Mechanics* magazine, it's probably all right to explain how it worked. Many years later, Prof. Frederick Woellner and I demonstrated this to an Education class at UCLA, and nobody guessed how we did it.

In high school, except for my special friends Cecil and Lope and Bob and Arthur Lee and Griffin Breazeale and his sister Beulah, and Willie Edna Brown, with whom I had my first date, just about everybody made fun of my natural history endeavors.

One hot summer day in Crockett I dropped in at Bishop's Drug Store to buy a lemon phosphate at the fountain. The two Bishop boys, both older than I, told me that they had a minnow trap partly submerged at the boat landing in front of their cabin at the Country Club on El Caney Lake. That morning, they said, they had pulled it up onto the bank to find it containing the largest and meanest-looking Cottonmouth Moccasin they had ever seen. They said they were afraid to get it out of the trap, and that I was welcome to it.

So walking on a fiery hot day the five miles to the lake, I started looking for the Bishop's cabin. Challenged by the caretaker, I explained my mission — only to learn that the Bishops didn't HAVE a cabin there. But the caretaker said he didn't mind if I looked around for snakes, and under an old boat there was indeed a beautiful Cottonmouth Moccasin.

With this fine snake in my bag, I trudged back to town and with feigned gratitude showed it to the Bishop boys, saying that it had been in the trap at their cabin just as they had told me. I thanked them profusely, and they didn't have much to say.

I left Crockett in 1934 to go to Texas A & M, where there was a cooperative residence house for Houston County students. I had no knowledge of the reptile-keeping facilities available at A & M, so left home with very few snakes — one gigantic Diamondback Water Snake and one fine Copperhead. The water snake gave birth *en route*, presenting more than 40 babies. The whole entourage found a home in the zoology department, where I met Mr. Berry before starting classes. We later released the water snakes, killed the Copperhead and added it to the department's preserved collection. Maybe it's still there.

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5,245 words

CHAPTER 8--KINGFISHER AND SIGN-PAINTING

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Megaceryl alcyon alcyon*

KINGFISHER

Westerly, Rhode Island, 1 mile West, on

Pawcatuck River

June 1, 1937

Two specimens were flushed from the tall grass and scrub bushes along the river's edge. Both flew around me several times before flying away, clattering as they flew.

•••••

On the way to the theater in Westerly, after a short hike along the river where the Kingfishers lived, I stopped to watch a skillful sign painter finishing up a small sign on the wooden canopy above the front door of a diner. "PETES' DINER," it read.

Ordinarily, I would have watched without interrupting his work, but that day I was feeling pretty sign-painterly myself, having recently finished lettering the menus on two drugstore lunch-counter mirrors, for \$1.00 each. Wishing to show myself as a member of the sign-painting fraternity, I had the nerve to speak up.

"Good morning! I'm studying to be a sign-painter too, and I was just wondering why you put the apostrophe *after* the 'S.'"

And I was immediately treated with full professional courtesy, for the painter stopped painting and took me into his confidence, launching into a technical discussion of the apostrophic position.

"Well, it's all balance. I know some sign writers put it before the 'S', but sometimes when you do that it just don't look right. That apostrophe sticks up there between two letters and takes up a lot of space, with open space underneath, and makes those two letters look too far apart. Ruins the whole balance, far as I'm concerned. So I like to put it in at the end, AFTER the 'S'.

"Course, if you've got a capital 'L' there, that's different. A capital 'L' has got that long bottom stroke off to the right, with all that open space above, and you can put your apostrophe there real nice. Then it don't balance right withOUT the apostrophe. If this said 'BILL'S DINER', I'd a had the apostrophe before the 'S'. But then, when there's two "Ls" like that, you gotta make the first one a little bit narrower, cause there's nothing to fill the empty space on that one. It's just BALANCE, and every sign is different. Every time, you gotta decide how you want to do it."

Without question, his work looked a whole lot better than anything I could do, no matter where the apostrophe went. (That problem with the capital "L", by the way, is still with us, and if he is still around, I hope he's noticed that a big chain of office supply stores spells its name in caps, and there is an "L" in it. Their artist has added a little dingus at the top of the "L," pointing down and to the right, which helps fill that void.)

Graphic arts have always figured large in my family. My older brother Allan and I both liked cartooning, and Dad arranged for us to subscribe jointly to the Landon Correspondence Course in cartooning, which he had taken as a young man. We patiently carried out the assignments, and sent them in for criticism.

At Wilson Junior High School in Tulsa, I was one of the three members of the Krazy Kracked Kartoontist Kompany, organized by a student named Ted Kronk. He gave me the stage name "Professor Skyblue Pink." We gave chalk-talks, performing several times at assemblies for the whole school. Chalk-talks were once a standard part of the entertainment world, and there were several books containing the sort of "patter" that was expected to go with the drawing— none of it very funny, lots of it full of offensive racial slurs, and many items incredibly dated. One book said to draw a picture of a lemon, and then say "This is a lemon, and if it strikes you in a skidoo fashion, it means twenty-three!" This was far out of date even in 1928!

I preferred my own routines, and had one that involved a lot of preparation and the use of smaller pieces of paper cunningly (I hoped) fitted through slots in the main sheet. I would draw a picture of a snake charmer sitting before an open basket and blowing on an instrument. Then I would turn my back to the audience, obscuring the picture, and when I stepped away, the snake charmer had empty hands and a surprised and angry look on his face, while I held an actual tin whistle in my hand. Then I would play "The Hootchie Kootchie Dance" on the whistle, while one foot pulled a string causing a cartoon cobra to rise from the basket. It actually worked at least once.

Most of my early childhood years in Tulsa were in the midst of the Great Depression, and boys were expected to earn part of the family income. Drawing and painting signs, however, were not an important source of income until after we had moved to Crockett, Texas, when I was about 12. In those olden days in Tulsa, there were plenty of other income-generating activities, such as delivering handbills, and selling magazines. I spent a lot of time as a door-to-door salesman for the Curtis Publishing Company. One of its products was the *Saturday Evening Post*, which came out once a week (but never on Saturday) and for which the customers paid a nickel. There were also two monthly Curtis publications, the *Country Gentleman* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*, which sold for 20¢ each. My average weekly profit from the *Post* alone was around \$1.20, and with the two monthlies, I was raking in more than \$8.00 every month.

When I was about ten years old, Dad helped me luck into a good job, paying a regular \$3.00 a week. For this all I had to do was turn the crank on the Mimeograph in Mr. Rhinehart's office to produce the weekly *Ira Rhinehart's Oil Report*, collimate and staple the sheets together, and hand-deliver the finished product to subscribers in downtown Tulsa. While carrying out that last obligation, I once came out of the Cosden Building, Tulsa's 11-story skyscraper (this was before the Philtower had been built) and, tripping at the door, sprawled out onto the sidewalk. A passerby helped me up, and said "Now, son, you can tell your friends that you fell out of the tallest building in Tulsa!"

Not all of the money thus earned was turned over to the family; I was encouraged to keep a little for my own spending money, and to establish a Savings Account at the bank. The undeposited money kept me in harmonicas; the Hohner "Marine Band" then cost 50¢, and I needed at least one a month. Bank savings were for other purposes. One such purpose was a

birthday present for Mom. Neither of us had ever been in an airplane, and half-hour excursions could be had for five bucks apiece. So Mom and I took a flight one November day, in a Fokker trimotor — a twin of the popular Ford trimotor; I don't know which came first.

Those planes had a non-retractable landing gear, the wheels at the bottoms of vertical struts attached to the high single wing and clearly visible from the passenger seats. Mom was at first pretty nervous about the whole idea, and fastened her eyes on the wheel outside her window. After we were airborne, the wheel continued to turn by its own momentum, but coasted more and more slowly until finally it stopped. When it did so, Mom gasped and whispered "We're gone!"

She quickly recovered, though, and thoroughly enjoyed the rest of the flight.

I gave up selling magazines when the family moved to Crockett in 1929 or '30, and began earning money as a sign painter. Lettering has always fascinated me, and until I turned 84 I was highly privileged for being paid to participate in such an enjoyable activity, as a freelance calligrapher. My interest was sparked by my Dad's drafting skill in this direction and by his old book of fancy alphabets (*Draughtsman's Alphabets*, NY: Keuffel & Esser Co. , 1877. It's still in my library.) Dad had wanted to be a newspaper artist and sports writer, but his father thought that kind of career was too undignified and precarious, and made Dad study engineering at Vanderbilt. He was able to draw, however, with a skill far beyond that of most draftsmen, and unquestionably could have been a successful commercial artist. He used to draw for us kids, making a game we called "drawing guesses"; he would draw some object or person, and while the drawing was in progress, the first child to guess what it represented would win that round, and his or her name would be inscribed beside the finished picture.

The letters in the *Draughtsman's Alphabets* were all drawn in "built-up" form, with ruling pen and regular penpoint: no broad pen was used. I tried copying those alphabets, with indifferent success, but did a lot better after stumbling onto the Speedball line of broad pens and the *Speedball Textbook* . Using such pens, I copied alphabets painstakingly from that book, which was first published in 1915. It went through many subsequent editions, and until verty recntly I was using the 21st—which may not be the most recent one. With its help, I got pretty handy with broad pens, less so with the brush.

My favorite alphabets in sign-painting were in the “Blackletter” family, and I used them indiscriminately, whether appropriate or not. “Old English” is a very forgiving alphabet, so full of curlicues and flourishes that an accidental waver or blot or smear can be made to look as if it had been done on purpose. My first “professional” use for it was in painting names and numbers on rural mailboxes. Sometimes the owner would give me a quarter for this, or (in my peripatetic late teens in Texas, the painting would be exchanged for a meal. I'm sure that any of those hospitable rural folks would have given me the meal even without the painting, if I had asked.)

One young boy on an outlying farm near Palestine, Texas, made a comment about my rendition of his father's name.

“Gosh!” he said, "That's so perty I can't hardly read it!"

More than 70 years later, the memory of that comment still had an influence on my calligraphic work.

In 1927 my big sister, Mary Jo, married an artist named Jon Gnagy, who later became famous as the first art teacher on television. Jonnie came of Mennonite German stock around Hutchinson, Kansas, and he told me that itinerant mailbox painters were well known in that

community. Also, he said that their lettering, called "fraktur," was very much like the "Old English" that I favored.

My larger signs and showcards were painted over this signature:



In Crockett, there was no professional sign shop, so my sign-painting efforts were apparently appreciated, and my shortcomings treated with considerate patience.. For example, Mr. Caldwell, Dad's boss in the highway office, hired me to paint "Crockett City Limits" on the pavement.. Some big construction job was going on in town, and lots of trucks were coming in that way. He didn't say anything about this sign's orientation, and for some reason I painted it so the letters were right side up to anyone driving OUT of town.

Mr. Caldwell said "Well, heck, now those truck drivers 'll think 'Good, I'm out of town now and can speed up as much as I want.' What I wanted was for them to slow down coming IN!"

Dad defended me, pointing out that nothing had been said about which way the sign was to be read, and Mr. Caldwell finally stopped grumbling and paid me. A dollar and a half, I think it was.

I remember one job for a restaurant, where they gave me an unused room to work in. This room was inhabited by hordes of cockroaches. The sign was duly finished, installed, and paid

for. A few weeks later, I wanted some cockroaches to feed the hungry lizards in my backyard cages, and asked the proprietor of that restaurant if I could go into that room, and collect some. He became very angry. "What kinda place ya think this is? There's no roaches here, and if you say there IS, you'll be in big trouble!"

Although much of my sign-work was of an ephemeral nature, such as the cardboard price-tags and "Special Sale" notices at Perry's five-and-dime store, some were more permanent. One of these was a pair of wooden signs, one at each entrance to Crockett on the main highway, saying "Welcome to Crockett, the Pecan City! 5,000 people, 10,000 pecan trees!" (A common saying had it that there might really be 10,000 pecan trees, but you'd have to count the hogs and mules to get the population up to 5,000.) I think these signs were done at the behest of the Chamber of Commerce.

(The Chamber of Commerce was said to have been responsible for the bronze plaque at the Crockett Oak — a large Live Oak about 3 miles from town where Davy Crockett was supposed to have stopped to camp on his way to the Alamo. Several years after leaving the town, I heard from a friend that the Crockett Oak had been destroyed by lightning, and that the Chamber had selected another oak, closer to town, and moved the plaque there. This story may well be apocryphal.)

Another big job for me was a large banner painted on sign cloth, saying "Port Crockett". This was displayed at a ceremony on the Trinity River, about 20 miles west of Crockett, where a visionary boatman was trying to stir up interest in making the river commercially navigable. The sign was left in place after the ceremony....

There was one series of time-consuming jobs for which there was no pay. These were the schedules for the football and basketball teams of Crockett High School. Mr. Jordan, the Principal, would bring me a stack of cardboard posters, about 13" x 18" in size. They were preprinted with a two-color picture representing the sport in question, with an open space for the name of the school and a larger space for the whole season's schedule. All I had to do was fill in the spaces on enough copies to be distributed for display in selected places of business in downtown Crockett.

In addition to hand-lettering the sports schedules, I worked the "scoreboard" at school basketball games, using brush and Spanish whiting on a large blackboard to paint the changing scores for all to see. In spite of these activities, my reputation at Crockett High School was almost entirely that of "Snake-catcher" or "Animal Trainer." Mom was quite miffed when the school Annual mentioned only that aspect of my life, ignoring all musical and sign-painting activities.

A source of revenue and meals lay in drug store lunch counters. Each of these was invariably equipped with a big mirror behind the counter, and on this mirror was painted the menu. In exchange for a meal, or sometimes for a little cash, I would bring the menu up to date, or even start from scratch and re-do the whole thing. (Show-card paint applies to clean glass quite easily, and when dry, can be scraped off with a razor blade.) I think I did the menu at Bishop's Drugstore in Crockett at least three times. Later, while traveling with the Major Bowes Units there were frequent free days, with no bookings, and I could spend them hitchhiking through the neighboring countryside, often earning drug-counter lunches in this way.

Crockett had one movie theater, and it did not possess a marquee with movable letters. I got a nice job painting signs there — two each week, one naming the movie "Now Playing" and a smaller one telling what next week's offering would be. Occasionally there was a third poster announcing, several weeks in advance, some movie of more than routine interest, such as "Frankenstein. " For all such work I was given materials, a place to work in the transformer room upstairs, and an unlimited pass to the theater for myself and one other. This became widely known among my friends, and it was not uncommon for me to be hailed as I walked toward town: "Hey, Sam, are you going to the show? Can I go with you?" Some of these hailers were girls, but these events weren't real dates, and I didn't deign to sit with them inside.

The little room where I painted the signs was next to the projection booth, and contained a mercury-arc rectifier which cast an intense blue light. There was no other light in the room, and the blue light rendered the colors of the showcard paints indistinguishable from one another. I painted the words "red", "blue", "yellow," "black", "green", on the outsides of the paint jars, but soon learned the surprising fact that one could identify most of the colors by their smell.

When Frank Buck's "Wild Cargo" was due at that movie house, I worked at home and made a large flat chip-board cut-out of a cargo ship with two glass-fronted cages set into the side. I intended to populate the cages with snakes and lizards and set it up in the lobby, but the theater manager would have none of it: no reptiles allowed on his premises!

When this job first began, I would often slip out of the transformer room into the adjacent balcony to watch the movie. This balcony, however, was the only place in which black people were allowed to sit, and the presence of a white boy was obviously threatening to them, bringing about a marked dampening of their spirits. I wanted to associate with them, but they apparently

thought that associating with me might be dangerous, so I decided they would be happier if I sat in the white seating section downstairs.

During rush periods I worked behind the counter at Perry's Racquet Store, and another job occupied many a Friday afternoon after school, having me walk from house to house, distributing handbills advertising grocery specials for Saturday.

Lettering and drawing, along with natural history pursuits, stood me in good stead at Texas A & M College, where one of the professors, Mr. Raymond O. Berry of the Zoology Department, hired me through the National Youth Administration (NYA) as a lab assistant and scientific illustrator, and this 35¢ per hour (later raised to 39¢) kept me in school. The same sort of job, with the same title and federal funds, helped to see me through my three years at UCLA. (My wife, Leslie, in her college days also worked through NYA at UCLA. She was a music copier and arranger.) And still later, this combination of interests got me my first good job after Leslie and I were married, as Director of the Palm Springs Desert Museum. And finally, it led to my 36-year employment by the University of California, starting as an Editor / Illustrator for UCDWR, the University of California Division of War Research.

After the war, the UCDWR scientists returned to their pre-war positions, many of them at the University's Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Percy ("Barney") Barnhart, who had been director of the Aquarium and Museum at Scripps since 1914, was retiring, and the Scripps Director, Dr. Harald Ulrich Sverdrup, offered me Barney's job. Like the earlier job in Palm Springs, this Scripps Institution job was at first pretty much a one-man operation, and I had lots of opportunity to design, construct, and install museum exhibits, to collect fishes and marine invertebrates, and to make hundreds of aquarium and museum labels.

As a retired old geezer, I still did art work until very recently, and was the quasi-official calligrapher for several departments at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and other UCSD agencies. Calligraphy is a lot of fun, and I learned something with every commission.

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3,340 words

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**CHAPTER 9 - CHICKEN SNAKE AND HITCHHIKING**

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Elaphe obsoleta confinis*

CHICKEN SNAKE

Belton, Texas, 5 miles west on Lampasas Road

July 12, 1937

One beautifully marked specimen was seen going across the road. He was captured in the ditch with ease. This individual was about four and one-half feet long. When released, he resumed his leisurely "gait" into the woods; being handled seemed not to affect him in the least.

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"Damn! I knowed I'd forgot something!"

The Bowes Unit in the Magnolia Lounge at the Dallas Pan-American Exposition had closed. I had a few days between shows, and was on my way to Lometa to interview an experienced physician about snakebite and its treatment. (Well, that was the excuse for the journey. I think what I really wanted was to see more of Kay, the physician's granddaughter, whom I had met in Dallas.) After meeting that Chicken Snake I had walked a few miles, and at last had caught a ride. The driver asked where I was going, and I said "To Lometa." He was only

going as far as Lampasas himself, and Lometa lay a few miles beyond that. So I got into his noisy old car and we set off.

It was a sultry hot day, and all the car windows were wide open; the wind and the sounds of the car made conversation impossible. That was just as well, for there was no attempt at audible communication. My host didn't open his mouth until we were hitting the outskirts of Lampasas, then he suddenly slapped his thigh and spoke in an loud, aggrieved voice:

"Damn! I knowed I'd forgot sumpthin!"

He stopped and let me out right after that, and I never learned what he had forgot . But I remember him, as I remember so many of the kind folks who gave me rides..

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Back when I was in high school, I got a ride not far from Huntsville with a dignified elderly man. At one point we saw a good big Chicken Snake in the road, and it looked to me as if the driver was swerving toward it with murderous intent-- the usual intent of most folks at that time.

"Don't run over it!" I said.

He gave me an odd look. "I'm not; I just want to look at it up close."

He stopped the car, well short of the snake, and we both got out to watch the snake crawl through the dry ditch and lose itself in the bushes at the side of the road, and the driver said "I just wanted to see for sure what kind it was."

He revealed himself as the first real full-time herpetologist I had ever met: he was Dr. John K. Strecker, professor of zoology at Baylor University. My junior high science teacher in Tulsa, Miss Edith Force, had mentioned him to me in her letters, and meeting him was a heady experience.

We talked snakes and turtles all the way to Huntsville, where he treated me to lunch and gave me his address.

Somehow I never got around to writing to him, and he died in 1933, quite soon after our meeting. I've always wished I could have known him better. I later learned that we had a lot more in common than our love of reptiles; he was interested in folklore, too, and had been president of the Texas Folklore Society. He was kind, he was knowledgeable, and he was genuinely interested in young people. His name is preserved in the names of several Texas amphibians and reptiles: Strecker's Chorus Frog, *Pseudacris streckeri*; Strecker's Hook-Nosed Snake, *Ficimia olivacea streckeri*; and Western Pygmy Rattlesnake, *Sistrurus miliarius streckeri*.

(By the way: biologists today don't name plants and animals for themselves. Names are usually bestowed by specialists, who may wish to honor someone — sometimes the person who collected the specimens upon which the description is based. The person who does the describing, known as the "author" of a name, is immortalized by having his or her own name, not in italics, follow the scientific name. Thus, since H. K. Gloyd revised the genus *Sistrurus*, the full technical designation for the Western Pygmy Rattlesnake is *Sistrurus miliarius streckeri* Gloyd. If research someday reveals some kinds of necessary changes, "Gloyd" will still follow the new name, but in parentheses. I collected about 80 of these little rattlesnakes and sent them to Gloyd; he wrote that he was considering naming the new East Texas subspecies for me, but his untimely death made it important for him to be so honored instead.)

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On one extremely hot summer day in East Texas, I got a ride with a retired cotton farmer who said he was devoting his life to reading. He had always loved to read but while farming cotton, he had neither books nor time to read them.

"But now my daughter is a librarian, and she keeps getting books I never heard of for me to read, and my gosh, what a lot of stuff there is I didn't know! And stuff I thought I knew but was wrong! Lately I've been reading books by this Robert G. Ingersoll, and he really gets down to cases. Man was a Yankee Colonel in the War Between the States, and he's been dead more'n thirty years, I guess, but he's really got a modern way of looking at things. What he says about the Bible....."

Here he broke off, as we passed an elderly black man walking in our direction.

"You mind if we give him a ride?" my driver asked. "It's too hot for anybody to be out there in the sun."

I didn't mind at all, and the old gentlemen climbed gratefully into the back seat.

"I'm a minister of the Gospel," he explained, "and on my way to a visit in Houston. A good friend of mine is a minister too, and he wants me to preach a guest sermon in his church."

The driver again took up the discussion of his reading.

"So Robert Ingersoll says how can we accept the Bible as the undisputed word of God when it's so full of conterdictions? It can't all be true when it says one thing one place and then says the opposite somewheres else. Like in one place it says that God created man and woman at the same time, then later on in the same chapter it says that man came first, and woman a long time later. Same way, it says God made the beasts first and then made Adam; later on it's just the opposite. If one is true, then the other one sure isn't!

"Lots of things in the Bible just don't make sense. Like on the first day, God says 'Let there be light!' but He don't make the Sun until the fifth day! And whoever wrote the book of Genesis thought the stars was just little lights up there, and had God spending less than half a day to make all them stars, millions of 'em, while it took him about five and a half days to make the Earth. But we know now that all of them stars are a whole lot bigger than the Earth, and probably every bit as complicated.

"And some things bothered me even before I started reading Colonel Bob. Like the Bible says that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born, and Joseph hadn't laid with her yet. But then why does it spend so much time talking about Jesus being descended from the old kings, when it's really Joseph's family they're talking about? If Joseph wasn't the father, what difference does his family tree make? And anyway, if it DOES make a difference, two Books in the New Testament show that family tree in two different ways; they can't both be right!

"Ingersoll says there's lots of good stuff in the Ten Commandments, but that there's no Commandment saying 'Thou shalt believe everything in the Bible!'"

At this point the man in the back seat spoke up softly. "Here's where I get off, please, sir."

"I thought you were going on to Houston."

The rider spoke gently but firmly. "No sir, this is where I get off."

The driver stopped and the preacher disembarked. I looked back as we left, and he was still walking toward Houston through the shimmering heat

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On another trip in East Texas, a young couple of rural dress and mien picked me up and asked where I was going and if I had been saved.

"I hope you been saved. We both seen the light and come to Jesus. You got no idea how much happier we been since Lord Jesus come into our hearts! We used to go dancing a lot, but we don't do that no more. We even drank bootleg liquor sometimes, and I used to cuss and swear like nothin' you ever heard, but we just don't want to sin any more. And we don't miss it a-tall."

The man said that he felt he had a call, and he and his wife were on their way to confer with the elders of their church; if the elders agreed that he had a genuine call, he would be formally named a preacher.

As we stopped at our parting spot, he said a prayer for me.

"Oh Lord, he'p this young fella find contentment in his heart the way You he'ped me. I know his life is fraught with temptations, him workin' on the stage and everything; he'p him see his way to salvation. Let him be saved! Amen!"

His wife echoed "Amen!" and then, with genuine Christian charity, said "Billy Bob, why'n't we eat that watermelon while this boy is still with us? He could sur use some nice cool watermelon on a hot day like this!"

The husband agreed, and pulled off to the side of the road in a pleasant spot.

"I hope this melon's a good urn," he said anxiously. "We bought it 'way back there near Tyler, and it 'thunks' pretty good, but we didn't take no plug out of it. It's mighty hard to tell...."

He laid the melon on the running board of the car, and seemed just to touch it with the sharp edge of a long kitchen knife. The melon sprang apart at the touch, revealing its deep red "meat," red almost all the way to the green rind with very little white; the seedless heart split naturally, ready to be scooped out and imbibed. The seeds were jet-black. Altogether, this was a

paradigm, the embodiment of perfect watermelonship, the very essence of what a good ripe East Texas watermelon should be.

The young man straightened up and shouted "Hallelujah! Praise His name!"

And the young woman replied with an earnest "Amen!"

(I've always hoped that the Elders accepted this young man into the ministry. There's an old and widespread story of a similar young man who did not make it. He saw clouds one day, formed in the shape of the letters "G P C". He interpreted this as a sign from Heaven, standing for "Go Preach Christ", His Elders, however, didn't agree; they said the sign meant "Go Pick Cotton," and the boy was not accepted into the ministry. In the Midwest, the same story is told, with the official interpretation reading "Go Plant (or "Plow") Corn."

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Hitchhiking was quite an accepted mode of transport in those days of the Great Depression, and very few of either the drivers or the hitchers seemed to worry about the possible dangers.

I remember one of each, however, who revealed some qualms. This was some time about 1935, during my student days at Texas A&M, , and I was in my A&M ROTC uniform ( a guaranteed way to get a ride quickly ), and was invited to sit in the front seat with a driver. A mile or so along the way there was another Aggie in uniform, and he was ushered into the back seat.

We all chatted amiably for a few minutes, then the new rider said "Well, it looks like I'm in safe company, so I guess it's all right to put on my watch."

And he took a wrist-watch out of his jacket pocket.

The driver laughed, and said "Right with you, buddy!" and took his own wrist watch out of the map compartment.

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One ride was in an ancient tank truck, probably used to pick up crankcase drainings for re-refining. The driver, a friendly black man, cleared a place for me beside him on the seat, sweeping a number of unidentifiable objects onto the floor. Everything on and in the truck seemed loose, the road was rough, and there was a tremendous banging and clanging. The driver and I hollered back and forth for a few minutes until there didn't seem to be much else to say.

Then he started singing in a low voice which nevertheless transcended the truck's cacophony, with his left hand hanging out the window and slapping the side of the truck in time with the music. There were no words to his song, and the tune was obviously improvised, but it was within a framework with which I was familiar, so I took out my harmonica and tentatively blew a few notes. It was hard to hear above all the other noise, but he heard it all right, and immediately shifted into the key of the instrument. I was just then learning some of the rudiments of cross-harp (blues) style, and found it quite easy to harmonize with the singer.

The most insistent part of the noise in the vibrating truck came from an old bucket rattling about on the floor of the cab between us, and the driver, without missing a note of his song, reached down, picked it up, and tossed it out the window. This substantially reduced the noise level.

"That's better!" he said, and went on singing.

We reached the point where he was to turn off and I was to go straight ahead, so he stopped and let me out. As we shook hands, he said:

"I do declare, if I was white or you was colored, what kind of music we could make!"

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My preferred technique of thumbing was to walk toward my destination, turning around as each car approached and giving the universal thumb-sign of wanting a ride. Some hitchhikers preferred to find a spot that looked good, and stand there until a ride was offered, but I always found that boring. You saw more while walking, and if you didn't get a ride, at least you got somewhere.

Once in Washington state I was walking along through a rural area where the road was lined with apple trees. There were lots of apples still hanging in the trees, and a few had fallen over the low fence and into the road. One beautiful red apple was especially appealing, and I picked it up and dusted it on my sleeve.

But before I had taken a bite, a voice nearby shouted "Hey! You don't have to pick 'em off the road! Take a good one off a tree!"

I had not seen the grower standing there in his orchard, and jumped guiltily when he spoke. But he really meant what he said, and himself picked a couple of nice apples and handed them to me over the fence.

We had a pleasant chat for a few minutes, and he gave me more apples as we said good-bye. It's been more than 50 years since I did any hitchhiking, but I still think that walking between rides was the best way to do it.

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Conversations with drivers often lead in unsuspected directions. One driver exclaimed over the sight of a flat-bed truck carrying bales of cotton; these bales were not in the usual rectangular shape, but were cylindrical.

"What the heck is that? Why on earth would anyone make cotton bales like that?"

I had never seen such cotton bales either, but, as usual, my ignorance did not deter me from talking on the subject.

"Maybe," I offered, "maybe it's 'cause it takes less burlap to wrap 'em in. A cylinder can have the same volume as a cube, but with less surface area."

The driver pondered over this for a few moments, then pronounced it wrong.

"Nossir, it can't be that. You can change the CIRCumference, but you can't change the DIcumference!"

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On country roads there were usually plenty of wild creatures to be seen, and I delighted in displaying my familiarity with them.

A box turtle at the side of a road caught my attention, and I said "Look! A Three-Toed Box Turtle!"

The driver snorted and put me in my place.

"Hell," he said, "You can't count his toes from here!"

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In all my hitchhiking, I met none but friendly people, and this was true even in New York City .. In 1936, I thumbed my way to New York with a mental picture of a population of cruel sourpuss Yankees just waiting for a chance to be disagreeable to a stranger. But it wasn't like that at all, although the first person I talked to came close to fitting the expected stereotype. He was a policeman, and I asked him how to get to the American Museum of Natural History.

"Is that uptown or downtown?" he asked.

I said I didn't know.

He said "Sorry; I can't help you!" and turned away.

But from then on, everyone was helpful. Asking the next cop for directions, I had sense enough to say I wanted to go to 77th Street and Central Park West, and his directions were clear and friendly. (I never did get it quite straight about "uptown" vs. "downtown.")

On that first trip to New York I was there for several days, spending the nights on the subway—which then cost a nickel. At first, I tried sleeping in the waiting stations, sitting on a bench with my chin resting on my upended guitar, but this method didn't work. Every time I tried it there was some friendly person to wake me up and tell me I was missing my train. In one case, this was accomplished by an attractive young couple, she holding her hand on the subway door to keep it from closing, while the young man awakened me.

By dint of scrutinizing the subway maps (with lots of unsolicited volunteer assistance from helpful fellow-passengers) I finally worked out a good route for sleeping on the move. There was a long run between Church Street and Jamaica, and the stations at either end did not require spending another nickel in order to board a train in the opposite direction, so a single five-cent fare could last all night.

On finally leaving Manhattan, I thought it would be fun to walk through the Holland Tunnel, but a policeman stopped me and said that was not permitted. I told him I was hitchhiking home to Washington DC., and he hailed a truck, asking the driver if he would mind taking me through. The driver didn't mind, and took me all the way to Wilmington.

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There were some fascinating contacts with other hitchhikers. One was a blind young orphan, about my own age (19), who was on his way to meet some relatives he had just heard about. As he passed through the town where our Major Bowes Unit was playing, he was told that there was a cowboy singer there — me. This traveler was a *genuine* cowboy singer, and came to the stage door in a mistaken effort to meet me as a fellow in that genre.

He had been blind for all his life that he could remember; his mother, working on a ranch in Wyoming, had abandoned him when he was an infant, and he was raised by the rancher and his family. He spent most of his time in the bunkhouse with the cowhands, listening to their songs and stories, and one day someone gave him an old guitar.

This guitar had all six strings, he said, but they were all slacked, and had to be tightened to get any kind of tone at all. Having no idea how a guitar was supposed to be tuned, he just fooled around until the sound of the open strings made some sort of sense to him, and he learned to play in that unique tuning.

In the theatre here my troupe was playing, he went out front to watch the afternoon matinee, then joined me again in the dressing room. There was a good long time before the first evening show, and he borrowed my guitar, tuned it to his own inimitable system, and sang several songs. Then he wanted to get back on the road, but accepted my invitation to go out for a quick supper.

In the cafe, we each had a good substantial meal, and after dessert I asked him if there was anything else he'd like.

"Well," he said, "I sure could use a bottle of beer, but only if you'll have one with me."

I have always disliked beer, but did want to be companionable, so ordered two bottles. I managed to get mine down, then he said he'd sure like to have another one—if I would join him.

I just couldn't face the thought of downing more of the distasteful brew, but wickedly taking advantage of his blindness, wrote a note to the waitress. "I'll say bring TWO bottles of beer, but please bring only one."

She obeyed, and the cowboy singer drank his beer with relish, not knowing, of course, that I was not drinking with him. The lie was repeated once more when he wanted a third bottle.

As we were leaving the cafe, the owner (I guess that's who he was) came up and snarled at me:

"I know what you're doing, and you won't get away with it! I'm calling the cops!" And to the blind boy he said "If you get in any trouble, you just come back here."

If he did call the cops, they didn't show up, but I was terribly upset, realizing that they thought I was getting my friend drunk for some evil purpose. The friend himself seemed not to notice, and didn't say anything except thanks for the dinner. I guided him to a good street-lighted thumbing spot where we parted.

Arriving at the theater well before show time, I was still disturbed, and moped in the dressing room until it was time to go on. Then I ran, as usual, onto the stage, announced my first number, and struck an introductory chord on the guitar. Catastrophe! I had forgotten to retune the damn thing!

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Later, after Leslie and I got our first car, I was able to reverse roles, and become the driver for some hitchhikers. One was an old man with a short white beard (unusual then in 1943.) He was walking along the highway near Cabazon, between Palm Springs and Los Angeles.

The United States was then involved in World War II, and a troop train was traveling on the tracks beside the highway, with soldiers leaning out the windows to wave at passing cars. My passenger scowled.

"Just like a bunch a goddam cattle bein' taken to the slaughterhouse," he said "except that there's some purpose in killin' cattle."

This opened up a political conversation. He agreed that Hitler had to be stopped, but said "Hell, he never woulda got started if it hadn't been for the World War, and there was no excuse for that one."

He said his name was Samuel Thaddeus Thompson, that he had been a railroad man and a member of the "Wobblies," the Industrial Workers of the World, almost since its inception, and that he had once been considered for the vice-presidential nomination on the Socialist ticket with Eugene V. Debs. How rarely does one get a chance to hobnob with a personification of history!

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CHAPTER 10 - NIGHTHAWK AND MUSICIANS

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Chordeiles minor minor*

NIGHTHAWK

Columbus, Ohio

August 7, 1937

Each evening, just at dusk, the Nighthawks appear over the city streets, flying low between the buildings and giving their rasping cries.

Their cries were heard as late as 4:00 A.M.

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Ordinarily, at 4:00 am I wouldn't be wandering about the city listening to Nighthawks, but asleep in a hotel room. This time, though, there was a good reason for my being there.

I was lost.

I've often been lost, and it's always an embarrassment. My preferred self-image is that of the outdoorsman who always knows where he is and in which direction his destination lies, but this is a characterization I can't really live up to — especially in a strange city where three hotels are involved.

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Major Bowes's Second Anniversary Unit had just been disbanded, and a brand-new show — Ted Mack's Precision Rhythm Revue and Parade of Youth — was scheduled to start its tour in Columbus. This show was not advertised as a Major Bowes Unit, but it was closely connected; Ted Mack had relatives in the Bowes organization, and several other Bowes performers and I had been chosen to transfer to the new Mack show.. As the Bowes Anniversary Unit had closed in Columbus, I was delegated to wait there for several days before joining the new unit. Also selected was Howard Mott, our gifted piano accompanist and musical arranger. At the beginning of this week off, Howard and I had been staying at the same hotel in Cleveland, but I had found pressing reasons to move to another one across town.

This move was a craven effort to escape from a situation I didn't know how to cope with. In the first hotel, where the whole troupe of the closing show was staying, I shared a room with a young mimic named Willy (not his real name!), and Willy met a girl. For three nights running, he asked me to wait in the lobby for a while before coming up to bed, as he and his new friend, Clara, had some business.

Willy was not at all secretive about this business, and each night, after I was permitted to enter our room, he boasted of his activities, going so far as to display a used condom while still in the presence of Clara, who seemed somewhat embarrassed, but didn't say a word.

I stayed on in that room after Willy and the rest of the troupe, except for Howard the pianist, left. On the first free morning, I got up early and went out for a long hike along the river, saw a lot of good things and captured a nice turtle.

When I returned to the hotel, a note had been slipped under my door:

"Dear Tex,

I enjoyed meeting you, and I'm sorry you weren't here when I called. You are my idea of a real gentleman, not always thinking about just one thing. I'll come by again about 7:00 tonight."

Sincerely,

Clara."

It was about 5:00 PM by then, and I feared this could grow into a situation in which I didn't know how to act, or what might be expected of me. I might turn out to be "just thinking about one thing" after all. So there was just time to pack up and clear out, forfeiting that day's rent and moving to another hotel way across town.

There I felt safe. Later I ran into Howard at a restaurant, and he invited me to join him for the evening, saying that a second arranger had arrived and the two of them were to make full orchestral scores, some to accompany all the acts who would form the new show, and some to serve as orchestral showpieces.. This new arranger was staying at still a third hotel and I walked there with Howard without watching very carefully where we went.

Their work was fascinating, and it was an educational joy just to listen to them even when I didn't understand a lot of what they said. It's a marvel to me that good musicians can look at a musical score, and say "This part doesn't SOUND right," and fix it so that it does.

Sometime after midnight, however, they ran out of liquor, and were afraid that their springs of inspiration would dry up. Howard remembered that he had a bottle in his hotel room, and asked me if I would go and get it for them. This I was happy to do, and he gave me the key to his room in the hotel from which I had checked out.. (In those days, hotel guests were supposed to leave their keys at the desk when they went out, but it wasn't always done.)

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The bottle was easily found, Clara was nowhere to be seen, and I bore the liquor away. And that's when I got lost. I couldn't remember where this arranger's hotel was, and didn't even know the name of it. The hours passed while I tramped around, accompanied by the friendly cries of the Nighthawks and glancing into every hotel in hope of recognizing the right lobby. This finally happened at 4:00 am, and once in the hotel, I found the right room with no problem.

The imperturbable Howard and his friend thanked me for the bottle, and no mention was made of my three-hour absence.

These men were fine examples of good solid journeymen musicians, unsung heroes that are behind just about every kind of musical entertainment.

Howard's prowess had impressed me from the moment I met him, when he was accompanying the performers in the first unit that took me in. On the day I arrived, there was no time for a rehearsal, and Howard had never heard me when I stepped onto the stage. But no rehearsal was necessary: he picked up my keys and chord sequences as they were played, and after the first few bars was playing along as if we'd been doing it for years. My numbers were, of course, composed of simple harmonies, but even so, his skill was obvious — and welcome. That good solid background was a much-needed support and encouragement.

One of my numbers was "Nola" played on the tin whistle. I had learned the tune, more or less, from Zez Confrey's playing of it on an old Edison record we had at home, and the combination of my uncertain memory with my limited ability on the instrument resulted in a far-from-perfect rendition. The first six measures were at least recognizable in my playing, but after that there comes a run far beyond my powers, so I just sort of tweedled my way through it. But on the second day, I suddenly realized that while I tweedled, Howard was doing the run correctly

on the piano, even though we were playing it in G instead of the D in which Felix Arndt had originally cast it. Howard never mentioned this, but just DID it, and our audiences gave me credit for it, sometimes applauding for ME at the end of that difficult passage.

For the first few weeks, Howard played simple accompaniments, but when I was feeling more at ease he started getting a lot fancier. My final song in each show was "When We Gonna Marry," also known as "The Mountaineer's Courtship," and Howard started improvising contrapuntal melodies as a sort of quodlibetal background. I remember that he used both "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and "Mary Had a Little Lamb" in this way, as well as melodic passages of his own invention.

Still later, Howard started treating me like a seasoned veteran, knowing that I could handle his jokes without spoiling the performance. The piano was on-stage, and he would sometimes whisper hoarsely something like "Hey Tex! Your fly's open!" This didn't make me falter, but it did make me self-conscious about that zone of clothing. My stage costume involved a pair of blue jeans. In those days, blue jeans didn't have zippers, but used brass buttons. At the lower end of the opening was a single rivet not covered by the flap, and my self-consciousness made me become afraid that this would reflect the spotlight, and would look like an unfastened button, so I painted it every day with matte black showcard paint .

Howard's gag had another result. my act included an old song called "Groundhog," which has one verse that said:

"Catch him, boys, he's about to fall;

Hold him there, don't let him fall!

He's et till his pants won't button up a-tall !

Groundhog ! "

If my fly really had been open, I knew that the line about the pants would bring a coarse laugh from the audience, along with a lot of finger pointing, and that prospect so haunted me that I had to stop using that verse.

They told a story about Howard that was probably true, although I didn't see it myself. 'Twas said that in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, there had been a local amateur contest, and the winner was to appear as a special guest on the Major Bowes stage show. The winner was a baritone singer with an insufferable ego. Someone suggested that he rehearse with Howard, but he said something like

"Why should I? I certainly know how to sing, and if the piano player is any good, he should be able to read the music!" So he came on without a run-through.

The piano was on the stage, and Howard played the introduction — faultlessly, of course — but the singer came in a half-step flat. So Howard shifted to the left on the keyboard, from E-flat down to D, whereupon the singer dropped down another half step. Moving farther to the left and transposing down to C-sharp was no problem to Howard, who slid leftward on his piano bench so as better to reach the lower notes, but it didn't help the singer. He flatted again. This may have happened several more times, with Howard sliding to the left each time until he brought the program to an end. Pretending to have run out of bench and keyboard, he reached way out to the left and fell off the bench with a crash. (This was in 1937, before Victor Borge had become familiar to American audiences.)

Howard never instructed me in music theory, although he certainly could have. But there was another keyboard artist on the Ted Mack show, and he patiently gave me a lot of fine basic

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instruction. Lou Webb, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was probably in his thirties, the oldest member of this "Parade of Youth" cast. He played the Hammond Organ, which was a novelty at that time, and which he played very well indeed. Lou loved to talk about music. He told me the names of the degrees of the diatonic scale — tonic, supertonic (or double dominant [ "dominant of the dominant"]), mediant, subdominant, dominant, superdominant, and leading tone — and showed how chords were derived from the triads built on these degrees, and how the distribution of half-steps and whole-steps determined whether a chord was a major, minor, diminished or augmented chord. He also explained how chord sequences should "go somewhere" so as to complete a figure in some logical way. His instruction gave some feeling to my guitar accompaniments, if only in the form of a few simple "walking bass" movements.

My music was all by ear, and that was completely my fault; for in my childhood there had been no lack of opportunities for as much formal learning as I now wish I had wanted. Mom was a good pianist, a teacher, with extensive classical training. Raised in Gatesville, Texas, she had wanted to go to a music school upon graduating from high school, but her parents felt that as an aspiring "Southron" Lady she should attend a finishing school instead. So she was sent to Kidd Key College in north Texas, a finishing school operated by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for young ladies. Even though it was a "finishing school," music was important there, and in 1919 ( long after Mom had left there) Kidd Key was reconstituted as a Junior College and Conservatory.. At Kidd Key Mom quickly became noted for her music. Sometime around 1905, when she was 16 or 17, she was selected to represent Texas as a pianist 'way up in Chautauqua, New York. Mom said that as a Texan she was a rarity in the northeast, and some of the young fellows who squired her about just couldn't believe that she didn't have a pistol in her luggage.

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I used to love to listen to her play on our old Ivers and Pond piano. I especially liked some of the Gottschalk compositions, and one of his "Tremolo Studies" was a favorite. She also did an arrangement of the Quartet from *Rigoletto* arranged for left hand alone. Dad always said that Mom should play that with her right hand held high in the air, so everybody could see she wasn't cheating.

Quite unlike most of the educated musicians of that day, Mom held no scorn for non-classical music. A part-time teacher, she subscribed to the old *Etude* music magazine, whose editors left no doubt as to what should be considered GOOD music. "Never allow your students to listen to ragtime;" they thundered: "It will completely spoil them for performing or appreciating good music." But Mom sniffed at that; she was a pretty good ragtime player herself. She also played fiddle tunes and a lot of popular music, and the whole family spent many evenings around the piano, while she played and we all sang. We had sheet music for the popular songs of the day -- "Ain't She Sweet," "Bye Bye. Blackbird," "My Blue Heaven," "Yes Sir, That's My Baby", "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charlie," "I Miss My Swiss," "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," for example, as well as some of the sheet music Mom and Dad had saved from the early days of their marriage, "Come, Josephine, In My Flying Machine," "Oceana Roll," "Waltz Me Around Again, Willie!," "I Ain't Got No Use For Sleep," "Wal, I Swan!." It was those older pop songs that my sisters Nell and Ann. and I, used to form the nucleus of the Texas Trio's repertoire.

Mom was quite willing to give me piano lessons, and she succeeded in persuading me to try some lessons on the violin that my grandfather, Judge Duffie, gave me, but I wasn't interested in

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serious study. I just wanted to fool around with the harmonica, the "jew's-harp", and whatever other instruments I could make or find that I didn't have to take lessons on.

For my eighth birthday, "Judge" (Mom's father) gave me a diatonic button accordion. Tin whistles (which we called "fifes") were available at Kress's for a nickel, and at home I could spread partly-filled glasses and jars all over the kitchen to make a glass version of a xylophone — more properly, a vitrophone. The harmonica, however, was my favorite. There is something about that simple instrument that makes it seem like part of the player's body; changes in the way you breathe, or in the position of your tongue, brings changes in the timbre of the sound. Cupped hands around the instrument produce still other effects. This feeling of personal unity with an instrument became so pronounced that it passed over into my sleep world, and I used to have a recurring dream to the effect that I could play the harmonica on anything — a stick, or even my own finger.

Mom has said that I learned to play the harmonica at 5 (she said she bought me one at Jenkins' Music Store in Tulsa, and I was playing "Turkey In the Straw" before we got out of the store.) There was also my button accordion, which I could use for tunes and for some accompaniment to my singing. After we left Tulsa, I played for an evening function at Crockett High School, using my double-row 8-bass Hohner accordion in a duet with Mr. Barker Tunstall. He played any number of instruments, and dealt in second-hand ones in his store; on that occasion he was playing the mandolin. At one point in our rehearsal, he stopped and said "You ought to use a B-seventh chord right there."

"I don't think there's anything like that on this accordion."

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He took the instrument and fooled around with it, finally saying "I guess you're right; there's no B-seventh. We'll have to do a piece that needs only A and E chords," and he proceeded to play a tune that I have called "Mr. Tunstall's Two-Chord Hoedown." I still play it as a harmonica solo. (The harmonica also has only those two chords, the tonic and the dominant seventh—one when you blow into mseveral hjoles at once, and one when you inhale.)

The French-harp — harmonica — placed me in an early ethical dilemma. In downtown Tulsa there was a theater, the old Strand. The Strand had regular Saturday morning amateur shows, and when I was about ten years old, I got on the show with my harmonica, and won, receiving a magnificent prize of two dollars. But the moral question was raised.

Young boys in those days were allowed all sorts of freedom to roam around, but the part of the City where the Strand was located was off limits. That was a "rough part of town," and nice boys weren't supposed to be there. I had gone there anyway, and in the amateur contest had attained the pinnacle of success — but how could I tell the folks about it? How could I brag about it? How account for the two dollars? I finally DID tell Mom and Dad, and they made no mention of my having violated a taboo; instead, they congratulated me and said they were proud of me.

In Tulsa, my best musical friend was Hal Armstrong, who played the bones and harmonica while I did the button accordion. We played frequently for school events at Woodrow Wilson Junior High. In addition to having a real talent for music, Hal was a mechanical genius. He built his own accordion, using reeds from old harmonicas; it never did quite work, as he had trouble making the bellows, but the keys, with rubber-band springs, were a wonder to behold. Hal also made excellent crystal radio sets. He showed me how to make them too, with the coil

laboriously wound by hand on an empty Quaker Oats cylindrical cardboard container. We worked up a very small business, selling two or three of these radios for, I think, a dollar apiece. (This did not include the necessary earphones.) In later life, Hal moved to Atlanta and got a real 120-bass piano keyboard accordion and became a maestro on it — this in addition to his earning a doctorate in engineering and becoming a professor of that subject at Georgia Tech.

Singing was important, too, and I decided at an early age that I would learn every song in the world. In church and at home we all sang in improvised harmony, and in those days of lots of home-made music, the ability to harmonize was not at all uncommon, and many 12-year-old kids could do it. In the Boys' Glee Club at Woodrow Wilson Junior High in Tulsa, we had a two-part arrangement of "How Can I Leave Thee" (a translation of the German "*Abscheid*" song.) One day several of us arrived early for after-school practice, before the teacher got there, and we started singing it in improvised multi-voiced harmony. The teacher arrived and was fascinated; she immediately formed the group into a double quartet. We sang that song in concerts, and others without any printed music, all in four- or- more- part- harmony. No bass voices, of course.

(Years later, I was to have the pleasure of meeting Beth Landis, a music supervisor in the public schools of Riverside, California, who put on a big Sixth-Grade Sing every spring. She would have each sixth grade in the district practice sing a stirring arrangement of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic", and then they'd all get together in a big auditorium for the final sing as one great choir, augmented by a section of bass voices borrowed from the music department on the Riverside Campus of the University of California, with an added flourish of trumpets from the brass section of the U C Riverside band.)

As a small child, I didn't listen much to the radio, but there was quite a bit of music in the family's record collection. We had an old Edison phonograph, with a diamond needle; it could play only Edison records, which were hard-rubber disks about a quarter of an inch thick. One of my earliest musical memories is of listening to "Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming," played by an orchestra of ineffable sweetness on quite unidentifiable instruments. There was also Liszt's "Second Hungarian Rhapsody," played on the piano by none other than Rachmaninov. (Mom said that I used to ask her to 'play Rock Mackinaw for me'.)

One of these records also gave me an accidental introduction to a non-musical discipline — phonetics. This was a recording of a vaudeville pseudo-Irish song called "Now He's Living the Life of Reilly." As with many of these records, there was a glitch in its grooves, and the phonograph would get stuck and play some short section over and over. On this one, the stuck place was at the end of the line "...the Life of Reilly," and the repeated phrase was "EE-ly, EE-ly., EE-ly." I wondered why it wasn't "Eye-ly, Eye-ly, Eye-ly," and made the great discovery that our "EYE" sound was really "Ah-ee."

In Crockett, there were few formal musical performances, but lots of backyard and family music. That area was rich in ethnic diversity: there was music from the southern white tradition represented by my folks and by the older "upper-class" families in town; there was a strong Anglo-Celtic tradition among many of the rural families, whose backgrounds lay in the Ozarks of Arkansas and Missouri; there was a very strong African-American tradition, and a little western "cowboy" tradition, and finally a lot of Cajun influence (especially down around Beaumont, where we spent so much time with my grandparents, Dearie and Judge Duffie.) The hymnal used in our Methodist Church, South, showed the notes in shape-note form, but no one

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could explain to me what those shapes stood for. It was not until I started teaching folkore for the University of California Extension in the late 1950's that I discovered the rich tradition of shape-note religious music that still existed in the rural south.

Among my earliest memories are Sunday fishing-trips with Judge. He used to stop at a drug store and pick up several copies of the Beaumont Sunday newspaper, to be distributed among his friends (mostly Cajun folks) on the way to whatever fishing ground he had in mind. He would also buy me a bottle of pop, always lemon soda because if I spilled it, the stain wouldn't show on my clothes. Dearie hated stained clothing, and, with almost equal passion, hated the very idea of any kind of soda pop. As he handed me the bottle, Judge would always say quietly "You needn't say anything to your grandmother about this."

We would stop at several houses, leaving a newspaper and passing the time of day. Often I could hear live music somewhere around these farm houses, and I remember one of Judge's friends — I think it might have been Mr. Taylor Fultz — singing the children's song "Saute Crapaud" over and over so I could learn it. That wasn't hard: it had only two lines:

"Saute, crapaud, ta queue va brulé;

Prend courage, une autre va poussé."

("Jump, frog, your tail is going to catch fire; Be brave! another will grow!")

Diatonic accordions, available through Sears, Roebuck and other mail-order houses, were becoming quite popular among these folks, and my fascination with them was what prompted Judge to buy me one of my own. It was a Hohner instrument with a D row and an A row, and I still have one just like it. (This was before the "German-style" diatonic accordions became known as Cajun-style instruments.)

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We'd often have lunch at one of these homes, and there was nearly always some singing or accordion-playing. (I don't think any of Judge's friends were fiddlers.) One such meal stands out in my mind. The main dish was a gigantic crab gumbo in a large pot, from which our ample hostess ladled out equally ample helpings. All the kids had to wait for the grownups to finish before being invited to sit down at the kitchen table. There was plenty of gumbo left for us, but by that time the pot wasn't nearly so full, and the ladle was coming close to the bottom of the big pot. On one pass, the mamá came up with a ladle full of gumbo plus a well-cooked dishrag. She hooted "I been wonderin' where that thing had got to!" and then stood there shaking with laughter — and the room shook with her. As she bounced in her mirth, the floor, slightly sagging, took up her rhythm, and everything was moving up and down in the jolliest sort of way. And the gumbo was, of course, delicious.

Later on, in Crockett, it was my privilege to hear quite a bit of African-American music. One of the churches in the Black community was not far from where we lived, and the music there was by no means confined to Sundays. Occasionally, some of the white high school boys—a pretty rough crowd, many of whose members belonged to the so-called "better" families—would go into this church during services. They watched the serious services with ill-concealed amusement, and later, they would tell, with cruel exaggeration, about the "comical" things they had seen. I didn't care much for that crowd, and didn't want my black friends to think of me as one of them, so I never went inside the church. I could hear perfectly well outside, and learned some beautiful songs that way.

By the time I entered Texas A & M College, several instruments (the ukelin, several kinds of zithers, ocarinas, etc.) had been added to my collection, and I knew a lot of songs, but there

was still no guitar. That lack was soon filled. Rollins Colquitt (scion of a well-known Texas family that had included at least one governor) was one of my roommates in the dorm, and said he had an old guitar at home. Just before the end of our freshman year, he managed to get it to campus, and lent it to me. The plan was that I would learn to play it over the summer, and would teach him when school started up again.

The first part of the plan worked fairly well; I did develop some calluses on my finger tips, and learn a few chords. But the second part fizzled. Rollins Colquitt didn't come back to A & M while I was there, and I had that old beat-up guitar for several years.

In one way, learning the guitar was easier for me then than it is for young folks now. I knew only one person who played it, and he wasn't very good. I had heard a lot of country music (then usually called "Hillbilly") on the radio, but the guitars sort of merged with the other instruments. In short, I had no idea what good guitar-playing should sound like, and the first chords I mastered sounded just fine to me. There was some discouragement because of sore fingers, but developing calluses cured that. What I was spared was the discouragement of comparing myself to real players. A learner today will probably have records of guitar players from Segovia to Chet Atkins to Doc Watson, and will have to overcome a natural feeling of frustration: "I'll NEVER be able to play like that!"

Singing songs was always my main interest in music, and up until the advent of the Colquitt guitar, the singing had been done *a cappella* or with a simple accordion accompaniment. One problem with the button accordion was that it was like the harmonica in having both "blow" and "draw" tones, some sounded by squeezing the bellows in, while others sounded when the bellows were pulled open. When singing with the accordion, then, I had a

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strong tendency to draw in my breath when pulling the bellows open, and that made singing quite difficult. Also, my instrument could play in only two major keys — A and D — and the range of some songs made those keys inappropriate for my voice. The “bass buttons” contined no useful minor chords. So the guitar was very welcome.

While I was still in high school, several years before the guitar came about, my older sister Mary Jo had given me a copy of *The American Songbag* by Carl Sandburg. I already knew a lot of the songs in it, and decided that this was my kind of music.

At A & M, I picked up songs from everybody, found song books in the library, worked on the songs I already knew, and soon developed a sizable repertoire, and dating from the end of my freshman year, had the guitar for accompaniment.. It was then that I realized that most of the songs I knew were "folk songs," and my delight in this discovery was like that of Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who was so pleased to learn that he had been speaking prose all his life without knowing it. So I started calling myself a folksinger. Someone at the University of Texas heard about it, and Professor J. Frank Dobie invited me there to present a program of East Texas folksongs to an informal gathering of the Texas Folklore Society. This was in 1935, and was my first formal lecture-recital.

Rollins Colquitt's guitar came apart in the car on the way from Riverdale, Maryland, to New York, when we were going there to audition for the Major Bowes radio program. We had to turn around and dash to the home of one of Nell's friends to borrow his guitar, which he decided to sell to us for five bucks. That was the instrument I took on the road, but it didn't last long. The guitarist with The Mimicking Melodiers, George "Russ" Russell, had just bought a fine new Gibson guitar, and he sold me his old Washburn (with the unusual configuration of rounded top

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and round sound-hole) for 50 bucks. That is still my most-used instrument. Russ, by the way, became a respected studio guitarist and teacher in Los Angeles.

Russ taught me quite a bit of music, especially as concerned the guitar. He played, in the style of most jazz guitarists, with a flat pick, and all of his chords used all six strings. At that time I had a bursal ganglion that made it difficult to bend my left wrist, and never learned the technique of the *barré*, which involves pressing the left forefinger across all six strings, while the middle, ring, and little fingers form chords between the higher frets. Russ quite rightly despaired of my ever attaining any real facility, for it is only with the *barré* that one can play in such keys as A-flat, E-flat and B-flat, in which so much of our popular music was cast. I was — and am — pretty well limited to the keys like C, D, E, G, and A, in which some of the notes are obtained on open strings.

Neither of us knew about the capo, a small movable bar that is clamped down across all six strings of the guitar, thus effectively shortening the strings and making them higher in pitch. With the capo clamped down at the first fret, you can finger chords as if they were in the key of D, and the sounds will come out in E-flat. Finger A and you get B-flat, and so on.

Russ also demonstrated how to read and play the score for an orchestral guitar part in popular music and jazz.. It shows the name of the chord, with a slash for each stroke. In the Ted Mack show, the whole orchestra sat on risers on the stage, with me, as guitarist, on the upper tier at the stage-right end. (From there, I could easily slip offstage, take off my orchestral dinner jacket and white tie and don blue jeans, checkered shirt and neck bandanna for my solo act.) My main function in the band was to LOOK like a guitar player, but by following the score, I was

able to learn most of the numbers, voicing the chords as best I could, sometimes on only three strings..

My musical education continued after I left the road and settled down in Southern California. My most profound musical influence has come from Leslie, who began enriching my life--musically and in every other way-- after I had gone back to College. I met her at UCLA in 1938. She was Majoring in Art and Music Education, and was a talented and well-trained violinist, violist, and mezzo-soprano, a soloist in the A Cappella Choir at UCLA. I tried out for that choir, but didn't read music well enough to make it. The Men's Glee Club, however, wasn't all that choosy, and took me in. Mr. Raymond Moremen—one of the kindest, gentlest men it has been my pleasure to know—was the conductor and teacher of both groups.

At the Christmas season in 1938, the Glee Club and the A Cappella Choir gave several joint performances, one of them on the big steps at the Westwood Boulevard entrance, then at the western edge of the campus proper.. In one selection, the Glee Club men stood singing on both sides of the walk at the foot of the stairs while the A Cappella Choir members came singing down the steps. The song was "Christ Was Born on Christmas Day" (to the tune of "Resonet in Laudibus" from the 14th Century, also used for the touching German carol, "Joseph Lieber, Joseph Mein") and the soloist was a lovely red-haired young woman with a voice (and a face) like an angel. I fell in love with her on the spot, and at a party that night sought her out and introduced myself.

That happened on the last day before the Christmas vacation, so I didn't see her again for two weeks. We had exchanged addresses and phone numbers, however, and during that time

maintained contact through mail and telephone. Then within three days after school had resumed, we were engaged.

It was nearly two years before we could be married, but her musical tutelage began right away. There was never any formal teacher-pupil relationship, instruction being carried out by quiet and patient example. Between her and Mr. Moremen, I quickly learned to read music well enough to warrant my acceptance by the A Cappella Choir.

Leslie had a job as a church soloist, and also played viola in a fine string quartet organized by pianist and composer Homer Simmons; her older sister, Frances, played first violin. But she really didn't enjoy public performance. After our marriage in 1940, she sang with me on a number of public occasions, and she performed one season as a singer in the Starlight Opera company of San Diego, and for another season as violist in the La Jolla Community Symphony. conducted by Peter Nikolov. By and large, however, she has kept her music for the home and family. Both our children turned out to be fine musicians, and Leslie is still, after more than 63 years of marriage, quietly instructing me.

Her formal musical abilities have never ceased to amaze me. She can listen to a recording of a complicated fiddle tune, and not only write the music out, but can tell how the fiddle was tuned! Folk fiddlers don't always use the standard G-D-A-E tuning, and this is true also of some classical music; Von Biber, Paganini and Mahler, for example, wrote many pieces requiring a non-standard *scordatura* , as did Bach in one of his sonatas for cello.)

Another tremendous musical influence has been from our friend Austin Faricy. We worked together during the Second World War, he as a writer and I as an illustrator for the University of California Division of War Research (UCDWR). Our section wrote books on the use of recent

oceanographic and electronic research in pro- and anti-submarine warfare.. Austin had been a Rhodes Scholar, taking a Master's degree in music at Jesus College, Oxford, was co-author of a popular college textbook in the humanities, had been on the faculty of Columbia College in Missouri, and was a professional concert artist with his harpsichord, clavichord, and lute...

A natural born teacher, Austin organized several informal lunchbox noon courses in our wartime headquarters at Building X -- the old Bridges Estate on Point Loma. One course was in General Semantics as educed by Korzybski, and another was in Sheldon's Constitutional Anatomy and Psychology, the source of the popular terms "endomorph," "ectomorph," etc., or in one or another aspect of music, which was his greatest love. Lots of the other writers, artists, and scientists at UCDWR were interested, and they and their spouses often got together with Austin after work. For some of those occasions, we met at our apartment in Pacific Beach to sing liturgical masses and motets by Palestrina, Josquin des Près, Lassus, and other ancient composers who have produced some of the world's most beautiful music. We read the music from Austin's personal library. Austin would have us read the music through several times by counting, rather than singing the words: "One, two, three-and-four; one, two-and three, four," etc. One night we had done this several times in a difficult passage of a "De Profundis" when our landlord upstairs (we lived in a two-story apartment) hollered down "For God's sake, when do you get to five?"

Leslie and I often attended Austin's concerts, but it was in private conversations with him that I learned the most about music, about writing, and about life in general. Lots of folk music is modal in form, but nobody had clearly explained to me what this meant until Austin came along. And he had invaluable suggestions about guitar accompaniments, such as pointing out that to

keep the modal feeling, most of the accompanying chords should be derived from the same mode, without accidentals.

Austin was the formal piano teacher for our daughter Leanne. He had a way of teaching that encouraged her to experiment, and made her feel that her compositions were to be taken seriously. I was listening one day when she played one of her own compositions, which he praised. He also said "That part right there is in a rhythm — BUM-pa bum-bum, BUM-pa bum-bum—often called a 'habanera', and it's been used quite often. I've heard your father play 'La Paloma' in that rhythm" — and he played a bit of it — "and there is the famous 'Habanera' from the opera *Carmen*," and played some of that. This made Leanne feel like a colleague of the great composers, and it all helped her grow up with a tremendous amount of musical skill and taste. Her professional field of study is linguistics, but even this she has approached with musical connotations: her PhD thesis was on the language of the Havasupai Indians as revealed in their songs.

Our son Matt, a little more than three years younger than Leanne, is also a fine musician in his retiring way. While a student at UCLA he qualified to sing with the Roger Wagner Chorale, and while still a teen-ager he won first place in his category, playing his own compositions on the five-string banjo at the Topanga Canyon Fiddle and Banjo Contest near Los Angeles. When I learn new songs, I'm always glad to try them out on Leanne and Matt (and Leslie most of all), as they can give me all sorts of insights into both words and music, whether or not a song is worth working on, and what kind of work it might need in order to sound at its best.

After the War, Austin left California and lived for a while in Honolulu, working as a music critic, then went to Japan as a teacher of English in Osaka. After 17 years of this, he retired and

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came back to California, and our friendship was renewed. He died in 1998, but his influence will always be strong.

Altogether, music has been a very important part of our lives, and has led Lesli and me to many, many friends. We've met people at concerts and festivals all over the country, and lots of them have come by to see us at home. One such home encounter was with the folksong collector Sam Eskin, who in about 1948 dropped by for a day or so and showed us the first tape recorder we had ever seen. It completely filled the trunk of his car, but was far better than the old disk-recorders he had been using.

Sam stayed at our little cottage on the Scripps Institution campus, while *en route* to his collecting sites, where he made field recordings for the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Music. He had perfected a technique of playing his own guitar and singing as an ice-breaker. He sang in a gravelly voice, with simple guitar accompaniments, and said that this was just right as a means of getting other folks to sing for him.

"Boy," he said, "they just can't wait to get that guitar out of my hands and show me how it OUGHT to be done!"

Another eminent folklorist and collector, also working for the Library of Congress, was Sydney Robertson Cowell. She and her husband Henry Cowell spent several days with us while we lived in Cottage 27 at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. We were a little worried about this: her husband was a world-famous musician and avant-garde composer, and we weren't sure how he would take to our simple and laid-back life-style. But there wasn't any problem. While Sydney and I talked about folk music, Henry Cowell and Leanne, who was then about nine years old, sat at the piano trading compositions, and everyone had a fine time.

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7,031 words

nCHAPTER 11 -RATTLESNAKE AND SNAKEBITE

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Crotalus atrox atrox*

DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE

Lometa, Texas, about 5 miles west, toward Colorado River.

July 13, 1937

One small but very beautifully marked specimen was seen crossing the road ahead of our car. The snake was shot by a member of our party.

Examination showed a large red ant, on the inside of the snake's translucent "rattles", running about frantically.

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During the Bowes era, there were always several shows on the road at any one time, and occasionally a unit was sent out for some special purpose. That's the way it was with the Pan American Exposition Unit, which played out its whole life at one theater — the Magnolia Lounge at the 1937 Pan-American Exposition in Dallas. While I was there, there were just five acts — Johnny Jewell, banjoist; Gerry Burns and Marion Lee, tap dancers; Tex Gilmore, animal imitator, and me--"Texas Sam Hinton." Wally Sharples was the MC and Betty Knox Heard the

accompanist. The Lounge showed five shows a day, with no charge to the audience, courtesy of the Magnolia Petroleum Company.

This was a pleasant venue. For one thing, we weren't traveling, and didn't have to stay in hotels; rooming houses were much homier. The summer was a hot one, but there was time to walk a lot -- slowly --, and there was a great deal to see in Dallas. An elderly gardener known only as "Pop" worked in the yard at my boarding house, and he turned out to be a fine fiddler, playing almost every night in a local barbecue emporium. The Dallas Aquarium was nearby, and I was welcomed there as the donor of a specimen they didn't have — the nice Painted Turtle that had been given to me a few weeks earlier in Boothbay Harbor, Maine.

And at the Exposition there was plenty to do between shows. In the Latin American section of the Exposition, I was privileged to hear for the first time Guatemalan marimba music, and to make friends with the four musicians who played it. They stood side by side, all playing on a long marimba in which each resonator was provided, as Guatemalan tradition demanded, with a "mirlinton"— a small aperture loosely covered with a thin membrane of goat skin, making it into a sort of kazoo, imparting a fascinating buzz to its sound. (I later learned that the buzz won't sound unless the resonator is in proper acoustic phase with the sound-producing wooden bar, providing a method of checking the fine tuning when the instrument is under construction.) These merry young men also gave me my first rudimentary instructions in the Spanish language, and taught me to ask politely for a piece of music I wanted to hear: "Toca 'El Harabetapatillo,' por favor." They were a little older than I, but asked me to call them by their first names -- Trimerro, Luis, Ezekiel, and Tony--while they jokingly called me "Don Samuel", which sounds pretty good in Spanish — "Doan SahmWAIL."

Life in the Lounge was relaxed, and between shows there was time to talk to other people. One lovely young woman and her mother came backstage to meet me; Mary Kay Douglass, a beautiful girl just about my own age, lived in Lometa, Texas. She and Mrs. Douglass were interested in folksongs. In talking to them, other points of mutual interest were discovered. Naturally, I had to expound on reptiles, and told them of my experiences milking Water Moccasins at A & M. Mary Kay told me that her grandfather, Dr. Biggs, had been in medical practice for many years around Lometa, and was known far and wide for his skill in treating rattlesnake bites. "He treats anywhere from three to a dozen every year, and has never lost a snake-bit patient!"

With typical Texas hospitality, they invited me to visit them for a few days when the show was over, so as to meet Dr. Biggs and learn about his methods. Several weeks later the show closed, and the Bowes office allowed me to take a week or so off before returning to New York. For reassignment. So it was off to Lometa, hitch-hiking the 250-or-so miles without any trouble.

Dr. Biggs turned out to be the quintessential kindly country doctor, and I lost no time in asking about snakebite.

"What sort of treatment do you use?"

He looked a little embarrassed:

"Well, I immerse the bitten member in a container of kerosene. "

My astonishment must have been evident, for he went on :

"Hell, I know that sounds like superstition, and I know about cutting and suction, and I know about anti-venin, but when I first went into practice kerosene and whiskey was all there was. I knew the whiskey part was no good, but kerosene seemed to help, and the first thing I

knew, I'd gotten myself a reputation. I've seen people start getting well the minute somebody else said 'Well, here's Doc Biggs!', and I think mental attitude is the most important thing in treatment. Folks objected when I tried to change to more modern methods, so I've just gone ahead with the old one."

Dr. Biggs was of the old school, having been exposed to a classical education, and he quoted some ancient Greek on the subject, in Greek. I didn't understand it, of course, but years later, I found in Bartlett's Familiar Quotations a translated passage from Hippocrates, and this might well have been what he was quoting.

"...some patients, though conscious that their condition is perilous, recover their health simply through their contentment with the goodness of the physician."

Snakebite has always been a fascinating subject for me, dating back to my high school days in Crockett. In 1934 a Crockett physician —not our family doctor—called one day to ask if I could come to his office and identify a snake that had bitten one of his patients. The patient had been following a ritual that was all too common: any kind of snake would be picked up by the tail, and cracked like a whip, destroying the poor snake's head. This guy had done that, and the resentful snake had bitten him before the fatal snap., I ran all the way to the doctor's office, and the snake's headless body was easily identified as that of a Copperhead.

"Is it poisonous?" the doctor asked, and was told that indeed it was.

"Well, how should I treat this man?" he asked.

"He should be given the anti-venin if you have some."

"I've got it in the refrigerator," he said. "Where do I inject it?"

"Well gosh, I guess it's supposed to be intramuscular, and I guess any big muscle will do. Maybe the gluteus maximus... "

This was done and the patient suffered no ill effects. (Only about 5% of Copperhead bites are fatal, even without treatment, and this patient fortunately was not sensitive to horse serum. )

A few weeks later the Crockett High School Senior Class held a picnic at the Country Club, and I went in Skeeter Woodward's car along with a lot of other kids. At the lake, just when we were getting ready to leave, I turned over a log and found a fine Copperhead. I had no snake bag, and had to carry the snake in my hand, holding it carefully behind the head in the prescribed manner. The other passengers in the car quite reasonably refused to let the snake and me ride with them, and I had to walk home. Carrying a poisonous was actually less dangerous than riding in a high school student's car, but through my own carelessness I managed to get bitten. Tired of holding the specimen in one hand, I tried to switch to the other, and the Copperhead, equally tired of my inept handling, somehow sank a fang into my left forefinger. It was a good bite; only one fang connected, but that fang was left behind, deeply imbedded in the finger.

At that point, I had to let the snake go, and indulged in the then-standard first-aid treatment, making a ligature of a shoelace, and using my knife to make a cut across the fang marks. Walking back to town, I sucked the wound forcibly, and went to that same doctor's office. But, not having a lot of confidence in his knowledge of snakebite, I didn't tell him or his receptionist what was wrong, and just sat in his waiting room for an hour or so, reading some old Esquire magazines. By then it was evident that I was not in any trouble, so I went on home, and everything was fine.

Later, at Texas A & M, I came close to having a bite from a Cottonmouth Moccasin. I was guest speaker at a science club, and was demonstrating the technique of extracting venom from the snake, holding it carefully behind the head while coaxing it to bite over the edge of a glass receptacle, with paper stretched over the top to push back the fleshy tissue as the fangs went through. After this was done, and a small puddle of venom deposited in the glass, I placed the snake back into its bag, but neglected to shake it down. A few seconds later, I felt something move against my right wrist, and looked down to see that the snake had bitten the sleeve of my jacket, and its fangs were entangled there. That time I REALLY shook it down into the bag, and tied it safely. My main thought was not that I had a narrow escape from a dangerous bite, but a narrow escape from incurring an embarrassing bite right out in public view.

My passion for snakes goes back beyond the scope of my memory, and I've met a good many people who at least in some degree, shared this passion. Back in the early '30s a carnival came to Crockett, and there was a sideshow advertised mysteriously as "Emma". The posters outside gave no indication as to who or what Emma was, and from the tent there issued a hoarse repeated metallic groan, as of some great mysterious and unhappy beast. Inside, Emma turned out to be a stout, comfortable middle-aged lady who handled snakes. She had a canvas "pit" in which she sat surrounded by scores of snakes of many kinds. Handling them all indiscriminately, for an extra fee she would hold a rattlesnake or a copperhead so that it bit her arm. She insisted that her snakes were not "fixed" in any way, and offered to incur a bite from any snake that the audience might bring in to her. "Any snake, that is, except a Harlingen Coral Snake. I'm not immune to them." (Harlingen, of course, is a Texas town 'way down where the Rio Grande

flows into the Gulf , at the Mexico border, and that name was more familiar to her than the literary “Harlequin” Coral Snake. of the widely accepted common name.)

I didn’t like to see her bitten, but did offer to bring her some Water Moccasins, which she had none of, and she was glad to get them. And she DID bite herself with one of them, whose venom apparatus had certainly not been tampered with. She also gave me a job relaying her calls for “More water!!” which meant telling the black youth behind the canvas curtain to put more oomph into cranking the machine that made the mysterious groaning sounds.

She let me do other odd jobs around the snakes, and for the rest of that summer I hitched daily rides to wherever that carnival was set up in nearby East Texas towns. And Emma talked a lot about her career.

“I didn’t used to be immune to snakebites,” she said. “I got bit several times, and it was hard on me. In them days they didn’t know nothing about anti-venom serum, and potash of permanganate was what lots of doctors used.”

She held up her right hand, showing the forefinger with its distal joint missing.

“That’s what potash of permanganate does! That one damfool doctor made some cuts on the finger, where the snake had bit me, and stuck in crystals of potash of permanganate—and the next thing I knew the finger turned black and just sort of dropped off! Don’t never let ‘em use it on you if you get bit!”

Then she had heard about anti-venin, and how it was made by injecting gradually-increasing nonfatal doses of snake venom into a horse until the horse became immune, after which its blood serum, containing the necessary antibodies, could be used in treating humans. She reasoned that if a horse could be made immune, so could a uman—and she painstakingly

immunized herself to rattlesnake venom. (There are lots of kinds of rattlesnakes in North America, but their various venoms seem to have a lot in common; in fact, immunity to any North American rattlesnake seems to confer at least some immunity to all other kinds and to the other two American pit-vipers, Copperheads and Water Moccasins, all belonging to the family Crotalidae. American anti-venin in the 1930's was called "Serum Crotalidae," and was made with just one kind of pit-viper venom, usually one or another of the rattlesnakes.

It would probably have been more effective if made available specifically for each species. In Brazil, where there are many kinds of poisonous snakes, each of the many anti-venins is specific, and is wrapped in a paper printed to resemble that snake's skin, so it can be identified even by a victim who can't read. This was all worked out by a physician, Dr. Afranio do Amaral.)

"Since I got immune," Emma went on, "a bite from a local snake don't faze me a-tall—except for Harlingen Coral Snakes. They got a different kind a poison, and I never had enough a them to immunize myself. "

I have no idea what ever became of Emma. I hope she retired gracefully and after that never had a bite; anaphylactic shock could have been disastrous.

In 1942 I met another person who was also missing a finger because of snakebite. This was Cy Perkins, Curator of Reptiles at the great San Diego Zoo. He didn't like to talk about it, but did finally tell the story of his only snakebite. It had occurred in a manner that was most embarrassing to an expert. Carefully and correctly holding a large Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake, he was using a pencil to lift up the hinged fangs in a demonstration for some important visitors. Somehow his concentration wavered for a moment, and his finger went into

the snake's mouth and was bitten. The wound showed that the fang had gone all the way through the finger tip, and Cy thought that all the poison had been deposited outside the exit wound. He was wrong, however: a large load of poison had been deposited inside the finger. The hemolytic action of the venom was such that the blood and lymph vessels in that area were immediately destroyed, and the poison could circulate no farther. Necrosis set in very rapidly, and the finger tip just sloughed off. Cy concluded by saying "So the way to get cured of a snakebite is to be bitten by a big snake in a little place, and that place will just drop off!"

Cy was a careful scientist whose passion was dealing with the public by imparting true reptilian information, and his regard for the truth was very different from an ex-carnival worker I met in San Diego during World War II. His stock in trade had been in gulling the public, not telling the truth, and he generously explained how I could do that too.

His car was stuck in the off-road mud in a vacant lot near our apartment, and I helped him dig out. He noted a couple of snake cages in our yard behind the apartment, and was pleased to meet a fellow snake lover. His "carney" work had been deeply involved with snakes.

"You been a big help," he said, "So here's somethin' you'd oughta know: If you was to work a snake show in a carnival, what you need for a star attraction is a Mexican Horned Rattlesnake— and I'm gonna tell you how to make one!"

And he told me— a gruesome process of making a shallow longitudinal cut in the top of a big rattler's head, then inserting the large end of a freshly severed rooster's spur and taping it down. After a few weeks, he said, it would heal, and there you've got your Mexican Horned Rattlesnake!

Right after coming to California, while I was at UCLA, I had the pleasure of knowing Grace Olive Wiley, the Snake Lady of Long Beach. She genuinely loved her reptiles and had some sort of mysterious rapport with them. Her home contained a tremendous population of reptiles, primarily snakes, from all over the world, including a 20-foot python named Romeo. Her meager income was earned by occasionally renting a snake or other reptile (always to be under her immediate care) to the movie studios, and from charging people a quarter to see her collection in Long Beach. This latter income was very small, especially as she had a good memory for human faces, and a person who had visited two or three times became a friend, from whom she would never accept another quarter. Her friends did learn that she always needed newspapers, which were used as floor-lining in the cages, so at every visit we tried to take her a stack.

Snakes seemed to love her as much as she loved them. The first time I saw her, she had just acquired a magnificent pair of King Cobras, each more than ten feet long. They reposed in a roomy cage, and she told me that they were too new for her to handle. A couple of weeks later I came in again, and rather jokingly asked if she was handling the Cobras yet.

“Oh, yes!” she said. “They’re darlings!” And she opened their cage and began hauling out the larger of the two, hand over hand. The smaller one came to the door of the cage and looked out, and Mrs. Wiley lightly flicked his nose with the back of her hand, saying “Get back in there, King! It’s not your turn!”

She had a large Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake named Huckleberry Finn, which did not live in a cage, but crawled around wherever he wanted; she often sat knitting with Huck in her lap. Romeo, the python, was often taken out, and would just lie around wherever he was placed.

Once during a Reptile Exposition at the old Wilshire-Ebell building in Los Angeles, I noticed that Romeo was not in his cage. "Oh, he's all right!" Mrs. Wiley assured me; "Just resting while I clean his cage." Her smaller cages were on a row of tables covered with a green cloth which reached the floor, and she showed me where Romeo was lying on the floor under the tables, behind the cloth. "He'll stay there until I get him." A little later, she rounded up a number of us able-bodied young people, and under her direction, we managed to lift Romeo and feed him, yard by yard, into his cage.

Mrs. Wiley later packed up all her snakes and left that exposition in a huff, when she learned that rattlesnake meat was to be served as a snack for anyone who wanted to try it. She would not condone the wanton killing of any creature.

In the early 1940s I was Curator of the Desert Museum in Palm Springs, and made several unsuccessful attempts to maintain captive Southwestern Speckled Rattlesnakes, *Crotalus mitchellii pyrrhus*, but they consistently refused to eat. I tried everything I knew: live mice in special dark feeding boxes, stunned mice placed enticingly on the floor of the cage— but the snakes ignored them. Those irritable rattlers also damaged themselves by constantly striking the glass of their cage whenever something outside moved. On a visit to Mrs. Wiley, I saw that she had several fine — and calm — specimens, and asked her how she got them to eat.

"Why, I'll show you," she said. "It's time for them to eat now."

She cut some strips of cold uncooked beef into roughly mouse-sized pieces, and held them with her fingers as she reached down into the cage. And one at time, the rattlers raised up gently, taking and swallowing the beef!

One time she met a rare Chinese Alligator, five feet long, belonging to Anaconda Joe, a reptile dealer down in Orange County. This alligator was sickly, with cloudy eyes and unhealthy skin, and Grace persuaded Joe to lend it to her so she could nurse it back to health.

Late one night her home was nearly destroyed when a drunk driver ran his car through it. An apocryphal story arose to the effect that Mrs. Wiley, sleeping in bed with her mother, was awakened by a door being flung across them. Throwing off the door and springing from the bed, she shouted "My Alligator!", and ran to check on it. (It was not harmed.) Then she screamed "My Mother!" and ran back to their bed. There was no way to find out whether or not the story was true, for no one wanted to ask Mrs. Wiley or her mother, and the drunk driver did not survive the crash.

Harold "Woody" Woodall, a fellow student at UCLA, organized a fund-raising campaign, and we garnered enough money for Mrs. Wiley to buy the alligator from Anaconda Joe. Her nursing was successful, and the creature made a complete recovery.

Mrs. Wiley was not at all immune to snakebite, and none of her charges had their venom apparatus impaired in any way. She finally died from the bite of a Sumatran cobra, which bit her hand as she was demonstrating, to a photographer from *Look* Magazine, how Indonesian priestesses handled their cobras.

When the United States entered World War II, I was Curator of the Palm Springs Desert Museum, and took a second full-time job as a civilian lab technician at the U. S. Army's Torney General Hospital there. One day I heard that there was a snakebite victim in the hospital; (out of uninformed curiosity he had picked up a Sidewinder Rattlesnake). The soldier had been taken to Ward C for treatment, and my boss, Lieutenant-Colonel Hans Smetana, gave me permission

to go check on it. When I got there, a Medical Corps Captain was on the phone with Colonel Jones, the Commandant of the hospital. The Captain was almost hysterical, shouting “You’ve never seen such a swelling! His whole arm below the elbow, twice its size, my God! What do we do ?” Then I heard him say “What’s that? A civilian? Named Hinton ? Well, I’ll see if I can find him...”

When I made myself known, he was still in a very excited state, and asked me what he should do. I told him about anti-venin, and that before using it, the patient should be checked for horse-serum sensitivity. This was done and the anti-venin administered. The captain asked if there were other measures to take, and I told him that often the swelling could be reduced by making shallow cross-cut incisions at the upper end of the swelling, to drain off some of the poison-laden lymph. A surgeon, he found this more in his line of work, and went at it full tilt. He insisted that the patient (a large and phlegmatic MP, named Woscenski, I think) be put under a general anesthetic. Then with a scalpel he made deep cuts here and there on the swollen arm. At each cut, the stretched skin immediately sprang apart into a circular hole, and the Captain inserted a hemostat into each hole, pulling up the flesh and tying it off with surgical thread. By now the Captain was feeling more in control, and said “How many of these cuts should I make?”

Horrified, I answered “Well, you’ve already made thirteen!”

He said “Wups! That’s bad luck! Can’t stop at thirteen!” and slash! made another cut..

. On the day after the bite, the swelling had gone down, but there was a tremendous ecchymosis, a subcutaneous bleeding, spreading like a horrible bruise all over his arm and down his right side. Lots of the medical staff came to view it. and I was asked to make a painting of it, and did so. This whole incident has been a weight on my conscience all these years, for— along

with the Captain and his colleagues — I had thought of the patient only as an interesting case and not as a frightened human being

On the fourth day after the bite, I was again inspecting the subsiding symptoms, and for the first time addressed Woscenski in a personal way. He was still phlegmatic, expressionless, apparently unperturbed, but I thought a word of encouragement would not be amiss.

"Well," I said, "It's been three full days since that Sidewinder bit you, and nobody ever dies if he's lived that long after a bite!" (I didn't really know that was true, but it seemed a good thing to say.)

Woscenski didn't change his expression, but as he looked at me his eyes filled to overflowing, and great tears ran down his temples. I'll never get over feeling sad and guilty about this, about how callous we all were in treating him impersonally as a case, letting him face the thought of his own death, with never a human word of comfort or a single thought about his inmost feelings.

I'm glad to say that his body made a full recovery, and I hope his mind was not scarred by our callousness.

5,000 words

**CHAPTER 12-MAGPIE AND BOOKS**

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Pica pica hudsonia*

MAGPIE

Lincoln, Nebraska

October 15, 1937

Magpies were abundant in the open fields next to the railroad tracks. They were usually perched on telephone poles or wires, but flew away as the train approached, so were most often seen from the rear as they escaped from the disturbance created by our train.

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Some of the “stands” (engagements) of the Bowes troupe were busy and hurried, with arrival on the day of the opening, often a rehearsal with the house orchestra, four or five shows a day, and, after the final show, departure late at night or early the next morning. That's the way it was in Lincoln, with no time for wandering in the countryside, no time to get even a little acquainted with the city itself. We were traveling by train. Railroads then had a custom of providing a private car for groups containing at least some minimum number of paid fares, and our troupe met that qualification. These private cars were usually semi-retired conveyances, often with imperfect or absent heating, with worn upholstery and grimy windows. But they

encouraged camaraderie among the troupe members, who behaved more naturally in the absence of any strangers, and they made the loading of the show's gear a lot easier, as the car carried not only the people but all our gear as well, and was usually available on a siding to load long before being picked up by the scheduled train. Also, these cars were nearly always hitched at the back end of the train, and while there was no rear platform such as those found on the fancy observation cars, it was still pleasant to stand at the back door and watch the receding landscape.

Most of what I learned about Lincoln and its surrounding countryside I observed from the train, for this was one of those hurried stands. But I did have an Adventure with a Girl.

Our Unit had been augmented by the local Trocadero Revue, a group of dancers sharing the bill with us as a preview of their full show scheduled for the following week. This was a professional (that is, they were paid) group, but most of the members were dancing on a part-time basis. It was my good fortune to meet one of them.

With so little time between shows, everybody went out to meals at the same time, and at every meal, a number of us would wind up in the same café. Toward the end of our engagement, a winsome dancer named Lois noticed the book I was reading in the restaurant, became interested, and introduced herself.

Lois was a student at the University of Nebraska, working her way, as a dancer and ice-skater, toward a baccalaureate in English; My status as a quondam student now vacationing between colleges gave us something in common. So we did quite a bit of talking. Somehow the talk turned to poetry, and I broached some ill-formed idea about the hidden meanings in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess." She was working on a term paper about Browning, and tried to

convince me that my interpretation was wrong. Neither of us had the entire poem from memory, so we agreed that a reading was necessary. I had an anthology of poems in my hotel room, and Lois agreed that we would repair there that night, after the last show. So that's what we did.

Reputations were important to young women in those days, even among showgirls, and Lois wasn't about to risk hers with an unknown male vaudevillian like me, so she wisely brought another of the dancers with her.

The two girls sat on the bed, while I sat on the floor, leaning back against the wall, and began reading "My Last Duchess" aloud. It was pretty late, and we were all tired after doing five shows, and before the end of the poem had been reached, we all fell asleep. And we slept until after daybreak.

The three of us were embarrassed when we woke up, and the two girls lost no time in leaving, without our having reached an agreement about "My Last Duchess." I walked with them down to the lobby. Unfortunately, just as we were going on our way out of my room, some other members of the show were entering the room across the hall; they had been out on an all-night party. They didn't say much at the time, so Lois and her friend were not subject to any ribald comments, but later, on the train, in our chartered private car, I was not spared.

"Wow!" they said, "Talk about still waters running deep! Ask Tex about those two glamor-girls that spent the night with him at the hotel!"

Realizing that they would never believe me if I told them that my relations with those girls had been strictly literary, I tried to give the impression that it was beneath my dignity even to notice their comments, I buried myself in a book, still reading "My Last Duchess." If I had seen Lois again, I would have had to apologize, for re-reading showed that my wish for a happy

ending had led me into the error of thinking that the Duke of Ferrara had not actually had the Duchess killed, but had placed her in a nunnery. Of course, this is NOT what the poem says, and Lois was quite right about it.

That anthology was a part of my traveling library, a suitcase full of books. Included were collections of poems, both serious and "light", bird books, reptile books, and some others that I just liked to read.

By far the most useful bird book was Roger Tory Peterson's epoch-marking *Field Guide to Eastern Birds*, which had been published less than two years before. That was (and is) not only useful, but easily portable, which could not be said of some of the others. One favorite was the large and heavy *Birds of America*, a 1936 Garden City reprint of the University Society's three-volume edition of 1917. It was illustrated with marvelous color plates (although some were rather poorly reproduced) from the paintings that Louis Agassiz Fuertes had made for Eaton's *Birds of New York* (1910), with less spectacular wash drawings by R. I. Brasher. The latter, in their comparative drabness, had a special appeal for me, as they looked like something I might someday be able to emulate, if I could only learn the wash technique. Fuertes, of course, was too far beyond me for any hope of equality.

I coveted, but didn't own, the multi-volume Roberts's *Birds of Minnesota*, but did have a one-volume collection of its color plates in his *Bird Portraits In Color*, with great paintings by Allen Brooks, Walter A. Weber, Francis Lee Jaques and others—including one by Fuertes himself.

Books especially poetry collections -- were involved in some of my earliest childhood memories. Mom was a part-time elocution teacher, and knew a whole lot of poetic "readings;"

"Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" was one her most dramatic ones. She and Dad often recited other poems together, especially the lilting verses from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. Dad was very admiring of the craftsmanship in their rhythm and rhyme, and would wag his head and tap his foot along with the poem; I can still visualize how he would say, in the words of Father William,

"And the MUScular strength that it GAVE to my jaw  
Has LASTed the rest of my LIFE."

Dad was a fine improviser of light verse, and used to play a sort of game. One of us kids would accuse him of not knowing some nursery rhyme like "Hey diddle diddle" and he would say, with an aggrieved air, something like "Of course I know that! Here, I'll show you:

Hi diddle doot, the cat and the flute,  
The bull jumped over the sun.  
The little girl laughed to see such a leap,  
And said 'You sonofagun!'"

And Nell would say "DaddeE! That's not right!"

Dad used to sing me to sleep when I was very young; one of his favorites was "Swing Low, Sweet Chari-oh" and I never found out why he pronounced "chariot" that way: perhaps his mother had thought it a French word, and pronounced it correctly from that standpoint. What I liked best was his improvised ballads about ME, always sung to the tune of "Good-bye, My Lover, Good-bye." It was different every time, but I dimly remember how one of them started:

"See the steamer go 'round the bend  
Good-bye my lover, good-bye;

They're taking old Sammy away to the pen

Good-bye, my lover, good-bye.

Why are they taking old Sam to the pen?

Good-bye, my lover, good-bye.

He hit a policeman, and hit him again,

Good-bye, my lover, good-bye.

Bye, baby, bye-o,

Bye, baby, bye-o.

Bye, Baby, bye-o,

Good-bye, my lover, good-bye."

Then followed a long account, one of them telling about "old Sam" escaping from the prison ship, being rescued and treated to a stack of hamburgers by a Ford-driving fat man; this was in a restaurant with a door so narrow that the generous fat man became stuck in it .... I tried to re-create s ballad like this on one of my children's records for Folkways, but it never did come across as well as Dad's versions.

My sister Mary Jo, eight years my senior, was in high school by the time I entered first grade. She learned a lot of poems in a public speaking class at Central High School in Tulsa, and recited them while we washed dishes after supper. Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo" was a favorite, and Sis recited it with all the extravagance it calls for. She also did a great job on Lindsay's "Simon Legree," with its dark refrain of "Down, down, to the Devil."

(I admired Vachel Lindsay's works, and have always regretted that I never met him in the flesh. With a little more alertness I might very well have done so, for after we moved to

Crockett, Texas, it developed that he had an aunt there whom he frequently visited. I wanted to look her up and talk to her about him, but didn't get around to it, and he came to Crockett for a visit and departed without my having known of it. Then I lost no time then in scraping an acquaintance with the aunt, but Vachel Lindsay died without ever having come back to Crockett.)

My brother Allan was six years ahead of me in school, and as the family athlete (he was the champion amateur tumbler of Oklahoma in 1927, and locally famed as a swimmer and diver ) he didn't have a lot of time for poetry. But he did write some parodies which became quite popular among his schoolmates at Central High, and I remember his complaining about having to write one of them over and over in order to provide copies for his friends. (This was 'way back before Xerox™!) That one started

"Under the spreading smithy the village chestnut stands.

The Nut, a moldy man is he, with pale and skinny hands;

The muscles of his scrawny arms, they look like rubber bands."

We had a good many books at home, including the 20-volume children's encyclopedia, *The Book of Knowledge*, and it contained a good many poems. One was the sentimental "An Arab's Farewell To His Steed," and Allan wrote a parody on that one too when Charles Lindbergh turned his history-making airplane, *The Spirit of Saint Louis*, over to the Smithsonian Institution in 1928. I think *The Book of Knowledge* was more important to my education than formal school ever was. After we left Tulsa for Crockett, we found ourselves in a town that had no public library. There was one, however, over in Lufkin, about 40 miles to the east. Dad occasionally had business in the highway office there, and it was a great treat for me to go

with him to spend a Saturday or, in summer, a weekday in that little library. It was wonderful! It was a small library, and if we had lived in Lufkin every volume on the shelves would have been examined within a year or so, but there was plenty to keep me busy through those scattered days.

There was a much larger public library in Beaumont, one of the reasons I loved to go there and visit my maternal grandparents, “Dearie” and “Judge” Duffie.. Several whole summers were spent in Beaumont, and I was able to get a Library Card, and actually check out some of the books! Unfortunately, children were allowed to check out only two books at a time, and, by reading while walking, I would usually finish one of them during the two-mile trek to the Duffie home out on North Street. The other would be finished that night, and the next day the whole thing would be repeated.

Judge loved books, and had a pretty good library at home. *Mark Twain's Complete Works*, in a good many volumes, was a favorite, and there was a lot of poetry. Judge was fond of quoting—in his very quiet way—some of his favorites. He gave me a copy of *The Poetical Works and Letters of Robert Burns* (which I still have). I didn't read all the letters, but memorized some of the poems, and Judge and I had long discussions about them and about Burns's Scottish dialect.

There was also a volume of James Whitcomb Riley's verse. Part of the charm of his work was his careful attention to rhythm, meter, and rhyme, and for this sort of craftsmanship I've always shared my father's enthusiasm. I even came to fancy myself a versifier of the same sort, writing any number of pieces in a "country" dialect which nobody on earth, thank the Lord, has ever actually spoken. One of them won second prize in a newspaper contest in Beaumont (Judge

was incensed that it hadn't placed first; he claimed that the first-prize winner had simply paraphrased Tennyson), and several others were published in the school paper at Wilson Junior High in Tulsa. I commit things to memory very easily, but those poems were so bad that I'm thankful to be unable to recall any of them now.

In 1935, while a student at A & M, I met a girl in Liberty, Texas. Her name was Marcy, and she inspired an ill-starred effort at poetry. She had green eyes, just the color of the eyes of one of my favorite turtles, the Cumberland Terrapin. (This was before the species *Chrysemys picta* had been split into a number of subspecies; the one to which "Cumberland" now applies does not range into Texas.) Back at the College, I sent Marcy a letter with a poem, comparing her eyes to those of the turtle. Happily, this poem too is entirely forgotten, but I remember crafting it very carefully around the ringing dactyls of "CUMberland TERRapin".

Marcy answered my letter. She said "I received your lengthy poem, and did not appreciate you saying I look like a turtle." End of relationship.

Years later I met Leslie, and my feelings for her were far too serious to be expressed in doggerel. Early in our acquaintance, I did consider writing a sonnet to her. I had noticed that her lovely red hair was just about the red-orange color of a local variety of the Sticky Monkey Flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), which was at that time blooming widely in the chaparral hills around UCLA. Remembering Marcy's reaction, I did not dare to write a poem about this. I now know that if I HAD done so, Leslie would have taken it seriously. I can imagine her asking me something like "Well, Sam, how do you feel about Sticky Monkey Flowers?" and I would have answered "Oh, I LOVE Sticky Monkey Flowers!" And she would have understood what I was getting at.

But that never happened, and wasn't necessary; I very quickly got up enough nerve to tell her directly, without metaphor, that I loved her, and was astonished and gratified beyond measure when she responded in kind. After more than 60 years of being married to her, I'm STILL astonished and gratified.

There is something about the proximity of books that brings comfort. It's best to read them, of course, but just having them near seems to impart a sort of companionship. Because of this, my heavy book-filled suitcase was very important to me during the on-the-road period.

Two essential items in the book-suitcase were much-read volumes of light verse — the big *Book of Humorous Verse* collected by Carolyn Wells and the smaller but even more delightful *Anthology of Light Verse* edited by Louis Kronenberger for the Modern Library. Good light verse is like good vocal music, appealing to the senses on many simultaneous levels. (By "good" music, I do not mean "classical" music exclusively, but ANY kind of song in which the words and music fit well together without pretension, both contributing to the overall feeling and meaning.) Even more serious verse is not spoiled for me by rhyme and rhythm. Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Ciardi, are fascinating on an intellectual plane, but none of these has moved me, arousing a feeling of kinship with the poet, like some of Bliss Carman's lines:

"The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry  
Of bugles going by.  
And my lonely spirit thrills  
To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills."

Of course, rhymes aren't really necessary in good poetry. Walt Whitman can be equally stirring, and perhaps the most memorable poetic experience of my life was hearing Edwin

Markham recite "The Man With the Hoe" and other poems of his own crafting, most of them in blank verse form. He lectured at Texas A & M in 1934 or '35. when he was at least 82 years old. But his words rang like deep-toned bells, and still so ring in my memory.

Whenever our show troupe schedule allowed time, I looked through every town for its bookshops, and would often sell one of two of the books I had finished, so as to make room for more. There were no large bookstore chains, and the small establishments were usually manned — and owned — by people who knew their stock and loved to talk about it. Typical in this way was Miss Anna Blom, proprietress of a small bookshop in Spokane, Washington. It wasn't far from the theater where my troupe was playing, and I went by there before and between shows throughout her open hours. Miss Blom was a White Russian emigrée, spoke with a fascinating accent, and taught me to drink Russian tea not from a cup, but from a glass. She said further that many Russians sipped the hot liquid through a sugar lump held between the teeth, but this required a loud slurping that she found unpleasant.

Miss Blom did most of the talking, holding forth on the glories of Russian literature; we did not get into politics. At the last visit, she presented me with a Modern Library edition of *The Brothers Karamazov*, and that one became a permanent resident of the suitcase, not to be traded in when finished. I've read it many times, and still have it.

Libraries have always been nearly as interesting as bookstores, and being on the road gave me an opportunity to visit a great many of them. Librarians proved always to be helpful and friendly, even with the whispered conversations demanded by the rules. My father's sister, Miss Fanny Hinton, the librarian at the Carnegie Library in Atlanta, was someone I admired tremendously.

The Scripps Institution of Oceanography has for a hundred years had a fine scientific library, primarily oceanographic. When I joined the Institution in 1946, the librarian was Miss Ruth Ragan. She respected books of all kinds, and was a whiz at the Library of Congress catalog system, but her heart was not in oceanography; she was, on her own time, a Shakespeare scholar of some repute. Miss Ragan would, I know, have deplored my calling her a "whiz." A similar informal word got her dander up when she was about to retire, and the Library Committee had to find a replacement. The Chairman of that Committee reported to Miss Ragan that they had indeed found someone and that he appeared to be a real "crackerjack." Miss Ragan seized upon the word "crackerjack" and emphatically used it at every opportunity when the Chairman was present, much as Antony used and played with the word "honorable" in his Caesarian eulogy. "Well, that's a problem that your CRACKERJACK will have to deal with." "Surely a CRACKERJACK will be able to understand that."

A strict grammarian, she had no hesitation in correcting any misuse of our language. The Museum, of which I was the Curator, was on the ground floor of her Library building, and I was perforce invited to attend some of the meetings of the Faculty Committee For the Library and Museum. At one of these meetings the Committee was discussing plans for a necessary increase of library floor space. Miss Ragan saw the whole thing as an invasion of her territory, and did nothing to conceal her impatience. At one point, the Chairman, one of the senior biologists at Scripps, brought up the subject of a mezzanine floor which could be built in the high central museum room and used by the library. Miss Ragan, who knew at least the pronunciation rules of several languages, bristled even further, and said "If you must talk about

such a travesty, please at least use the correct pronunciation. It is MET-zanine! MET-zanine!"

The chastened Chairman apologized.

The subject came up again and again at subsequent meetings, and the Chairman, apparently remembering that there was a "t" in there somewhere, always referred to the project as the "mezzan-teen." (It was finally installed after Miss Raglan's retirement. Now, of course, Scripps has a magnificent new library building, Eckart Hall, and the old library building, like Miss Ragan herself, is no more.)

Miss Raglan's acerbity was not limited to the library. In 1948, I had an extracurricular live radio program, "The Calendar of Folksongs, " on station KSDJ, which later changed its call letters to KOGO. This was a half-hour show, airing every morning at 7:00 AM and sponsored for one 13-week series by the Sun Harbor Tuna Company. I had to rise early every morning, check the flow of sea water in the aquarium tanks, then drive to downtown San Diego for the program. It was hard for me to get back to work at the Aquarium-Museum before 8:30 AM, but the then-Director of the Institution, Dr. Carl Eckart, unhesitatingly gave me permission to be half an hour late in the mornings provided my work-day was never less than the required 8 hours. Miss Ragan stopped me one day and said "I hear you are doing a radio program every morning."

I said yes, that was true.

"Well, " she said, "How do you get away with it?"

When Scripps was expanded to become a general campus — UCSD, the University of California, San Diego — and I had been appointed its Director of Relations With Schools, a tremendous new library (later named for Theodore Geisel, better known as "Dr. Seuss") was

created. When the new Library accessioned its 500,000th book, a special public ceremony was held. The book in question was a rare folio volume of Shakespeare. Miss Ragan, the amateur Shakespeare authority, was invited to participate in the ceremony. Although by then long retired and quite feeble, she was able to come up from her retreat in the Casa de Mañana Retirement Home, and to make a number of caustic remarks about the new UCSD Library building. (“That’s a fine large building, but I’ll wager nobody in it has done anything about the anomalies in the Library of Congress cataloguing system!”)

Everyone was just a little afraid of Miss Ragan, and with good reason: she was often right.

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4,036 words

CHAPTER 13 -- BARN OWL AND UCLA

FROM THE JOURNAL

BARN OWL

*Tyto alba pratincola*

San Clemente. California. 8 mi. south on Highway 101

February 5, 1939

DOR [Dead on road]. Not badly damaged. Sanders stuffed 'im.

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Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico, 10 miles north

February 6, 1939

Several flying and ghostly owls were seen in the headlight beams.

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In 1939 there was a whole clique of UCLA zoology majors who spent their spare time hanging around Professor Raymond. Bridgman Cowles's office and classroom. Bob Sanders and I were among them. Bob had a car, and when he or I periodically saved enough money for some gasoline, (very dear -- 35 cents per gallon! ) we would head out for a bit of camping in the California deserts or in Baja California, looking at reptiles, birds, and plants. One such field trip was in the Fall of 1939, to Death Valley (and boy! was it hot!) Bob and I often reminisced about that trip having given us three days more of peace than most people were allotted. Hitler's

invasion of Poland took place on September 1, and resulted in England and France declaring war on Germany — but we didn't know about it for three days. Death Valley was pretty isolated, and we had no radio.

On one of the days of that trip, we had, no kidding, 5 blowouts, and had to repair the inner tubes right out there in the blazing sun. Once we stopped at a gas station for fuel and a cold drink. The only cold drink they had was bottled beer, which was kept in the freezing compartment of a kitchen refrigerator. Neither of us cared much for beer, but there wasn't anything else, so we bought two bottles. The moment they were opened up, and the compressed gases inside allowed to expand, the liquid froze solid! We had to place the bottles in a bucket of water at air temperature (probably at least 115°F) and wait what seemed like hours before we could get a drop to drink.

Bob, after graduating in Zoology from UCLA, spent a couple of years serving in the U.S. Navy's Construction Battalions (the "Seabees".) Upon his discharge at the end of the war, he went back to college to complete his California teaching credential, and went into high school science teaching. Here he made an important name for himself. When he retired, he became the Volunteer Curator of Herpetology at the San Bernardino County Museum. It was a sad occasion when Bob died in 1998.

This group of friends that included Bob Sanders was tremendously important to me. With Dr. Cowles often in attendance, we constituted an informal discussion group that could, and did, discuss everything under the sun, particularly items relating to natural history. I remember being especially interested at that time in the concealing coloration of animals, and some of my thoughts were examined, discussed and judged to my heart's content. Is the Vermilion Flycatcher

concealingly colored when among the bright green leaves of the desert Cottonwoods? I thought maybe it was, for I had noticed, while resting under such a tree on a bright desert day, that every shift of my eyes brought hundreds of complementary after-images of brilliant green leaves, and the after-images were, of course, in the complementary color of the leaves, and that color was vermilion. So what was really a Vermilion Flycatcher might look to an innocent eye like just another after-image, and the viewer wouldn't pay it any attention. This led the group to consultation of the literature, trying to find out which predators had cone vision, and whether retinal chemistry caused them to see after-images in the complementary color. We never even approached learning the answers, but the discussions were mind-opening. Everyone had such ideas, and all were subjected to prolonged serious examination. This was my dream of what college life should be.

Nearly all of this group went on to distinguished careers in the biological sciences.

Several of us were interested in scientific illustration, and Bob Stebbins was the best artist of us all. Among many other accomplishments, he had written, illustrated and published a booklet on the birds of the UCLA campus. After I left UCLA, he went on to a PhD there, and became a Professor of Zoology at U.C. Berkeley, and Curator of Reptiles at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology there. His books and papers on western herpetology are standards in the field, and his pen-and-ink work in his *Amphibians and Reptiles of Western North America* (McGraw-Hill, 1954) is far ahead of any similar efforts I know.

Another fine artist among us was Gerhard Bakker. He had the ability to become completely absorbed while making a drawing or painting, all his faculties focused solely upon interpreting and reproducing exactly what he wanted to show. He once made a beautiful wash drawing

showing the head of a Sidewinder rattlesnake in profile, much enlarged. He had held the live snake carefully in one hand while drawing and painting with the other. When he showed me the finished picture, I remarked that he must have made it in Dr. Bellamy's lab. He asked how I knew that, and I said "Those trees reflected in the snake's eye are only on the west side of this building, right outside Dr. Bellamy's window." Gerhard looked closely at his drawing, and said "Well, I'll be damned!"

He became a renowned and loved Science Professor at Los Angeles City College. Some time after he retired, he was killed by an accidental blow from the tail fluke of a diving Gray Whale in Laguna Guerrero Negro, Baja California. His widow Elna became a well-known natural history writer, and a leader in conservationist thought and writing.

Ken Stager went on to a position as Mammalogist and Ornithologist at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County,. I think he got into bats *via* herpetology, through his study of the elusive California Lyre Snake, *Trimorphodon biscutatus vandenberghi*, a rear-fanged desert dweller whose diet consists largely of bats.

Harold "Woody" Woodall, handsome and debonair, would certainly have joined the ranks of well-known scientists had he not lost his life in a training accident while he was a Navy aviator in World War II. It was he who was the closest friend of the Snake Lady of Long Beach, Grace Olive Wiley, and organized several programs designed to help her financially. He was one of the few of our coterie who owned a car. The car was an old hearse, bought from a funeral home, and while it used a lot of gas, it was very comfortable, and carried a lot of camping gear.

Chuck Bogert had already finished his herpetological PhD under Dr. Cowles's tutelage, but used to join us once in a while at the office or on official field trips. He later became Curator of

Reptiles at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, replacing my rather austere pen-pal, G. Kingsley Noble.

Chuck Lowe, a high-school boy who lived near UCLA and hung out with us, also earned his PhD, and wound up as a Zoology Professor at the University of Arizona.

My best friend was Joe Gorman, poet, music-lover, skeptic, general intellectual, impoverished philanthropist, and conscientious objector to war. He too went on to a PhD degree and a subsequent teaching and research career. Joe was never one to make life easy for himself. When drafted, he told the draft board that he would go to prison rather than serve in the military, and that his objections to the military were intellectual and logical, NOT religious. Much to his surprise, he was nevertheless classified as a Conscientious Objector, and sent to a "C.O." camp in the mountains above Glendorra, California. Even there he refused to follow the path of least resistance, and in this camp, populated primarily by Jehovah's Witnesses, got in trouble for insisting, when he was editor of the camp newspaper, on spelling "God" with a lower-case "g".

We all used the premises on the top floor of the Biology Building as a clubhouse. On one occasion, while we were having our bull session in Dr. Cowles's office, I noticed that Dr. Cowles himself had taken refuge out in his lab-classroom to grade papers. But he never complained.

After I met Leslie, she joined us whenever she could, and was welcomed by the group. To save her from a needless walk up three flights of stairs, we devised a signal; whenever I was there, I would hang my red bandanna out the window, and she could see this from the ground.

Leslie and I were married while I was still an undergraduate student, which was not a common practice at that time. I think, however, that we stimulated others to take the same step; Bob Stebbins married Anna Rose, and Jimmy Hall joined up matrimonially with Audrey, already

a member of our group. Jimmy and Audrey both had illustrious careers as high-school science teachers in the Santa Barbara area.

UCLA was still a young campus, with scarcely a dozen years in that locality, and the atmosphere seemed to promote the vigorous pursuit of every aspect of learning. "Intellectual" was not a pejorative term. Typical of that attitude was a short colloquy, conducted through the newspapers, between the President of the older University of Southern California and a faculty member at UCLA. President Rufus von Kleinschmidt of USC was quoted as saying that modern child-rearing practices had produced an inferior lot of young people. "The trouble with this generation of youth is that it is the first generation that has never been spanked!" To this, Dr. Frederick P. Woellner, a popular UCLA professor in the Education Department, widely noted for his pithy comments and jokes, grandly replied "Tell my friend Rufus to send his problem students to UCLA: WE know which end of the spine the brain is at!"

In one of his lectures, he talked about how easy it was to sway public opinion, given the basic gullibility of human kind. After this lecture I told him of my experience with the carnival performer who catered to this gullibility, and fooled the multitudes into believing that he could read minds and had a "photographic memory." Nothing would do but for Dr. Woellner and me to repeat the so-called "demonstration of eidetic memory." An inveterate showman, he posed as the expert while I helped behind the scenes until the dénouement at the end of the "show."

He had put a turban on his head, and had procured a large folding Chinese screen to place on the dais. After class had begun, he asked a student to go to the Education Office and borrow a Los Angeles telephone directory. I, with a blackboard and an identical telephone book, was already installed behind the screen, invisible to the audience but visible to Dr. Woellner. He, as

the mage, riffled quickly through his phone book, then handed it over to the audience, saying that he had thereby memorized it, and asking that a name be selected, and its page number, column, and line number read aloud. After a moment's pause, with a dramatic hand held to his brow to signify deep thought (and to hide the direction of his gaze) he correctly gave the name and phone number found at that position in the directory. I, of course, had used my copy to find that place, and had written the name and number on the blackboard. Even after several repetitions of this feat, the class could not guess how it was done until Dr. Woellner dramatically folded the screen to reveal his accomplice and the blackboard.

He was in great demand as an after-dinner speaker. I often performed folk songs on the same occasions, so we came to know each other's material fairly well. One night at some banquet he came on before me, and in closing jokingly expressed the hope that "Mr. Hinton would sing some different songs." I had noticed that some of his better *mots* had also appeared in the *Youth's Companion* magazine, of which my Dad had some bound volumes from the turn of the Century. So after being introduced, I made some retaliatory remark to the effect that I had been glad to hear, for once, several jokes from Dr. Woellner which had NOT been in the *Youth's Companion* 50 years earlier. Dr. Woellner laughed dutifully, but not very enthusiastically, and later that evening his secretary, Mr. Gibson, gleefully whispered to me "He really DOES have a file of old *Youth's Companions!*"

One of his most-quoted speeches was completely original, and I didn't hear it, for I had graduated and gone on to the Desert Museum in Palm Springs. The UCLA football team, under the coaching of "Babe" Horrell, had for years been regularly beaten by its arch-rival, USC. Dr. Woellner made the promise that if UCLA ever won over USC, he would lecture to his class

drunk, and in Latin. The good guys finally did win, and Dr. Woellner carried out his promise, although the drunkenness was feigned and the Latin merely imitated. The lecture began with the professor staggering down the aisle, waving a bottle from which smoking liquid sloshed occasionally. (He had conferred with members of the Chemistry Department to get help in finding liquid that smoked when spilled.) Reaching the lectern, he sagged upon it, turned to the audience, raised his bottle in a toast to the Coach "Babe" Horrell, and shouted "Vivum Infantum Horrellum!"

At the end of my first semester at UCLA, I met my Leslie, and my whole life was changed; she was in my every thought, and we were together as much as possible between classes.

I enjoyed going to Babe Horrell's football games, especially in Leslie's company. It was at one game, in the Coliseum near USC, that I presented her with an engagement ring, made of the gold and tiny diamonds from an old bracelet that Mom gave me for that purpose.

We participated in the card stunts, and in all the other activities that were optional for students. There were some who thought that UCLA, still a very young campus, ought to have more traditions, and the cheerleaders agreed. They used to explain innovative procedures to the crowds in the stands, and would often say "Now listen! This is going to be a tradition from now on!" but traditions don't start that easily. Even without a lot of traditions, the games were fun to watch. The star football players during our tenure at UCLA included Jackie Robinson (I didn't go to the baseball games, and knew him only as an exceptional football player) and Kenny Washington. Woody Strode, who later went into the movies, was on that team too. Any game with those three playing was bound to be exciting. UCLA, alas, lost that game, although a very long pass from Kenny Washington to Jackie Robisnos scored in the last seconds of play.

UCLA had its own homecoming game and activities (in fact, it may have originated the idea of the Homecoming Day that is now a common practice throughout the college and university world), but the one homecoming I remember most vividly was a University-wide event at the founding campus, U.C. Berkeley, with all the University of California campuses participating. Some committee at UCLA selected me to represent our campus there, and in the Stadium I played my guitar and sang, unamplified, as loud as I could. Chiefly memorable about that occasion is that the UCLA committee very generously gave me a plane ticket to Oakland, and that was my first flight to a specified destination. This was a springtime trip in a DC-3, and we flew quite low most of the way. The Mountain Laurel blazing blue and white on the hills provided as heart-lifting a sight as can be imagined, an unforgettable welcome to the glories of air travel.

My extracurricular activities on campus were not athletic, but connected with the Glee Club, the Campus YMCA, the *Daily Bruin* student newspaper, the Men's Glee Cub, and (after Leslie had taught me some rudiments of reading music) the A Cappella Choir. I did cartoons for the *Bruin*, which did not have facilities for making line cuts. The cartoons were therefore done as type-high linoleum cuts, which Leslie (an Art and Music Education major) showed me how to make, and which the printers clamped into the forms along with the type and the halftones and printed directly.

The A Cappella Choir was exciting, because of Leslie's presence, because our dear friend Mr. Moremen was the director, and because we sang interesting songs and did them pretty well.

Some of the songs were quite difficult to learn; I remember especially a "twelve-tone" piece by Arnold Schönberg, in which my semi-literate baritone harmonizing didn't work at all,

and I had to really read the music. Professor Schönberg was then on the UCLA music faculty, and practice on his song had to be done when he was not within earshot, for we were to surprise him with it at his home on his birthday. It was a successful surprise, and he was appropriately gracious, saying he'd never heard that piece performed better. (The main Music Building at UCLA is now named Schoenberg Hall, spelt that way because of generations of unlauded typewriters.)

The Disney Studios were at that time working on *Fantasia*, and they selected our *A Cappella* choir to record the "Ave Maria," led by the graceful hands of Leopold Stokowski, whose trademark was the omission of the conductor's traditional baton. This was not the recording that was heard in the final film, but a working copy used by the animators in keeping the sound and the pictures synchronized. But I think we sounded just as good as the professional choir that made the final sound track.

There were also dramatic productions, and Leslie and I both had small parts in the production of *Of Thee I Sing*, the Gershwin musical that had swept Broadway in 1932. And Leslie played viola in the orchestra while Elm Halpren and I furnished appropriate offstage music (his voice and my guitar) for a couple of numbers in the annual Dance Recital.

It took me more than three years and a summer session to graduate from UCLA, after having successfully completed two years at Texas A M. This was mainly because of the difficulties of transferring units from one institution to another, and of not having any academic advice in preparing my class list. In my first UCLA year, I mistakenly assumed that I was a junior, and took all the upper-division courses in field biology that could be crammed into my schedule. I did well in them, and nobody advised me that I had no right to take those courses. At

the end of the year, however, I was called into the office of Dean Watkins, the Dean of Letters and Science, for some bad news. UCLA then had a rule that upper-division courses could not be taken until the student had earned what was called "the Junior Certificate," and my two years at A & M had not met all of its requirements. This was partly because my course in Texas History and American Institutions did not meet UCLA's requirement for CALIFORNIA History and American Institutions. Accordingly, all my work for that year was thrown into lower division, and I still needed to finish some missing lower-division requirements while taking a full load of two years' worth of upper-division work in order to graduate. They did at least allow me to do some of this concurrently.

Incidentally, my last 16 years of full-time employment by the University were spent at the then-new campus, UC San Diego (which grew from the nucleus of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography) as a sort of Admissions Counselor, making sure that transferring students knew in advance what was needed.

Back to 1939: one bad aspect of my problem was that I had already taken most of the field courses that I relished, and little was left but a lot of lab courses, such as embryology, about which I was less enthusiastic. My grade point average went 'way down. But one thing turned out well: I needed three lower-division semester units in one of the Humanities in order to attain full junior standing. So right there in the Dean's office I decided that it would be Introduction to Philosophy, which sounded interesting but about which I knew nothing. When the course started the next Fall, I was dismayed to find it an enormous class, meeting in Royce Hall with the little bitty Professor way up there on the stage. But that little bitty professor turned out to be a

visiting scholar — none other than Bertrand Russell! That class was one of the most exciting academic experiences of my life.

I must admit that part of the lowering of my grade point average was because I was spending too much time with Leslie, and her grades also suffered. We found it hard to be together except on campus; she lived with her parents in Inglewood, and I lived with mine in Glendale, and neither of us had a car or knew how to drive. Many of my evenings were spent doing "casual" jobs as a folksong performer, but I spent every possible moment at her home. After we reluctantly said "Good night," a walk of only a mile or so would take me to the trolley stop at 54th and Crenshaw, where I could catch the Number 5 streetcar to Eagle Rock, then walk a couple of miles to Glendale. We were too poor to go out very much, although we did take in a few movies at a theater in Inglewood where the admission price was only a quarter.

She had her own academic agenda, of course, in her senior year leading to the AB degree and a Special Teaching Credential in Art and Music, which required Practice Teaching for full recognition. We collaborated on our class schedules, and did our best to have classless hours at the same time. The campus was where most of our courtship took place. It wasn't really courtship in the usual sense, for we already knew we wanted to spend our lives together, and had publicly announced our engagement. We were not secretive about it—indeed, one of her Art professors suggested that it was just a little improper for us to walk about the campus holding hands. But the campus was our primary meeting ground.

The main part of the campus ended at Westwood Boulevard, with nothing west of that but the Drill Field (for the optional ROTC) and the lovely chaparral-covered hills. (Pauley Pavilion and several dormitories lay 'way in the future.) One of the east-facing hills had set into its slope a

large letter "C" for California, made of concrete painted blue and gold. Aside from that, it was all virgin chaparral. We took many long walks over there, and found our mutual love growing as we discovered more and more about each other. Leslie was just as excited as I over finding several baby Killdeer while their mother tried in vain to lure us away by pretending to be a fluttering earthbound, easy-to-catch cripple. And the spring flowers made everything even more wonderful; it's no wonder we missed classes and suffered a drop in our grade averages!

Right on campus was a deep, wild arroyo, spanned by a bridge on the street that led in from Hilgard Avenue on the east. This was a lovely wild canyon, thickly grown with local chaparral plants, and populated by local birds and reptiles. It became a favorite place for Leslie and me to eat our lunches. I was working part-time for Dr. Cowles, and one of my assignments was to locate inhabited bird nests and keep a record of the body temperatures of baby birds as well as standard and wet-bulb temperatures of the ambiente. ( Dr. Cowles was studying the thermal relationships of animals, especially reptiles, and baby birds seemed to be at an evolutionary point between ectothermic and endothermic life styles, their body temperatures varying with that of the ambient temperatures.) Leslie and I had found nests of several California Jays (now more officially known as Scrub Jays, *Aphelocoma coerulescens* ), and we enjoyed taking our brown-bag repasts while sitting next to one of the nests. Scrub Jays are easy to work with, quickly overcoming their fear of humans, and the adult birds would often share our lunches — even after I had manhandled their babies by taking their body temperatures with a rectal thermometer.

(Now, by the way, 65 years later, we still enjoy feeding Scrub Jays in our back yard in La Jolla. A good many avian generations have known the bounty of Leslie's home-baked bread scraps and leftover fluffy buttermilk pancakes .)

I visited UCLA again more than 20 years after graduating, teaching a couple of summer session courses --Biology 12, a lower-division introduction to Southern California Natural History, and an upper division course called "The Forms of Folklore." In these I was temporarily replacing regular professors, both of whom have since departed this world. Ken Norris (biology) and D.K.Wilgus (folklore), were then away on sabbatical leave. The campus had changed a lot. Not only were there many more buildings, but the steep part of the arroyo had been filled in, and the bridge had become simply a walled portion of the street. But it was, and is, a grand university.

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4,212 words

**CHAPTER 14--RED-TAILED HAWK AND RACIAL INHUMANITY**

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Buteo borealis calurus*

RED-TAILED HAWK

Santa Barbara, California,

25 miles north, on road to Monterey

Dec 26, 1939

A large specimen with bits of rabbit fur in its talons was found dead in the road. A few feet beyond it was a small dead rabbit. Both had been struck by a car, apparently just after the hawk had seized the rabbit.

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"Will you serve a Negro here?"

In 1939, this was a question that had to be asked at eating places, even in relatively enlightened California. Many managers answered "yes," but there were still too many who said "no."

Five of us—Guy Harris, Bob Ward, Pete Yamasaki, Bill Lacefield, and I—were driving from UCLA to the Asilomar conference grounds at Pacific Grove (near Monterey, California), for the annual YMCA-YWCA Winter Conference. I was student then at UCLA, which, of course, had no color barrier, and there were many black students. One of these was our companion, Bill Lacefield, a well-known track star at UCLA.

Lots of restaurants barred black customers, so one of us others had to ask the question at every proposed food stop. If the answer was "yes," we all went in and ate; if not, we'd get back in the car and try another spot.

The conference itself was just great. There were 550 college students there— more than at any previous conference. A year later in December of 1940, Leslie and I, three months married, were counselors at the next YWCA-YMCA Conference there, the closest we came to having a honeymoon. Among those attending these conferences were many who were later instrumental in originating all sorts of social movements.

It was at Asilomar that most of us first heard about the youth hostels of Europe, and the AYH—American Youth Hostel association—was founded shortly afterward. A student named Bob Osgood introduced us to square dancing, which was all but unknown in California. Later, Bob, as organizer of a square dance federation, trainer of callers, and creator/publisher of the magazine *Sets In Order*, helped establish square dancing as a popular pastime for millions of urban Americans. After Leslie and I were married, we served as musicians for several *Sets In Order* conferences, held, appropriately, at Asilomar.

Since my days at Texas A & M, the campus "Y" organizations had been an important part of my life. They were social organizations with not too much emphasis on the "Christian" part of their name, firmly dedicated to social equality and responsibility. One of the admirable College "Y" district administrators in Southern California was Dick Mills, who often came to UCLA and who remained our close friend for the rest of his life. There weren't many other organizations so open to students of all colors and races; even most churches were segregated.

There is no question that race relations have a long way to go before anything like full equality is attained, but it doesn't hurt to recall how bad things were before the great Civil Rights movements. Prejudice and segregation—both *de jure* and *de facto*— were so pervasive that there was no escaping them, no forgetting even for a moment that they existed.

This began bothering me when I was very young. I clearly remember being taught that every young southern person should show respect for every older person by always using the address forms "sir" or "ma'am". At the same time, it was held to be quite improper to use these forms when addressing black people. This was confusing. I knew no one more deserving of respect than a stern, capable black woman who helped my mother around the house. Known to me only as "Ward", she was a mountain of strength and knowledge, and her word was law—but I mustn't call her "ma'am."

In the same way, southern chivalry demanded that all adult females be referred to as "ladies"—unless they were black. I remember mentioning a person as "that colored lady," only to have an adult say

"Hmmp! If that's a lady, I'd hate to see a wench!"

This all bothered me. I really don't remember any white adults in Crockett whom I admired and respected nearly as much as I did some of my black friends, but the social mores of that time and place looked askance at any language showing any signs of this respect.

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Probably my earliest memory to which a date may be attached is of the terrible "Race Riot" in Tulsa in 1921, when I was four years old. News accounts indicated that 79 black people were killed, although recent historical research has more than tripled that number. I was too young to

take in the details, but have since been told that racial tension had been growing in Tulsa, deliberately and diabolically fanned by Ku Klux Klan and other extremists, and that the spark that set off the riot had occurred when a young black man in an office-building elevator was said to have "sassed"—talked back to—a white woman.

Many white families, including mine, looked upon the resulting activities as a spectacle. We went up to the top of Reservoir Hill (I think that's where it was) from which we could look down into the Greenwood district—the black part of town. I remember seeing a small church in flames. And I remember my mother talking to a black woman who was obviously terrified. That's my earliest memory of disagreeing, privately, with Mom, who seemed to me to be insensitive to the Black woman's state of mind. Mom wanted to discuss the possibility of the woman's coming to our house to do laundry, and the latter, obviously distraught, said "I don't know if I'm gonna live through this."

The family left the hill as National Guardsmen were setting up a machine gun. The Guard had been called in to stem the murderous marauding by the white people. Recent statistics show that 1,000 houses, 35 grocery stores, eight doctors' offices, and five hotels had been destroyed.

Starting immediately afterward, some survivors and, later, their descendants, began asking for reparations. Almost exactly 80 years after the riot, the Oklahoma Legislature produced a final announcement about it, saying, in effect, "It was a bad thing, and we're sorry it happened—but there ain't gonna be no reparations!" .

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Schools were segregated in Tulsa and in Texas, and I never did get to know well any black kids of my own age. There was more contact with some adults, but even this was often furtive. In

Texas, there was one elderly couple who farmed for shares on a plot near Hurricane Bayou near Crockett, and I used to stop in for a visit while on my reptile-hunting forays. The man of the house, whom I greatly admired for his energy and his agricultural knowledge, often sang at work, and I learned some of my best songs by listening to him as he plowed with his mule. He and his wife were gentle, kind, hospitable people, and they approved my mission which they saw as ridding the area of snakes. The wife made delectable salt-rising bread, and they kept a large milk-can of buttermilk cool by suspending it in the well. I was sometimes invited to join them at the table. The pleasure of their company and of that delicious meal, however, was marred by the fear that my father might find out that I was dining with Black people. That sort of thing simply wasn't done, but Dad never found out about it .

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At one of the Berkeley Folk Music Festivals in the '50's, I met Lightnin' Hopkins, the legendary blues man, who had grown up in Houston County, of which Crockett is the county seat. Thinking it would be nice to talk over some of our probably mutual acquaintances, I thought of asking him if he knew any of those black folks who had been so kind to me and had become my role models. But I suddenly realized that I knew only the first names of those people—this in the deep South, where young people were taught always to address their unrelated white elders respectfully, as Mr., Miss, or Mrs. (pronounced “Miz”) with the last name. In church, "Brother" or "Sister" could be used instead of Mr. or Miz., and adult relatives might be addressed by the first name—but always with an honorific “Aunt”, “Uncle”, or “Cousin” in front. But such respect was not to be accorded to Black folks, and I hadn't learned the last names of any of these people whom I so admired. It just didn't seem right to ask Mr. Hopkins if he knew Ola who had worked

for Miz Beasley, or Big Jim, who ran a mule-powered hauling service and gave me my first live Armadillo, or Old Nemo, who sold tamales on the street and led his church choir on Sundays. I never did learn whether Mr. Hopkins and I had mutual friends.

The depth of my own unwitting racial conditioning may be gauged by the fact that it didn't occur to me to ask him about any white acquaintances.

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In Crockett, everyone talked about a drama in the court house. I didn't see it myself, and was not certain how much of the talk was true, but the story was that a black man was on trial for the murder of a white man. During the proceedings, a nephew of the deceased stood up and shot the defendant with a pistol. The defendant died as the courtroom was being cleared; the white nephew was not disarmed, and was never indicted.

Regardless of how true all these details are, there was no doubt as to the opinions of those who believed and gleefully recounted the story: the nephew's act was fully justified, they felt. He had saved the state the expense of an execution, and that was the way, they said, that it ought to BE!

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There were no black students at Texas A & M in the 30's, so the membership of the campus "Y" was all white. Nevertheless, we were aware of some of the problems faced by African-Americans. On one occasion, the campus YMCA Director had a letter from a black minister in nearby Bryan, asking if he could help find someone to teach some of his adult parishioners to read and write. A number of us volunteered as teachers, and the Y arranged for a local elementary school teacher to give us some basic pedagogical instruction. But before the program

got under way, it was stopped. The Y Director was sent several letters from white people in Bryan, promising that any black people who took part in the program would be made to suffer. And in those days, "suffering" might well have involved death.

I don't know how we would have reacted if we, the white would-be teachers, had been threatened, but as the wrath of the bigots would fall upon our prospective students, we could only abandon the project.

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In Houston one day I was walking down the street in my A & M ROTC uniform. Ahead of me on the sidewalk were two black men talking. One of them had a face that instantly struck me as belonging to someone I'd like to know; his hair was gray, and his whole expression bespoke intelligence, humor, and compassion. I was wishing I could draw a portrait when the two men separated, and the one who had so impressed me walked in my direction.

He immediately stepped off the sidewalk into the gutter to let me pass, and impulsively I said "Oh please, don't step off the sidewalk for me!"

He replied in a whisper.

"Please, sir," he said, "Don't get me in trouble!"

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This sort of frustration was well illustrated in a joke that started making the rounds in the early days of the Civil Rights Movement.

A small-town southern business man is complaining to a friend about all those Yankee troublemakers.

"They just don't know how we do things down here. Why, we've got an old man who's been with our family since before I was born; we call him 'Uncle Will,' and I know he don't have any complaints about the way he's treated."

So the two men agree that they should get old Uncle Will to speak on the radio, telling the Yankees that there was no problem, and that they should stay home and mind their own damn business.

"Just go over to that microphone, Uncle Will, and tell ever'body what it's really like for you here in the south."

"You mean," says the old man, "that when I talk here people are gonna hear me all over? In Chicago, and New York, and Washinton?"

They assure him that was indeed the case, so Uncle Will goes over to the microphone, takes a deep breath, and hollers:

"HELP!"

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With all their problems, the northeast and western parts of the country were ahead of the south in regard to *de jure* discrimination, and traveling into the south could be quite shocking. In 1947, when traveling about to get ideas from museums and aquariums all over the country, I left New York on a Florida-bound train, and went to sleep in my coach seat. Upon awakening a couple of hours later, as the train stopped at some southern depot, the first thing to catch my eye was a sign: "Waiting Room: Whites Only."

I had grown up with this sort of segregation, but had pushed it to the back of my memory, and the sight of that sign hit me like a physical blow.

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Wally Sharples, the Master of Ceremonies with one of the little MaJor Bowes troupes that played at the 1938 Pan-American Exposition in Dallas, came from England, and probably thought of himself as quite unbiased. But he catered to the prevalent American stereotyping, and often told of an experience he had with a show troupe traveling through the American deep south.

"We had these two colored dancers, and I was told that a southern audience would never accept the idea of their traveling and associating with the white members of the cast. But you know what I did? I dressed 'em as cooks, with white aprons and tall white chefs' *toque* hats, and we never had a complaint."

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This engagement, with Wally Sharples as MC, was played in the little Magnolia Lounge at the Exposition. The only jarring note there was the abrasive personality of one of the stagehands, an all-too-typical racial bigot . I tried and tried to keep out of arguments with him, but he talked so much that it was hard to do. Once he was fulminating against the presence of a young black man—a member of a South American track team—in the audience. I ventured to say that I thought it was all right for him to be there.

"Are you saying he's as good as you?" demanded the stagehand.

"Well, I don't know him personally, but maybe he is -- yes!"

"All right, then!" thrusting his face close to mine, "I say you're not as good as me! Whaddaya say to THAT?"

I was too afraid of him to say what I thought of that..

This stagehand claimed that he had once been called a sonofabitch by a famous female fan-dancer, and he proudly quoted himself as replying to her "I been raised never to raise my hand to a lady, but anybody that calls me a sonofabitch AIN'T a lady, and if you don't apologize I'll knock your block off!" He told this story often, and while I certainly agreed with the fan-dancer's assessment, I never told him so.

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Black people traveling through small towns had a special kind of problem. In big cities, there was always a large enough black population to support some facilities for them, even though they were savagely segregated. But this wasn't so in the smaller towns; there were no facilities specifically for people of color, and the white hotels wouldn't take them in. This was true not only in the south, but everywhere we went. In fact, it was a little better in the south, for even small towns there supported a significant African-American population with some amenable facilities.

While a student at UCLA, I rejoined one of the Major Bowes Units for a summer tour starting in Minnesota. And one of our cast members, a rather shy young black man named "Strawberry" Russell, couldn't find a place to stay.

Some black performers had extensive lists of hospitable black families, often to be met in church, and that had been the case with one of the acts on our New England tour a year before; those two young men always had a place to go. But here in Minnesota and the Dakotas, it wasn't like that. "Strawberry" had no list, was not a churchgoer, knew no one, and one-night stands permitted no time to make arrangements. Occasionally, he said, a theater manager would let him

stay all night in the dressing room, but that didn't happen often, and it was lonely and scary when it did. Strawberry said he had spent many nights on park benches.

This unit was traveling in a chartered bus, and Hubert Lang, our sturdy driver who came from Utah, did not share the general prejudices against black folks. He suggested that Strawberry sleep in the bus—but Strawberry was uncomfortable sleeping there all alone. So we quickly worked out a program that lasted throughout that summer. We bought ourselves second-hand blankets and all three of us slept in the bus. Lang (he preferred that call him that rather than Hubert) slept on the wide back seat; Strawberry made himself a bed by folding down the arms of two seats and piling a couple of suitcases in the aisle up to the level of the seats, then stretching out across two seats and the aisle; I strteched out on thewide overhead baggage space.

We even ate lots of our meals in the bus, buying canned food, breakfast cereals and milk in the grocery stores, and sometimes sandwiches from a local delicatessen or drugstore counter.

It really worked out pretty well. We all saved a lot of money. In about every third town, either Lang or I would check into a hotel with the rest of the unit. Then we'd locate the service stairway, and sneak Strawberry in for a shower.

It should be noted that all active prejudice was outside the show troupe. Within our group, Strawberry was just one of the gang, and could share dressing-rooms and bus seats with anyone.

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While I was traveling with the Ted Mack show, my father, working as a civil engineer for the U.S. Department of the Interior, was shifted from Washington D.C. to Los Angeles. Through the mail, arrangements were made for Mom and Dad and my sisters Nell and Ann to drive out by

way of Salt Lake City, timing the trip so as to get there while the show was playing its one-week stand at the Utah Theatre.

I knew that the family would want to be introduced to all my fellow-performers, and this worried me; would Dad shake hands with the two Rascals of Rhythm? Brother Goolah and the Deacon, as the Rascals called themselves, were ebullient young black singers who skillfully imitated all sorts of musical instruments, *à la* the famous Mills Brothers, and I was truly fearful that they might not be greeted in proper fashion.

But it worked out all right. To my immense relief, Dad shook their hands without a moment's hesitation.

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When, in 1938, I first came to live in California, I was astonished to learn that the State had—and enforced—strict laws against miscegenation. These laws held that marriage between people of different races was illegal, and a white person could not legally marry an Asian, an African-American, a Latino, or a Native American. There were tales of an isolated community in Morongo Pass (Los Angeles County) where breakers of this law lived in constant fear of discovery. Many other States had such laws, and it was not until 1967 that the United States Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional.

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When Huddie Leadbetter, better known as Leadbelly, came to Hollywood, California, in 1946, most white musicians felt honored to join him on stage and provide instrumental backup to his wonderful songs and powerful twelve-string guitar. But this had to be done on the sly, late at night, usually in small barrooms, for the rules of the American Federation of Musicians forbade

white and black musicians to play together in public. There were even separate AFM Locals for black musicians. The rule against whites and blacks appearing together had been challenged about seven years earlier, when Benny Goodman had hired black musicians to play with his band at Carnegie Hall. Today, thank goodness, no such rules or segregated Locals exist, and I am in no way ashamed of being a retired Life Member of Local 325, AFM.

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Sign posted on the door of a cafe in Palm Springs, California, as late as 1941: "We do not cater to the colored trade. This includes Mexicans and Indians."

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3,599 words

**CHAPTER 15-CURLEW, 'MEET THE PEOPLE,' AND LESLIE**

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Numenius americanus*

LONG-BILLED CURLEW

Mugu Inlet, California

August 13, 1940

My introduction to Point Mugu was formalized by a Long-billed Curlew screaming insults as it flew away from me. These Curlews were everywhere, appearing to be much more common than the Hudsonian Curlews. They could be easily identified by their deep cinnamon color as they flew, and by their screaming conversation.

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On most days, in the middle of an August week in 1940 I would have been working in "Meet the People," but that Hollywood stage show was closed for a few days while in the process of moving from the Circle Theatre to the Music Box Theatre, both in Hollywood. Leslie and I had scheduled our wedding for early September, but were temporarily and painfully apart, she with her parents and siblings on a visit to relatives in Canada. So, being alone and lonely, I gassed up my Powell motor scooter and took a three-day trip to Point Mugu and Point Hueneme

in Ventura County, just north of Los Angeles, with the intention of banding some shorebirds.

After that, it was back to "Meet the People."

This legitimate musical revue was extremely important to me, for its long run and Actors' Equity minimum salary of \$50.00 a week made it possible for Leslie and me to marry after we had been engaged for a period that had seemed to drag on forever, but was actually a little less than two years. Leslie had graduated from UCLA, but I was still a student there, and prior to being accepted by "Meet the People" for the cast of its second company, my university courses and un dependable singing jobs had made marriage financially impossible.

Leaving the traveling units in the dying days of vaudeville had not meant leaving show business completely. I became a "casual" artist, and for a while even had an agent. He arranged sessions for me at the rate of \$10.00 each. Later in our relationship I discovered that my agent was actually charging the clients \$25.00, of which I was given only \$10.00 — minus his commission of 10% of the \$10.00! Since then, I have worked on my own except for non-exclusive arrangements with several large organizations such as Community Concerts, W. Colston Leigh, the California Association of Public Events and Services, the GATE program (Gifted And Talented Education) of the San Diego City Schools, and Young Audiences, Inc.

Those casual engagements in 1939 and '40 often sent me to one-night variety shows, putting me in company with some of the old-timers who had retired from vaudeville, or from whom vaudeville had retired. The Texas Trio ( Nell, Ann and I ) played a one-day stand at the old Hippodrome Theatre in downtown Los Angeles, and with us on that bill was an elderly black couple who were said to have been the ones who introduced the Cakewalk to the vaudeville stage many, many years before.

The Hippodrome had been the Opera House in a very young Los Angeles, then became a vaudeville house for big-time shows with stellar performers, and finally a small-time venue for elderly performers on the way down and young performers hopefully on the way up. Today there's nothing on the site but a parking lot. A history of the Hippodrome would encapsulate a good bit of Los Angeles history.

On "casual" dates, one man I worked with several times but remember only as "Jimmy," was one of the last of the "comic Dutch" stereotypes. (They were supposed to be German, not Dutch, their name coming from the language "Deutsch." They were sometimes called "Deutsch Comics.") He rendered monologues in a thick pseudo-German dialect. These were old-fashioned humorous tales rather than jokes, not requiring a real "boffola" snapper at the end. One story was about meeting a man who was a champion at spitting:

"He said dot he could shpit t'rough der open door, make it turn der corner und go into der goboon, all mitout touching eider der doorframe or der door. Und he didt! He shpit t'rough der open door, made it turn der corner und go into der goboon all mitout touching eider der doorframe or der door. Und I vas surpriced und pleaced!"

Several more feats were recounted, each one making the raconteur feel "surpriced und pleaced", culminating in the remarkable feat of "shpitting between mine eyes und mine eye-glasses, mitout touching eider der eye or der eye-glasses, but comink a LITTLE bit closer to der eye dan to der eyeglass. Und I vas surpriced und pleaced — but a LITTLE more surpriced than pleaced!"

He also sang a comic song—"Could I Be More Polite?"—in the same sort of accent.

I remember one MC at the old Jonathan Club in Santa Monica—an old trouper who would never let the show die. Once he tried his best to save my act. My act usually included a pretense that my harmonica wouldn't play properly, and this was blamed on "this damp California climate. Yes, I said 'damP!'" Then, while I pounded the instrument against the palm of my hand, would come some folklore in the form of tall tales about the dryness of Texas weather, to which my instrument was said to be accustomed.

"A friend of mine back home had water on the knee, and one day a flock of geese chased him for five miles. Another friend was struck by a drop of water, and it surprised him so that he fainted. We had to throw four buckets of sand in his face to bring him to!"

But this night, when I first started having "trouble" with the harmonica, this MC thought my problem was real, and, quick as a flash, leapt into the breach:

"While old Sam fixes his instrument, I've got a couple of jokes to tell you..."

Some of the old-timers had lots of autobiographical stories to tell, and it was hard sometimes to know how much to believe. One, a portly and jovial gentleman who was not himself a performer but who drove me in his car to some of the Jonathan Club engagements, was a constant stream of conversation all the way out Wilshire Boulevard, and I took almost everything he said with a large grain of salt.

"Just last month I was driving along this very street and when I came to a stop sign I just went on through without stopping. A policeman quite rightly pulled me over, and I said 'Officer, I'm glad you saw that, and I am deeply ashamed of myself. I fully deserve a ticket. When you finish with me here, I'm going to go around the block and come back this same way, and prove

to myself that I CAN stop at that stop sign.' The policeman said this was just a warning, and waved me on, and I did what I said I'd do; I went around the block and really stopped that time."

A retired insurance man, specializing in insuring people in show business, he had a lot to say about the distinguished clientele he had had in New York City.

"Catherine Cornell, one of Broadway's greatest actresses, was a client of mine, and wouldn't let anyone else handle her insurance." And so on and on, while I uncharitably thought "Yeah, yeah...."

At the club, one of the acts was a young woman dancer whose last name was Cornell. This gentleman asked her if she was related to Catherine Cornell, and she said "Yes: Kitty is my cousin, and we're good friends."

"Well," said my friend, "I used to handle all of Kitty's insurance."

"Why, then" cried the dancer excitedly, "you must be Putzi!"

And Putzi was who he was.

I worked several shows with an old-time blackface performer who pretended to be a preacher. His performance harked from a distant past, and even in 1939 it made some people uncomfortable. Today it would be wholly unacceptable. Instead of a Bible, he had an old telephone directory, which he flourished as he said "Many are called but few shall answer!" He told of Jezebel getting in bad with the King, and the King saying "Throw her down! Throw her down seven times—yea, seven time seven times!" And they threw her down, and some of her fell upon stony ground, and some upon sandy ground" and so on . . .

His closing line came when he said "As Eve said to A-dam..." and began trying to find his text among the many loose pages of his ravaged phone book. "As Eve said to A-dam..." then holding loose pages in each hand, he looked up and said "There oughta be another leaf!"

Television was not then an entertainment medium, but when it became so, many of these retired vaudevillians became active in it. Dick Lane came to be very widely known as an announcer for televised weekly wrestling "contests." He was noted for his vivid expressions such as "Wow! He's hotter than a baker's apron!" When I first met him, however, he was a singing MC with as sweet an Irish tenor voice as one could desire; his "Mother Machree" could wring tears from the eyes of the most jaded audience.

But back to "Meet the People." I got into it through the offices of a good friend, Elm Halpren, a fellow member of the Men's Glee Club at UCLA. He was a trained baritone, and we worked together on several programs in addition to singing in the Glee Club. He sang to my guitar accompaniment, doing offstage music for several numbers in one of the annual UCLA Dance Recitals, and we had parts in the campus production of "Of Thee I Sing." This gave Elm and me ample opportunity to talk together, and to discover that we shared a number of political ideas and ideals.

Elm told me of an organization he worked with occasionally, the Hollywood Theater Alliance, one of whose activities was the providing of musicians to help maintain high spirits on Union picket lines. So I joined up immediately as a volunteer, and sang for and with the picketers at several strikes in various parts of Los Angeles.

(Later, Elm was drafted to fight in World War II, and was killed in action.)

But that wasn't all that the Hollywood Theater Alliance did. The Alliance was headed by a Board of Directors who were actors, directors, playwrights and composers, many of them veterans of the depression-days Federal Theater Project, and all of them dedicated to theater arts as a "source of entertainment and a vital force in cultural and educational advancement." As a prelude to a planned series of straight dramatic productions, they organized a musical revue. This was "Meet the People," and it attained tremendous popularity, "breaking all previous long-run records for any such productions outside of New York City."<sup>1</sup>

The underlying motive for this production was to provide entertainment which would "mirror and illuminate the conditions of the times in which we live, further the principles of democracy and be an expression and clarification of the problems and aspirations of the greatest number of people." Hollywood movies, they said, fell far short of this sort of expression. The opening number was built around the waking-up of "Miss Hollywood" and inviting her to come out and "meet the people."

"Step out: meet the people!

Meet the common man, you'll find him wonderful!

He's not the kind of guy the papers extoll,

But he's a power in the Gallup Poll.

So climb down from your steeple;

Mr. Hoi Polloi is simply marvelous!

Just turn your feelings loose

And let somebody introduce

Comment [SH1]:

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<sup>1</sup> The quotes here are taken from the Program booklet for *Meet the People*.

The People to you!"<sup>2</sup>

After a very successful run of about a year, the Hollywood show was moving on to New York as a Shubert production, and a second Hollywood company was being formed. Auditions were held for the new cast, and the plan was that the two casts would be pooled, half of each going to New York while the other half stayed on in Hollywood. Upon being assured that I would not be sent to New York, I took the audition, and to my amazement and delight, was selected to join the show. (I think they may have chosen me partly because my act was flexible in time and space, being obviously capable of performance "In One" — that is, on the apron in front of the main drop, while scenery was changed behind the drop.)

This show was fully unionized, every cast member belonging to Actor's Equity. There were no stars. Everyone received the standard Equity minimum of \$50.00 a week, and the featured singer or dancer or actor in one number would be in the crowd or the chorus of another.

. Most of the cast were just starting in theater work although some were old professionals. Leon Belasco, one of the latter, had already made a mark as a character actor in the movies. Most went on in theatrical careers after this show had closed, and a good many of them became well known, including, to name a few, Dorothy Dandridge, Jimmy Dodd, Nanette Fabray, Jack Gilford, Elliott Sullivan, Doodles Weaver, and Bob Vanselow .

Aside from the salary, which permitted me the supremely important step of marrying Leslie, the greatest glory in being in this show lay in getting to know some of these wonderful performers, as well as the invisible people backstage. The stage doorman, for instance, was a wounded veteran of the Lincoln Brigade, and was not reticent about recounting his experiences

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<sup>2</sup> Lyrics by Henry Myers, music by Jay Gorney.

in Spain. Songs and sketches were written by some who had made their names long before; much of the music was by Jay Gorney, who had written the music for the Great Depression's greatest song, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime," and Eddie Eliscu, well known for "Flying Down to Rio," "Great Day," "More Than You Know," "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree," "Without a Song."

Lyrics and sketches were provided by equally well-known writers such as Henry Myers and Mortie Offner, while Danny Dare was dance director. Most of these creative people were founders and Board members of the Hollywood Theater Alliance.

To top it off, the front drop had been designed by Milt Gross, who also designed the cover of the printed program..

I was a trial to Danny Dare, whose job it was to make me bear at least some resemblance to a hooper in some of the production numbers.

"All right, kids" he'd say in rehearsal, "now you just fill in with a regular time-step."

"But Danny, I don't know what a time-step is!" And he'd sigh, and get one of the real dancers to show me. I learned what it was supposed to be, but never learned to do it properly.

"Two left feet" doesn't begin to describe my terpsichorean ineptitude. I truly believe that I am lacking in a basic kinesthetic sense, not knowing where my feet are unless I'm looking at them— and my feet are so large that misplacing them can be catastrophic. One number required a few bars of a simple tap routine, and Danny had to get me off to the side with a tutor, doing it over and over. (Now an old man well into his 80s, I still have this problem in an exacerbated form, and need a cane or walker to get myself around. My doctors have said that I am suffering

from a long-standing case of the painless variety of “peripheral polyneuropathy,” perhaps originating in a bad allergic reaction to diphtheria antitoxin when I was about 12 years old.)

It all worked out, as long as I stayed in the back row of the chorus. And where I had to be visible, as in the two-man Cannibal Sketch, the dance routine was simplified to the point where even I could get through it.

Rehearsals were long and arduous, and on the night before the opening, we were at it until 2:00 am. We were so tired that everyone gloomily predicted a flop for the opening matinee, but we all perked up at show time, and did an excellent performance. Then we collapsed again, and knew for sure that we could never get through the evening performance. Once again, however, new energy flowed in from somewhere; we not only put on a fine show — even Danny Dare said so — but had strength enough left for a noisy, long-lasting backstage party afterward.

Casting assignments were quite flexible. At one time or another during the ten-month run of the Second Company, in addition to my solo performance of folksongs, I appeared in at least eight of the musical production numbers and in four of the sketches.

One sketch, adapted from a piece by Mike Quinn in *The Daily Worker*, had me as a young stone-age cannibal arguing with his father (played sometimes by Elliott Sullivan and sometimes by Dave Kerwin) about whether people should be eaten or not.

"Don't listen to those alien ideas from across the river," advised the father; "people always have eaten each other, and they always will. It's human nature, and you can't change human nature. If skulls lost their value, civilization would collapse. Listen, son — you'll find out soon enough that there's only one 'ism' that's any good, and that's 'CANNIBALISM'! Now forget about it, son; let's go out and have a little somebody to eat." Then we "trucked" off the stage, singing a

parody on the theme song of the show — "Step out, eat the people; Eat the common man, you'll find him wonderful...!"

The show was strongly pro-union, and in one three-person skit I sometimes played the part of a long-suffering husband. A man and woman are seated on a couch in passionate embrace. The man is worried about the possible appearance of his paramour's husband, but the woman assures him that they have an understanding, that there is nothing to worry about. Sure enough, the husband (me) comes in but says nothing except to ask about supper, to which the wife airily replies, without removing herself from the embrace of the Other Man, that she "hasn't had time to fix anything but that there's lots of stuff in the refrigerator." The husband goes out uncomplainingly, only to return a moment later with a coat over his arm. He taps the other man on the shoulder, asks him if this is his coat, and upon receiving an affirmative reply, takes out a pistol and shoots him. Then he turns to the audience and holds up the coat, saying simply "No Union Label!"

Following that was a production number, with the chorus girls singing

"A Union Label  
On your rabbit or sable  
Make a gal who's under par  
Toddle like a model out of Harper's Bazaar.  
Though your apparel  
May be only a barrel,  
If it's unionized, Baby, it will do!

True! True!"<sup>3</sup>

One of my favorite musical numbers was "Let's Steal a Tune From Offenbach," where I played the part of Chopin's ghost, and didn't have to dance. A lot of popular music at that time was based on classical themes; Everybody was singing "Moon Love," which was based on Tchaikovsky's "Symphony No. 5 in E". This skit had the ghosts of Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Beethoven, Debussy and Ravel picketing the grave of Offenbach; I was Beethoven.. A young composer --"a composer of other composers' music" — comes in with his sweetheart, and sings his worries about "what song can I steal to reveal how I feel?" until we ghosts, invisible to him, inspire him to steal a tune from Offenbach, for "some of our best friends are Offenbachs". Our chant ("Offenbach is dead, dead and buried; Offenbach is dead, cemeteried, etc.") is effective, and the young composer sings

"Let's steal a tune from Offenbach.  
Set 'moon' and 'June' to Offenbach.  
I'm sure he'll think there's nothing wrong  
In letting lovers use his song.  
For love's sweet sake we'll take  
A melody from Offenbach."<sup>4</sup>

Typical of the show's social outlook was "The Same Old South:"

"Grandpa sailed a river steamer  
Up and down the Mississippi shore.  
He knew every nook and every southern cranny,

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<sup>3</sup> Lyrics by Henry Myers, music by Jay Gorney

And if he didn't know, he simply asked his granny.

Grandpa sailed to his Redeemer,

Outward-bound in 1884.

But it might be worthwhile

To bring him to earth while

We look at the southland once more.

And Grandpa would admit,

It ain't changed a goddam bit!

It's the Same Old South.

It's a regular children's heaven;

Why, they don't start to work till they're seven!

It's the same old South.

Oh honey. hush my mouth;

Let the Northerners keep Niagara;

We will stick to our southern pellagra!

It's the same old South.

Why he bloodhounds that once chased Liza

Now chase the poor C.I.O. organizer;

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<sup>4</sup> Lyrics by Henry Myers, music by Jay Gorney, based on Offenbach's "Orpheus."

It's the same old south!"<sup>5</sup>

This was very well sung and danced by Buddy Pepper and Glenn Turnbull in front of a backdrop depicting a muddy street in a sleepy southern town, dominated by a motion picture theater showing "Gone With the Wind."

I had fun and worked hard in the chorus of "Elmer's Wedding Day," a sprightly production number by Sid Kuller and Ray Golden, depicting a "hillbilly" rural wedding. The song was set to an old Yiddish tune, "Ot Azoy Neyt a Schneider," and I will always remember the part played by the multi-talented Leon Belasco. He was "the town Musician," and with his violin played a solo section in the best Klezmer style. The chorus introduced him by singing (to Part A of the melody)

"Here comes Zeke, the town musician;

He gets seven bucks to play,

Minus ten percent commission

This is Elmer's wedding day!"

I had the role of Elmer's father, and for me the chorus sang, to the B part of the melody:

"Elmer's Pa is looking cute;

You can tell that at a glance,

'Cause he's got a brand new suit

With an extra pair of pants!"<sup>6</sup>

And on that last line I turned my back to the audience, revealing the extra pair of pants with its waist end tucked down into my belt while the legs flopped loosely like long coat-tails. (You

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<sup>5</sup> Lyrics by Edward Eliscu, music by Jay Gorney

think that was easy for a non-dancing klutz like me? I think I sweated more over this simple bit of business than over anything else in the show. I had to walk bouncingly across the stage, arrive at the right spot when the song said I should be there, turn my back to the audience and flip up my "coat-tail" pants just as the chorus sang the word "pants," then fade naturally into the crowd.)

This whole show was a new experience for me: working in the same theater night after night, with a steady core of cast members, the same offstage directors, and always an enthusiastic audience. The whole thing was tremendously stimulating, but I didn't get as much out of it as I could have, for all my thoughts were on our approaching wedding.

Leslie at last returned from her trip to Canada, and the wedding for which we had waited so impatiently was held at her parents' home in Inglewood. It was an outdoor affair, in a garden decorated with myriad begonias of every imaginable kind and color (except blue.) These were provided by Leslie Woodruff, a young local nurseryman who specialized in begonias.. (Shortly after the wedding, he embarked on a trip to the Amazon, where, according to one report, there was a wild begonia of that elusive blue color.) For the wedding music, Homer Simmons composed a new string quartet with piano, and hired a new violist to replace Leslie. Her father, though in a wheelchair and speaking with difficulty because of a stroke, gave her away without a hitch. Leslie's old high-school friend, Ethel Louise Fuller, was the maid of honor, and Jimmie Fitch, a friend from "Meet the People," was my best man.

The ceremony over, we retired to our Hollywood apartment for an early supper, then hurried to the Music Box Theater for the evening show. After the finale, the cast assembled on the stage and presented us with a wedding gift. The presentation speech was made by Leon

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<sup>6</sup> Lyrics by Sid Kuller and Ray Golden, music traditional ("Ot Azoy Neyt a Schneider.")

Belasco, who did not utter a single vocal sound; he held behind his back a bird-call "squeaker," with which he imitated the words being shaped, but not spoken, by his mobile mouth. We understood every squeak.

I was still a student at UCLA, and should have graduated in June after our September wedding . But at the last minute it was revealed that I was still not eligible for graduation, needing one more course. My cap and gown had already been rented by then, and we decided not to bother my Mom and Dad about it, but to let them go on thinking that everything was all right. They attended the commencement exercises, at which the names of students were not called out. In lieu of diplomas, blank rolls of paper were handed to the capped-and-gowned seniors crossing the stage. These rolls were later, of course, replaced by genuine diplomas. I took mine, knowing that the diploma was not to follow. Thus my name was not on the printed program, but Mom and Dad remarked fondly on how typical this was of my way of not getting things done. My genuine graduation didn't occur until the end of the following Summer Session, but Mom and Dad never did find that out,

The regular schedule of "Meet the People" made it fairly simple to schedule my courses at UCLA. The only time I missed anything at the theater was on the day they took photographs for the printed program. This program had my name in it many times, but no photo. "Trust old Sam to miss out on everything!" my folks said.

Later, after and Leslie and I were married and "Meet the People" had closed, I was more active than ever in seeking part-time casual jobs. One was at a birthday party for the young daughter of Lou Holtz, one of the best known of the old vaudevillians. Mr. Holtz himself joined the party for a few minutes, and was pleasant and entertaining, but I was most impressed with the

charm and poise of the ten-year old girl whose party this was. Apparently sensing that I was feeling a little uncomfortable, (I didn't know just when I was supposed to start singing), she took me under her wing with rare tact and understanding.

Leslie was pregnant then, and we were having long discussions as to what to name the baby. We decided we could do no better than to name her for that kind young Miss Holtz, and that if our child turned out to be a girl she would be named "Leanne."

She WAS a girl — a beautiful baby — and Leanne Leslie is her name. We wrote to young Miss Holtz and thanked her for the use of her name, and she responded with a very nice letter, the gift of a baby blanket, and the news that HER name was spelled the French way— "Liane." We nevertheless kept the "Leanne" spelling for our wonderful daughter, who is now a Full Professor of Linguistics at U. C. Berkeley, with a specialty in American Indian languages, and is the Chair of the Linguistics Department. .

When "Meet the People" closed, I worked for a while as a riveter at the Lockheed Aircraft plant in Burbank, still doing casual musical jobs at night and on weekends, before getting a much better (but lower-paying) job as Director of the Desert Museum in Palm Springs. Although known to be a temporary position, awaiting the return of the previous Director from the armed forces, this marked a great change in my life, second only to marrying Leslie. Until that time I had been a show-business person with an interest in natural history; from then on, I was a natural history professional with an interest in show business.

But the important thing was — my dear Leslie had become my wife, and my life had begun in earnest.

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A NATURALIST IN SHOW BUSINESS  
Chapter 15

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4,629 words

## CHAPTER 16-- WILD ORCHIDS AND PALM SPRINGS

## FROM THE JOURNAL

*Epipactis gigantea*

## STREAM ORCHIS

Palm Springs, California; Fern Canyon, just north of  
the lower end of Tahquitz Canyon.

April 17, 1942

These flowers were in full bloom, and were not uncommon right  
next to the flowing stream. They apparently live next to streams  
throughout California, even here on the desert side of the mountains.

•••••

"Mr. Hinton! Mr. Hinton! What's the bird with the little white trousers?"

Mrs. Fish was one of the regular visitors—and contributors—to the little Palm Springs Desert Museum. She always had a question to ask me, and was always grateful for my attempts to answer. (In this case, the answer, arrived at after some discussion, was "It's probably a Black Phoebe.")

This is one of the many delights of being a professional naturalist; people really want to know about things you love, and you are privileged to help them.

Those who work in public museums, whether specializing in art, history, or science, are usually deeply imbued with the love of what is represented, and to many of them, expounding

upon their subjects to an interested audience is what life is all about. While traveling with the Major Bowes units, wherever time allowed and the local telephone directory showed the presence of one of these institutions, I paid a visit, and was always welcomed.

I kept no complete record of all the museums and aquariums and zoos encountered in these travels, but can mention at least a few of them.

In Illinois there was the Municipal Zoo in Bloomington, and the State Museum of Natural History and Art in Springfield, and an attractive Art Center in Decatur. Layoffs in Chicago gave me time to visit the Field Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Science and Industry, the Shedd Aquarium, and the Adler Planetarium, while short train or trolley rides gave access to the wonderful Brookfield Zoo and the surprisingly "outdoorsy" Trailside Museum of Natural History at River Forest.

Evansville, Indiana, was the home of the Evansville Museum of Arts and Science; Columbus, Ohio, could boast of its Ohio State Museum. The Fairbanks Museum was in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, New York.

At practically all of these I was allowed to meet and at least shake hands with staff members. The only event I can remember that even approached a rebuff was at the Field Museum in Chicago, where a guard brusquely informed me that I was NOT permitted to draw pictures of the great bronze statues of Africans by Malvina Hoffman. He was right, of course; copyright rules required that prohibition, but the guard could have been a little nicer about it... And a few minutes after that, my hurt feelings were soothed by as warm a welcome as could be imagined from the leading scientist of that museum, Dr. Karl P. Schmidt, herpetologist.

By 1941, Leslie and I were married and had a little girl. I had graduated from UCLA, and the show "Meet The People" had closed. I was working part-time as a clerk in the hardware

department of a Sears-Roebuck store on Pico Boulevard in Los Angeles, and full time as a riveter in the Lockheed Aircraft plant in Burbank. That full-time job was beginning to pall. It was interesting to help build a special version of the Lockheed Lightning—the P-38 fighter plane—expressly made for sale to the United Kingdom, but it was assembly-line work, making it difficult to see any sort of big picture. And the noise was an ever-present and literal headache. My leadman, C. J. Sortland, was instructive and patient, and even forgave my terrible *faux pas* when he assigned to me the preparation of a special "edition" of the airplane, for static tests. This was to have been a perfect structure, and I was flattered to be told to assemble the central web on the jig where I worked. Wanting to do as professional a job as possible, I went to the tool crib and got a new, sharp drill. I'm sure I asked for a No. 16 high-speed drill, but they gave me a No. 12, and my eye was not sufficiently alert to see the difference. So I drilled all the holes, then got the rivets to put in them, and was horrified to see the first rivet drop straight through, head and all! The holes were far too big.

Mr. Sortland had that web scrapped, then made me feel a little better by assigning me to do another one, which came out perfectly. Although patient and sympathetic, he was not favorably impressed by my prowess at playing tunes on the air-powered drill. (The farther you depress the trigger, the higher the whine. Less than an octave range, but lots of fun!)

It had always appeared to me that working in a natural history institution was the best way in the world to make a living. The little Palm Springs Desert Museum needed a Curator to fill in for their permanent Curator, who had been gone into the military service., and Dr. Cowles, my chief professor at UCLA, recommended me for the job. When I applied, one requirement was that the Curator have a car. Leslie and I not only didn't have a car, neither of us had ever learned to drive, and my little motor scooter provided all the transport we needed around Los Angeles.

Dad had given me a few driving lessons, but he was an impatient teacher and I was a slow learner. Nevertheless, with a little more instruction, I learned enough to get a driver's license, and Leslie and I spent our meager savings in buying an old Ford from my older sister, Mary Jo Gnagy. I was able to drive it to Palm Springs for the interview with the Board, and got the job.

Leslie, too, learned to drive at that time, and immediately became, and has remained, a better driver than I.

My appointment as temporary Curator (in practice, executive director) of the Palm Springs Desert Museum in 1941 was like a ticket to heaven; I now had the incredible good fortune to be numbered among that favored few. I was a professional naturalist!

The Palm Springs Desert Museum today is housed in its own magnificent building, and is as much concerned with the fine arts as with the natural sciences. In 1940, though, it occupied only one room in the new Wellwood Murray Memorial Library, and was primarily devoted to desert natural science and anthropology.. The only non-public work space was in a tiny closet-like hallway leading to the main Library. The Museum room had been designed as a children's library, but the Library found itself with insufficient funds to develop it as such, and rented it to the Desert Museum. One fortunate aspect lay in our getting to know the librarian, Dorothy Bear, who immediately became a good friend and later shared a house with Leslie and Leanne and me out near El Mirador Hotel.

All in all, while the Palm Springs Museum job meant a great reduction in pay, it couldn't have come at a better time, and Leslie, as delighted as I was, was her usual supportive self. So late in the fall of 1941, Leslie, our daughter Leanne, (only a few weeks old), and I moved to Palm Springs.

Think of it! I was the luckiest person in this whole world! Being paid \$40.00 a week just for running a little museum, designing and constructing its exhibits, writing a weekly column for the *Desert Sun*, giving regular public lectures, conducting weekly field trips, and in general being considered a source of information about the natural world of the California Deserts! The only drawback was that it was a temporary job, available to me only until the permanent curator, Lloyd Mason Smith, returned to civilian life.

And what a natural world I was to interpret! I had long since decided that my working life would ideally be spent either in the desert or on the seashore, and the more I saw of the desert, the more fascinating it became. I was familiar with it through Dr. Cowles's teaching and from field trips with him, as well as many private field-trips with Bob Sanders and Woody Woodall and other UCLA compadres. We had done "road-running" trips in every part of the California deserts— the Mojave and Coachella and Colorado Deserts— cruising roads at night and stopping frequently to capture the snakes and lizards enjoying the road's retention of the day's warmth. We also picked up or at least recorded the identity of "DOR." (Dead On Road) specimens. Everywhere in the desert there were lots and lots of my beloved reptiles, myriad birds, and an extremely varied and accessible flora.

Leslie and I were lucky in being allowed temporary use of a low-rent cottage across the street from the Museum, on the grounds owned by Dr. Florilla White, a Palm Springs medical pioneer who had come there as a colleague of Dr. Welwood Murray way back before World War I. This area and its several cottages, one of them lived in by Dr. White herself, was right smack in the middle of downtown Palm Springs, and has long since disappeared to be replaced by offices and a shopping mall.

In the southeast corner of Dr. White's property was an undeveloped hot spring, which was later diverted to become part of the supply to the world-famous spa on Cahuilla Indian land across the street to the east. At that time, the spring was simply a hole on the ground, filled with bubbling warm water and covered with a large piece of plywood. To my delight, lifting the plywood disclosed on the edges of the hole a veritable army of cockroaches, and I was able to capture enough to make excellent dinners for my captive lizards at the Museum. But after a few such forays, my lizards had to be fed from some other source, for Leslie discovered that every time I lifted the plywood, hundreds of displaced roaches invaded our kitchen. After that, the reptiles had to make do with mealworms, which were cultured in the Museum itself.

The Museum was financed and overseen by a Board of Directors or Trustees, a dedicated body of desert enthusiasts who were always a joy to work with. Some unpleasant aspects to this job later manifested themselves, but the Board members were in no way responsible. I've heard from various sources that small museums can often be hotbeds of discontent, with Boards of Directors forming competing groups of partisanship and resentment. The Board at the Palm Springs Desert Museum was never like that at all.

There was one tense time, however, a couple of months after I had been hired. Dr. Cowles was a member of the Museum Advisory Board, and was asked by the Board of Directors to come to Palm Springs for a discussion. I was not invited, for the subject was me.

The Board was not satisfied with my work.

After Dr. Cowles conferred with them and then with me, it was obvious that the problem was one of communication; the Board simply didn't know what I was doing.

At Dr. Cowles's suggestion, I immediately prepared a formal report on Museum activities, and received enthusiastic commendation from most of the individual Board members, plus a

couple of shy apologies. After that, I wrote a report every month, and was invited to attend the regular Board meetings to discuss our program. There was no more difficulty of that sort. I did learn a valuable lesson in dealing with such governing bodies; keep 'em informed and keep 'em busy!

President of the Board was Madeleine Cook. Although confined to a wheelchair, Miss Cook ("Madge") took her presidency very seriously, and kept a close watch on the Museum and its new Curator. The Museum closed at 5:00 PM on weekdays, and Madge always made a point of calling me on the phone at five minutes past five, to discuss the affairs of the day. She was strongly supportive, but she did object to the presence of a baby in the Museum, even during closed hours. A great many of those closed hours were spent in exhibit preparation, and Madge's decree meant that from then on, Leslie had to stay at home with Leanne, our baby. Leslie is ten times the artist I am, and the exhibits would have been much better if she had had more freedom to work with me. Still, we muddled through.

Fortunately this was not a difficult Board to work with. In addition to the active Board of Directors, there was an equally-active Board of Advisors; I could never keep straight who was in which category. Christina Lillian of nearby Cathedral City was a pleasant source of information about local history and desert geography. H. Earl Hoover (yes, of Hoover Vacuum Cleaners) was a Trustee who was knowledgeable about finance, and always supportive. Albert Frey, Swiss-born AIA Architect, was a Board of Trustees member (later President) and was already beginning to garner some of the architectural fame that accrued to him. There were also many active supporters who were not then on either Board, and they and the Board members have merged in my mind as an undifferentiated assemblage of wonderful people. They included Carl Lykken, Tom Slavens, Francis Crocker, Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Kocher, Edwin F. Leigh, and Horace

Pennery. Also never to be forgotten were Sally and Culver Nichols; photographer and wise advisor Onas Ward and his wife Grace; Pat and Chester "Cactus Slim" Moorton, he a former circus contortionist and now a nurseryman and desert horticulturist; Frank Bogert, (brother of herpetologist Chuck Bogert, whom I had known at UCLA), who was later to become the Mayor of Palm Springs; Phil Boyd, also to become Mayor and later one of my remote bosses as a member of the Board of Regents of the University of California. Among the Advisors who didn't live in Palm Springs were entomologist Phil Timberlake at the University of California's Citrus Experiment Station (now the University of California, Riverside), and naturalist Edmund C. Jaeger at Riverside City College.

These fine people gave me all sorts of needed advice, and did all the fund-raising; I was never required to assist directly in that all-important activity. At our monthly meetings, I always had some sort of proposal that would require funding, and the Board always took my suggestions seriously, and frequently acted on them.

The tolerance of this Board even survived a period in which plans were started for the Tramway at Chino Canyon, with cable cars running up to near the summit of 10,900-foot Mt. San Jacinto. I was publicly and vociferously opposed to the plan, which called for what I saw as a violation of the wilderness status of the area, while several of the Board members were actively involved in its planning and financing. No Board member ever suggested that I keep my misgivings to myself.

(After the war, the Tramway was built, and I must admit that a trip on it is a truly delightful experience. And, contrary to my forebodings, it has not had much in the way of deleterious effects on the environment.)

The schedule at the Museum was not an easy one. After several experiments, we finally settled on having the Museum open to the public from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Tuesday through Saturday, except for an hour at noon; we were also open from 1:00 to 5:00 PM on Sundays, and 7:00 to 9:00 PM on Wednesday nights. We were closed on Mondays.

On Mondays, I led one or two field trips; if there were two, they were both to the same location, so that each museum member would have a better chance of getting to one or another of them. At first, we arranged to have our field-trippers bring their own cars, and would proceed in caravan to such wonderful spots as Palm Canyon, Cathedral Canyon, and Thousand Palms. After we entered World War II, gasoline rationing dictated that most field trips be contained within walking distance. The alluvial fan of Tahquitz Canyon and its near neighbor Fern Canyon were easily accessible on foot, and they were favorite spots for guided walking tours. Some excellent accessible sites were no more than vacant lots within the urban area; in the desert, these are often full of interesting plants and lizards, with footprints of kangaroo rats and other fascinating creatures showing in the sandy patches.

There was also an evening lecture series. A given subject was announced and discussed once or twice each month. I think I learned nearly as much from preparing these lectures as I had from my college education, and they were a lot of fun for me. They were often on general biological subjects with examples chosen from among desert species. General subjects included "Camouflage In Nature," "The Vertebrate Eye," "Bird Flight," "Treatment of Snakebite," "Basic Ecology." There were also some more desert-specific topics such as "The Lizards of Palm Springs," "Birds of the Desert," "The Desert 20,000 Years Ago," "Cahuilla Culture a Hundred Years Ago," "The Roadrunner," "The Geology of the San Jacinto Mountains." Occasionally we had a guest lecturer. Bert Harwell, Ranger-Naturalist of Yosemite, talked about and imitated bird

song; Edmund C. Jaeger told us about the history of Palm Springs; John Hilton recounted some of the adventures of a desert landscape artist; Dr. Harry Hoijer of UCLA lectured on American Indian languages. But with the travel restrictions imposed by World War II, these guest appearances became rare, and I was happy to do most of the lectures myself.

In addition I wrote and illustrated a weekly column on desert life for *The Desert Sun* newspaper. This feature, which had been started by Lloyd Mason Smith, my predecessor at the Museum, was called "Hammada", an Arabic word adopted by international geographers, referring to "a rocky desert area."

We had some excellent glass-fronted museum cases, and these were kept filled with rotating exhibits. One such display was on insects of the desert, and the pinned specimens were augmented with enlarged wood-and-plaster models of several kinds of insects. I was especially proud of an eighteen-inch dragon fly model, with wings of wire and Cellophane.. Leslie had somehow managed to save enough money to buy me a birthday present— a Moto-Tool from Sears-Roebuck which helped tremendously in the carving of such models.

Leslie and I built a number of exhibits, often doing all but the final installation at home. They were all pretty small, for the display cases were not very big..

Soon after the United States entered World War II, the Navy took over the San Diego Natural History Museum, and we arranged with its Director, Dr. Clinton G. Abbott, to borrow some of their material that had to be moved out. These were small (about 6 x 3 x 3 feet) habitat groups of reptiles, birds, and mammals, all of which had been prepared about 10 years earlier with funds from the national Works Progress Administration, better known simply as "The WPA". I made several trips to San Diego, and selected about 20 of these cases, showing various desert habitats and their inhabitants, rented a truck to carry them over to Palm Springs, and set

them up in the Museum. Stacked two or three high, they completely filled our exhibition space, except for the row of cages containing live reptiles, and from then on there was very little room for new exhibits.

The Museum closed for the summers, and I had to find other ways of making a living during that time. Soon after we had entered the war I had tried to enlist in the Navy, but didn't pass the physical exam. Later, my draft number came up, and again I was rejected, with the 4-F classification. I still felt that my summer job should be somehow connected to the war effort.

El Mirador Hotel became Torney General Hospital, U.S. Army. This required a lot of construction, including the building of temporary wards, and I signed on as a carpenter for the summer.

The pay was great, but this was a hot way to spend a desert summer. I was put to laying flooring for the new wards, which was done before any sort of roof or other shade was erected. There was one fellow-worker, an obese carpenter who suffered vociferously from the heat. One afternoon he went over to a nail keg to fill his apron pockets. The keg was standing in the open sunlight, and its contents were much too hot to touch. Not being aware of this, the carpenter recklessly thrust his hand down among the hot nails, only to jerk it back instantly, scattering nails in every direction.

"That's the last goddam straw!" he howled. "I quit this job right now!"

"But Pete," somebody warned him, "you can't quit; this job is frozen."

"Frozen my ass! I'll show you whether its frozen or not!" And somehow, he DID quit.

I too quit that job a little later. I was fired. I got too smarty with the boss. My technique in laying flooring, learned from one of the more seasoned carpenters, was to lay pieces of flooring and nail them in place, forming the new floor from left to right, until I came near the end. Then

I would skip one segment, and firmly butt a piece against the end of the floor, not nailing it down, and leaving a gap between the completed portion on the left and the end of the right-hand piece. To fill that gap, a new piece could be inserted with one end against the nailed-down left-hand piece, and its other end UNDER the end piece. With a pencil, the end of the fill-in piece would be marked against the overlying end piece; the new piece was then removed and sawed off on the marked line. The pencil mark was obviously a fraction of an inch beyond the end of the pattern piece, and I made my handsaw cut on the right edge of the mark, leaving the pencil line itself on the new piece.

The boss watched this operation and said: "You oughtta cut right down the middle of your pencil mark. My Daddy was a carpenter, and he used to make me saw a line, then he had to be able to see the pencil mark on BOTH pieces."

I thought he was kidding, as it's obvious that a saw kerf is wider than a pencil line, and unwisely responded in a way that I thought was joining in a joke session.

"I couldn't do that, 'cause my Daddy is a draftsman, and he taught me to always keep my pencil sharp."

The boss didn't laugh, but gave me a long level gaze, and left without saying anything more. When I signed out at quitting time I was handed my pay to date, and told not to come back. ( To be honest, this termination may have been at least partly due to the fact that I was a pretty poor excuse for a carpenter.)

With my 4-F classification, active military service was quite out of my reach. Still convinced that I should be working full time in some sort of defense work, and needing a job, I was pleased when Torney Hospital hired me as a sign-painter in spite of my failure there as a carpenter. For a while, that was a full-time job. But when it came out that I had completed a

parasitology course at UCLA, the Hospital gave me a position as a civilian lab technician with a specialty in that subject. This job continued into the fall and winter, and the Museum Board gave me permission to take it as a second full-time position, on top of the curatorship of the Museum. That was when Professor T. D. A. Cockerell and his wife Wilmatte came to the Museum to run it during its open hours, while I continued all the evening and off-site operations.

This began my very first experience of trying to work with someone who was genuinely opposed to me. This was not the Professor, but his wife. My understanding had been that the Cockerells were there to assist me, while Mrs. Cockerell understood that I was HER assistant. When I endeavored to have my own way in some minor detail of she conceived a violent and permanent dislike for me and for all my works.

At one meeting with the Board of Directors, I requested funds to hire Bargylla Rateaver, a UCLA graduate student in botany, on a part-time basis. This was to update and add to the Museum's small herbarium collection; Bargylla was in the desert on a research project, and would do this extra work for a mere pittance. The Board granted \$75.00 for the purpose. Prof. Cockerell had been taken ill, and Mrs. Cockerell had accompanied him to San Bernardino for medical treatment, so they were not present at this meeting. She was formally notified of the Board's decision and of Bargylla's pending activities, but nevertheless conceived the unshakable notion that I was putting something over on her. She accused me of having altered the minutes of the meeting, and refused to let Bargylla into the Museum. Bargylla was so embarrassed that she didn't want me to take this up with the Board. That \$75.00 was never spent, and the herbarium was never augmented..

Professor Cockerell tried to be a peacemaker, in unobtrusive ways that his wife didn't know about. She would rail at me for some shortcoming, real or imagined, or sometimes leave

vituperative notes for me. Then that evening the Professor would telephone me at the museum or at home.

He would say something like "Hinton, I've just found an interesting paper describing the taking and naming of the first Grizzly Bear by Lewis and Clark. Would you like to hear about it?" and he would read excerpts from the article. There was never any apology, or any mention of the day's unpleasantness; just a getting-together with a fellow naturalist.

At one point Mrs. Cockerell verbally castigated me for not taking proper care of our living Gila Monster, she insisting that eggs were not a proper food for a reptile. I flatly refused to let her have a key to the cage (she was quite absent-minded about locking up), and she said "Very well! I shall write to Mr. Perkins at the San Diego Zoo, and HE will tell me what should be done." That was all right with me; much of what I knew about Gila Monsters I had learned from Cy Perkins, who headed up the great reptile house at the Zoo.

A few weeks later I was in San Diego, and of course went to the Zoo to see Cy.

"Hey," he said, "What's going on in Palm Springs? I got an angry letter from Mrs. Cockerell, demanding information about feeding Gila Monsters. Then a day or two later I get a letter from the Professor, telling me all about the botanist who first described the Creosote Bush. What's it all about?"

Apparently, Professor Cockerell tried to follow up every one of his wife's contacts with a placatory communication.

During this difficult period the Presidency of the Desert Museum Board had devolved upon architect Albert Frey, who remained a dear friend until his death (at 95) in 1998, and it was primarily his support that made Leslie and me willing to continue trying to cope.

My boss at the hospital was a pathologist, Lt. Col. Hans Smetana. (Yes, he was related; Bedrich Smetana the composer was his great-uncle. Colonel Smetana himself had been a sergeant in the German army in World War I.) Lots of American soldiers were returning from tropical service, and many were afflicted with various kinds of parasites. The routine microscopic stool examinations fell to me.

One day practically all the specimens contained what appeared to be ova— eggs— of some unknown kind of tapeworm, but try as I would, I couldn't pin it down. A young Army lab tech named Keith Wagnon (he later married Bargylla) was a friend of mine, and I showed him a slide full of these ova. A trained botanist, well on his way to a PhD when drafted, he recognized them immediately.

"Those are stone cells from pears!" he told me, and a little checking up showed that fresh pears had been handed out at the mess hall. There was no helminth epidemic.

There was always a more pressing need for blood work than for parasitological examination, and Col. Smetana had me instructed in that field too. Soon most of my time was spent in gathering blood samples and running routine blood-counts on them.

Equipment in the laboratory was meager, to say the least, and pipettes of blood samples for red and white cell counts had to be shaken by hand. We all got pretty good at counting cells on a slide under the microscope while using our left hands to shake up the two pipettes (one for counting red cells, one for white cells) for the next blood count. The counting of the cells under the microscope was done by two's, usually subvocally, but I remember that if someone told a joke, laughter would be expressed by chuckling "Twenty-two, twenty-four, twenty-six, twenty-eight...."

One ward had a number of Italian prisoners of war. They were not isolated, but were mixed in with some American GI's, who cheerfully set about teaching the prisoners the rudiments of the English language. As is usual in such situations, the words taught did not necessarily mean what the learners thought they did. One patient smilingly greeted me with his new-found command of our language:

"Allo!" he said, "You blood-suckin' bastard!"

My sister, Mary Jo Gnagy, had settled with her and Jon's two kids, Polly and Steve, in Palm Springs, and Mary Jo too got a job in the lab at Torney Hospital. She became an expert at making serial sections, either wax-imbedded or frozen, with the microtome. She was also good at sharpening the microtome blade.

Folk music was by no means forgotten during this period. In off-hours I often sang for patients at Torney Hospital, and occasionally joined as paid guest artist with the various touring groups that visited there. These groups often consisted of the stars and technicians of some popular radio show, broadcasting each week from a different military establishment. In this way I performed with the Bob Hope Show and with Kay Kayser's College of Musical Knowledge. And Leslie and I did some local lecture-recitals for the Woman's Club and other organizations. She sang with me and played the violin, but soon gave in to the fact that she didn't enjoy public performance, and thereafter kept most of her music at home, just for fun.

One of my professors at UCLA had been Dr. Martin Johnson, a marine biologist from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, a research facility of the University of California. He had visited UCLA to teach a single course in intertidal marine biology, and I had been very much attracted to the subject. When the war started, he and many other Scripps scientists became part of the University of California Division of War Research (UCDWR). He

suggested that UCDWR might be able to use me as an illustrator and writer, and UCDWR acceded. In 1944 I joined the organization in a temporary position, due to end when the War did, This job turned out to be the beginning of my 36 years as an employee of the University of California.

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5,316 words

CHAPTER 17--**BELL BARNACLES AND UCDWR**

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Balanus tintinnabulum*

BELL BARNACLE

Salton Sea, Imperial County, California

May 16-17, 1944

Identification of this species is not certain; the barnacles have recently appeared here in the Salton Sea, presumably brought here from the Pacific Coast as larvae traveling inside the hollow pontoons of military sea planes. Dr. Martin Johnson of the University of California is doing a research project on them, and he has made this tentative identification, although the Salton Sea specimens are much smaller and less colorful than their Pacific counterparts.

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Dr. Johnson came to the Palm Springs Desert Museum and asked me to be his guide to the Salton Sea, driving his car, with his gas-ration coupons. The work he was doing was classified as part of the war effort, and as I had no clearance, he couldn't tell me much about it, but he did explain a lot about the organization for which he was working. This was the University of

California Division of War Research (UCDWR), which had begun operating as a contractor with the federal Office of Scientific Research and Development under the auspices of the National Defense Research Committee, and working as part of the U. S. Navy Department. He said that most of the staff at the University's Scripps Institution of Oceanography (where he was a permanent staff member) were now working at UCDWR, all doing research that was applicable to naval warfare. He also said that recruitment was in progress to augment a department of publications, and that if I wanted to work for them as an artist and writer, he would give me a good recommendation.

Several years earlier, he had taught a course in Intertidal Biology at UCLA, which I had found fascinating .At the time of his visit to Palm Springs, I was still employed as Curator of the Desert Museum there, but that job was beginning to look less and less secure, mainly because of the enmity of the woman volunteer who was charged with maintaining the Museum's open hours while I worked behind the scenes.. Also, the previous Curator, Lloyd Mason Smith, was due to return from the armed forces sometime soon to reclaim his job. Therefore, I had no misgivings about tendering my resignation there.

I also had another full-time job as a civilian lab technician at the Army's Torney General Hospital, but my boss, Col. Smetana, said he would not stand in the way of my leaving there — especially as the proposed salary of \$225 a month was far more than I could hope to attain at the hospital. So in June of 1944 I happily applied for the new job, and was accepted.

The housing crunch in San Diego was extreme, and we couldn't find a place for Leslie and Leanne and me. We finally located a single room for me alone in a home on Pt. Loma, and I

stayed there and took my required courses at the Navy Sound School while Leslie and Leanne stayed with Leslie's family in Inglewood. Just about the time I finished the Sound School courses, we were given the opportunity to occupy a little one-room shack in the middle of the poinsettia fields on the outskirts of Encinitas, about 18 miles north of my place of work.. This house belonged to our good friends John and Priscilla Chaffee of Palm Springs, and it was wonderful to be with Leslie and Leanne again.

We weren't there very long, however. While driving to work one morning, I noticed an apartment house under construction in Pacific Beach. Talking to the builders there soon elicited the name of the owner, and he promised us one of the apartments as soon as the building was finished. Another UCDWR worker, editor Everett Lee Jones, also applied and was accepted. He, his wife Boots and daughter Pamette became our neighbors.

Several other UCDWR workers lived nearby, and we all worked out a permanent car pool arrangement. One of the things I remember about that car pool (I think the car itself belonged to Bent Holtsmark) illustrates the neighborliness of that place and time. Early one morning, as we crossed a bridge over an arm of Mission Bay, a hubcap came off our right front wheel and rolled off the bridge into the water. The water was clear, and we could see the hubcap lying near the shore at a depth of about two feet. One of us was preparing to take off shoes and roll up pants when a shore fisherman stopped us, saying that it could be reached dryshod when the tide went out. He said he would still be there when that happened, and would retrieve the hubcap and set it on top of a pillar at the end of the bridge. He did, and the item was there when we drove home from work that afternoon.

Much of UCDWR's laboratory projects, and all its sea-going operations, were centered at the U.S.Navy Radio and Sound Laboratory way out near the seaward end of Pt. Loma on its Bay side; our publications section was located in a large house — the former Bridges Estate — near the landward end of the Point.

One of the main concerns of UCDWR was research into acoustic and optical processes in the sea. The Publication Section was given the classified results of this intensive research in order to produce classified books and pamphlets on how to sink submarines, or how not to be sunk if you were a submarine. I did a good bit of the writing, but became primarily an illustrator, with specialties in cartography and cartooning, with a lot of graphs thrown in.

One of the senior writers was Professor George R. Stewart, on loan from the Berkeley Campus of the University of California. He was a well known author, his most popular work up to that time having been *Storm*, a novel presenting the biography of a great weather upheaval named "Maria" by the protagonist, a young meteorologist. It was this novel that gave rise to the song "They Call the Wind Maria" and to the official practice of giving names to tropical meteorological disturbances.

For a wartime series appearing in the *Submarine Supplements to the Sailing Directions*, put out by the U. S. Bureau of Ships, Dr. Stewart, created a cast of characters operating a submarine. The captain was Stephen Decatur Farragut, better known by his old Annapolis nickname "Hi Yi Cue," and his executive officer was Zeke, who liked to fire torpedoes. Their adventures were always successful and informative, with Hi Yi Cue scientifically solving each problem as it

arose, and instructing Zeke in what his solutions meant in terms of torpedo-firing. I illustrated the series with cartoons, and it proved to be quite popular in the submarine service.

After several months of this, however, the Bureau of Ships decreed that the whole thrust of the series must change; the Captain himself must be as eager as Zeke to fire torpedoes, and Zeke, as a good Executive Officer, should be more interested in the scientific aspects of submarine warfare. There was also an admonition that all officers should be pictured with more intelligent faces, and that enlisted men should have their caps on straight.

George went to Washington to argue about some of this, trying to explain that these fictional characters represented, in simple terms, the dual nature of submarine warfare and of successful submariners, but the Bureau was adamant. So was George. Hi Yi Cue did not appear again, and George resigned and went back to his faculty position at UC Berkeley. I visited him there several years later, and was pleased to see that he had framed and hung in his office a drawing I had sent him while he was in Washington arguing with the Bureau. It depicted Hi Yi Cue and Zeke standing nonchalantly by while George, dressed as one of the Three Musketeers, was prepared to defend them using a large pen instead of a sword.

For one publication I drew a personification of a battered but smugly smiling submarine with a broom tied to its shears — an old Navy practice signifying that the returning vessel had made a clean sweep of the seas. This cartoon proved quite popular, and I drew a lot of them for framing and display in the submarine fleet.

Our division received another notice from the Bureau of Ships telling us that our cartoon submarines, depicted as living creatures in themselves, should be more masculine. Several of the

artists had a lot of fun with that, but their more-masculine submarine pictures could not legally have been sent through the mail. I think no changes were ever made in the cartoons as they appeared in the publications, and we heard no more about it from the Bureau.

In charge of the scientific accuracy of the Bureau's publications was Roger Revelle, a tall young oceanographer from the Scripps Institution,. A Navy officer with the rank of Commander, he did not concern himself with straight hats in our cartoons, but was a bear in relation to the science presented in the booklets. Every nuance, every picture, every word, had to be justified, resulting in publications that were scientifically accurate—but issued long after their due date. Roger had taken his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley, with his graduate research done at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, so he was well known to all the Scripps scientists at UCDWR. He came back after the war, first as Associate Director of the Institution with Dr. Carl Eckart. A short time later, he became the Director, and remained so for many years thereafter. In 1963, when Scripps was expanded into a general campus, the first of its undergraduate Colleges was named for him. (The Scripps Institution of Oceanography became a Department and a Graduate School within UCSD —the University of California, San Diego,)

Drawing maps had become a hobby with me, and there were plenty of maps to be drawn at UCDWR.. There is a basic rule of cartography which I see as a paradigm for some aspects of life in general, and especially for my attitude toward the folksongs I sing. In singing songs from a subculture of which I am not a part, for an audience not from that subculture, I figured I could be true to the form or to the message, but not to both. (I generally choose the message as the more important.). When you make a map of the whole globe, or a major portion of it, on flat paper,

something has to give, and you can't make a map that tells the truth about both shape and relative size . You have to choose what you want to tell the truth about and what you want to lie about. Conformal maps are good at showing shape: that is, a small square will be a square anywhere on the map, but its area will be distorted. Equal-area maps, on the other hand, preserve the relative sizes of continents, but at the expense of distorting their shapes. You can't make a map on flat paper that is both equal-area and conformal, although there are many projections that are neither one nor the other, trying to lie somewhere in between. The much-maligned Mercator projection is conformal, showing true shapes at the expense of size, and for navigators having the advantage of showing rhumb lines (compass courses) as straight lines, crossing meridians and parallels at the same angles wherever they are drawn.. But the sizes are grossly increased as they are farther north or south of the Equator.

For one publication, I thought it would be a good idea to have an Azimuthal Equidistant projection of the whole globe, centered on San Diego. Although all the landforms more than 90 degrees from the center are terribly distorted, and the antipodal point on the earth becomes the whole outer circumference of the map, this conformal projection shows true direction and distance from its center to any spot on the globe. No such map centered on San Diego was available then, and I set out to make one. However, I got bogged down in the trigonometry required for making the grid, and couldn't get it done in time for the publication, so it became something I planned to do in my spare time if I ever had any.

I talked about the problem with a UCSD scientist, Dr. Orville Becklund, an electrical engineer from the University of Minnesota. A few days later, he handed me several sheets of

paper showing the location of every intersection of latitudinal and longitudinal lines on a 10-degree azimuthal equidistant grid, which could be plotted on an existing global grid, for which I used a simple 10-degree cylindrical projection. Orville — who in every way was one of the most helpful and friendly people I have ever known — had figured all this at home, using his slide-rule, this being many years before the advent of computers or hand-held calculators. The resulting map came out fine, and was used in another UCDWR publication. Later it was used again at radio station WWD, which maintained constant radio contact with the research ships of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and the map gave accurate information as to which way the antenna should face to pick up signals from a known position anywhere in the world.

The most romantic use of this map, by the way, was in helping two sections of Sir Edmund Hilary's Mount Everest Expedition stay in touch with one another. It was found that at some points the climbers' radio could not reach the base camp, but by some freak of transmission it was clearly audible to Station WWD at Scripps if the antenna was pointed in the right direction. And WWD could also reach the base camp. The two parties could not reach one another, but both could reach WWD, and WWD could in turn talk back to both of them. So for several days, the station in La Jolla relayed messages passing back and forth between two parties only a few miles apart, but both halfway around the world from La Jolla.

Several years later the Scripps Institution celebrated its 50th Anniversary, and I made a museum display of a large map showing the tracks of all the major expeditions up to that date. For this purpose I constructed a map of the Pacific Ocean on a gnomonic grid, which has the advantage of showing great-circle routes as straight lines. A great circle, of course, is the shortest

distance between two points on the earth's curved surface. The map itself looked fine, but when I started plotting the expedition tracks, it developed that no Scripps vessel had ever followed a great circle route! This in itself pointed up an important feature of oceanographic exploration: ships engaged in this sort of activity are not expected to go from one place to another by the most efficient route, but to explore the nature of the seas between here and there.

(The Scripps Institution, by the way, will celebrate its One Hundredth Anniversary in 2003.)

At UCDWR, we all worked hard, always aware that the outcome of the War might well be influenced by our work. I'll never forget the fortitude shown by one of the physicists, Dr. Wilbur Ufford from Haverford College, Pennsylvania. A Quaker, he was limiting himself to research on the non-aggressive defensive aspects of submarine warfare, and he needed to know how the temperature structure of the near-surface waters might be affected by internal waves. In spite of his predilection to dreadful sea-sickness, he arranged for the old *E. W. Scripps* to be positioned in a very rough spot near Bishop's Rock in the nearby open sea in order to study the temperature structure of the waters for a continuous 24-hour period. Although almost incapacitated by his sea-sickness, he supervised the whole operation. Later, back at the lab, he realized that his figures were not complete because he didn't know enough about the pitch and roll characteristics of the *E. W. Scripps*. With a sigh, he arranged for another 24-hour stay at the same spot, and he studied those characteristics of the ship while in the throes of that same malady. This second voyage, by the way, was undertaken shortly after Santa Barbara had received a minor barrage from the guns of a presumably Japanese submarine — the only actual attack on the continental United States

during World War II. All of us aboard the *Scripps* had this in mind all the time we were deploying our instruments with lights blazing away out on the open sea. . .

Wilbur was not only brave in this way, but could even joke about it. When Dramamine first appeared as a seasickness remedy, I asked him if he had ever used it. "Oh, yes!" he replied, "And it's a great help. I used to get sick by the time the ship passed Ballast Point, but with Dramamine, I can get all the way to the Old Spanish Lighthouse before I start throwing up!" (Both these points of reference are well within San Diego Harbor.)

Dr. R. Dana Russell, a geologist from Louisiana State University, was the head of our Publications Unit. (Dana returned to Louisiana State after the war, and there established the Coastal Studies Institute.) One UCDWR pamphlet for which he was responsible showed the whole process of calculating the quantity of sea water to be flooded into the ballast tanks of a submarine in order to bring the vessel to quiet rest at a pre-determined depth. Following Dana's orders, I had drawn a series of cartoons, culminating in Hi Yi Cue's ordering "Flood 3,000 tons." The work was proofed, approved by Commander Revelle, sent to the printers, and several hundred copies of the finished pamphlet arrived at our office for distribution. The next morning Dana was shaving, and cut his chin when he realized with a violent start that Hi Yi Cue should have been saying "Flood 4,000 tons." Roger had somehow missed that point, which was correctly stated in the text but not in the cartoon. All of the art staff spent a whole day making manual changes in that pile of pamphlets, striking out the wrong term in the balloon and lettering in the proper amount, trying our best to imitate Gil Fera's inimitable brush lettering.

There were many scientists whom I never came to know well, as most of my duties involved working with the publications staff. One section of the scientific staff, however, was located on the ground floor of Building X (the publications staff was on the third floor), and one of the scientists with whom I did become familiar was Dr. Parker Trask, on leave from the U.S Geological Survey. He not only knew a lot about geology, but was quite willing to talk about it, and he was well known for the carrying power of his stentorian speaking voice.

One morning as I arrived at work I met him in the hall, at the foot of the stairs, and asked him a question about the "Great Shakes" — the New Madrid Earthquake of 1811, which changed the course of the Mississippi River and stopped clocks as far away as Boston. He gave me an excellent summary of information about that great quake, and I felt my usual urge to pass along some of this new knowledge. So when I arrived at our section on the top floor, I started in to tell artist Jack Zane about it, and he said "Oh yes, we heard every word of Parker's talk!"

That year and a half at UCDWR was a tremendous learning experience for me, and many lifelong friendships were formed. Our publications section was a remarkable assemblage of talent and character, and working there in a group effort was more educational than any amount of formal schooling. One of the editors was Austin Faricy, a true polymath if there ever was one. His background in education, writing, and teaching lay primarily in the humanities, but he was interested in every sort of human activity. He owned a fine Challis harpsichord, as well as a clavichord, and gave a lot of highly professional concerts throughout the San Diego area.

These concerts were usually in the evening, and he had to get to the site early in order to tune his instruments.. Consequently, there usually wasn't time for him to go home after work

before going to the concert, so he often came to the "lab" dressed for the performance. Such dress consisted of white tie and tails, and he presented a unique sight as he bicycled to work with a silver-headed walking stick and a lunchbox balanced across the handlebars. (Special arrangements would have been made for moving his harpsichord.)

Austin had a charming down-to-earth quality that appeared even in his formal concerts. On one occasion, he had not had time to work up as many pieces as he would have liked, and the audience was clamoring for more encores than he could provide. So, resplendent in his white tie and tails, he held up a hushing hand to the audience and said "Ladies and gentlemen, I have shot my wad!" He became Leanne's piano teacher and a dear family friend, and remained so until his death in 1998.

The skills of some of the artists were eye-opening.

Gil Fera was a good general artist with a special ability to do informal brush lettering, and his captions adorned almost all our publications.

Jimmy Leighton, the youngest artist of the lot, was adept in every artistic technique you could imagine, including detailed technical illustrating, and he taught me a lot. He also played the guitar and sang, and some of the songs I learned from him became a part of my regular repertoire. When UCDWR closed down, he stayed on with the U. S. Navy Electronics Laboratory, and remained there until his retirement.

Ethel Ihan had a remarkable sense of composition along with a puckish sense of humor, both of which showed up in her extra-curricular, somewhat surrealistic, fine arts paintings. As

Ethel Greene, she later became one of the best, and best-known, painters among the artists in San Diego. Ethel passed away in 1998.

Joe Starbuck was an enlisted man in the Navy, posted to our group temporarily as an artist. He had a remarkable ability at caricature, and soon his drawings of all of us were posted on the walls.

Patricia Clarkson was classified as a clerk, but worked primarily in drafting, and taught me a great deal about the use of various drafting instruments and how to use them in making graphs and other technical drawings. She married Graeme Welch, one of our young physicists, and after the war moved to Berkeley, where Graeme was for many years associated with the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory. I was best man at their wedding in 1945, and Pat and their children are still among our very best friends. Pat is still going strong, but Graeme died in 1999.

Like Jimmy Leighton, Jack Zane was the master of every technique in the graphic arts. Several years after UCDWR closed down, he became the graphic arts director of the Salk Institute, and later held a similar position at the Berkeley Campus of the University.

Jack usually worked very carefully, and was quite patient. As is usual in commercial graphic arts, all illustrations were done first in pencil on tracing paper. These "tissues" were then subject to checking by the scientists and by the head artist, John Olsen, who had occasional spells of being very hard to please. One of Jack's assignments was a large double-page spread showing an aerial view of an imaginary tropical island harbor, and he must have made a dozen or more full-sized tissues before John Olsen was satisfied. When the work was finally finished, and the final wash drawing made, one of the writers, Lindsay Field, pasted up all those tissues on the

walls of the main workroom, and in the role of a critic with a faked British accent, gave a noon-time lecture on 'Arbor Day. John Olsen took it all with great good nature.

When the war was over, Jack wanted to get some of his work to include in his portfolio, to use in seeking a new job as an illustrator. One of his successful wash drawings had been a head-on view of a submarine under water. In making this drawing, he had some difficulty finding a model to draw from, and after a lot of red tape got permission to make sketches of a submarine in drydock. The torpedo tubes, however, were covered with canvas, and Jack had to use his imagination in drawing them. The finished art was used as a cover on one of the classified booklets, and try as he would, Jack could not get permission to include a copy of that drawing in his portfolio; the picture was classified "Confidential.", and that was that. Later some other branch of the Navy pirated that picture for an unclassified recruiting poster; Jack in turn swiped a copy from a power pole and at last had it in his portfolio.

All our output was rigidly classified, and this raised some problems in scientific circles as well as among the artists. For example, much investigation of the thermo-acoustic properties of the sea made use of an instrument that had been invented before the war by Dr. Harald Sverdrup, the Director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. (His co-inventor was Dr. Athelstan Spilhaus.) Dr. Sverdrup, however, had relatives in occupied Norway, and he was thus denied clearance, and had no access to the instrument. Nor could he legally see any of the wartime publications stemming from its use.

The art staff was kept pretty busy illustrating all the booklets put out by UCDWR, but lots of us found extra night and week-end work as well. I was pretty active in both art and music,

within the limits imposed by wartime travel restrictions. It was during this period that I gave the first of hundreds of school programs in the San Diego area—a program for a Kindergarten class taught by Ms. Crystal Thompson, in nearby Escondido. There were lots of opportunities for unremunerated singing, too, and I sang frequently for patients in the Naval Hospital; it was there that one of the patients, who came from the hills of Kentucky, introduced to me “The Barnyard Song,” which became a sort of signature in my children’s programs, and was later to be featured on my first Decca record in 1951,

There was a wartime shortage of manpower in practically every area of industry, and commercial artists were much sought after. Most of the artists at UCDWR found moonlighting employment in this field. There was a restaurant in El Cajon that hired me to make a logo for their much-advertised "Blimp Shrimp," and my cartoon of a blimp-like shrimp (for which I was paid five dollars) was made into a large neon sign which graced that restaurant for several years.

The most widespread of these moonlight productions was a painting by Jack Zane. The San Diego County Fair people wanted a picture of a Spanish grandee to represent the Fair, and, holding Leslie's guitar, I posed for John's watercolor portrait. Jack gave me a small mustache, a good head of hair, a charro costume and a slimmer body, and the Fair people named the resulting character "Don Diego." They paid John the promised ten dollars for it. It was then made into a 20-foot painting at the Fair, and was also placed on all the Fair letterheads and literature; Later, a real live person, much resembling that portrait, was hired to be Don Diego himself, the chief symbol of the Fair.

Our art director, John Olsen, had been on the art faculty at UCLA, and both Leslie and I had taken his course in watercolor. He was one of the head editors, and all writing and illustration had to be passed by him before being subject to scrutiny by the scientists. He was not well versed in the scientific aspects of our work, but his knowledge of art, and his contagious feeling for it, were truly superior. In my cartoons, he detected the rudiments of a meaningful line, and had me draw and redraw until this line began to develop.

This supervised practice in art work stood me in good stead when, after the War, I became the Director of the Aquarium-Museum at the University of California's Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

All during the UCDWR days (and nights) I had spent as much time as possible studying seashore life, taking the bus to good collecting areas at low tides in the wee small hours of the morning. This experience, together with Leslie's wise tutelage, led me toward the beginnings of some taste in the graphic arts, made me eligible for this wonderful job.

Like the earlier position in Palm Springs, this was at first pretty much a one-man operation, and I had lots of opportunity to conceive, design, produce and install museum exhibits, and to make hundreds of aquarium labels.

Today, in my retirement, I still do some art work, and am often hired as a freelance calligrapher by UCSD and other buyers. My 36 happy working years with the University of California owe a lot to John Olsen and the others on the top floor of Building X.

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4,948 words

## CHAPTER 18--ELEPHANT SEALS AND OCEANOGRAPHY

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Mirounga angustirostris*

NORTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL

Guadalupe Island, Baja California, Mexico.

February 16, 1946

Under the leadership of Dr. Carl L. Hubbs, the *E. W. Scripps* sailed to Guadalupe Island primarily to look at some of the few remaining Elephant Seals. As the ship approached the island, a dozen or so Elephant Seals were visible, lying on the beach. Soldiers from the Mexican garrison located on the island were apparently glad to see us coming, and through our glasses we watched in dismay as they cleared the beach for us — running up to each of the somnolent seals and kicking them in the sides to make them move off into the water!

Much larger colonies of the animals were later seen on less accessible beaches on both landward and seaward sides of the island.

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What a wonder to see Elephant Seals! The species had been hunted almost to extinction, their numbers going down at one time to almost certainly less than 100. Commercial hunting had

ceased when it was made unprofitable by the decrease in numbers, and after the species was "rediscovered" on Guadalupe Island in 1892, the government of Mexico passed laws to protect it. About 6 years after our minor expedition of 1946, George Bartholomew and Carl Hubbs made a more detailed survey, and counted more than 4,000 individuals on Guadalupe Island, and occasional individuals were seen that year as far north as Los Coronados Islands, just south of San Diego. off the Baja California Coast . Today, Elephant Seals have expanded their population almost to equal that of the mid-19th Century, and have extended their range to nearly its former limits: thriving breeding colonies are found on offshore islands halfway up the California Coast..

This was my first participation in a Scripps Institution Expedition. Our research vessel was the *E. W. Scripps*, a 120-foot schooner with Diesel power. Built originally as a private yacht, she had served Scripps since her purchase in 1937, and during World War II had been used by the University of California Division of War Research, and I was familiar with her, having worked aboard her many times there.. When I joined the Scripps Institution staff,, the skipper *pro tem* of the old "E.W." was Gus Brandl, an unassuming old seaman whose chief visible prerogatives as captain were a private bunk and a seat reserved at all times for him, and for him only, at the mess table. On one leg of this southward trip, Gus had the sails raised; this was among the last *Scripps* voyages deliberately under sail, although sails were later used on occasion when the cranky Diesel engine shut down in a sulk.

Captain Brandl had the born seaman's sense of identity with his ship. There was then no rigid separation between the ship's crew and the scientists, and we all took turns at anchor watches and other unskilled activities involved in running the ship. I was even invited to take the helm at about 3:00 o'clock one morning when we were proceeding under power alone..

I kept my eye glued to the compass, and tried to hold the ship steady on course, but over-corrected every time a slight turn was required. Then I over-corrected again, going back too far the other way, and for a while we proceeded in a zigzag course until I got the hang of the steering. The skipper was asleep when I took over, but my zigs and zags were enough to awaken him, and he showed up on the bridge. I fully expected him to growl something seamanly, like "Steer small, damn your eyes!" but he said nothing. Watching me for a few minutes, and observing that a real sailor was standing by to give me instructions or to take over if necessary, Gus left without a word, and went back to his bunk.

Later, we were anchored in the dubious shelter of Melpomene Cove on Guadalupe Island off central Baja California, Mexico. I stood an anchor watch in the middle of the night, and did not do a thing to attract the attention of the skipper— but the breeze did. The light wind shifted and the *Scripps* slowly swung harmlessly about on her anchor line. There was no dragging of the anchor, no coming jerkily to the end of the anchor line, but the gentle movement was enough to bring Gus out on deck to check up. Again, he looked over the situation, saw that everything was all right, and saying nothing, went back to bed without voicing a single growl.

Gus wasn't a growler except when he expressed his distaste for low-flying aircraft whose pilots might not see the tall masts of the *E. W. Scripps*. There were often seaplanes taking off and landing in San Diego harbor, and Gus would mutter "Keep away from us!" as they passed overhead.

He didn't share all the prejudices of many old-time seamen. One common bias, which Gus never did seem to share, was against women on board ships at sea.. The person who helped to break the anti-feminine ice frozen into many crew members and scientists alike was a visiting

graduate student, Eugenie Clark. She can only be described as a beautiful young woman whose superior intellect was matched by her outward appearance. She is now a well-known scientist, professor (University of Maryland), and author, still beautiful, with a specialty in sharks. While at Scripps, she was not invited to go on any expeditions aboard ship, but one day she saw the old *Scripps* a mile or more offshore, beyond the kelp beds, doing some biological dredging. A champion swimmer, she decided to visit the ship, and swam out to her. Her swimming prowess, as well as her general demeanor, much impressed Gus and the crew. The second-most important man aboard, the cook, was especially smitten. Genie was welcomed, fed, and allowed to remain as long as she wanted. Later, when a lot of us were instructed in hard-hat diving by Frank Haymaker (this was before the Cousteau-Gagnan SCUBA gear became available), the *Scripps* was our diving platform, and Genie was accepted on board as a matter of course.

An interim skipper, Gus was temporarily replacing Captain Earl Hammond while the latter was serving with the wartime armed forces. When Captain Hammond came back and re-assumed command, Gus went to work for the Star and Crescent Line on excursion boats and ferries in San Diego harbor, and on the *Scripps*, the evolution toward gender parity had to start over. But the trend had begun, and as more capacious research vessels joined the Scripps fleet, the all-male policies faded out. Today, of course, women scientists are fully as important as the men on all cruises, which carry out research projects in almost every part of the world ocean.

When the Scripps Institution was through with the *E. W. Scripps*, by the way, she was sold to a movie company, and performed as the cannibalized *Henrietta* in "Around the World in Eighty Days," starring David Niven and the great Mexican comic actor Cantinflas. She also appeared briefly in "Anna and the King of Siam." (Is there an Oscar award for Best Background

Scenery?) After that the movie company sold her to a pair of enterprising brothers named Matthews who refitted her — sails and all — and intended to use her for inter-island service in the South Pacific. The story is that the ship was sailed to Tahiti, but then the required paperwork was slow in coming. When it finally did arrive, and the ship formally cleared for her inter-island work, the brothers held a big celebration on board, with plenty of liquor. During the course of the party, the old ship was somehow set afire and burned to the water-line; her remains now rest irretrievably on the bottom of Papeete Harbor.

My wonderful job as Curator (in practice, director: payroll title, Senior Museum Zoologist) of the Aquarium and Museum had been offered to me because of the impending retirement of Percy Spencer Barnhart, who had been the Curator since 1914. "Barney" stayed on for several months after I was hired, and showed me the ropes of running the aquarium-museum and dealing with the administration. One important lesson was in connection with the required weekly trip to the People's Fish Market in downtown San Diego, to buy fresh California Mackerel for fish food.

"When you go to the market," Barney told me, "be sure to get your mackerel from Augie; he's the one to deal with."

Barney went on: "You'll have to put a nickel in the parking meter in front of the market, and Tilly will reimburse you." (Tilly Genter was Secretary to Dr. Sverdrup, Director of the Institution, and she held the petty cash purse strings. As Scripps grew and Tilly retired, she was gradually replaced by a business office, a whole staff of accountants, a purchasing department, a personnel office, a telephone switchboard with all its necessary personnel, a stockroom, and unnumbered secretaries, stenographic pools and administrative assistants.)

"But what you do is tell Tilly that you had to pay a DIME for parking, and that leaves you with another nickel to buy a cigar for Augie. If you tell her what you really did with that nickel, you wouldn't get reimbursed, 'cause the University wouldn't approve it."

And we always did get good fresh mackerel.

There was one other Aquarium-Museum employee, Claude Palmer, and he worked half-time with me and half as a glassware cleaner in the Bacteriology Department.. He and Barney instructed me in how to cut up the fresh mackerel for a feeding once a week and how to go out and collect mussels, sand crabs and red worms for the other weekly feeding. They showed me how to clean the display tanks without unduly disturbing the inhabitants, and once a month to shovel sand out of the big concrete seawater storage tank. Barney instructed me in making lifelike plaster casts of fishes for museum display. He let me participate in his experiments in setting tempered glass in concrete tanks, which he had learned to make without the use of reinforcing rods.

Barney schooled me in the quick identification of local fishes, which was made easier because of his book, *Marine Fishes of Southern California* (University of California Press, 1936; illustrated by the author.)

There were also techniques in catching fishes for display—use a barbless hook, don't touch the fish with dry hands, get them into ocean-temperature seawater as quickly as possible, etc. The Aquarium-Museum possessed a small skiff with an outboard motor, and regular fishing trips were made to the kelp beds offshore. The skiff was kept at the outer end of the thousand-foot pier, 20 feet above the water at mid-tide, and was raised and lowered by means of a hand-cranked

winch. This winch was, of course, geared 'way down, and it took many, many turns of the crank to do the job.

When I complained that Scripps ought to do better than that, Barney said "Huh! You young fellows don't know how lucky you are. When they built the pier in 1920, all I had for the skiff was two regular lifeboat davits, with a line attached to each end of the skiff. I had to haul the rope on one davit till the boat was tilted just far enough, then tie it off and run to the other davit and raise THAT end. Then back to the first davit again. Took me a good half-hour and lots of muscle to get the boat up or down."

Later, when I had become one of the Old Guys, I took much the same stand with the young ones who complained about the vagaries of the new gasoline-powered winch. "You ought to be thankful you don't have to do it with a hand crank!" And I'm sure that when the electric winch was installed after I had left, they told the new generation of hands "Heck, you should have been here when we had a temperamental old one-lung gas engine that had to be started with a crank. Just push a button now—that's NOthing!"

In addition to preparing museum exhibits and taking care of the aquarium, there were several ancillary jobs which included the taking of a daily plankton sample at the end of the pier; changing paper and checking ink supply in the tide gauge there; and doing the same sort of routine care for the big seismograph in the basement of the Library-Museum Building. The seismograph room had an earthen floor, and was not rigidly connected to the rest of the building, so that movements recorded on the floor-standing instrument were those of the earth itself, rather than those of a resonating building.. Any time I encounter a musty earth-smell, it brings that seismograph room to mind. . . .

On other parts of the campus (notably, the pier) we also recorded air and water temperatures and barometric pressure, made an estimate of cloud cover, checked the rain gauge, filled out the Weather Bureau form, and phoned all that daily information in to the weather station at the airport in San Diego.

These readings were routinely taken every morning, but occasionally there would be a special call to duty. Any earthquake anywhere in the Pacific area resulted in a call to get out to the end of the pier, no matter the time of day or night, watch the tide gauge, and report any anomalies that might be connected with a tsunami.

The Eleventh Naval District in San Diego was once writing up a Disaster Bill, and called on SIO Director Harald Sverdrup for advice. He told them that if a tsunami did arrive here, statistics indicated that it would probably be as the result of an earthquake in the Aleutians, and that it would probably be less than two feet high when it reached our shores. A few weeks later, this scenario actually occurred, and the word got around that Harald had predicted this earthquake and its resulting "tidal" wave. He spent quite a bit of time trying to explain to the news media that he had not predicted this occurrence at all, but was simply talking about probabilities.

The Scripps Institution of Oceanography was located in the San Diego area in 1903 as a local independent organization, but a few years later became part of the University of California, and subject to its orders. Tilly gave me a list of University rules (which I later learned were scarcely known to anybody else), including specific requirements and limitations in the use of office space. One limitation was in the nature of chairs for visitors; if you were a Dean or higher, such chairs could have arms on them; if you were lower than a Dean— no arms! (Any

discussion of this rule with faculty members brought the usual response: "Hah! There's nothing LOWER than a Dean!")

Another restriction governed desk size, which was clearly specified for various ranks. This applied only to desks purchased with University funds, and just out of devilment and using my own time and money (not much!) I built myself a desk bigger than any of those mentioned. The Aquarium at that time was in a frame building that had been erected in 1923 at the landward end of the pier, while the Museum was on the ground floor of the Library. My workshop was in the Library basement, next to my office, and one of the pleasantest tasks in this pleasant job was assembling a set of tools for exhibit preparation. A budget for "inventorial items" had been provided, and I was privileged to buy a good ten-inch table saw, an eighteen-inch bandsaw, a jigsaw, a drill press, router, grinder, power whetstone, one of the new "Skilsaws", and the myriad hand-tools we needed.

This, together with the routines of collecting new fishes and invertebrates, buying and collecting food for them, making new labels (in that old building there was no backlighting of labels, and they were simply opaque), refurbishing old museum exhibits and preparing new ones, doing the daily pier observations and plankton sampling, acting as Public Information Officer for the Institution, and scheduling and guiding visiting school groups, all made for a pretty busy life. It was made much easier by our living in a cottage right on the campus.

Leslie and I raised our two kids, Leanne and Matt, in Cottage 27, where we lived until 1958, when we built our own house in the cooperative Scripps Estates Associates development just up the hill from the campus. Cottage 27 burned down in 1959, a year to the day after we had

moved to our new home, and on the day that we put Leanne on the train, bound to activate her full scholarship at Reed College in Oregon.

The campus was a wonderful place to raise kids. There was a lot of open country all around, with a consequent profusion of wildlife. On our first night at Scripps (we were temporarily in Cottage 5), a banging noise outside woke us up, and upon investigating we found a poor Striped Skunk with its head stuck in a mayonnaise jar. The animal was on its last legs from asphyxiation, staggering about and bumping into things. The noise also awoke one of gardeners, Floyd Nyhus, who bravely picked up the jar, skunk and all, and holding it at arm's length, gently shook it until the skunk dropped out with a "plop." It assumed a defensive posture for a moment on the ground, then shook its head and trotted off, a free skunk.

Matt especially loved living near the aquarium, and by the time he was seven years old, he could conduct tours as well as I could. He also gave personal names to the outstanding fishes. We didn't know why he named the largest California Sheephead "Sergeant Thompson", but he did, and the name stuck. He bestowed the name "Harvey" upon the big Broomtail Grouper in honor of the invisible "pooka" rabbit in the movie "Harvey" starring James Stewart. Harvey (the Grouper) was a star attraction for years, and only recently, more than 30 years after I had left the Aquarium, I found that there had been a whole succession of big groupers which had inherited Harvey's name.

There was nothing but open country and high sea-cliffs north of the Institution, and one lovely canyon with a trail leading down to an isolated part of the beach. (This beach was locally known as "Bare-Ass Beach," later called in honor of the owner of the adjacent cliff-top land "Black's Beach" and it is still very much favored for nude sunning and bathing, although such

exposure is not now legal.) The canyon and its trail are now part of the property of Scripps Estates Associates, the cooperative development where Leslie and I still live.

One day when Leanne was a high school student she was temporarily afflicted with a pensive *Weltschmerz*, and announced that she was going out for a walk "to be involved with the Spring," as she put it. She returned in a radiant mood, for sitting on a knoll overlooking the canyon, she had been granted the sight of a mother Gray Fox carrying a rabbit back to the babies in her den.

There were open fields on the flat land just south of the institution, and in the neighboring lot someone kept two friendly goats, a large one and a small one, and when Leanne was in first grade, they quickly became her good friends. These goats were on tethers fastened to small upright posts set in the ground, and each had cleared a perfect circle of land by grazing to the limit of the radius provided by the tether. An aerial photograph showed these two circles quite clearly, which puzzled people who did not know about the goats.

There was a lot of community feeling in that small institution. One of the larger bungalows was not at first assigned as a dwelling place, but as a Community Center, and there were frequent gatherings there. One group met quite regularly to sing old songs, and I prepared lots of Mimeographed or Dittoed word sheets. A particularly enthusiastic member of this group was marine chemist Dr. Norris Rakestraw, who taught us all a number of old college songs. He firmly believed that every one who was, or ever had been, a university student should know "Gaudeamus Igitur," in Latin, and this always had to be included in the community sings.

As the staff expanded and more dwellings were needed, the Community House became the home of Carl and Laura Hubbs. (Later, after Harald Sverdrup had resigned and moved back to

Norway, the Hubbyses moved into the Director's Cottage, No. 16. and the Community Center again became the Community Center. The new Director, Roger Revelle, didn't need the Director's Cottage because he and his wife Ellen already owned a house in La Jolla.) The Community House is long gone, its former site overlapped by the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics.

Gatherings were also held in the individual cottages. Leslie organized a weekly "Art Night" at which people would display art work, and engage in making new drawings or paintings. There were seasonal get-togethers, too, as when friends would gather in our house to make "pysanki" Ukrainian-style Easter eggs. (Leanne, now a Professor of Linguistics at the Berkeley Campus of the University of California, specializing in American Indian languages, has continued these traditions.)

Austin Faricy often came to our cottage to conduct "Polyphony Sings." Dr. Gene LaFond, a neighbor, had several "grunion parties" on nights when those peculiar fish were expected to spawn on the beach just after high tide. Community beach picnics were commonplace. One such oceanographers' picnic was drowned out by high tide, an event which received a sardonic notice in the *New Yorker* magazine.

Getting to know the scientists was fascinating and instructive. Just hobnobbing with them seemed to bring about a sharing of some of their knowledge. Matt, with his inquisitive mind and superlative memory, picked up a lot from them and from his reading, and years later, when he enlisted in the US Coast Guard, he confounded his authorities by passing the exam for a specialty in Oceanography without having taken the required courses.

This was a time of change for the academic life of the Institution. Until 1946, it had functioned as a laboratory, wherein graduate students from other institutions were supervised in their research projects. In 1946, however, Scripps began offering its own graduate curriculum in oceanography — the first such program in this country, perhaps in the world — with graduate degrees bestowed by the parent organization, the University of California, Los Angeles..

Some of the Scripps scientists were truly dedicated teachers. All the students at the graduate level aimed for the PhD, and one strict requirement (established in 1946) for that degree was that the candidate be literate in both French and German. Unfortunately, Scripps offered no formal courses in these subjects. So Dr. Marston Sargent, our next-door neighbor on Discovery Way, , organized an informal non-credit evening class in scientific German, and was instrumental in making it possible for several students to pass their orals. Other staff members, like Research Associate Margaret Robinson, also became language tutors.

The advanced degrees were granted through UCLA, and the Scripps professors took part in the traditional Academic Processions there at Commencement times. The order in which these professors marched was determined by the age of the institutions at which they had earned their doctorates, with those from the oldest universities going first. For several years, then, the procession was headed by Dr. Adriano Buzzatti-Traverso, a genial visiting marine biologist whose degree had come from the ancient University at Milan. There was a good-natured plot in which another of our professors hoped to get ahead of Adriano by wangling an honorary degree from an even older University in Portugal, but somehow it didn't work out.

Adriano once gave a talk at our weekly "Skipper's Mess," a gathering instituted by Dr. Roger Revelle when he became Director of the Institution in 1949. Here the entire staff gathered

every Wednesday noon to eat from their brown bags while some staff member or graduate student expounded on his or her work in progress. Adriano was doing research on sea-urchins, especially our common local species *Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*, but nobody could tell what species he was referring to until he wrote the genus on the blackboard. "I'm sorry," he said, "but I have never learned to pronounce Latin in English!"

One particular bonus was a constant presence of graduate students and visiting researchers from all over the world, most of whom, after earning their degrees, went back and established new oceanography programs in their home Universities. One special friend was grad student Colm oHeocha from Ireland, who had learned Gaelic before he learned English. He laughingly recounted his getting his Master's Degree in an Irish university, writing a thesis on some arcane aspect of algal physiology — in Gaelic! This caused problems. No one wanted to admit that Gaelic, then the official national language of Ireland, should cause trouble, but it was very difficult to find a Gaelic-speaking plant physiologist to assist in judging Colm's work. Here at Scripps, he did his PhD thesis in English, and went back home, eventually to become the President of University College in Galway., a position from which he retired sometime during the last few years. While here at Scripps, he patiently tutored me a very short distance toward the correct pronunciation of the words in a few Gaelic songs.

J. Bennett Olson ("Ben") took his PhD in the taxonomy of Copepods. He left Scripps to become a professor at California State University, Santa Rosa, and from there went to Purdue, where he remained on the faculty until his death. and he and his wife Dorothy were among our best friends as long as both of them lived, and we are still in touch with their daughters.

A whole succession of Japanese students helped me with children's songs in their language.

Ken Norris, a student in marine biology, baby-sat for our two kids and was a dear friend for the rest of his life. As head of a branch of the American Miscellaneous Society, he organized a group whose duties lay in informing animals of their correct taxonomic status. He also proposed a group devoted to putting pupils in the eyes of Little Orphan Annie and her comic-strip cohorts. Ken became an expert in cetacean behavior, and developed training methods in Los Angeles and Honolulu that are still applied to dolphins and orcas in captivity. Both of our children, Leanne and Matt, worked for Ken as young adults. Matt helped in dolphin-training in Hawaii, and Leanne acted as general assistant in an expedition researching whale information along the entire Pacific Coast of Chile. Ken spent many years as a much loved Professor of Biology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and stayed on in Santa Cruz after his retirement. He died in 1998, in his last hours surrounded by family and dear friends singing with him the songs that he had so loved.

The Scripps Institution was a magnet for scientific folks from all over the world, and we were privileged to get to know any number of interesting visitors. Douglas P. Wilson, of the Plymouth Marine Aquarium in England, visited, and had Thanksgiving dinner with us at Cottage 27. We cooked a turkey on the outdoor barbecue, and ate it outside, "D.P." marveled at the meal and at such pleasant weather in November..

One excursion that we set up for visitors will always stand out in my mind; two ornithologists, Roger Tory Peterson of the US and James Fisher of the UK were touring North America (see their book, *Wild America*, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1955) and visited the Institution in 1953. Dr. Hubbs was their host, and he arranged an overnight camping trip to Los Coronados Islands, where the visitors saw all the birds they had hoped to see. I was a sort of general helper

on this trip. Lewis Wayne Walker, then helping develop the Living Desert Museum in Tucson, was another member of the party, with Carl and Laura Hubbs, and Al Allanson as pilot of the Buoy Boat.

Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher did not at all fit the stereotypes of their respective countries. Peterson, the American, was dignified and reserved, while the English James Fisher was more of a rowdy outgoing type. On the way to the Islands, he taught me to sing "On Ilkly Moor Baht 'At," and sang it lustily.

Not only the scientific folks were interesting and pleasant to know; so were the buildings and grounds and maintenance people. One of the gardeners had been raised by missionary parents in Kenya, and had grown up to be a circus acrobat; he still did handstanding exercises on a stout table in front of his bungalow. A man-of-all-work was John Stackelberg, who took a menial position at the Institution just because he liked being near the sea and the scientists who studied it. John knew the location of every pipe buried in the 167-acre campus, and he was the only one there who could mend holes in the soft lead pipe that supplied salt water to the concrete storage tank. He was also an amateur astronomer, and ground his own parabolic mirrors by hand.

Head of Buildings and Grounds was Carl Johnson. He always got to work early, and left assignments for John on small bits of paper, which John perforated and hung onto a button on his shirt. He was particularly pleased with two assignments written on one sheet, and he carried that one in his wallet even after its duties had been discharged.

"John S.", it read; "1. Bury dead seal on beach. 2. Place flag at half-staff."

John said the flag-lowering was not on account of the poor sea lion, but he liked to think it was.

The cottages we lived in were rather flimsy affairs. Built around 1923, they certainly came nowhere near meeting later Building Codes. They were built like boxes, with no vertical studs except at the corners, and their appointments were on the primitive side. At Cottage 27, there was once a leak in a water pipe which caused a considerable rivulet to run through our yard right alongside the clothesline. After waiting several weeks, I finally asked Carl Johnson about it.

He said "I've been meaning to talk to you about that; you can use that water in any way you like!"

It was during this period that I started teaching evening courses for University of California Extension. The local Director of the Extension Office was Caleb A. "Shelley" Lewis, and he had an experimental mind in regard to Extension education. He disregarded my lack of a graduate degree, and showed me how my enthusiasm for various subjects could be used in teaching. Over the years, he arranged for me to teach not only in the standard classroom, but *via* television and radio as well.

My first course, taught in 1948, was in World Folk Music, and was in the standard lecture-classroom format. Never having taken a college course in folk music, of the world. I was diffident about my knowledge of the proper content of such a class, and sought help from various sources. Most helpful was the University Organist at UCLA, who was himself teaching a similar course in Los Angeles. I also secured class outlines from patient and well-known folklorists at Ohio State and the University of Pennsylvania. I thoroughly enjoyed that first course, and learned a lot from it.

After that, Shelley had me branch out into other subjects, All this teaching experience led to my being appointed part-time Lecturer in Folklore for the UCSD Department of Literature from 1968 until two years after my retirement in 1980..

Today nobody lives on the Scripps campus. Cottage 27 burned down, and the site where it and several neighboring cottages were located is now occupied by the Hydraulics Laboratory. Some of our neighbors on campus again became neighbors when we built our own home in the cooperative Scripps Estates Associates, adjoining the Institution on the north, but many of these neighbors are now dead. Dr. Martin Johnson's cottage, not far from our old No. 27, has been remodeled into a Graduate Students' Center, and all of the others have either been razed or are in use as storage and even office facilities. But living there was fun while it lasted.

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5,444 words

**CHAPTER 19- ROUND STINGRAY AND SCRIPPS INSTITUTION**

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Urobatis halleri*

ROUND STINGRAY

La Jolla, California; on beach at SIO Pier

July 10, 1952

Our long beach seine came in with about 20 Round Stingrays, which seem to congregate in the shallow surf at this time of year. Nearly all were released, although many of them had their "stingers" entangled in the net, and it took a lot of work to disentangle them; lots of the bony barbs were left behind in the net. Some animals were lying on the beach before they could be put back into the water, and I managed to step on one which had an undamaged but damaging barb still attached, and was stung on the top of the foot. The standard hot water treatment was immediately successful in easing the pain.

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This stingray wound was a classic example of the ancient medical counter-irritant. A few minutes before, I had sat down on a stranded Purple-Striped Jellyfish, and the backs of my

thighs were smarting in a most annoying way. Then, when I stepped on the stingray, the jellyfish stings were completely forgotten.

The seining operation itself was part of an effort to provide lots of specimens for the new Aquarium, which was nearing completion. A cooperative effort, the collecting was carried out by a host of volunteers plus one new temporary employee. This was Ben Cox, borrowed from the California Department of Fish and Game; Ben later became our permanent Aquarist. We already had plenty of stingrays, but were after some Yellowfin Croakers and other surf-dwelling fishes, even hoping for a Corbina or two.

Seining was always delightful, for one never knew what would show up in the net. It could be done either in the quiet waters of Mission Bay, which had not at that time been "improved." or, as in this case, on the sandy beach of the open shore. The seine would be piled on the back thwart of our skiff, which would then be rowed out through the breakers while paying out a line. The end of which was held by a member of the shore party. When the line was completely paid out, the boat would make a 90-degree turn, travel parallel to the shore, paying out the net itself. When the end of this was reached, the boat would turn again, back toward the shore, paying out the line attached to the far end of the net, until the end of this line could be handed to another group of shore-party volunteers. The net had weights and floats making it hang upright in the water, with the leaded edge touching the bottom. The lines were attached to wooden brails at each end of the net, and several hands at the brails would drag the whole net up onto the beach.

On one occasion we took our seine a quarter-mile down the beach to the La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club. This is quite an exclusive place, patronized by people who are pretty well off

financially, but its beach, like all non-military California beaches, belongs to the public. This broad flat beach was ideal for pulling in the beach seine. Among the creatures pulled up in the first haul were several Bat Stingrays — essentially harmless, though fierce-looking, black creatures with a "wing"-spread of up to four feet. Some of the people staying at the Beach and Tennis Club came down to watch us, and soon the manager, Bill Kellogg, came out with a perfectly reasonable request:

"Sam, could you please go somewhere else along the beach? Some of my customers have looked at those damn things and they swear they'll never go in the water again!"

So of course we moved.

The Scripps Institution was first organized not as a full campus, but as a specialized research facility under the ægis of UCLA. In many ways UCLA had the last say about how things were done 'way down there at Scripps, and working thus 120 miles away didn't always produce the best results.

For example, we always had a lot of trouble with fouling in the salt water lines. Fouling organisms — especially the nauplius larvae of Goose Barnacles— would come in with the water, settle inside the pipes and grow up, impeding the water flow. Worse, they would sometimes die, and bits of barnacle shell would travel down the pipes until they blocked off some of the narrowing apertures of spigots feeding water into the aquarium tanks. If not corrected, this could kill a whole tank full of fish in 10 hours or so.

Being in charge of the aquarium, I had to go through the work area at about 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock every night, checking the water flow and clearing any stopped-up spigots. It had to be checked again at 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning.

So, in about 1955, several years after the opening of the new Aquarium-Museum (which had the same problems), a Salt Water Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Adm. (Ret) Charles D. Wheelock, who was then acting Director of the Institute of Marine Resources at Scripps. I was an *ex officio* member of this Salt Water Committee, and expounded on the excellent system used by the United Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom in their aquarium at Plymouth.

They had installed a double pipe system. One pipeline would be in use while the other was drained, the changeover being accomplished every three days or so. This killed off the larvae in the drained pipe before they had a chance to mature, and our Committee decided that this system was what we needed at Scripps.

We thereupon designed a double system, specifying two 6-inch pipes made of the then-new Transite, a compound of cement and asbestos. Plans were drawn up and then, following the rules, sent to the engineers at UCLA for approval. Those engineers completely missed our point, and changed the plans, indicating (as if we didn't know!) that we could get as much water through one 8-inch pipe as through two 6-inch pipes, and that's what they gave us — a single system of 8-inch Transite pipe that was subject to all the same old barnacle problems. Water-flow in every tank still had to be checked at least every 10 hours.

Barnacles are members of the Subclass Cirripedia, and for years we spoke of our poor old delivery pipes as suffering from a “cirripedal stenosis.”

Much later, after the Scripps Institution had evolved into a general campus—UCSD, the University of California, San Diego—and had its own staff of engineers, a much better system

was designed by Jeff Frautschy and Doug Inman, and installed. This involved an open flume sloping landward down the full length of the pier, plus a large sand filter at the shore.

Adm. Wheelock was just one of the many oceanographers with whom I have been privileged to work. As a group, they represent a tremendous portion of oceanographic history, and the ways in which their science is conducted. For example, sometime in the '60's, I was surprised to see Dr. Per Scholander, biological oceanographer, on the campus.

"Hi, Per! I thought you were on an expedition to Point Barrow!"

"I am," he answered, "but one of my students is having his oral exams today, and I flew down for that."

This made me keenly aware of how oceanographic research had changed in the course of a single lifetime. Harald Sverdrup was a Director of the Scripps Institution until 1948. Years before he came here, he had been the meteorologist on a famed trip to the Arctic aboard the Norwegian research vessel *Maud*, an expedition headed by Raoul Amundsen. The idea of this expedition was to freeze the ship in the arctic ice and let it go along with the floe, thus providing information about surface currents in the Arctic Ocean. The party left Norway in 1918, and it was seven and a half years before Harald saw Norway again. The whole party was completely out of touch throughout that time, and there was no flying back home to see a student through his orals..

As Director of the Scripps Institution, Harald decided when he took me on as Curator of the Aquarium and Museum, that I should make a tour of aquariums and museums in the United States to get ideas for the new facility that was to be built at Scripps. Preliminary plans for the building had been drawn up by the architect, and there were several things I didn't like about

them. I was very young and rather insecure, however, and didn't like to make much of a fuss, thinking that when I got back from this tour I could speak with more authority.

It was a wonderful trip for me, except for missing Leslie and our two kids. But there was a hitch, brought about mainly by the distance between the Scripps Institution and its "parent" campus, UCLA. I got lots of ideas for the new Aquarium-Museum building, but while I was away, the existing plans were approved and accepted by the University of California Board of Regents, and I returned to a *fait accompli* as far as the plans were concerned.

Fortunately, the building described was too costly for the budgeted \$125,000, and the plans had to be revised. I did make myself heard in the re-drawing. It's been a point of pride with me that we increased the floor space while lowering the cost, but there were some lacks that never were liquidated. There were not enough non-display storage tanks, the tanks were made of reinforced concrete and were too closely integrated with the floor and some walls of the building, Barney's foolproof method of mounting glass was not even considered, there were overflows but no drains in the tanks, and the Museum section consisted of a number of static, identical display cases. I hollered and wrote a good many memos about these points, but was not heeded. Nevertheless, the aquarium worked pretty well, and we learned to live with it. And the public enjoyed it.

For the trip itself, Harald arranged for me first to spend several weeks in the Preparations Department of the Chicago Museum of Natural History. (Several years earlier, some authorities at the Field Museum had decided that having multimillionaire Field's name in their title would lead prospective donors to think that the institution was not in need of further charitable support, so they changed the name to the Chicago Museum of Natural History. A few years later, having

seen an insufficient increase in donors, they switched back to Field Museum of Natural History, and retain that name today.) The rest of the tour was up to me. We arranged for Claude Palmer to work 100% time for the Aquarium, Eugene Clark moved in with Leslie to keep her company, and I was on my way, to be gone for about four months

The stay in Chicago was an experience never to be forgotten. I checked in at the Sloan House YMCA Hotel within walking distance of the Museum, where Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt welcomed me literally with open arms. He introduced me to my assigned mentor, Mr. Leon Pray, taxidermist and general preparator. Mr. Pray was also teaching another apprentice, Moawad Mohsen, a talented young man from Egypt. We worked not only with Mr. Pray, but also with other staff members in the Preparations Department.

These preparators were right up in the forefront of new museum display methods, creating mounted animals that appeared to be full of life and breath, using techniques that far transcended traditional taxidermy. A hippopotamus, for example, is a difficult subject. Traditional taxidermy relies upon a covering of fur or feathers, but the hippo has neither, and it's very difficult to give the actual skin any sort of lifelike look. Leon Walters, however, had solved the problem, using new materials to augment the methods worked out by Carl Akely. He used wire and internal braces to pose a dead hippo in the desired position, then encased it in a sectional plaster cast. Bristles, which are an important part of the animal's appearance, remained stuck in the plaster, while the actual skin was removed from inside. Then a coating of carefully color-controlled cellulose acetate—"celluloid"—painstakingly painted on with shades and tints of color to match the photographs of the living or freshly dead animal, was brushed on the inside of the plaster molds. (Mr. Walters said "I always wanted to use paint as the casting

medium!") When the plaster was finally broken away, there was a new hippopotamus with every bristle in place in a new "skin" of lifelike translucent celluloid. Many diehard taxidermists scorned this technique, for no part of the dead animal (except for a few bristles) remained, and that just wouldn't do for the trophies that were a major part of the work of taxidermists who didn't work for museums.

The technique could also be used with reptiles, amphibians, birds and furry animals as well, making final display specimens that were not only lifelike, but light in weight and easily handled.

Mr. Walters designed his projects to last forever. I asked him once about one of the new casting plastics, and he said "Oh, I wouldn't trust that stuff! It'll turn yellow in 75 years!"

Joe Krstolich was a sculptor who was experimenting with the carving of the new plastics, both chemo-setting and thermo-setting. He had just finished carving a magnificent much-enlarged seahorse of transparent plastic, rendered translucent by his hand-tooling of the surface. I asked him how he got that surface texture, and he said "Oh — you just keep working at it."

Leon Pray was the oldest of the group, and more nearly traditional in his work; he had Moawad and me each mount a crow in his version of traditional taxidermy, and also had us make and paint a plaster model of a large carp, with hand-carved plastic fins. He was somewhat scornful of some of his colleagues' methods, and had made and posted a cartoon, in the old vicious "comic" valentine style, of an extremely unattractive woman in a bathing suit, with a large ribbon diagonally across her meager bosom reading "Miss Plastic Snakes of 1946." He was a good teacher, though, and Moawad and I learned a lot.

One of Mr. Pray's great contributions lay in his developing the use of borax instead of arsenic to treat the insides of skins. He maintained, probably quite rightly, that continual exposure to powdered arsenic was very bad for preparators and not even very good for the skins.

I usually ate lunch with the preparators, and many were the tales they told of other preparators' adventures. Some of their stories did not quite jibe with official museum records: a sort of technical urban folklore!

Moawad was staying with several Egyptian friends at International House, and spent his off-time with them. I was staying at the rather impersonal YMCA Sloan House Hotel, and Dr. Schmidt, the head scientist at the Museum, realized that I might be lonesome. He and his family took me under their generous wing, taking me to concerts and having me spend a few nights at their home. Mrs. Schmidt even made sack lunches for me, and sent them to the Museum with Dr. Schmidt every morning. She and all their kids were just as warm and loving as he was, and their ministrations really worked to alleviate my loneliness.

While nobody else could ever match the hospitality of the Schmidts, after I left Chicago everyone on my itinerary proved to be friendly and helpful. Dr. Chris Coates and James Atz at the New York Aquarium (housed then in the old Lion House at the Zoo) were especially full of ideas about new materials and techniques, and gave me a tremendous amount of information that I planned to use in the new building at Scripps. I think I took more notes there than at any other of the aquariums on the tour. They were experimenting with materials other than concrete for tank construction, and had developed several approaches that allowed for relatively easy tank replacement without damage to the building. Those two were typical in making me feel at home in the profession, and I was able later to keep in touch with them through meetings of the

American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the American Museum Association and the Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums.

Chris Coates, by the way, retired not long after my visit, and Jimmy Atz was inducted as head of the Aquarium. His Board of Directors told him that he would need to finish his PhD in order to hold that job, and gave him one year to do so. Jimmy later said that he had "made it with twenty minutes to spare!"

All these experts looked at the plans for the new building at Scripps, and there were many suggestions for improvement. I remember one conversation with a staff member at the beautiful Cranbrook Institute of Science in Michigan. Quite a formal person, he immediately discerned a lack in the plans.

"There is no place to check hats and coats!" he said.

I answered "Well, this is on the beach in southern California, and a good half of our visitors will be in bathing suits."

He frowned and said "Mr. Hinton! I am serious!"

Back at Scripps, work on revising the plans for the new building started right away, and in spite of the plans having already been prematurely approved by the UC Regents I was able to get some changes made to my liking. The architects had designed L-shaped tanks in the corners, with two viewing glass panes at right angles to one another. I suggested that a large glass be installed diagonally, greatly enlarging the water capacity by making the tank into an approximate right triangle, with glass on the hypotenuse. This was done, and the tanks thus changed were our most popular ones.

The original plan called for the museum room to be two stories high, with a balcony all around, and with skylights above. We re-designed it as having two separate floors, and I had fond thoughts of using the upstairs storey as a laboratory and lecture hall for the Junior Academy of Science that I hoped to establish. The second floor was built, all right, but I didn't get to use it; it became the office of the Director of the Scripps Institution. We did found the Junior Oceanographer's Corps, but there was no laboratory space for them, and we met for lectures and movies and field trips at other spots on campus.

Another change in the plans was in the extent of work space and storage space. The building was on sloping ground, sloping up toward the front, and at ground level at the rear was a partial basement containing a workshop, laboratory room, and office, while the space from there to the front of the building was not to be excavated. We really needed space for making exhibits and for storage of collections (the Museum then had custodianship of the entire invertebrate collection plus a good many vertebrates), and I begged for a complete excavation of this "basement" area. My pleas were unsuccessful, but a very dear friend had more success. Dr. Wesley Coe, a quiet, gentle person with an unfathomable range of zoological knowledge, had retired as Director of the Invertebrate Zoology section of the museum at Harvard, and had moved to La Jolla. With no official position on the Scripps staff, he carried out continual zoological research as a visitor unsupported by University funds. He agreed that this basement space was absolutely necessary, and offered personally to finance the cost of the excavation. The University authorities were thus driven to the realization of the importance of the project, and, while not accepting Dr. Coe's offer, they did come up with the funds to authorize the construction.

(Later I proudly showed the central basement room, with its many rows of shelves full of pickled invertebrates, to a visitor from the British Museum. He said it was very nice, but pointed out that his institution had three times that much space for the Annelid worms alone!)

The University assigned Lionel Pedley, a construction engineer from UCLA, to supervise actual construction. Lionel and I became good friends, and he allowed me a lot of welcome latitude in making on-the-spot adjustments to the plans. ("Look here. The plumbing plan shows a pipe coming through the floor at this point, and the wiring sheet shows an electrical conduit coming through that same spot. Which one do you want moved, and where to?" Lionel retired a few years after the building was completed, made La Jolla his permanent home, and rejoiced in his position as one of the champion tennis players in the Masters' list.

After workmen had finished for the day, I spent many an hour just wandering about the site, marveling at all the space it was to give me, dreaming of all its wonders yet to come, and making notes of questions to take up with Lionel.

Meanwhile, we were doing all we could in preparing exhibits that could be moved into the new quarters. There was no room for actual assembly of these exhibits, but the details could be prepared. During much of this period, Claude Palmer was ill; his sick-leave turned into a permanent retirement, and I had all the work to do alone. The administration was finally persuaded to give me some help, and Cornelius Cole ("Corny") Smith came on as a half-time museum artist for a year. Then Judy Horton came aboard in that position, and had a tremendous influence on the development of museum exhibits and aquarium labels. She later married Dr. Walter Munk, the noted physical oceanographer and my idea of the "compleat" scientist. Judy

and Walter, living only a few doors from our house in Scripps Estates, are still among our dearest friends.

For work in the aquarium, we lured Ben Cox away from the California Fish and Game Department's trout hatchery in Fillmore. Ben could do all sorts of things, especially tying up seines and other types of nets for shallow water collecting, and was an expert welder. He built a tandem tank-trailer for carrying specimens from the collecting grounds to the aquarium, and we proceeded to fill the tanks in the old aquarium to dangerous levels of population, waiting for the new aquarium to become available.

And become available it finally did. Named the T. Wayland Vaughan Aquarium-Museum, in honor of the second Director of the Institution, it was finished in February of 1951. We had planned on about six months of work after completion before opening to the public, but the administration had another idea: "Let's open it up on March 22, the University of California's Charter Day!" So what I had was less than six weeks.

It wasn't enough by a long shot, and, in spite of 'round the clock work by all my staff, as well as unpaid work by Leslie and other volunteers, we did get kind of ready. There were 24 exhibit cases in the Museum, and we had to open with six of them still empty. We at least painted their plain backgrounds in a carefully color-coordinated way, with signs listing the title of the display that would eventually be installed, but it was to be two years before the last case was filled. It was intended that these exhibits be changed fairly regularly, and in the ten years following the opening, there was a total of 45 exhibits in those 24 cases.

On opening day there was a big ceremony. I had suggested that my predecessor, Percy Barnhart, be invited, and he was. Talking to a reporter, Barney pointed to the new building and said "E. W. Scripps promised me that building 20 years ago!"

One big job was in the sorting of the invertebrate collection, for which no funds had been provided. The first thing I did was to locate all the type specimens (those specimens designated as "types" upon which some new classification—family, genus, species, etc.—was based). These were extremely valuable specimens, and required care that my meager staff and budget could not provide. Therefore, with the permission of the Director of the Institution, they were sent away to other institutions where appropriate specialists were located. Thus, all the nudibranchs went to Hopkins Marine Station near Monterey, where several malacologists were specializing in nudibranchs. And so on...

For the aquarium, we worked out a system of making good, permanent labels. One of the purchases I made was a Nolan proof press, and we set up type by hand for label texts. The University of California Press in Berkeley had a Monotype system, and my friend Augie Young used it to make up a number of complete type fonts for us. Careful study of samples suggested the most easily-read typefaces, and we had Futura and Stymie in several sizes and formats, including bold and italic. On my own time, I built some type cases for them, using the California job case as a model. (Typographers must have been a very conservative bunch, in some ways. The California Job Case has the upper-case letters in alphabetical order except for J and U, which come at the end— because they were the last letters added to the English alphabet!) I wrote the texts, and staff artist Judy Horton became especially skilled in setting type and pulling

proofs. I helped primarily by cleaning the type and putting it away, carefully, each letter in its correct compartment, learning to mind my p's and q's.

The proof was pulled on the Nolan press, using coated paper. Then I made a drawing of the species depicted, drawing on scratchboard to make a black figure with lines of detail in white. This was pasted onto the printed sheet and handed to our friends at the Photo Lab (who had come to occupy some of the space in that controversial basement) and they produced an 8" x 10" negative on Kodalith film. This gave us clear letters and a clear drawing with black lines on an opaque black background. Judy and I then taped colored cellophane behind the type and Leslie or I made a water-color underlay on translucent paper to be taped behind the picture, depicting the true colors of the specimen. The whole label was then installed in a back-lighted frame above the tank.

This was quite time-consuming, but very effective, and I was pleased to hear at the various meetings of aquarium people that we were one of the best-labeled aquariums in the business.

Often there wasn't time for one of these Kodalith labels, and I would paint a picture and hand-letter the text on single-ply Strathmore bristol board, thin enough to let the light shine through in a gentle, diffused way. This once led to a pleasant encounter in the viewing gallery. A visitor stopped me and asked "Who does the calligraphy on these labels?"

I told him that I did.

He reached into a shirt pocket, pulled out a fountain pen, and said "Do you use an Osmiroid pen like this?"

"Yes!" I said, and withdrew my own Osmiroid in this brother-meets-brother ritual.

"Do you know Lloyd Reynolds, the calligrapher at Reed College?"

"Yes!" I cried; "And I use his Chancery Cursive manual all the time!"

And we had a long conversation about calligraphy and calligraphers.

Not all the visitors were so pleasant. I remember one who criticized the use of the plural term "walruses" in one of the museum exhibits, insisting that it should be "walri." I tried to tell him that "walrus" was not a Latin word, but came from a Danish combination probably meaning "whale-horse," and was now an accepted word in English, but he became very belligerent and I finally said he was probably right, in order to avoid what looked to be an impending physical attack.

I did once separate two men who were actually fighting over the "proper" name of a fish; one called it a "sculpin" and the other agreed with the label calling it a "scorpionfish." I tried to tell them they were both right; it just depended on local usage, and that that was the reason for scientific names. They stopped fighting, but I don't think my little lecture had any lasting effect.

Long before the new aquarium was built, we were the clearing-house for public information, and for several years I was the official Public Relations Officer for the whole Institution. Hundreds of letters were written, and hundreds of phone calls answered. Sometimes the questions were hard to answer, like one from a bar where a bet was in progress:

"What is the I.Q. of the average porpoise?"

The only answer I could give to that was that if an intelligence scale were ever set up for porpoises, the "average" would be 100. That would also be the average for grasshoppers and elephants and amoebae.

Sometimes the questions placed an unwanted responsibility upon me:

"Are frogs fish? I am a Catholic, and I eat only fish on Fridays, and I want to know if it's all right to eat frog's legs."

I had just read that the Pope had approved the eating of whale meat on Fridays, and I told the woman that frogs were a whole lot closer to fish than whales were—but that she'd really better take it up with her priest.

One Sunday a San Diego party boat fisherman hooked a Spotted Ragfish (*Icosteus ænigmaticus*), and nobody aboard knew what it was. A newspaper man tried to find out by calling the Scripps Institution, and the janitor, happening to be in the Museum at the moment, answered the phone. This was in the old museum on the ground floor of the Library, and the janitor could have raised his eyes to see a good plaster model of the Ragfish hanging on the wall, but he didn't, and said he didn't know what kind of fish it was. The next day the newspaper had a photo of the fisherman with his Ragfish, and a caption "Strange Fish Baffles Scripps Scientists."

One thing I had dreamed of having was a bookshop in the Aquarium-Museum, as a way of adding a little to our meager operating budget, and begged to have one installed in the new building. University rules, however, got in the way; any money earned by an individual department could not stay with that department, but must go into the general funds of the entire seven-campus University of California. (It's now a NINE-campus institution.) Dr. Robert Gordon Sproul was President of the whole shebang, and he told us that if we could find one exception to that rule, he might be able to talk the Board of Regents into letting us have a Bookshop.

And Prof. John Isaacs of the Scripps Institution discovered the required exception: there was an elevator to take people to the top of the Campanile on the Berkeley campus, and each

passenger was required to pay a small fee. This fee constituted the salary of the elevator operator, and did not become part of the general fund.

Armed with this information, Dr. Sproul went before the Regents and secured permission for our bookshop. The Regents even lent us \$12,000 to get started. By this time, the new Aquarium-Museum was in operation, and I built display cases and bookshelves, ordered a wonderful batch of books, and the Aquarium Bookshop was under way. All our titles dealt with marine science or other maritime matters (including sea shanties), and I had an exhilarating sense of power in going over a publisher's catalog and saying "I'll have that one, and that, and that...."

We took special orders for books, even when they were not concerned with marine science. A foreign graduate student came to me to say that his fiancé was coming over to join him, and they were to be married. He confessed, however, that he was quite ignorant about the "physical aspects" of marriage, and wanted me to order him an appropriate book.

The best I could do at that time was Van der Veldt's *Physiology and Technique of Marriage*, a dry-as-dust tome that never even suggested that there could be any fun in the whole arrangement. (This was way before *The Joy of Sex* and other similar books had been published.)

The book arrived, and the wedding was held. A few weeks later the new husband came to me again:

"Do you have anything more advanced?"

There was much to learn about running a business, even one as small as this one.. Many of our customers were graduate students at the Institution, and their financial status was irregular. Nevertheless, they needed text books. So I wanted to set up a charge account system for them,

but was told by the Business Office that it couldn't be done. Several passionate memos were returned with a "No!" answer, and in desperation I finally set up a simple system of my own. The resulting IOU's were discovered, of course, at the next cash audit, and the business officer said "Sam, I've told you over and over you can't have a charge account!"

I answered "I've never been able to understand why we can't."

"It's because you don't have an Accounts Receivable Ledger!"

"Well," I said, " couldn't such a ledger be set up?"

The business officer thought for a moment, then said "Sure, I don't see why not."

I'd just been asking for the wrong thing.

That Business Office was quite hard-headed about some things. I wanted an adding machine to help add up each day's take and figure how much of it was sales tax, but could not afford one. This was long before the invention of the hand-held calculator, and the simplest adding machine cost more than \$100.00; if you wanted it to do multiplication and division (which was accomplished by the noisy clackety-clack of adding or subtracting a given figure the requisite number of times) it was more than \$300.00.

In visiting a State-run war surplus store in Los Angeles, where genuine war surplus was sold at extremely low rates to federal and state organizations, I found, for \$5.00, a Munroe Calculator. New ones cost, I believe, something like \$800.00, which was more than my total annual budget. So I gleefully forked over the five bucks out of my own pocket, and took the calculator to be used as an adding machine.

But it was not to be. The business office ruled that my department was not qualified to have a calculator, , and permitting me to have one, even at that low price, would set a precedent;

When it wore out, I might demand a new one! So I couldn't keep it, even if the \$5.00 came from my own pocket without reimbursement.

I still marvel at the convenience and low price of hand-held calculators...

As our attendance grew, so did our staff, and we ended up with a total of six. Eighteen wonderful years passed, and it's hard to imagine a more stimulating sort of job. I learned SCUBA diving, went fishing as often as I wanted, worked with paint and plaster making museum exhibits, gave public lectures, sat on outside committees such as the one at the Department of the Interior in Washington, DC, where we were planning a great new National Aquarium to be built at Haines Point. (This project was later abandoned). I worked with the local Science Fair, traveled to scientific meetings in distant places and met hundreds of fascinating people.

One of the most memorable of such trips was a sojourn to Monaco for the Premiere Congrès Internationale d'Aquariologie, where I presented a paper on *The Longevity of Fishes in Captivity*, full of data gathered by mail from aquariums all over the world. I traveled to Frankfurt am Main without cost, on the old Military Air Transport Service (MATs), while Leslie took a paid passage on a commercial airline, her fare not covered by the University. In Frankfurt we were met by a group of school teachers; there were then (in 1960) a number of American Schools serving the children of American soldiers stationed in Germany, and I proceeded in the next eight days to give 32 school programs of folk music on the way to Monaco. (I was on vacation from the University during those 8 days.)

In Monaco we were royally received—literally. Jacques Cousteau presided over a cocktail party at the palace, where in groups of two or three we were presented to Prince Rainier and Princess Grace. The Princess was graciousness personified; she noticed that Leslie and I

were not carrying cocktail glasses, and without consulting us, whispered to a servant who brought us each a brimming glass of orange juice.

We enjoyed meeting aquariologists from all over the world. One of the Germans was quite dignified and formal, but at dinner one evening in a café he loosened up, and began teasing me about my last name.

"Hinton!" he laughed. "Do you know what 'Hinten' means in Low German?"

I assured him I did, that it was the same in Yiddish -- a shortening of "behinten" meaning "behind," that portion of the anatomy that is sat upon. Then he went off into gales of laughter when I told him what his name— "Backhaus"— signified in rural America. Dieter Backhaus was one of Europe's leading aquariologists.

There were many other meetings, all in the United States but all delightful. These included the American Association of Museums, the Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, and (on my own time) the American Folklore Society, the Western Folklore Society, and the Society for Ethnomusicology. I was also a member of the Folk Music and Jazz Panel of the U. S. Department of State's Intercultural Exchange Program, on Boards of Directors of the La Jolla Art Center (before it became the Museum of Contemporary Art), Torrey Pines Park, and *Sing Out!* Magazine. Leslie and I were also founding members of the Board of Directors of the Mingei International Museum of World Folk Art.

One pleasant aspect of Aquarium-Museum operations had involved working closely with the schools, scheduling hundreds of tours, talks and teacher-training programs. UCSD, foundd in 1963, needed someone familiar with the schools of San Diego County, and I left

Scripps in 1964 and moved to the new campus as its Director of Relations With Schools, .and became a sort of ombudsmen for high schools and community colleges. This was at first a Systemwide position, and I represented all UC campuses to all the “feeder schools” of California. This continued through a busy and happy learning period of 16 years, and I retired in 1980 at the age of 63, becoming once more a full-time musician and entertainer.

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6,500 words

**CHAPTER 20--BLUE CRABS AND FOLK FESTIVALS**

FROM THE JOURNAL

*Callinectes sapidus*

BLUE CRAB

Newport Island, Rhode Island; bridge at north

end of the island

July 7, 1968

From the bridge leading onto the north end of the island, a number of Blue Crabs could be seen swimming about the pilings, sometimes "landing" on them to pick off food morsels.

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The Technical Director of the 1968 Newport Folk Festival was George Wein, and he told me "Now remember, you have just 16 minutes on stage, and you must NOT go overtime."

Adhering to a schedule in a big Festival concert is a hard job, and Mr. Wein had reason to worry. During the folk music boom of the '50s and '60s, there were lots and lots of folksong singers, and the enthusiasm of audiences made each performer want to stay on and on. Many "hootenannies" and festivals were quite loosely organized, and going overtime was usual. But that wasn't permitted at Newport.

I told Mr. Wein that I prided myself on maintaining schedules. I wore my wrist watch on the inside of the left wrist so that its face was visible while I played the guitar, and my program

that night, played to an audience estimated at 13,000, lasted exactly 16 minutes. Mr. Wein graciously thanked me.

The Newport Folk Festival was, of course, extremely well organized, its big evening programs tailored to a reasonable length, with only ten or so performers scheduled. On the other hand, the amateur "hootenannies" that were set up in every community during the folk music boom nearly always seemed to be organized on the principle of "more is better," and they would last far, far into the night.

There was one of these in San Diego put on by the San Diego Folk Song Society in the Jewish Community Center on 54th Street. Admission was charged, with all proceeds going to a Mental Health charitable organization, and in their enthusiasm, the organizers made the roster of performers much too long. It was 1:00 o'clock in the morning before the last act was finished.

A fortunate aftermath occurred a few weeks later. Pete Seeger had been booked for a concert in San Diego, and for this a contract had been signed for the use of the auditorium at Hoover High School. Just before this date, the House Unamerican Activities Committee found Pete guilty of contempt of Congress, and the school board of the San Diego Unified School District thereupon decided that his presence would constitute a terrible menace to our country, so they canceled the contract. That happened at the last minute, but a local benefactor took the decision to court, and managed to get a court hearing on the Friday before the Saturday program. Pete had already arrived, was staying with Leslie and me, and he and I went to the court together.

After a lot of testimony (much of it of a groundless, pointless, and almost hysterical opposition from a couple of members of a Veterans' organization) the judge found for the plaintiffs, and ruled that the School Board must abide by the contract. The concert should was to

go on as scheduled. After making this pronouncement, the judge asked that "Mr. Seeger and Mr. Hinton approach the bench." We did, and the judge spoke to us quietly.

"I just wanted to tell you that I was at that Hootenanny at the Jewish Community Center, and I stayed till the bitter end!"

Getting to know people like Pete Seeger was one of the great delights of those years of the folk music boom. Folk music performers tend to be such interesting people, and everywhere Leslie and I go now, we usually find some that we know. Folksingers passing through or performing in San Diego often get in touch with us. We've not only heard a tremendous amount of great music, but have also gotten to know the performers backstage and in the less formal workshops that went along with every festival.

On the first visit to Newport (in 1963) one of the concerts was on an evening when the fog was just blowing in from the sea. Joan Baez did a set, and she presented a lovely sight up on that high stage, in a bright yellow dress, with the fog swirling around and the breeze blowing her hair across her face. Later, at a festival in Berkeley, California, where we gave a joint children's program, I told her how that scene had impressed me.

"Oh, I remember that!" she said. "I took a breath and choked on my hair and almost couldn't finish!"

In 1968, the many pleasures of the Newport festival were greatly enhanced by the presence of our son Matt and his wife Rue. Matt was then in the Coast Guard, stationed temporarily at New Bedford, and we hadn't been seeing nearly enough of him. That pleasure had also been experienced earlier at the Berkeley Folk Music Festival, when both Matt and our daughter

Leanne were undergraduate students there. Anything that helped us see our wonderful wandering kids was great!

I had given several concerts on the Berkeley campus long before the beginning of the Berkeley Folk Music Festivals--indeed, before the beginning of the Great Folk Music Boom of the '50s and '60s. . The first of these was while I was a UCLA student in 1938, when UCLA flew me up to Berkeley to represent our campus in an all-University Homecoming held in the stadium.

Many of the early Berkeley programs were in Wheeler Auditorium. I remember one in particular, a program for children on a Saturday morning. Wheeler had a sort of stage-- a large lecture platform, but no backstage area; when you left the stage by way of the door at the back, you were out in the hallway. This kids' program went well, and the applause was most gratifying. Planning an encore, I left the stage by that back door—and locked myself out!

It was a dreadful, helpless feeling to stand there in the hall and listen to the applause finally die away...

Many later programs at Berkeley, and all of the wonderful Berkeley Folk Music Festivals, were arranged by Barry Olivier. The program that got me in touch with him, way before the festivals began, was one in a series of three, with Josh White and Carl Sandburg doing the other two. This was in the early '50s, and the series was put together by the UCB Committee For Arts and Lectures. Barry, just out of high school, talked to me after my program, and asked if I'd mind telling him how much the University had paid me.

"I don't mind at all; it was quite generous. They gave me \$75.00."

Barry was outraged.

"It should have been a whole lot more, and would have been if they'd publicized it properly. Listen — could you see your way to doing another concert here in a few months? I'll handle all the publicity, and while I can't promise a fixed amount, you'll get a fair share of the gate, I know it'll be more than 75 bucks."

I said it would be fine if I could manage to get time off from work. This turned out to be possible,, and Barry arranged everything at his end. He convinced the Committee that he would take all responsibility, and that it wouldn't cost the University anything except the use of Wheeler Auditorium. They let him do it, and the concert went on — and my share of the gate was \$700.00!

That night I saw a little of Barry's attention to detail. He said that after the concert he wanted me to do a set or two at the North Gate, an off-campus coffee house, and arranged for someone to meet me and convey me there.

"When you get there, would you like a cup of coffee?"

I said yes indeed, and Barry wrote a couple of words in his pocket notebook.

"Sugar and cream?" he asked. I said yes, and the notebook came out again. And a good cup of coffee with sugar and cream was awaiting me at the North Gate.

Of all the folk festivals I've attended, the Berkeley Festivals were my favorites. While not quite as big or as widely publicized as Newport,, they were everything a Folk Music Festival ought to be. Sponsored in part by the Associated Students of the University of California, Berkeley, the Festival was Barry's brain-child, and he personally oversaw every detail. He proved to be a magnificent delegator of authority and work, and for the festivals he trained the most efficient staff I have ever met.

There were about twenty of these Berkeley Folk Festivals, each one a gem of insight and organization, and I had the honor and pleasure of being in every one of them, as performer, MC, and discussion leader. Not only was there music, but also serious discussions and seminars led by experts. The Fifteenth Annual Festival, ( October 7-11, 1970 -- an Autumn Festival in addition to the usual Summer Festival that year) may be considered as typical. The "faculty" included Pete Seeger, Ewan McColl and Peggy Seeger, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Mimi Fariña and Tom Jans, Big Mama Thornton, Bess Lomax Hawes, Malvina Reynolds, Los Tigres del Norte, Mississippi Sam Chatmon, the Na Rhma Wa Ci American Indian Dancers, Robbi Basho, The People's International Silver String Macedonian Band, Sara Grey, Fiddlin' Earl Collins, Brother Lee Love, Dr. Charles Seeger (Pete's father, a well-known musicologist), and me. Rock music was recognized as having spun off from folk and blues, and Nick Gravenites, Shine & Co., Joy of Cooking, Frontier, and Big Brother and the Holding Company were there to uphold that end of the music.

There were six major concerts ( one of them for children,) Seventeen workshops on subjects ranging from "An Hour With Fiddlin' Earl Collins" to a round table discussion led by Dr. Seeger : "Folk Music and Unrest." .There were showings of three folk music films made by John Cohen, and a Sacred Song Program on the Sunday morning, with many of the festival performers —and the audience—contributing. On each of the nights there was a campfire in Sophomore Grove, with "Open mike" (without the use of an actual microphone) and group singing often led by some of the talented local staff members and volunteers.. The final event was a 5-hour outdoor Jubilee Program in the U.C. Hearst Greek Theatre on Sunday afternoon, with all the Festival artists taking a turn.

In the middle of one of these Greek Theatre Jubilee Programs, the carillon in the nearby Campanile began playing very loudly. Barry said "Oh my gosh! I forgot!" and dashed to the phone, dialed a number, and spoke a few words. The carillon went silent.

The Music Department at Berkeley, immersed as it was in the classical traditions, never paid much attention to these Festivals. On one occasion, however, I did prevail upon one professor, a violin historian, to come over and hear the Hackberry Ramblers, a Cajun country music group from Lake Charles, Louisiana. This was way before the Cajun Zydeco music had obscured the older tradition. One of the members, who was a Sheriff in the Lake Charles, Louisiana, area, played music in his spare time, and was a fantastic fiddler.

At the break, the professor sought me out in great excitement. "That fiddler," he cried, "is using an Eighteenth Century bowing technique!"

One of the great things about the folk music boom was that some "forgotten" folk artists were brought back before the public for some of the acclimation they deserved. One was Mance Lipscomb, a black blues guitarist from Navasota, Texas, who had made some "race records" back in the '20s. As he sat on the Greek Theatre stage on the Berkeley campus, our son Matt took some pictures of him from behind. They were pretty impressive. He presented an 8 x 10 copy to Mr. Lipscomb, the picture showing him silhouetted against a bright background of thousands of listeners in the rising tiers.

"Oh my!" he said. "They'll never believe this back in Navasota!"

The Folk Music Sessions at the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts, up in the pine-covered mountains of Southern California, were also important to my family and me. There we had a smaller staff, and instead of one-hour workshops there were two-week courses taught for

an hour or more every day. To mention just a few of the teachers who were there over the years, Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry taught us about blues, and each held a course on instrumental work (Brownie on guitar, Sonny on harmonica). Pete Seeger taught banjo and repertoire, making and playing the chalil, and supervised the making of a steel drum. Jimmy Driftwood held forth on the Anglo-Celtic tradition of the Ozarks, Alan Mills and Bonnie Dobson (in different summers) worked on Canadian Folksong; Kimio Eto told us about Japanese music and taught koto; Guy Carawan taught guitar and banjo and his wife Candie joined him in teaching the history of music in the Civil Rights Movement; Dr. Roger Abrahams taught folk music scholarship and Caribbean sea shanties; Bess Lomax Hawes taught guitar, voice, and respect for traditional music; the New Lost City Ramblers held forth on string band music and instruction in a number of instruments; Salli Terry taught us about unaccompanied singing, Joseph and Miranda Marais (who lived in Idyllwild the year 'round) taught about concert presentation techniques for audiences accustomed to classical music, Ataloa (a Cherokee) introduced us to American Indian life and lore; Mary Hood talked about musical literacy, and Sidney Fox lectured on folk music as used by classical composers. I taught various things, and was in charge of the whole program.

There were also ongoing programs in addition to the folk music sessions, and there was a healthy overlap. There was a child-care center, a junior theater, and arts and crafts classes. Harry Sternberg taught art, and Martha Longenecker taught pottery, on several occasions with the help of Japanese, Mexican, and Hopi folk potters. There were classical music courses galore; we always loved to see the teenage oboists and french hornists practicing out in the woods. Meredith Wilson conducted the junior orchestra one year. Modern dance was regularly taught by Bella Lewitzky, with such guest teachers as Eugene Loring and Merce Cunningham; folk dance

was the area handled by Vyts Beliajus. Bob LeHouse taught African dancing to the youngsters. (I'll always remember Bob's work with young teen-age boys, who, according to the mores of the time thought that dancing was kind of sissy. But Bob had them do a Zulu Warriors' dance, in which they brandished spears and assumed stances that were thoroughly masculine, and their hesitations about dancing vanished.) Recorder music was taught by Patty Grossman and others, and recorder players came from all over the country. Patty had given me her Dolmetsch bass recorder (the finger-holes were too far apart for her small hands), and with it I had a delightful time, sitting in on one of the Big Blows at the end of the course as one of the 10 or so bass players.

The Idyllwild folk music program lasted for about 15 years, and the classical music and drama and art classes still go on throughout the year, now under new management, no longer connected officially with the University of Southern California. ISOMATA (the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts) was the creation of two much-loved music educators, Max and Bea Krone. They officially retired in 1967, and Max died three years later.. Bea continued in a very active advisory mode almost to the time of her death in August, 2000., at the age of 98.

The San Diego State College Festival was a great Festival, and one the longest-running of the lot... This was started, I think in the very early '70s and is, in a sense, still going, although the former host institution, which has changed its name to San Diego State University) no longer sponsors it. Lou Curtiss, the original founder and organizer. has become the proprietor of "Folk Arts: Rare Records" on Adams Avenue in San Diego, and the annual Folk Roots Festival there is sponsored by the Adams Avenue Business Association. The Festival has been held on Adams Avenue for only three or four years, but Lou maintains that it is a continuation of the old State

College Festival, and the May, 1999, session, was listed as the 26th Annual event. Lou remains in the background while quietly and benignly running it, and it is always a joy to work in.

Before retirement, such activities had to be tucked around in the corners of my jobs at Scripps and UCSD. Life had become a lot more settled for Leslie and me after I became a full-time naturalist. There were regular (if often very long!) working hours, and a regular paycheck. The 18 years as Curator (Director) of the Aquarium-Museum at the University of California's Scripps Institution of Oceanography went by in an exciting tempestuous rush. This was followed by another 16 years as local Director of Relations With Schools at UCSD--the University of California, San Diego--which was opened in 1963 around the nucleus of the University's Scripps Institution of Oceanography. In addition to these full-time jobs, there have been numerous part-time assignments -- as teacher of biology and folklore for a UCLA Summer Session, teacher of many subjects for University of California Extension (from 1948 to 1989), and Lecturer In Folklore in the Department of Literature, UCSD. Fortunately, all of my full-time positions have had very flexible working hours, and during my 36-year association with the University I was fortunate in being able to pursue this secondary career as a performer of folk music.

It was lucky for me that the life, if not the official Job description, of an aquarist and a school relations officer must be based on a 24-hour day and a 7-day week, and the rules of the University preferred the building up of Compensatory Time Off rather than the paying of overtime. At one point, the ever-changing rules held that no more than 80 hours could be accrued in this way.. Try as I would, my overtime work always exceeded the prescribed limit, and the time thus lost was simply an un-reimbursed gift to the University. But that was fine; it gave me

leeway for a few concerts and small festivals during the year, plus most of the summer off (when combined with my annual vacation time) . When I was away my colleagues, with the same privileges of Compensatory Time Off and vacations, handled the work.

Thus it has been among my pleasures. both before and after retirement, to participate in all of the Berkeley and San Diego State Festivals, to be on the teaching staff of the Pinewoods Folk Music and Dance camp at Buzzard's Bay, Massachusetts; to teach song writing to junior high school kids at Port Townsend, Washington; to teach guitar at the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop; to sing for the National Folklore Festival at Wolftrap Farm in Virginia; to play and sing in several Canadian festivals in Toronto and Vancouver, to perform and run workshops at a great many of the annual Summer Solstice Festivals in the Los Angeles area, to perform at several of the Festivals of the Sea in San Francisco; to sing several times at The Ark, the fabulous coffee house in Ann Arbor, Michigan; to perform at two of the great Newport Folk Festivals and at the Golden Links Festival near Syracuse, NY; to give 32 programs in American schools in Germany, while in Europe to attend a meeting of aquariologists in Monaco, to serve on the Folklore and Jazz Subcommittee of the International Exchange Program run by the US Department of State; and to serve on the Board of Directors of *Sing Out!*, the Folk Music Magazine.

Community Concerts, Inc., and W. Colston Leigh, Inc., both booked me for a number of concerts, nearly all on Friday and Saturday nights. For a while I was fairly popular as a "second-choice" performer when the first choice wasn't able to meet part of the schedule. I was available on weekends, and I was cheap, and filled in primarily in the smaller towns where the organization's concert series consisted of less highly paid performers, like me. About 60 such

programs were given in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Louisiana, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Washington, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming.

I well remember one in Leadville, Colorado, which lies at an altitude of over 10,000 feet. I felt a little shortness of breath while walking about the town, and at the theater told my hostess that I might want to sit for part of the program in order to have enough wind for the harmonica and tin whistle. She found a stool for me, then said "I forgot to tell you; the oxygen bottle and inhaling mask are just offstage over there." I wasn't the only one that worried about the altitude! (NOTE: I am proud to say that by showtime I was acclimated, and used neither the stool nor the oxygen.)

Another source of bookings was the College Association of Public Events and Services (CAPES), now defunct; I did scores of programs for them at Community Colleges and other college and universities in California, Oregon, and Washington. Personal contacts and other agencies had me playing at other colleges and universities all over the country.

Programs for the elementary and secondary schools have been frequent, but before my retirement 1980, were not done nearly as often as requested.; the best times for me were in the evenings and on weekends, which didn't fit at all with school schedules. After retiring from the University., however, I averaged between three and four school programs every week in the school-years between 1980 and 2000. . Most school programs in San Diego County were arranged by the Gifted and Talented Education program of the San Diego City Schools, and by Young Audiences of San Diego. Advancing age (83) has recently necessitated my retirement from these fine organizations. Unfortunately for me, my goal of singing in every school in the

county has not been realized. The San Diego City School system alone has about 190 schools, and I've sung in only about 150 of them....

There have always been lots of one-time "casual" jobs. These are usually arranged by phone, all of them having come about without the help of an agent. One call came from the Program Chair of a Woman's Club in a San Diego suburb. Her scheduled speaker had fallen ill, and she wanted me to perform the next day. I told her I already had an engagement at that time, but added the hope that they could use me at some later date.

"No," she said: "This is the last meeting for this year."

"Well, maybe you could use me sometime NEXT year."

Again she said no. "Next year, we'll have time to get who we WANT."

Making records has been fascinating, and I have recorded for ABC-Eagle, Columbia, Decca, Folkways, RCA-Victor, Time-Life Publications and National Geographic. This all started when I sang at a party in Del Mar, California, where one of the guests was a music publisher named Irving Bibo. Mr. Bibo liked my work, and was especially interested in the then-new song by Vern Partlow, "The Talking Atomic Blues." This was in 1949, and before a year had passed he had copyrighted the song in Vern Partlow's name, and secured a contract for me with Gordon Burdge, who was the whole staff of ABC-Eagle Records. With Vern's permission, Mr. Bibo had re-named the song "Old Man Atom," and sheet music and 78-rpm records with my singing of it were duly produced. The recording was done in the old Capitol Records studio in Hollywood, and I chose "Long John" for the backup side of this single 78 rpm record. A number of other singles, all of traditional folksongs, was recorded at the same session.

“Old Man Atom” attained quite a bit of popularity, and was widely heard on the radio and in cafe juke-boxes. Other covers of the same song were made by The Sons of the Pioneers, Ozie Waters, and several other artists. Columbia Records bought mine from Gordon Burdge, who was supposed to share the proceeds with me but never did. In fact, I got nothing whatever from the recording of that song except publicity, some of which was not so good.

Feelings against "Un-Americanism" were running high, and one ultra-conservative group considered the song as threatening to our national security. The record and I were blacklisted. The song ended with the line "Peace in the world or the world in pieces," and that, to the little minds of the censors, just HAD to be Communist propaganda! I was included in California State Senator Jack Tenney's list as a possible subversive, but here was no other government action taken, Nevertheless, Columbia and other record companies withdrew the song from their catalogs, and radio stations voluntarily stopped playing it. (I felt really betrayed to be listed by Senator Jack Tenney. He was a singer himself, and a songwriter, havng composedi "Mexicali Rose," and I thought he should be more considerate to a fellow musician.)

I was never subpoenaed, but the number of singing jobs temporarily declined markedly, and I was bothered by innuendo rather than by overt action. For example, I had been working on a film-strip about seashore life with the science supervisor's office in the San Diego County school system. The County school board had been somewhat reluctant to fund what they thought of as an experimental advanced technological educational method, but had finally agreed to it. One of the County School Board members, however — a retired admiral — was vehemently opposed to any hint of political pinkness, and my collaborators told me that if my name were to appear on the list of film makers the admiral would assuredly see to it that all district support was

immediately withdrawn. So I had to bow out with a great feeling of frustration; the admiral hadn't really DONE anything for me to complain about, and there was no way I could fight openly against this kind of anticipated prejudice.

There was one complaint directed personally to me when I performed in a California Youth Camp (sort of an outdoor reform school), and one of the youngsters asked me if I wasn't the one who had recorded "Old Man Atom." I said I was and he said

"Well, my dad said if he ever met you he would break your neck!"

Vern Partlow, the composer, didn't fare as well. He was hailed into hearings by both State and Federal legislators. He lost his job on the newspaper, and his whole life—which wasn't very long after that— was destroyed. No authority at the Scripps Institution ever questioned my continued employment.

Mr. Bibo was dumbfounded at all this, but didn't give up on me. He placed me with Decca Records, where I made a number of singles for children, plus three 12" LP albums. My two kids, by the way, were intrigued at one point, when the children's 78-RPM singles were re-issued in the new 45-RPM format. They found they could play them at 78 RPM, and they sounded much more interesting that way.

I loved visiting the Decca studios in Hollywood, where a large wooden cigar-store Indian, gazing intently into the distance with a hand shading his eyes, was decorated with a placard saying "Where's the melody?"

Moe Asch was at Idyllwild one summer, and he asked me to make some recordings for his Folkways label. This resulted in four 12" LP's, which today are available as audio tapes or CDs from the Folkways Project at the Smithsonian Institution. Moe, the son of writer Sholem Asch,

was a man of great knowledge, and a pleasure to work with. The choice of songs, the titles of albums and the voluminous record notes were left up to me without any interference on his part. He paid me union scale (both American Federation of Musicians and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) for the recording sessions at studios of my choice, and he paid the recording studios. Any succeeding royalties were in the form of free copies of the records.

Another interesting recording session was for Time-Life Publishing Co., which was doing a series called "The Sounds of History." They called me in for some songs from our Colonial days. My fondest memory of that session is that there was a string quartet in the studio, rehearsing a piece composed by Benjamin Franklin as a *tour de force* of *scordatura*. Each instrument was tuned differently, and the whole thing was to be played on open strings alone. The cellist was a famous concert artist. On this occasion, he clamped the cello between his knees and held his left hand up above the scroll, bowing the open strings and giggling the whole time. This quartet did not appear on the final record. Neither did any of the songs I recorded, with the exception of one duet ("The Quaker Lover"), arranged on the spot with Salli Terry.

Somewhere along in there I was approached by the RCA-Victor people. They were doing a double-disk 12" LP album to be called "How the West Was Won" (not related in any way to the movie by that name, which came out shortly thereafter.) They had hired Alan Lomax to help choose songs and write the accompanying booklet, and he had recommended that I be included in this activity.

Most of my classroom programs in the schools are of songs related to American history, so I had lots of ideas for songs to use, and to save time, sang them into my home reel-to-reel tape recorder, and sent in the tape. Si Rady and his co-workers decided to use a good many of the

songs, and wanted me personally to sing some of them on the final recording. I had a verbal agreement of exclusivity with Moe Asch at Folkways, but Moe generously gave me the go-ahead for this recording.

Not all of these songs were then in my usual repertoire, and I made the tape while reading the words and music. Occasionally I would have to resort to a practice that is common in solo folk music, playing an extra bar or so on the guitar while gathering my thoughts for the next line. By the time we made the recording in LA, I knew the songs, and such illegitimate pauses were not necessary. However, most of the songs were backed by a small orchestra, and the arranger had written in all those pauses! We worked it out, though; the arranger was present, and those professional musicians had no problem in playing to a score altered on the spot.

Other performers on this album included Jimmy Driftwood, the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir, Bing Crosby, and Rosemary Clooney, but none of these were present at my recording session. In one of the songs that I had recommended ("Down By the Brazos") I play guitar and sing in the chorus while Rosemary Clooney does the solo, but I'm sorry to say that I have never met the lady, all of our relationships having been purely electronic.

One folklore journal praised this album with faint damns, saying it was "not as bad as one would expect."

Later on, there was a similar request for my services from the National Geographic Society, asking for help in selecting numbers for an album of Cowboy Songs, and, again, helping to prepare an accompanying booklet. All the writing and editing was done by mail, with my recording of five songs done in Washington DC in 1975 while I was there covering the Smithsonian Folk Festival On the Mall for National Public Radio.

There were several early television appearances, including a series of history-related songs made for the Los Angeles County Schools. One TV program involved providing background music for an art-instruction program done by my brother-in-law, Jon Gnagy. He came to Los Angeles, to make a few films of his "You Are An Artist" series, and, wanting in one of them to draw a dustbowl scene, asked me to sing Woody Guthrie's "Talking Dustbowl Blues" as a background. This was fine with me, but I told Jonnie we should really get Woody's permission, and we phoned his wife Marjorie in their New York City home..

Woody wasn't in, and Marjorie said that he had gone out to buy a loaf of bread a couple of weeks before, and had just kept on going. She thought he might be somewhere in the LA area, and we were advised to check and see if Will Geer knew where he was. So we phoned Will, and sure enough, Woody was there with him in Topanga Canyon.

Woody joined us in Hollywood, gave full permission for me to do his song, and Jonnie took us all out to a late lunch after the session. That was a very pleasant day.

I had first met Woody in an "Oakie" camp in the California desert several years before. While I was at UCLA and doing some herpetological field work in the desert with fellow-student "Woody" Woodall, I heard that my literary hero, John Steinbeck, was visiting this camp. I screwed up my courage and went there and introduced myself. And he introduced me to Woody Guthrie!

Woody's friend and host, Will Geer the actor, was also someone that Leslie and I met on several occasions, as we were often invited to some of the same parties. Will was a wonderful raconteur and reciter; he did a marvelous interpretation of T. A. Daly's poem "Noah and Jonah and Captain John Smith" which had the crowd participating as well as they could while

wanting to roll on the floor with laughter. He also performed a hilarious restrained dance while he recited a political poem whose refrain went "One step forward and two steps back; / That is the method of the Liberal attack."

One evening activity that has brought me a tremendous amount of pleasure is teaching for University Extension. My first such course was on Folk Music of the World (talk about an ambitious approach!), taught in 1948. Such classes were held once a week, in 2- or 3-hour sessions, depending upon the number of college credits carried. Mr. Caleb A. ("Shelly") Lewis was in charge of the San Diego branch of the Extension program, and he was supportive, experimental, and open-minded. He had me teaching courses in a number of subjects. Over the years, these have included Oceanography, Marine Biology, Geography, General Folklore, Folksong In the Classroom, American Folk Music, Guitar For the Classroom Teacher, Folksongs and History, World Music, Calligraphy, and Scientific Illustration. These were all full-credit college courses, and most of my students were school teachers. I have taught one or another of these courses on seven of the nine campuses of the University of California.

At one point, the University decreed that its employees could not be paid more than their basic salary, so I had to teach gratis for a few years. Extension had budgeted the salaries, and had the money available, so Shelly was able to divert it into buying a full set of folk music recordings from the Library of Congress, and, for a Marine Biology class, ship-time on one of the smaller Scripps research vessels ( the *Paolina T.* ) for seagoing field trips.

I tremendously enjoyed teaching about seashore life, and those classes were always well attended—even the field trips. Tidepool field trips must be taken when the tide is low, and the situation on the Pacific Coast of North America is that the lowest tides in the summer come

between midnight and 5:00 am. Students in those summer courses turned out for 3:00 AM field trips without complaint. In winter, the extreme low tides are in the afternoons, but winter scheduling was a problem, for during the school year all daytime field trips had to be scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays, when my students were not occupied in their teaching jobs, and the tides rarely cooperated in this respect.

Two courses (one of them taught twice) were especially pleasurable for me. One of these was called "Land and Life in Baja California," and was team-taught with Dr. Homer Aschman, an expert in the human geography of the Baja California peninsula and Professor of Geography at the University of California, Riverside. Homer taught about the people and the history, while I did the zoology and botany. The course was held in Cabo San Lucas, at the southern tip of Baja California, where Shelly and his staff had arranged for the use of a fancy hotel during its off-season. We all lived and dined in this sumptuous spot, and the teaching was continuous, on both formal and informal bases. Shelly had even arranged for Leslie to accompany me. I learned a lot, and we had a marvelous time.

I had brought along a small dredge and a plankton net, both of which could be handled from a skiff, and there was also a small microscope. Through the use of this equipment we were treated to a number of fascinating creatures in addition to the ones we saw while simply tidepooling or faceplate diving.

That other course of such pleasant memories was called "The Folk Musicians," held in 1972 and again in 1973. We had a whole raft of excellent folk musicians. In the first session, Spring Quarter, 1972, we had Jean Ritchie, Mike Seeger, Malvina Reynolds, Bessie Jones and her Sea Island Singers, Frank and Anne Warner, Guy Carawan, and Jimmy Driftwood. In 1973 it

was Gene Bluestein, Hedy West, Irene and Tony Saletan, Alan Mills, Caroline and Sandy Paton, Michael Cooney, "U. Utah" Phillips, Clabe Hangan, bluesman Tom Shaw, and an early pre-rock band called "The Frontier."

Each folk musician took a 10-day tour, giving a lecture-recital at each of 7 campuses of the University of California — UC San Diego, UC Los Angeles, UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC Santa Cruz, UC Davis, and UC Berkeley. I was the first performer at each campus both years, and arranged for transportation and lodging for everybody along the whole route. At each campus, a local folk music scholar or enthusiast was the campus coordinator.

It all went smoothly, although there was an on-stage quarrel between one of the coordinators and Alan Mills, the Canadian folksinger. The coordinator, a noted folk music scholar, made some slighting remarks about the state of folk music scholarship in Canada, and Alan took patriotic umbrage. That coordinator later told me that he would be glad to be coordinator again if we offered the course, but NOT if Alan Mills were to be among the artists. I had to tell him that Alan had told me that HE'd be glad to do another series— but not if that same coordinator was to be on the list!

The whole thing took a lot of organizing, but boy! was it fun!

Shelley also experimented with courses in non-traditional settings, and had me offer college-credit classes on both radio and television. These involved final meetings with registered viewers and listeners, who had to take the final exam under my eagle eye.

There were many other broadcasting opportunities that didn't involve UC Extension. This included several sponsored radio and TV series, the first of which was in 1948. Called "A Calendar of Folksongs;" this was a live

show on radio station KSDJ (which later became KCBQ) in San Diego, and one of my sponsors was the Sun Harbor Tuna Company.

At one point, the announcer was offering a recipe for "spooned tuna cakes." I thought he said "spooned tunicates," Tunicates are rather squishy invertebrates that live attached to pier pilings, and it was hard to imagine anyone eating them..

Another radio series was "Songs From Home", sponsored by the Home Federal Savings and Loan people. In this one there was a theme for every half-hour show, in which one song led to various versions and other sorts of connections; I sang about half the numbers, and played records for the rest,. for the most part using the "field recordings" from the Library of Congress. On one program I sang a version of the Irish "Banks of the Roses," which begins with the lines:

"On the banks of the roses, my love and I sat down,  
And I took out my violin and played my love a tune.  
In the middle of the tune, oh she sighed and she said  
'Or Johnny, lovely Johnny -- would yea lave me?'"

On that day I did several other songs with a musical-instrument theme, and remarked that perhaps radio did not provide a medium in which I could freely discuss the Freudian and Jungian symbolism of these instruments. Folklorist Ed Cray was at that time doing a radio folk music series on station KPFK (Pacifica Foundation) in Los Angeles, and he announced that this demonstrated one of the differences between my commercial radio and his listener-sponsored radio, and that HE was free to discuss such matters. And he did.

In 1975, National Public Radio hired me to work as joint anchorman with Jonathan Eberhart in a three-week covering of the Smithsonian Folk Festival on the Mall in Washington,

DC. During the day, Jonathan and I scurried around with portable tape recorders, recording anything of interest we came across. That night, all our snippets of tape would have been magically organized into coherence by the incredibly talented NPR staff, and Jonathan and I would talk on the air about these recordings. Leslie and I were housed in an apartment near the Watergate apartments, and we did our grocery shopping in the Safeway in the Watergate basement. That really was fun!

Another delightful event was a trip to Anchorage, Alaska, aboard the educational cruise ship *S. S. Universe*. During the day, I lectured on marine biology and physical oceanography, discussing marine animals, marine ecology, tides and waves. In the evenings I sang folksongs in the lounge. Other faculty members on this cruise were geologist Barney Pipkin from the University of Southern California ( a most engaging lecturer), anthropologist Patrick O'Houlihan from the Heard Museum of Tucson, Arizona, and a young Tlingit Indian named Norman Tate, who was adept in the arts and history of the native Americans of the Pacific Northwest.

I'll always remember Norman as he was making a bentwood box in the traditional style, and someone asked him what that box was worth. "I don't know what it's WORTH," he replied, "but I'll get about \$2,000 for it!"

There were many stops along the way, and Leslie and I were privileged to see a number of Alaskan cities and to take a few hikes on their outskirts.

In 1963 I took most of the summer off from Scripps and taught two Summer Session courses at UCLA — Biology 12, The Natural History of Southern California, and Folklore 155, The Forms of Folklore. The two professors who usually taught these courses— Ken Norris of the Department of Biology, and folklorist D. K. Wilgus— were both away for the summer, and had

asked me to fill in for them. Shortly after that, the Department of Literature at UCSD appointed me Lecturer in Folklore, and every year thereafter until 1982 I taught one upper-division course, General Literature 160, The Forms of Folklore. This was made possible by a complicated arrangement in which the payroll showed me as working 84% time as Campus Director of Relations With Schools, and 16% time as Lecturer in Folklore. In actual practice, I was devoting much more than 40 hours a week to that Directorship, and a lot more than 16% time to the teaching, with total working hours far in excess of 100% time.

It was a heady experience, being a member of the faculty, having an office near other faculty members of the Literature Department, holding office hours for students, attending faculty meetings, and even supervising a number of "199s" — independent undergraduate research projects. I sometimes wished that I had gone on for a PhD in either biology or folklore, and could be a professor all the time, but actually, I wouldn't change a thing if my life could be lived over again.

Unquestionably, my interests in natural history and in folk music have given me an extremely happy life. They have led to my meeting and marrying Leslie -- the most fortunate happening in a fortunate life. And they have led to lifelong friends. To name only a few, these include scientists such as Carl Hubbs and his wife Laura, Ken Norris and his wife Phyllis, Graeme and Pat Welch, Bob and Sonia Hamburger, and musicians such as Guy and Candie Carawan, Jean Ritchie and her husband George Pickow, Pete and Toshi Seeger, Tom Paxton, and Bess Lomax Hawes.

It's been great to follow two major interests, to have biologist friends who think I'm a fine musician, and musician friends who think I must be a good naturalist. There's a lot to be said for living this kind of double life!

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