

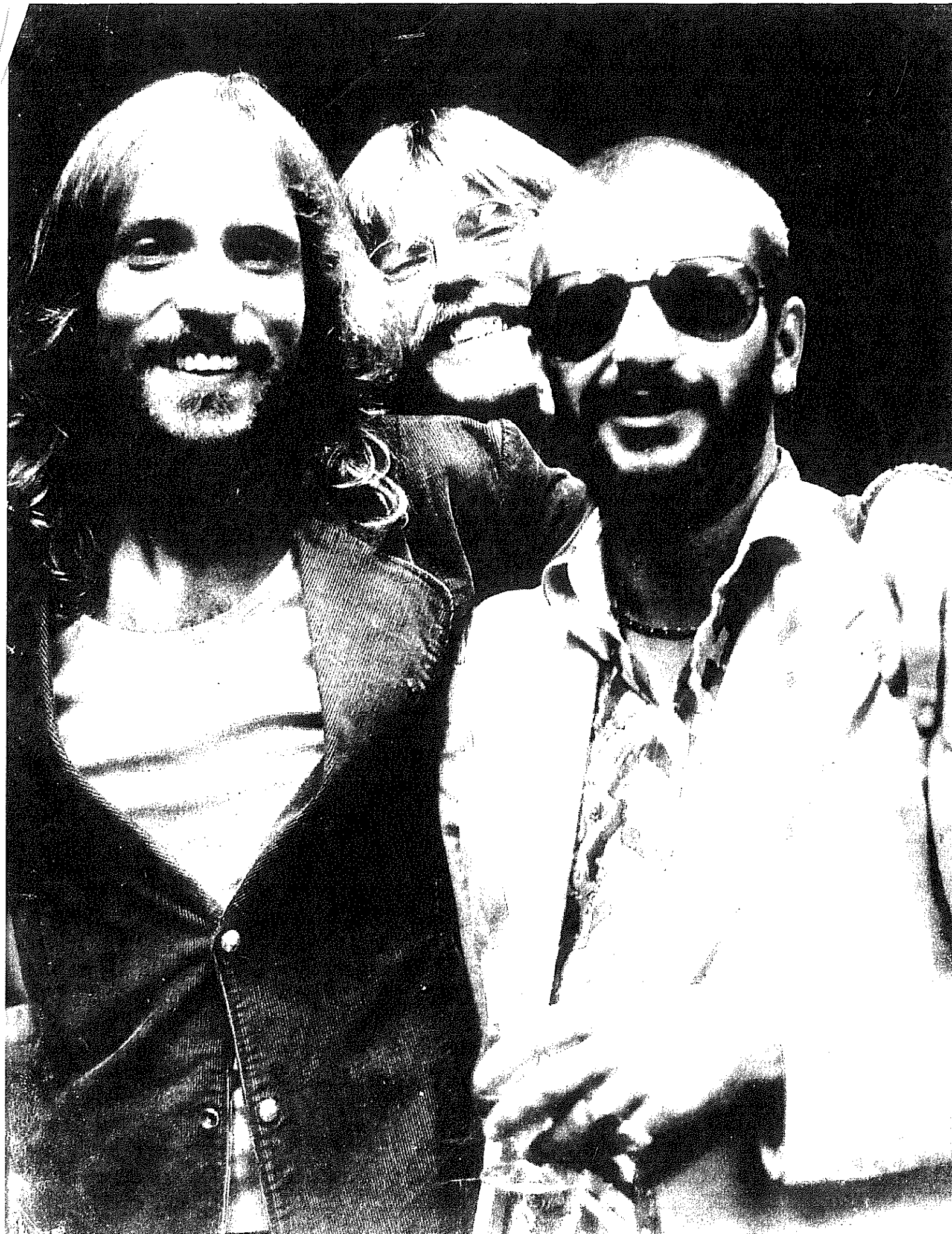
# THE ACCIDENTAL ROCK STAR

BY DAVID JAMES HOLSTER

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draft  
only

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“This is America and in America you can grow up to be anything you want to be. If you play your cards right, who knows? You just might grow up to be President of The United States.”

There was a girl that sat behind me in third grade. Her name was Roberta and she wore glasses that were as thick as the bottoms of coke bottles.

There was something wrong with her. She wore the same frilly green dress to school everyday with a matching bow in her scraggily hair. Her nose ran constantly and for a little girl she could fart like a truck driver, which she did often after which she would laugh. Nothing fazed Roberta. I don't even think she knew where she was half the time. She used to talk to her fingers but she was happy in her own little world.

I knew..something was wrong..If this was America and you could be anything you wanted when you grew up.. What about Roberta? I was only eight years old but I knew Roberta was never going to be The President of The United States of America no matter what they said. That was the first time I noticed that sometimes there was a big difference between what people said and what people did.

When I was a very little kid my Father would take me down into the cellar and sit me on top of a very tall bar stool in front of his beloved work bench and talk to me and to himself about life.

The workbench was his pride and joy, his private place. All of my father's tools were hung on hooks above his workbench. Everything was painted. The wall behind the bench was painted red except for behind each tool where the wall remained white in the exact shape of the tool that hung there so everyone would know exactly where each tool went and everyone would know when a particular tool was missing. My Father had a framed cartoon hanging on the wall. It was a frowning man squeezed into a box hugging his knees. The caption read "People Are No Damn Good!"

The radio was painted green and my father always had it tuned to the kind of music he had grown up with. Big band music, crooners and mooners, Bing and Franky. The make believe ballroom.

We would listen to the radio and my Father would drink highballs and expound to me about life.

"Son! This is America and when you grow up you can be anything you want to be!"

He would tell me about how my great grandfather came over from Holland to find a better life.. How he worked hard to bring his brothers over to America one by one.....

As he drank more and talked more my father would tell me stories about his youth and how much better everything was. "Why you could swim down and

eat the watercress right out of the bottom of the Passaic River.”

My father came from a generation that was always looking for a better life in the future but always talked about how everything had been so much better in the past.

My Father had been a crooner, a singer with the Johnny Dee Orchestra and Frank Sinatra was just a skinny kid from Hoboken and how they played the same North Jersey roadhouses in the thirties and forties. By then he'd have tears in his eyes. I loved my father but I'd be falling asleep. As he carried me up to my bed he would say, “Anything you want to be when you grow up.”

By the time I was old enough to understand what he was talking about we hardly spoke anymore.

My Father had once been a handsome young crooner and my Mother a pretty young bobbysoxer. There was no such thing as TV, Roosevelt was in the White House, the world was at peace in the late thirties. My mother and her sisters would take the train in from New Rochelle and they would either go to see my Father sing or they would go to Newark to catch The Hoboken Four with their dreamy lead singer Frank Sinatra. Life was good in 1939.....

Intro V

The War changed everything. By December 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, my sister had been born. My Father was sure he was going to be drafted so he took a job as a welder in the shipyards building battleships, a deferment job. He started singing at night with the U.S.O.

Sinatra's Mother got him a deferment because of her political connections in Hoboken. Frank was free to continue his singing career. He didn't have to get a job as a welder and he didn't have to sing with the U.S.O. He did work with the U.S.O. occasionally and that is where my Father and Frank Sinatra met.

My Father and Mother became friendly with other people who would go on to be big stars during the War Years; young entertainers like Dennis Day and Martha Ray. My Mother became good friends with Nat King Cole who once held me in his lap and dipped his whiskey soaked finger into my mouth to soothe the ache of a baby tooth that was coming in. Martha Ray and my Mom used to put us to sleep by singing Tura Lura Lura and making glow trail patterns in the dark with the end of their cigarettes. They all went on to become stars.

By 1944, when I was born my father had stopped singing. He never got over it. It made him sad and later bitter. I swore I would never let that happen to me. I was going to take his advice and follow my heart because in America you

can be whatever you want to be. Besides I was from a long line of dreamers and entertainers. I had a great uncle from Holland who was a beer hall entertainer in New York City at the turn of the century. He was supposed to have been very good too. The only problem was, he'd always drink away all his pay.

## Intro VI

One fateful night after a particularly successful engagement at a lower eastside establishment called Van Dradle's Hog's Head my Uncle, with a belly full of dark German Lager and the flush of the cold night on his face, in a jovial and triumphant mood seeing that it was well after midnight on New Years Eve; boarded the last train that would take him home to a warm bed and the scorn of my Great Dutch Aunt, his wife.

The story goes, as it was related to us children by another and still living at the time Great Dutch Uncle Orrie. I had eleven Great Uncles from Holland and some were greater than others but no matter... The story goes that my Great Uncle the entertainer boarded the last train to go home. It seems the amount of beer he had consumed and the fact that in those days there were no privys on the trains, added to the fact that in the winter they had a coal burning stove in the cars which often worked too well and could make it unbearably hot: My great Uncle decided to go out on the platform between cars, relieve himself into

the wind and get a breath of cold fresh air in the process. While out on the platform he was singing at the top of his lungs happy as a clam. He held on to the rail with one hand and peered his head round the corner Eastward into the wind.

According to family folklore he had gotten to the third verse of “My Wild Irish Rose” in broken Dutch when a west bound train went by in the other direction. As luck would have it there was an equally inebriated Irish gentleman hanging similarly out of the West bound train singing a different song entirely. And so ended the career of my Great Uncle.

After the war my Father gave up singing.



# Les Paul

## I

Since it had turned me into a madman and a junkie and had almost killed Me I decided that it would be a good idea to steer clear of the music business for a while.

It was the summer of 1996 and I had just come out of Sand Island, a tropical way station in Honolulu. A kind of holding pen for the chemically irresponsible. I was still getting royalty checks from all the songs I had written and one day I just took a cab to the airport and soon found myself at LAX. I had nothing but the clothes on my back, flip flops, jeans and an aloha shirt, A six string and a couple of hundred bucks.

I stayed the night at The Airport Ramada having Blue Hawaii tropical drinks in the Elvis Room with a stewardess from Texas. In the morning I rode the Desert Wind to Colorado... L.A. to Glenwood Springs. I called my old friend Shag and was soon back up on Basalt Mountain. After a few days I started to go into town. One thing led to another and before long I was playing music in the Roaring Fork Valley again...just for the pure joy of it, plus I was still a pretty good draw in those hills at the time and money is money.

It was during that time that I met Suzanne Paris. She tapped me on the shoulder one night and looked at me with those big blue eyes and said, "Do you want to play music with me?" It was all over and away I went back into

the music business again.

That's how I met Suzi and got back into the music business. I've tried to quit the music business several times but I've never been able to do it.

Somehow something happens and there I go again. Even though it almost killed me and nearly cost me my sanity, I just can't seem to get away from it.

This time it was Suzi. She came to live with me in a place I was renting by the river in Colorado and I fell in love with her. Suzanne was not only beautiful but she could sing. I was hooked.

She said she wanted to go out to California and make a record. I said I'd help her. I'd write songs for her and help her get out to California and help her make her record. I was in love with her.

I asked her to marry me. She said yes. We were married. I bought a truck and we were ready to get out of The Roaring Fork Valley. I was starting to do the things that made me sick and crazy the first time... Cocaine and alcohol, but I was in love.

Suzi and I both agreed that we had to get away from the party town Aspen Colorado, if we were going to anything. Trying to get away from drugs and alcohol in Aspen, Colorado, at least for Suzanne and I was almost impossible.

We were getting close though. We had made the decision. We bought a truck and even packed it with all our stuff. The only thing standing in our way was money. I was out of money and between quarterly royalty checks. We had to get out now. We were all packed. We were staying with Tina Ruby our good friend. But we were hanging out in the bars and slipping back into drinking and doing coke everyday. We needed a miracle. We got one....

A friend of mine, Dee Dee Brinkman told me there was going to be a Coors Beer commercial shot in town soon and that if I needed money I should audition for it. Dee Dee ran the Aspen Casting Company and she had been a good friend for as long as I could remember. She said it would be a long shot but they might use some local people and it would pay pretty good. So I gave it a shot. What did I have to lose.

There were about one hundred guys at the audition and they only needed a couple but I went anyway. I figured that it would be like a sign if I got it. Suzi and I were sinking back down into alcohol and cocaine abuse. We had spent our money on a truck and staying alive... And I have to admit... Cocaine and booze... We were ready to go. Had to go.

I said to myself, if I get this commercial and we get the money to go to California and get away from cocaine then it will be a sign from Heaven that

I should get back into the music business. If I didn't get the commercial then it would be a sign to stay out of the music business.

Not only did I get the commercial, but the shoot required me to sit at a small table in a bar setting for four 16-hour days with none other than Les Paul. THE Les Paul, the inventor of the electric guitar. I did the commercial and I did sit at a small table for four 16-hour days with Les Paul. Les Paul sat and told me his life story and all about how he invented the electric guitar so people could hear him play at a noisy drive in food place. He used his mother's phonograph-magnet and a radio. He told me about his career in show business....

Les told me all about his beloved Mary Ford and how great she was and how much he missed her. We sat there for four days and Les Paul talked and I listened. I loved every minute of it and I love that old man. Les Paul and I are still friends today.

That was my sign. I was back in the music business. I got paid for doing a Coors Beer commercial with Les Paul. Suzanne and I jumped in the truck with all our stuff and we drove out to California to make a record.

We hadn't been out in California for too long when we were invited to a barbecue at "Casa De Mason," The home of rock and roll icon Dave Mason.

Inserts

Les Paul, make sure everybody knows it's 1996.

# Traffic Jam

## II

## Denver Death

The sun rose majestically in the East as it has since the dawn of time and as it will long after man has faded from his earthly existence.

Whatever! It was the morning of October twelfth 1997, a beautiful fall morning on California's South-Central Coast. I was up early making coffee in the kitchen of Casa de Mason. Dave Mason's pale pink, adobe style, Rock and Roll Rancho Deluxe stood a few hundred yards from the rustic Two-lane blacktop that circumvents picturesque Lake Casitas. The house was nestled on a gentle rise ten miles from the Pacific in the rolling hills above the town of Ventura.

Suzanne Paris, my wife and I were planning to go to a get together down in La La Land; actually Bel Air. We had been invited to an afternoon shmooze and cocktails at the home of Cassandra Delaney Denver, John's ex-wife.

The plan was simple, John and Cassandra were to take their eight-year old daughter Jesse Belle and her friends to Disneyland in the morning and afterwards we "adults" would meet for cocktails. I was looking forward to getting away from Casa de Mason for a day and it would really be good to see John again.



Another thing about the Sunrise, you never know what the new day is going to bring.

Suzi and I had met Dave Mason by chance. We had both had separate dreamscapes that we would work with him one day. I had been a big Traffic fan in school. Dear Mr. Fantasy, The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys, Feelin' Alright, Pearly Queen...I mean these were great songs. Music, I and the rest of the 60's youth culture had grown up with. We felt we knew this guy.

We had met Dave Mason by way of a coincidence. An actress friend of Suzanne's was dating a Sony Producer who was a good friend of Dave's and by chance we had been invited to a barbecue at Casa de Mason. As we drove up 33, the Ojai Highway, we were in very good spirits. We were convinced that this meeting was meant to be. A cosmic convergence..and to top it off, this would be the first time Comet Hale bop would be visible in the night sky. We were sure that this was a magical happening and that something really great would come of it. On the way up the mountain we blew a radiator hose... I should have seen it as an omen but we were so wrapped up in our cosmic-ness and feelings of synchronicity and good fortune that nothing that could have happened was going to spoil it for us.

I love Suzi very much and we had been through some tough times

together moving from Colorado, kicking coke, making a record and all. It was really good to see her happy... When she smiled she lit up the world. She definitely controlled my weather. When she was sad and down the storm clouds gathered but when she was loving and happy it was like the sun breaking through. I put some Kahlua in my coffee to steady my nerves.

The sounds of people stirring came from downstairs. Living with Dave was like living with a moody British pit bull. Working in the studio with Mason and Capaldi were like Reservoir Dogs, the musical. They were like night and day. Jim, the main lyricist and drummer on all those great Traffic songs, liked it raw and natural, while Dave had a tendency to overwork things a bit.

A typical day of recording at Dave Mason's house would be to rise whenever, drink gallons of coffee most times with Kahlua, smoke half a pack of cigarettes and a joint or two, tune and strum a guitar or two and watch a movie.

Sooner or later Jim Capaldi would wonder up the stairs groggy and unkempt. He would go about making tea. The whole while complaining about how Americans were second to the English in all things culinary and American football was boring compared to English football. Tommy Cooper and Benny Hill, British humor. After tea he would start ragging on

Dave. He was drinking Dave's booze, sleeping in Dave's house, splitting Dave's gate at shows, recording in Dave's studio and ragging on Dave endlessly. Dave will never do this, Dave will never do that, and he's got one foot in Vegas, he used to be better, etc. Finally Jim would leave and go into Ojai to talk to some girl he was working on. Jim Capaldi sees California and all of America as fair game when it comes to women. Married or not, somebody's girl or not. What did he care? He was in America. His wife and family were a world away. He never seemed to realize what an arse' he was making of himself or maybe he didn't care. Jim, God bless him, was stuck in the sixties.

Like a lot of old rockers I have known from both sides of the Atlantic, he seemed to be emotionally stalled in his moment of his glory. Famous for fifteen minutes in the sixties and stuck there forever. I've got nothing against Jim. He's a very talented guy and responsible for some great music... I love the guy... Psychotic Delusions of Grandeur and all.

If comedy equals tragedy plus time... Jim Capaldi is a great comedian.

The day we met Dave Mason... He was witty and charming. We thought the world of him. For Suzi and I it was a magical experience.

There we were jamming and joking with the founding member of Traffic. He loved Suzi's voice and our songs. That very first day he expressed an

interest in producing us and before long he had invited us to move in with him to work towards that end. So we gave up the apartment we had just put a deposit on, losing the deposit and moved into Casa de Mason.

On this typical day of recording at Dave Mason's house; after Jim had gone off to Ojai to play Don Juan, Dave would come upstairs from his lair. If he came out of his spacious bedroom at all. He often stayed in his cave for days without coming out. But on the days he did emerge he would grunt good morning and go directly to his computer and the phone, ignoring us totally until he had a few hours of coffee and computer.

I really liked Dave a great deal. He's witty and charming, generous and talented. Deep down inside I know he has a big heart. He has shown moments of great humanity and love. However, he can also turn on a dime. I don't know if it is because he grew up; in the Rock and Roll business or what, but Dave can become cold and calculating right before your eyes. I guess it's the way he's learned to survive, confusing and frustrating no the less. Plans made the night before in the flush of "high" enthusiasm would fade to ether in the reality of the new dawn.

Promises and words stated in the heat of the night before proved to have been mere glittering generalities the next day.

Multiple projects in various stages of development. Right!

At about one in the afternoon, Dave would get in his current SUV and drive away. Not saying a word to anyone about where he was going or when he would be back. Normally I wouldn't give it a second thought. But I, foolish boy that I am, would still be banking on the plans made the previous evening. "Tomorrow we'll work on this track or start that song etc."

After all, this was supposed to be a recording day at Casa de Mason. That's the reason we were there. After spending the afternoon in Ojai bird dogging, Jim Capaldi would return and sit down in front of Dave's big screen TV and manipulate the controls so that the twin dishes of Dave's giant satellite system were aimed at some must watch soccer match in Venezuela or a championship rugby tournament from Ireland. Soon Jim would be snoring.

Usually around three or four Dave would return. We were all in the house at one time at last. But we would never seem to make it into the studio. It was now cocktails, beer and marijuana time. Soon followed by sushi and saki at a friend's restaurant in Ojai, Go Fish.

After much Saki and raw fish we would all head back to the house for beer and a few bottles of wine. By ten or eleven at night, tired, stuffed and loaded, we would finally move it into the studio. Needless to say, we hardly

ever got anything accomplished. This went on for months....Frustration!!!!

I was starting to remember why I had quit the music business in the first place. Suzanne and I were starting to get that something smells in Denmark, feeling. That nothing is as it appears, now you see it, now you don't odor.

We had learned contrary to Dave's story that Dave had been fired from Fleetwood Mac for a no show for an important New Year's Eve gig in Las Vegas... A certain member of the McVie clan never wanted to see him again.

We also knew first hand that he had been fired from the Ringo Starr Allstar Band for various reasons. Suzanne and I had attended a band dinner party at a Greek restaurant in L.A.

For us it was another magic night. Gary Brooker and his lovely daughter were sitting directly across the long narrow banquet table from us. Gary was a delight as was his daughter. The writer and vocalist of Whiter Shade of Pale and many other classics by The Procol Harum. He is a true British gentleman. It was a great and distinct pleasure to meet Mr. Brooker and child.

Jack Bruce of Cream was also there. I had met Jack years before. Aside from being a great writer, singer and musician, Jack is one of the funniest Scotsmen in the world. A joy to dine with.

Dave had brought a couple of well-cleaved Chicago strippers along,

which added a touch of sleazoid to the mix. The next day he was fired and it was simply never mentioned again.

It began to dawn on me that the only reason Jim Capaldi was in the States was to avoid the British taxman and not to make records. A song he had co-written, Love Will Keep Us Alive, had been recorded by The Eagles on the When Hell Freezes Over reunion album....Money!!! This of course meant that Jim would pay fewer taxes in England if he spent six months in America.

Jim had been hanging with George Harrison before coming to America, trying to get one of his songs on the ex Beatle's next album. Now why would a person come to America to make music with someone he hadn't gotten along with for years, Dave Mason; when he was palling around with George Harrison at home where his family lived?

Dave and Jim had also attempted a Traffic reunion but Steve Winwood wouldn't play with Dave. It was pretty evident that things were not as they appeared. Jim was there to avoid taxes and it was becoming painfully evident that Suzi and I were there not because Dave wanted to produce us; but because he wanted us to play and sing on his record gratis.

Suzi has a beautiful voice and is very talented. But, Dave's main interest however, was to get a piece of the publishing on some of my already

completed songs....

On this particular day we were glad to get into our car and drive to Bel Air. John Denver had been a friend for over twenty years and had been the first big star to record one of my songs. He had also gotten my band and I, Starwood, our first recording deal with RCA, Windsong. John had in fact given me my start in the music business. I was looking forward to a taste of John's welcomed company.

John Denver and Dave Mason existed at complete opposite ends of the pole. John may have had some hard times of late, but in the many years I knew and admired him he had always been real and healing to me. I was definitely looking forward to seeing him . As we drove away I remember thinking, I hope he's still there by the time we arrive.



John Denver

Rocky Mountain High

III

Suzanne and I pulled out of the driveway of Casa de Mason with a sense of relief and made our way down Highway 33. By the time we hit 101 south we were Feelin' Alright....Sort of....

I had been casually introduced to John Denver in 1965. I was living with my sister Judith in the East Village in New York City. She was a waitress at The Bitter End, a trendy café and showcase stage owned and run by Fred Weintraub.

The Chad Mitchell Trio, who John was working with at the time, played there often. Since my big sister worked there I hung out a lot and occasionally ran errands and did odd jobs for Fred...It was an amazing scene and an invaluable learning experience for me to watch all those great acts; up and coming stars like Harry Chapin, Bill Cosby, John Denver and many more great performers, work their magic night after night.

I didn't really get to know John until the early seventies in Aspen when his career was really starting to fly; when he started to take an interest in our band, and recorded one of my songs, Cowboy's Delight, written with the help of Bobby Carpenter of The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

I knew Annie Denver as well. Annie is the salt of the earth, a very together and lovely woman. She was the love of John's life. They had been

together since 1966. Annie had been through it all. Losing Annie in 82 along with the decline of his recording career, threw John into a tailspin.

Suz and I arrived at the home of John's new ex and their daughter Jesse Belle at about 4:30 on the afternoon of October 12, 1997.

Cassandra Delaney Denver is an Aussie, a very attractive Aussie. John and Cassie met in 1986 while he was appearing on an Australian music awards show. They were married in 1988. Jesse Belle was born a year later. After a short stormy few years they were divorced.

Suzanne and I arrived at Cassandra's roomy Bel Air home for the post Disneyland party, in good spirits. There were about thirty guests including Cassie's mother, Australian entertainer Tutu, John and Cassandra's adorable little daughter Jesse Belle Denver and assorted beautiful people....

There were cocktails, a buffet of fine foods, music and fashion statements galore... a typically well done and classy Cassandra Delaney Denver event. The first thing I asked when we arrived was if John was still there. Apparently there had been a few words between them and he had left. I immediately got his number in Monterey but was told he wouldn't be there for a while so I embarked on the mandatory socially correct introductory shmoozemingle. Cassandra introduced me around handed me a plate and told me to enjoy...

Being a guest and quite a hungry one at that; having left Casa de Mason without breakfast, I gladly followed the suggestion of my gracious and beautiful hostess.

As Cassie left she whispered in my ear... "After you finish... If you'd like to smoke a joint, meet me in the little room off the kitchen." She gave me a little kiss and a flirtatious wink. With a graceful turn, she was gone in a cloud of Ode' de Lilac. Cassandra was being a very gracious hostess, as always.

After dining I made my way to the little room off the kitchen. On the way I noticed a few of John's guitars were around the room. They reminded me of late snowy nights in years past, when John and I and friends from the Aspen area would sit in his house and talk, sing songs and pass the pipe around. The days of innocence. (Marijuana not crack)

There was a particularly beautiful pearl inlaid Martin six string that I remember being one of John's favorite house guitars in the corner. It brought to mind quiet snowy evenings up in his house..at Starwood on Aspen. He almost always performed professionally with a six or twelve string Guild. I remember thinking it odd to see that guitar leaning against the wall of a Bel Air mansion. I felt a chill. An eerie feeling ran down my spine.

I found Cassie, her mother and Suzi already puffing a skinny but potent

joint in the little room next to the kitchen. They were in a pot induced hysterics about something silly, I'm sure. I took a toke and soon was laughing right along with them. The combination of Cassie, her mom, Suzi and I all together had always been great chemistry for laughter and merriment. We mixed well.

Though we had no idea at the moment, we were about to bond forever in a loving but tragic way. This night was about to become a night the four of us would never forget.

We were laughing so hard that tears were rolling down our faces. We had been laughing about something or another for what seemed like an hour. Now we were laughing about the fact we couldn't recall what the hell we had just been laughing about for the past hour. It made no difference, we were having great fun and that's all that mattered.

For the next few hours we would join the party for a little while, giggle at everybody and then reconvene in the little room off the kitchen. Suzi and I, Cassie and Tutu were smoking another joint and having another private laugh when the phone rang.

I remember saying, "I hope that's John." It wasn't.

Suzi answered the phone. Cassandra was laughing too hard to talk. She motioned with a wave of her hand for Suzi to get it. As soon as she said

hello, her expression told me something was wrong. I felt a second chill run down my spine....

Suzi handed the phone to Cassie who leaned against the wall cupping her face with her hands to hear better. For a minute I thought Cassie had begun to laugh again. Her whole body started to shake. I'll never forget the next moment for as long as I live, Cassie turned and looked me straight in the eyes. She had tears in her eyes. She had gone from sexy hostess to lost little girl, in a split second. She softly said, "John is Dead."

The caller was an Aspen friend, Malcolm MacDonald. John's body had just been recovered from the Monterey Bay. He had crashed his new plane, plunging 1000 feet to the water. He died instantly upon the impact. Cassie, Suzi and Tutu went upstairs. The guests had all left. The phone was ringing off the hook. The tabloids were already at the front door. I became the designated media fielder.

I took a shot of Stoli and became, Surrealistic Numb Man and started holding off the press.

"The family is in mourning and has no comment at the moment."

Cassandra and her mother and Suzi were all sitting cross legged in a circle on the bed in Tutu's room. Jesse Belle was sound asleep in her bedroom. She was unaware of what had happened, which presented a

problem. Jesse had to be told before she went downstairs and turned the television on. The news of John's death was sure to be everywhere in the Media at dawn.

The tabloids were persistent. They wouldn't take: "The family does not choose to make a statement at the moment" for an answer. It was now three in the morning. The phone never stopped ringing and there was continuous knocking on all the ground level doors.

I would answer the front door, give my statement to a guy from whatever tabloid and close the door. I would then pick up the phone thinking it may be some distraught friend or family member. It would be the same guy hoping some one else would answer. I'd say, "Give us a break, would you please, there's been a tragedy, have a little respect, these people are in shock."

It didn't work. The last time I picked up the phone it was Peter Castro from People Magazine. Peter sounded like a human being and I respected the integrity of People Magazine. He reminded me that there was going to be a story written regardless. I made a deal with him. "Get rid of all these tabloid people. I'm going to take the phones off the hook and I promise I'll have the family's statement for you, and you alone, in the morning. Deal?" Peter said, "Deal!" and after unplugging the phones I went upstairs to check

on the girls; but not before taking another well deserved shot of Vodka...

Cassie's Mother was sitting in a chair and Suzanne and Cassandra were under the covers. There were a couple of empty wine bottles on the floor and the room smelled of marijuana and Ode de Lilac. I was invited to lie down with them.

"We need a man!" Cassie was slightly tipsy. I got into the bed and under the covers with Cassie and Suzi. They immediately snuggled up against me putting their heads on my shoulders. It was a very pleasant feeling. For the next few hours we swung from complete hysterical laughter to tears and back again. People react to sudden death in odd ways. We found comfort in one another that night. I was glad I was there.

Eventually the topic came around to Jesse Belle. Someone had to tell her before she went downstairs and found out from a TV newsbreak or well meaning phone call.

We continued to drink red wine, smoke pot and snuggle for a while. We were still in shock. We joked and sang and laughed and cried. It was an amazing, surrealistic emotional night.

Soon the dawn started to peek through. It was time to tell Jesse Belle. I held Cassie's hand to steady and comfort her as she got out of bed. I stood in the hall as she and her Mother entered the little girls room. Soon it was



done. The sweet little princess was told that her Dad was dead. She was crying and moaning. Soon all the women were crying and hugging.

I had to get some air. I went down the stairs and through the living room, passing the beautiful pearl inlaid Martin six string I had seen so many times in John's house on snowy evenings, and went outside.

I laid down on a big chaise lounge and stared up at what was left of the stars. There were still quite a few visible but the Sun was coming up. It began to dawn on me what had actually happened. John Denver was dead. It was difficult to imagine.

John had always been there. It had been more than thirty years since I had first seen him at The Bitter End in New York. He was so young looking back then. Scenes and images of John were popping into my head. John had been responsible for so many good things in my life. He was a beautiful guy, a great spirit, a man of his word, a genius, a holy man and a friend. This was tragic.

In the old days I would often go up to his house in Starwood above the town of Aspen, unannounced. He was very cool and gracious about it. He would invite me in if he was busy I would just kind of hang around looking at his gold records or playing one of his many beautiful acoustic guitars; including a certain pearl-inlaid six string Martin.

I remembered one particular night I had arrived at around ten. He was preparing for a trip. I had plunked down on a chair in his little upstairs music room. We were just kind of having a running conversation about nothing in general when I said; “John when are you going to record one of my songs so I can buy a nice house and some beautiful guitars?” .... “When you write me a song I can sing?” was his answer....

On the table there was a book of turn of the century photographs. Actual working cowboys and Indians still living as they had for centuries on the Western Plain. The book was open to a particularly interesting photograph.

I had just started writing songs. I had written a little in college but now I was writing a lot. The only reason I was in Starwood, the Rock and Roll Band was because I had told them I could write songs.

At that time, there were probably fifty folk singers with guitars below in Aspen trying to snag the brass ring. John was hot. Getting a song on a John Denver album was a very big thing at that time.

I looked at the Curtis book on the table. The image was a real 1898 cowboy on his horse, surrounded by cattle. There was a big moon and a mountain ridge behind him so you could only see his silhouette. Beneath the image the caption read: Working Cowboy circa 1898. The cowboys of the day timed their work by the position of the stars. When a certain star

reached the crest of the mountain the cowboy knew that he was about to be relieved. The caption went on: To guard against the danger of a stampede being caused by a sudden noise; the cowboys would hum or whistle a simple tune of their choosing, thereby keeping the sound threshold up so that a distant clap of thunder or the cry of a far off coyote wouldn't rile the herd.

I was reading this to John as he was banging around in the next room for something.

He came in and looked at the photograph and said, "Far out! There ya go."

"Write a song about that and maybe we'll have something."

"Can I borrow the book for a couple of days?" I asked.

"Sure! If you write a great song you can keep it."

I left about three in the morning with John's Curtis book under my arm wishing him well on his trip.

I'm happy to say, I still have the book.

*Sing Songs of the Sunrise into The Night.*

*With The stars as your timepiece.*

*You'll make it alright.*

*Make friends with the Darkness*

*And talk to the Moon.*

*When the Mood hits you can let out a tune.*

From "Cowboy's Delight"/John Denver/ RCA Windsong.

I knew the ladies of the house would be sleeping in considering what they had been through the night before. I grabbed a blanket and covered myself against the morning chill.

There is more sea than land in this World, and, on this day more tears than joy....How had it come to this? John Denver was gone. I couldn't believe it. This was very sad and tragic. John was a wonderful spirit in the world. He was a beautiful guy, a genius, a patron of the arts, a man of his word, a protector of nature... And a friend.

It started to dawn on me. I hadn't had a chance to feel anything in the heat of the night. But now it came to me. I cried like a baby. This was a terrible thing. John had done so much good for his friends and the World.

My mind began to drift back. How had it all come to this? I had begun my music career as a way to meet girls and make a little pocket change and had, partially, due to this good man, ended up having a real career. Record deals, tours, TV, Gold Records, Platinum Records, sex, drugs and Rock and Roll....A life, however accidental.

## Little Elvis

### IV

## Davy Crockett

In 1954 I became Davy Crockett... My name was already David a short enough step to Davy. I obtained a coonskin cap and a Daisy air rifle that I referred to, as Old Betsy and that was it. I was Davy Crockett. All my friends and I would watch the day's episode on the tube and the next day we would act it out at play. None of the bigger kids were interested in playing Davy Crockett.

At first everyone thought it was kind of cute but as the months wore on and I continued to walk, talk and act like Fess Parker, or Davy Crockett, Twenty-four hours a day my family, especially my mother, began to worry. I wasn't just Davy Crockett when the other kids were around. I was Davy Crockett all day and when I went to bed I would say in a deep Fess Parker voice, "May the good Lord bless you and keep your powder dry," Like Davy used to say.

My mother thought I had lost my mind and was ready to call the men in the white coats when another much deeper vibration was felt all across America. A vibration that would soon be felt around the World and would change the way everybody under twenty dressed, acted and felt about everything and the way everybody felt about everybody under twenty. All

the stir was caused by a nineteen-year-old hillbilly singer from Tupelo, Mississippi.

Sometime during the summer of 1951 this shy, young acne faced teen aged hillbilly mama's boy went to the movies. The movie he saw in that little Mississippi movie theatre that day was called The Blackboard Jungle.

In the movie Tony Curtis plays a juvenile delinquent, a bad boy. He wore his intentionally greasy blue black hair combed back on the sides so that it met at the back to form what became known as a DA or duck's ass. In the front he wore a pompadour high over his forehead which at the last stroke of preening he had pulled down in a final swoop. Puzzled fathers all over the country would later refer to the result as a whoopdeedoo hairdo.

The hillbilly boy was very impressed by Tony Curtis's character and his duck's ass whoopdeedoo hairstyle. When he got home he immediately put half a jar of Vaseline on his hair and tried to go about creating the same effect for himself.

The year was 1950, a few years before I became Davy Crockett. I was six at the time the hillbilly boy started to experiment with his image. He was fifteen. Somewhere in Liverpool England John Lennon was ten and a grammar school student at Dovetail Grammar School and John Denver was a little boy on an air force base in Arizona.

The hillbilly boy's father got caught forging his boss's name on a check and had to do some jail time. When he got out he piled his little family into their old Ford and they moved from Tupelo Mississippi to Memphis Tennessee, where they moved into the welfare projects.

Soon the hillbilly boy could be seen hanging out on the Beale Street in Memphis and standing outside the Pentecostal Church listening to the Colored church choir practice and admiring the clothing store front windows. Everyday he passed one particular store that sold "colored styles"... today the style would be known as "pimps are us." The clothing store was owned by a Jew but the clientele was primarily colored boys and cheap and flashy was the name of the game.

The hillbilly boy did odd jobs here and there but mostly he would bum a few dollars from his beloved Mama. Soon, to go along with his grease back whoopdeedoo duck's ass hairdo, which he had dyed black with the stuff his Mama used to hide her premature gray; he began wearing pink pimp shirts and high cut black "nigger pants" with pink stripes down the side. On his feet he wore cheap Italian shoes with black sides and white on top. They were actually golf shoes but he had removed the spikes. He loved the way they made him feel... different.

It was almost time for the boy to enter high school. He was to attend



Humes High school in Memphis, the epitome of poor white, redneck, crew cut, dumb cracker, football playing, Deep South bigot mentality, lower-educational institution.

When 16-year-old Elvis Aron Presley walked into Humes High school on that September day in 1950 and faced those redneck kids who must have thought he was an invader from Mars....It was a defining moment of Monumental proportions for the American and World pop culture.

The fact that in the days to come he would be ridiculed, spit on, called sissy and every other name in the white trash book, beat up pushed around and other wise become the victim of every kind of abuse imaginable and never back down, would forever be held as an act of extreme personal valor that would eventually put the entire world at his feet and put us all forever in his debt.

Long Live The King.

Sometime during his high school years Elvis entered and won a talent contest. Singing an old country song about a dog, Old Shep, written by Red Foley. It was a triumph and the first time the shy hillbilly boy with the jet-black whoopdeedoo duck's ass hairdo in the pimp garb felt within himself the power of the raw talent and the charisma he possessed.

In 1953 he cut an inexpensive do it yourself record as a birthday present

for his Mama and was noticed by the secretary at Sun Records who later brought him to the attention of Sam Phillips, owner operator of Sun, after over hearing Sam say that if he could find a white boy that sounded black he could make a million dollars.

Phillips discovered Elvis. They recorded what are now known as The Sun Sessions, which in the opinion of many are the best recordings Elvis ever made, and almost immediately turned around and sold his contract to RCA for not much money. I don't know if anyone but Sam Phillips knows what the dollar amount was for sure but it wasn't much. Some say \$10,000.

Elvis got hooked up with the Colonel Parker, went over to RCA and on January 27<sup>th</sup> 1956 he recorded Heartbreak Hotel. Following in rapid succession with Hound Dog, Don't Be Cruel and All Shook Up.

If you were to ask anyone over 45 today especially the young boys and girls who would later go on to be The Beatles, Stones, Yardbirds, Crickets and on and on; any and all the people who went on to have musical careers, anybody who was totally moved by the shock wave created by Elvis, they will all tell you that there is a huge dividing line between what the world was like before and what the world became after Elvis Presley hit the scene.

Elvis's impact shot a shock wave chord of meaning and vitality around the world and every kid that was alive at the time felt it and it created a

cultural firestorm. Elvis shook the world.

I was sitting in our den with my Davy Crockett hat on my head and Old Betsy by my side watching one of my kiddy shows on the TV one early evening in 1957; when my older sister and a few of her girlfriends fluttered excitedly into the room crowding me off the sofa and acting all giddy. They rudely switched my show to a boring variety show hosted by one of the stuffy Dorsey Brothers. I had been forced to sit through the show before and I hated it. Trumpet players and boy and girl singers. It was boring stuff.

Suddenly the room erupted in loud squeals of excitement. I couldn't understand what all the excitement was and was about to leave the room when I looked up at the screen... And there he was....

A twenty one year old hillbilly cat with a greasy blue-black whoopdeedoo duck's ass hairdo dressed in pimp clothes holding a guitar like a tommy gun. He moved. He bounced in time with the music. He shimmied with the beat. He stared mischievously into the camera and went a little crazy with his eyes and looked away. He smiled his little curled lip half smile, half snarl. "You ain't nothin' but a hound dog." He never stopped moving. He was polite. He was threatening. He was putting us on. He was dead serious. He was your brother, your lover, your friend, your worst enemy. He was overflowing with raw sexual energy. He was

fantastic. “Rockin’ all the Time.”

As soon as it happened it was over. My sister and her giggling, twittering, wet pants little teenage girlfriends were out the door and down the street. I was left alone in stunned silence trying to make sense out of what had just happened.

I was dumbfounded, in shock. Slowly I reached up and took off my precious Davy Crockett hat and let it slip to the floor. I leaned Old Betsy, my trusty air rifle against the wall. I remember slowly walking over to the mirror that hung on the den wall and staring at my pathetic little eleven year old boy face, I ran my fingers through my pathetic little boy hair cut.

Slowly and before I even realized what was happening my upper lip started to curl up into a kind of mischievous half smile, half snarl. My head started to kind of swagger. My leg started to bounce to some unheard beat. Suddenly I pointed at myself in the mirror and sang in a deep southern drawl, “Since ma baby lef me...da da...I foun a new place to go...da da...Down to the end of lonely street called Heart Break Hotel.”

My Davy Crockett days were clearly over. I would never wear my precious coonskin cap again. My mother had been right all along. No more wasting my days with childhood fantasies about a mere historical woodsman, pioneer, Indian fighter, congressman and hero of The Alamo. I

had seen the light. I was eleven and I had finally realized what I wanted to do with my life. I would be like Elvis Presley, an uneducated hillbilly singer with a dyed blue black whoopdeedoo duck's ass hairdo who wore eye makeup, dressed like a pimp, held his guitar like a tommy gun and shook his ass on national television, Yeah Baby.

With the performance on the Dorsey show and soon to follow appearances on The Ed Sullivan Show, Elvis had changed the world. He had opened up the floodgates for all the pent up emotion and sexual frustration of an entire generation.

When Elvis came along the social climate was like a pressure cooker ready to explode. In 1955 the youth culture's only hope for relief, James Dean, had been killed in his Porsche outside of Paso Robles, California on his way to the road races in Salinas. With his death went the only chance to break the vacuum of social rigidity that had existed since the giddy days of World War II. Eisenhower and Nixon had been elected in 1952 and re-elected in 1956. People were afraid to breathe<sup>o</sup> and the kids were primed for any release they could find. Elvis blew the top of the kettle to the moon.

I couldn't sleep for a week. Right away my mother happily noticed that I no longer was wearing my Davy Crockett hat. Her joy was short lived. I started to put gobs of Vaseline in my hair and pile it on top of my head in an

awkward attempt at a duck's ass whoopdeedoo.

I started to wear my sister's blouses because they looked more like "Elvis clothes." I drew sideburns on my face with eyebrow pencil and started to talk with a deep southern drawl. Deep for an eleven year old anyway. I still greeted my mother with Howdy Maam but with my newly found southern accent and that little nervous stutter that Elvis used to do...

My Mother was always very tolerant of me but my Father thought I was losing my mind and suggested I get professional help.

My sister became a juvenile delinquent, became pregnant at 16 and ran away with a guy named Johnny who drove a powder blue 56" Chevy and wore a whoopdeedoo duck's ass hairdo.

The nun's kept sending me home from school to change my clothes and wash the goop out of my hair. Finally my father snapped and before I knew it I was off to boarding school to be whipped into shape by The Franciscans. It didn't matter. Nothing could stop me now...I was going to be like Elvis Presley and nothing was going to stop me.

At this point in time John Lennon was trying to be like Elvis Presley in Liverpool and had started his first band, The Quarrymen. John Denver was trying to be like Elvis Presley on an air force base in Arizona...and every young boy who was alive and awake when Elvis happened was somewhere

trying to be like Elvis Presley. The monster was loose. The hillbilly cat was out of the bag. Elvis had reached and touched us all.

My biggest concern became... how to get a guitar... and where to get the latest Elvis 45 records... and listen to them until the needle wore through....

I guess it was partially because my sister had become a juvenile delinquent and gotten knocked up and run away with a guy named Johnny who drove a powder blue 56' Chevy; and partially because I had gone from trying to be Davy Crockett, which was something my Father could justify as child's play; to piling my hair on top of my head with the help of gobs of Vaseline, speaking in a stuttering southern drawl and wearing my sister's clothes (because they looked more like Elvis's clothes)... that led my Father to the decision to send me up to The Franciscans at Delbarton School for boys in Morristown, New Jersey. They would straighten me out.

I knew I was still a little too young and a little too short yet to be Elvis, but boarding school?... I had heard the threats before.... At least it wasn't the dreaded military school... Elvis would have to wait... but not for long.

I was supposed to board at Delbarton but my first semester they had no open beds so I commuted... from our little apartment on the lower Eastside in Manhattan to Morristown, New Jersey. Four hours a day. Plus a full day of school with the Good Franciscan Fathers and a full load of homework

when I got home. I was twelve years old.

Now I realized how my father intended to keep my mind off Elvis and my body out of my sister's clothes.....He would work me to death.

I would wake up in the dark at 4:30 a.m. and dress,...my school tie, my brown shoes and my green Delbarton blazer. I would then walk the 17 blocks in the freezing cold and snow from our apartment in the Village to the Port Authority Building on 34<sup>th</sup> Street and take the bus to Jersey. From the bus stop on the Jersey side of the river I would walk another mile or so, still in the dark and freezing cold to catch a ride with some other boys and their father who would drop us all at the Lackawanna Erie Train Station in Denville New Jersey.

The train station was where the real fun began and a feat of survival in itself. The train station was a convergence place for all the little monsters on their way to school from all over North Jersey.

The littler ones were open prey for the bigger ones. Food, homework and money were all open for blatant extortion. Standing on that icy platform being repeatedly punched in the arm by some slob so he could copy my Latin or have my tasty cake. Being pelted with snowballs threatened and pushed and pulled by upper classmen became an everyday occurrence, something to be endured. There were no adults for miles except the station



guy who could care less what we did to each other and stayed locked in his little cage inside the station.

Finally the train would come and temporarily end the chaos. It was an ancient commuter train filled with salesmen and students. The conductor tolerated no shenanigans so the ride from the Denville Station to the Morristown depot became a safe oasis. It was always hot on the train. It might have just seemed that way because I had just spent twenty minutes being harassed in the bitter cold on the frozen railroad platform, but it became hard to stay awake...From total anarchy to oven like drowsiness.

After forty minutes of trying to stay awake in the stifling heat of the ancient train we were dumped off at the much bigger Morristown Station where there would be about 100 little monsters, being the final convergence point and meeting place where the buses from the school would eventually show up and drive us all up to the campus.

The Morristown station was utter chaos. Bullies scanned the crowd for weaker kids to prey upon. There were con games, strong-arm tactics, more arm punching, running, crying, screaming, fighting and there were books flying and boys turned upside down and shaken with threats of violence. The big threat was the dreaded, "Give me your money and your math homework or I'll stick your warm little tongue on the frozen tracks and the

train will run over you head.”

If you were fast enough and lucky enough to escape the terrorism without losing all your books, money or food...just before it actually became The Lord of The Flies for real...the buses would show up.

It was the bus ride to school...the final leg of the daily perilous commute that I live for. The Brother's who drove the yellow school buses had learned long ago from the experience that turning the radio up very loud was the only way to tolerate the din and screech of fifty mad banshees.

So...every morning as the sun began to rise over the frozen landscape of historical Morristown New Jersey, I would sit in my seat usually with bruised arms and no milk money and listen to WABC AM coming out of New York City. Those wonderful sounds would be like soothing salve to my wounds. A mystical audio oasis of Elvis, The Drifters, The Cadillacs, and Richie Valens, “Oh Donna Oh Donna.” Fifty wailing misfits singing in unison. Future wall-streeters, doctors and lawyers. Privileged little white prep school ass-holes listening to poor black men and uneducated southern boys singing songs written mostly by bald Jewish guys from the Brill Building. However it all happened, there on that bus, those magical, mystical, wonderful sounds became forever etched in my heart and mind...In the midst of all that pubescent, violence and madness...I was sure

I had heard the voice of God..."A Wop Bop A Lu Bop A Wop Bam Boom."

Everyday I was punched, threatened and otherwise terrorized. I was given so many forget me not nuggies. I had knots on my head for months. The worst of all was the dreaded wedgy. A bigger boy would come up behind you and reach down the back of your pants and pull up your underpants as fast and as far as possible. There were a few times I thought my little balls were going to pop off.

Every night after completing the horrible trek in reverse and getting home well after dark, I would search the dial on my sister's radio, which I had inherited when she ran away with a guy named Johnny, until I found WABC AM. For the rest of the night until I passed out from exhaustion I would listen in bliss to the sacred sounds of the top forty while pretending to study my Latin verses. In the morning, at 4:30 it would happen all over again...

There was a particularly savage antagonist on those frozen early morning train platforms. He was a kid 240 pound 13 year old named Sabia. He was a big fat Italian slob of a kid with a thick crop of black curly hair. His fat pink belly always stuck out from under his untucked shirttails. He had big horse teeth and wet slobbery lips. Sabia was the worst. He was mean. He was the baby son of a very wealthy family from Montclair. The youngest of six boys. His father was a prominent construction contractor and it was

obvious that Sabia took a lot of abuse from his macho older brothers at home because he loved to take it out on the weaker kids at the train station.

One of Sabia's favorite targets was this frail little shy kid Getz. Getz lived in terror all the time. Sabia would make him pee his pants every morning. Poor Getz, he was one of those kids whose nose was always running. He would hide somewhere around the train platform but Sabia would always find him...

"GETZ"... "I'M GONNA GET YOU!!"... Sabia would bellow. Poor Getz would be quaking in some corner somewhere peeing in his pants until Sabia would eventually find him and drag him by the scruff of the school blazer out onto the edge of the platform. Even some of the older boys would tell Sabia to take it easy, but to no avail... Sabia was too big and too mean... and set on his path of destruction.

One particularly freezing cold morning Sabia had poor little Getz at the edge of the platform on his back... He had Getz's pants open and was cramming big handfuls of snow down the front of his pants with every thrust you could see Getz's little hairless pecker turning red and raw with the abuse.

For a split second Getz's eyes met mine. I could see the sheer terror in his eyes. There was a circle of boys surrounding the action at this point...

Suddenly I felt my upper lip curl into a kind of half smile and half snarl. My leg started to bounce up and down to some unheard beat. I raised my hand above my head and started to sing at the top of my lungs in a deep southern drawl...

“Well IT’S A ONE FOR THE MONEY..AND IT’S TWO FOR THE SHOW...NOW IT’S THREE TO GET READY NOW GO MAN GO...”

For a split second everybody froze and looked at me. With that I rushed at the circle of boys surrounding fat Sabia and poor little Getz with all my might.

Everybody slipped and fell and tumbled off the train platform and down onto the frozen tracks. I was able to grab a handful of fat Sabia’s curly mop. I began punching as hard as I could forcing his face down on the cold steel of the track.

The station manager had finally come out of the safety of his cage. When they pulled me off it became evident that Sabia’s fat mouth and tongue were stuck. The sound of the train whistle could be heard not to far off in the distance... The station manager had no choice. With one quick pull he wrenched the fat kid’s head back and pulled him off the tracks. Sabia was squealing like a pig. Blood was everywhere...

And... There it was... Stuck to the track. Just before the train rolled over

it. Everyone could see it. A big piece of Sabia's tongue had come off and stuck to the track. The train rolled over it and pulled to a stop.

My Father had to pay the doctor bills and I was suspended from school. I spent the rest of the semester at home avoiding my father and listening to my precious tunes on the radio...

When I returned to school after Christmas break, this time as a full time boarder... things were different... I noticed that I always had a small circle of littler kids around me and all the bigger boys seemed to be keeping their distance.

That was fine with me... It gave me more time to listen to my songs on my sister's radio, which was mine now and dream about guitars, pink Cadillacs and being like Elvis...

"Wella blessa ma soul what's wrong with me... I'ma ichin like a man on a fuzzy tree."

## Devil with a Blue Dress

V

By the time I was tall enough and my voice was getting deep enough to be like Elvis...Elvis was no more. He had gone in and out of the army and had started making his silly travelogue movies. The Colonel had sold him out and for some reason Elvis let it happen. Either he was losing touch with reality or he just didn't care anymore; but after the army The Hillbilly Cat had become a homogenized parody of himself... The year was 1962.

In February John Glenn became the first American in space. He orbited the planet three times in his Friendship 7 spacecraft for 296 minutes at a speed of 17,545 miles per hour. The UPS reported that the flight gripped the nation in intense excitement.

In October of that year J.F.K. ordered a blockade of Cuba to halt the build up of Soviet built missiles that could inflict mass destruction on every Nation in the Americas.

In August, in a great dramatic demonstration 200,000 blacks and white sympathizers massed before the Abraham Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. demanding the immediate across the board abolition of all-racial discrimination.

Also, my sister left that guy named Johnny who drove the powder blue 56' Chevy and took over our little rent-controlled apartment on East 3<sup>rd</sup>



Street in the Village. My parents couldn't handle it anymore and moved up to their summer cottage on the North Jersey New York State border to get away from it all. A little lake up near Lake Hopatcong... Lake Shawnee.

My sister was in the city with her two daughters by herself. She was working as a waitress at The Bitter End.

I had been expelled from Delbarton again, this time for good. My best friend, Jimmy Hirsch and I had gotten hold of two department store mannequins and put them in our beds with a sign on the door that said, Do Not Disturb... Yellow Fever, and had gone into the city for the weekend to visit my sister and see what kind of trouble we could get into. We would have gotten away with it too, but some idiot accidentally set his room on fire and we were caught in the fire drill head count.

I didn't care. My parents were out of the picture. So I enrolled in public school in the city and went to live with my sister. It turned out to be the best move I ever made. I'd been around The Village all my life; but as a kid playing Davy Crockett and stick ball... Bugging the chess players on Washington Square and swing on Saint Mark's Cube. Now I was big... Things were different. They say timing and location are everything.... They're right....

Puff The Magic Dragon.

I spent the spring and summer of 1962 just hanging out in the village. At my sisters. Bob Dylan and Alan Ginsberg...all these poets and folk singers and musicians were everywhere. I was still pretty unhip and didn't really know what was going on or who anybody was, but I felt it... Something great was brewing you could feel it. I could have gone over to Gerde's Folk City and seen Dylan before he became the Bard, but I didn't...nobody did. At that point he was just some kid from Minnesota. I probably passed him in the street a hundred times and didn't even know it. The important thing is that he was there...shuffling around with his small entourage' of people writing all those great songs...

I did see Lenny Bruce...My sister took me to see him.

I saw all kinds of people at The Bitter End... The Kingston Trio, Bill Cosby before he was anybody... The Serendipity Singers, The Kingsmen, I saw Tiny Tim in a little café...I thought he was nuts...the list is long but it's not really the point. I didn't know or care who anybody was...It's just that I was there and felt it. I felt the vibe. That's the important thing.

I knew something great was in the air. The place was alive and vibrant and the important thing is...I felt it... There were people who were there that didn't and I wasn't one of them and that's what I was so happy about. I wasn't really apart of anything but I felt it...so I sort of was...I also did

drugs for the first time that summer... that may have helped.

Of course drugs were not new... they had always been around since time began. Since man discovered that if you chewed or smoked or ate certain plants or herbs it could make you stay awake longer or feel better or go to sleep...

I smoked pot for the first time at my sister's. She was getting ready to go to work at The Bitter End and I was to hang out at the apartment and watch the girls. I noticed that before work my sister always took a couple of uppers. I knew what uppers were. I had just spent most of my teenage years fantasizing about being Elvis Presley cloistered in a Franciscan Prep school... but my eyes were open... I knew what drugs were about... She simply flipped me the bottle and said "Don't take too many or you'll be up for a week." They were called Black Beauties. She also gave me a little baggy of "Mary Jane" she called it. She went off to work and I proceeded to get ripped to the gills... and I put on some music. Coletrain... It was like a religious experience... I couldn't believe how fabulous the music sounded...

It was the summer of 1962. I would have been very happy to hang around The Village smoking pot and listening to music forever but my sister was smarter than that. I had no money and no job. This was my first real taste of freedom and I was really digging it... I was 17...

A few months before I was expelled from school, Father Kenneth, my student guidance counselor had suggested that I apply for early acceptance to college. I had filled out some forms and taken a couple of tests and then immediately forgotten about it.

One night my mother called. She was all excited and happy. I had been accepted at Villanova University... another Catholic school... outside of Philadelphia. For her sake I pretended to be happy too.

I wasn't. I was enjoying my newfound freedom and I liked what I felt was happening right there in The Village. I didn't want to miss anything.

My sister suggested that I check it out at least. What did I have to lose? She pointed out that I really didn't have anything tangible going on in The Village and that Philly was only three hours away. I could come back on weekends and holidays. Though she never said it... in hindsight, I must have been becoming a bit of an economic drain for her especially since I had started to smoke her pot. I had older friends from prep school that had gone to Villanova. I had to admit that the stories that filtered back concerning parties and girls were very encouraging.

Plus, since I didn't want to be Elvis anymore... I had no definite direction. I loved smoking pot and listening to music but they weren't paying people for that occupation yet...

There was just one minor detail I would have to take care of...although I had enrolled in public school in the city when I came to my sister's...I had never attended. I still hadn't graduated from high school...oops!

My sister had an artist girlfriend who had a family that lived in a big house in Jersey. The consensus was that if I didn't get out of the city I would probably never finish high school... They were probably right...

So my sister's girlfriend made a couple of phone calls and I had a couple more tokens. Marie, my sister's girlfriend, had mentioned that she had two brothers one of which was a rocker who could play the guitar and sing like Little Richard. That was good enough for me... After a couple of days I said goodbye to my friends in The Village, kissed my sister Marie and the kids; and I was off for New Jersey to live with The Lamonts, finish high school and most important... Learn how to play the guitar....

#### The Lamonts

There's a football stadium in The Meadowlands now, but in the early 60's travelers who didn't know New Jersey would see only an ugly wasteland of oil storage tanks and gaudy highway billboard signs while enduring the stench of the hog farms that butted up against the Hudson and New York City at the time. People traveling through would understandably be left with the impression that all of Jersey was nothing more than a swamp and

garbage dump for the borough of Manhattan.

Before urban sprawl and industrial pollution and for the most part still today, North Jersey consists of mostly quaint little towns nestled amongst a network of pretty lakes and rivers with miles and miles of farms and woodlands. They didn't name it The Garden State for nothing.

The Lamonts lived in an old sprawling six-bedroom farmhouse that sat on a small hill in the center of what was once a thriving 4000-acre farm.

Old Man Lamont, which is all I ever heard anybody call him, had been a farmer in Caldwell Township since the 30's, and a very good one. But, as he grew older and times changed he was forced to sell off his land parcel by parcel until it was nearly gone. Land developers and real estate investors had all but bought him out. Completely surrounding the old house and the twenty or so acres he still owned, stood a sea of one and two bedroom tract houses; mostly of the same lower middle class suburban design.

There sat The Lamont House on its little rise like an endangered American Gothic with it's weathered barn and rooster vane, rusted old John Deere tractor, hayloft, pitchforks and all; surrounded by an encroaching hoard of tasteless little blue and yellow boxes closing in for the kill.

I'm sure it's all gone now, but in the autumn of 1962 when I showed up to live with The Lamonts the grand old place still stood proud.

First there was Old Man Lamont himself and his wife, sweet, round Mama Marie, who always smelled of pie dough and had an infectious high, pitched giggle interspersed with her favorite expletives, “Oh My” and “Sweet Jesus of Nazareth.”

There was little Jake who everybody called Kip, the youngest. He would only stop talking long enough to eat which he did incessantly to feed his enormous energy.

And there was Joe the Indian, a full-blooded Lenapi who had been in the family forever. Joe never spoke much except to The Old Man. No one seemed to know exactly where he came from or how old he was....

#### Joe The Indian

The old Indian had a dark leathery skin and his face was deeply rutted and wrinkled... His left eye was glazed over white. He was kind of scary looking at first but I would come to know him as a kind and wise old man.

Finally there was Jimmy Lamont. Jimmy was like someone I had never known before. We were both about the same age but I still looked like a kid while he could have easily passed for thirty. Jim was one of those guys who was born to be around the gasoline combustion engine. He was a motor guy... He had a motorcycle and a truck and several hot rod projects he was always messing with on the place. He smoked incessantly and his fingers

were always stained yellow to go along with the black under his fingernails. He was a clean enough person but he had been tinkering with engines for so long his hands were permanently soiled with oil.

He always wore cowboy boots, jeans and a tee shirt with a pack of Luckys rolled up in the sleeve and he combed his hair like James Dean. Jimmy was cool. He had a beautiful old single cut away acoustic electric Gibson and could play the hell out of it. And as his sister Marie had said, he could sing like Little Richard. He was a natural. He knew every Elvis song, he could do Buddy Holly, The Everly Brothers, you name it, and he could play it. I was knocked out.

There was an old beat up Stella six string lying around the house. I got hold of it put strings on it and he tuned it for me. I proceeded to suck his brain dry. I wanted to learn to do everything he could do. I needed to know everything he knew about singing and playing.

Jim liked to play but he was more into cars and motorcycles so I would have to trade off helping him pull the engine out of some old Ford if I wanted him to teach me a few more chords and a couple more songs that night.

Hour after hour at night we would sit listening to records and playing guitars, and every morning we would go out to the garage and get greasy



pulling some trashed transmission or doing a valve job on some old jalopy.

When school started The Lamonts thought it would be a good idea if I said I was their cousin from the upstate to save the hassle of repeating a lengthy explanation over and over. So I became the Lamont's cousin from the upstate New York whose parents were away in Europe for a year.

Public high school was a joke compared to Delbarton...so the schoolwork was no problem for me. Jimmy didn't care about school at all and would have quit if he didn't think The Old Man would knock his block off. By Thanksgiving I was holding my own...By Christmas I was getting pretty good....

By Christmas vacation 1962 Jimmy and I could play about thirty songs together. So we asked a kid from school whose father had a set of drums to come over one night and the next day we started a band. The Ravens. I had been reading Poe.

We played our first gig on New Year's Eve at a friend's party. I'm sure we sounded pretty raunchy with two little guitar amps to play and sing through, one cheap mike and a drummer who had only ever played in the school marching band, but to me it was magic. It was something I had dreamed about doing for years. Standing in front of a group of kids playing and singing rock and roll, holding my guitar like a tommy gun. We drank a

lot of beer, made a lot of noise and had a ball. Jimmy was singing Long Tall Sally when the town sirens started to wail welcoming The New Year. 1963.

The Lamonts had a cousin who was a successful songwriter and record producer in the city. He had written and produced a big hit single for a black singing group called The Rays... The song was called Silhouettes and it had been a number one hit nationwide. I had heard the song several times on the radio and I had to meet this guy. It wasn't long before we were on a bus to the city carrying our guitars. I had no case so I wrapped the old Stella in a raincoat and tied it up with string and we were off.

We met Bob Crewe at a little hole in the wall-recording studio called Allegro. When we got there they were in the middle of recording so we had to wait in the tiny waiting area until the red light went off.

After about twenty minutes they took a break and we went in. It was fabulous. There was Bob Crewe in all his glory prancing around the studio giving direction to a group of black girl singers who were positioned around a big silver mesh microphone. Behind a separation barrier there was another mike set up with a small circle of hand clappers. As soon as Bob saw us he floated over and gave Jimmy a big hug and offered his hand to me in greeting.

He pulled us right into the action. It seemed that the hand clappers were

made up of the janitor and the deli guy from down the street and they hadn't seemed to be able to clap in time. So they were immediately excused and we were stationed around the mike. "Thank God, real musicians"... He said, and before we had even taken our coats off we were recording at a real recording session in New York City with a guy who had written and produced a No. 1 hit. I was in heaven.

In those days everything was done on four track. You couldn't layer like you can today. Many times two things went on one track together. So everything had to be balanced just right and the two separate performances had to be perfect. There were two mikes but it was all going on the same track. There was no vocal on it yet, that would be done at a later session so all we had to work with was the basic track of drums bass and piano.

We clapped to that track all night. Bob was a perfectionist in the studio. He was absolutely great, I loved him. His energy and stamina were infectious. He was totally into it and he was a genius. That's why he went on to have about 30 hit records with The Rays, The Toys, Freddy Cannon, The Four Seasons, Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels...The Bob Crewe Generation.

I had no way of knowing it at the time but the song we were clapping on all that night was Palisades Park. That summer it would be a No. 1 hit

single. Bob was on a streak. Almost everything he produced during the early to mid sixties was successful. I was just lucky to have been there but the fact remains that the first sound I ever made in a recording studio, even if it was just one of three people clapping hands, became a very small part of a very big record. A number 1 hit single nation wide. Whenever I hear that song even today I get a big kick out of the fact and it makes me think fondly of that first night at Allegro with Bob Crewe.

After that you couldn't keep me out of New York City and Allegro. I hand clapped, I beat on cans and bottles. I sang background ooo's and doubled doo-whops... I went for coffee, I went for pizza, I ran errands, I got to watch and even take a small part in the creation of some major classic Rock and Roll standards. I clapped my hands on Palisades Park by Freddy Cannon and Big Girls Don't Cry by The Four Seasons. I was around for the actual writing by Ray Bloodworth of Devil With A Blue Dress, which became a big hit for Mitch Ryder. I was a lucky boy.

I would have been around for a lot more but Old Man Lamont put his foot down when the school called and told him I had been truant for two weeks passed the Christmas break. The Old Man got really mad. I thought he was going to throw me out for a minute but Joe the old Indian said something to him and it cooled him out.

The next day my body was back in school but my mind and spirit were in that little recording studio in the city.

I had to get my high school diploma. I was just months away. So I sat there in school. I did get to go back into the studio a couple more times before the school year ended but my timing had been thrown off. Bob had business out on the coast so many times there was nothing very spectacular happening.

I was very shy around girls. I had been in an all boys' prep school since I was twelve. My only contact with girls at Delbarton had been prearranged heavily chaperoned dances put on in conjunction with nearby all girl parochial schools. The priests and the nuns would look on as a school bus filled with proper young Catholic girls would show up. We would form reception lines, boys on one side, and girls on the other. We would bow and the girls would curtsy. We were forced to dance one foot apart in classic ballroom style. From time to time a nun or a priest would walk through checking distances and tap the boy on the shoulder if the distance between the dancers seemed a little too close.

My only other contact with girls was from The Village. Talk about opposite polarity. My female friends from The Village were actresses, waitresses, folk singers, dancers and hookers. One of my good female

friends was the hat and coat check girl and The Bitter End. Dolly Kitteridge. She was a pretty blonde who wanted to be a Broadway dancer. She was moonlighting at The bitter End part time to meet the show people who frequently cruised The Village to catch the latest new comedian or fold singer and to make a couple extra dollars. Her main gig was as a stripper at The Metropol up on Time Square. A big second story strip club right above the avenue. The girls danced half nude in the windows to hook the tourists from Ohio in from the street.

Dolly was really cool. We used to sit in The Tin Angel next door to The Bitter End and drink wine and talk about things for hours. She was really smart and funny. She knew a lot about the city and show business.

Dolly was wise. She had a philosophy called The Snowflake Theory. She used to say that no matter what you have to do to survive the most important thing was to be yourself. She believed, and she was right, that the only thing any of us has to offer that is unique and special is the fact that no two people are exactly alike...Like snowflakes. Even if you are one of a thousand extras in a Cecil B. Demille movie, if you let that special difference shine through you will eventually be noticed and stand out because you are being real. She taught me a valuable lesson. I really loved Dolly Kitteridge. I asked her to the prom at my high school...

Dolly was twenty; she wore a lot of eye makeup and short skirts that showed her shapely legs. I was seventeen. What made it even more interesting was that Dolly was a full four inches taller than me. With her spiked heels it became ten inches.

When we walked into the high school gym on the night of the senior prom, which had an enchanted forest theme, I could see all the jaws hitting the floor. And Dolly could dance, man could she move...

Dolly wore a tight leopard print dress and high spiked heel boots she called "Fuck me shoes." She made all the little high school girls in their frilly pink and lavender prom dresses look like children playing grown up. At first people were a little put off by her but by the end of the night she was the most sought after dance partner in the place. Every girl at the prom was eventually imitating her moves. She was great. She was witty and clever and even won the teachers and adult chaperones over before long.

After the prom The Ravens were slated to play an all night party. We played and Dolly got drunk and did her strip routine on the dining room table. And then went outside and dove into the pool butt naked to cool off. Soon everybody was naked in the pool. Later we made love on a bed piled high with high school varsity jackets and borrowed for the prom, fur coats and imitation stoles. It was my first time. We were both pretty smashed and

if I could remember it, I'm sure it would be something I would never forget. I do remember waking up with a terrible hangover the next morning but it was well worth it.

The next time I saw Dolly Kitteridge was in the 1968 March issue of Playboy Magazine, Bunnies of Manhattan was the title of the layout. She was bending over a table of men serving cocktails in her little bunny suit. The men were staring at her ample cleavage and smiling mischievously at each other.

I stared at the picture for a while but there was something wrong. It made me sad. Dolly looked great as usual but the look on her face was kind of staged and artificial, put on.

I remembered what she had told me about The Snowflake Theory. I guess she had forgotten. I closed the magazine zipped my pants and flushed the toilet. I never saw or heard from Dolly Kitteridge again. But she was really something on prom night 1963.

Almost exactly one year earlier, in June of 1962, The Beatles had their historic audition with George Martin at Parlophone in London. Brian Epstein, their manager, and The Beatles had been shot down by just about every record company and Parlophone was about their last chance.

George Martin was known primarily for producing comedy albums like



The Goons, a forerunner of acts like Monty Python etc. Peter Sellers was a Goon. He had also produced Shirley Bassey. His musical background was classical. Thank God and the powers that be. He heard something in the young lads from Liverpool and signed them to a recording deal with Parlophone. They recorded the first Beatles album in eight hours and released “Love Me Do” as the single. The single of “Love Me Do” sold 5000 copies... in a week....

For those of us born in the mid to late forties, weaned on TV and raised on Rock and Roll, 1963 would become a 10 on the seismic event scale.

The Beatles had worked their way up from pubs in England and Germany to town halls and men’s clubs and then ballrooms. They had released their first recordings in Britain and the fuses were lit. Soon they would explode in Europe and soon after Beatle mania would take over The World.

In 1963 Bob Dylan would release his first album, Free Wheelin’ Bob Dylan, and write songs that would become his next LP... aptly titled... The Times They Are Changing.

Our pop subculture galaxy was poised to move off into space in perfect balance. We seemed to have it all.

They were calling Washington DC, Camelot. A handsome charismatic 35-year-old president and his beautiful wife and children filled the White

House and the land with a feeling of hope and promise. There was an overwhelming sense of positive potential almost euphoria across the country.

But just as we were all about to ride this seemingly perfectly balanced rocket ship to the heights of unrestricted potential and uncharted space, and assassin's bullet sent us spinning wildly into an orbit of confusion and utter chaos.

On November 23, 1963 John Fitzgerald Kennedy was shot and killed by ...no one really knows who, for no one really knows why. The collective American heart fell to the floor like a stone. To add to the horror two days later we all got to watch the weird little triggerman, Lee Harvey Oswald, die on national TV. Shot and killed by a shady Dallas nightclub owner. What next!!?

The warmongers took over The White House and by August of 64' Lyndon Johnson was dropping bombs on North Vietnam and reinforcing; the word they used was escalating, our forces in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific. The carnage had begun.

In Berkeley, California Timothy Leary and his associates were starting his LSD, drop acid and drop out campaign.

The scene was set for the amazing sixties. The most defining and outrageous, horrific and wonderful decade of the twentieth century.

My war baby siblings and I were front row center. But...one thing that made the sixties amazing and unique to all others was that everybody took part. There were no observers. The sides were heavily divided. The lines were clearly drawn. You were either for or against. There was no middle ground. For instance if you flunked out of college there was a very real and definite possibility that you would be drafted and sent to Southeast Asia to kill or be killed.....

A few weeks before graduation Bob Crewe called The Lamont House and asked Jimmy and I if we wanted to make a record. Bob was a great guy and I know he wanted to help us but it is my guess in hindsight that there were other reasons for his sudden altruism. Bob Crewe was hot. He had hits all over the charts. Either he was making too much money and needed a write off or he owed somebody some product. No matter. We were ecstatic. We were in the city for a meeting that night.

It was decided that we would record an instrumental version of the song Come Softly To Me. A tune that had been a hit a few years before by a trio called The Fleetwoods. Bob gave us some ideas about how he would like it to be done and told us to go home and learn it; and then practice it until we could play it in our sleep. The flip side was to be an instrumental version of the movie theme High Noon. Thinking about it now, the choice of material

seems rather odd but we didn't question it. We were happy just to get a chance to make a real record.

We went back to The Lamont place and played Come Softly To Me and High Noon until we couldn't stand either song, and waited. Weeks went by.

Finally, two days before the commencement ceremony for graduation Bob called us into the city.

It took us four days and nights to get it right. I had only been playing the guitar for six months and here I was making a record. You think you're good until you put it down on tape. Every timing and pitch flaw stands out like a bad dream every time it's played back and you just want to go in and fix it as fast as you can before they play it again, and as I said before Bob Crewe was a perfectionist. Jimmy went to graduation but I didn't care, I spent my high school graduation day in the studio perfecting my guitar parts.

The single came out that summer on the Cameo Label and was picked by Billboard Magazine along with Tony Orlando's first record as Co-Pick Hits of the week. Bob had changed our name from The Ravens to Salt and Pepper for the single so when Jimmy went around town showing all the kids our record half of them didn't believe him...I was back in The Village by the time it came out.

I never saw Bob Crewe again after that. I heard that he was in a very bad

motorcycle accident out in California a few years later....

Bob is a wonderful guy and a great talent. The songs and records he contributed to this pop subculture of ours are a testimony to his great gift. He was into it man, body and soul; old Brill Building Tin Pan Alley style... The record business could use more people like Bob Crewe today. But he was one of a kind.

# The Fat City Five

Jim Croce

VI

In 1796 The Augustinians founded the first religious order of men in the 20 year old United States of America, one block from Independence Hall in Philadelphia; the then Capitol of the newly founded Nation. In 1841 the brotherhood purchased the estate of Revolutionary War Officer John Randolph and established a Seminary academy. By 1842 the academy became a Villanova College, named after Saint Thomas of Villanova, a 16<sup>th</sup> century writer, scholar and bishop. And by 1953 the college became Villanova University.

The Villanova Campus is located about twelve miles west of Philly on Lancaster Pike, which became known as the Main Line. First because of a canal that was dug to transport trade and manufactured goods and then because of the railroad line that replace it. It's a beautiful area.

As the area grew post World War I, big money industrialists and money barons found the gently rolling hills and valleys near enough to the necessary centers of commerce an ideal place to build their mansions.

Prestigious institutions of higher learning began to spring up amongst the estates and manors in and around The City of Brotherly Love and Tolerance and of courses the original birthplace of our Declaration of Independence and of our Government itself.

In the fall of 1963 I found myself on the train to Philadelphia. The City of Brotherly Love. I had no idea what to expect. My worst fears were that it would be just a glorified prep school. I had had enough of priests at Delbarton. I had been raised a Catholic but I always had a hard time buying the proposition that a God who was amazing enough to create The Universe had only been able to come up with having his only begotten son nailed to a board to save mankind from sin. I mean I was a mere mortal but I could have come up with something better than that.

The fact that grown men would dedicate their lives to that proposition further astounded me and gave me a giant reason to question their credibility if not their sanity.

Even though I had made some good friends at prep school, I had found the bulk of the student body to be snobs and misfits who, by the luck of the draw had been born into well to do families who for the most part didn't want them around.

I really wanted to stay in the city but I had promised my sister and my Mother I would give it a try. More than once the thought crossed my mind to get off the train, but I didn't. The truth was, I had no choice. I had nowhere else to go. With no income I was too much of a burden for my sister and there was no way I was going to go live with my father.



Along the train ride from the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Philadelphia to the University I had been watching out the window at old money mansions on magnificently groomed estates, beautifully groomed fields and pastures and horse farms that looked like paintings I had seen of fox hunts and bugles at the art museum in New York.

I was still on the train when it pulled into 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Philly. I found the commuter train west and was soon at the Villanova Station. I was to begin my college career. I carried one suitcase and my guitar to the old red brick Villanova field house where they were holding freshman orientation and registration. I spent the rest of the afternoon standing in lines with about one thousand other young Christian gentlemen. With my pants rolled up to my knees wearing a ridiculous beanie that designated me as fair game for harassment, hazing they called it, by upper classmen. My worst fears seemed to be coming true.

I was seriously considering bolting when I was approached by a crazy looking little guy dressed in jeans and a motorcycle jacket.

He looked at me and my guitar and motioned for me to come over to where he was standing with a group of other swarthy looking characters.

“Hey man! Can you play that thing?” He said quietly as if he didn’t want anybody to hear what he was saying.

“Yeah I can play it.”

“Folk shit or Rock and Roll?” He asked looking around as if what he had to say had some clandestine cloak and dagger relevance.....

Beneath his motorcycle jacket he was wearing a tee shirt with the words GET LOST across his chest. His tattered blue jeans were covered with different colored paint and canvas high top sneakers. After a short animated conference with his friends who kept glancing over at me as they talked, he returned.

“You don’t want to live in the dorms man. Only dweebs and jocks and dickheads live in the dorms.” He said, still looking around like the street shysters in the city did when they were trying to sell you a hot watch.

“Do you go to school here? Are you a freshman?” I asked.

“Well that depends on what you mean by going to school, but I’ve been a freshman for two or three years, why?”

“Then you should be a sophomore or a junior.”

“Junior, freshman, what’s the fucking difference... It’s all college... Listen I’m trying to talk to you man... You don’t want to live in the fuckin’ dorms. Too many rules..No loud music, no beer, no fuckin’ women man. The dorms suck!! We scored a farm house man... Are your parents

paying your bills?” He looked at me intensely as if my next response was of particular importance.

“Well Yeah..” I said kind of tentatively.

“Perfect!” He seemed very contented with my answer.

I liked him. He was definitely crazy but I could see the flicker of fun and mischief in his eyes.

“Ca-mon man your comin’ with us. We’ll go over there right now. You gotta see this place it’s fuckin’ great. We’re having a kegger with a band and chicks man..ca-mon... Grab your shit let’s go... Ca-mon.”

He had said the right words, bands and chicks... So far I didn’t like what I was seeing on campus. It seemed like as soon as the new freshmen completed the registration process and left the field house there was a group of crew cut looking jockstraps waiting to give them a hard time. A “good old Nova tradition.” I wasn’t ready for any of that. I reminded me of the assholes at prep school.

“OK Let’s go!” I said, “I’m game, let’s check it out.”

“Great....Gemme five.” He slapped my hand and yelled to his gang, “Let’s book, party time!!”

In a split second they had grabbed my guitar and my suitcase and just about lifted me up and whisked me out of the field house and down the stairs passed the hazing mob. Before I knew it I was heading down the road....

The sun had just gone down behind the western hills as we pulled through the gates onto The Elmaker Estate. I had learned the names of my new friends along the way. The crazy little one who had approached me in the field house was Charley Pierce. The farmhouse they had found was actually an old converted carriage house and it was... "fuckin' great," as he had said. In better days it had been a working carriage house with a barn, stables and exercise ring. Though the stables and barn were still in use to board a few horses, the building had been converted into living quarters, which the Elmakers rented to college kids for extra money and a source of cheap help around the place.

I would learn later that the grand old place had been built in the 20's by a railroad tycoon for his daughter and her husband as a wedding present. It must have been spectacular at the time. But in recent years, since the Elmakers acquired it, had fallen to neglect. The old main house needed paint and weeds and undergrowth had taken over the once meticulously groomed grounds, and the fences and out building showed signs of age and disrepair. But it was still a beautiful old place.

There was a full blown party going on when we pulled up to the sty, which is the name the old carriage house had been given by the first group of irreverent undergraduates to rent it back in the 50's and it had stuck.

We piled out of the hearse. There were people everywhere, dancing, drinking beer from one of the several kegs. They were hanging out of windows and sitting on the roof. Loud music could be heard from inside...I could tell immediately from the imperfect din and rattle that it was a live band. Charley Pierce hadn't exaggerated. There were women everywhere.

Somebody handed me a mug of beer. The pungent odor of marijuana was unmistakable and soon I was high as a kite and digging every minute of it. I saw Charley say something to a small circle of dancing coeds and before I knew it I was being hugged and greeted by two or three cut but very toasted party girls

After a few more hugs and beers and a toké or two I was able to make my way into the house. The band was incredibly loud and there were so many people it was difficult to move. Charley was standing on the stairs and motioned for me to make my way over.

Upstairs he took me into his bedroom and closed the door. We still had to half yell in order to hear each other but the gist was they needed another roommate who could pay \$150.00 a month... Was I interested?

“Is it always like this?” I hollered in his ear...

“No...not all the time...” he bellowed back, “Sometimes it gets a little loud...”

“In that case I’m in!” We laughed and shook hands and that was it.

The party went on until about midnight. Most of the girls were either college freshmen from one of the many women’s schools in the area or local high school girls or townies. Most had one o’clock curfews. There were thousands of young women from all over the country in the immediate vicinity. Rosemont, Cabrini, Harkum and Bryn Mawr Colleges were all within twenty minutes of the Sty. Some of the most prestigious women’s schools in America. Not only were most of them young beautiful and from well to do families, they also had to be pretty smart to get into those colleges in the first place. The pickins were pretty incredible.

By one thirty the place had just about cleared out except for the guys who lived there, which now included me, and the usual post party trash heads who always remain after parties and won’t give up until every keg is drained dry and every plastic cup is emptied, including an occasional gag on a cigarette butt.

The band was still playing a slow blues and it was pretty cool. A harp player was blowing some pretty sweet licks.

They were called The Fat City Five and had been around for a few years. Every year they had to replace a graduating member or two and this year was no exception. They had been loud and pounding all night. It was so loud in the relatively small main room; I hadn't really been able to tell if I liked them or not.

The blues they were playing sounded real good though; until the lead guitar player walked up to the mike and started to sing. He was a pretty decent picker but could not carry a tune in a bucket. I mean bad. He had plenty of feeling but he was way out of tune.

I knew the song. It was an old Chicago blues, a Jimmy Reed tune called You Got Me Runnin'...I was leaning up against the wall singing along when I felt myself being pushed up to the microphone by Charley and Bomber, another of my new roommates.

"Is it ok?" I asked the guitar player, trying to be polite.

"By all means." Was his response and he kind of bowed and backed off the mike. Now...I was no great singer at the time, but I was pretty good. I knew I was a whole lot better than what I'd been hearing all night. I was also half in the bag but so was everyone else. I figured what the hell and let her rip.

What I didn't know yet was that they had been auditioning singers all week with no luck and had fraternity gigs coming up. So when I received a thunderous response of foot stomping and whooping from the band and my new Sty roomies it was as much for their relief of finally finding somebody who could sing at all, as it was for my performance... That night I joined the band....

From then on it was non-stop partying and gigging. We played two or three frat parties and some kind of an afternoon keggar or football barbeque or mixer every weekend and often during the week. We were the hot band on campus. Girls, pot, acid and beer flowed like a river. I worked hard to keep up with school during that time but I was always missing classes and taking make up tests. But, it was worth it.

I was playing music and going to college. I was living the life and there was never a dull moment at the Sty.

There were a couple of bands around campus at the time. The Critters were a Villanova band and they had recorded a song called Younger Girl that was getting airplay on the radio. There were also some folk acts that used to play at The Main Point in Bryn Mawr.

I remember one night during Spring break I saw a couple of guys doing folk songs with two acoustic guitars. One had on a Villanova Singers blazer,



the school folk/glee club. He was a real clean cut like somebody from The Kingston Trio or something. The other guy was scruffy as hell. He was wearing a jean jacket with patches and funky blue jeans and muddy work shoes. His black curly hair was long and uncombed and he was smoking a cigar. They did a couple of folk songs and then the scruffy one sang a song he said he had written.

I don't remember the song being that great but the guy and his voice, everything about him on stage was great. John, from our band, and I introduced ourselves and we all sat at a table and had a beer together. The clean-cut guy's name was Gene and the scruffy one said his name was Jim, Jim Croce.

We hit it off well and one beer turned into ten. We talked mostly about music and guitars and song writing. I had never written a song but I was real interested in songs. Jim invited us out to his farmhouse and we stayed up late smoking pot, drinking beer and playing songs.

He was a real good singer. We harmonized on Beatle songs and old country songs for a while. When we put down the guitars it was four thirty in the morning. His wife reminded him that he had to go to work in a few hours so we said goodnight and invited him to come over to the Sty one day and jam.

I didn't see Jim again for a couple of months. Until one freezing cold night in February. I had been cramming for a test in one of the dorms. It was about three in the morning as I was walking through the quad. When I heard a voice call my name from the darkness. I walked toward the voice. Just as I was able to make out a dark form sitting on the curb at the bottom of the icy steps next to the walkway, my feet flew out from under me and I landed on my butt.

"See." Said the voice in the dark. "I told you it was slippery. They just had to take a guy out of here that split his head open. I'm the guard. I'm on duty... Warning people. I guess I didn't warn you loud enough... Sorry bout that."

It was Jim Croce sitting on the curb. It was about fifteen degrees out and all he was wearing was that same jean jacket. He was drunk. I sat down next to him.

He had been there for at least an hour, since the guy had fallen and smacked his head and some other guys had taken him to the hospital. He didn't want to stay because he was freezing his ass off. He didn't want to go because he was afraid somebody would come along and break their neck. So, he just sat there and got drunk.

At first he said he had just frozen his ass off but then he had remembered a quart of rum he had bought the day before that was still in his pack, so he started to drink it; and he wasn't cold anymore. He offered me a drink.

He also handed me a couple of sheets of paper from a loose-leaf notebook he had on him for song lyrics. He said they won't keep you any warmer but they will keep your ass from freezing to the curb.

His nose was beet red and his lips were blue but he was determined to stay at his post. We proceeded to get shit faced.

Soon we became two lookouts on a German U boat in the North Atlantic in the wintertime. Then two look outs on The Titanic. Two Eskimos waiting for a walrus to stick his head up through the side walk. We had a discussion about: When you freeze to death. What would be the first appendage to fall off you nose or your dick? We were lying sprawled out on the black ice patch laughing ourselves silly when a Franciscan Brother in a brown robe and over coat showed up with a bag of rock salt.

Jim looked up at him and said, "Thank God it's a Saint Bernard with more rum."

"That will be all for the night gentlemen. Thank you for your vigilant good deed." We laughed and stumbled our way through the quad to my old

Chevy. Somehow we made it to John Thomas's apartment in Bryn Mawr where we crashed on the floor till' morning.

I'd see Jim around from time to time after that. We had a couple of beers at Kelly's a few times. Then I didn't see him around anymore. I'd heard that he went to New York to make a record. A few years later I was driving to a gig up in Steamboat Springs, Colorado when I heard his song Operator, come on the radio. I remember I almost flipped out I was so happy. I went to the nearest record store and bought the album. When I heard Time in a Bottle, I almost cried I was so glad for him.

A few years later when he was killed in that plane crash, I really cried. It broke my heart, and everybody else's. He was so young and talented and such a great guy. It was a black day for music. Jim inspired me to write songs. He had a great feel for music and life and I will always miss him.

I went to see his wife at her club in San Diego, Croce's; but she was pretty busy and I never really knew her... I just wanted to see it for some reason....

I'll never forget Jim.

# The Satanic Moonfish of the Septic Nile

## VII

John Thomas was the bass player for The Fat City Five. He had a little apartment in Bryn Mawr. Just down the street from The Main Point, the happening folk club in the area.

Just about everybody but John and I had gone home for Thanksgiving break. There was no one at the Sty and the school campus was pretty much deserted. Only an occasional priest or faculty member could be seen making his way from one building to another through the brisk autumn air. There were still a few students here and there. Mostly foreign exchange students who couldn't go home and those like me who didn't want to.

My mother and father had gone down to Arlington, Virginia to spend the holidays with Aunt Kit and Uncle Donald my father's older brother. There was no way I was going to make that trip.

My sister had moved out to California by then. She had been given the opportunity to get into the casting business through friends she had made in New York. She sublet the little apartment in The Village, packed up the girls and went out to Hollywood to work in the movies. It would turn out to be a good move for my sister, and down the road it would open up some very interesting opportunities for me.

John and I decided to hang together at his place for the break, which was fine with me. I liked John a lot he was quiet and easy to get along with and he had a great record collection. He had somehow acquired a two track reel to reel BBC recording of The Beatles doing a live Top of The Pops radio show from London. I had heard of them, but had never heard their music before.

He also had Freewheelin,' Bob Dylan's first album, which I had heard before. But now I would have a chance to really listen to it. John had a little pot. We bought some beer and some cheap red wine and ordered some pizza. We were set. Between the Beatles and Dylan, the pot and the pizza, college football on TV, and cold blustery autumn weather outside... we were ready for an extended lay about...some music, some laughs and some relaxation.

The first six weeks of college had been pretty hectic; adjusting to new surroundings, going to class, which I had learned was not a priority with my roommates at the Sty. I had to commandeer an old Indian motorcycle that had been left lying around by a former resident and get it running in order to get to class. I had also had to learn all the bands material on the run to this gig and that. Every weekend the band was booked at this frat party or that. Villanova, Drexel, Temple, The University of Pennsylvania, even far away

as The University of Virginia. It was fun and I was even making some money, but....I was ready for a break.

John and I had been lounging around his apartment all day listening to records and taking it easy. It was late in the afternoon Saturday, November 23, 1963. The television had been on all day with the typical Thanksgiving week fair.

We were discussing the possibilities for the evening. Being Saturday night there was sure to be someone half way decent at The Main Point but because it was Thanksgiving break there wouldn't be much else happening. The idea of going out to Kelly's a local pub and eatery came up but the only transportation we had was my old Indian and it was pretty cold outside. While we were deciding, a special news bulletin was breaking into the broadcast of the football game. I leaned over and turned up the sound.

It was Walter Cronkite... There was something about his tone of voice that raised the hairs on the back of my neck: "I repeat," he said... "The President has been shot. At approximately 12:30 PM John Fitzgerald Kennedy the thirtyfifth president of The United States was shot along with Texas Governor John Connally. The President was shot as he rode through Dallas in the Presidential limousine in what had been a triumphant



motorcade. He was taken to Parkland Hospital in Dallas. His condition has been reported as grave.”

John and I, along with the rest of the country were in shock. I looked at John and remember wondering if my face looked as white as his. It was unreal. The world seemed to stop.

A few hours later he died.

We sat stunned in front of the TV for the next three days. It was like a dark right of passage. The entire nation was reeling in disbelief. Business came to a stand still from coast to coast. Families all over the country who had come together for the holidays watched the grim scenario play out together. Children continued to play while their parents, grandmas and granddads, uncle Joe and Aunt Betty stopped carving the turkey or clearing the table to silently gather in front of the TV.

The age of innocence was over. This was a cold slap in the face, back to reality. Nothing or no one would ever be quite the same. The ugly monster that lived on the dark side of the human soul had raised it's ugly head.

Camelot was no more...the day that John John Jr. saluted the casket containing his fallen father as it rolled by...I'd had enough. I jumped on the old Indian and just drove.

The British are coming!

The Beatles played The Ed Sullivan show in February of 1964 to an audience of 73 million people and Beatlemania swept America... The Country was still reeling from the Kennedy assassination and we needed The Beatles as much as they needed us. There was a general air of confusion and distrust after the events in Dallas. The Beatles showed up with their mop top hair and their Liverpool scouse accents singing, "She loves you Yeah Yeah Yeah." It was perfect timing for us and for them.

At the close of spring break 1964 Charley Pierce showed up with 800 hits of acid, LSD. He had tried it while on break and loved it so much he had bought the guy out.

(Drugs have turned into such an all around tragedy for so many people I don't want to condone their use but it's part of this story and truth.)

Naturally we all tried it. It was great in the beginning.

The Sty is very near Valley Forge State Historical Park where George Washington and his men camped in the winter of 1777, 78; and froze and starved while the British dined and attended balls in Philadelphia. It's a

beautiful place to visit today but it must have been hell for George and his 12,000 men with no food or shelter in 1777.

Valley Forge became our tripping grounds.

Shag... Shag was my best friend and still remains one of my best friends today. He figures prominently in my story. I met Shag during an all night acid trip at Valley Forge in the summer of 64. He was the funniest person I ever met. He is well over six feet tall and well under 150 pounds, dressed in a tattered tuxedo shirt and pants and filthy tennis shoes. He just showed up out of nowhere. There he was stoned to the gills on LSD carrying a satchel containing a shaker, plastic cocktail glasses, olives and an expensive bottle of gin. "Care for a Martini?"

It was nearly dawn and we were all pretty much spent. We always ended our acid trips at Valley Forge on a stone bench located inside the George Washington Memorial Arch. A monstrous stone thing located at the foot of a large hill. We would sit and watch the sun come up. We called it the "Club Foot" our own private psychedelic outdoor nightclub.

Charley Pierce, had been taking acid everyday since his return from Spring break. He had changed his name to Captain America and was starting to look like a crazed pirate and speak like one as well...he was getting strange.....

We had started a private tripping brotherhood. Intended to mock the stodgy brotherhoods and fraternal organizations that seemed to exist everywhere throughout institutes of higher learning. We called ourselves The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile....A brotherhood dedicated to a no rules at all standard. We existed under the banner of absolute freedom to do anything we felt like doing at any time we felt like doing it. Meetings were to take place at The Club Foot...and only under the influence of LSD.

The membership was restricted to whomever showed up. I was elected Grand Poopah...Shag took the title of Major Domo...While Captain America was named Mad Wizard and Chief Procurer of Magic Potions. We were very much into formal ceremony and pomp ritual which made the fact that we were stoned out of our minds even more idiotic and added greatly to our satire... We laughed until our sides ached.

One of Captain America's duties as Mad Wizard and Chief Procurer of Magic Potions was to supply the LSD. Another was to think up appropriate formal rituals to perform, which he was very good at.

One of The Captain's rituals was this: First he would bow his head and say, "As Mad Wizard and Chief Procurer of Magic Potions for The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile I feel it is our cosmic duty to honor all those brave men and boys who froze their toes off here at Valley Forge fighting

with General George Washington under whose memorial arch we now sit stoned out of our minds on LSD and Shag's martinis."

He would then take about five large M80 firecrackers out of his magic bag, previously taped together with duck tape with a filter less cigarette fashioned as a time delayed fuse. The idea being that if he taped the M80 bomb under the stone memorial bench that sat within the hollow archway of the massive stone monument and lit the cigarette, we could be half a mile away and on the path through the woods by the time of the explosion and therefore out of harms way and far from any legal recompense from the Park Police.

It sounded like a fine idea to the rest of us and for the first few times it worked perfectly. We'd be up on the hill a good halfmile away hidden by the trees and brush. KAABLOOEY....the report would echo around the park. We would wait just long enough for the Park Police to show up looking around and scratching their heads as we belly laughed our way back to The Sty.....

With each successful explosion The Captain or in this case The Mad Wizard would increase the amount of M80's that he used until the resulting bomb was the size of a melon with a correspondingly more deafening report....

One Sunday night late May 1964, we decided to drop acid and go to Valley Forge Historical State Park. It was a warm early spring and it had been a longer cold winter; so we decided to call the first fair weather convergence of The Satanic Moonfish of the Septic Nile.

We dropped acid at about ten or eleven at night and wondered around the park like a band of mad gypsies, having deep cosmic revelations about life and finding infinite levels of significance in the most common everyday occurrences.

Maybe it was the amplification of the cosmic hook that made us like it. Everything seemed intensely interesting, and more times than not totally amazing. When something was funny you cried in pain from laughing. When someone said something even remotely philosophical it sounded so profound and insightful you could hardly believe the guy had said it... I had all of them going for hours one night with the words “mutually exclusive” was a “GLITTERING GENERALITY”....and we rolled on the ground in hysterical convulsions...It was great fun. And, it was hilarious and insane and sometimes frighteningly close to actual certifiable wackiness. And it also took a lot out of you.

When we had wrung every enzyme from our adrenal glands and finally run out of gas. We would always find ourselves heading for the stone bench

that sat within The George Washington Memorial Arch. Dubbed... The Club Foot.

None of us realized that it was Memorial Day. True to our psychedelic traditions we flopped down on the bench to drink whatever the cocktail of the evening was and proceeded to "Get Mellow"...and watch the sun come up.

Captain America aka The Mad Wizard, and Chief Procurer had recently acquired some fine Afghani hash that worked really well to take the jagged edge off our frazzled nervous systems and ease the end of the acid trip. The sun rose in all it's glory and it was so beautiful and we were getting so mellow from all the opiates and alcohol; we stayed a little longer than we normally should.

We were getting really stoned again when someone started talking about God. And that the word God; G, O, D, was not a name in itself, it was an occupation; like cop or narc...or nerd. "So...? What was God's name?" Someone asked. "If he had a name? What was it? Yeyhew?...Jehovah?... What?....."

It got really quiet for a long time and then some one quite calmly and seriously said.... "Bob!....Bob God!... That's his full name"... "In Bob we

Trust”.... That was it. We fell all over each other in hysterics all over again....

People who are doing LSD are very easily entertained. I’m sure Andy Warhol made that eight-hour movie of a guy sleeping in real time for people who were high on acid and I’m sure they found it very entertaining. When you are on LSD everything is very entertaining even a guy sleeping for eight hours.

It was getting a little late in the morning to still be at the park tripping... “We better get out of here before people start showing up,” someone said.

Captain America had begun to prepare his ceremonial time bomb for detonation. He had already begun reciting his “Ode to the Frozen Toes of George Washington’s Brave Men and Boys,” as the rest of us started to walk up the path towards the woods.

We were well into the woods and hidden by the trees by the time he lit the fuse. Usually we stopped at a little clearing above the monument and waited for The Captain to catch up. But, on this particular morning he was late showing up, so we made our way back down the path to see what was keeping him. As we approached the edge of the woods and got closer to the monument we could hear The Captain’s voice clearly saying... “Oh shit, Shit! Shit! Shit! OOH Shit!” It seemed that Captain America had lit the



cigarette time delay fuse to his multiple M80 patriotic pyrotechnic device and in adherence to his psychedelic duties as Mad Wizard and Chief Procurer of Magical Potions and Thinker Upper of Stupid Things To Do; had duck taped the bomb under the little stone bench that sat inside the tunneled arch carved out of the mass of granite that was the George Washington Memorial Arch. Unfortunately, we had all forgotten that it was Memorial Day, and that people come to visit places like The George Washington Memorial Arch on Memorial Day.

When the Captain reached the top of the hill above the monument and was about to enter the woods to join the rest of us and listen for the heavy explosion and deafening kick and reverberation from the device he had planted, he stopped for a last look. “Oh shit! Oh shit! OOH SHIT!”

To his horror and amazement an old black car had pulled up in front of The Arch. The fuse was lit... From inside the car emerged a tiny little old lady. Slowly she closed the door on the driver's side and walked around the car. After what seemed like a long time the passenger side door opened and very slowly and ancient frail old man was helped out. He was about as old and frail as you can get. He was wearing one of those blue Veteran of Foreign War hats. After what seemed like an eternity... The old couple made their way slowly up the stairs and sat down on the little stone bench

that sat within The George Washington Memorial Arch, to reflect and enjoy the peaceful Memorial Day morning....

KA...FUCKING...BLUEWEEE....KA..FREAKIN...BLAAAAMO

The explosion was so loud it moved the air a foot, and we were five hundred yards away. It was so loud it shocked us all into gaping wide eyed silence...For a full 20 seconds I could hear nothing but a high pitched ringing in my ears; I couldn't imagine how deafeningly loud it must have been for that poor old frail Veteran and his ancient wife sitting at ground zero on the little stone bench inside the massive echo chamber that was The George Washington Memorial Arch. I must have been beyond excruciatingly loud.

My first thoughts were....They must be dead....We just blew up two old people....

We waited...No one knew what to do. We couldn't actually see the old couple from where we were standing. And, since it was The Captain's bomb... We decided that he should be the one to go down and take a look. So far there had been no sign of the Park Police... They must have heard the explosion. Later; we figured they didn't show up right away because the noise was so loud.

It was so loud, they just didn't associate it with the Park. It was way beyond the decibel level of any normal park prank. It was so loud their immediate response was more likely to be a sonic boom or an Expressway accident... Whatever they thought it was... they didn't show up right away.

Charley Pierce, aka Captain America, alias The Mad Wizard and Chief Procurer of Magical Potions and thinker upper of real dumb things to do for The Satanic Moonfish of the Septic Nile, had out done himself.

On that Memorial Day morning The Captain was in all his glory. He looked like a mad pirate. He wore a scraggily goatee and long black mustache.

He actually was very good looking in a maniacal kind of way. His face even possessed, circa 1950, matinee idol features; a square jaw and that blue black kind of superhero hair color. He had steel blue eyes and a stocky muscular physique.

The Captain's only real problem besides the fact that he was wasted on acid most of the time was that he was very short.

He had buckles and bags and knives tied around his waist and fancy pouches and cache bags hanging from everywhere and a larger leather pack slung over his muscular shoulders.

But; the poor Captain, his legs were very short... He looked like he was made from two different bodies sewn together in the middle. The upper body of a strong young man and the bandy little legs of a bow legged child...

It was always a theory of mine that The Captain's bandy little legs and resulting lack of altitude were a prime contributing factor and cause for his eccentric attitude and outrageous behavior.

The Captain was elected to go down to The Arch and check on the status of the Old Veteran and his wife.

It was Memorial Day and it was Sunday and people were starting to show up with their blankets and picnic baskets.

The Captain did his best sneak out of the woods and cover the 400 yards or so to The Arch. We watched from the cover of the trees as he disappeared out of sight and turned to enter The Arch.

The Captain approached the old couple cautiously. Finally he was directly in front of them. They were motionless. They sat completely still with their eyes wide open and mouths agape. He waved his hand in their faces and asked them if they were alright but got no response.

He came around to the front of The Arch where we could see him and shrugged his shoulders with palms up, as if to say... "What the fuck....They ain't moving!"

"See if they're breathing." I heard myself yell down to The Captain.

More and more people and cars were arriving to enjoy the day in The Park. Families from the Main Line Bryn Mawr, King of Prussia, and Philadelphia all scrubbed and clean from church... Sunday morning....

We had been tripping our brains out drinking and sweating and rolling on the ground all night. What was it going to look like, a band of stoned out hippies and a dead veteran and his ancient comatose sweetheart. We decided it would make the most sense to vacate the area immediately.

The Captain made it back to the cover of the woods out of breath and over excited.

"Battle Fatigue, Battle Fatigue!" He kept saying over and over.

"They've got battle fatigue, they're just sitting there with their eyes wide open and their mouths wide open staring straight ahead, not moving not even blinking...Man it's weird Battle Fatigue man!"

"Not Battle Fatigue numb nuts!" I heard my voice say. "Shell shock maybe but not battle fatigue. They haven't even been in a battle....But they

have definitely been shelled. Are they alive?... Did we kill them is the real concern here.”

“Yeah, they’re alive... But they’re not movin’ man... they’re just sittin’ there staring off into space with their mouths wide open... like statues man.”

The sun was high in the sky and picnickers were all over the place by now. Kids running around playing and people stopping to read the patriotic inscriptions chiseled into the granite walls of The Arch. They paid no attention to the old couple sitting quiet and motionless on the little stone bench. Only the family dog showed any interest in the old couple... but soon realized he wasn’t going to get a pet out of them and went onto other more animated prospects.

“My God! Should we call an ambulance or something?” I heard myself ask.....

“Nah!.... Sooner or later some one will notice that the old couple hadn’t moved an inch all day... Besides, I’d like to stay out of jail for the rest of the day if possible?”... I answered myself sarcastically.

When we got back to The Sty... I slept for two days.....

I checked the paper and listened to the news everyday for weeks, but nothing. I was sure there would be some mention of The Old Veteran and his Gal somewhere.... but there was nothing.... It was like it never happened.

Of course no news is good news. But I was very curious about what had become of the old guy and his gal....God! They had been at ground zero...sitting right on the explosion...It had almost knocked me over and I was 500 yards away. It didn't figure...no mention...Nothing.

After a while the whole thing kind of faded into Sty history. I became busy with the band and school and The Old Vet and his Wife became just another bizarre occurrence...And eventually no one brought it up anymore.

There was, however, an article in the Philadelphia Inquirer around Thanksgiving of that year. It was buried deep in the human-interest section where none of us would ever see it.

It was titled, "Miracle on Memorial Day." It read: "On Memorial Day this year, 100 year old WWI Veteran, Private First Class Percy Kilbride of King of Prussia, one of the last surviving American Veterans of WWI, was visiting The George Washington Memorial Arch at Valley Forge Historical State Park when a miracle occurred. According to his nurse and lifetime companion Miss Beatrice Night N'Gale Hoolihan; they were sitting on the little stone bench inside The Arch enjoying Memorial Day morning and paying their respects to their long ago fallen comrades when there was a hot white flash; followed by a visit from Black Beard The Pirate. According to Kilbride, the vision spoke in strange tongues and cast a spell on him....And

the next day when the old Soldier, who had been totally deaf since being knocked over the head with a wine bottle in a Parisian bar fight in 1915, woke up; his hearing had been totally restored. Avast!



New York, You Nork

VIII

The French were out of Vietnam by 1954. It took them 114 years to realize that they could not win.

The Japanese tried also, starting in 1940 while the French were still there, but they gave up after Hiroshima.

So, in his infinite wisdom, and knowing full well that it couldn't be done: Lynden B. Johnson and his administration of war hawks and financial imperialists started sending American troops...American kids...poor uneducated American kids to die in hell for politically ideological self serving reasons. Vietnam hadn't lost a war in 2200 years against incredible odds and unimaginable forces. Those little guys had jungle gorilla warfare DOWN.

They were the world's toughest, best trained, most dedicated, deepest entrenched, gorilla jungle fighters in the world. They had been fighting in those hills and tunnels since before Christianity. There was no way any outside nation was going to tell them how to run their country.

The United States finally gave up in 1973 after killing, crippling and maiming several hundred thousand innocent, uneducated poor black and Hispanic kids, and a fair number of white kids too. The VA hospitals and

drunk alleyways are still filled with the scarred, mostly forgotten veterans of that illegal war.

The Paris agreement was signed in January of 1973 and President, "I am Not a Crook," Richard Nixon pulled what was left of our troops out of Vietnam.

For the record...They are still fighting over there today as I write this page. For the same reason they started fighting 2200 years ago and for the same reason they will probably be fighting 2200 years from now....They don't want anybody telling them how to live...It's called freedom of choice in government, religion, etc. etc. The Bill of Rights...They are still fighting today....Against the same foe that started the whole thing 2200 years ago...China... Talk about back to square one.....

College was flying by, everything seemed to be moving faster.

Things were changing in the world. I remember, because it was right before my twentieth birthday, that Cole Porter died. "Night and Day," "Begin the Beguine," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "In The Still of The Night." For God's sake...I loved Cole Porter.

Krushchev went down, Brezhnev took over The Soviet Union.

We were in a multi billion dollar race to the moon with the Russians. The longest space flight by Americans by 1965 had been Gemini 4,

astronauts James McDivitt and Ed White had stayed in space for 97 hours, 56 minutes and 30 seconds.

In August of 65 there were violent riots in the Watts ghetto in California. 7000 mostly black rioters tore the place up. The National Guard was called in.

Reagan was elected Governor of California in November 65.

The Beatles were at work making "Revolver" an album that would be voted The Best Album of the Century 35 years later.

1965 was the year that Bob Dylan decided to go electric to the dismay of many of the folk purists that idolized him.....

John Denver was singing folk songs at the Universities and the folk clubs around the Southwest.

Hair was getting longer. Drugs were starting to be accepted as cool almost expected behavior. Everybody was taking drugs, acid, pot, uppers, downers... The sixties were a lot of fun...

There was a lot of unrest and upheaval both socially and economically.

There was no Aids. A simple shot in the butt got rid of most of the sexually transmitted bugs being passed around in the spirit of free love.

If you flunked out of college and you had a real good chance of being drafted into the army, sent to Vietnam and shot or blown up. Keeping your

student deferment meant not quite flunking out but not quite graduating either.

Some guys went to Canada, some guys refused to go. But most guys...especially the poor and uneducated blacks and Hispanics just went, like lemmings. The body count had started. It was like a sick way they came up with for keeping score. Every night on the six o'clock news or in the morning paper you could get the score. The "war score" and it was always total bullshit. "Today in the war Southeast Asia, the US lost 8 guys and the Viet Cong lost 1200." Everybody knew it was bullshit, and it was the sickest bullshit. Real people were dying. Our friends and brothers were dying. The Vet Hospitals were filling up. There were more and more guys not around anymore...or worse...

The War in Vietnam, which is a bastardization of the Chinese word for south, was fought primarily by the uneducated and poor. When I went for my mandatory army physical for the draft in 1963 at the cavernous Newark armory in Newark New Jersey there were over a thousand young men in their underwear. Standing in a continuous serpentine line that zig zagged from wall to wall, back and forth across the entire floor.

Out of those one thousand young men registering for the draft probably 95% were poor black kids. There was a white guy way over there and

another one way over there...and so on and me; and I didn't have to be there. I went voluntarily to get it over with so I could get my college deferment and not be bothered later when I was at school.

Now I realize that the line was supposed to reflect the population in the surrounding area, but it didn't.... Where were all the white guys?

The white guys I knew were educated. They knew the war was bullshit.

This is one time that higher education paid off... We educated white kids knew something that the poor uneducated kids didn't know.

All the poor uneducated kids knew was how to make the world work on a one day at a time basis. If the man said take a physical...that's cool, I'll take the physical, and be back on the streets by the afternoon. If the man says your drafted...that's cool, I'll show up stay out of trouble and I'll get to wear a uniform. Besides all my friends are going anyway...and so on.

They were slowly marched in increment of a day at a time into the hell that was The War in Southeast Asia. All because they were poor and uninformed and didn't know what was really going on.

I, and many of the upper middle class, white educated young men were having no part of it...For this simple reason...we were educated and knew that it was a war that could never be won as well as being illegal, immoral

and based on a private socioeconomic agenda to serve the avarice and political ambition of a select, soulless few.

We educated white guys... At least the ones I went to school with knew that; The people of Vietnam had been fighting that war against foreign rule and outside interference since 210 years before the birth of Christ. The first United China had folded with the death of the guy that united it, Qin Shihuangdi, and the South or Nam Viet. Which later became Vietnam formed it's own government.

The little country of Vietnam managed to hold off the Chinese... A country that outnumbered them 50,000 to 1 until 1850... For two thousand years.

China finally gave up and the French tried it in 1850 but they gave up.

I decided to spend the summer of 65 back in The Village in New York. I had become friendly with a girl who had an apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan that she wasn't going to be using. She wanted somebody to stay there for a month or so to field calls from her parents who would be in Europe for the summer season, while she went and hung out with the latest love of her life up in Newport Rhode Island. I jumped at the chance.

My last exam was on a Thursday morning. I was in The City that night...

The Village was buzzing. The Beatle's "Help" was playing at the Waverly Theatre, having just replaced a record run of "A Hard Days Night." There was a fake Beatle Band playing at the Peppermint Lounge... Knocking out the long standing Joey Dee and The Starlighters and "The Peppermint Twist."

New York City is always about a year ahead of everybody else in pop culture, art, fashion and trendy styles. I mean it's got the entire United States continent to the West and England, France and the entire European Continent to the East. Everything passes through New York.

There was new music everywhere, great songs being written and great records being made all over The City. The energy was invigorating.

Everybody knew me or had seen me growing up in The Village. I knew a lot of people and they knew me, waitresses, doormen, bartenders, bums, street characters, strippers, owners....I was a familiar face...As a result I was trusted and it was OK if I was backstage or privy to this or that. The inner circles of The Village are very difficult to discern let alone break into, for an outsider. It had to be that way. Greenwich Village is bombarded by people from everywhere all the time. It has always been known as a cultural and artistic hub, and it's also a tourist trap. It's the fore front of the



Avant-Garde, art, poetry to beat theatre, jazz and folk music mixed intermittently with tack come on joints and shops... I Love New York!

The Tin Angel was a beer and hamburger place next door to and below The Bitter End. No fast food place; The Angel was really cool. Good people, a lot of the entertainers and techs that worked The Village always hung at The Angel between shows and on nights off. There was always somebody interesting to talk to. The beer was served in big mugs and they had the best and biggest cheeseburgers in town.

It was a good place to pick up on interesting odd job opportunities and maybe make a couple bucks. Somebody was always putting on some kind of promotional event or an art show or moving from one apartment to another and needed some help. I got to do a little bit of everything from painting scenery for small theatre productions to helping move an old upright piano up 12 flights of stairs for a blind Columbia art student who lived in what we used to call a checker board walk up...because of the little black and white mosaic tile designs that they used to use in the lobbies of the old buildings.

One afternoon in the late summer of 1965 I was sitting in The Tin Angel with a few people talking and drinking a mug of beer. The Chambers Brothers had just played somewhere in the City and they were down in The

Village booking some gigs and hanging out. At this time they were still more of a gospel singing group. No guitars yet. Kind of a R&B folk thing. They were using The Bitter End to rehearse after hours and they let me hang around and listen. I would get them cokes and whatever. They were real nice people.

So we were sitting at a table at The Tin Angel and Lester Chambers asked me if I could do him a favor. He had to deliver an amplifier and some other musical gear to a rehearsal that was going on uptown; and he had decided on his own to bring some food.

He asked if I could order a bunch of burgers and fries and help him run them up there in a cab. Of course, I said I would be glad to help... Anything you want, I'm at your service... Lester!

I ordered the burgers and fries and Lester and I loaded the musical gear and the food into a cab and we were off. We stopped somewhere above Time Square on the seedy Eighth Avenue side. Unloaded the stuff on to a freight elevator of an old industry building and took it up to an old factory loft.

There was a square riser in the middle of the floor and some amps and a drum set. A couple of Musicians were milling around, or at least I assumed they were musicians.

“Oh great the shit’s here.” One of them said.

Lester introduced me... “This is Mitch Mitchel and this is Noel Redding...” “And this is Dave..Mitch and Noel...He helped me deliver all this ..to ya’ll... Where’s The Man?”

“He’s bummed man, we got shot down again...He’s out there.”

Noel pointed toward an exit door. “Down the fire escape in the alley, he’s bummed out man... Getting fucked up.”

Lester and I went out the door and down the fire escape into the alley below. There sitting in the filthy alley with his head in his hands and a nearly spent bottle of Jack Daniels next to him...puke on his shirt and shoes was Jimi Hendrix...

“Go up and get some ice out of the cokes and get a towel or something... Jesus Jimi why do you do this to yourself?”

I went up and got whatever I could and came back down.

“Here you stay with him I’m gonna go make a phone call.”

I had no idea who Jimi Hendrix was, nobody did except the R&B musicians he had backed for the last five years.

He was just this guy in the alley who had obviously chased too many downers with too much booze. All I knew was that Lester Chambers thought he was the greatest guitarist to come along in a long time. He had

told me in the cab that he thought Jimi Hendrix was way ahead of his time and was having trouble getting a record deal because the record companies couldn't hear past the latest moneymaker hit. I put my arm around his shoulders and wiped his mouth off with my shirt.

We sat there for about twenty minutes before Lester and some other people showed up and picked him up and carried him up the fire escape and away.

During that twenty minutes alone in that alley with this sick guy who I only knew to be a great guitar player according to Lester Chambers. He wasn't famous yet. He hadn't even gone to England yet. I had no idea who he was and he was too messed up to care who I was. It was totally accidental and completely innocent. One guy caring about and helping another guy. He mumbled things about record companies and people not knowing their ass from a whole in the sky...mostly incoherent babble...He did look at me and say, "I love you man!" When they lifted him up. And that was it...

The only reason I'm mentioning it in my book is for the simple fact that it happened and that it was Jimi Hendrix. The most beautiful thing about it was that I didn't know, neither did he.

I would see him up close again after he became famous. At a place called The Electric Factory, or was it The Electric Circus whatever...in all his flower power psychedelic glory. He was GREAT!!

I saw him a few more times in big shows in New York and Philly...and for the last time at Woodstock. I never spoke to him though....And, I cried when he died.

Later on I would see Lester Chambers and we would always say "Remember the Man!"...

I would work with people who knew him and worked with him...Like Dave Mason who played that killer acoustic part on "All Along The Watchtower!"

When they would tell their Jimi Hendrix stories I would never mention mine. It was just one of those moments in life that just happens. It's become a very special moment for me, wiping the puke off of Jimi Hendrix's mouth and having him pass out babbling on my shoulder and say, "I love you man!" in a damp dark alleyway in New York City, 37 years ago...And that's my own personal Jimi Hendrix experience...And I will cherish the memory until the day I die.

The summer of 1967 would be The Fat City Five's last chance to work a summer as a band. There had always been talk about it but because of

summer school and different family commitments it hadn't happened. The following spring most of the band would be graduating so this was it.

Somebody knew somebody who knew somebody and somehow we got booked for the summer out in the notorious Hamptons on Long Island. The gig was at a little place called The Drift Inn on Dune Road.

Fat City was a damn good fraternity party band. We had plenty of energy and had a great time, everybody at college loved us and we worked all the time. But, playing out on Long Island was the big time to us. We were a part time music/ part time student band. We were a good time loud and loose party band.

The bands that were playing out on Long Island were serious full time rock musicians.

Dune Road is a two lane black top road that runs along a thin strip of dunes with the Atlantic on one side and the bay on the other. The Drift Inn was on the bayside of the road. Directly across the road were two big clubs; one was called The Eye, the other was Charley Bate's Tianna. Down the road about a half mile was The Barge where the summer before The Young Rascals had been playing when they got their first hit. The Eye and The Tianna rotated their bands individually.

All the bands were great. Hot players from The City and Long Island and Jersey. One of the bands that was in the rotation at The Eye were called The Hassles...they were kind of styled after The Rascals... They had a lead singer, Little John Dyzack who ran around the stage like Eddy Briganti of The Rascals, a great drummer, and guitar player who even looked a little like Gene Cornish of The Rascals, and they had a B3 organ player who hardly ever sang...but he was GREAT on the keyboards... Billy Joel.

In late June of 1967 The Fat City Five, accompanied by The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile, assorted friends, girlfriends, roadies, loadies and hangers on; piled into several vehicles including Shag's 1948 flower powered Buick Hearse and assorted trucks, motorcycles, sports cars and running junks and headed Northeast to Long Island to play the summer at The Drift Inn on Dune Road, South Hampton, Hampton Bays, Long Island.

Gene Mahann, a friend and college mate who kind of acted as our manager/road guy/organizer...had rented a house in East Quogue.

Captain America led the caravan on his motorcycle with all his freak flags flying. He was wearing his American flag jacket and had his skinny girlfriend on the back. He would speed ahead and than drop back. All the time making contorted faces and whooping and hollering about how great it was to be alive free, loaded and on the road. We drank beer, smoked pot and

sang along with "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," at the top of our lungs all the way to South Hampton. It was 1967.....The Summer of Love.

We had to start playing the night we got there.

Dune Road was a trip. Every Friday at about six o'clock the cars would start showing up. We played Tuesday through Sunday, day and night but the weekends were the real deal. Thousands of people would show up to party and dig the scene. The traffic went on for miles. Car headlights all haloed by the thick Atlantic sea mist, bumper to bumper as far as the eye could see. Thousands of kids coming out from The City, Long Island, Jersey and as far away as Philadelphia to get high and hear music... They came to party, but they definitely came for the music too. Those kids could have partied and gotten laid a lot closer to home if they wanted to. They drove all that way and sat in all that traffic for the music. Not just Billy Joel's band... All the bands were great. You didn't get to play out on Dune Road unless your band was great and the competition was fierce. Fat City was just lucky to be there. I had lucked out again.

We found out right away how good the other bands were and how good we weren't. We weren't a bad little college fraternity band but we had nowhere near the musicianship and musical power and sophistication of bands like The Hassles.



I used to go over to The Eye on every break and just watch. Billy Joel looked more like a boxer than a keyboard player and in those days at least, in The Hassles he hardly ever sang. When he did sing it was magical. He would do a version of the Otis Redding rendition of "Try a Little Tenderness" that would make chills run down your back. That summer I must have watched Billy Joel for a thousand hours. He had something very powerful. I know it's easy to say now that he has become a big mega star but he had it then in spades and anybody paying attention could see it.

He was just the organ player...we had an organ player. But he was much more than just the organ player. In 1967 on that stage at The Eye playing with The Hassles Billy made that organ walk and talk. He didn't just chord along. He held the song up and made it dance. I had never heard anything like it. He was so concentrated and involved with every nuance, so right on the note and in the pocket....at all times. He drove those Hassle versions of Sam and Dave songs and Otis Redding songs and all of it home to MAMA.

I had seen the light. So this is what it took. Billy Joel inspired me. All those great musicians, mostly local Long Island and Manhattan/North Jersey Kids, just kids...but what talented kids...It was definitely a wake up call for me.

Nobody took us to seriously...meaning the other bands. They were friendly and all that, but there was and is a definite pecking order amongst the bands. We were accepted but we were definitely at the bottom of the food chain. I didn't care. I considered it an honor to be there. I got next to Billy as much as I could. Most of the other Hassles shined me on, but Billy was a musician first and when he realized that my attempt to touch base with him was based on my desire to improve myself as a player and musician he warmed up a little.

The Drift Inn survived as an overflow place for the big clubs. It was on the bayside of Dune Road and a lot smaller than The Eye and The Tianna. On the weekends we'd be packed because the bigger places would be overflowing. On the weekdays it would be a lot slower, but it gave me more of a chance to catch other bands.

I had it down to a science. I would make sure that our sets started and ended so I would have just enough time to run across the road, catch the end of The Hassles' set and make it back in time for the beginning of ours.

We didn't demand much respect from the bands in the bigger clubs and why should we? It was kind of a given that the band playing The Drift Inn was at the bottom of the musical food chain.

I didn't want to force myself on anybody. I didn't know what I would say anyway. It was early in the summer. I figured I'd get my chance to meet Billy Joel and I did. It just didn't happen the way I thought it would.

We were there for about three weeks and everything was going along fine when we got busted for possession of marijuana.

They came to our house in the pre dawn hours and handcuffed us and searched the house. We ended up in The Suffolk County Jail. I thought it was the end of the road as far as our gig in The Hamptons. We spent three days and nights in jail wondering what was going to happen.

This was 1967. Being busted for possession of marijuana was a big deal back then. We didn't know what was going to happen to us.

As it turned out though...It turned into probably the best thing that could have happened. The cops out there had had it in for the clubs out on Dune Road and the bands that played the clubs. Everybody knew that someday one of the bands was going to get popped.

And though it didn't seem so when it happened...Being the band that took the bust was the best thing that could have happened.

While we were in jail our friends from school, spearheaded by Captain America and the Moonfish, (we had toned down the name for expediency), had started a kind of grass roots protest about our being busted and in jail;

primarily motivated to try and raise some money for our bail and defense. The sixties was a big decade for protests and causes....And because our cause kind of correlated with an existing friction between the local establishment and the big clubs and their Rock and Roll Bands out on Dune Road....It took off.

All I knew was one minute we were in jail with no idea how to raise money for bail...And the next minute we were bailed out and treated like local heroes. There was a crowd of kids outside the jail when we were released. We were hugged and congratulated, given flowers and cheered. We got our job back... We were on the map.

The bust had made us one of them. Our gigs were full every night. And what was most important to me, the guys in the other bands started to say hello to us and treat us with a little more respect. We were still low on the musical food chain but we had taken the hit for them. The cops had to make their yearly statement and pop somebody and it had been us. When ever I went over to see the other bands after that everybody said hello and treated me like I belonged.

I got to know Billy Joel...He was a very serious and intense no bullshit guy. At first I would just say "How ya doin'?" and he would say it back.

But as the summer went along and everybody kind of got used to me...we got a little closer.

I was there every day like clock work. I knew every word of every song and every punch and stop Billy used on his B3. When I asked him things; he knew I had done my homework and he also sensed that all I was after was knowledge about how he did what he did, he talked to me. It turned out to be a great summer.

Billy Joel and I never hung out together or became best friends or anything like that. I saw him almost every week during that summer....I learned a lot from just watching him and talking to him and the rest of the musicians that played The Hamptons that year. Billy Joel told me two things that made a whole lot of sense to me. We were talking out on the back deck of The Eye...about musicianship and songs and he looked at me and said: "Listen man," "It's the songs...Song is King..." He said, "If you can write a great song...you don't have to be a great player or singer; but if your material sucks it doesn't matter how good you play...cause you ain't gonna make it!!" He continued... "There are a million guitar players and a million piano players...Leave the virtuosity up to the virtuosos...If you have great songs you can hire any player you want!!" "Write great songs my

friend and you win...Song is King!!!!....Write a great song and you can take that to the bank and cash it!!!”

I never talked to Billy Joel again after that summer but I was real glad to see him make it. He is part of the reason I have a couple of gold records of my own on the wall...and I won't ever forget that summer I played the Hamptons at The Drift Inn on Dune Road across the street from The Eye and The Hassles and Billy Joel.

It was the summer of Love. Sgt. Pepper's was the big album and Billy Joel was the man. I had lucked out again... The right place at the right time.

There were other people I met that summer Steve Boone and Zal Yablanski of The Lovin' Spoonful were cool. Al Cooper was out there, and a couple of the guys who would go on to become big acts were bouncing around...but Billy Joel impressed me the most...as far as I was concerned Billy was the real deal and still is.

It rained on Labor Day weekend and it was pretty dead out on Dune Road. We had a big party and drank a lot of beer with the owner Steve and the girls who worked there. The next morning we packed up our stuff and headed out.

I was in no hurry to get back to the Sty and College. Shag and I decided to stop in The City and hang around Greenwich Village for a few days. It would prove to be a very fateful decision.

For all practical purposes The Fat City Five was over.

Three of the five would be going on to some kind of graduate school the following June. We had a few bookings lined up for September through Thanksgiving but the guys wanted to focus on school so after the Thanksgiving break that was it. I didn't really care. It had been fun for what it was; a good time fraternity party band. I would miss the people and the extra money but musically it was getting old...And going nowhere.

Shag and I were lucky we found a parking spot right in front of The Bitter End. It was still raining. I loved the city in the rain.

We went into the Tin Angel and I introduced him around. We ordered some food and beers and settled in at one of the big round tables.

Before long the bar started to fill up. It was really pouring outside. Zal and Steve Boone joined our table. We had just seen them the night before at the closing party at The Eye out in The Hamptons. It had only been one day but it was like seeing long lost friends. The Hamptons and The City were definitely two different worlds.

The conversation turned to music, naturally.

Seated at a table not to far from ours was one of the acts booked to play The Bitter End that week, The Chad Mitchell Trio.

Zal pointed them out and proceeded to tell the whole story, as he had heard it, about how Chad Mitchell had been busted for drugs...heroin Zal thought; and had been temporarily replaced by a kid from the West Coast with a real nice voice and a hard to pronounce last name, Deutschendorf...John Deutschendorf...That's him right there.

We all looked over and there he was looking really young and wholesome as apple pie. His hair was wet from the rain and he was smiling and talking as he wiped his foggy glasses with a napkin. John Deutschendorf soon to be John Denver. Later we met briefly and that night we went to see them play. John had a really nice high voice I thought. I saw him a few more times that week and that was it.



## In The Movies

### IX

The Beatles manager, Brian Epstein died when they were in Rishikesh. They went into a kind of spin and never recovered. They formed Apple and then realized they didn't know how to run it. Their music took a dive with Magical Mystery Tour.

It was kind of like when Elvis went into the army. He was still Elvis afterward but never quite the same. After Mr. Epstein died, The Beatles were still The Beatles but it wasn't quite the same. They would still go on to make some great music, but the rush was over.

College was beginning to become boring. As was the Sty. The band was over and the "Animal House" routine was wearing thin. There was too much partying and drugs and not enough substance.

In April Dr. Martin Luther King, America's leading exponent of nonviolence in the civil rights movement and winner of The 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, was shot as he stood on the second floor balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. He died at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Two months later in June, Robert F. Kennedy was shot in the right ear in the kitchen of The Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

The football player Roosevelt Greer sat on the assailant until the police arrived. Bobby died a few hours later in the intensive care unit of Good Samaritan Hospital.

It was all too depressing for words....I needed a change...My sister was out in Hollywood casting movies...I called her and she invited me out to California...I love my sister and my nieces and it was about time we spent some time together. So I bought a train ticket and rode the Silver Bullet (The Desert Wind) to Hollywood.

Shag was a year behind me in school and I figured what ever I was going to do... We should probably do it together. I didn't want to get out of school and lose my student deferment too soon. The war in Southeast Asia was raging, so I took a work break from school. If your grade average was ok and you weren't rich, you could take as much as a year off and still keep your deferment. Off to La La Land...

My sister had gone out to California to work as an assistant to an assistant casting director. Before long she became the assistant casting director and a little while after that she became the casting director and then head of her own casting company. Holstra\* Casting. (\*the pre Ellis Island Dutch of our last name.) But in 1968 when I went out to visit her she was still the assistant to the assistant casting director.

All I wanted to do was to see her and the kids and check out a movie studio. I had never been any farther west than Indiana and that was just for a weekend to attend a Notre Dame football game.

When I got there my sister was working all the time and the kids were busy doing what kids do so I just kind of hung out.

Finally one day my sister asked me if I wanted to check out a real movie studio. She had a friend who was working as a grip over at Warner's and he could get me in to take a look around if I didn't mind getting up at 4:30 in the morning so I could meet him at the Warner Brothers front gate at 5:45. I said... Sure, I'll be there.

This would be good. I had always wanted to take a look at a movie studio. I was up at 4:00 am and at the front gate of Warner Brother's Studios at 5:30 am. I was still there at 5:45, 6:00, 6:30, 8:00....

I was still standing there at 10 o'clock and no guy...and it had started to rain...hard. I had about 80 cents in my pocket.

I tried explaining my situation to the guard at the gate but he had never heard of my sister or the guy that was supposed to meet me. He said... "Now if I let you in...They wouldn't need a guard to keep people out, now would they? Sorry kid, better luck next time." I liked him, he was funny; but he wasn't going to let me in and I was getting wet and cold... So....

I walked down the sidewalk and around the corner. The fence was chain link with one strip of token barbed wire on top. I went to a place where a

big tree was close enough and I was up and over in a flash. I didn't care...I had come 3000 miles to see a movie studio.

I was walking around minding my own business checking out Warner Brother's when I walked right into the guard who had turned my away at the main gate. He said, "Hey!" and started for me but I was too fast for him.

I ran around the corner of a big sound stage and followed some people through the door.... I found myself on a big sound stage with about 100 other people. I just kind of melted into the crowd.

There was this guy looking everybody over and telling each one some instructions; which I found out later were 1) We can't use you. 2) Go to make up trailer A, or 3) go to make up trailer B. Or 4) Whatever.

I was standing in the line waiting my turn when I saw The Guard who was after me come onto the sound stage.

Without even thinking of what I was doing I cut to the head of the line...The guy just looked at me for a second raised his palms and shoulders and finally said, "What?" As if to say What the fuck are you doing?

I said, "Listen, I'm sorry. I just arrived from the East Coast and I'm still waiting for my brain to catch up... Where did you say I should go?"

He looked at me for a second...I thought it was over ...and then he said... "Are you SEG or SAG Honey?"

I had no idea what he was talking about. "I'm from New York...I'm a fucking actor...!!" I just said it because I didn't know what else to say...It was more nervous energy than anything else...And the guard was getting closer. A MIRACLE...He laughed and hugged me.. "Well excuse me!!" He called his assistant... "ANDREA! Show this young fellow, Mr....what's your name?" I used my middle name to protect my sister... "David James." I said (leaving off the Holster which I added back later) "Bring Mr. James to Syd in wardrobe."

I went through wardrobe and make up. They cut my hair and dressed me up like a kid from the depression or something. They gave me baggy pants with suspenders and a sweatshirt with pins all over it that said the names of old baseball teams and political campaign names like Dewey.

Finally a girl said "Ten minute call!" I kind of followed the group; which had thinned out considerably, to the set.

The set was a big dance floor with bleachers all around it and a band stand at one end. There was a big turning mirror ball high above the center of the dance floor. There were movie cameras, technicians, all the stuff I wanted to see...I was having fun just looking around. I started to notice that some of the other people I was standing at the middle of the dance floor with, looked familiar.

Suddenly I was nervous... And then the nervousness turned to panic... But soon the panic turned to inner giddiness... Wait until I tell everybody about this... They won't believe it.

I had accidentally gotten myself onto the set of the movie "They Shoot Horses Don't They?" as an actor. No one had figured it out yet..I didn't belong there...It was great...Standing right next to me was Gig Young and Al Lewis the guy from the Munsters and standing right in front of me was Jane Fonda doing stretching exercises...There was Bruce Dern, Red Buttons, Suzanna York, Michael Sarason, Mike Conrad, Bonny Bader and a few other actors I could recognize but I couldn't remember their names.

The Director was Sydney Pollack, who really turned out to be a great guy, and of course there was me, who had come out from Pennsylvania a week ago to visit my sister and her kids and had never acted in his life.

"OK", said Sydney Pollack... "Let me see you run." The movie is about a marathon dance and the dancers had to run around the dance floor. So..We ran. Ah Hollywood, there's nothin' like it. One minute you're out in the rain, the next minute your running laps with movie stars....This was good...Now this was more like it....

For the first few days I hid. I drank coffee and ate a lot of donuts. I knew I would eventually be found out. I just wanted to stretch it for as long

as I could. As luck would have it, I was sitting in the bleacher seats of the ballroom trying not to be noticed when a woman sat down next to me and asked me what I was doing in the movie. I figured that was that.

“I’m a stow away.” I confessed.

I told her my whole story, how I jumped the fence and ran from the guard etc. To my surprise she thought it was a great story. To my added surprise, she was a reporter for The Hollywood Reporter. She immediately brought me straight to the publicity people and then to Sidney Pollack himself. I was introduced to Jane Fonda, Gig Young, Red Buttons, Al Lewis, Suzanna York and Bruce Dern...I became a minor celeb on the set. The Hollywood Reporter did a story on me and the movie. It was great fun. I was given a kind of immunity to the normal pecking order that exists on Hollywood movie sets.

I was given free run. I was a novelty. For six weeks I practically lived on the set. I read lines for Mike Conrad, and Gig Young. They were really great to me. Once they realized that I had no designs on being an actor and was only this kid on a lark from school who had gotten into the movies, they dropped their guards.

I had been on “They Shoot Horses Don’t They” and studying gratis with Bruce Dern at night, for about six weeks. I was having a great time and



being paid to do it...But, I had to get back to school. I had already missed part of the second semester and the band had been calling everyday. I will always have a warm spot in my heart for Sidney Pollack and the cast and crew of "They Shoot Horses Don't They." It was a small thing for them and a big thing for me. By the powers that be, I was somehow allowed to visit their world for a brief time. They were all very talented and gracious people and it was an amazing occurrence. But it was time to go. We all had a party at the Sty upon my return. I was given an honorary Oscar carved from Spam. I had been in California for all of eight weeks and I had gotten into the movies. Nothin' to it!

I got back to school and the band and before I knew it, it was summer.

The Woodstock Music and Art Fair  
The Summer of Love

X

## Woodstock I

Woodstock the amazing happening, the high point of the 60's American counterculture, was the apex and acme of the "We Can Change The World," dream. The grand social experiment, attended by 400,000 hippies and freaks who rejected materialism and authority, opposed the War in Vietnam, supported civil rights, dressed unconventionally and experimented with sex, illicit drugs and socialism; was seeded by capitalists who planned to cash in on the powerful mystique of Bob Dylan and The Band who had recorded Big Pink and other assorted memorable projects in the town. The plan was to build and promote their own recording studio.

Michael Lang and Artie Kornfeld, a hippy and a lawyer, along with John Roberts and Joel Roseman two adventure capitalists, were the people responsible. The event they planned was an outdoor concert that would bring attention to their new studio. When they couldn't find a field large enough in the actual town of Woodstock, which is located upstate in New York's Catskill Mountains, they moved the concert site to a hog farm in Bethel about 48 miles from Woodstock.

They struck a deal with a wonderful old farmer, Max Yasgar... "Yasgar's Farm." By the second week in July 1969, news of the Woodstock Music

and Arts Festival had spread across America. In the 60's news traveled fast. These were great times for underground networks of communications. The underground word traveled fast and wide in the 60's. We didn't need computer networks we had our own ways and they were quite efficient. The opening date of the Festival was August 15, 1969. By the last week of July the first wave of 100,000 or so counter culturists were on their way. The planners were expecting 50 thou' max.

By the first week in August there were another 100,000 or so on the highways from all over the country. By the time The Festival was in full swing there would be upwards of 400,000 people there.

There were stand still traffic jams for miles and miles in all directions. The promoters eventually gave up trying to control the flow of people, to collect money and declared it a free concert.

Helicopters flew in food, doctors, medical supplies and musicians. Everyone cooperated; the people, the locals, the authorities, state and local, the merchants... the entire event took on a natural vibe of love and brotherhood. Everyone was high on the feeling. It was contagious. We all took care of each other. Everything was free. Everybody was safe. It was truly a wonderful moment in time.

The music was a part of the event but we were all the stars equally. The Who, Janis Joplin, The Greatful Dead, Santana, Richie Havens, Crosby Stills and Nash, and the up and coming Jimi Hendrix were all there along with so many others.

The stage was set up at the bottom of a very wide and gradually sloped meadow. There was a twelve-foot rough cut 4x4 lumber wall at the foot of the stage separating the crowd and the backstage area. Soon, as the rains started to intermittently fall, the wall, which resembled the battle defenses of a medieval army, would be covered by blankets and sleeping bags hung to dry. There was a sea of people.

At either side of the stage, about 40 feet away, were very tall scaffold steel speaker towers with stoned hippies climbing precariously all over them. Often there would be announcements over the microphone for them to come down.

Many people who weren't old enough or lucky enough to be there don't realize, the three day Woodstock Music and Arts Festival which was initially meant to attract 50,000 people and ended attracting over 400,000, also lasted well over a month. The official music concert was only the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> and, if the stage was the size of a Frisbee, amongst rolling meadows and

woods, lakes and streams, the actual Festival of people would have been the size of a football field.

There were many people who never made it to the stage area at all. There were many smaller stages. There was The Merry Prankster Stage and Ken Kesey's bus. There were amps and generators with electric guitars wailing all over the place. Some were played by players but most I heard were played by tripping hippies just having psychedelic fun. People had little hobbit homes and gypsy camps everywhere... Everyone was welcome everywhere. You could walk into any situation or any camp sight at anytime of the day or night, and be greeted with hugs and offered whatever they had, which was usually something to keep you stoned. There were jugs of wine being offered all the time that contained some kind of hallucinogenic or another. Alcohol was everywhere, pot and hashish was everywhere... At the time it was wonderful.

Even the rain was wonderful. It rained hard from time to time and then the Sun would come out like a blessing. The rain was also a blessing. 450,000 human beings were living together and although there were portasans, most people were either too stoned or too far away to get to them. The rain was sweet and clean and washed up and washed the ground. The

rain also made the mud. The mud also was one of the blessings. It wouldn't have been the same without the mud...

The amazing 60's were coming to an end in August of 1969. Nixon had been re-elected in November. The War in Viet Nam was starting to wind down.

As hundreds of thousands were making their way to the Woodstock Festival in upstate New York, Charles Manson's band of brainwashed lunatics were murdering Sharon Tate and her unborn child along with four other innocent people in Beverly Hills, California.

A few weeks earlier on July 20<sup>th</sup>, at 7:56 p.m., PDT, Neil Armstrong stepped out of The Eagle Space Craft and became the first human being to step foot on the surface of the Moon. Those were some heady times.

While man was walking on the Moon I was in summer school at Villanova University in Pennsylvania making up for the time I had lost as a result of my short but glorious movie career in *They Shoot Horses Don't They*.

College was coming to an end for me. The Fat City Five was over. Most of the band had graduated and moved on. The Sty had lost it's charm. It had been six years of keg parties and acid. Things were beginning to get ugly.

The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile were all burned out. So, when I returned from summer school exams one day at the end of July and was presented with the idea of going up to New York State for a big music and art festival I was more than ready to get away. I actually had no idea about the festival at the time having been in the small world of hot and lazy summer school classrooms. I was ready for a trip of any kind. Getting in that truck was the luckiest thing I've ever done.

Charley Pierce, the mad wizard and chief procurer of magic potions and thinker of dumb things to do for The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile, had obtained a used emergency medical truck probably as a result of an outstanding drug debt. Charley had become a very scary and possibly dangerous person and dealer by now.

Captain America had changed for the worst over the past six years. The constant partying had taken its toll. The once rosy cheeked, quick witted young Irish kid I had met in the Villanova field house on freshman orientation day in 1963, was now a hollow cheeked, skinny drug addict and full fledged alcoholic. The abuse had made his behavior more and more bizarre as the years past.

He looked much older. As a result of all the speed his hair was thinning. His eyes were permanently pinned. He was short tempered and becoming



more and more erratic and hard to live with. The Captain was losing it. He had also become a full fledged drug dealer and was always paranoid and suspicious of everyone.

But on this particular day at the end of July 1969, Charley was still active in his position as magic procurer for our frazzled band of collegiate misfits. He took pride in his job. He would constantly surprise and amaze us with his seemingly never ending ability to procure things, some times it was a vehicle of some kind for us to play with, like a freshly brush painted motorcycle, and some times it would be a hooker from the South Philly or a bicycle frame just delivered from Nepal with a cargo of hidden cash. One night it was a very large bag of THC that he wanted help with. The Captain had punched holes in big sheets of cardboard and inserted half of an empty gel capsule in each hole...

Our job was to take hands full of the fine powder and spread it across the surface of the cardboard so that each capsule received a dose. THC turns you into a rubber mad man. Too much THC turns you into an insane Gumby. We spread and packed a few times and that was it. There were seven of us doing it and we all became so stoned we could do nothing but lay on the floor.

We never thought to wear gloves. This was my first experience with THC, I was so high I thought I had died and gone to rubber room heaven.

I was lying next to Kathy Potts, a very cute member of the Female adjunct to The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile, The Naked Nurses. Kathy and I were both way too high. We grabbed on to each other for dear life. Needless to say, we became one after a while and as a result of the massive dose of the drug we had ingested, we decided it would be a good idea to spend the rest of our lives hugging and when the mood hit, screwing. Even more needless to say, the mood hit quite a few times that night and by morning, I felt that we had done just that, in one night. It felt so good to hug Kathy Potts that night. I still remember it today as one of the best nights I've ever spent with a woman. Of course we were very close to insanity on a massive overdose of hallucinogenic drug, but in the 60's that was an every day occurrence. "One Pill Makes You Smaller...."

I think everyone, just once in their lives, should do a large sugar bowl full of THC and go hug somebody warm and sweet like Kathy Potts. I did...and I'll never forget or regret it...I'd do it again.

Anyway, The Captain some how obtained a highway emergency rescue vehicle...and we all piled in bound for Woodstock.

On a beautiful summer day in July 1969, The Satanic Moonfish of The Septic Nile, along with the female adjunct group, The Naked Nurses... All piled into Charley Pierce's, Captain America's newly acquired, official highway emergency rescue vehicle and headed to New York State to attend The Woodstock Music and Art Festival.

I had no idea at all where we were headed. I had just that day finished summer school and upon returning to the Sty after exams, had proceeded to get high on acid and drunk on foamy beer from the many kegs that were on hand. Summer around the old carriage house in those days was quite pleasant and psychedelic.

On this particular day the boys were busy playing jump the creek on an old Honda motorcycle. The banks of the creek, which were about fourteen feet apart were very wet and slippery. By the time I arrived everyone and the smoking motorcycle were covered with mud. No one, as of yet, had accomplished the daring feat because of the muddy and slippery conditions...

I had a plan... I obtained a wide board and placed it on an available cinder block... a ramp. Walla... On my first attempt I planted my head in the soft mud of the far bank, depositing the motorcycle into the middle of the stream. I looked at the problem closer. Not enough trajectory I surmised. Ah... I