

had the solution. We rolled a half full keg of beer out to the site, along with the garage door, which someone had conveniently torn off the hinges.

“Perfect”... I said. “Van Brahn would be proud!”

But who would be the stunt pilot? The ramp had become serious. It shot off at a very acute angle. Before we had time to contemplate the severity of such an angle combined with mass and speed....

We heard the sound of a motorcycle gaining speed. It was Shag. He was wearing his bonafide World War I leather Van Ricktoven, flying ace leather hat and goggles, his black Marlon Brando, Wild One, motorcycle jacket, a red scarf and red long underwear and engineer boots. He was coming fast from about 150 yards, hell bent for leather, screaming like a banshee.

He hit the ramp at about 50 miles an hour Ferrooop! And he was gone. I mean seriously air born. He cleared the creek, a couple of cars and a few amazed drunks, and entered the woods at about fifteen feet off the ground, as he disappeared all I remember seeing were the tops of the trees he struck shaking as he went in.

“Who wants to go to a party?” Captain America was standing atop a burned out 57’ Chevy with a battery powered megaphone. “Who wants to go on a Magical Mystery Tour?”

Shag had flown off into the woods, landing where ever and everyone had already forgotten about him. They had forgotten about him before he even hit the ground out of their sight. Out of sight out of mind.

I was still pulling the mud out of my ears from my unsuccessful attempt to jump the creek when I was forcibly lifted off the ground and placed in the rescue truck. "Wait a minute." I said, "What about Shag?"

Everybody said, "What about Shag?" in unison... The engine started and we were off. I later learned that Shag had landed safely enough, and he was planning on riding his motorcycle to Woodstock in a few days. We, of course were two weeks early... Which turned out to be a blessing in the end considering how massive an exodus this event would turn out to be. I was still in my mud stained Seersucker blazer and chinos with penny loafers on... Dressed for summer school...

There were about nine or so of us in Charley Pierce's highway emergency rescue vehicle. Charley no longer wanted us to call him Captain America, his title and nick name since the early days of The Moonfish. Things were different now, more serious; not to us, but to The Captain. He was beginning to show the effects of extended alcohol and drug abuse. He was getting dark.

It was all still just another party to the rest of us, but Charley was one of the first to show signs of going off the deep end. He wouldn't be the last. So we just began calling him Charley, and after a while it became just Pierce. It was a word more befitting his new personality anyway. A sign of things to come. None of us seemed to notice.

The rescue vehicle was running well. We were driving north toward the Pennsylvania/ New Jersey border. The truck seemed to go just fine, but somewhere along 95 heading up the New England Turnpike we found out it didn't stop too well. We would find out the hard way that there was a leak somewhere in the brake line and we had lost all the fluid.

We were approaching the end of long lines of stopped and slowing cars at a toll gate when Pierce alerted us to the problem. The highway fanned out at toll gates, becoming several lanes wide. We were approaching fast at about 70 miles an hour. Right down the middle with slowing lanes of cars and semi trucks, all at varying speeds all around us. There looked like no way out but to hit the semi truck in front of us. The music was very loud. I could see Charley acting agitated at the wheel far up in front. He was waving his arms and stomping with both feet on the brake pedal. I could hear his shrill voice screaming in terror, "NO BRAKES!!!! NO BRAKES!!!!"

I had been stoned and semi comatose, lying in the back wrapped in blankets, sleeping bags, back packs and Naked Nurses listening to Mystic Danny make up his own words to the songs that were blaring through the speaker system when the rescue vehicle started to pitch violently from side to side.

One of the girls who had come along as a Naked Nurse, was in the middle of the floor doing a sensual hipped out incense dance. One minute she was dancing and the next she was up against the wall. And then the other wall. And again.

Charley, The Captain, or just Pierce, was doing a miraculous job of serpentine. Bobbing and weaving through the seemingly impassible traffic. Horns were blaring. Tires were screeching. All I could see as we were being pummeled back and forth from wall to wall....was just Pierce, he was like a mad man at the helm of a floundering ship lost in a violent storm. He had gone from sheer terror to hysterics, reckless abandon. We were all about to be crushed to death or burn in a horrible traffic accident and this lunatic was enjoying himself. Now that I look back at it, I was kind of enjoying myself too, in a scared out of my wits, very close call, kind of way.

Somehow we made it through all the cars and trucks without killing anybody. I could hear voices yelling obscenities at us at different stages of

the near tragedy, as we came within inches of ending their lives or at least their day.

Though we had made it through the traffic we were still moving pretty fast and there were still No Brakes. I was in the act of trying to make my way up to the front of the rescue vehicle, when everything came to an abrupt stop.

The rescue vehicle came to a final stop of forward motion balanced precariously on two wheels. Everyone on board let out a simultaneous "Whoo-aa," as it teetered between falling on its side or on its tires. Finally it landed correctly on its wheels with a loud foorumpf followed only by the sound of steam escaping from the radiator.

We all tumbled out of the truck laughing and babbling. Captain America immediately ran off into the woods to stash his nap sack of psychedelics; Pierce was always thinking. Soon there were cops and irate truck drivers everywhere yelling and talking. Car loads of other Woodstock bound hippies, noticing their brethren surrounded by cops and rednecks, were stopping to voice their support for us and their disdain for the men in blue and the good ol' boys.

The turnpike was overflowing with hippies headed for Woodstock. The police realized there was no profit in detaining us. There must have been

fifty people there by now and the incident was causing an even worse traffic situation then had already existed because of the festival. The police were becoming overwhelmed.

With the help of our brothers and sisters we pushed the rescue vehicle out of the mud and back on to the highway and before long we were caravanning with about twenty vehicles, VW busses, trucks, etc. all packed with young kids from the love generation... Flower Power... You could smell the incense and pot every time the traffic slowed. The size of the caravan kept growing as we got closer and closer to the festival.

At one point a very nice thing happened. The caravan of Woodstock bound people had grown miles long... The traffic often stopped, sometimes for ten or twenty minutes... At one stop people had turned off their engines. All the radios were turned to the same station.

The station everyone was tuned to had picked up on the migration occurring on all the highways because of the festival. On this particular traffic stop which lasted about ten minutes, something incredible happened. They were playing the new Crosby Stills and Nash song (Find The Cost of Freedom, or teach?) and for about four minutes, right there in the middle of the interstate highway as far as the eye could see and the ear could hear the children of the sixties were sitting and standing outside of their cars and VW

campers singing along with the radio to the song... Right along with CSN. It was amazing.

What made it even more incredible was the fact that all the cars on the other side of the interstate, across this wide meridian and divide were regular people... They were all headed away from the festival. Most were probably totally unaware of the festival.

All they could see for miles, on the northbound side of the grass meridian, were hundreds of long haired, flower children, brothers and sisters standing and singing next to their stopped vehicles.

Young hippie girls started dancing on the median and offering the clueless civilians flowers. At least once and I'm sure several times out of our vision, cars were driving across the median from the straight side of the highway to our side, to join us in our pilgrimage to Woodstock. One guy had a suit and tie on. His car got stuck in the soft mud along the median shoulder. Hippie sisters walked with him and his girlfriend as he undid his tie while brothers he didn't know pushed his car to our side of the highway. He and his girl got into a van and his car joined the caravan driven by people for the love generation.

There were no thoughts of danger or rip off. Everybody was going to the same place for the same reasons. It was truly beautiful.

The closer we got to The Woodstock Festival the heavier the traffic became. After we exited the main highway the narrow country roads were crowded. It was the first week in August. In a few days these roads would become impassable. Thousands of people would just abandon their cars and go the rest of the distance on foot. It would become a traffic nightmare for emergency vehicles and delivery trucks. From now on all people and supplies would have to be brought in by helicopter.

No one had planned for an event of this magnitude. Everybody would have to start improvising. The people running things at the concert sight and local merchants along with the police and citizens of the town would start making it up as the incredible event unfolded. That is one of the things that made it so special. It became a people run happening with an underlying theme of cooperation, brotherhood and love. And it worked. We were all lucky to be there.

They needed our truck. They didn't have enough indoor medical space. No trucks would be able to get past the thousands of abandoned cars on the roads. We and our truck were immediately whisked by police and fire company escort, to a spot directly to the left and behind the central stage. We were front row center with privilege at The Woodstock Art and Music Festival. It was an accidental miracle.

We were still a week early, so after the rescue was parked and taken over we all went about exploring the scene.

There were hundreds of working hippies preparing the stage area for the upcoming concert. The gently sloping bowl that would make up the main audience area was already being staked out by the early comers. They laid their blankets and coolers on the damp ground with the intention of sleeping there for days until the music started.

For the next few days we all explored the vast terrain that was Max Yasgar's Farm. Hills, valleys, lakes and streams... It was an awesome layout for a happening such as The Woodstock Festival. People were setting up camps and outdoor kitchens. Artists were everywhere with their hippy beads and crystals.

At night there were small campfires and groups of people singing with guitars; dancing and swaying. There were electric players with generators. Flutists, fiddlers, drum circles, fortunetellers, jugglers, story tellers and women and girls. Pretty hippy girls dancing semi naked and uninhibited. Hippy men doing the same thing.

Psychedelic school buses were here and there. One in particular we stopped by was the one and only Ken Kesey's Merry Prankster Bus with adjoining plywood stage and generator for amps. Mr. Kesey was no where

to be found but the Merry Pranksters were there in abundance and we stayed the night with them and got high as kites on window pane and fine Moroccan hashish.

I met a beautiful Jamaican girl called Song who had traveled with The Pranksters from Oregon. She invited me to stay with her on the bus for the night. She was soft and warm. She smelled of exotic Farangi oil and mango. Her name fit her well. Spending the night with her on Ken Kesey's bus in the middle of the Woodstock Festival gypsy camp was like living in a song, a dream song. It was a beautiful night.

It was the night of August 9th.

On the other side of the continent; just as the magic happening that would become the Woodstock Festival of Art, Peace, Love and Music was getting underway on the East Coast, a darker and much more sinister chain of events was beginning to unfold in the West.

On the morning of August 9th, 1969 a maid entered the front gate of an estate in trendy Benedict Canyon in Los Angeles, California. It was 8:30 in the morning. What she discovered were the bodies of pregnant actress Sharon Tate, wife of director Roman Polanski, Abigail Folger heiress to the Folger Coffee fortune, Jay Sebring a friend and hair stylist and Steve Parent an 18 year old friend. They had all been slain the night before. Their bodies

were scattered around the estate in what police described as a ritualistic mass murder. The words Helter Skelter had been written on the wall; and the word Pig, had been written on the front door... in blood.

Two days later as hundreds of thousands of us were gathering on Max Yasgar's farm in upstate New York to celebrate Art, Love, Peace and Music, The La Bianca murders were committed in the same area in California.

Most of us at Woodstock were unaware of the murders or what the relationship would be to us and the subculture, but it was the beginning of the end. We had no way of knowing that Woodstock would be the final party, the ultimate statement, the end of The Dream.

I know that everyone of us who were there felt the feeling. We all knew that something very, very special and important was happening. There was a strong sense of love and brotherhood at Woodstock. We felt that we were all one together. There was an incredible feeling of belonging I will never forget. I loved every last one of those hundreds of thousands of people and I love them today. Hippies, locals, cops, firemen, every last soul. We were all there for a reason. It was like we were picked up to be there. And that's the way we felt. It was the final party at the end of a long and beautiful dream... It was the end of the 60's....

I had been at the Woodstock Festival for what seemed like forever. We had gotten there on August 5th. The three day concert had been the 15th, 16th and 17th. I had seen Richie Havens open the show. Crosby Stills, Mountain, Jimi Hendrix and The Who were all becoming fond but acid blurred memories. I hadn't slept in a bed or taken a hot shower or changed my clothes in weeks.

The last few days I had unsuccessfully tried to find someone I had come with to open up the dialogue of possibly finding a way to get home. Most of the hundreds of thousands were gone by now. There were still thousands of people but only a relative few compared to the hoards that had been there a week or so before. Most of the people who still were there were practically zombies from the extended experience of drugs and alcohol, plus physical and emotional exposure. Many of the people I saw in the end didn't remember where they lived let alone how they were going to get there.

I did catch a glimpse of Captain America or Pierce, toward the end but he was so far gone he didn't even recognize me. He was stumbling around in the mud with a group of equally out there people who had decided to stay at the festival for the rest of their lives. They were in the process of making up their own language when I ran into them. That's the last time I ever saw Charley Pierce alive.

I had had enough. I managed to get a ride to a train station and after what seemed like forever, I found myself back at the Sty.

The first person I saw was Shag who had never made it to Woodstock. He had just rented a two hundred year old house on a farm about five miles away. I took one look at the Sty. It had been totally trashed. I retrieved my stuff, got into the hearse and said goodbye to College.

Moving West

XI

Shag, my long time best friend at Villanova, was a lanky 6 foot 4 inch athlete. He was from a wealthy Wisconsin family and had been a state champion at the pole vault in high school. If he wasn't jumping over things on a motorcycle or skiing or partying his brains out at Valley Forge or the Sty...He was bored.

I had been going full tilt for six years. Between going to school, playing gigs with the Fat City Five and partying with the coeds, I had been burning the candle at both ends.

On the new farm Shag had found we suddenly found ourselves isolated. We were five miles from the loop and for all practical reasons we were through with college. I had finally taken enough credits to graduate and he didn't know or care how many he had taken. We had to run the college experience out. It was over and now here we sat on a farm in the middle of nowhere with no idea about what we wanted to do. We were too young and full of piss and vinegar to sit and watch the world roll by. They say idleness leads to trouble. They were right.

There was an old barn on the farm and inside there was an ancient World War I style crop duster airplane. Naturally Shag wanted to see if it ran. So one morning we got the barn door open and took a look. The old plane was covered with canvas tarps and junk. It took us about an hour to uncover it

and wheel it out of the barn. The tires were flat, the cockpit was full of spider webs and dust. The old engine looked like it hadn't run for years. I left Shag with the old plane. He loved tinkering with motors. He'd be busy for a while.

I decided to take some time to contemplate what I was going to do with my life. College was over. I had been on my own since I was twelve. The only thing I cared about was music but the chances of making a living as a musician were slim and far between. I had been playing in bands for years but they were just party bands. I could play alright and sing alright but I was no Jimi Hendrix or Paul McCartney by a long shot. I remembered what Billy Joel had said to me the summer before, out in The Hamptons, "Song is King!" And, I thought about my late night conversations with Jim Croce he always said that the songs are everything. You didn't have to be a great singer or guitar player. If the songs were great and honest, from the heart than the singing would follow if it was true to the song.

I thought about the day I met Jimi Hendrix in that alley and he was so depressed because he couldn't get a record deal or even a record company to take him seriously and being heartsick had made him get sick as a dog on dope and booze, and then when I saw him a couple of years later at The Electric Circus playing to a half empty club after he had just recorded all

those great new songs he had put together in England. Monterey Pop had really launched him and there he was right up there on the stage at the Woodstock and he was fucking great... His perseverance was inspirational...

It started to become clear to me. There was absolutely no question about it. I wasn't going to become a bitter frustrated old man like my poor father... He had known Sinatra and Nat King Cole and all the others and took the safer road, but it had been a decision he regretted for the rest of his life. He had even been in competition with them, a peer, and forced to watch from his bar stool as they realized their dreams. Condemned to never know and always wonder... No way Jose'... Not me!

I had no idea how I was going to go about it. But I figured since God had always thrown music at me and put me in musical situations and instilled inside me a natural passion for it. I had no choice.

I began to look at all these chance meetings with incredibly talented people who gave me the same advice, as cosmic interventions.

None of these people were stars when I met them. Bob Crewe was an established producer but not a star in his own right. Billy Joel was just another guy in a local Long Island band called The Hassles. He didn't even sing lead yet. Jim Croce was a part time student part time construction

laborer with a guitar, muddy boots and no great songs yet. But I knew... Somehow I knew which ones to seek out and listen to.

Why did God put me in an alley with Jimi Hendrix? Or in the studio when Bob Crewe was creating all those classic Rock and Roll standards? Or in front of one of the most important performance stages; at The Bitter End in Greenwich Village, New York City, for months at a time in the early sixties? Probably the most important melting pots and experimentation arenas and periods, for artists and artistic development for our counterculture in the second half of the Twentieth Century. Why was I at Woodstock?

It wasn't because of anything I had done.

It was all accidental.

Starting that day, my day of revelation, I call it. I decided that there was no other choice for me. I felt relieved. I stopped fighting it. How many signs from God did I need? I had met all these people and been through all these experiences for a reason. I was here on this farm with nothing but a bed and a guitar. Plus 200 hits of acid, a half pound of pot and between Shag and I... one of the best record collections around... At least that I knew of. I sat there for the next few months listening to every album we had over and over and over again. Hendrix, Cream, Big Pink, Procol Harem, Moody

Blues, BB King, Beatles, Beatles and more Beatles, Stones, The Kinks, The Byrds, Crosby Stills, Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins, Robert Johnson....

After a while my hands hurt so much from being on the strings I had to soak them in water at night. I studied and listened and studied some more and listened some more. Finally I decided it was time to try and write a song.

I tried writing for days. When ever I though I had come up with something good and put it on my little tape recorder; I'd listen back and would immediately know it was dribble. I must have started a hundred songs and they all sounded like B versions of old manure. This writing songs thing was going to be tougher than I thought. I kept remembering what Jim Croce had said one night, how he had written songs he thought were pretty good and then ended up throwing them in the fire because they weren't, and then started all over again and how frustrating it was.

I was sitting in the kitchen of the old farmhouse wracking my brain trying to write one cold day in November, when Shag came bursting into the room covered with motor oil and wearing his WWI leather flight hat and goggles.

“It’s running!” He said all excited and out of breath from running up the hill from the barn.

I put on my coat and went out to see. There she was as pretty as a picture. All cleaned up with air in the tires and all the wing strut cables connected.

“I’ll be damned.” I said, “It’s beautiful.”

And it was running, smoking a little but running. He said he’d already taken it for a taxi and everything worked fine.

“What now?” I said, as if I didn’t already know the answer.

“Well, I thought if we had a hair on our asses we’d take her for a little spin.” He said with a mischievous grin.

“That’s what I was afraid you were going to say.” I returned a little nervously. “I think it’s time we went in the house and took a drink or two. It’s a tradition in my family, we never fly in a plane for the first time with someone who has never flown a plane in his life unless we’re good and drunk.”

“That’s quite a coincidence.” He said. “We have that very same tradition in our family. Let’s go.”

The barn stood at the end of a very long country drive way to the east and in front of a very large field to the west, or behind. The field must have been 500 yards across, with a gentle decline down to the cliff above the river. The cliff was a good 25 or 30 foot drop to the water. On the other side of

the river was a row of trees and another field at just above the water line.

Shag's plan was to taxi across the field, drive off the cliff which of course would render us temporarily airborne. At which time we would glide smoothly across the river and over the trees and land like a feather on the lower field. Sort of like a toy glider, he said.

Shag and I had always dared each other to do dangerous things. We were proud of the fact we had always risen to the challenge. Whether it was jumping from dizzying heights into small bodies of water or making long distance motorcycle jumps from make shift ramps over the rivers that were obviously too wide, or cascading over waterfalls swollen by rain in a leaky rowboat. Our record of not backing out, so far, was perfect. But this plane thing was by far, The Golden Bozo of all stunts.

We went into the old farm house and proceeded to get snockered.

We both had the feeling that we were about to turn a corner. Everything was changing. We drank a toast to college. We drank a toast to The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile, To The Fat City Five, to the girls from Bryn Mawr, Cabrini, Rosemont, The Naked Nurses, to all women all over the world. To anything and everything feminine on this and all other planets...

It was time. It was now or never. If we didn't do it now, it would be too late, we'd be too fucked up.

“Are we really going to do this?” I queried foolishly.

“Does the pope shit in the woods?” Shag answered.

We had a little trouble restarting the old motor. But after several tries it finally sparked and with a loud backfire and puff of smoke it turned over.

With Shag at the controls we maneuvered the old relic into position. The cockpit was actually designed for one but with a little wriggling we managed to fit side by side.

Slowly we started to roll forward down into the field and toward the cliff. There was a row of outhouses along the top of the cliff, which according to Shag’s flight plan we would miss.

Shag revved the engine and we began to pick up speed. The ride was beginning to get a little bumpy and the row of outhouses, which also meant the cliff, was getting closer and closer.

“Are we sure about this?” My voice sounded high and shaky as we bumped along the rutty field.

“We’re not going fast enough.” I yelled at the top of my lungs.

“Too late.” Shag hollered as he pulled back hard on the wheel.

With a very extended, “Whoa-oooooooo-aaaaaa-ooa-wow!!!!”

The old plane lifted off the ground.

“Hooollllleeeeeeee Sheeeeeeeit.”

We didn't quite clear the outhouses. Three of them went crashing off the cliff down onto the docks and rowboats in the river below.

The nose was way too high and the tail was much too low. The plane began to fall backward on itself. Shag gunned it and we banked severely to the right. "We're gonna die!!" I screamed. My heart was in my throat. I could see the gleam of the river far below. He opened up the throttle again and we started to level out, but we had turned completely around. We were no longer headed for the lower field on the other side of the river. We were headed straight for the old farm house. We were going fifty miles an hour and twenty feet off the ground. The only thing between us and the house was an ancient grape arbor.

"Put it down!" I yelled.

I looked at Shag and he was white faced and white knuckled.

"Snap out of it! We're going to die! Land this thing!!" I yelled.

Shag looked over at me with a maniacal expression on his face and screamed, "In that case... Bonfuckingzaiiiii-eee!!!"

We careened through the grape arbor. Hitting the arbor was the luckiest thing that could have happened. It slowed us down. As we came through the other side covered with vines and pieces of wood framing, we hit the ground and bounced. We hit the ground a second time just as we smashed

through the side of the house, where we came to an abrupt stop. The plane's engine spilled gas and started the house on fire.

For a second I was stunned. I couldn't quite fathom what had just happened. Shag was just sitting there with his goggles on his chin. "My guitar!" It was the only thing I owned that I really didn't want to lose. I ran up the stairs and into the bedroom. It was hot and smoky as hell. "Throw everything out the window...I'll pull the hearse up." Shag yelled up through the smoke.

"Call the fire department while you're up there!"

I smashed the window with a chair and started to heave everything we owned out into the darkness...I had no time for phone calls. As soon as I broke the window I could see the flames shooting up the stairs.

Clothes, records, stereo, the TV, motorcycle parts, everything went out the window. I could see Shag frantically grabbing arms full and hurling them into the open back door of the hearse.

The hearse was Shag's pride and joy. It was a flower powered and psychedelically painted, 1948 Buick. I threw the last of the stuff down into the driveway. A lava lamp bounced off the windshield.

"Come on, let's get out of here!!"

He was already behind the wheel as I was crawling out the window looking for a soft place to land. There were big licks of fire coming up the stairs. "Geronimoooo!!"

I left a large depression in the roof of the hearse as I landed. I scrambled down and through the passenger side of the window as Shag floored the big Buick and we raced down the driveway.

We could hear the sirens wailing as we reached the road. The tires squealed as we made the corner.

"The dogs!!!..." I yelled.

Shag slammed on the brakes, stuck his head out the window and let out a shrill whistle... "Fred.... Mary..." He bellowed.

Fred and Mary were two of the funniest looking little mutts you would ever want to see but Shag loved them and they him and he wasn't about to leave them behind. They were there in a second. They had already been chasing the hearse all the way from the farm house. Shag opened his door and the two little varmints leapt right in and on to his lap, panting and wagging and licking all over the place. They were smiling too. Dogs can smile.

We're off. We sped down the dark country road as fast as the old hearse would go, slowing down only long enough to allow the fire trucks and police cars to go by, like the good motorists that we were.

"The farmer isn't going to like this." Shag mumbled as they went by. We picked up speed and headed for the expressway.

"Where we going?" I asked curiously.

"Well, let's see," He said tapping his chin with his finger.

"College is over. We just crashed the farmer's airplane and burned down his farmhouse. We're driving in a psychedelically painted hearse with everything we own. We've got nowhere to live. Soon the farmer will have the cops after us. We're covered with soot. We smell like a garbage fire. We've got...." We both emptied our pockets... "Sixty two dollars and seventy five cents. We're wearing World War I flight goggles... We have a half tank of gas, no heater and a bottle of Jack Daniels, some pot, a little window pane. Ummmmm....where should we go?..... I've got it....Skiing,....Where else?"

"A perfect choice." I said in agreement. "And what particular mountain slope come to mind, prey tell?"

"Why, I hear the skiing is best out West." He answered.

We slapped palms, took a long swig, and pulled onto the interstate...

It was nearing the end of November 1969. With great enthusiasm and without a care in the world, two best friends,.... After almost seven action packed years of college, girls, partying, music gigs, cars, motorcycles, football games, keggers, mixers, dinner dances, Cabrini, Immaculata, Bryn Mawr, Rosemont Women's Colleges and Harkum School for rich chicks from New York... The Satanic Moonfish and The Naked Nurses, New York trips, Newport, Rhode Island trips, trips to the North Jersey shore, bad trips, good trips, acid trips, Be ins, Love ins, drop outs, anti war, anti establishment, mid-term exams, final exams, car crashes, plane crashes and farm burnings, etc., all played out against the backdrop of the upper class Main Line, Blueblood, old money mansioned, beautifully manicured hunter and jumper horse farms, stables and carriage houses, high dollar snobbish suburbia, The City of Brotherly Love and of course, Valley Forge Park, our patriotic tripping grounds and The Sty; we bid a fond farewell to College, to the sixties and to Villanova and the greater Philadelphia area, the original Capitol and birthplace of Freedom and our Great Country.

Freedom! That's what it was all about. We were free, white and 21. Of all the members of the original Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile, who had met rosy cheeked, innocent and full of promise on the steps of the Villanova field house seven short years before; Carter the artist was off to

New York City to peddle his paintings, Captain America, Charley Pierce, was lost in the ozone of heavy alcohol and drug use. Scotty, the commodore, was listed as missing in action in Vietnam, and Shag and I were headed merrily for Colorado.

We were off. Nothing could stop us now. Having no heater, we headed south hoping for a warmer passage to the Wild West.

We broke down in West Virginia. We were so cold we had our feet on the dogs so our toes wouldn't freeze.

Bang! Thud, thud, thud.... The universal joint went at the top of a long hill in the middle of the night. We coasted down the hill and took the off ramp right into the dark night of the West Virginia hill country. Luckily, at the end of the ramp was a gas station. It was a one pump affair and it was closed. We could see a light in the window of a little apartment above and behind the garage. We gingerly climbed the rickety wooden stairs and knocked on the door.

“It’s hippies Aines!” We heard a woman’s voice from behind the door. “We’re closed! Office hours is six til’ six no exceptions, now git.”

An old woman’s haggard face came to the filthy little window and peeked out at us.

We explained our predicament through the door shivering and stomping our feet against the bitter cold. We assured her that we were harmless hippies and we were freezing our butts off.

“Aire’ Ya Christians?” She asked.

“Yes Maam....By Good God Almighty!! Halayhloooouuuuuia it’s cold out here..Can we just come in for a minute to thaw Maam?” Shag moaned.

“They want to stand by the stove Aines.” She said to someone in the house.

She slowly opened the door. A blast of warm air from a coal stove hit us as a man’s voice said, “Slow and easy boys... Slow and easy.”

And so we entered the home of Ainsley Proctor and his wife Wanda May. The room was hot and it took a few seconds for our eyes to adjust. The place smelled of tobacco and coal dust. The room was small and dark. I could make out a person sitting in a chair. He had a rifle across his lap and two hounds at his feet.

“Ainsley Proctor.” Said the man in the chair, “And this here’s Wanda May. Come on in and have a sit by the stove.”

We introduced ourselves politely and did just what he suggested. The heat from the stove was intense but it felt good.

“Whar’ you boys headed?” The old man asked.

"Out West....Colorado..." I answered still shaking a little from the bitter cold, all the time keeping one eye on the rifle and the other on the dogs.

"Had a brother who went out west once." The old man said as he spat tobacco juice dead center into a coffee can that sat by his feet between the dogs. "Elk huntin." He paused for a second like he was reflecting on something from the distant past.

"Aint't heard from him since."

As my eyes became better adjusted to the light I got a chance to look around. Ainsley Proctor was a small thin wisp of a man. He had that wiry kind of Sinewy hillbilly look, his silver gray hair was neatly slicked back with some kind of five and dime pomade and his set steel blue eyes were set far back in his head.

Wanda was also skinny except for a little pot belly that protruded out, probably from making babies and she wore an old rag of a flowered print dress. She was shy. Wanda was barefoot and from what I could see, toothless but she had a very friendly smile and way about her.

Their rooms were small. All the available space, corners, nooks and crannies were filled with stuff. A collected lifetime of stuff. The stuff and furniture and even the people had that very settled in look.

Very settled in. Like it had all been there forever. Everything had been there for so long in exactly the same position, the whole place had assumed the same kind of sagging contour. It was easy to see the paths they took when they went from room to room because everything else looked like it had been untouched for years.

On the walls there were dusty framed photographs of country singers with guitars and cowboy hats. There was a picture of Gene Autry among several I didn't recognize. There was a photograph of Hank Williams himself. Upon closer scrutiny I noticed that they were all autographed.

"Did you meet Hank Williams and Gene Autry?" I asked the old man.

"Know m'?" said Wanda blushing as she spoke.

"Why Aines played the gitar' with m', they was good friends."

"That's amazing Mister Proctor... You knew Hank Williams and Gene Autry?" I said stammering a little...

"Well hell son there ain't nothin' amazing about it. In the old days, all those ole' boys used to come round the mines every year and play Old Bill Farrel's Barn Dance... down at the feed store. I used to do a little flat pickin' with them."

"Aines the best flat picker in the Wheelin'." Wanda said blushing.

"Could you play a little for us...I play a little." I said...

"Here yaar' boys, take a pull on this while I fetch my Gibson."

The old man handed me a jug and Shag and I both took a drink.

Whatever was in the jug burned like hell going down but it warmed you up good on the inside...I went out to the hearse for my Martin. There was a full moon. It was turning out to be a very interesting evening....

We were still pickin' and talking until early the next morning. Ainsley Proctor was a hell of a flat picker as Wanda had said. He would play for a while and then reminisce about his early years as a coal miner and country player. After a while the homemade sour mash took it's toll and he went to bed. Shag and I passed out with the dogs on the floor by the stove.

In the morning, after a fine breakfast of scrambled eggs and grits, Ainsley fixed the hearse and filled our gas tank. He would take no payment. We made a present of the lava lamp to Wanda who accepted with a shy sweet, toothless smile. We shook hands and wished each other the best and Shag and I were back on the road.

We still had money in our pockets, the hearse was fixed, our bellies were full, the sun was shining and we were headed west.

Before we hit the interstate we took a pull on the jar of hooch Ainsley had slipped us and downed a couple of uppers each.

“Here’s to Ainsley Proctor and his lovely wife Wanda... And to Wheeling West Virginia... And the good ole’ U.S. of A.”

We drove and slept and drove and drove... Amazed at how much land there is out there. When we finally reached Kansas we were sure that we would see the The Rockies at any moment.

“There they are!” But it would just be lowlying clouds. It seemed like Kansas took forever to cross, in our anticipation. Then finally, we could make out a vague low blue wall on the horizon. No cloudbank this time. As we got closer we could start to make out an occasional snow covered peak as the sun briefly revealed it through the clouds, lit spectacularly and then gone. An almost biblical experience. By the time we reach Denver, we were a mile high, in more ways than one.

Rocky Mountain Home

XII

Shag and I pulled off of the Interstate highway I-70 and on to highway 82, at that time a narrow two lane dubbed Killer 82, that ran from Glenwood Springs to Aspen, ending at Independence Pass. It was early December 1969.

Unbeknownst to us, half way around the world, in London England, The Beatles were breaking up. And, in Los Angeles John Denver had just recorded Take Me Home Country Roads, a song and album that would become a hit and begin him on his road to unbelievable success.

It was snowing lightly as we pulled the hearse up to The Jerome Hotel on Main Street, in Aspen, Colorado.

Aspen was first inhabited by The Ute Indians and then in the 18 hundreds by silver miners. Before and during World War II, it was used as a training area for a special group of soldiers, The Alpine Ski Troops.

A few of the troops came back to the Aspen area after the War and Aspen the ski town was born. It would grow in glitz and fame over the years becoming a trendy playground for the rich and famous by the mid 80's. But when Shag and I arrived there in the winter of 1969, Aspen, Colorado was still a small friendly little village.

The Hotel Jerome was just a run down old Victorian building, rooms were cheap but comfortable. The Aspen we found in 1969 was very different than the Aspen of today. Ski passes were cheap, land was still affordable and dogs were allowed to run free. There were no Gucci shops or Rodeo Drive types there yet. There were vacant lots in the center of town. People wore hiking boots and flannel shirts as opposed to minks and \$800.00 lizard boots. In my humble opinion... It was a much better place then, than the glitter showcase it would become...

All that really mattered to Shag and I, two guys in their early twenties just out of college, was that the little ski town had, in abundance, everything we loved most in the world; women, beautiful scenery, skiing, more women, basically all the sex, drugs and rock and roll we could want.

It was perfect. It was like a beautiful Rocky Mountain college campus without the fuss and bother of an actual school. The Hotel Jerome became sort of our administration building, where we gathered information about the town, places to stay and jobs, where the best music and parties were. In later years a good friend of ours, Mr. Slatz Cabbage, would capitalize on just that idea and open up the Aspen State Teachers College Bookstore, selling mugs and tee shirts, everything a real university book store would sell; except the books. A brilliant idea, we all thought.

Our first night there we got lucky and ran into two young and willing chalet maids. With temporary housing taken care of the next step was to find some way of making money. Shag found a job bussing tables at The Red Onion while I went about checking out the local music scene.

I quickly discovered apres' ski. Many of the bars in town were hiring folk singers to draw the skiers as they came down off the slopes in the late afternoon. I soon was working regularly singing oldies at a place called The Blue Moose owned by an ex pro football player for The Detroit Lions and a good friend to be, Jim Gibbons.

For the time being we had it made. I also noticed an ad in The Aspen Times. John Denver was booked to play a place called The Leather Jug in Snowmass in the weeks to come. I made a mental note of it.

We spent the rest of the winter of 1970 working, partying and skiing. We were in heaven. We didn't have a care in the world. We loved The Rocky Mountains and The Rocky Mountains loved us...Especially Aspen and The Roaring Fork Valley.

One fateful night in March of 70' I happened to walk into a rock and roll dance bar called Danny's. Playing that night was a band called Black Pearl. I was floored the first time I heard them. I had been in bands all my life and seen some of the greatest bands up close and Black Pearl was one of the

most powerful bands I had ever seen. On the guitars were Bobby Mason and Geoffery Morse. On the drums was a six foot six monster named Oaky and there was a great harp player they called Deadbody.

Bobby Mason was the leader and front man. He screamed on the Telecaster and sang like Joe Cocker. At that time he was the best thing I had ever seen. That's the guy I want to play music with, I thought to myself.

I was hooked. I went to see Black Pearl every night. I learned all their songs so if I ever got the chance to sit in I would already know everything. After a while I got to know Bobby a little and even sat in once and a while. But there was no way I was ever going to be asked to join the band. They didn't need me. They all played and sang better than I and besides, the season was coming to an end in a few weeks.

In those days when the season came to an end everything closed up for the summer. Aspen became a ghost town in the summer of 1970.

It was time to figure out a new way to survive and look for a new place to live.

We were looking through the Aspen Times one day when...

In the real estate section we found ten acres for sale on Basalt Mountain for ten thousand dollars. One thousand down takes it.

"That's it!" I said to Shag.

“We’ll buy ten acres and build a cabin.”

“Sounds Great!” Shag agreed.

“How much money do we have?”

We counted everything we had and came up with \$27.00 in cash and Shag had a paycheck coming for \$180.00.

We decided to go look at it anyway. We had no idea how we were going to get the money... We figured we had nothing to lose.

The little town of Basalt lies about 18 miles west of Aspen. At that time there was one bar, called The Midland. There was one cop named Buck Davis, a real Colorado cowboy deputy. We noticed immediately there were no “long hairs” in the bar. We were to meet the realtor, John Wicks at ten in the morning.

John Wicks turned out to be a great guy and the ten acres turned out to be just what we wanted. It lay about four miles up the most treacherous dirt road we’d ever seen. We came to realize that the road was the reason the land was available at such a good price. No one in their right mind would ever buy a place that required you risk your life just to get there. The road was one lane of red dust and mud in the summer, and ice in the winter. It hugged the mountain, straight up on one side and straight down on the other. The down side of the road often collapsed adding to the excitement of it all.

But the meadows and beauty of the land on top made it more than worth the risk to Shag and I. We talked to John Wicks into selling it to us. We had two weeks to come up with the thousand down... No problem... We told him...

That night we went to the Midland Bar on Main Street in Basalt. There were about four cowboys at the bar. They looked at us with disdain as we entered. In the back of the room there were two long hairs playing pool. We decided to challenge them to a game.

One of the long hairs was a big tough looking kid. He was wearing a black cowboy hat and turquoise jewelry, a monstrous bracelet and a big blue stoned belt buckle. His name was Bob Dunn.

The other smaller guy wore a big buck knife on his belt and he had a birth mark on half of his face. His name was Lynch Quinn.

We played pool for a while and talked. Bob Dunn was from Rhode Island. He had been a boxer and looked like he could handle himself pretty well. Lynch was from Pennsylvania and had been a wrestler at the University of Colorado. Dunn was a pretty good pool shot and the game ended with us owing them a pitcher of beer.

We all hit it off pretty well. We told them that we were trying to buy a piece of land up on Basalt Mountain and we had two weeks to come up with one thousand dollars.

After a few more pitchers we all decide to go up and spend the night camping on the land. It was a beautiful moon lit night. We all sat in the hearse and smoked pot and drank beer. Dunn pulled out a little vial of white powder and for the first time I experienced the euphoria of cocaine. We talked all night.

During the night we began to trust each other and Dunn mentioned that he knew a way we could make the thousand dollars. One of us would have to drive to Newport Rhode Island and back with him. It would be as easy as that. Shag and I flipped a coin. I lost. So a couple of days later Bob Dunn pulled up the road in a Cadillac...

I knew I wasn't going to make one thousand dollars just for my company. Dunn didn't know me well enough yet to confide the exact nature of the operation. All I knew was I really wanted that land and I was willing to take the chance to get it.

I got into the Cadillac and we were off to Newport, Rhode Island. Crossing the country in Bob Dunn's Cadillac with adjustable seats, a great

stereo and heater was a lot more comfortable and a whole lot faster than crossing it in Shag's hearse.

"Is there anything in this car I should be aware of like drugs in the trunk?" I asked him.

"Not yet, just the coke and pot in my pocket which we'll do before we get there. There's nothing to worry about." He answered. So I just sat back and enjoyed the ride and the music.

We made it across the continent in record time. The Cadillac proved to be a great cross country vehicle and the music was great.

"We're going to go up to Newport and party with my brothers for a few days, but first I have to make a short stop in The City.

Before I knew what was happening we were in a seedy part of Brooklyn, New York. Bob got out and made a few phone calls.

We kept circling the same few city blocks. Every twenty minutes or so Dunn would stop and make a phone call at a pay phone. Finally he said, "Okay, it's set. I'm going to go into an apartment and make the deal. When I come out you be behind the wheel and when I say Go!... Go... Okay? Floor it... I don't want to get stuck or be seen in this neighborhood... The highway is four blocks straight ahead and left."

I began questioning him. He said, "Do you want the thousand bucks or don't you?"...

I said, "Let's get it over with..."

We were parked across the street from a run down apartment building. "Keep the engine running." He said, and went to the back of the Cadillac and took something out of the trunk and put it under his leather jacket.

I was a little nervous. What had I gotten myself into? I kept thinking about the land. Dunn crossed the street and went up the stairs and disappeared through the door of the building.

About twenty minutes passed. It seemed like forever to me. Once in a while a face would appear in one of the windows and at least a couple of times police cars would drive by. I slouched down in the seat as low as I could as they passed. The land, the land I kept saying to myself.

Suddenly Dunn came flying out the door of the building down the stairs and dove through the open passenger side window head first.

"Go!! Fucking Go!!!" he was yelling...

I floored the Caddy and we fishtailed down the street. I became broadside, for an instant we were stopped. I could see people streaming out of the building yelling for us to stop. I finally got us clear again but we had to go down the first available street, away from the freeway and our escape

route. At the first intersection I pulled a one eighty slide and we were headed back toward the scene of the crime.

“I’m gonna kill you Dunn.”

We were headed straight for the guys who were after us. I noticed in horror that they were waving guns. Dunn also had a gun and he proceeded to shoot a couple of rounds off into the air.

“What are you nuts?” I yelled.

They tried to block our way. Dunn yelled, “Switch places!”

We switched places in mid skid. Dunn grabbed the wheel and headed straight for the group of guys that were after us. As we were just about to hit them they scattered and Dunn steered the car up and over the curb. As we bounced over the curb the passenger door came open and swung out knocking one of them down. I reached out to grab the handle and looked back to see if he was still moving. Dunn made a sharp right and I fell back.

I saw the spark of a ricochet glance off the pavement as I fell back and a sharp force hit my leg. There was no pain just a sharp blow like a kick. I was shot in the leg.

Dunn was whooping like a cowboy as we flew up the on ramp and skidded in a cloud of smoke on the highway going North.

“I’m shot you fuckin’ idiot.” I said as calmly as I could be expected.

“I’m bleeding like a pig. I need a doctor.”

We stopped at a secluded rest area. Dunn poured booze on my wound and wrapped it tightly with a toilet paper wad and duck tape.

“It’s nothing, it went right through the muscle. Take a few of these.” He handed me some pills and I washed them down with Vodka and orange juice. After a few minutes I was out cold.

I had a dream. I was hanging from a big green eagle who was holding me with it’s talons. Below me there was a lush jungle. Every once in a while the eagle would swoop down low over the dense green trees and a big black leopard would leap up and bite me in the leg. It would hang there with it’s jaws clamped on my calf with it’s big razor sharp incisor tooth through my leg.

When I came to I was in a strange room. My leg was bandaged and there was an envelope pinned to my pajamas.

I looked around the room for a minute and called out. There was no answer. I tried to get up. The leg hurt but not too bad. Whoever had fixed it up knew what they were doing. I could see the Atlantic Ocean out the window. I went to the closet and all my clothes were there freshly laundered and hung up neatly.

In the envelope there was one thousand and fifty dollars and a plane ticket to Denver through Aspen. The note read: Had to go see a guy about a mule. Good travelin' with you. See you on the Mountain. Dunn. There were a couple of antibiotics on the table next to a bottle of Stoli and an expensive cigar with a bow around it.

I put my clothes on and went downstairs and called a cab. By ten that night I was in the Midland celebrating with Shag and Lynch. By ten the next morning we were in John Wick's real estate office with the thousand signing the papers. The land was ours. My leg hurt for weeks. I still have the bullet hole scar.

Lynch knew of a saw mill way up in the back country above Cunundrum where you could work for your logs. The place would let you mill your own. The deal was you had to mill twice as much as you needed and yours would be free. We would have to haul it out of there ourselves. So for the next month Shag and I with our new partner Lynch Quinn camped at the old saw mill high in the Rocky Mountain back country and milled three sided logs with a gasoline powered saw blade that was as tall as we were. It was hard work but we ended up with enough logs to build a big cabin on our land.

Lynch got some money sent out from Pennsylvania and we spent the rest of the summer building a cabin on our land on Basalt Mountain. The cabin still stands today. But that's another story.

Homebrew

XIII

One hot summer afternoon we were working on the roof of the cabin when a Land Rover came whining up the road. It was a tall long haired guy and his pretty girlfriend. They were looking for land to buy.

I recognized the guy from somewhere but I couldn't place him right away. It suddenly came to me. It was Bobby Carpenter. I had seen him playing around Philadelphia. He was a great keyboard player.

They got out and walked around the mountain for a while, admiring our cabin. Bobby had moved out to Aspen. He had just finished a tour with Sister Sledge and had come out to Colorado because he wanted a change from the East Coast.

I was thinking to myself: If I could just get the two Bobby's together. Bobby Mason and Bobby Carpenter, that would really be some band. Of course they wouldn't need me; That was the only problem.

The summer of 1970, building that cabin with Shag and Lynch Quinn, with the help of a few local guys and a couple of Moonfish who had straggled out from Pennsylvania, was the best summer of my life. We worked all day in the hot sun. Dived into the ice cold Frying Pan River to clean off, and at night went down to the Midland to drink beer and play pool

and foosball. It was all great fun and the cabin turned out better than I expected.

As the end of the summer approached it was becoming time to start thinking about work for the winter. On a beautiful August day I hitched a ride into Aspen to see what kind of Après' ski gig I could get.

Though I was hoping for something better. I was walking the streets of Aspen just nosing around when I ran into Bobby Mason.

“Hey, how’s it going Bobby?” I was really glad to see him.

He said Black Pearl was over and a bell went off in my head.

Bobby mentioned that he was putting together a new band. He had a female singer lined up and maybe a piano player. I immediately jumped at the opportunity and asked if I could audition. He looked at me kind of disparagingly and said, “Well Sure, why not. Why don’t you come up to my house tomorrow afternoon and we’ll see what you’ve got.”

I hitched a ride back to Basalt and went into The Midland to look for Shag. Everybody was in the back drinking beer and playing pool. Shag, Lynch Quinn and Bob Dunn, who had returned from Rhode Island. I told them the news about the new band that was forming and asked if anybody was going up the mountain. Lynch and Shag said they had just come down from working but Dunn said he’d give me a ride.

So we jumped in his Cadillac and went up to the cabin. I told him how excited I was about my audition and how I planned to stay up all night practicing Black Pearl songs. When he dropped me off he handed me a plastic bag.

“What’s this?” I asked.

“It’s something to help you with your practicing. I did real good on our little trip back East. When you get rich and famous remember who your friends are.” He answered.

The bag had about a quarter ounce of high grade cocaine in it.

I went into the cabin and played the guitar parts of the Black Pearl songs I had worked out all night. The next day I caught a ride into town and went up to Bobby Mason’s house for my audition.

Bobby was there alone. The house was an A frame on the east end. I didn’t have a guitar so he lent me one of his. We fooled around a little so he could see I was pretty good, but not great....

I offered Bobby some cocaine. We did a couple of lines apiece and he made us a couple of rum and cokes. We talked for a while.

The most important thing about the new band, he told me, was that they wanted to do all original songs. No covers. No band was ever going to make it playing other people’s material.

Bobby said he had a few originals and the girl singer had a few, and then he asked me the big question, “Do you write?”

Although I had tried and tried... I had never been able to write a song worth keeping, but I really wanted into this band. It meant money, women and a lot of other good things but most importantly the music would be great with all these good players.

Before my brain knew what my mouth was doing I said, “Yes.”

“Cool, play one for me then.”

I was numb. I could feel the panic welling up in my spine. What had I done. Play me some he had said. I didn’t have even one. I downed my rum and coke and asked for another. “Lets do another line.”

Just as I was about to faint from the shock of the spot I had just put myself in, there was a knock at the door. To my added amazement in walked Bobby Carpenter.

“This is the piano player I told you about.” Mason introduced us.

“We’ve met.” Carpenter said.

“He’s about to play a couple of his original songs.” Mason added.

“Would you like a line of cocaine?” I said stalling for time.

I got lucky. They went into the kitchen together for a few minutes. I looked around the room in desperation and there sitting right in front of me on the piano was an unopened bottle of Whiskey. I read the label.

I grabbed a napkin and scribbled down some words...

The label read, Sour Mash Whiskey, My Old Kentucky Friend. I did a little editing and made up a few words of my own and started to play the D chord. After a few minutes the two Bobbies came back into the room to hear my original song...

I just thought to myself, You've gotten yourself into this now just sing, and I did. I just made it up as I went along. I changed the state from Kentucky to Tennessee thinking they might find me out, and sang

“Tennessee Whiskey my old friend.”

“The sun is rizin’ and I’m lonely again.”

“So won’t you be my companion, my old friend.”

“And bring me down easy Tennessee Whiskey.”

I made up some words on the spot for the verses and sang the chorus over again and stopped. There was a moment of dead silence. I was looking for the nearest exit to escape the embarrassment I was sure was coming. There was a ringing in my ears for a second and then I heard the sweetest sound I think I ever could have heard at that moment, applause. Glenda, the girl

singer and Peggy, Bobby Mason's girlfriend had come in during my performance. To my astonishment they were all clapping.

"Do it again." Bobby Carpenter sat down at the piano and Bobby Mason grabbed a guitar and with Glenda singing in harmony with me, we did my new song, Tennessee Whiskey. It was great. The four of us really sounded good singing together and we all noticed it.

I couldn't believe it. It was like the governor had just called a last minute reprieve just as they were about to pull the switch. I was saved, but it didn't last for long. "Show us another one." They all said.

I can't remember what I said but I begged off until tomorrow.

I was invited back for the next rehearsal in two days. I made it back to the cabin on Basalt Mountain as fast as I could. I lit a big fire in the newly completed fireplace, did a line of cocaine and smoked a joint and sat down and wrote songs. I had no choice. I just made them up as best I could. On the day of the rehearsal I played my new original songs and miracle of miracles, they loved them and just like that, I was in the band.

We rehearsed all day and some times all night for weeks. I just kept on making up melodies and lyrics about anything and everything and with the help of the bands great musicianship they became really good songs. It was decided we would call the band Homebrew.

The band was made up of myself on acoustic, the two Bobbies on piano and electric guitar, and Glenda on vocals and acoustic guitar. We switched off on bass guitar and we all sang our own original songs. We played the first few months without a drummer.

We started to play gigs in Aspen and then all around Colorado. We finally added the first of many drummers around New Year's Eve. By the time 1971 rolled around we had developed a pretty big following.

Cocaine was beginning to become trendy in Aspen and the stuff was everywhere. All the myths prevailed: It's not addictive, it won't hurt you, some people were even so disillusioned as to think it was good for you. We were young and healthy and the band was on a roll. We did coke everyday. It became part of every day and every night.

We were having fun. We'd do coke to wake up and to get up for the gigs and we would drink or take downers to sleep. It was part of the deal. For a while, at least, it seemed to be alright...

During the next summer we hired a bass player and a permanent drummer. Bernie Mysior played the bass and Michael Buono became our drummer. By the ski season of 71/72 we were a full six pieces. By Thanksgiving Glenda quit. Both she and I had been over doing it with our

cocaine use and the band confronted both of us. I promised to control my use and Glenda left.

The was it. We were an all male Rock and Roll Band. I became the principal songwriter and because we sang our own songs, the lead singer. It was the start of the decadent 70's. Aspen was becoming the in place as far as party ski towns were concerned and everybody who was anybody would eventually come through. Cocaine was the fuel that fed the beast.

We started to think about making a record. We had been approached by different industry people who seemed to show an interest in us. We all knew John Denver. His album had taken off and he was beginning to get big. Don Henley had just left Linda Ronstadt's band and formed The Eagles. Don used to come to some of our gigs. He had kind of hooked up with Glenda and her beautiful girlfriend Marie.

Don Henley used to encourage me as a songwriter. He told me he particularly liked the song Dance The Night Away, which I had written with Bobby Carpenter. During those early days we all used to hang out and party. Henley wasn't a big star yet. He was a lot of fun to hang out with. I identified with his drive to write songs. He ended up taking Marie away from me which hurt at the time but I got over it. Later he would produce an album for Glenda and use Marie in a song. Marie was the girl from Rhode

Island and Aspen was the place they called paradise. We all watched the Eagles take off....

For the next year we played almost every night in a big dance club at the base of Aspen Mountain called The Gallery. The place could hold three hundred people and we were packed every night. We also played every afternoon at an après' ski gig at The Aspen Highlands.

We would go into a small studio in town called Dromedary Studios and make demos. We were novices at recording but we kept at it and we learned. Between playing gigs day and night, writing songs and staying up until dawn in the studio my cocaine and alcohol use became heavy and constant.

We went from the big basement at The Gallery to a plush new nightclub called The Cabaret. Today it is called The Double Diamond. It was plush in those days with tiered seating and a dance floor in front of the stage. The town rocked, in those days celebrities of all kinds would come through town either playing gigs of their own or just to ski and party. Most of them jammed with us. To name them all would be ludicrous but some of the people who jammed with Homebrew, soon to be Starwood in those early years were Cher, Dan Fogleberg, The Average White Band, Al Cooper, John Denver, Andy Williams of all people and he was great, the list is endless but

that will give the reader the idea. The list of people who came to see us goes on for days.

Before we ever got our first record contract some of us, at least I was a heavy drinker and cocaine user. I was getting burned out before we even started to get anywhere.

There were women everywhere. They came in to town by the plane loads. Twenty planes a day. There were always new girls showing up ready for anything. We were the band in Aspen in those days and somehow accidentally, I was the lead singer... It was too much...

I had gone to see John Denver at The Leather Jug that first year that Shag and I had come to Colorado. I reintroduced myself and told him that I had watched him often at The Bitter End in New York.

He had begun to have some success as a song writer by then. Peter Paul and Mary had recorded his song, Leaving On A Jet Plane and had had a hit with it. I saw him several times around Aspen during the early days of Homebrew but it wasn't until he and Annie bought the house up in Starwood and I was invited to their house warming party that we became friends.

The album, Take Me Home Country Roads had been recorded in 1969 but it wasn't until almost two years later that it became a hit. The song had been written by Bill Danoff and his wife who would later become The

Starland Vocal Band and have a big hit themselves with the song Afternoon Delight.

It was in the early seventies when I would visit John's house occasionally to play my new songs for him and listen to his. It was during this time he gave me the Curtis book and told me to write a song about a particular photograph, Cowboy's Delight would be the result and would later appear on his multi platinum selling Windsong album.

In the early days everything was much simpler, people were much more accessible. Nobody had secretaries you had to go through and you didn't have to make special appointments to see people. Don Henley and John Denver and Jimmy Buffet and Glen Frey were all just young guys with records coming out. But like everything else even Aspen itself, sooner or later the corporate mentality sets in and everybody gets overly important. They are all talented people and deserve respect but let's face it...Popular music is not brain surgery or a cure for cancer.

One afternoon in the summer of 72' we were all summoned up to Bobby Mason's A frame on the east end of Aspen. John Denver was coming over and he wanted to ask us something. We had been recording demos with Daniel Moore for Electra Asylum and they had expressed interest in signing us.

The Mason house sits on a hill and has a big open front porch that looks west directly into the Colorado sunset. The whole band had shown up early and we were all milling around sipping cocktails when John showed up. He asked us all to come out on the porch. The sun was just dipping behind the peaks and a thermal breeze rustled the aspen leaves. It couldn't have been a more perfect picture.

We all sat down and leaned against the house and John Denver began to speak. In essence he said that at that point in his career he was selling more albums than anyone in the business and filling up the biggest concert halls. He went on to say that he was managed by Management III led by Jerry Weintraub who also managed Frank Sinatra.

John went on to tell us that he was starting his own label and would be calling it Windsong Records, it would be a subsidiary of RCA and also distributed by RCA. Finally he made us an offer. He wanted to sign us, Starwood, (we had changed our name from Homebrew), to Windsong/RCA and that management III would manage us. It would include an album, touring, television, the works. Were we interested? Naturally we said yes. What a moment. The sun had just gone down. The sky was on fire with color and we had just been handed the world on a silver platter. We thought. What did we know? What did we care? We had a record deal. I was in

shock. The first batch of songs I ever wrote in my life were going to become an album on RCA.

A little later after the sun had gone down we all went inside to congratulate each other on our good fortunes. We were all sipping cocktails and thanking John and enjoying the moment when John motioned for me to follow him into the kitchen.

“Congratulations.” He said.

I thanked him and we hugged each other. He said he had to get going and started to go when he turned around with a big smile on his face and said, “By the way I’m going to sing Cowboy’s Delight on my album.”

“You’re kidding.” I couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“It’s a beautiful song David, Take it easy, I’ve got to go, Later.”

That was it. I couldn’t believe my luck. In one day I had gotten a record deal with RCA/Windsong, a management deal with Management III, the same people that managed John Denver and Frank Sinatra, and the news that a song I had dreamed up from a 90 year old photograph was going to be on John Denver’s Windsong album.

It was all too much. It was like a dream come true; more like a hobby gone wild. All I ever started out to do was to meet girls and avoid having to work as a busboy or a waiter. In my mind I wasn’t even that good. I was

only in the band because I had lied about being able to write songs. It was all like a wonderful accident that only I knew about. I suddenly felt this fear run through me. What if somebody found me out. What would happen when they realized I was just a fraternity band player who couldn't really write songs. I didn't consider myself a songwriter. I had just made them up. I had no idea what I was doing. I swore to myself, I would never let them know that this whole thing was a big accident. Until they did find out, I'd enjoy it. "Cocktails anyone?"

After the big day the band took a much deserved break. We had unanimously decide to sign with John Denver's RCA/Windsong Records, so that was that, we had gotten our recording contract. It always seemed like such a big thing in those days, a recording contract. It seemed to us that if you got signed, you were in. You had made it. We were young.

Everybody in the band went their separate ways for a few weeks.

I went up to the cabin to enjoy it for the first time since we had built it. It was beautiful up there. It was the middle of September, just the start of the fall season. Shag and Lynch Quinn, Bob Dunn and Jim Dooley, the big Irishman that helped us build, were all there together with our dogs and the fire roaring in the fireplace. It was really very satisfying, that few weeks after the big day at Mason's. We listened to music, smoked pot, had our fun

with the many young ladies that would come up the hill. Drank a lot of beer, took a little LSD, watched several unbelievable sunsets and laughed a lot. It would prove to be one of the best times I would have up there... at The Cabin.

I had about four weeks at the cabin and then I would be off to Los Angeles to sign the contracts with RCA and Management III and begin my life as a recording artist. Things would never be as simple as they were for those four weeks again.

About a week before it was time for me to head out to L.A. we found out that Charley Pierce, Captain America, Mad Wizard and Procurer of Magic Potions for The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile, our old crazy friend from Villanova, had committed suicide. One of the girls had seen it in the paper when she was visiting the East Coast.

Captain America

XIV

The article began: Charles Pierce son of a prominent New Jersey DEA investigator took his own life.

The reason The Captain's death had made the wire services was not just because he was the dope dealer son of a ranking figure in the Drug Enforcement Administration, but because of the bazaar nature of the death.

The Captain was always rather over dramatic and flamboyant but in college we had always dismissed his extravagant behavior as part drugs and part hormonal disorder. The Captain had always been a bit twisted by the fact that he had been created with the upper body and the face of a matinee idol; but, with the bandied legs of a bow legged child. It made him compensate with outrageous behavior.

As time went on and his extended abuse of alcohol and drugs caught up with him his hair and teeth started to go and his handsome facial features started to become grotesque. In short, Captain America had become all that he had always mocked and laughed at as a handsome quick witted youth.

Poor Charley Pierce. He had become a true victim of the sixties. When Timothy Leary said, "Drop out and drop acid." The Captain was listening with both ears. He felt that the Berkley Guru was speaking to him personally.

The Captain went hook line and sinker. I can honestly say, I never saw him straight once, since the day he approached me about moving into The Sty in 1963 at the freshman orientation at The Villanova Field House, until the last day I saw him alive on that hillside in Bethel, New York, at the tail end of The Woodstock Festival, in 1969.

The Captain had been ripped the whole time.

Toward the end The Captain became more and more outrageous. He forgot to bathe, he began to speak in tongues some times claiming to be The Messiah. He had been so strange for so long no one made anything of it. By the time he returned to Pennsylvania from The Woodstock Festival he was certifiable.

Poor Charley had stayed up in New York long after the festival was over. He had remained there with a group of festival freaks until it had started to get too cold. Their dream of sustaining the festival forever dwindled as the temperature started to fall.

Woodstock had officially been over for months by the time October rolled around. In upstate New York it can get real cold early in the fall. Charley finally realized that the festival was over and he was alone sleeping in the woods and freezing his butt off; so he reluctantly made his way back to familiar territory, The Sty.

During the summer The Elmaker Estate containing The Sty had been sold. By the time The Captain returned, the main house had been bulldozed along with the grounds and the stables. The Sty stood but in shambles and marked for demolition.

Naturally The Captain reacted radically and barricaded himself inside. In his psychedelic psychosis he imagined himself making some kind of noble stand against the onslaught of cold hearted capitalism in the form of The Ben Franklin Insurance Company, who were the posted enemy come to build a complex of commercial buildings on the site of his greatest imagined triumphs.

The Sty had been his find, his home, his headquarters, his base of operations, his Globe Theater and now it became his personal Alamo. The once beautiful Hunter and Jumper horse farm was over.

In his own convoluted way of thinking he was fighting for the last breath of a way of life.

The Captain had become a casualty of The Great Experiment that was the 60's. Without the backdrop of the era, The Moonfish or The Sty, Captain America no longer existed. Charley and everything he thought he was, would soon become comically out of place in the coke and disco, I, Me, Mine narcissism of the 70's.

He became a crazed recluse. Poor Charley was hauled forcibly from the barricaded Sty and spent 30 days in County Jail.

When he was released, he returned to the since leveled Sty and somehow found and retrieved his stash of several ounces of pot and one thousand or so hits of window pane acid from the rubble. Before leaving the area forever and hitch hiking to his father's house in Teaneck, New Jersey, The Captain managed to set several of the pieces of heavy equipment on fire, an act for which there would still be outstanding warrants long after he was dead.

Charley, Captain America, Pierce had been brought up in an upper middle class neighborhood in Teaneck, New Jersey. His father was a ranking narc who was never home.

All Special Investigator C. Pierce Senior knew, was that his bright handsome, though short in stature, Christian son had some years ago, gone off to University with the Good Franciscans at Villanova.

For all those years, that is exactly what the special investigator chose to think. He blamed the fact that he had not seen his son for almost six years on their conflicting busy schedules, himself busy ridding the state and society of the vermin drug element; and his son (so he thought) working toward a higher Christian education.

How proud had Special Investigator Pierce been when his oldest son, short but handsome Charley had been accepted to Villanova University. He himself had dreamed of attending University of Villanova but the War had come along and he had been forced to finish his undergraduate work at night school at City College.

He was the most successful of all the brothers and his aging father was proud that his short but handsome grandson had been accepted at Villanova. Special Investigator Pierce was proud to tell his brothers that his son was going to Villanova. At the beginning of September 1962 Special Investigator Pierce and his wife were proud to drive their son Charley to The Villanova University Field House for freshman orientation and registration day.

That was a year to the day before I met The Captain for the first time. Anyway....

So, you can imagine the disbelief in the eyes of Special Investigator Pierce when on an autumn day in 1969 a skin and bones, raggedly dressed, jabbering, drunk and disorderly person came staggering up the front walk claiming to be his son, short but handsome Charley, who was supposed to be off being molded into a fine young Christian gentleman by The Augustinians at Villanova.

Special Investigator Pierce would never be quite the same after Charley's return. Charley moved into his old room in the attic. The Pierce's had kept it just as it was when their short but handsome son had left. The sports banners and the baseball glove and bat. The room was the same but Charley had changed. Charley just stayed up in the attic until one day someone heard a bang and that was it. It seems Charley had decided to finally paint his masterpiece....

For as long as I had known The Captain, he had always said, "Some day I will show everybody, there is a great painting in me, or a great book, or a song... It's just waiting to come out. When it does come out of me... It will be my Masterpiece!"

I think Charley had something there. I truly believe that there is a beautiful something inside all of us. What Charley couldn't live with was the fact that he couldn't get at the beauty in himself so he could hold it up and show everybody.

It seems Charley Captain America Pierce had decided to finally create his masterpiece right there in his father's attic. The room he had grown up and been a boy in.

He bought some fine canvas and stretched it himself and treated it with a primer base. He set the large canvas up on a strong easel tripod and secured

the feet of the stand to the floor so that no amount of over zealous passion during the act of creation would shake or shimmy the stroke.

Knowing Charley, he probably said some words he had prepared like when he used to toast to the frozen toes of George Washington's men at Valley Forge.

Charley then sat straddling a chair with the back of his head to the stretched and treated canvas. He then fired a cocked and loaded shotgun through his head at such an angle as to distribute the contents of his head onto the canvas without causing any damage to the picture, of course he pulled the trigger with his toe. His leg being exactly the right length for the task.

There will never be another one like Charley Pierce.

Long Live Captain America... Goodnight Charley Pierce.



RCA
The Big Deal
+
Frank Sinatra

XV

I already had what I wanted but I didn't realize it at the time.

I had a beautiful cabin on a mountain top in Colorado. I had good friends and good dogs. I had a great job playing music with the best band in The Valley and all the female attention I could handle. It could not get any better than it was. It could only get worse, and it did.

If it only could have stayed just as it was in 1973, forever:

We all made our separate ways out to California. I packed a bag. Said goodbye to everybody on the mountain. They had a little celebration for me at The Midland, Shag, Lynch, Dunn, Dooley and assorted ladies of the valley. I said goodbye to my dogs. Took one last look at the cabin and I was off to the airport and Hollywood.

We recorded our first album at RCA's studio B on Sunset Blvd. It was like an airplane hangar. We had no producer. John Denver was supposed to produce it; he is listed as executive producer on the album, at least that's what I thought; but....Well I can't blame him. John's career was really taking off. He was becoming gigantic. I talked to him many times about it later.

Mega success was all new to him. Whether you liked John Denver music or not. Very few artists achieve that kind of success that fast. He had experienced several flop album attempts after Chad Mitchell and before

Take Me Home Country Roads. Take Me Home was his last shot with RCA. It went through the roof.

John was very busy and really didn't have the time to produce us. I really didn't mind because he was in the studio himself recording Windsong which had Cowboy's Delight on it... So it was alright with me. It's just that we were left to produce our own record.

I don't remember who made the arrangements for the band but they put us up in a cheap and seedy Hollywood Motel. I think that was the name of it, The Cheap and Seedy Motel.

There we were just signed to a major record deal with RCA Windsong and to a management deal with Management III, the company that managed John Denver and Frank Sinatra.

We had no producer, we were staying in a hooker motel and none of us had any money. Also we were waiting for Harry Nilson all the time. See, Harry was using the recording machines in Studio A that we needed to record with in Studio B. Harry was a big RCA star he had priority.

The only problem was that Harry Nilson would have the recording machine we needed sitting in Studio A while he was at Martoni's Italian Restaurant getting drunk on White Russians. We would be at another table in Martoni's Italian Restaurant getting drunk on rum and cokes because we

were waiting for the recording machine that Harry Nilson had sitting idle in Studio A.

One day I went over to Harry's table and pointed out the irony of the situation at which point Harry Nilson offered to buy me a White Russian. So there we were, me and Harry Nilson getting drunk on White Russians while RCA paid the tab. Not only for the White Russians but for the two idle studios, A and B. Not to mention the tab on the Cheap and Seedy Motel.

It was Harry that took me over to The Tropicana Motel. Harry said if I was going to stay at a cheap and seedy motel; I might as well stay at one that has a good breakfast restaurant. Harry Nilson turned me on to Duke's and The Tropicana. I moved in to The Trop that day.

I was much happier at The Tropicana. I ate breakfast every morning at Duke's. I got to meet Tom Waits, and The Romones were always leaning around on the walls. I guess the girl with the beret on was always Ricki Lee Jones, but she never said anything... Anyway at least The Tropicana had a swimming pool even if it was painted black and nobody knew what the liquid in it was.

Eventually we got into the airplane hangar they called Studio A. We had an engineer named Mickey C. who had worked with John Denver at one

time or another. He knew how to turn the machines on and off and he had a suitcase filled with drugs. Coke and uppers for fast songs and Quaaludes for when he wanted to get rid of you.

I would say something crazy like, "Do you think I could try singing that twice?" and Mickey would say, "Here, take four of these and go back to the motel." He was a hell of a producer.

No one from the record company or the management company ever came to the studio to see how we were doing. I didn't think much of it never having been in that position before.

We just sang and played just like we always did and after a couple of weeks somebody said we were done.

There was no big celebration or party. Everybody just kind of went away. I stayed at The Tropicana for another week. And that was it. We had recorded our first album.

I took the train back to Glenwood and Barbie Jones picked me up at the train station and drove me up to the cabin.

The next day we were back in Aspen playing at The Cabaret at night and at The Highlands in the afternoons, like nothing at all had ever happened....

Nothing really happened for a while. We just kept playing at the same places we had always played. They had always been packed so that hadn't

changed. We weren't getting paid anymore money. The only difference was in people's attitudes. Everybody seemed a little more interested in what we had to say. There were a lot of questions.

I lived at The Cabaret, then The Paradise, now The Double Diamond. The cabin in Basalt was too far to get to every night at four in the morning so I slept in the dressing room. We played there almost every night and with the coke and the booze, never left the place until the sun was coming up. So I just stayed there. For almost two years I was like the phantom of The Paradise.

The dressing room became my bedroom. I lived there. I would stay in the dressing room after playing there that night, playing guitars, writing songs, snorting coke and drinking until I passed out, usually with some young lovely or another. I would stumble out from backstage sometime around three in the afternoon. Still dressed for the show. I would line up two monstrous rails on the bar. Snort my morning wake up and make myself and my young companion a couple of Bloody Mary's.

Everyday and everynight.

I was getting laid four and five times a day. Women loved the life style. There was nothing bad about it. They were all willing and having fun. It was totally decadent and outrageous looking back at it today. It's just what

was happening to me at that point in time. I was the lead singer and writer for The Band in The Party ski town of The Rockies... in The decadent 70's; and it had nothing to do with anything I had done. It was all pretty much by accident that I was even there....

By 1975 John Denver was a gigantic Star. His album Back Home Again had launched him and subsequent hits put him farther out in the stratosphere of rare air that is mega stardom.

The Windsong Album containing Cowboy's Delight, and our RCA/Windsong Homebrew by Starwood Album and The Starland Vocal band's Album containing the hit single to be, Afternoon Delight... All came together to promote John Denver and Jerry Weintraub's new Record Company, Windsong.

There was a giant double page ad in Billboard. There were reviews everywhere in all the trades on the albums and the songs. Billboard said everybody was great. Cashbox did the same. Rolling Stone said John Denver's new album should not let John Denver fans down and they pointed to Cowboy's Delight, the song I had written for the Curtis Photo with the help of Bobby Carpenter, as the best of the bunch.

One of the reviews that came out during that period I was very proud of. It was a small article in The Village Voice that called my writing, genius that

must be nurtured but probably wouldn't be. The article predicted, rightfully so, that Starland Vocal Band, would get the hit; while my writing would probably not be rewarded, and The Village Voice writer, (bless his counter cultural little literary soul) said he hoped I lasted long enough to get noticed because the music business needed the quality.

We all did The Merv Griffin Show together. John Denver, The Starland Vocal Band and Starwood, us. The Merv show was really a ridiculous thing for us to do. I had no idea what was happening. I mean who was I to question the wisdom of the management company or John Denver...After all, they managed Frank Sinatra....Duh! Hello!

I don't blame anybody. I was happy to have just been there. Management III had absolutely no interest in us. We were just there because John Denver was their biggest client. I was signed to Management III for one year and during that time they got us one gig. The Merv Griffin Show, which was an absolute mistake.

We were stoned out, beat your door down and take no prisoners live Rock and Roll Band. We had been playing rock and roll dance music to packed houses of high roller ski junkies and ski resort party animals 300 nights a year for four years.

So, there we were on the Merv Griffin show in the middle of the afternoon playing for twenty million middle aged, over weight housewives waiting for the cooking segment and retirees and grandmas hoping Merv would sing, Yes We've Got No Bananas, just one more time.

The whole thing was stupid. We had no manager. We had no record company. Windsong was just a name. There was no Windsong Record Company.

I showed up at the theater to do the Merv Griffin Show and no one knew who I was. I had driven out there with a friend of mine and we got a room at The Tropicana.

I got myself into the theater but I was early. I finally convinced somebody that I was supposed to be on the show that day with a band called Starwood. The word Starwood drew a blank but when I said John Denver they seemed to know who I was talking about.

Eventually they led me to a waiting room. A woman came out and explained to me how to get seated in the audience. I took another crack at telling her that I was actually going to be on the show....

Finally the guy who had driven me there from Colorado, David J. came and got me and escorted me to the famous Green Room. David had been getting the star treatment because he was all dressed up like a pimp cowboy

for the occasion. They thought he was somebody. He had a black cowboy hat, plenty of turquoise and silver, leather fringe, diamonds, thousand dollar boots, duster...Rocky Mountain coke dealer wear.

I was dressed in boots and jeans and a torn cowboy shirt. Rocky Mountain Rock and Roll wear. So they thought David the coke dealer was a star and I had come to watch. It made no difference.

The rest of the band showed up. We all did plenty of blow in The Famous Green Room, thinking that we were only there so early for a run through. I was kind of hanging in The Green Room digging the scene, doing lines and drinking beer when somebody said, "Starwood you're on!"

There was no one looking out for us. No one from the record company or the management company. None of us had ever been on Television before. We had no idea what we were doing or what to expect.

I did have a cleaner shirt but it was back at the motel. Luckily my guitar was in the car but I didn't have time to tune it or warm up or anything. One minute I was lounging in The Green Room drinking German beer and snorting coke waiting for a run through...

And the next minute...We are playing...Live
On a tiny set....With a TV union sound guy....
Twenty million people....

Nobody from Management III.....

Nobody from RCA....Welcome to the big time.

The next night we were back at The Paradise and I was back to living in the dressing room. The Merv Griffin Show happened so fast and it had been such a joke that it seemed like it had never happened. It wasn't due to air for a while so I just forgot about it.

During the next few months after The Merv Show, things went along great. The band was sounding better and better, we were really getting tight only the way a band who plays constantly, hours and hours a day and night can. I was still getting away with the songs I was making up although I still didn't consider myself a songwriter.

The Paradise had booked some great people to share the billing with us on special nights, we were more or less the house band. They had booked Cheech and Chong for a week. This was great for me. They were great guys and even funnier off stage. Tommy would hang around and jam a little after hours. I mean, the dressing room was my house. I had some great house guests that year. Cheech and Chong, Robin Williams, it was great fun. Sometimes they would book somebody who wanted the dressing room to themselves and I would have to crash somewhere else, but usually when we shared the bill with somebody they were happy for the late night

company. Of course there were always a lot of pretty women and free drugs around in those days. So everybody stayed pretty happy. Nobody got very much sleep in the 70's and there were very few over weight people hanging around. We attributed that to what we referred to as The Aspen Diet. Which consisted mostly of saki, sushi and cocaine. It sounds decadent, and it was, but for a long time it was a hell of a lot of fun. It was the life...Aspen in the early seventies... It was the life...Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll...

A few months later John Denver did a television special with Frank Sinatra. We were out on the road playing shows to promote our new album. We were playing a show at a small theater called The Boarding House in San Francisco when we got the invitation to come to the taping of The John Denver / Frank Sinatra Special.

I had always wanted to meet Frank seeing that he and my Father had worked the same venues before and during World War II.

We went to the theater on the day of the taping and were shown to some backstage bleacher seats. John was walking around the set talking to people. Jerry Weintraub was there along with Sal Bonafetti, one of the guys who worked at Management III. That one day, when we were led like sheep into Jerry Weintraub's office at Management III, we had been introduced to Sal

by Jerry. Sal was supposed to be our guy at Management III. "If we needed anything." Sal would be our guy.

Until the Sinatra taping, that would be the last time we would hear from him. I'm not finding fault with Management III. Like I said, we were only signed with them because of John Denver and they didn't care about us otherwise. I was just along for the ride. I had never expected it to even go this far. I was sure it would soon be all over and I would be able to get back to Basalt Mountain and the cabin.

At least I was going to get the chance to say hello to Frank Sinatra for my Father. It wasn't going to be easy though. As soon as they sat us in the onstage bleachers, Sal said to us, "No matter what you do, Do Not approach Frank." Sal Bonafetti was my manager and he had been for almost a year and the only words he had ever said to me were, "How ya doin'?" and "Whatever you do, Do Not approach Frank Sinatra."

There was no way I wasn't going to talk to Frank Sinatra and say hello for my Father. For my entire life I had seen the look in my Father's eyes every time a Frank Sinatra song came on or whenever Frank Sinatra was on a television show.

I had lived with that frustration all my life. They had been peers in the 30's and 40's. My Father had stopped singing to support his family after the

War. That wasn't Frank Sinatra's fault, and who knows, my father may not have made it anyway...But! The point was always, that he would never know. All he did know was that Frank and Dennis Day and Nat King Cole and some of the others that he knew and was once on the same level with...had made it, and now he was old and he would never know...

So, it was a big thing for me. If I was going to get this close to Frank Sinatra...I was going to talk to him and tell him my Father said hello.

I was wise enough to know that no one wanted to be bothered before a performance, that was just common professional courtesy.

I was going to have to catch him somewhere after the show. We were sitting there on the on stage bleacher seats for about an hour just watching the techs and musicians doing their preparations, when all of a sudden the place went still. From behind us to the left there was movement...First a couple of obviously Italian type guys came out through a curtain holding it open as they looked around. In a second a couple more guys came out and then there he was....

There he was, in the flesh, Frank Sinatra. Francis Albert Sinatra, the one and only. The Voice. He was very impressive. He looked taller than I had imagined and more stout. I thought he was absolutely beautiful. He exuded confidence and experience. You could tell he had stood in the wings of

stages all his life, ready to go out there and do what he did better than anyone else in the world. Sing! Entertain! Be Frank Sinatra.

I absolutely loved it. He was great. I sat there fifteen feet away and watched Frank and John do their thing. It was quite an honor and a treat.

I knew that Frank Sinatra had a reputation for vacating the theater in a hurry after a performance. It was probably a hold over from his old days at the Paramount in New York City. When the girls used to mob him like they did later with Elvis and then The Beatles.

Towards the end of the performance I made my way to the stage door that led to a long hall and an exit out to a back parking lot. I looked out the door. There were two limos and a security guard.

In a few minutes a parade of Italian guys in Thousand dollar shark skin suits starting coming down the hallway. I was sort of moved out into the parking lot by the force of inertia. They were moving fast and I didn't see Frank Sinatra among them.

“Who are you kid?” One of the bodyguards asked.

“I’m with John Denver...My Dad knew Frank from Jersey and....”

I didn’t get a chance to finish. In a split second there was a rush of guys and I saw Frank Sinatra whisked into one of the limos surrounded by guys.

There was no way I could get a word in. The guy who asked me who I was got in the limo with Frank and zoom....

They were gone. I watched the two limos drive out of the parking lot and make a left down the street. When I turned to go back into the theater I realized I was locked out. I rang the bell but nobody came. It was ok though, I kind of wanted to be alone for a minute. It was really cool, I remember thinking...Frank Sinatra...My Dad...40 years ago...They were both in Jersey...

Before I could reflect anymore both the limos pulled back into the parking lot. The body guard who had asked me who I was ran the backseat power window down and said, "Who's your old man, kid?"

I said, "Dave...." I remembered that my father used my grandmother's maiden name when he sang because Holster was too German sounding and because my grandfather didn't think singing in saloons was a very honorable profession....

"Doyle...Dave Doyle...He used to sing with The Johnny Dee Orchestra at The Meadowbrook in Jersey...Before the War...And he and my Mother wanted me to say hello...to Mr. Sinatra."

I was trying to say everything I could think of to make the connection. There was a long pause. I could hear them mumbling in the car. Then...I heard the voice. Frank Sinatra's voice saying...

"You mean that red headed kid what's his name...uh Dutch... That's it, Dutch...With The Johnny Dee Band, yeah I remember your Dad kid...He had pretty good pipes... That was a long time ago...How is your Dad kid?"

I said he was doing fine and that he always talked about Frank Sinatra and the old days in Jersey and that if I ever ran into Frank Sinatra, seeing I had the same manager, I should say hello.

"Yeah well tell your old man hello kid, ok?" "OK kid?" That was it. It was over as fast as it happened. I was ringing the bell to the back stage door again when the limo driver came up to me. I could see the cars waiting in the street. The driver asked me to write down my parents address which I did and then... They were gone.

I'll never forget it. I hadn't spoken to my Father in years. About two or three months after the Frank Sinatra / John Denver taping I got a half page letter from my Father. It was the only time in my life my Father ever wrote me a letter. He had seen the Merv Griffin Show when it aired and he had heard from my Mother that I had met Frank Sinatra.

My Father's letter congratulated me on being on the Merv Griffin Show and at the very end he said, "And Thanks for The Sinatra thing." Thanks for the Sinatra thing?....I didn't know exactly what that meant until I called my mother.

I don't know if it was Frank Sinatra's office people or what. My Father had received an expensive bottle of Scotch and a card that said "To The Old Days!" and it was signed Frank Sinatra....

It made my Father's year...He cherished that card and that bottle of Scotch until the day he died. When Frank died years later I remembered that day in the parking lot and whether it was just part of a mailing list thing or whatever...I like to think it was sent and signed by Frank and that it gave my Father some peace...

Anyway meeting Frank Sinatra and saying hello for my Father is something I'm glad I did. I never did get back into the theater that day.

Starwood
+
William E. Mcuen
A

XVI

By the summer of 1975, four years after hitchhiking from my cabin on Basalt Mountain to Aspen to look for work, I had become the lead singer and songwriter for Starwood, been signed by RCA/Windsong, we had made and released our first album, I had been on national TV, I had met Frank Sinatra and said hello for my Father, I had gotten a song on John Denver's Windsong Album which had been released and was already selling in the millions, not to mention three of the other songs I had written for our little Homebrew Album had been recorded by other groups... Three Dog Night and The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and The Starlight Ramblers...had recorded my songs.

I had also done more cocaine and alcohol and slept with more beautiful women than I thought was humanly possible. I didn't realize it at the time but I was running myself into the ground. I was getting tired. The stress of it all and the sleeplessness of it all had run me down. I was kind of glad it was over.

At the end of the summer we had a couple of weeks off. I went up to the cabin and slept for two weeks. It was good to see my friends and dogs. There was no phone at the cabin and that was a good thing.

After a couple of weeks I started to feel better and went into Aspen to see what was going on. We were booked to start playing at The Paradise again for the season. That was alright with me. That meant we'd be staying home. I liked it just fine when we stayed in town. We had made our album and had our little taste of the big time. We would be guaranteed full houses and bragging rights for the season. Everybody liked our record. We were set for a fun and profitable season.

As far as I was concerned, that was enough. I had pulled it off. My position was secure and I was happy with it. I wouldn't have to pretend I was a song writer anymore. Even though I had more than gotten away with it. I had even started to have some success with it. I knew I wasn't a real songwriter. I had just faked it to get into the band. How did I know John Denver was going to start a record company and sign us. How did I know that John and Three Dog Night and The Dirt Band and The Starlight Ramblers were going to record my songs on their albums. I mean, I wasn't complaining about it but I was kind of glad it was over and I wouldn't have to fake it as a writer anymore.

The season started and we started our grueling schedule of playing The Paradise or one club or another six nights and seven days a week. All through the season of 75/76 the cocaine use and the alcohol abuse escalated.

Somewhere around the middle of the winter Bill Mcuen started to come see us a lot. I liked Bill. I knew he was the manager of The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and I knew he was associated with a comedian named Steve Martin. I had seen Steve a couple of times in the early days and he was hilarious...Really funny.

Bill was real cool and a very nice guy. He and his wife Alice had a cabin they used to invite me to. The three of us, me, Bill and Alice would just sit and talk and listen to music. I really enjoyed those days.

Bill decided to manage us. It was good for Starwood but not good for me. I knew in my heart that if Bill became our manager it could destroy our friendship. I liked being friends with Bill and Alice. It was nice, honest and pure...Rock and Roll wrecked that.

In the beginning when Bill Mcuen and Alice and I were just friends, nobody expected anything from anybody. We were just friends because we liked the same things, music, guitars, art and because we liked each other. When he became Starwood's manager all of a sudden people began expecting and demanding things from each other.

Bill didn't realize that I wasn't actually a songwriter or a rock and roll star. I was just a guy who wanted to be in the band as opposed to working as a waiter or something worse and the band had gotten further than I thought it

would and now I was accidentally in this forward position. When Bill started to manage us things started to get really crazy for me.

One day he said to me, "I'm going to get you guys on Columbia Records so start writing the songs... Also write a hit for The Dirt Band while you're at it."

That was it. I was through. How was I going to pull this one off? Write an entire album's worth of songs for Columbia Records and while I was at it write a hit for The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band?

By the end of February I was exhausted from working seventeen hours a day seven days a week in the clubs, writing songs and doing enough cocaine and alcohol to kill a horse. One night after the gig I collapsed and they took me to the hospital and I was diagnosed with acute exhaustion and hepatitis B. I was immediately put into a big house up in Starwood and waited on hand and foot. I was getting the royal treatment. Flowers, cards, visits and phone calls by the dozens a day.

It was great. I really didn't feel that bad. I was just real tired. I had been burning the candle at both ends for five years.

By 1975 we had done our album with John Denver's RCA/Windsong label. The record had come and gone. There really was no Windsong

Records. John had become gigantic and The Starwood Vocal Band had had an unexpected hit with the song Afternoon Delight.

We were left to fend for ourselves as The Village Voice had predicted. We had our taste of the big time. I was happy. Four of the songs I had written, two with the help of Bobby Carpenter, had been recorded by other people. John Denver, Three Dog Night, The Starlight Ramblers and The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band had all recorded my songs...I was starting to get royalty checks.

We had it made in Colorado. Our game had definitely increased. We had never had much trouble filling the clubs in the past but now we were packed all the time. Three hundred or more dancing, sweaty, beautiful people-bodies every night. We were happy. At least I was. I had a gold record on my wall, money was starting to come in. We were booked solid through the bi-centennial year at The Paradise and all through Colorado.

The snow was flying, the skiing kind and the Peruvian variety.

The airplanes landed at the airport all day long filled with the young and beautiful and rich; all of them come to ski and party.

We, Starwood, were the current IN band. The darlings of the Aspen night life. John Denver was the superstar and we were his protégé's. His boys. All the stars were there: Jack Nicholson, Cher, Andy Williams, Ted

Kennedy, The Eagles, Buffet, Goldie Hawn, Art Garfunkle, Ringo Starr, the list goes on forever... It was a ball... The winter of 76' a decadent Felini movie like bash. All wrapped up in one long picture perfect Rocky Mountain winter night.

We were the big thing in Colorado in the winter of 1976 but in relation to the real world our career as a rock band was at a standstill.

In walks William E. Mcuen.

Bill Mcuen was and is one of the most unique individuals I have ever known. If there is one word that describes Bill, and I'm sure there isn't, I would have to say that word is "Style." Bill has style. In his dress, in his homes, antiques, guitars and of course through out all his many projects. Everything about Bill Mcuen exudes style and taste.

He, along with his lovely wife Alice, are responsible for some of the most incredibly beautiful album designs and marketing packages that have ever occurred in pop or rock music. His Nitty Gritty Dirt Band projects: Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Dirt Silver and Gold and countless others are among the best ever done.

Taking nothing away from The Dirt Band, they were a great band but Bill's touch took them over the top and gave them the style and class of presentation they needed to set them apart. I mean, God bless The Dirt

Band, they recorded several of my songs but without the genius of Bill Mcuen, The Dirt Band was just The Dirt Band.

Bill also was partially responsible for Steve Martin the comedian's career and marketing. He also started The Aspen Film Society which was responsible for ... The Jerk and Pee Wee Herman's Big Adventure.

In 1979 William E. Mcuen decided that he wanted to manage us, Starwood. He was managing The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Steve Martin, who hadn't really taken off yet. And now he would manage us.

He told me to start writing songs...

One week before the band was to start our grueling 1976 schedule of bookings, I took a week to go up to Basalt Mountain and see Shag and the boys. The cabin was full. There must have been fifteen people living there. Friends of Lynch Quinn's from Boulder, Girls from everywhere who had just moved here and had been lucky enough to have wondered into The Midland Bar and been invited up to The Cabin and had never left.

I couldn't blame anybody. If I was still living there I would have wanted it no other way. The only problem was there was no room for me.

Shag had built another small house way up on a high plateau overlooking the land and with a great view of the beautiful Mount Sopris. I stayed with him for a few days.

One afternoon we were sitting in The Midland Bar in downtown Basalt, Colorado when John Wicks walked in. John was the realtor who had sold us the ten acres up on Basalt Mountain to begin with. John's a cool old cowboy.

I happened to mention my predicament to him about having no where to live because the cabin was full. I asked him if he had anything in town for rent. He said he didn't handle rentals but why didn't I just buy a house now that I was making so much money.

I had been meaning to check my mailbox. That is one of the reasons I had come to visit. I went over to the Basalt post office and checked my mailbox. From the stack of mail I counted over twenty thousand in royalties before I was halfway through the pile.

That afternoon I bought a three bedroom house on 3rd street in Basalt, Colorado... from John Wicks...

By the time I had moved my stuff into the house on 3rd St. it was time to go to work.

Bill Mcuen didn't fool around. From the day we signed with him we were gone. His first move was to book us at The Roxy in Hollywood to showcase us to Columbia Records.

We were to open for Bill's brother John Mcuen.

In 1976 The Roxy was considered THE place to showcase in Hollywood. It was across the driveway from the notorious Rainbow. Those two places were collectively THE spot. Upstairs at The Roxy was a little private bar called On The Rox where the elite would sit and snort and sip while watching the club and the parking lot and the act on the stage over the closed circuit TV.

On the night we opened for John Mcuen at The Roxy, an interesting turn of events would turn what was a very important night for us into a very magical and amazing night for everybody.

On this particular Saturday night in Hollywood we were booked at The Roxy. Naturally we were staying at The Riot House. We were living it.

Anyway, there was a prestigious concert of some kind scheduled for that night. To this day I'm not sure who or where it was to be, but...to our good fortune it was for some reason or another, cancelled.

Everyone who was in town was going to this cancelled concert.

Their concert having been cancelled, all these people went looking for something else to do, somewhere else to go, a lot of them decided to go to The Roxy and check it out... It was the spot anyway, if the music wasn't great there would be women at The Rainbow.

One of the things that makes a band play great in addition to working hard and playing together day and night for five years, is collectively wanting to blow the audience away, as a band.

Before the curtain came up at The Roxy that night, and for the days that immediately preceded that night, we assumed and were frustrated by the fact that we were going to be put in front of the wrong audience. We assumed, and logically, considering the circumstances, that we would be playing in front of a John Mcuen audience... an audience of dedicated Blue Grass fans. We were showcasing for Columbia Records in front of a Blue Grass audience.

We, as a band decided, due to our frustration, to go nuts and just kick their Blue Grass asses. We expected typical polite Blue Grass applause from a typically polite Blue Grass audience. The pressure was off. We knew who we were playing for so we decided to throw caution to the wind and just go full out.

When the curtain came up at 9:00 that night we were ready. We always started the shows with my back to the audience. I would count off the first song and we'd be off. Which is exactly what we did. We immediately hit a great groove and kicked ass. It was the perfect time for the band to really come together. Anybody who ever played in a Rock and

Roll band will tell you, it's like a drug. When it works...it really works.

Sometimes you get into such a solid groove that you can do no wrong.

Everything is easy. Everything sounds great and everybody is totally on.

The band and the audience. We were having one of those nights.

It wasn't until the third or fourth song that I looked up....

When I finally got a chance to look out into the audience I couldn't believe my eyes. The Roxy has a floor audience and also tiers of tables in the back. It holds about three hundred people. I'd say there were at least four hundred there that night.

When I looked out into the audience after the first couple of songs I was amazed to see that the audience was like the who's who of Rock and Roll. Because of that cancelled concert we were packed with famous musicians and actors and personalities of all types. For instance Ringo Starr, Warren Beatty, Joni Mitchell, Bernie Taupin, Harry Nilson...It was surreal. I had never seen so many famous faces in one place.

What's even better was we were hot that night. We were already to play for a blue grass audience so we were in just the right frame of mind. If we had known who was really on the other side of the curtain when we started, we never would have been relaxed enough to be as good as we were...But as it was we kicked ass. Every hard working band has and deserves to have

one of those nights occasionally, and this night was ours. Everything came together for us that night.

We looked great and we sounded great on exactly the right night in front of Columbia Records and all those famous and powerful people.

All the Columbia people and Bill Mcuen and Ringo and a lot of other people were in our dressing room for pictures and what ever. Ringo had his arm around my shoulder telling me that he was starting Ringo Records and I should call him. Better yet he said after I dried off why didn't I meet him at On The Rox and We'd talk.

When the crowd had subsided a little and John Mcuen was doing his set a heavy set girl with a lot of eye makeup came and got me. She said she worked for Ringo Starr and he would like to talk to me.

She led me out the side door of The Roxy and through an unmarked door and up a flight of stairs. I walked into The Top of The Rox. I was shown a seat next to Ringo Starr at the bar. There were only four people in the little place including the bartender, there was myself, Ringo, Bernie Taupin and Warren Beatty. No one said a word.

I could see John Mcuen on the monitor but the sound was turned off. There we sat.

I ordered rum and coke and not knowing any better, I tried to pay for it. I didn't realize it but I had landed in the realm of the "Super Duper Cool." These guys were so cool that they didn't even know what to say. I sat there for a few more minutes and finished my drink and stood up to leave. I was halfway to the door when Ringo said, "Tight little band... Give us a call why don't ya?"

I said, "OK... What's the number?"

He motioned for me to come and have another drink. Soon the heavy set girl with too much makeup was back and she wrote a number down for me to call... And asked me for mine.

"I'm at The Hyatt House on Sunset."

"Under what name?" She asked me whispering...

"Under the name #204." I whispered back...

"Good one." She said... "Would you like to come over for a drink later tonight?" She added.

"Sure, I'll be downstairs with my friends. Come get me later."

Bill Mcuen was happy. Columbia Records was happy. The Band was happy. All the trade reviews the next day would rave about Starwood. We had arrived.

After having drinks at the Top of The Rox with Ringo and Warren Beatty...I went back down into The Roxy to watch John Mcuen.

The heavy set girl with too much eye makeup who worked for Ringo came over to me and said that there was a phone call for me in the office. She then led me to the phone.

It was Shag. He had tried to make the show but he had gotten hung up in Malibu. He had driven out to see me and to buy a wind surfer. He wanted to wind surf up in Colorado on Reudi Damn.

I got the girl with too much eye makeup ... Who's name I finally found out was Lucy... To give him directions.

She hung up and I asked her when Shag said he would be here.

"He's not coming here." She said.

"I gave him directions to the party...He'll meet you there."

She continued...

"You're coming with me...And we're going right now."

I told her I had to get my stuff form the dressing room and say goodnight to a couple of people and I went up to the dressing room and got my guitar and my coat... Lucy grabbed me by the arm when I came down from the dressing room and whisked me out into the street and into a waiting cab.

"What about the other guys in the Band?" I said.

“What about them?” said Lucy.

The cab drove us to a mansion in Beverly Hills....

As we pulled up I saw Shag’s old hearse parked out front. When we went inside there was practically no one there. There was one particularly familiar looking guy with a gruff British Accent. Lucy introduced us. It was Eric Burton of The Animals and War... The House of The Rizin’ Sun and all that. He was very drunk and loaded on something but a very cordial and friendly chap.

He asked me if he could get me anything and led me up to the bar. To my hilarious surprise the bartender, or should I say the man behind the bottles was Shag. Eric introduced me to Shag and Shag and I let him in on the fact that Shag was actually my friend who had just driven from Colorado to see me play at The Roxy and buy a windsurfer, and that he wasn’t really the bartender at all.

“Well he said he was the bartender.” Eric insisted...

“I think he was just pulling your leg to get in the front door.”

Eric thought that was pretty funny and took Shag and I upstairs to one of the gigantic bedrooms where we partook of some LSD and smoke some hash through a gigantic hookah.

After a while the party filled up. I remember sitting on a hammock over a gold fish pond with John Philips of The Mamas and The Papas. He was talking about The Beatles album Revolver and how he would give anybody a hundred dollars if they could go and put it on the stereo. I was so stoned I couldn't move but I also had to pee. I leaned over to John and said, "If I can do it, I'll do it for you for nothing. And if I can't do it, I'll do it anyway."

"Do what?" John Philips asked me.

"Put on the Revolver Album." I said.

"That's a great idea... I wish I had thought of it." Said John.

I woke up in a bathtub with a girl from the night before. The last thing I remembered was sitting on a bed full of people singing Beatle songs with somebody's guitar.

I was still fully clothed except for one boot which I found on the staircase landing on the way to the kitchen. There was no sign of anyone. I could see a few still sleeping in the garden. I looked outside and Shag's hearse was still there. All the windows were steamed up and there was Jimi Hendrix music coming from inside.

I tapped on the window and the door opened a crack and Shag stuck his head out in a cloud of Marijuana smoke.

"Care for a cocktail?" Shag asked handing me a bottle of gin.

“Don’t mind if I do?” I said, the swig nearly choked me but I felt better in a second.

We all went into the house, Shag and I and the girls who had slept in the hearse.

As we were looking around for this and that jacket or cowboy boot, Lucy the heavy set girl with too much eye makeup who worked for Ringo came in to the kitchen. She had been to the store and was carrying grocery bags.

“Breakfast anyone?” Lucy said with a smile...

“We’d be delighted!” We all chimed in.

“I’ll make the Bloody Marys.” Shag offered.

“Is Mr. Starr about?” I asked politely.

“I think he’s sleeping, I’ll check.” Answered Lucy.

Shag and I had to get going. There was a snow storm in The Rockies and I had to play The Paradise starting Wednesday night.

I did see Ringo one more time. He came to the top of the stairs in a robe and sunglasses asking for a cup of tea. I said goodbye to him and he wished us a safe trip.

“Leave yer number with Luce then boys.” And he went back to bed.

We drove back to Colorado in the hearse. Driving with Shag was always a lot of fun. He laughs at everything. I’ve never seen Shag take anything

seriously. From burning down houses to bar fights, I would always look over through the chaos and see Shag's face under a table some where laughing and making a joke of it all.

On the way back to Colorado Shag took a turn off to Las Vegas and we drove hundreds of miles and saw adobe houses and pickup trucks of Indians. He drove us to Las Vegas, New Mexico...But we didn't care. We just went to a bar full of Mexicans and Indians and drank beer and played pool.

I got back to my new house on 3rd St. in Basalt about four in the morning on Tuesday night. The next morning the phone started ringing. It was Bobby Carpenter and then it was Bill Mcuen, everybody was all excited. We had gotten a handsome offer from Columbia Records. We were going to start recording our second album in six weeks.

Bill Mcuen had booked the famous Caribou Ranch recording complex for us. Jimmy Guercio had built this beautiful recording ranch complete with plush individual cabins and a full time female care staff. It was a beautiful state of the art studio. The place was incredible. It even had it's own elk herd. Jim Guercio had produced many of the band Chicago's albums and it was Chicago money that built Caribou.

Caribou Ranch
+
Columbia Records

XVII

Everybody was very excited and happy. I was the only one who was nervous. I was supposed to write the songs. I had finally written one song that I thought was pretty good. It was titled Jamaica Lady and The Dirt Band would record it and release it as a single that year, but I had hardly written any new songs for Starwood. We were still playing the same songs we had recorded on the first album.

We played at The Paradise for a few weeks and then it was decided that we take a little time off to prepare for the album.

We had added a great sax and flute player, Brian Savage and another singer guitarist, Haden Greg. Everybody in the band went their separate ways for a few weeks. I asked Haden to come down to Basalt and help me write something for us to record at Caribou.

Haden came down to the house on 3rd St. for a couple of weeks and with his help I made up a bunch of songs.

All this time drinking and doing coke...Booze and coke...Booze and coke... It was the 70's. It was accepted, almost expected behavior. We were a Rock and Roll band in the 70's. We didn't know any better.

It was during this time that I really started to notice the effects that years of extended alcohol and drug abuse were having on me. Adding to the pressure of being the songwriter for a Columbia Recording Group, I had no

confidence in my ability to write songs... To me this thing had gone much too far. I had lied about being a songwriter to get into the local band. I had made up a few little ditties and gotten away with it. I had even gotten away with the RCA album. But now the whole thing was going corporate... Hundreds of thousands of dollars were on the line. People were starting to count on me to write songs.

The plan was to start the album at Caribou Ranch right after the holidays. That Thanksgiving I had dinner with Steve Martin at Bobby and Peggy Mason's house. It was that night I started to get a little worried about myself. I was sitting next to Steve Martin eating Thanksgiving dinner and I couldn't remember his name.

He was in his arrow through the head stage and we had been supporting him at some of his gigs. And now I couldn't remember who he was and I couldn't remember why I was there with him.

When Steve Martin is not on the stage being funny he is quiet and sort of sullen. He will break into some shtick every once in a while but for the most part he's quiet.

So we're sitting at Thanksgiving dinner and I know he is somebody I've seen but I can't fucking remember because I've been doing alcohol and

cocaine for 7 years straight and it's finally starting to have an effect on my brain.

“So what do you do for a living?” I ask him completely honestly...
“Since we’re sharing dinner and no one else is talking.”

“I’m an English sheep dog who can talk.” Said Steve.

I excused myself from the table and went out on the front porch into the cold night air. After a minute or two Steve came out. He and his date had to be somewhere and while she was inside saying goodbye he came out to talk to me.

“Are you OK pal? You look white as a ghost.” He asked kindly.
“Listen, I couldn’t even remember where I was in there for a minute.” I admitted....

Steve’s date started to come out the front door with Peggy Mason.
You should try to take it easy a little bit...too much of that stuff will kill you.” Steve kind of whispered to me.

When the girls got closer I said, “So read any good books lately Mr. Funny Guy?”

“Yeah, The Tibetan Book of The Dead is always good for a belly laugh...”

They started making their way down the steep driveway at The Mason's house. Suddenly a thought came to me. I ran down behind them and asked Steve a question. I mean this guy had written gags for Johnny Carson and for Saturday Night Live, he had make people laugh all over the country...Now I remembered who he was...

"What books should I read really?" I said out of breath...

"What do you mean?" He looked at me smiling.

"I mean what books should I really read?" I said again.

"Are you serious?" he asked.

"As serious as a talking sheep dog who's about to make a record for our common friend and manager William E. Mcuen." I said.

"Arthur Rambaud and Charle Baudelier." Said Steve Martin.

"Thank you very much." I said.

Steve Martin and his date drove away.

We were booked to play New Year's Eve at The Paradise and I spent Christmas at my house in Basalt. My little cousin Tommy Spillane showed up in Aspen with no money, no job and nowhere to live.

We were booked for a national tour right after we finished...

It looked like I would be gone for a long time. We would be at Caribou Ranch for three months and then on the road for six months after that. I just

handed my cousin Tommy the keys to the house. I also called my friend Diedre at The Red Onion and got him a job.

On the way into Aspen the night before we were to go to Caribou Ranch and start our album, Shag and I stopped at The Woody Creek Tavern for a beer. My old friend Shep was running the place and I just wanted to stop and say hey.

As soon as we walked in I could see it was old home week. The place was full of Aspen old timers. We settled in to drink a few and "shoot the shit" as they say. After a while John Denver came walking in with a couple of people. I said hi and he asked me how I was doing and what was happening. He told me all about his World Hunger project and how he had met The President of The United States, and how he had been to The White House. He wasn't much interested in the fact that we were going to make another album. I'm not even sure if he heard me.

John did ask me if I had a bump, meaning snort of coke... Of course I did. We went outside to his car and did some.

"Listen," John said, "Let me buy some from you, I feel like partying a little."

"I don't have any for sale but I'm going right now to pick some up for Caribou." I answered.

“Well I want to get some... Let's go... Is it far?”

I said, “No no, it's right on the west end of town... You're not a narc are you?” I said, trying to be funny...

I said let me call and you can go over there with me.

“I can't go over there,... who's gonna be there?... Do I know the person?... Can't you just go get it for me?”

For the first time I noticed that John was a little drunk. I offered him another snort.

“How much do you want John?” I asked.

“I don't know a couple of grams.” He answered.

“OK give me the money and I'll go get it for you.”

“I don't have any money... I'll have to go home.” He said.

I had to go to Aspen. This was starting to get ridiculous. I told him to give me his car. I gave him the little bit of coke I had and said that Shag would drive him home and I would go score and meet them up at his house.

I could tell he was too far-gone to drive. John Denver could not hold his liquor. He was a real nice guy and all that but he was an easy drunk. A few beers and a shot and he was gone.

So off I went to my coke lady's house. I had lined up a couple of ounces for the album. I was doing at least an ounce a week and it was getting

worse. I gave a lot away too. But I was taking no chances. I wasn't going to get caught down at Caribou Ranch with no coke. I was also getting 250 Quaaludes and some pot.

So I went to my dealer's house driving John Denver's car and score this massive amount of drugs. I found out later that they were going to bust my dealer's house in the wee hours that night but they cancelled the bust because they saw John Denver's car and license plate parked outside. Saved by the bell....

I made it up to John's house in Starwood, safely. When I got to the security gate the guard stopped me and handed me a note from John. I had to be quiet because Annie and the kids were home. I parked in the street. The front door was open. I knew my way to his private music room area and that's where I found John and Shag in animated conversation.

I took out what looked like a couple of grams and put it on a record album jacket. John thanked me and asked if it would be ok if he paid me tomorrow, he didn't want to wake up Annie looking around for money.

We hung out for a little while but I really had to get going. I was supposed to meet the guys in the band. We were all going to meet for a little celebration at The Paradise. So Shag and I said Goodnight to John Denver

and went into Aspen. We got to The Paradise at about midnight. We all had drinks until way after the bar closed.

Just for old time sake I stayed in the dressing room all night snorting coke and drinking wine and playing music. Bobby Mason, myself and a couple other Aspen locals sat around all night.

When the morning came we dragged ourselves to the airport and after a couple of Bloody Marys, found ourselves in Denver getting into the Caribou Ranch van. It was a thirty-minute ride to Nederland and then we were there.

The first day we did nothing. We all had our own cabins with close circuit movies and twenty-four hour room service. Anything you wanted you could have. If they didn't have it they would get it for you. There were skimobiles, expensive winter gear, and pretty girls on staff.

We didn't get around to recording for a few days. We just hung out and dug the place. We ate our collective, big meals in a gigantic dining hall with long wooden table lined up together to make one very long banquet table. Our producers, Bruce Botnik and Terry Powell were there for our first big ceremonial dinner. Michael Martin Murphy and Jim and Jeff Guercio were there also. Jeff was already a good friend of mine from Aspen.

We also went into the town of Nederland and hung out at a little bar called The Pioneer. It seems that everyone who ever recorded at Caribou

hung out at The Pioneer. There were pictures of Chicago, Elton John and band, Dan Fogleberg, The Beachboys and now they were taking a picture of us, Starwood, to put on the wall.

I'm sure it's still there.

Bruce Botnik had been the engineer under Paul Rothchild for most of The Doors records. He was sitting there daily as that incredible scene was happening. Even more he was involved with every quirk and nuance' of that incredible voice and those great songs, hours of listening and mixing. He was privy to the turmoil that raged in the drunken Lizard Kings whiskey and drugged soaked mind and along with Paul Rothchild was responsible for capturing what would become part of The American soundtrack of the 60's forever.

Columbia Records decided that Bruce Botnik should produce our little record along with Terry Powel, a charming but inexperienced Columbia executive. I had no idea who was making the decisions at the time and I didn't care how it all was being decided or how it was happening. All I knew was I was making an album at Jimmy Guercio's Caribou Ranch and it was to be produced by Bruce Botnik of The Doors fame. Now the guy who was turning the knobs during the recording of songs like "Light My Fire"

and “The End” and had known and worked with Jim Morrison only a few short years before would be sitting at the console recording us.

England had Mick Jagger and Robert Plant but The Lizard King was ours. He was an American original...the epitome of the narcissistic decadence and grand self-indulgence that was Rock and Roll in the sixties.

I don’t know what I believe about ghosts and spirits. We all know that more goes on in the world than our human minds can see, but, there is no doubt that Jim Morrison’s presence was very strong through Bruce’s intense association with him. His aura seemed to hang like an L.A. fog around all the people I ever met who had strong ties with him. I felt his presence very strongly and loved every minute of it. It may be just in my mind...but it’s there none the less...I felt close to him even though I had never met him. I had seen him years before in a little place in New York City call Ondine’s. But I never felt closer to him than there at Caribou making our album for Columbia with Bruce Botnik.

I didn’t even belong there. I had these feelings that I was putting everybody on. All I had really wanted was “get in the band” as I had always done all my life, for the express purpose off avoiding waiting tables and to meet girls...It was a prank gone mad...I could handle putting on the ski crowd...or the frat party crowd...but all of a sudden in a couple of years it

had gone from a fun game to this. I was on the inside. I secretly had these great waves of guilt. Shouldn't I tell somebody before they discovered I was an imposter? Too late now. I was even the lead writer and singer. I mean I looked the part; I could play and sing, But Jim Morrison?

Recording an album at Caribou Ranch in the mid winter of 1977 was like being in Antarctica. The wind blew sideways for the entire three months. There was two feet of snow with a half-inch frozen crust on the top. If it wasn't snowing it was blowing snow.

Going from the warm comfort of my luxurious cabin to the main buildings where the studio and dining hall were, was like trudging to the Pole with Perry. First you had to dress up in a moon suit and boots. Then you had to lean into the wind and fight your way through the blizzard.

It was actually a good thing for me. I was exhausted. After the basic tracks were completed I wasn't needed until it was time for vocals. I took a much-needed rest while Bobby Carpenter and Bruce Botnik made the record.

I lay in my big brass bed, used the phone to talk to a girlfriend or two into braving the weather to join me. I drank a lot of expensive wine and watched a lot of movies. I kept the service staff busy bringing me wine and cheese and changing the tapes in the VCR machine.

Jim Guercio had stocked the movie library well, and being a movie nut, I took advantage of his diligence.

One night I was a little tired of sitting in my cabin. I put on my moon clothes and made my way down to the dining hall. The main table consisted of tables strung together end-to-end with a common tablecloth. The result was this very long table that could seat about forty people. It was four o'clock in the morning and I was at the kitchen end of the table eating a bowl of corn flakes the night girl had just brought for me....

As I sat eating my corn flakes I noticed that there was some one sitting opposite me at the farthest end of the table. The other end of the table was forty feet away in the dark end of the dining hall. My end was lit by the light from the kitchen.

"How's it going?" I said politely.

There was no response. When I found the opportunity I whispered to the girl as she brought me some orange juice.

"Who is that down there at the other end of the table?"

"Brian Wilson of The Beachboys." She said.

I continued to eat my corn flakes for a while. When a little time had passed I heard myself saying...

"I hate to be a bother but I am a very big fan of your music."

No response.

“I think the album Pet Sounds is a milestone in recording standing with Sergeant Pepper’s as one of the most remarkable recordings of the modern era.”

I thought I heard a kind of affirmative grunt. I looked up from my corn flakes but I couldn’t see anyone at the other end of the table anymore. I could hear the harmonies of Good Vibrations in my head.

In My Room and Help Me Rhonda had been two of my favorite records... of all time. It was the strangest thing. The only doors in or out of the dining room were up at the kitchen end of the table. My end, the lit end of the table.

“Where did he go?” I asked the girl.

“Who?” she looked at me kind of curiously.

“Brian Wilson, he was sitting down there a minute ago.”

I had practically nothing to do with making that album. I had written the songs and played a few chords on the basic track, but after that I hardly ever even went near the studio. I was content to sit in my comfortable cabin and read and watch movies. I was trying to get through the French Poets that Steve Martin had suggested I read.

I had Rimbaud in both English and French but I still couldn't make it work. I started to call a girlfriend of mine from Pennsylvania.

Lori Chandlee was an old friend of mine. She was the Grand Niece of Edgar Allen Poe. She had once played a song I had written, after reading Gone With The Wind, for Joan Baez. Joan Baez said she would like to use the song on her next album, but Bill Mcuen nixed it, my manager at the time.

Anyway Lori was staying in Colorado now so I was spending hours on the phone with her discussing the difference between Arthur Rimbaud in English and French and watching Fellini movies and Clock Work Orange, and It's A Mad Mad Mad World; instead of recording in the studio.

I was becoming more and more distant from the business and the politics of the music business. All they talked about in the studio was who's who, who's what, and numbers and tours. When it came time for me to do my vocals I went into the studio and did my vocals... but I found myself growing apart from the other guys in the band. No better and no worse just different.

I really loved songs and records but I definitely felt like I was in over my head and it made me feel alienated from my own record. Nobody seemed to notice, in my own mind; I just didn't belong there.

To me, the supposed main songwriter for this happening new group on Columbia Records, the music wasn't making it. There was something missing. Everybody wanted hits. If you wanted to please everybody, especially the record company, you had to come up with songs that were potential hits. They didn't want to hear anything else.

I had actually written a couple of pretty good songs by then because of the shear number of attempts I had made at writing.

They weren't interested in those songs. So I gave them what they wanted. I was unconsciously trying to perpetuate my position. I had the ability to make up, practically on the spot, pieces of music and snatches of catchy words that passed for contemporary hit songs.

I was able to tap into the creative side of my mind and dig into the assimilated library of tones and phrases stored there and come up with things that everyone around me accepted with no questions as songs worth recording on albums.

Even other people, John Denver, Three Dog Night, The Dirt Band, Columbia Records, other artists I would meet. They all would record my songs and validate me as a bonafide songwriter.

Years later, after I had learned I would go on to write some good songs and be proud of the poet I would become, but in 1977 while recording that

second album with the Starwood Band for Columbia Records at Caribou Ranch in Nederland, Colorado, I was not.

I thought the songs were rushed and unc�평ed on my part. They were simple attempts at achieving commercial success and more acceptance from the world around me. In short, at that time, I had no idea what I was doing or how I had gotten myself in this position...

It was very much like that old Groucho Marx joke. He wouldn't want to be a member of any country club that would have people like himself as members.

I didn't know how to articulate it at the time but looking back that is what it was. These people were accepting anything I wrote as something worth putting down on record as their music.

I was spending no time writing for Starwood. I was starting to spend time writing musical pieces and poems, but nothing that I thought they or the record company would be interested in hearing.

I was into Dylan both Zimmerman and Thomas, and Rimbaud. The music I loved and listened to was Lightnin' Hopkins, and BB King and Muddy Waters... Sam and Dave, Joe Tex, etc.

There was a vast chasm between the music and songs I loved and respected and the songs I was writing at the time.

And the big thing was....It was taking all the fun out of it for me. It was alienating me from the band. My standards were higher than both the bands and my ability to create music.

There I was fronting and writing for a Columbia Recording Group. With a big time manager who believed in me, with a couple of hundred thousand dollar budget. A state of the art studio at my disposal, strong fan base that loved our music, a Silver Eagle tour bus and a national tour booked and waiting; I had already been on a million selling album as a writer; AND...I was hiding in my room drinking wine and avoiding everybody because I did not believe in the music or my ability to write songs...What was I doing there? I surely thought they would have found me out by now, but they didn't. Instead, they thought I was some kind of genius....So I drank more...and snorted more coke...and I slept with more women.

The album was finished in March and by April we were getting ready to go on tour.

Shag and I and Lynch Quinn and Jim Dooley...The guys I had built the cabin in Colorado with, Shag being my long time best friend and the other guys my good friends and adventure companions; had a master plan. It revolved loosely around building a cabin in The Rocky Mountains, which

we did, and then waiting for the property values to go up sufficiently to sell off half the land buy a sailboat and sail around the tropical World.

The music career had blossomed a bit bigger than I had planned and that was all right, it meant we could buy a bigger sailboat. But the music career seemed to show no signs of ending. Year after year, what started out as a way to make a living that was better than a real job, kept growing and getting bigger. The stakes got higher and higher and more and more people became involved. I was in for the duration.

Meanwhile up on Basalt Mountain, the party went on. The cabin became a party house. Drugs and women, music and drugs. I was told that many nights they would get stoned and dance all night to some of my music.

Just like everything that had to do with excess, it would come to a bad end. Drugs and alcohol always win in the end. No one who continues down that path comes to a good end. None of us realized that reality yet. In the sixties it had been fun. In the seventies it was accepted behavior but toward the end of the decade the constant abuse started to take it's toll. Especially for people of our generation.

Chinese Honeymoon

XVIII

On his thirtieth birthday, in a booth at The Midland Bar in Basalt, Colorado, Lynch Quinn died of an overdose of heroine. My friend and partner. Like the rest of us he had been doing drugs all through the 60's and 70's and he thought he was bullet proof.

They had come down from the cabin to celebrate Lynch's birthday and as usual on birthdays, everybody was buying him shots and beers. He was probably already half in the bag when he arrived there.

Lynch never did much heroine. None of us ever did, but being his birthday, when it was offered to him he took it and that was it. He was only one hundred and thirty pounds soaking wet. They tried rolling him in the snow when somebody noticed his lips were blue.

Seeing Lynch passed out at the table at the end of his birthday was nothing out of the ordinary but when they couldn't revive him and he stopped breathing that was it. Lynch was dead. The party at the cabin was over.

I didn't hear about it until about a week after the funeral. We were at The Omni in Atlanta, Georgia, playing The Columbia Records Convention with Cheap Trick and Boston...

A week later when we were on our tour bus headed for a concert in Tulsa, Oklahoma when I found out that my cousin Tommy, who I had given my

house to live in, had been killed in a small plane mid air collision outside of Aspen.

My reaction to both of these tragedies was to feel nothing. It was all too much so I blocked it out. I was on the road playing one-night stands. Houston, Texas; Topeka, Kansas; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Meridian, Mississippi; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Ames, Iowa; Colleges, Festivals and Spring break, it all became a blur of drugs and girls and motel rooms and hours and hours on the highway inside that Silver Eagle.

A significant plateau of passage for any Rock and Roll Band is their bus. The day we saw our bus pull up to take us out on the road was a day that was as important as the day we got signed or the day we made the charts.

The Silver Eagle complete with bunks, video, wet bar, state of the art music system, tinted windows and bonded Rock and Roll driver Cadillac Jack. It's a great feeling when you reach the point when the powers that be, decide that your band and your music warrant a Silver Eagle Tour Bus.

It means you are up there with the rest of them. Everybody who has toured will tell you there is nothing like the feeling of going down the road knowing you are heading toward endless gigs and endless adventure. Wine, women and song... All Across America....

The first couple of days even the first couple of weeks are great. It's hard to explain, it's one of those experiences you have to experience to truly know. It is a great feeling in the beginning and soon becomes a blur. Then you can't wait to stop. But soon after you do stop, you can't wait to go again. It's quite insane. People become addicted to the road. It's a love-hate relationship.

I stayed as high as I could. I was already getting a little delusional. I don't think I slept for more than an hour or two in a row for months. I was going through mental torment. I knew that I was standing in front of thousands of people every night with a microphone in front of me but I was bound to an inane script of meaningless patter that I myself had scripted. I had written dribble about male female relationships and partying and making love, in order to make the band and record company happy.

Now I was in front of all these people with an opportunity to say something real and true. Something that would touch them and reach them deep down inside. It was driving me crazy. I had sold out to get there. But in truth I couldn't even take credit for that. I didn't even know I had sold out to get there until I got there.

I wanted so much to reach these people. I didn't want to just entertain them with meaningless ditties... I wanted to reach them and to touch them... I wanted to move them. I felt like a fraud.

I started to drink even more. I did a lot of coke and Quaaludes. It was the only way, I thought, I could get through it.

I was a farce, a fake, I had no right to be up on that same stage where giants like Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix and Muddy Waters and Hank Williams and Otis Redding... had stood; in front of all those people.... singing the songs I was singing. I owed them more than that.

If there was anything positive that came out of the psychosis I was experiencing, it was that I had the feeling that I could. I was getting the distinct feeling that I did belong up there. It was just that I hadn't earned it yet.

We were somewhere in the hot south when Elvis Presley died. Luckily the tour was almost over. It was August we were due for a break. I needed a break....

It wasn't much of a break. The record company wanted us back out there. I was home long enough to put the cabin and the house on 3rd St. on the market. That dream was over. I had a dead best friend out of one and a dead cousin out of the other.

Shag was OK, he had bought more land and built a house higher up on the mountain.

In a few weeks we were back out on the road. We played Red Rocks natural amphitheater with the group Firefall. We did some shows with Michael Martin Murphy, Brownsville Station and The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. We played The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion as the headliner and filled it. We played New Year's Eve for Bill Graham at The Cow Palace in San Francisco with Santana and Eddie Money.

Bill Graham was supposed to come flying down from the sky in a Star Wars, Luke Sky Walker type rocket ship but the cables got hung up and at 12 o'clock midnight as it became 1978 he was dangling from cables in a cardboard rocket. Occasionally when there was a minute hole of relative silence from the stage and crowd...you could hear Bill Graham screaming obscenities from 100 feet in the air, dangling from the domed ceiling of The Cow Palace.

Essentially that was our last gig. I had had it. I was starting to get really far out there. Talking to people who weren't there. Talking to myself. I was high all the time. The band wanted to book more dates but I was done. I left The Cow Palace and flew back to Colorado.

I got a room at The Hotel Jerome and stayed locked up in it.

I would venture down to the bar late at night and power drink. I struck up a little friendship with a pretty blonde waitress...

Her name was Molly. I had known her for a couple of years. She would come up after work and listen to me babble about art and music and the universe... my dead cousin... my dead partner... was I being punished for being an imposter?... Molly would bring me bottles of wine and coke. She would score me pills and food. After I hooked up with Molly I never had to leave the room.

“The guys from the band have been asking around about you.”

“I didn’t say anything... they think you are in the hotel but they’re not sure... I didn’t say anything.”

“There’s another guy and a girl who have been asking about you, his name is Kenny Edwards, he plays in Linda Ronstadt’s band... and her name is Carla.”

I just wanted to have some time to think. I had met Kenny at a couple of our gigs and had talked to him about songwriting and records. He had been with Linda Ronstadt since the beginning; he had helped form The Stone Ponies. I really liked Kenny.

“Tell Kenny Edwards that I will meet him at the bar downstairs, when you see him, OK? But don’t tell anybody I’m staying here.”

I was lucky to have Molly...I was really a wreck...at that time.

“There is also a guy named Shag who has been asking about you, he’s down in the bar now.”

I had surgical pajamas and a robe. Molly had taken my one set of jeans and a shirt to the cleaners and they hadn’t come back yet.

“Go down and tell Shag I’m here and bring up a couple of bottles of wine from the liquor store.” I asked Molly.

It was good to see Shag. We talked about what had happened with Lynch Quinn and my cousin. He also told me that my house on 3rd St. in Basalt had sold and that John Wicks was looking for me to sign the papers.

I was still wearing the blue surgical pajamas and cowboy boots. Shag said he had something I could wear in the hearse and went down to get it. He came back with a gigantic sheepskin coat. Shag had scored some sheep skin and had gone into the sheepskin coat business until he found out how hard it was to make one. But he had made a couple and he loaned me one plus a cowboy hat.

So off we went in Shag’s 48’ Buick Hearse to find John Wicks and sign away my house. I didn’t want to have it anymore because of Tommy my cousin getting killed in that mid air crash and all.

We got to John Wicks’ office at about eleven in the morning.

I signed the papers and he handed me a check for almost \$30,000.00 dollars. I asked him to walk over to the bank with me and I cashed it.

“What about you and your cousin’s stuff at the house?” John asked. “Shag, will you grab that stuff on your way up the hill and stick it somewhere?” He agreed and that was it...

So there I was, dressed in blue surgical pajamas and a gigantic sheepskin coat. I had on boots and a cowboy hat and I had a bank pouch in my lap with thirty thousand dollars cash in it.

Shag and I stopped by The Midland Bar and we drank a toast to Lynch Quinn. I gave him a handful of hundreds in honor of Lynch and for helping me on the mountain with my dogs and my stuff.

Shag was going to drop me at my drug dealer’s in Aspen. We were driving past the Hotel Jerome when I saw Molly outside talking to Kenny Edwards. Shag blew the horn and before I knew it we were all on the way to my drug dealers. Shag dropped us off. My coke dealer lived part way up Independence Pass.

When we were safely inside my coke dealer’s house, myself, Kenny Edwards, Molly and my coke dealer and his girlfriend, I decided it was time to have a party.

“We can’t have a party here.” My coke dealer said, “But a good friend of mine is out of town and his house is cool, and it’s a really great house, Fireplaces in every room. I just have to call him in New York.”

I said, “How long is he gone for? Tell him I’ll rent it for a couple of weeks.”

My coke dealer made the call and after a minute looked up at me and said, “With maid service... A thousand a week.”

“I’ll take it.” I said.

When he got off the phone he asked me how much blow I wanted.

“How much do you have?” I asked him quite seriously.

I bought four ounces of pure Peruvian flake cocaine and a jar of Quaaludes, and some other exotic goodies. On the way to the house we picked up a couple more people including Jeff Geurcio from Caribou who we saw walking down the street. We stopped at the liquor store and bought cases of everything...

The house was on Red Mountain. It was beautiful. I pulled Molly into the biggest upstairs bedroom and laid claim. I had no luggage. I just threw my sheepskin coat on the bed and Molly lit a fire in the big stone fireplace.

There was a massive dining room table with a crystal chandelier above it. My coke dealer found the biggest mirror in the place and we laid it on top of

the dining room table. I took a plastic bag with an ounce of cocaine in it and dumped it on the mirror. My coke dealer rolled up some hundred-dollar bills like coke dealers liked to do...

“We need music. We need some guitars.” Kenny said.

I had no idea where any of my stuff was. The last time I had seen my guitar was on the stage at The Cow Palace in San Francisco.

I had no idea where any of my clothes were and I didn’t care. I knew that my dogs were up on the mountain safe and sound at Shag’s house and that’s all I really cared about at the moment.

For the next two weeks we partied, slept, screwed, jammed, drank, snorted, smoked, drank, played, snorted some more and drank some more.

I had a stack of mail that Shag had given me that I hadn’t even opened yet that I was sure was more royalty checks and I still had about twenty thousand in cash in Molly’s purse. It was pretty wild.

Sometime during those last two weeks of Aspen madness Kenny Edwards and I decided that he and his partner, Greg Ladanyi, would produce my solo album for Columbia Records. They had just completed Carla Bonoff’s first album and Greg had also finished working on Jackson Browne’s Running on Empty album, which he engineered and mixed.

I would record it at The Sound Factory in West Hollywood. That was the happening studio. Peter Asher had done some of the Linda Ronstadt albums there and Everybody Loved the Room. As we were playing Warren Zevon was just finishing up his infamous Ware Wolves of London at The Sound Factory.

I wasn't even aware of the fact that I was going to do a solo album for Columbia. Kenny and Greg said they would take care of everything. Columbia, the band, the studio, everything. It was all beyond my control and comprehension.

I was taking the road of least resistance. If it was good enough for Linda Ronstadt and Jackson Browne, it was surely good enough for me. Before I knew it I was in L.A. I was staying with Kenny Edwards in West Hollywood. I really love Kenny Edwards. He is a good, kind, talented human being and funny as hell. We were both so loaded on cocaine and everything else all the time it's a wonder we got anything accomplished at all. I must say one thing though...Kenny Edwards and I laughed and had fun the entire time we were living together and making the album.

The apartment was a big white three bedroom. White floors, white walls and mirrors and white ceilings. We had beds in the bedrooms but that was it. No other furniture at all. Plenty of white.

I didn't want to know anything. It was all starting to become surrealistic. I was much too high all the time but so was everyone else. After Lynch and my cousin Tommy and Elvis all died, I sort of snapped. I know what was going on. I was out in L.A. to make a solo album for Columbia Records. I just didn't understand how or why.

There were so many people who would have killed to be in my position. And there I was, I didn't even have any songs.

Linda Ronstadt's bass player and Jackson Browne's engineer and co-producer were producing me. The band they had put together for the album was the L.A. A List; Waddy Wachtel and Danny Koochmar on electric guitars with myself on acoustic, Russ Kunkle and Rick Marada on drums, Kenny and Bob Glob on Bass, David Sanborn on sax and David Lindley on lap steel.

Greg Ladanyi saw right away that I was pretty fucked up from constant touring and abuse, so before we started the album he thought I should take a short trip to Hawaii with him to rest and dry out a little. He and Jackson Browne had gone down to Maui and rented a beautiful house on the beach in Kanapali. The house belonged to a guy who had done the surfing classic movie Endless Summer.

So we flew down to Maui and stayed at Jackson Browne's house for a few days. I ended up playing a few songs with Jackson at a little place called Chuck's Steak Pit. We ran into Eddie Money who I had just played the New Year's Eve gig for Bill Graham at The Cow Palace with. I introduced Jackson and Eddie. It was my first time in Hawaii. I got a little color and met Jackson Browne...

When I got back to Kenny's apartment in West Hollywood it was time to write something to record. I needed more coke. I had plenty of money. I had about seventeen thousand dollars in cash and another few thousand in royalty checks.

Kenny knew a dealer and I immediately bought a few ounces of coke. I didn't want to blow all the money or lose it, so I ran around the corner to a classic car dealership called Image Makers and I bought a Porsche Speedster for ten thousand cash.

The studio was just down the street but now I had a red Porsche to drive there in.

Every night at Kenny's apartment the L.A. Rock and Roll elite would show up and sit around, snort coke and play songs. That part of it was great. On any given night there would be people like Kooch, Andrew Gold, Waddy

Wachtel, Harry Dean Stanton, John David Souther, Carla Bonoff. It was great fun to sit up all night and listen to great music and great stories.

Soon it was time to make my solo album. The band that Kenny and Greg had lined up was the cream of the studio and stage musicians at the time in L.A. Kooch had played with everybody, but mostly James Taylor. Waddy had most recently been working with Linda Ronstadt and with Kenny but he had also produced Ware Wolves of London with Warren Zevon. Russ Kunkle played with everybody and so did Rick Marada... and David Sanborn and David Lindley were in high demand in many circles. My point is that because of these famous players and because these very rooms were like home to them... Famous faces were always wandering through. Like in a dream.

I was like a babe in the woods. I had no songs. Steve Martin the comedian had skyrocketed to fame, so I had no manager... Bill Mcuen was nowhere to be found. The Starwood Band was over. Somehow by the random confluence of a million different seemingly unrelated circumstances I was making a solo album for a major record label, Columbia Records. I had the top players in L.A. at the time and two very talented and successful producers.

And because of the circumstances and the people involved, The Sound Factory and therefore my recording sessions were visited nightly by the cream of the current show business crop.

On any given night while I was trying to hold my own with all those great players, doing a song I had just barely finished that afternoon, blitzed on cocaine and alcohol... I would walk....

James Taylor, John Belushi, Bill Murray, and Linda Ronstadt or different combinations of equally amazing personalities. In my fragile state it was all like a dream, surrealistic.

I was doing so much coke I had a constant nose bleed. I had to find another way to ingest the stuff. I was in the bathroom at The Sound Factory trying to stop the blood from flowing from my nose when a very famous singer who had recorded one of my songs with his group a few years before walked in and asked me if I was OK and did I have a bump? We sat down for a second and I handed him the baggy. He took out a needle and started to prepare some coke and he asked me if I would like to try shooting some.

I said no, but I admitted I had to find another way to get it into my blood stream because my nose was shot.

He said there are only four ways besides snorting that I know of to get cocaine into your blood stream. One is to shoot it into your vein, then

there's sticking it up your butt and there is smoking it and finally there is drinking it like a cocktail. I thought the drinking it like a cocktail seemed like the most civilized of the three. I definitely couldn't snort it anymore. I had a half glass of Stoli with melted ice on the sink so without further ado, I took what probably was about a gram and dumped it into the drink. I stirred it around and downed the whole glass.

My famous singer friend watched me for a second and then hit himself with his needle.

It hit me like a ton of cocaine bricks. I heard sirens, my ears were screaming. I tasted cocaine and smelled cocaine throughout my whole body. I didn't know whether I was going to shit in my pants or go blind. I blacked out for a second.

When I realized what had happened I was on my knees facing the urinal. My famous Rock and Roll singer friend was on his knees facing the other urinal saying, "Don't Puke, Don't Puke."

I was going to puke. I held it back slowly and the feeling subsided. "Holy Shit." I said.

"How am I going to go out there and record now?"

My famous Rock and Roll singer friend said here you better do some of this and he took his finger and dipped it in a bindle and stuck his finger

under my tongue. In about a minute I was puking and gagging but when it was over I felt great. I had tasted my first speedball. Cocaine and heroine. For the rest of the album I was wasted on cocaine and heroine cocktails...

I wasn't stupid. I was very high and confused. Through the haze of all the cocaine and alcohol and the sea of strange and often famous faces I began to get paranoid. I didn't know these people and they didn't care about me. They were all being paid to be here to drink booze and snort cocaine. They didn't care whether I lived or died as an artist or a human being as long as they were getting paid and there was enough cocaine to snort and alcohol to drink.

The person who saved me was Bill Murray. I was in the bathroom puking blood when Bill Murray and John Belushi arrived.

When I came out of the bathroom and went into the studio there was no one there. They were all in the office watching John Belushi rip the little wood slats from the window shade.

I guess I didn't look too good. Bill Murray walked right up to me and said, "Come on outside, you wanna see an automobile?"

He put his hand on my shoulder and led me outside. He sat me down on the sidewalk and sat down next to me. We leaned against the Sound Factory door. Right there on Selma...there was a little two seat Nash Convertible,

obviously the car that Bill and John Belushi had arrived in. It had a racing stripe that was obviously painted with a house painting brush, up the front of the car, up the outside of the windshield and down the inside of the windshield, continuing down the dashboard over the floor and the seat and all the way down the back of the car.

“Now that is an automobile!” Bill said to me.

I looked him right in the eyes and said, “What am I doing here?”

He said, “Life ain’t worth dyin’ over my friend.”

Of all the people, in that sea of drugs and confusion, Bill Murray was kind enough to take a look and wise enough to see....

“Life ain’t worth dyin’ over.”

We sat there for a little while and stared at the Nash convertible.

We stood up and I thanked Bill Murray and gave him a little Irish Catholic man hug and that was it.

The next day I put my Porsche on consignment at Image Makers. I bought a ticket to Colorado and went up the mountain to see my dogs.

I didn’t quit drugs and alcohol right away. It’s not that easy. I’ve been in and out of rehabs and hospitals. It took a while.

I had to stop playing music for a while.

Columbia released my album but I was nowhere to be found to promote it. I heard it once. It's better than I thought it was going to be considering the condition I was in.

I still love music... but I try to keep my distance from the scene. It's all changed so much. It's hard to believe that Elvis, John Lennon and John Denver are all gone....

“Life ain’t worth Dyin’ over.” —

Every time I see Bill Murray I smile.

The End