

JIM & JoANN MAYO

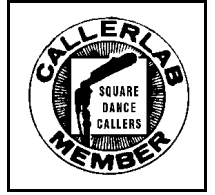
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To: All Who Read The Book That Follows:

This book, *Shades Of Grey*, was written by Bill Peters for his family and friends. We found it so interesting that we asked Bill to let us make it available to a wider audience. With his permission we offer it for all who would read it. Bill has asked that we include this letter requesting those who read it to communicate with him. His E-mail address is:

billpeters@pacbell.net. His snail mail address is: 3157 Lockheed Court, Cameron Park, CA 95682

Bill's original document was in a chapter-by-chapter format in Word Perfect. I have converted the book into a single MS Word file. In the process I lost a couple of pictures and may have changed some of Bill's original format. I hope that these changes will have been carried through to the final version successfully and without changing the impact of the original.

We hope you will find this biography of one of the great contributors to modern square dancing as fascinating as we did.

JIM MAYO

SHADES OF



GRAY

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
BY
BILL PETERS

SHADES OF GRAY

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SHADES OF GRAY

PROLOGUE

*Nothing in life is black or white and the
secret of success lies in your ability to
identify and accept the shade of gray
you are most comfortable with.
(Otto Peters' advice to his young son.)*

It was a late November afternoon in the year 2000 and I had been describing some of my World War II Army experiences to a group of Hawaii square dance friends. I had regaled them with stories about my exploits as an English-German translator in Europe and, when I had finished, someone asked if I had written these adventures down so that my children might enjoy them after I had passed. The thought had never crossed my mind and, as the conversation drifted to other things, I continued to think about my stories. Writing them down was an intriguing idea and the more I considered it, the more the suggestion appealed to me.

I was born in 1923 and I have been around for most of the important events of the twentieth century: from the boom times of the Roaring Twenties to the depths of the Great Depression; from F.D.R. and Harry Truman to Watergate and Bill Clinton; from Jolson, Crosby and Sinatra to Elvis and the Beatles; from Jazz and the Blues to Woodstock and Rap, I have seen and heard them all. I was a G.I. in World War II and I have monitored the debacles of Korea, Viet Nam and Desert Storm; I have known vaudeville, radio, movies and television and witnessed the atom bomb and space travel. Today, I communicate by e-mail, surf the Internet and enjoy the miracles attending the digital revolution. The years have not been dull.

So why not take my friend's advice? Why not describe the events of my life while I still remembered them? Why not write my own biography? I realized that every personal memoir was potentially self-serving and that it was pretentious and arrogant for me to contemplate writing one. But if, on the other hand, I did it well, if I did it with taste and honesty, there would be a first-hand account of my life in the family archives and that had to be worth something. Slowly, an outline for a book took shape in my mind. I found myself blocking out chapters and making mental checklists of the things I might write about. To hell with arrogance and pretension, let's go for broke! I was off and running.

And I knew exactly where to start. I had recently completed a comprehensive genealogical study of our families and had written several lengthy monographs describing the family trees of both the Hauxhurst/Holme and the Peters/Sonnen lineages. To illustrate them, I had organized the hundreds of snapshots and photographs that Betty and I had accumulated over the years. A few of the photos had found their way into albums, but most of them lay in shoe boxes, half forgotten and in no particular order. I sorted them, arranged them chronologically, and neatly placed them in a year-by-year series of loose-leaf albums. I dated each picture, identified the people or the scene it portrayed and affixed appropriate comments alongside each photo. What had once been a hap-hazard collection of miscellaneous photographs and memorabilia, was now

a structured, up-to-date family history. The project remains ongoing and open-ended. As new photographs and other items are received, they are immediately added to the album for that year.

As expected, our photo collection was a treasure trove of useful information. It reminded me of people, places and events and recalled experiences I might otherwise have forgotten. It was not, however, my only source of reference. Since 1958, I have saved each of my calling calendars and collected most of the flyers, announcements and brochures that were created to advertise my upcoming classes, dances, festivals or callers' schools. They too are all stored in loose-leaf binders and I referred to them frequently. But helpful as they were, they were not my primary source of reference. That distinction belongs to my own admittedly flawed and imperfect memory. It is therefore likely that some minor inaccuracies have crept, unbidden, into my descriptions. If so, it was unintentional and I apologize.

Who we are and who we become is determined by three factors: heredity, environment and happenstance. I am the fruit of my parent's loins and I carry their genes. My life began with my mother and father - - and so does this story. My life has routinely mirrored my environment and has consistently reflected the society in which it thrived. Which is why, in addition to recounting the events of my life, I have sometimes described the customs, practices and outer trappings of the world I inhabited at the time the events occurred. As to happenstance, many of the incidents and events I experienced were unexpected intrusions; things I could neither predict or control - - precisely the kinds of situations my father had in mind when he reminded me that choosing a comfortable shade of grey is not the same as settling for second best. It is rather a sensible, untroubled way to remain sane in an insane world.

In one sense, this book is an anthology, a collection of stories and anecdotes that represent the building blocks of my life. I have told most of these stories many times before; so often in fact that they have become an integral part of my day-to-day social intercourse. I have refined each individual story into a finely-honed performance piece, a conversational module that I can drop into a discussion whenever I choose. I am a showman by nature and have always played to the crowd. I suspect this applies to my writing as well. When I wrote this book, I may occasionally have resorted to dramatic license, but I never knowingly compromised the truth. What you are about to read really happened. It is all true. You have my word on it!

Chapter 1

PAPA (1893-1954)

*Be moderate in all things - - but try not
to miss anything!
(Otto Peters' advice to his teen-aged son)*

The name on his German birth certificate reads: Wilhelm Otto Peters, but I never heard my father use his first name. My mother and everyone else who knew him called him Otto. He signed his naturalization certificate ***Otto Peters*** and that is how he signed his correspondence. I, of course, called him ***Papa***.

He owned a large silver belt buckle that was a source of much amusement for me and my childhood friends. His initials, W.O.P., were engraved on the buckle and we kids thought this was hilarious. We used to snicker behind ***Mr. WOP's*** back whenever he wore it.

My father's birth certificate identifies his parents as Louis Peters and Theresa Peters (formerly Becker) and lists his date of birth as ***13 June 1893***. This has always confused me since we traditionally celebrated his birthday on June 11 and Papa never corrected us. He must have decided that June 11 was the correct date since that is how it appears on his 1954 death certificate. He was born in the tiny hamlet of Hergisdorf, just outside Eisleben, near Halle in Saxony. Eisleben is also the birthplace of the famous sixteenth century Protestant church reformer, Martin Luther. In Germany, the city is often referred to as ***Die Lutherstadt***. Because of his anti-establishment tendencies, Papa personally identified with Luther and was proud of the fact that they shared the same birth city.

Except for a couple of fading photographs in our family history album, I know very little about my father's early years. As a young man, he acquired the skills of a barber. In Germany, this occupation is called ***frisieur***, a term that encompasses considerably more than mere hair cutting. A ***frisieur*** is a highly skilled artisan and an expert in the field of hair care and maintenance. It was the profession my father followed his entire life.

There were two stories my father used to tell about his early days:

He told this one whenever the conversation touched on the supernatural: He had taken a job as a hotel barber in London. In those days, a hotel's service employees were sometimes provided with living quarters as a part of their overall compensation and this particular establishment had assigned all of its top floor rooms to accommodate its service employees. It was a convenience for all concerned since it reduced the morning ***commute*** to a short elevator ride to the lobby.

My father described an odd dream he had one night. It was about a flying white dove with a man's face, a face my father had never seen before. After flying for a while, the dove suddenly folded its wings and crashed to the ground. It was a disquieting dream and my father quickly put it out of his mind. Several mornings later, he and three or four other employees were waiting for the elevator to take them down to the lobby. When it arrived they noticed that a stranger was operating the lift. Everyone asked the stranger what had happened to the operator who usually worked the elevator and were told that he was ill and that he, the stranger, had been

hired as a temporary replacement. Everyone boarded the elevator - - except my father who decided to use the stairway instead. When he arrived in the lobby there was a great commotion. To his horror, he discovered that the elevator he had refused to ride, had snapped a cable and crashed to the ground and that all its passengers had been killed! When telling this story, Papa always paused dramatically before revealing why, on that particular morning, he had decided to take the stairs: it was because the operator's replacement bore the same face as the dove in his dream! Papa swore this story was absolutely true!

The second story is not really a story, but an account of how my father spent his time during the first World War. After the London hotel job, he took a position as a *frisiseur* in the salon of an around-the-world luxury cruise ship. The ship was in port in Johannesburg, South Africa when World War I broke out and, since South Africa was a British Colony and my father's ship was owned by a German company, the British authorities in Johannesburg immediately confiscated the vessel as legitimate spoils of war and interned its entire crew as enemy aliens. Papa sat out World War One in the relative comfort of a British internment camp in South Africa. He couldn't have been happier - - or luckier !

He used the time to read and study and to learn languages. He had a British jailer in the camp who, although he spoke English with a strong Cockney dialect, was nonetheless fluent in many tongues. He agreed to help my father achieve his multi-lingual goals and supervised his training. Papa claimed that when he left South Africa he could hold his own in nine European languages; it is also true that just a hint of Cockney had been added to his English!

Although he originally spoke German in the guttural, hard-to-understand dialect that plagues most Saxons, Papa deliberately trained himself to speak *Hoch Deutsch* or *High German*. It is the purest version of the language and it is totally free of dialect. It is the German equivalent of *The King's English*. Papa studied English when he was a very young man and it eventually became his primary second language. By the time he emigrated to America, he was as fluent and as articulate in English as he was in his native German. Perhaps even more so. In addition, I have heard him converse in French, Spanish, Italian, Polish and Czech.

While you could clearly detect an accent of *some* kind when my father spoke English, it never sounded German. You sensed rather than heard that English was not his native tongue and, while you might deduce that his accent was European or, as one of his customers often characterized it, *Elegantly Continental*, you really couldn't pinpoint it's derivation.

Papa had no formal college or university training. He was, nevertheless, an extremely well-read, literate, self-educated man. He took pleasure in word games and was an ardent crossword puzzle addict. He excelled at cards and enjoyed reading Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. His greatest passion, however, was the game of Chess.

Papa was a gifted and talented chess player. He regularly carried on correspondence games with fellow enthusiasts from around the world and he was a respected upper echelon member of the local chess community. In the mid 1920's, the noted chess master, Jose Capablanca, visited New York's prestigious Marshall Chess Club. He was scheduled to play a simultaneous game against twenty-one separate boards and Papa was chosen to play one of them - - a great honor and tacit acknowledgment of his recognized skills as a player. When the exhibition was over, Capablanca had defeated twenty boards and agreed to call the remaining one a draw. The draw game was my father's and, for the rest of his life, Papa proudly boasted that the master had been unable to beat him that day.

I was later told that his success against Capablanca earned my father a part-time assignment as Chess Problems Editor for a magazine, long defunct, called Games Digest. Papa would compose chess problems and, each month, publish one or more of them, along with an appropriate commentary, in the magazine. He once devised and published a particularly difficult chess problem (White to move and mate in twelve) in which the solution simulated the strategies of Napoleon and Wellington during the battle of Waterloo.

My father's World War One internment ended in 1918 and, a few years later, probably in 1922, Papa met and married my mother. I was born in 1923. It was the time of Germany's disastrous inflation and the German economy lay in ruins. During this chaotic period, German currency lost its value so rapidly that the factories paid their workers every hour. My mother recalled how the worker's wives used to wait outside the factories with wheelbarrows in order to carry the bundles of worthless scrip to the grocers before its value dropped even more. My father had taken a job as a ship's barber with the North German Lloyd fleet of trans-Atlantic liners. It was an excellent job and it enabled him to avoid many of the economic difficulties that afflicted most Germans in those days. However, since everyone expected the German economy to decline even more, he wisely decided to leave the country and move to America with his new family.

His shipboard job took him back and forth between Bremerhaven and New York and, between crossings, Papa prepared for our emigration by contracting to buy a three-chair barber shop from an Italian gentleman named Henry Mormile. The shop was located at 785 Driggs Ave. in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. In May, 1923, my father brought his wife and three-month old son to America, rented a cold water flat near the barber shop, quit his job and, for the first time in his life, became a self-employed barber.

The Williamsburg Bridge is a familiar part of the New York City East River skyline. It connects Williamsburg on the Brooklyn shore with Manhattan's Lower East Side ghettos where, in 1923, thousands of Russian-Jewish immigrants had recently settled. For many of these immigrants, the first step toward achieving the American Dream was to leave the East Side and move across the bridge to live in Williamsburg. This was how Williamsburg became a predominantly Jewish lower middle class community, an ethnic, social and economic character it retained for the entire time we lived there.

My father toiled in his Driggs Ave. barber shop for more than thirty years, through good times and bad, twelve hours a day, six days a week. He developed a severe case of varicose veins in his legs, an ailment my father claimed afflicted most barbers since they spent so much time walking around a barber chair. And he always complained of back pains from leaning over the chair with a razor when his customer asked for a shave. I don't remember him ever taking a vacation. Papa was a loner, a reclusive, unassuming man with few friends who, nevertheless, had strong opinions and beliefs. Although never an outspoken political activist, he read Marx, Engels and Strachey and believed in the socialist principles they espoused. He was fascinated by organized religion and studied the dogma, rituals and tenets of all churches. He respected everyone's choices, however, and considered religion to be a very personal matter. His own beliefs probably placed him somewhere between an agnostic and an atheist.

As his love of chess and his appreciation of the Sherlock Holmes stories confirm, he admired logic and reason and would undoubtedly have made an excellent engineer or scientist. He had very little interest in mechanical things and never learned to drive a car. He had no interest in music and I never heard him sing. He did, however, respect art and admired the genius

and creativity of artists. Papa was much impressed with New York's Radio City Music Hall and, shortly after it opened in 1932, he took me to see the show, complete with symphony orchestra, chorale, a *corps de ballet*, and the high-kicking Rockettes. That show alone, he often said, justified moving to America. He had no artistic talents himself, but compensated for this lack with a clever and busy imagination.

I remember one Christmas during the depression when he couldn't afford to buy a gift for his son. He therefore decided to make one himself. He scrounged and collected scrap pieces of plywood and, with a dime store handsaw and some sandpaper, constructed a series of jig saw puzzles that lay one atop the other. Each puzzle showed a map of the United States at various points in its history and the final puzzle depicted the 48 contiguous states. The silhouetted outline of each state or territory was a separate piece of each puzzle and solving them involved fitting together a series of historically accurate maps. It was a puzzle, a game and a geography lesson all rolled into one. I remember the biggest piece of the puzzle was The Louisiana Purchase. He had put it all together after hours in the barber shop and it must have been a long and tedious job. He had a pleasant disposition but very little humor. He seldom laughed and I never heard him tell a joke. My mother, on the other hand, laughed lustily and unashamedly, and at the slightest provocation!

I look like my father. Compare photographs of each of us at the same approximate age and the family resemblance leaps out at you immediately. My father was afflicted with glaucoma and, early in his life, he completely lost the vision in one eye. I obviously inherited his glaucoma-prone genes because when I turned seventy, I learned that I had also contracted the disease and, although I might have prevented it had I sought an earlier diagnosis, I too am almost totally blind in one eye. After many years, and for reasons no one has ever explained, my father's blind eye suddenly became badly discolored. One day it turned completely blue. It looked horrible so he had it removed and he spent the rest of his days wearing a glass eye. One of his favorite stories was about a fellow glass eye wearer who happened to be an alcoholic. To maintain an appropriate symmetry, this gentleman ordered a series of custom made glass eyes that depicted progressively redder stages of bloodshot. As he became drunker, he would change the artificial eye so that it matched the ever-increasing redness of the good eye. The final *eye* proudly portrayed the American flag! The story was probably the invention of my father's imagination, but it was always fun to hear him tell it. Perhaps he had a sense of humor after all!

I share many other things with my father. He introduced me to Sherlock Holmes and I have remained a life-long fan and self-proclaimed Baker Street Irregular all my life. I was never very good at chess (my father lovingly called me a *pawn-pusher*) but, like Papa, I dote on word games. I suspect Papa would have loved TV's *Wheel of Fortune* (as do I). I seem to have also inherited my father's fanatical enthusiasm for solving crossword puzzles. When I was a teenager, Papa and I would engage in crosswords duels. We'd each buy a copy of the Times' Sunday puzzle, said to be the toughest in the business, and try our best to complete it. There were no time restraints, but it was unfair to look anything up in a dictionary, atlas or encyclopedia. Afterwards, we would compare results. He would pay me a penny for every blank or incorrect square in his puzzle and I would pay him the same for the blanks in mine. As I grew older, the stakes rose to two cents, then three, and finally we played for a nickel a square. I have been working the New York Times Sunday puzzles for more than sixty years and I have been looking for another worthy opponent ever since my father died.

I am also indebted to my father for my American citizenship. When he became an American citizen in 1931, the law provided that each new citizen's minor children were automatically naturalized as well, a category officially called *Derivative Citizenship*. By an inadvertent quirk of bureaucratic good fortune, the actual date of my father's naturalization fell on February 3rd, 1931, my own eighth birthday. My American citizenship turned out to be a priceless birthday present from my father!.

Germans are known for their fondness for beer and my father definitely contributed to that reputation. Papa dearly loved the product of the *Braumeister's* art and like many Germans, he preferred to drink it warm. He considered the American preference for drinking ice cold beer to be an uncivilized abomination. I remember one of my allowance-earning errands as a young boy was to go to the delicatessen store to buy two quart bottles of Schaefer's, a popular New York beer in those days and my father's favorite brand. Papa always cautioned me to tell the clerk not to take the bottles from the refrigerator and to remind him that he preferred the bottles that had been sitting in the sun in the store's window display. After Betty and I were married and Papa and Mama came to visit us, I would buy a six-pack of beer, put two cans in the fridge for me, and place the rest on the steam radiator for my father.

Papa died in 1954. He was only sixty years old. He had started smoking when he was very young and remained a heavy cigarette smoker for the rest of his life. He was never able to quit and I don't recall that he ever tried. He developed lung cancer in his late fifties and it eventually killed him. They took him to the hospital to remove one of his lungs, but when they opened him up and saw how far the cancer had progressed, they abandoned the idea, sewed him back up, and sent him home. He died a few weeks later. We followed his wishes and had him cremated. His ashes are buried in an interment plot in the Cypress Ave. Cemetery in Queens.



PAPA AND HIS FAVORITE CHESS PROBLEM

Chapter 2

MAMA (1894-1978)

*Dann muss es ein Mädchen von
Rheinland sein.*

(German pop song, 1918)

It is hard to decide whose influence on me was greater, my mother's or my father's. Each, in their own way, shaped my character and defined my personality. From my father I acquired an intense intellectual curiosity and a predisposition for scholarly activities. My enjoyment of reading, my fondness for learning, my fascination with logic and reason, and my obsession with order and organization clearly came from my father. From my mother, I inherited a life-long affinity for the arts. My involvement with acting, painting and playing the harmonica, as well as my leadership tendencies and my compulsive need to make my way into the spotlight came, just as clearly, from the genes of my mother.

My mother and I enjoyed many of the same pleasures. She loved the mountains and the out-of-doors. I do too. She laughed freely and had a boisterous, close-to-the-surface sense of humor. The same can be said about me. Of all the traits my mother passed on to me, however, the one that affected my life the most was her love of music, especially singing.

She had no formal musical training and played no instrument, but she thoroughly enjoyed singing. Her pitch was flawless, her sense of harmony, impeccable. She vocalized lustily and passionately and for no other reason but that it made her feel good. She was not a performer and she never sang for an audience. She sang only to please herself and, throughout her life, counted singing as one of her most cherished pleasures.

My own ear for pitch and harmony is as true as my mother's and my love of music, no less passionate. These traits are inborn and they have affected my life dramatically. They motivated my career as a square dance caller and they are largely responsible for my professional success. They influenced the kinds of hobbies and pastimes I enjoy. They have enriched my life in countless ways..

Her maiden name was Anna Hubertine Sonnen. She was born on January 5, 1894 in Angermund, a little country town near Düsseldorf in the German Rhineland. I know nothing about her early life. A few early photos survive but offer no clues about the kind of person she was. They show a prim, somber and sedate young lady in her early twenties who, dressed in her Sunday finery or in a local folk costume, seems intent on showing us her serious side. The poses seem artificial and unreal and the pictures misrepresent her true nature. I do not remember the solemn young woman depicted in the photographs. When I was young, she was a vibrant and joyful lady, full of good cheer; always laughing, always singing and always fun to be around. Her laughter was contagious. It brightened the atmosphere and made everyone feel better.

My parents never told me how they met. I know nothing of their courtship and I have been unable to discover the date of their wedding. What I do know, however, is that their marriage exemplifies the popular notion that opposites attract. They seem to have had nothing in common. She liked nature, my father was indifferent to it. She liked to sing, he couldn't carry a tune. She had a sense of humor, he was without laughter and seldom smiled. What then, did they see in each other?

If I had to guess, I would say that my father was drawn to Mama's down-on-the-farm good looks and to her boundless energy and unfailing good humor. My mother was no doubt impressed by Papa's courtly manners, by his obvious intelligence, and by his debonnaire been-there-done-that attitude. These were the years immediately after the First World War. My father had lived in London and South Africa and he must have cut a dashing figure, especially in sleepy little Angermund. That he was ambitious and talked about seeking a better life in America, only added to his charm. Be that as it may. The facts are that my mother and father crossed paths somewhere around 1921 or 1922. They courted and married and, within three months of my birth in 1923, they bid an apprehensive *Auf wiedersehen* to Germany and emigrated, lock, stock and be-diapered infant, to a new land where opportunities were unlimited and hope sprang eternal.

Their life in America followed the traditional conventions of the times. Papa was the breadwinner, and Mama took care of the house. Mama was in charge of shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry and, of course, child-rearing. This is how I came to speak German and why I learned to speak it fluently and without an American accent. Mama raised me at a time when she herself knew little English, so German became my first language. It was *die Mutterzunge*, my mother tongue. No doubt Papa tried to teach me a bit of English when he could but he was almost always away at work. His access to me was limited and for most of my waking hours, I was in my mother's care - - and she taught me German!

Although I didn't really begin to speak English until I was old enough to interact with other American children, it is fair to say that I learned my two languages more or less simultaneously. That I learned to speak German without a Saxon or Rhineland dialect is not surprising, since Mama and Papa always spoke *Hochdeutsch* in my presence. What has always puzzled me, however, is that while all my Williamsburg friends spoke English with an obvious *dem, dese and dose* New York accent, their Brooklynese speech never rubbed off on me. Inexplicably, my English never acquired a New York dialect.

Mama attended night school classes and eventually learned to speak enough English to qualify for American citizenship but, unlike my father, she never lost her heavy German accent. It embarrassed her all her life and compounded her sense of alienation. She lived in America for more than forty years, but her command of English remained minimal. She knew enough to get by at markets and food stores and she understood most of the movies she saw and what she heard on the radio, but anything more than that was a trial. It was an unforgiving handicap and it severely restricted her social interactions.

Until the day Mama died, it annoyed Betty that my own interactions with my mother were usually in German. It was rude of me; it excluded Betty from our conversations and she was right to take offense, but speaking German to Mama had become an automatic reflex. It was a hard habit to break. I tried to remember to speak to my mother in English whenever Betty was present and that worked fine - - until I had something important to say or needed to be sure she

understood me - - if, for example, I had to remind her of an upcoming doctor's appointment , or ask if she had taken her pills - - I automatically lapsed into German.

My mother came from hardy stock and was rarely ill. I do, however, have a faint recollection that she developed some sort of kidney problem a few years after she came to America. Although she recovered nicely, I can still hear her soliciting sympathy by frequently reminding us that she only had one kidney left.

The only real friend Mama ever made in America was a Mrs. Cappucci. She was a gregarious Italian lady who lived with her husband in the apartment above us in our first Williamsburg house. They knew each other for at least twenty years but they always observed the old world European formalities. In all that time, they never called each other by their first names; it was always *Mrs. Peters* and *Mrs. Cappucci*.

I never think of my mother without also thinking of her cooking. It was typical German fare and it was delicious. She served all of the traditional German dishes: sauerbraten, stuffed dumplings, schnitzel, bratwurst, red cabbage and bacon, and my absolute favorite, *Reibekuchen mit Apfelse* (potato pancakes with applesauce). Even when her meager food budget would permit only the least expensive cuts of meat, her roasts were mouth-watering and her gravies, thick, dark and richly flavored. I used to think that no one could cook like my mother - - until we visited her family on my first European calling tour and I discovered that every *Hausfrau* in the Rhineland cooked like that. During our visit, the family passed us around from one relative to the next and everyone prepared a meal for us. Every dish tasted as if Mama had cooked it, especially the *Reibekuchen*!

Mama had learned to cook from her own mother and her recipes were all in her head. She cooked from memory and this sometimes created problems. Whenever Betty asked Mama for a recipe, my mother was unable to comply. Not unwilling, *unable*. Complex, written- down recipes confused Mama and it was difficult for her to translate into English recipes she knew by heart. She would never admit this, however - - especially not to Betty. Frustrated, she would brush Betty's request aside and tell her to enjoy her meal and not to worry about it. This happened quite often and, eventually, Betty gave up trying.

Before my father died in 1954, Mama presided over a succession of houses in several different neighborhoods. Each new home was an improvement over its predecessor. My parents first apartment was a dingy cold water flat in Williamsburg located diagonally across the street from my father's barber shop. After about six or seven years, they moved several blocks away to another apartment. This one was across the street from the local hook and ladder fire station and for the first time ever, we enjoyed steam heat. A little while later, we moved again, this time to an even nicer Williamsburg apartment near St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

By this time, however, the Williamsburg neighborhood had slowly begun to deteriorate and Mama grew increasingly anxious to live elsewhere. A few years later she got her wish. Papa agreed to leave Williamsburg and, for the first time, they bought their own house. It was located in another, much nicer section of Brooklyn called Bushwick. For my father, it was a major concession since it meant that he could no longer walk to work. Now he had to ride the train, six stations each way, from Marcy Ave. to Kosciuszko St. on the BMT Jamaica line, but being a home owner was worth it.

Their first house was a well-maintained two-story home. I recall that we lived in the basement and first floor apartments and that, to help pay the mortgage, they rented out the

upstairs. I have always felt that the time they spent in this house was the happiest time of their married life. Its address was 609 Van Buren St.; the house was roomy and comfortable and its big back yard provided Mama with the opportunity to plant and cultivate her first American garden.

Mama could make anything grow. She had the proverbial green thumb. Whether it was a house plant in a Williamsburg apartment, or the *garten* that took up the entire backyard of her home in Bushwick, or a small corner in the patio of our home in California, Mama had the magic touch. Gardening came naturally to her and she enjoyed it. Almost as much as singing. Her horticultural talents were instinctive. She knew nothing of chemical fertilizers or soil enhancers, or insect repellents and she did everything the old-fashioned way - - sometimes to my utter consternation and embarrassment.

When I was a teen ager she insisted I accompany her to nearby Highland Park, a small island of recreational greenery in the middle of Bushwick's row-house residential area. Although it was three stations away on the train, we always walked there and back, a decision that had nothing to do with fitness or exercise. Mama and I each carried two large shopping bags and our mission in Highland Park was to stroll along its bridle paths and collect horse droppings. Mama always brought along special gloves and a tiny toy beach shovel for this purpose. We filled the shopping bags to the brim with the malodorous turds and carried them home where Mama mixed them into the compost and used them as fertilizer. I hated these excursions and would always try, unsuccessfully, to be excused. Toting these foul-smelling shopping bags through the streets embarrassed me terribly and I would avert my eyes if we passed anyone on the way home. But try as I might, I could never talk Mama out of taking me with her. The damned stuff worked and she would not be denied!

My father never made a lot of money but, with Mama's help, we got by and we usually fared better than most. Papa bought his barber shop in 1923 and he died in 1954. For that entire time, the barber shop was his only source of income. Papa withheld just enough of the profits to buy cigarettes and beer. He must have considered them business expenses. The rest of the money he turned over to my mother and, with it, she took care of the household finances. She got to be pretty good at it. Even during the Depression years when times were tough and money was tight, the rent was always paid on time and there was always food on the table and clean clothes on our backs. Mama even managed to put a little money aside each week and she made small but regular deposits into the family savings account.

There were no supermarkets in those days and Mama did much of her shopping with the pushcart peddlers who assembled on Havemeyer Street, two blocks away. Today, we'd probably call it a flea market. The pushcarts lined up on both sides of Havemeyer Street and when Mama went there to shop, she would slowly walk up one side of the street and then down the other, carefully checking out what was available and comparing prices. When she made her decisions, she'd make the walk again and, this time, transact her purchases.

We patronized a shop known as the vegetable store. Its owner offered the best bargain in the entire city. He called it *soup n' greens* and it cost three cents. He would wrap a carrot, a turnip, an onion, a potato, and a single stalk of celery in an old newspaper and, by adding a soup bone, you could make meal of it. Mama could also make a delicious soup using only the vegetables. I recall that the ladies of the neighborhood frequently exchanged *soup-n-greens* recipes.

When our budget permitted meat, Mama usually bought it at Mr. Moskowitz's Kosher butcher shop. She had developed numerous shopping tricks-of-the-trade. For some reason, she distrusted the quality of the meat that Mr. Moskowitz used in his pre-ground hamburger and, when she wanted to buy ground beef, Mama would order stew beef instead. As he began to wrap it, she would ask him *Please, Mr. Moskowitz, could you put it through the machine first.* I cannot imagine that Mr. Moskowitz was unaware of so transparent a ruse and, although it must have galled him that Mama questioned the quality of his hamburger, he never let her see his annoyance. I suspect he retaliated by raising the price of his stew beef by a penny or two whenever he saw Mama walk through the door.

Sometimes, Mama would take a short train ride to Ridgewood, a small German community near Queens where she shopped at Schaller & Weber, a genuine German butcher shop (*Metzgerei*). Their meats were uniformly excellent, especially their Rhineland-style pork sausage (*Bratwurst*). I have tried to find its equal for more than half a century, but nothing ever came close.

From the beginning, my father believed that coming to America had been a wise and prudent thing to do, an opinion my mother never shared. My father did everything he could to Americanize himself and to take advantage of the American way of life. But not my mother. Despite becoming a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1932, she made no effort to become assimilated into the American culture and, in her own mind, she remained German until the day she died.

It is not hard to understand why their attitudes differed. As a young man, my father was a world traveler. He hadn't had a real home since his teens and was accustomed to living in foreign countries. My mother, on the other hand, had never been out of the Rhineland and for her, the move to America was a traumatic, life-altering experience. Nor could any place on earth have been more different from Angermund than Brooklyn. For the rest of her life Mama considered herself a stranger in a strange land.

Her discomfort was even greater during World War II. She detested Hitler and cursed him for what he had done to Germany, yet she could never bring herself to consider her homeland as the enemy. She had even more difficulty dealing with my own enlistment in the U.S. Army, especially after they transferred me to the European front in 1944. She considered the possibility that I might encounter a family member on some nameless battlefield to be very real and, torn between opposing loyalties, felt guilty and conflicted. After the Rhineland had been bombed and also during its occupation after the D-Day invasion, Mama arranged for the International Red Cross to send special *care* packages of coffee, soap and other foodstuffs to her family.

My father recognized that Mama's misgivings were serious and that they went deeper than ordinary homesickness. He wisely raised no objections when Mama found it necessary to undertake a therapeutic visit to Germany every eight years or so. She went back on three separate occasions while Papa was alive (1928, 1938, 1951) , and twice more after he died (1960 and 1968). For the most part, her visits to her family rejuvenated her; it re-charged her batteries and brightened her outlook on life. She almost always came back refreshed and ready to resume her homemaking responsibilities. Three things occurred in the early 1950's that completely changed her life. First, I left home and got married; second, my parents sold their home in Bushwick; and third, my father succumbed to lung cancer.

In 1951, Betty and I were married. I left home and we moved into a tiny apartment in Hollis, Queens. When World War II ended, my parents settled into a comfortable way of life. They continued to live in Bushwick and Papa still commuted to his barber shop in Williamsburg. In 1953 there were strong indications that, because of its proximity to the racially troubled Bedford-Stuyvesant district, property values in Bushwick might decline. It was a matter of genuine concern to my parents since the Bushwick property now represented almost their entire estate. After much debate and considerable soul-searching, they reluctantly placed their Bushwick house on the market. It sold quickly and they used the proceeds to buy another home in Woodhaven, Queens. At about the same time, my father was diagnosed with lung cancer and things were never the same after that. His condition worsened and he was in and out of the hospital several times. He couldn't work and it became necessary for Betty and I to pitch in and lend a hand. We moved into the upstairs apartment of the new Woodhaven house and assisted my parents in every way we could. Papa died in 1954.

Not too long after that, I found myself out of a job. The New York job market was tight and Betty and I agreed that this might be a good time for us to pull up stakes try our luck on the West Coast. We were reluctant to leave my mother in New York where she would be completely alone and totally on her own, so we persuaded her to sell her house and accompany us to California. While Mama wasn't thrilled by the prospect, she saw how determined we were and no doubt felt she had no choice but to join us. For Betty and I, the move to California was full of promise; we saw it as an adventure and an opportunity. My mother saw it as the second time in her life that she had to completely uproot herself and make a new beginning. We left for California on the morning of March 22nd, 1955.

When my mother first came to America in 1923, she was young, naive and inexperienced. In the intervening years, she had successfully transformed herself into a feisty *Hausfrau* who had learned, the hard way, how to competently serve the needs of her family. She had managed and operated her own household; she had been almost solely responsible for the day-to-day upbringing of her son; she had calculated the family budget and decided when to make major purchases and how much to pay for them. She had come a long way since 1923 and was far better equipped to handle the move from Woodhaven to California than she had been for the move from Angermund to Brooklyn. She was devastated by the death of my father but she had also become a very independent lady. The woman who came to California in 1955 answered to no one but herself. That would soon change.

Our situation in California was the exact opposite of what it had been in New York: In California, we didn't live with Mama, she lived with us and Mama found it difficult to let go of the reins. She rarely agreed with our decisions and we argued all the time. Most of our disagreements were over trivial things and it soon became evident that we had completely different ideas when it came to raising our children. Those differences were not trivial and they eventually caused major problems.

I should have known that Mama could never adjust to any scenario in which she was not Mistress of the Manor. She had become too independent for that. When Mama and I disagreed - - which was often - - it usually had something to do with the children. We also proved the old bromide that says, *No house is big enough for two women!*. Everyone's nerves were on edge and our disagreements escalated. Betty dislikes any kind of confrontation so she generally capitulated rather than continue the unpleasantness; my mother blamed me for taking her away

from New York; and I found it hard to avoid the feeling that, somehow, everything was my fault. No one was spared. We were all miserable.

At the heart of almost all our differences was my mother's tendency to spoil our children. In our view, she failed to discipline them when they needed it and it was a major bone of contention between us. It was necessary, back then, for us to use my mother as a baby sitter and she was happy to be of service. When, for a time, Betty went back to work, it was only possible because Mama was available to take care of the kids.

A short time later, I made the decision to become a professional square dance caller and, once again, Mama was happy to help out. Square dancing is a couples activity and it was necessary for Betty and I to attend every dance I called. Calling is a night-time job and, if you are successful, entails a lot of travel, especially on the week-ends. This means that if you have small children, you cannot become a caller unless you have unlimited access to a reliable baby sitter. My mother filled that role to perfection. If she hadn't been available to take care of our kids while Betty and I chased my new career, I would never have become a square dance caller. For this I am truly grateful. I ultimately became a successful caller, but I will go to my grave wondering how it affected my children.

Over the next few years, my mother's unhappiness in California intensified and our problems at home continued unabated. My father was gone; I had gotten married and no longer needed mothering; my children had outgrown their need for a baby sitter. There was no one left for Mama to take care of and, for the first time in her life, she felt superfluous and unwanted. And so, she made a momentous decision: she decided to return to Germany, this time for good!

When she announced her intentions, it took us completely by surprise but, on reflection, we agreed that her idea had merit. Her plan was to find an apartment in or near Ratingen, the town where most of her relatives lived and, in that way, re-establish herself in their midst. She would live independently and not have to answer to anyone. But she would be surrounded by family and friends who could see to her needs if an emergency arose. My qualms about her being alone disappeared. It was a good idea. If only it had worked!

After arranging to have her Social Security checks sent to her new address in Germany, Mama returned to the familiar surroundings of *Meine Heimat* (my homeland). But it was too late. Although everyone was glad to see her and welcomed her back with open arms, she had become an outsider. The passage of time is a formidable barrier. Nearly fifty years had passed since she left Germany and the years had taken their toll. She simply couldn't fit back in as though she hadn't been away. Only relatives her own age remembered her and not many of them were left. To everyone else, she was *that nice old lady from America who used to live here*. Money was also a problem. The cost-of-living in Germany was sky high and Mama had difficulty making ends meet.

My mother's plan to end her days in Germany had backfired and, after six months of desperately trying to make a go of it, she returned to California. None of us wanted to risk a repeat of our earlier difficulties, so we agreed that the best thing would be for her to find an apartment of her own. We located suitable rooms not too far away from our house and we helped her settle in. It was a pleasant apartment and she was comfortable there. We visited each other frequently and our former problems never resurfaced. She lived in that apartment until she died. She passed away with a smile on her face. We had just completed a major remodeling of our San Jose home and had invited Mama to lunch so that she might see how it had turned out. We had

installed new carpeting and new kitchen fixtures; we had re-painted and bought new furniture. Mama hadn't seen any of it before and she was overjoyed with the results. After lunch, she settled back in one of our new easy chairs to watch Lawrence Welk on our TV. She sang along with the musical numbers and laughed at the antics of the performers. A half hour earlier, she had dozed off at the kitchen table. It had been difficult to awaken her and I had to gently slap her back to consciousness.. Now Betty noticed that Mama had been silent for a while and seemed to have drifted off to sleep again. This time, however, slapping her didn't work. This time I couldn't wake her. Her time had come.

Although there was a tragic sadness to the last ten years of her life, my mother made the best of it. She had lived in two worlds but was never able to reconcile her place in either one of them. In the end, she didn't belong anywhere. I am glad she passed away in our home and that her laughter and her singing were the last sounds I heard her make. The cause of her death was officially determined to be arteriosclerosis or heart failure. The date was June 10, 1978. She had asked to be cremated and that her ashes be interred atop my father's in the Cypress Avenue Cemetery in New York. I saw to it.



MAMA – 1954



609 VAN BUREN ST.,
BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN

BÜBCHEN (1923-1933)

Bube, n. A young boy.

Bubi or Bübchen. n. A diminutive of Bube
German-English Dictionary

My earliest childhood memory is an episode that occurred when I was five years old. It was 1928. We were steaming across the Atlantic aboard the S.S. Reliance. Mama had taken me with her back to Germany for a six week visit and now we were on our way home. We were two or three days out to sea and although it was a sunny afternoon up on deck, the ever-present North Atlantic winds were raw and damp and chilled you to the bone. Mama had left me alone while she went below to fetch a cup of hot *bouillon*. She had placed me atop a cargo hatch and, to protect me from the winds, covered me with a canvas tarpaulin.

Time passed and, when Mama didn't return, I began to worry. More time passed and my worries turned into full-blown panic. I imagined all sorts of dire possibilities: Had something happened to her? Had she abandoned me? What would happen to me now? My fears mounted and I hunkered down under the tarp and tried to hold back the tears that were welling up in my eyes. Suddenly, the tarp was pulled away and there was Mama, smiling broadly, holding a steaming cup of consomme' in her hands. *Wo ist mein Bübchen?*, she asked impishly. Where is my darling boy? My relief was unbearable and, unable to contain my joy, I did something I thought I had outgrown: I wet my pants!

Other recollections from that time are a disconnected hodge-podge of fleeting images; kaleidoscopic mental snapshots that my brain refuses to discard. I cling, for example, to a hazy glimpse of Dr. Berkowitz.. Doctors still made house calls in those days and the good doctor, a portly, middle aged man who always smelled of antiseptic, had come to our house to minister to my chicken pox. He was our family physician and one of my father's best customers. I survived the chicken pox, although it resurfaced many years later when, at age sixty-eight, I unexpectedly had an excruciatingly painful attack of shingles.

Chicken pox aside, I had few other childhood diseases. I don't remember having mumps, although I do recall that my tonsils were removed. I remember nothing about the tonsillectomy, just how lucky I felt afterwards when, for several days, the only food I was allowed to eat was ice cream. Despite a little pain when I swallowed, I was more than happy to comply. Doctor's orders had never been so much fun! I loved every spoonful and I probably gained ten pounds!

My birth certificate lists my birth date as February 3rd, 1923. I once checked the front page of the New York Herald Tribune on that date. The news from overseas expressed concern over the possibility of famine in Germany and there were worries about the increased influence of Bolsheviks in Russia. Closer to home, the headlines told about speakeasy raids and about how New York club women opposed the repeal of film censorship. My arrival on the planet was never mentioned.

The name on my birth certificate is the same as my father's: Wilhelm Otto Peters. It is interesting to note that while my father never used his given name and was never called anything but Otto, the reverse is true in my case. I was never called Otto and, except for my teen-age years when some of my friends called me Pete, I was usually called Willi or Willy or Bill - - all diminutives of William. I have no idea when Wilhelm became William or when Otto became N.M.I. (No Middle Initial), although I suspect my father had a hand in it somewhere. From the day I was born, my mother called me **Bubi** or **Bübchen**.

My birth certificate identifies Eggerscheidt as the town of my birth. Like Angermund, Eggerscheidt is a small country town near Düsseldorf. Unfortunately, the house of my birth was torn down shortly before they passed a law which designated houses of that age as historical landmarks and it became illegal to raze them. Several photographs of my birth house still exist, however, and I have placed them in the family photo archives. On our various trips to Germany, my relatives have, several times, taken us to see the site where my **Geburtshaus** once stood.

A few fuzzy images of our first residence in Williamsburg remain stuck in the back of my brain. We lived in a four-room cold-water flat that took up the entire middle floor of a three-story house located on the corner of South 4th St. and Driggs Ave. It was diagonally across the street from Papa's barber shop which meant he could either come home for lunch or Mama could take lunch to him if he was busy with customers. I was later told that the rent was \$15.00 per month!

I have a dim recollection of my mother bathing me in a washtub next to the sink in the kitchen. A big black coal stove stood against the opposite wall. Mama cooked on this stove and, during the cold Brooklyn winters, it was the only source of heat for the entire residence. Depending on the time of year, we stored our perishables in two places. In the winter, we kept them in an outside window box; a small metal cabinet with a sliding door that was somehow fastened to the outside of the house at one of the kitchen windows. The first time I saw cream rise to the top of a bottle of milk was in our outside cold box. In the summer, we kept perishable foods in an icebox, a large wooden cabinet that stood by the kitchen door near the sink. One compartment of the chest was designed to hold a large block of ice and it worked like a modern-day ice chest. As the block of ice melted, the run-off was channeled down to a wide metal collecting basin located at the bottom of the cabinet. This basin needed to be emptied once every day.

We bought ice from **Joe the Iceman**, a dark, burly mustachioed Italian *signore*, who draped a rubber sheet over his shoulder and used large ice tongs to steady the 25-cent block of ice he carried up to us every morning. In the winter, he became, **Joe the Coalman**, and brought us two large buckets of coal every day. I have long since forgotten what he charged for coal.

The kitchen had two windows. The outside cold box was attached to one of them and the other provided access to the clothesline. Mama used a washboard to wash our clothes. She dried them by hanging them on the clothesline which was attached with pulleys and hooks to a tall central pole in the backyard. The central pole was shared by about a dozen other clotheslines from neighboring apartments.

The earliest Christmas I remember was in this house. Papa always bought a tree but didn't put it up until after I had been put to bed on Christmas Eve. The German version of Santa Claus is called, *Der Weihnachtsmann* and, in the German legend, he not only brings gifts on Christmas Eve, he also brings a fully decorated tree to put them under. After I fell asleep, Papa would set up the tree, decorate it, and place our presents under it so that when I awoke the following morning, I would be convinced that *Der Weihnachtsmann* had come during the night. I probably believed in Santa Claus longer than any other kid in our neighborhood!

There were no electric Christmas tree lights in those days and we all lit our trees with tiny candles. This was a European tradition. The candles fit into small holders that clipped onto the branches. The risk of a serious fire was extraordinarily high but, in those days, everyone used candles and no one gave it a second thought.

There were two other tenants in our house. A Mrs. Peetz lived directly below us in what we called the ground floor I remember her as a crabby old widow lady who lived alone with about a dozen cats. The rooms above us were occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Cappucci and their two sons, Nicky and Vince.

Some of the other mental snapshots that occasionally tiptoe through my mind include an image of our favorite neighborhood grocer slicing a 1/4 pound slab of butter from a large vat and weighing it. He always managed to slice off the exact weight that Mama asked for! I also see him wielding a long grasping hook that was especially designed to retrieve an item of canned goods from the highest shelf.

In the evenings, after the pushcart peddlers had left, some of us kids would go scavenging in the Havemeyer Street outdoor market. We looked for the discarded wooden crates in which the peddler's produce had originally been packed. We used these salvaged crates in several ways: Sometimes we made toy guns out of the box ends. If you attached a rubber band to them in a certain way, you could shoot a small piece of cardboard *ammo*. Kids who were lucky enough to own an old pair of roller skates, could make a serviceable scooter by nailing the crate to a short length of two-by-four and then nailing skates to the bottom. Mostly, however, we used the crates as firewood. One of our simplest pleasures was to stand around a fire we had built in an old oil drum and roast Mickeys. A Mickey was a raw potato impaled on the end of a stick.

Once in a while, Papa would reward me with a field trip, but neither he or my mother were my escort on these occasions. My father couldn't leave the barber shop and Mama still didn't trust herself to get around on the complex New York City subway system, so Papa engaged an unemployed young man from the neighborhood to serve as my guide and baby sitter. Papa, of course, underwrote the cost of the entire expedition. I have forgotten my escort's name, but he was fun to be with and I think he enjoyed these trips as much as I did.

Usually our destination would be a museum or the planetarium or some other bastion of culture, but every now and then we'd go someplace utterly frivolous - - like Coney Island! While I recall none of the museum trips, I do remember our trips to Coney Island, especially my first! In those days, *Coney* was New York City's primary beach resort and, on a hot, muggy summer day, the beaches were packed with hordes of sweltering sunbathers. There was also a boardwalk that featured a long carnival-type midway. All manner of barkers and pitchmen hawked their wares or hustled tickets for such enticements as the roller coaster, the ferris wheel or the scary Loop-the-Loop. Back then, Coney Island was the home of Luna Park (30 separate rides for the price of a single admission) and it was the original site of *Nathan's* world-famous

hot dog stand, which I am told is still doing business in the same location. Another famous Coney Island landmark was Trommer's *Biergarten*, a pleasant outdoor restaurant specializing in beer and a German-style menu. A small band played for dancing in the evenings.

The reason this particular outing to Coney Island stands out in my memory is that my escort and I had spent the morning building sand castles at the water's edge and although I didn't know it until later, I had gotten severely sunburned. We spent the afternoon at Luna Park and, after riding all the rides, I developed a bad case of motion sickness. I returned home red as a lobster and beginning to blister and my stomach remained queasy for a week. I have avoided exposure to the sun and midway rides ever since.

From kindergarten through high school, I was educated in New York City public schools, a system that, according to the media, has deteriorated badly over the years. In my time, however, it was quite effective. If there was a so-called blackboard jungle, I don't remember it. For me, the emphasis was on academics and learning and I remember my school years in Brooklyn as an enjoyable, rewarding experience.

It fascinates me that while I can no longer recall very much about my former teachers, I am still able to remember, with astonishing clarity, the several fast-food peddlers who used to congregate around the school yards at P.S. 50. There was the vendor who, in the warmer months, sold ices out of containers surrounded by cracked ice in a special four-wheeled cart, Ices was a sherbert-like concoction that came in several flavors. Using a dipper-like spoon, he ladled the stuff into paper cups and there were two-cent, three-cent, and five-cent sizes. When the weather turned colder, he used a different cart to prepare and sell little bags of french-fried potatoes. They cost a nickel. There was another peddler who sold soft pretzels and another who sold little chewy strips of pressed, dried apricots that we called Shoe Leather. They were delicious.

When you grow up in New York, two important milestones measure your progress into adolescence: the first time you are allowed to cross the street unaccompanied, and the first time they let you ride the subways alone. You usually got to cross the street at about ten years old, and to ride the subways by the time you were thirteen or fourteen.

I have forgotten how old I was when my parents allowed me to cross the street by myself but it was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, I was suddenly footloose and free to roam the streets and to explore our neighborhood in ever widening circles. The downside was that my parents could now send me on errands I hadn't been allowed to run before. Mama could send me to the bakery to buy cheese cake for dessert that night (4 blocks away), or to Woolworth's for shoelaces, clothes pins or similar items (7 blocks). Papa could now send me to the post office (5 blocks), or to his favorite delicatessen to buy beer when he ran out of Schaefer's (3 blocks).

I don't know if they still exist but there used to be a unique phenomenon in New York City called a *candy store*. What the general store was to the rest of the country, the candy store was to New York. When I was growing up, it filled a variety of community needs. A candy store was a confectionary, soda fountain, tobacco shop and news stand all rolled into one. For both kids and grown-ups, it was a neat place to hang out. There were many places you could buy a pack of cigarettes, but a candy store would sell you a single cigarette for a penny - - and throw in a wooden match at no extra charge. In addition to a wide selection of penny candies, they sold tasty little rectangular portions of a middle eastern confection called *halvah*.

Candy store fountains invented the cherry coke and the famous *egg cream*, a delicious mixture made of chocolate syrup, milk and seltzer water. They also made milk shakes, which we

called malteds. Another famous candy store drink was known simply as *for two-cents plain*, an odd name until you understand its derivation. If, in those days, you asked for a cherry soda, they'd squirt a large spritz of cherry syrup in a glass, fill the rest of the glass with seltzer, and charge you three cents. If, however, all you wanted was a glass of carbonated water, they'd fill the glass with seltzer and omit the cherry syrup. This made the seltzer *plain* and it cost a penny less. It made perfect sense.

The candy store also served as the local message center. It was a time when only a very few people had a telephone in their home. The average New Yorker relied on public telephones. These were typically located down the hall in a tenement building, or down the street in a candy store. Papa's barber shop was right next door to a candy store; so close, in fact, they shared a common bathroom. This particular candy store had installed a bank of three phone booths and they were almost always in use. This was before dial telephones so you had to know the procedure.

Placing a call was easy. You simply entered the booth, dropped a nickel in the slot and told the operator the number you wanted. Receiving a call in a candy store booth was a bit more difficult. If someone called you at a candy store number, the owner usually answered the phone, scribbled down the name and address of the person you wanted to speak with, and then dispatched a kid from the neighborhood to fetch your party to the phone. It was customary to tip the messenger two or three cents for his trouble. Obviously, only those kids who had attained cross-the-street privileges qualified as messengers and they became a close-knit little fraternity. I joined the group as soon as I became eligible.

Because it was date night for the singles crowd, the phone booths were especially busy on Saturday evenings and a cluster of tip-hungry messengers always hung around the candy store on Saturdays, waiting for the phones to ring. We took turns answering calls and an unwritten first-in-line-first-to-go policy evolved. We adhered to it stringently.

The biggest advantage to crossing the street by myself was that I could now go to the movies without my parents. About a half dozen third or fourth run movie houses operated in Williamsburg and my favorite was the seediest and most rundown of them all. It was called The Broadway and on Saturday afternoons - - which started at 11 A.M. - - they showed a program consisting of three feature films, three comedy shorts or cartoons, and two adventure serials which we called chapters. The complete program lasted five to six hours. One of the feature films was always a Cowboys-and-Indians movie, another was usually a Warner Brothers shoot-em-up gangster film, and the third, a historical drama with lots of swordplay. It cost a dime to get in and, like today's television programs, it was a marvelous baby sitter!

I don't know if my father knew how to swim. I doubt it because in all the time I knew him, he never owned a bathing suit and he never went near the water. Perhaps this is why he paid for my membership and insisted I join the Y.M.C.A. The *Y* in Williamsburg had a pool and offered swimming lessons. My father signed me up as soon as I was old enough and not only did I learn how to swim, I forever lost all fear of the water. Learning to swim at the *Y* was a good deal safer than having someone throw you off the South 5th Street dock and into the slimy East River, which was how many of my friends gained their introduction to water sports.

In addition to its swimming pool, the *Y* offered a gym, crafts classes, and pool tables, and I made good use of them all. The *Y* operated a summer camp in Staten Island. In those days Staten Island was considered to be out in the country. I was about eight or nine years old and,

one summer, Papa sent me to the *Y* camp for a one-week stay. All I remember about it now was that there was a fresh water lake and it was the first time I swam in non-chlorinated water. It was also the first time I ever drank an uncarbonated ade-like fruit drink we called bug juice. But most important of all, it was where I made my debut as a solo on-stage performer.

There must have been a camp show but I remember nothing about it. It was probably a revue of some kind and I must have convinced someone that I could sing. They let me sing a solo and programmed me for the next-to-closing act. In vaudeville, this spot was usually reserved for the show's headliners. The song was called ***Little Man You've Had a Busy Day*** and I can still sing most of the words. I clearly recall wondering why everyone kept telling me not to be nervous when I didn't feel that way. I performed the number with gusto and there was a lot of applause. I also remember the heady sensation of standing in the spotlight and basking in the glow of everyone's attention! It was an epiphany!



1923



1927



1935

WILLY (1936-1939)

*Youth is a wonderful thing; what
a pity it's wasted on children.
(George Bernard Shaw)*

I turned thirteen in 1936. A consistent honor student, I had breezed through New York's nine-year elementary school program in eight years and was ready to enter high school. Most local students were sent to Williamsburg's Eastern District High School but because of my excellent grades, I was eligible to attend Stuyvesant High School across the river in Manhattan. Stuyvesant offered an accelerated program especially designed for gifted students from all over the city and eligibility was tantamount to an academic award. It tacitly conferred top-student status to all who were selected. Enrollment required parental consent and although Papa expressed minor reservations about my ability to handle the school's rigorous expectations, he agreed to let me go. I confess, however, that memories of my time at Stuyvesant have become sketchy and randomly selective. I recall unimportant details about peripheral matters but remember next to nothing about my teachers or the kind of education I received.

Located on East 15th Street near Manhattan's Union Square, Stuyvesant was only a two-station, under-the-river subway ride from Williamsburg. I had long since received permission to ride the subways unescorted and I had learned how to navigate around the city with ease. The short hop to Stuyvesant each day would not pose a problem. My parents added fifty cents carfare to my weekly allowance and, for the next three years, I traveled the subways twice a day, a carefree teenage commuter.

Teenagers often do crazy things and I was no exception. There were times when some of us would steal a ride home from school and pocket the carfare. Usually it was an unplanned, spur-of-the-moment decision. If, on the walk to the subway station after school, we happened to see a truck with its tailgate down headed south on First Avenue, we'd jump onto the tailgate when the truck stopped at a red light, ride the twenty blocks down to Delancey Street and jump off. From there, it was relatively easy to hitch a ride across the bridge to Williamsburg or, if necessary, take the three-cent ride on the trolley that trundled across the bridge in those days. My parents would have been horrified had they known I was doing something so dangerous but, luckily, they never found out.

There was a candy store across the street from the Stuyvesant school grounds. In addition to all of the usual items, this shop also sold freshly-baked fruit pies. They only carried one flavor, pineapple cheese, but it was fabulous! You bought a third-of-a-pie slice for a nickel and, even now, my juices run just from thinking about it. I do not remember food vendors operating near the Stuyvesant property but we did encounter some of them whenever we skipped the subway and hitched home after school. They had staked out a busy corner on Delancey St. near the bridge entrance. One sold hot *knishes* out of a cart. A knish is a Jewish potato dumpling, deep fried in oil. It has a crispy crust and a soft, mushy inside and it is absolutely delicious. Another peddler sold little bags of hot garbanzo beans, also out of a cart, and also delicious!

I did well at Stuyvesant, but I was never an honor student and my grades were only fair. I recall wanting to take French as my mandatory language course but my father insisted I choose German instead. I had wanted to acquire French as a third language but Papa reasoned that since my German was already fluent, I would get top grades in German without having to work for them. He expected that I would then have more energy to spend on my other classes and thereby upgrade my overall high school performance. It was a logical strategy, but it didn't work! While I spoke German better than any one else in the class, I could never master the theoretical mechanics of German grammar and those were the kinds of questions they asked on the exams. My grades were less than spectacular.

In my first year at Stuyvesant, my father gave me a gift. It was a second-hand typewriter, a large, clanky, upright Underwood. I came to love it dearly. I taught myself how to type and, using only four fingers, invented my own hunt-and-peck technique. I eventually got to be quite good at it. I once tested myself and timed out at better than forty words per minute. That typewriter profoundly affected the rest of my life. I was able to use my typing ability in almost all of my professional and non-professional endeavors and it contributed greatly to my success as a square dance author and publisher.

I have no memories of participating in sports or clubs or other extra-curricular activities. Stuyvesant was an all-boys school so there were no dances or proms. Prior to high school, I generally stood out because I was an over-achiever. At Stuyvesant, *everyone* was an over-achiever and I found myself lost in the shuffle. I graduated without difficulty but also without honors. I decided I'd had enough of school for a while and, for the time being at least, put thoughts of college on the back burner.

Like my father, I have always been interested in religion, which is odd since I received very little religious training as a child. About year before I entered high school, my parents enrolled me in a Lutheran Sunday School. I never understood how that came about. Papa was a religious iconoclast who didn't believe in the teachings of any organized church. Mama was raised in a strict Catholic environment and while she never attended mass in America, she definitely considered herself to be a Catholic. Given these two totally opposite religious postures, how did I end up taking bible lessons at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Williamsburg? It's a good question.

I think my father would have been content to omit my religious upbringing altogether. My mother, on the other hand, probably felt guilty about marrying outside her faith and feared that her sins had already condemned her to eternal damnation. Knowing that Papa would never allow me to become a Catholic, she prevailed upon him to let me receive at least some religious training. Sunday School at St. Paul's seemed a convenient compromise. It presented the fewest problems for my father, it provided me with a suitable religious connection, and it also soothed Mama's conscience and helped to minimize her guilt for not raising me as a Catholic.

I went to Sunday School for almost a year and was confirmed at St. Paul's in the Spring of 1933. The ceremony occurred on a Sunday morning and, later that afternoon, Papa took me aside and presented me with a package containing two books. One was a St. James Bible; the other, his own dog-eared copy of *44 Complete Lectures* by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, a well-known agnostic and so-called *Bible-Debunker* of the late 1800's. *Here*, he said. *Read them both and make up your own mind.* Both volumes remain on my bookshelves and I still browse through them from time to time.

In the 1930s, Willliamburg's population was approximately eighty percent Jewish and growing up there enabled me to learn a lot about Jewish culture and Jewish customs. I discovered what the Jewish holidays celebrated, I sampled Jewish cooking, and I even learned to speak a little Yiddish. For a time, I also worked as a *Shabbas Goy*.

In Yiddish, *Shabbas* means Sabbath and *Goy* means Gentile so the literal translation of the term *Shabbas Goy* is Sabbath Gentile. What it really meant was: *The little non-Jewish kid who is allowed to work on Saturdays.*

Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath. It lasts from sunset Friday night to sunset Saturday night. Talmudic law forbids working on the Sabbath and it was the responsibility of the local rabbi to decide what was *work* and what was not. In our neighborhood, he evidently felt that cooking did not qualify as work and decreed that it was permissible to do so on Saturdays.. Lighting the cooking fire, on the other hand, was not allowed. That *was* work and was, therefore, expressly forbidden. In other words, while you were allowed to cook on Saturdays, you really couldn't because you weren't permitted to light the gas burner that made it possible. This left Jewish households with only two *Shabbas* options: *Eat cold* - - an unappetizing, unthinkable prospect; or light the burner on Friday before the sun went down, let it burn all night and then cook on it the next day - - an alternative too dangerous and too costly to even consider. The obvious solution was to hire someone like me to come by the house on Saturday mornings to light the burner. And so, I became a *Shabbas Goy*. If you don't count the pennies I made as a candy store telephone messenger, that assignment represented the first on-the-job money I ever earned.

I had a route of about a dozen families whom I visited every Saturday morning. Each family would place two or three wooden matches on top of the gas range on the preceding day and I would come by on Saturday morning to light the burner. My fee for this service was three cents per household and, since handling money was also forbidden on the Sabbath, there would be three pennies for me alongside the wooden matches. Some customers would also ask me*if it wouldn't be too much trouble please* to empty the melted water at the bottom of the icebox.

It was about this time that my father decided I should learn barbering, a decision based more on pragmatism than pride. It was never his intention that I follow in his footsteps or that I actually become a barber. He mainly thought that it would be prudent for me to have a trade to fall back on *just in case*. At that time, Papa had a contract with a local orphanage to cut the hair of its children and they became my practice subjects. The orphanage was only a block away and, when haircut time rolled around, they marched the children down to Papa's shop in groups of eight. Papa had set up an assembly line operation that accomplished the haircuts while also affording me the training and practice I needed. It was the early 1930s and electric clippers were a new invention. They were clumsy, awkward machines, big and bulky and nothing at all like the sleek, slim models barbers and hair stylists use today. Papa had stretched a section of wire cable across the length of the shop and suspended the machine's large motor from it by means of pulleys. The motor rode the cable from one end of the shop to the other. A hand-held electric clipper unit fit into the motor by means of a flexible extension cord. After giving me a few

elementary lessons, Papa lined up the eight children by height and, starting with the tallest, I would go down the line, giving each child an initial rough cut with my clippers. Papa followed directly behind me with his fine clippers, fixing my mistakes and finishing the job. I've never had to cut hair professionally, but with a little work, I think I could do it if I had to!

I was now old enough to earn a weekly allowance, so Papa put me to work in the shop. I served as an all-around handyman and performed a wide range of duties: I folded towels, cleaned the windows and mirrors, dusted the pomade bottles, and shined up the silver-plated hot towel dispenser. I was also required to empty and clean the spittoon and, to this day, it remains the most disgusting and distasteful job I have ever had to do!

My responsibilities included sweeping up the hair that fell to the floor after each haircut. I don't know how barbers deal with this problem today, but Papa developed a special system of his own. The shop was situated over a cellar. Papa punched a hole to the cellar through the floor in the back of the shop and built a cabinet around the hole to disguise its purpose. He attached a large burlap bag to the hole and, after every haircut, I swept the fallen hair through the hole and into the burlap bag. When it became full, Papa sold the bag of hair to a strange little man who came with a pushcart to collect it. He bought hair from other barbers too and we could never figure out what he did with it.

When I got to be a little older, Papa let me *help* with real customers. I didn't actually give haircuts or shaves, but he taught me how to do some of the preparatory work such as pre-shave lathering and administering hot towels. Saturday night (date night) was the busiest time and Papa developed another assembly line operation to accommodate all the young men who wanted a fresh barber shop shave when they picked up their ladies. It required two chairs. I'd put a customer in the first chair, give him a hot towel and lather his face and Papa would be ready with his razor when I finished. While he was shaving the customer I had just lathered, I'd call *Next!*, seat that gentleman in the second chair and *prep* him the same way. I don't know how efficient we were but I remember our customers saying that our gyrations reminded them of a ballet and they enjoyed watching the two of us doing our *chaise de deux* as we gracefully pirouetted from one chair to the other.

When I was old enough to sprout my own beard, Papa showed me how to shave myself with a straight razor and, after I could do it without cutting myself, he let me try my new-found skills on him. Although I managed to shave him cleanly and efficiently and without a single nick, he never let me shave a real customer. My father always shaved himself with a straight razor and, for a time, I used a straight razor too. I transferred to a safety razor soon afterward, however, and went to an electric razor as soon as they became available.

A few years earlier, I discovered the local Boy Scout program and I became a member of Troop 235, where a bright and rather serious young man named Frank Swiatokos was Scoutmaster. It was an affiliation that would have a profound and lasting affect on my future. I was twelve when I joined and, between that time and my enlistment in the Army at age nineteen, the Scouts, along with my family and school, were the most important things in my life.

The troop met once a week in the back room of a former firehouse that had been converted into a kind of fire-fighting museum. The troop followed the standard Boy Scout programs but, in addition, placed special emphasis on hiking, camping and nature study. I loved it! I studied and practiced a wide range of skills and earned enough merit badges to qualify as a *Life Scout*. I volunteered to be a patrol leader and, a little later, was named Senior Patrol Leader of the entire troop. I found myself leading the gang in songs and became their unofficial cheerleader. I learned how to play the harmonica so that I could provide an accompaniment for

our song fests. Playing the harmonica eventually became a major outlet for my own musical creativity and, over the years, it has provided me with countless hours of pleasure. But what I liked most about being in the Scouts, the thing that really turned me on, was the hiking and camping.

Our Scoutmaster was an avid hiker himself and we went out often. When you live in Brooklyn, it is next-to-impossible to go hiking in the *real* woods without first traveling a considerable distance. But that never stopped us. We rode subways, buses and trains to locations in New Jersey, Westchester County or Long Island and on those hikes I learned the basic rules of backpacking and camping out. I acquired skills on these hikes that I would use to good advantage for the next fifty years!

The friends who participated with me in these activities, became very close buddies. We all enjoyed the same things and we were, for a time, inseparable. This group was the very center of my social life in those days and, although I am no longer in touch with any of them, they remain the closest friends I ever had. There was Bobby Sumpter, a brainy kid who became an aerospace engineer; and **Doc** Katta, who yearned to become a physician; there was the very Irish Tommy McElhearn who had a smile for everyone, plus Billy Kruse, Stan Cohen and Vladec (Walter) Gruszczynski. There was also a myopic Polish kid named Stanley **Salty** Solko. I always called him **Stash** (a Polish nickname for Stanley) and he and I hit it off right off the bat. We became best friends. He shared my passion for the out-of-doors and, for approximately fifteen years, we roamed the mountain trails together. We were both in the service during World War II and, on one occasion, coordinated one of our furloughs so that we might take an overnight backpacking trip together. Our affection for each other was deep-rooted and unwavering; we ultimately served as Best Man at each other's weddings. Unfortunately, distance worked against us and we gradually lost touch after Betty and I left New York and moved to California.

Then the unexpected happened: We hadn't heard from one another in more than twenty years when, out of the blue, Stash telephoned. I recognized his voice instantly. He was in the San Francisco Bay Area on a travel group vacation and had looked up our number in the phone book. We arranged a meeting but, since he was on a tour bus with a busy schedule, our reunion was necessarily brief. It was the last time I ever saw him. After all these years, he still lived in Williamsburg and I later learned from his sister that shortly after he returned home from California, he suffered a heart attack and died. I'll never forget him!

As our little Scout group grew older, we acquired a reputation as specialists in advanced backpacking techniques and, when the National Boy Scout organization first developed plans to create a new program for young men aged 15 to 18, we were asked to participate in their initial experiments. The goal was to create a youth program combining traditional Boy Scout principles with activities that might appeal to older boys. The extended backpacking trips we were taking in those days seemed to be exactly the sort of activities they were looking for and we were asked to participate in their original research efforts. The project involved extensive coordination with the Scouts' home office and required us to undertake even more backpacking trips than usual. We couldn't have enjoyed it more. We were in our element and we ate it up! The project resulted in the establishment of the Explorer Scout Program and our contributions were both useful and well-received.

I owe a lot to the Boy Scouts. I am basically a shy person but they brought out my leadership abilities and stimulated my talents as a showman. In spite of New York's granite canyons, its ungodly traffic and the dangerous undercurrent of its urban life, the Scouts allowed me to discover and pursue my innate love of nature and the mountains. And in a tough New

York tenement neighborhood, they provided a positive moral climate that shaped and defined the principles and guidelines that have governed the way I have lived for more than half a century!
They were also the first to call me *Pete*.



1937

SCOUTING -



1938



STANLEY *STASH* SOLKO

PETE (1940-41 and 1946-51)

*Why? That, of course, is the inevitable question....
Why go up Old Baldy, Bear Mountain, Rainier, the
Matterhorn, McKinley, Nanda Devi, Everest? Old
Baldy and Everest are scarcely the same thing, and
yet, in a strange and very fundamental way, they
are...and if you understand one, you understand the
other.*

(James Ramsey Ullman)

Not long after joining the Boy Scouts in 1935, someone in the troop inadvertently addressed me as **Pete**. The name stuck and it became my nickname. It must have struck my fancy too, for I did nothing to keep it from happening. My parents still called me Willi and my teachers called me William, but to everyone else, I became Pete. I went by that name until shortly after Betty and I were married some sixteen years later.

I graduated from high school in 1939 and, with the callow *hauteur* of a sixteen year old, was blithely unconcerned about learning a trade or preparing for a career. I ignored the future. I was young, strong and indestructible. Let the future take care of itself. I lived only for the present - - which was now almost wholly taken up with backpacking. It had become my passion and, now that I had finished high school, it was all I lived for. I would soon discover, however, that in the real world, you can't always have everything you want and nothing is ever simple.

For the first time in my life, I needed to think about how to pay for my projected lifestyle. When I graduated from high school, my parents informed me that not only were they terminating my allowance, they now expected me to pay them a small fee to cover my room and board. And while backpacking wasn't an expensive hobby, it wasn't cost-free. There was no way around it; I obviously needed to earn some money. I would have to find a job.

It wasn't difficult. I answered an ad in the New York Times and went to work as a shipping clerk and delivery boy for an organization called The Rapid Ruling Co. They produced custom-ruled ledger sheets. I worked in the Shipping Department where I learned to wrap reams of ruled paper and how to prepare packages for shipping. The company was located on 24th St. near Sixth Ave. and close by Manhattan's famous Flatiron Building. Many of Rapid Ruling's customers were within walking distance of the plant and I also made deliveries using a small hand truck. It wasn't very exciting and by no means could it be called a career-making apprenticeship, but I didn't mind. To me, it was a means to an end. It was a way to make enough money to cover my expenses and support my hobby, nothing more. I have long since forgotten the amount of my salary but I'm sure it wasn't much. I earned a small raise from time to time and I remained at Rapid Ruling Co. until I went into the Army in 1942.

For about two and a half years after high school, I went backpacking almost every weekend.

Many of these hikes were programmed events and involved our entire Explorer Scout group. Most of them, however, were casual mountain hikes on which I was accompanied by Stash and whoever else cared to tag along. In those days, we didn't refer to them as backpacking trips. That term wouldn't evolve until after World War II. We called them overnight hikes and, while we didn't much care where we went, as long as it was in the mountains, we always tried to find someplace new or different to visit: a peak we hadn't climbed, a lake we hadn't skinny-dipped in, a new place to camp, or a new range of mountains we hadn't hiked in before.

On a typical two-day weekend, we almost always hiked in the Ramapo Mountains of New York. The Ramapos are the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. They are not very high, and their peaks range from about 1100 to 1300 feet. They are located approximately forty miles up the Hudson River from New York City and occupy an area that, for the most part, lies within the boundaries of Harriman State Park. The park forms a rough triangle whose apex is West Point and Bear Mountain on the west side of the Hudson, and whose base is a line, roughly twenty miles to the west, running north along New York's Route 17 from Suffern through Sloatsburg, Tuxedo Park, Southfields and Arden.

There were two ways to access the park's trails. Each of them took about two hours to reach one-way from Brooklyn. I would imagine that today's New York City hikers travel there by car but, in those days, none of us owned an automobile and getting there involved several forms of public transportation and required a careful coordination of timetables and schedules. From Brooklyn, you took the subway to downtown Manhattan, walked west five or six long blocks to the Hudson River pier where you caught the ferry to New Jersey. That brought you to the railroad terminals of either the Erie R.R., whose tracks paralleled Rt. 17 and took you to the trails that begin at the western side of the park; or you boarded the Lackawanna R.R., which went up the New Jersey side of the Hudson and took you to the trails that originate at Bear Mountain.

The State Parks Department had constructed a network of hiking trails that criss-crossed the park in all directions. These trails were maintained by volunteers from various New York City hiking clubs. They were marked with small colored blazes painted on tree trunks at eye level. From any one blaze, you could see to the next one so that hiking a given trail was simply a matter of following the paint blazes. The trails were also color coded: I remember that the Suffern-Bear Mountain Trail was marked with yellow blazes, the Ramapo-Dunderberg Trail used red blazes, the Timp-Torn Trail, blue blazes, and so on. The famous Appalachian Trail passes through the park and, back then, its blazes were white. I assume they still are.

To accommodate overnight hikers, the park built a number of stone lean-tos with raised fireplaces. This meant that hikers no longer had to carry a tent. The lean-tos were identified as *shelters* and were situated at various trailside locations throughout the park. I have never seen anything like them in the western mountains, but in the east, almost every mountain trail system is supported by a network of such lean-tos.

In the Ramapos, we hiked every inch of every trail and camped many times in each of the lean-tos. The typical weekend was a depart-Saturday-morning-return-Sunday-evening affair. Holiday weekends offered opportunities for three and four-day excursions and we would use these times to wander further afield.

We had decided to hike as much of the Appalachian Trail (AT) as possible. The northern terminus of the AT is the summit of Mt. Katahdin in Maine and, from there, it travels south for 2000 plus miles, winding through most of the ranges that comprise the Appalachian chain. The trail's

southern terminus is in Georgia. On the longer weekends we hiked the AT through the Kittatinnies, the Taconics and the Berkshires. In the summertime, we coordinated our vacations from school or work and went into the mountains for two weeks at a time. These expeditions enabled us to hike long stretches of the AT through the pine forests of Maine, the Green Mountains of Vermont, the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Great Smokey Mountains of Tennessee. Not every one of us was able to go on every hike, but some of us managed to complete, in this non-consecutive, piecemeal fashion, more than a third of the entire trail, from Mt. Katahdin south to where it crosses the Delaware Water Gap into Pennsylvania. To this, we also tacked on about 120 additional miles in Tennessee.

Another favorite destination for our longer trips, was upstate New York's Adirondack mountains and we went there whenever we weren't accumulating miles on the AT. In the Adirondacks, we had a totally different goal. There, we became *peak-baggers*, collecting mountain ascents as though they were merit badges. In the Adirondacks, there are 46 peaks over 4000 feet high and barely half of them have trails to the top. To reach the summits of the other half often requires difficult, cross-country bushwhacking, a tedious, back-breaking effort that effectively separates the dilettante from the true mountaineer. Those who have successfully climbed all 46 peaks are unofficially dubbed *forty-sixers* and they are considered to have earned major bragging rights.

Stash and I decided that it might be fun for us to embark on our own forty-sixer project. At that time, we had already climbed fifteen of the 46 and we didn't think that another 31 would be too hard to accomplish. We vowed to try, solemnly shook hands on it and, for the next twelve years (with time out for World War II) we traveled to the Adirondacks every chance we got, until finally, one gray, drizzly afternoon, we scrambled to the summit of our 46th peak! It was Seymour Mountain and we could scarcely believe we had finally done it!

Becoming a forty-sixer is an informal process. You don't register or apply for a permit. You simply go ahead and *do* it. Nor does anyone check up on you when you finish - - although they could if they wanted to. A waterproof container (a jar or a tobacco can or something similar) protecting a logbook and a pencil stub has been placed in a cairn at the top of each peak and every successful climber signs the log to informally register his or her ascent.. A friend recently gave me a list of the names of the Adirondack 46 and it triggered a wonderful rush of memories. Some of the climbs I remember very vividly, others have become fast-fading half-memories, while others still have slipped away into oblivion.

One ascent stands out in particular. I have forgotten the name of the peak, but it was one of the tougher bushwhackers. We had bullied our way to the summit only to find that there was no cairn and no log for us to verify that we had been there. We were crushed and disappointed and wondered if we had misread the map and gone up the wrong mountain. We desperately re-checked our maps and guidebooks, confirmed that we hadn't erred and concluded that since we were on the right mountain, something must have happened to the summit cairn. Not to be defeated, we signed the back of a matchbook cover, folded it into a small aspirin tin from our first aid kit, and placed it in a makeshift cairn we built with some nearby rocks. I sometimes wonder if it is still there.

The only time I tried the sport of rock climbing, was in the Adirondacks. Not too far from Mt. Marcy, there is a steep 1200 foot granite rock formation called Wall Face. Some hiking friends I had met in the Ramapos, were also serious rock climbers and had invited me to join them on a climb up the vertical face of this spectacular mountain. I was an absolute novice with next to no experience but, eager to learn climbing techniques, I jumped at the chance. When we arrived at the mountain, they gave me a few lessons and literally showed me the ropes. When they were satisfied that I posed no threat to either myself or to the rest of the party, we tackled the ascent. I found the climb difficult, but also exciting and exhilarating and we made it to the top without mishap. I had been third man on the rope and contributed little to the success of the climb. With the rope fastened securely around my waist, I merely followed the climber who preceded me and copied what he did. And, while I learned a lot about rock climbing and thoroughly enjoyed making it to the top, it didn't strike me as much of an accomplishment.

A short time later, however, I decided that I'd like to try it again and asked Bobby Sumpter, one of my Explorer Scout buddies, to accompany me on a two-man climb up the same mountain. Bobby had been dabbling with rock climbing too and he owned a rope and some other climbing gear, and he readily agreed. We scheduled the trip for an upcoming four-day 4th of July weekend and trained for it with a number of simple climbs in the Ramapos to practice rope techniques. It was a good thing we did. The truth is that neither one of us had enough training or experience to attempt a climb as imposing as Wall Face. We should have known better but we were young and invincible and there was no stopping us. Besides, I had already made the climb once before and supposedly knew all of the mountain's secrets.

As planned, we took the bus to the Adirondacks, hiked into the mountains and established our base camp at a lean-to near the Wall Face escarpment. On the day of the climb, we were up before the sun and silently gulped down a cold breakfast of trail mix and water. At first light, with the rope slung around Bobby's shoulders and pitons and hammers dangling noisily from both our belts, we set out for the rocky base of the mountain.

The first few *pitches* through the scree and up the cliff are fairly easy and we ascended quickly in the crisp morning air. It was a two-man climb, and we had decided to alternate the role of lead climber. At the outset, everything went as it was supposed to. Then, without warning, the unthinkable occurred. We were about half-way up the wall, Bobby was leading and I was *on-belay*. I was securely anchored on a narrow ledge, slowly playing out the rope as Bobby climbed above me. He had gone about fifteen feet, when I heard the gut-wrenching sound of tearing rock. I looked up and was horrified to see Bobby falling. He had used a small rock slab as a handhold but it was unable to bear his weight. The slab ripped off the mountain, taking Bobby with it. He literally bounced off my belay ledge and continued to fall down the sheer rock face with nothing between him and the jagged rocks below but me and a length of nylon rope.

For a split second, I was dumbstruck and unable to fully grasp the reality of what was happening. I needed to do something. But what? I had secured my end of the rope around me in the approved belay fashion, so all I could do was plant my feet firmly, brace my body, dig in, and pray the severe jolt that would surely come when Bobby reached the end of his line, didn't pull me off the mountain too. As Bobby fell, the rope moved quickly through my hands. Instinctively, I tightened my fingers around the rope and hoped that it would retard the speed of Bobby's free-fall. It did. There was an audible thw-a-a-ang and I felt a sudden, powerful jerk on the rope. The shock created a powerful downward thrust which almost lifted me off my feet, but I held fast. Bobby had

stopped falling. From my belay position, I could see over the lip of the ledge. Careful not to disturb my safety stance, I looked down and saw Bobby: he hung suspended, swaying in the air, dangling from his end of the rope like a yo-yo.

I stared in disbelief, then shouted down to ask if he had been hurt. For what seemed an eternity, there was an ominous silence. Then I heard him shout back that he guessed he was O.K. and that he thought he might be able to reach out, grasp another handhold and re-establish himself on the mountain. I was firmly situated and well-entrenched, so I urged him to go ahead. Like a pendulum, he swung himself toward the side of the mountain and, on the second or third try, managed to grab hold of a jutting rock and pull himself back onto the precipitous wall. He gingerly located a couple of footholds and he was back on the mountain. He clung there for a moment, then slowly clambered back up the steep face to join me. When he finally pulled himself back onto the belay ledge, we both breathed a nervous sigh of relief.

We assessed our situation and checked for damage. Bobby had been stunned, but only momentarily. The breath had been knocked out of him and he was still a bit woozy, but otherwise seemed to be in good shape. He hadn't even lost his glasses which he always taped to his temples when climbing. Although I was hyperventilating and still shaking from tension-release, I too seemed to have escaped without injury. Except for my right hand. When I had tightened my fingers around the fast-moving rope, it seared through the skin and cut into a ligament in the ring finger of my right hand. They call it rope burn and I still carry the scar.

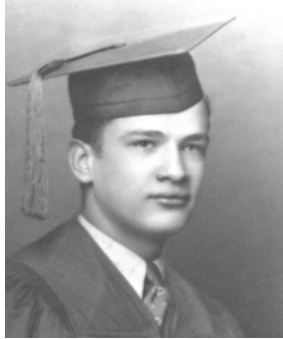
After resting for another ten minutes or so, we decided we'd had enough of Wall Face for one day and aborted the climb. We rapelled down the mountain, hiked back to our camp and spent the rest of the day counting our blessings. We realized that we had been incredibly lucky. It had been a close call and we were glad that we had spent all that time practicing rope handling in the Ramapos. Neither one of us ever went rock climbing again.

Over the years, our hiking group mastered all of the standard backpacking/woodcraft skills and even invented a few of our own. We became light weight fanatics and, even on our longest trips, we tried to keep our packs under twenty-five pounds. We usually succeeded! Some said it was carrying things too far when we cut off half of our toothbrush handles or cut away the margins of our topo maps, but we knew that ounces added up to pounds and we eliminated every bit of unnecessary weight, no matter how infinitesimal, whenever and wherever we could.

We experimented with the new ultra-lightweight dehydrated foods which had just come on the market after World War II, and we tried new kinds of gear and equipment. We used miner's carbide lamps because they were lighter than flashlights and produced more light. We preferred to make our own cooking pots by attaching wire bails to empty coffee cans. They weighed less than standard mess gear and you threw them away when the hike was over. We discovered that an old pillowcase filled with half-inflated balloons weighed far less than a hiker's air mattress and was just as comfortable.

Clearly, backpacking had been an all-consuming hobby for our adventuresome little band. Our interest began in 1935 or 1936 when we were youngsters entering our teens. It evolved into an abiding passion and continued unabated until the early 1950's, a time when most of us got married, started families and pursued our separate careers. We all went into military service during World War II and, in retrospect, I am amazed that our devotion to the sport remained unaffected. If anything, our enthusiasm increased. Upon our return from the military, we hung away our uniforms, dusted off our hiking gear and headed back into the mountains at every opportunity. It's a shame we

lost touch with each other. It is also likely that my best friend Stash isn't the only one who has passed away. I am absolutely certain, however, that those who are alive still remember our many hikes as fondly as I do. They were happy times and we'll never see their like again



HIGH SCHOOL GRAD - 1939



1947



1948



1949

SGT. PETERS (1942-1946)

If you put a uniform on a soldier, he remains a soldier. Put a uniform on a civilian, he remains a civilian but he'll be a problem because he thinks he's a soldier.

(General George S. Patton)

I wish I could say that the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 so enraged my patriotic sensibilities that I ran to the nearest Army recruiting office and volunteered. But that would be a lie. It never happened! I joined the Army voluntarily during the Second World War, but patriotism had nothing to do with it. The truth is that my local Selective Service Board assigned draftees directly into the Infantry, while those who enlisted voluntarily were allowed to serve in the military branch of their choice. I knew that if I didn't volunteer, it would only be a matter of time before they drafted me and the Infantry was the last place I wanted to spend the war. And so, in 1942, I enlisted in the Army Air Corps.

For basic training, they sent me to the most unlikely place imaginable: Miami Beach, Florida. It was true that the Air Corps shamelessly flaunted its elitist reputation, but this was beyond belief. Instead of barracks and pup tents, I was billeted in a fancy tourist hotel and I practiced close-order drill on the green, well-tended lawns of a high-priced golf course. My good pal, Stash, ignoring both my advice and my example, hung back and waited to be drafted. He wound up in the Infantry where he slept in muddy trenches and took basic training in a dismal Georgia swamp called Fort Benning.

It felt strange at the time and it seems even stranger today, but I officially spent a part of my military service in a German uniform! It was completely legitimate. I had only been in Miami Beach for a week when I received special orders. Apparently someone had discovered that I spoke fluent German and without so much as an interview or a test of any kind, they hustled me off to spy school. I was dumbfounded!

The school was located at a place called Camp Ritchie in Maryland. Situated between Baltimore and Washington, D. C., its primary mission was to train spies. I hadn't been there twenty minutes when I realized that not only did all the other students in my group speak fluent German, they spoke it as I did, without the slightest trace of an American accent. We learned what they had in mind for us at our first orientation meeting: Upon completion of our training, we would be flown to a Royal Air Force base in England. Then, dressed in German Army uniforms, we'd be parachuted behind enemy lines where we would pretend to be German soldiers who had been separated from our units. Presumably, we would then be allowed to roam around the countryside and radio back information about troop movements, weapons locations, or whatever other useful information we might stumble upon.

The school's curriculum was specifically designed to transform us into believable German soldiers. From the moment we entered the program, we were only allowed to speak German. Anyone

caught speaking English was given extra duty and suffered loss of privileges. To acquaint us with the life of a German soldier, they built an exact replica of a German military post and we lived inside it. It was an elaborate cocoon in which everything was 100% German. We slept in German barracks; we ate German food in a German mess hall; we wore German uniforms and we were each issued our own **Soldbuch** (a German soldier's basic personnel record). Current German newspapers and magazines were everywhere; German tanks and German autos were the only vehicles allowed on Camp Ritchie's streets. I had never in my life handled a gun before, yet I was issued a large Luger pistol which I had to wear at all times in a holster strapped around my waist. There was even a German style PX where we could buy German cigarettes and German **bon bons**. It had a jukebox that only played German records.

One of our first homework assignments was to invent a plausible but completely fictitious personal history describing where we were born, where we were raised, and where we had gone to school. We were also required to create an imaginary family, complete with names, ages, occupations and relationships. And the more details we provided, the better they liked it. It was all very exciting.

I had undergone about a week or so of training when, one afternoon during a class where we practiced eating in the European manner (your fork never leaves your left hand), I was summoned to the Commandant's office where they told me that I had been dropped from the school. They had discovered that although I could read hand-written messages in **die Deutsche Schrift**, a unique and traditional style of German handwriting, I was unable to write them myself. It was a major shortcoming and it mandated my immediate disqualification from further training.

Because it wasn't anything I'd be likely to use in Brooklyn, my parents neglected to teach me how to write in the old-fashioned way. My instructors, however, contended that an agent behind enemy lines needed the ability to both read **and** write in the German Script, if for no other reason but to avoid calling attention to himself.

And so, my brief but untested career as a spy ended before it began. Two days later, I was back in Florida and wearing an American uniform. I rejoined my basic training group and, once again, stood ready to withstand the rigors of Miami Beach. All of this happened nearly sixty years ago and I still speculate if my life would have turned out differently if my parents had decided to teach me how to write in the time-honored German style.

When I finished my basic training, somebody must have concluded that I had clerical aptitudes and, once again, I was packed off to school, this time to be trained in Air Corps administrative procedures. For this school, the Air Corps used the facilities a small college located in Brookings, South Dakota. I recall very little about it except that it had a beautiful campus. A tall campanile stood in the center of the school grounds and they rang the tower bell to tell us when our classes began and when they ended.

When I graduated the course, I was officially designated an Army Clerk and I received my first military posting: an assignment with the Air Corps' Aircraft Warning Unit Training Center (AWUTC). The Center was located at Drew Field near Tampa, Florida and I remained there for the next two years. The Center operated schools designed to train soldiers in a wide range of technical occupations including radar equipment operators, radar repairmen, and a number of related jobs.

I was now nineteen years old, still green behind the ears, and this assignment was my first real job. I became a **Classification Specialist**, which is a kind of military employment counselor. The AWUTC mission was to provide its trainees with a technical specialty. My unit was responsible

for the first step in the process: we administered aptitude tests, conducted interviews, and recommended an appropriate training program for each individual student. We also documented the entire procedure with reams of paper work.

Film actor Don Taylor was a fellow classification specialist and occupied the cubicle adjoining mine. He had just signed with MGM when he was drafted. I was with him when he received his orders to report to a Broadway theater to begin rehearsals for the upcoming Air Corps show called *Winged Victory*. Directed by Elia Kazan, the show was a big hit on Broadway. It eventually went on a national tour and was later made into a very successful movie.

Another popular film actor-turned-soldier assigned to AWUTC was Jeffrey Lynn. At the time, he was married to the well-known MGM actress and singer, Kathryn Grayson. She often flew to Florida to spend a weekend with her husband. I met them both at a St. Petersburg beach party. I vaguely remember Jeffrey Lynn grousing about why they had cast Don Taylor in *Winged Victory* when he (Lynn) was the better actor.

And while I'm name-dropping, I should also mention that I once dated the sister of Dana Andrews, who was, at that time, a well-known contract player at Fox. I met his sister when they sent me to Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville, Texas to attend another Army administrative school. The college held weekly dances for the servicemen and she was my date at one of them. Her name was Mary Andrews and she was the quintessential Southern Belle. She taught me that in the south, *damnyankee* was one word and that it wasn't necessarily a derogatory term. She claimed, in fact, that *I was just the handsomest damnyankee* she had ever met!

It probably isn't fair to say that the Army introduced me to alcohol, but it certainly provided innumerable opportunities for me to practice drinking. I know that my long-time preference for scotch got its start while I was stationed at Drew Field.

I forget what we were celebrating, but an Army buddy and I had each gotten a weekend pass and had made plans to go out on the town together. We arranged to meet at a popular Tampa hotel bar and I had gotten there about an hour early. It was roughly four in the afternoon and I was the only customer. With the nonchalant air of a suave man-about-town (which I had diligently practiced on the bus trip into Tampa), I casually ordered a Manhattan cocktail. I had absolutely no idea of what went into a Manhattan cocktail, but I had often seen them ordered in the movies and I thought this might be a good time for me to learn. I later looked it up and found that a Manhattan consisted of two parts rye, one part red vermouth and a dash of bitters.

The bartender raised a querulous eyebrow, sighed a weary mine-is-not-to-reason-why sigh, and fixed my drink. Then he garnished it with a bright green cherry. Now, at this tender point in my cloistered life, I had never even seen a green cherry, let alone taste one. Nor had I ever heard about artificial food coloring. This was an entirely new experience for me. That ridiculous green cherry resting so innocently at the bottom of my Manhattan, disturbed me. Was it really a cherry? What did it taste like? I quickly gulped down the reddish liquid so that I could find out for myself! I was both relieved and disappointed to discover that it tasted exactly like every other maraschino cherry I had ever eaten. But I couldn't let it rest. Whoever heard of a green cherry? In a well-ordered world, cherries were red and anything else was intolerable. I had to check it out again. I ordered another Manhattan, then another, and another one after that. The cherries grew even greener! I no longer recall exactly how many Manhattans I had consumed when I heard my buddy's voice behind me. *Hey Pete!*, it said.

I was sitting at the bar on a swivel stool and, as I wheeled around to respond, the momentum

propelled me right off the stool and I slumped to the floor in an unsightly heap. My face had acquired a sickly pallor that was even greener than the color of those damned cherries. My stomach felt funny and my head was spinning. My buddy and the bartender recognized my symptoms immediately and, grasping me firmly under each arm, carried me out the back door where, in a lurching series of heaving spasms, I threw up everything I had ingested for the past several days - - including all those incongruously green cherries!

Later that weekend, I was nursing a hangover the size of Mt. Haleakela and my buddy, an older, wiser fellow, sagely observed that my malaise had nothing to do with green cherries but was exclusively due to an excess of rye whiskey. He suggested that I would have experienced no problems had I been drinking scotch whiskey and that not only would scotch have provided a warmer, more enjoyable buzz, it wouldn't have given me a hangover; nor would it have made me sick. It was sound advice and I took him at his word. I have been a confirmed scotch drinker ever since. And I have never had another hangover.

My assignment at Drew Field was a great way to spend the first two-thirds of the war. The job was easy, on occasion, even interesting. And while most G.I.'s were digging foxholes in Europe or the Pacific, I was stationed in sunny Florida and safely out of harm's way. I earned promotions and worked my way up to Buck Sergeant. I received many three-day passes and spent them loafing on the nearby beaches of St. Petersburg or watching the Ringling Bros. circus practice in their Sarasota winter quarters. I was also given regular furloughs. I had gone back home to visit my parents, as well as to enjoy the special benefits that New York City offered to servicemen in uniform: the Stage Door Canteen, free Broadway theater tickets, preferential treatment at some of the city's well-known jazz clubs and a host of similar niceties.

It was on one such New York furlough that I discovered how much I enjoyed jazz. The musical tastes and preferences of most people are formed in their teens and, like most of my contemporaries in the late 1930s and early 1940s, I thoroughly enjoyed the music played by the jazz-inspired big bands. I was especially fond of the groups led by Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Gene Krupa, Harry James and a number of others. I bought their records, played them on juke boxes, listened to them on the radio and saw them in the movies. I also saw them *in person* when they headlined the stage shows at the Paramount and Strand theaters in Time Square. It wasn't until I joined the Army, however, that I came to recognize that what I really enjoyed about Big Band music was its jazz origins and influences.

That came about quite by accident. A fellow Drew Field Classification Specialist named Dick Pecheur was, like me, a New Yorker. He came from a wealthy family who lived on Manhattan's lower Fifth Avenue and, on one occasion, our furloughs happened to coincide. Since we were both going to be in New York, he suggested we spend a social evening together club-hopping around Greenwich village. It sounded like fun and I quickly agreed. One of the places he took me to was Nick's, a world renowned bastion of Dixieland Jazz. It was the first time I had ever heard live Dixieland and I was completely blown away. The music was fierce and uninhibited, wildly unpredictable yet always creative and continuously surprising. Its spirited ensemble style absolutely mesmerized me. I no longer recall who was on the bandstand that night, but they made an indelible impression.. I became a life-long, hard-core jazz fan on the spot!.

Thus far, I had been most fortunate in my military assignments and, while I counted my blessings, I also knew it couldn't last. Inevitably, there came a fateful day when I suddenly found myself out of the Air Corps and officially transferred into an Infantry Rifle Company. They told us it

had something to do with the Battle of the Bulge or with some other American reverses in France but, in the winter of 1944, there suddenly arose a pressing need for additional infantry forces in the European Theater. To provide them, it became necessary for the Army to retread as many soldiers as possible - - to reassign them to the Infantry, put them through an accelerated re-training program, and send them overseas as quickly as possible. I was one of those retreads. I was transferred out of the Air Corps, sent to Camp Gordon, Georgia for a hasty Infantry refresher course and some last-minute rifle practice. Six weeks later, I found myself toting a 60lb. pack and an M-1 rifle onto a troopship bound for Europe.

In Europe, I was assigned to the famous 4th Division, a much decorated fighting unit with a long, proud history of success in battle. They had been a part of the Normandy Invasion and had participated in the D-Day landings. I joined them shortly after they had crossed the Rhine River near Aachen. I was assigned to a foot-slogging rifle company but when Division Headquarters learned that I was fluent in German, those orders were summarily canceled and I was promptly attached to Division HQ as a translator. It turned out to be another great assignment. I had finally gotten a military job where I could use my bi-lingual skills.

At that time, the 4th Division was battling its way east across Europe and was moving forward at the rate of a few miles every day. The front line troops captured new territory, secured it and moved forward again, while the rear echelons, including Division HQ, followed about a day or so behind. We moved into a new town every two or three days and it became my job to precede the HQ Company and pave the way for their arrival. I was the Advance Man and it was my job to liaison with the local German community and through them, provide for the special needs of the General Staff and the Headquarters cadre that supported them.

I still hadn't learned to drive so I was assigned a jeep and a driver and we entered a town as soon as it had been declared safe by the mop-up troops. I had a checklist of four high priority items that needed to be accomplished in each new location: Priority One was to arrange with the priests and pastors of the local churches to allow our military clergy to use the local facilities for their own Sunday services. Second, I had to find the best possible billets for the Division General and his staff. These were usually villas or large manor houses or, in some cases, castles. Third, I had to inform the town's *Burgomeister* and his subordinates that we expected them to prepare the town for a weapons search. Every house in every town was searched for weapons before Headquarters Company moved in and I went along as translator to make certain there were no communication problems and that everyone knew what was expected.

My fourth and final responsibility was to locate and *liberate* the contents of all of the town's wine cellars. This, of course, was the part of the assignment I enjoyed most. Unfortunately, I didn't know then what I know about wines today and I am certain I must have allowed some truly premium vintages slip through my fingers. The General had the Division motor pool build a small trailer rig that attached to the rear of my jeep. It was specifically constructed to carry a maximum number of wine bottles and to insure that the General's table never lacked for wine.

I drank some of the wines myself but I don't recall that I enjoyed them all that much. In those days, my palate was still untrained and, while I must have encountered some excellent French vintages, I wasn't ready to appreciate them. I remember striking a deal with one company commander to trade his scotch ration of one bottle per month for his choice of wines. At the time, I felt I had the best of the bargain. Now, I'm not so sure!

These were exceptional times and, in my role as the Division translator, I had a rare

opportunity to observe the complexities of human interaction during wartime. It was especially fascinating for me to compare the attitudes of the defeated Germans to the victorious posture of the conquering Americans. Some of the Germans were shamefaced and apologetic, others remained fiercely defiant, but most of them, while somewhat sullen and resigned, were already planning how to pull themselves out of the rubble. The American demeanor was equally diverse: some G.I.'s were mean-spirited and vengeful, others were sympathetic and accepting, but most chose to have as little to do with the Germans as possible. It was as if they were invisible; as if they didn't exist.

The Allied and the Russian forces had been rushing toward each other across Europe and they both hoped to be the first to occupy Berlin. Along the way, each side encountered and liberated a number of concentration camps and prisoner-of-war compounds. Conditions in these camps were filthy and squalid and it turned our stomachs to see how the Germans treated those whom they perceived to be enemies or undesirables.

Our Division freed one prisoner-of-war camp where we discovered a group of British soldiers who had been captured in Greece in 1938 and had been incarcerated by the Germans for the past six years. They would never have endured the unbelievable hardships they had suffered were it not for the iron will and unflappable determination of their leader, a very proper and exceedingly military Sgt. Major Jensen.

The Sgt. Major was a strict disciplinarian and had kept a tight rein on his men throughout their six-year internment. A British soldier is trained to ask the permission his Sgt. Major for just about anything and everything and, after watching him in action, I am convinced that the primary reason these Brits remained indomitable and had never surrendered their spirit to the Germans, is that they hadn't received permission from their Sgt. Major to do so.

The 4th Division operated an excellent field kitchen and they prepared a special dinner for the Sgt. Major and his men. After 6 years of nothing but stale bread, slop and potato soup, our food must have seemed incredibly sumptuous to the Brits. They came through our chow line under the Sgt. Major's watchful eye. He repeatedly used his riding crop (he actually had one!) to point to a sign which was permanently affixed to one of the field kitchen tables. It proclaimed the exhortation that every G. I. since World War II has seen in a thousand different mess halls: ***Take All You Want But Eat All You Take!***. Understandably, the Brits found it difficult to resist temptation and they piled their trays high with food, taking far more than they could possibly eat. Later, when they were having difficulty finishing their meal, the Sgt. Major came through again, this time tapping each soldier's tray with his riding crop and demanding, ***Eat-Tit-tup! Eat-Tit-up! Eat-tit-Tawl-Up!***

The Allies and Russians finally met in the spring of 1945 and the war in Europe came to an end. The 4th Division was slated to return home immediately where they were due to quickly retrain for action in the Pacific Theater. Before they left, however, I was temporarily reassigned, this time on loan to the American Military Government (AMG).

The AMG was a group that had been hastily put together at war's end. Its function was to re-establish and administer the German economy and restore a democratic form of self government to the towns and cities located in the American Sector of what was to become a divided Germany. I had been assigned to AMG because of my language skills and it apparently also rated a promotion because the same orders that transferred me to AMG, promoted me to the rank of Technical Sergeant.

The immediate priority of AMG was to restore the German economy: to get its farms and non-military factories operating again. This required manpower and finding that manpower was

AMG's first major task. The overwhelming majority of German males were currently locked up in the hundreds of Prisoner-of-War Camps that were scattered throughout the Sector. Since it was easy to get lost amid the throngs of captured German prisoners who occupied these P.O.W. cages, they were also the best hiding places for those German war criminals who were still at large.

I was part of a team of interviewers who went from cage to cage and talked to each prisoner individually to determine if they might be eligible for release. Our job was twofold: first, to determine each P.O.W.'s occupational skills and, second, to discover if there was anything in their background that might warrant prosecution as a war criminal. The first was easy, the second, next to impossible!

We were issued a prioritized list of desperately needed occupations. Farmers and machine shop specialists were especially in demand. It was fairly easy for us to determine if a prisoner was a farmer or a skilled worker, but to discover whether he had been a member of the SS, or if he had been a Nazi party *Gauleiter*, or worse, was another matter!

In an effort to discover the truth, we would sometimes resort to trickery and subterfuge. For example, we would never ask, *Were you a member of the S.S.?* Instead, we'd ask, *How long were you in the S.S.?*; or we'd make some deliberately insulting comment like, *You don't really expect me to believe that you actually earned the rank of S.S. Kapitän, do you?* Surprisingly, our apparent disdain so offended some suspects, that they'd energetically defend the validity of their rank, forgetting for the moment that any defense at all was enough to confirm our suspicions.

Sometimes, when we suspected that a particular P.O.W. was less than truthful, we'd take him into a separate interview room where two of us would *double team* him. Because my English was unaccented, I'd act the part of the American Officer-in-Charge who understood no German. My partner would conduct the interview and, for my supposed benefit, translate everything that was said. The idea was to convince the P.O.W. that I neither spoke or understood German so that I would be able, at some strategic point in the proceedings, to unexpectedly turn on him and, in perfect *Hochdeutsch*, let loose a relentless stream of accusations and invective. We hoped, of course, that he'd be taken unawares and be so surprised at my sudden ability to speak and understand German that the shock would produce a confession.

Oddly enough, such tactics were occasionally effective. I strongly suspect, however, that despite our best efforts, our strategies failed far more often than they succeeded. We must have released many Germans who were guilty of war crimes and who should have been prosecuted. Nevertheless, it was an exciting assignment and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

About a month after V-E Day (Victory-in-Europe), it was announced that the 4th Division would be shipped back to the U.S. to be retrained for action in the Pacific. This terminated my temporary AMG assignment and I rejoined the Division HQ Company in time to catch the ship that took us home. Upon our arrival in New York, they gave us all a brief furlough, after which we reported for duty at Camp Butner, N.C., Camp Butner was near Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I became an Administrative Assistant to the Division Adjutant General and, for a time, served as the Division Classification Officer, a post usually held by a Captain.

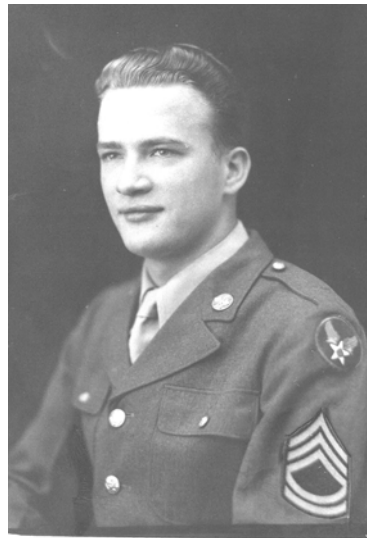
We had just begun our Pacific training program, when they dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Japan surrendered and the war was over. Demobilization began shortly thereafter and, after three and one-half years in the Army, I received my Honorable Discharge in February, 1946. I returned home to Brooklyn and became a civilian once again.

I left the service with mixed emotions. On the one hand, I had grown to really hate the military lifestyle. Military discipline was stifling and restrictive. I chafed under the cookie-cutter mentality that wearing a uniform encouraged and felt that the Army inhibited creativity and original thinking. I also hated the absolute authority that military rank bestowed and resented the power it gave one person over another.

On the other hand, my service in the Army was a fantastic time in my young life and I had, in fact, greatly profited from the experience. Although it was wartime, I had never been in any serious danger. The Army taught me a number of useful skills and involved me in many new and exciting adventures. It was the first time I was allowed to travel and see something of the world, both in the U.S. and abroad. And perhaps most important of all, the Army taught me how to stand on my own two feet. It sounds corny, but the Army made a man of me. It transformed a callow and inexperienced boy into a relatively confident and self-sufficient young man. For me, the Army was a major rite of passage.



1943



1945

PETE (1946 -1951)
PETER STONE (1946 -1948)

*When Johnny comes marching home
again, Hurrah, Hurrah
We'll take him a cup o' kindness then,
Hurrah, Hurrah
(Civil War Folk Song)*

In some respects, my life immediately after the war was identical to what it had been before I joined the Army. I lived at home with my parents, I occupied my old room at the Van Buren Street house, I had reconnected with my pre-war friends, all of whom had come back safely from the war, and I was once again spending as much time as possible backpacking and hiking the mountain trails.

In other ways, however, my life changed dramatically. For one thing, I had decided to become an actor. Ever since I can remember, I have identified with actors and on-stage performers. As a kid, I was captivated by the movies and envied the flickering figures I saw on the screen. As a young teen-ager, I saw live vaudeville during its last days and the artistry of the players impressed me greatly. I still recall with pleasure one particular two-a-day at the Folly Theater near Myrtle Avenue in Brooklyn. I have long since forgotten the names of the other acts, but the headliner was **Professor Lamberti**, a popular comedian who also played the xylophone. They all performed their magic and I was transported.

Old-time burlesque also delighted me. Like vaudeville, it too would soon disappear but, in the late 1930s, a few **burly** houses still operated in the Times Square area. I especially remember the Eltinge, the Gaiety and Billy Minsky's and, along with many other New York high school students, I occasionally cut classes in order to catch one of their raunchy shows. To be sure, it was the long-legged strippers and their jiggly bosoms that drew me into the theater, but I always came away impressed by the slapstick of the rambunctious comics and their straight men.

It was on a field trip with my high school English class that my view of performing artists changed from admiration to ambition. It was 1938, I was fifteen years old, and they took us to see a Federal Theater Project performance of **Dr. Faustus** that had been directed by Orson Welles. It was the first time I had ever seen a Broadway play and I was mesmerized! Welles played the title role with audacity and his direction was outrageously flamboyant. It was a brilliant version of the Marlowe classic, full of imaginative stagecraft and superbly acted. It literally took my breath away. More and more, I caught myself daydreaming about what it would be like to be an actor.

I saw many plays after **Dr. Faustus**, both on and off Broadway, and each show convinced me even more that I wanted to be on the stage. I put the notion aside during World War II, but it lay dormant in the back of my mind for the entire time I was in the Army.

My last military assignment was at Camp Butner and was located near the University of North Carolina. UNC had an excellent Drama Department as well as a production company called The Carolina Playmakers. I saw a couple of their shows shortly before I received my discharge.

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and Vincent Carroll's *The White Steed*. Suddenly thoughts of becoming an actor resurfaced. This time, however, it was more than wishful thinking. Congress had recently announced that there would be a G.I. Bill of Rights for the purpose of providing school tuition for returning World War II veterans. For the first time, I allowed myself to think that maybe becoming an actor might be feasible after all. Weren't the Carolina Playmakers simply a group of student actors training for a theatrical career? And wouldn't the G.I. Bill make it possible for me to do the same? By the time I returned to New York and received my formal discharge, I had definitely made up my mind: I would go to school and study acting!

When I told my parents about my plans, they were less than pleased, but I would not be dissuaded. I stood firm. Like it or not, I was going to study acting and nothing they could say or do was going to change my mind. There were many heated arguments but, in the end, they had no choice but to accept my decision.

At the first opportunity, I arranged for my G.I. Bill benefits and promptly enrolled at The New School for Social Research, one of the best known New York drama schools of that time. The program was directed by Erwin Piscator, a famous exiled German actor and teacher and he was assisted by Stella Adler, an equally well known actress and coach. Both were disciples of the Russian drama guru, Constantin Stanislavski, whose teaching theories would later serve as the basis for the technique known as Method Acting. The curriculum consisted of classes in Emotional Truth, Movement and Relaxation, Stage Presence, Character Development, Stagecraft and other related courses. The program included numerous improvisational acting workshops.

Most classes were held in the evenings so that students could attend theatrical casting calls during the day. At that time, many more Broadway and Off-Broadway shows were produced than are produced today and we were encouraged to attend as many as possible. Audition notices (known as *cattle calls*) regularly appeared on the school's bulletin boards and I tried out for some of them. To me, Broadway auditions were demeaning and degrading and I hated everything about them.

No matter how small the part, the competition was unbelievable. Hundreds of talented actors - - some even brilliant - - tried out for every role. The casting people were rude and inconsiderate and most of the competitors treated each other with hostility and suspicion. I felt insecure, out of place and utterly defenseless. I suspect the reason the school encouraged its students to undergo these tortures was to expose them to the unglamorous side of the profession and to let them experience, first hand, how uncompromisingly brutal it can sometimes be.

Despite of my lack of confidence, I was cast in two Off-Broadway plays. I had small parts in *The Silver Tassie* and *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, both produced by a group of actors calling themselves *The Interplayers*. The shows played only on weekends and used a tiny makeshift theater in Greenwich Village. Each play ran for about four weekends and I was paid \$5.00 for each performance. It was considered dinner money and subway fare.

There were, in addition, quite a few Off-Off-Off Broadway production companies operating at that time and I managed to land occasional roles with one or two of them. Some of these groups had strong left-of-center political leanings and they produced what are known as *agit-prop* or message shows. They were, for the most part, strictly seat-of-the-pants operations and they put on their plays wherever they could find an audience: in storefront theaters, public parks, and even on the backs of trucks. Personally, I was more concerned with acting than politics and I took the parts mainly for the experience. It was the era of the McCarthy Hearings and, very early on, most of us were advised to change our stage names. I became Peter Stone.

I had been a part of the theatrical life for several months when I had second thoughts about a theatrical career. I felt strangely unfulfilled. Had I made the right choice? Is this really what I wanted? While there was much about acting I enjoyed, there was also, I discovered, much about the *profession* of acting I found unpleasant and distasteful. I had done well in my classes and usually held my own in the improvisations, but I was much troubled by the insecurity of the audition process. It had become clear to me that success as an actor depends more on luck and happenstance than it does on talent and ability. The field is enormously overcrowded and there is absolutely no job security. I learned that most professional actors were unemployed most of the time and, when they did work, they were paid very little. I am not the kind of person who can endure frequent rejection and perpetual uncertainty. In those days, I needed at least some control over the progress of my career and I was far too pragmatic to entrust my future to a small group of uncaring casting directors. It was not a happy prospect.

After some serious soul searching, I quit the New School at the end of my first semester. While I might try out for an occasional show and take a role if it was offered, it would be strictly as a hobby and nothing more. I completely gave up the idea of seriously pursuing a theatrical career. Besides, I needed a regular income and it was evident that I couldn't count on acting jobs to provide it.

By and large, it had been an interesting experience. For a brief period, I had taken part in a creative endeavor and done things I had never done before. I had been an active participant in a world that most people never see. There were times when my fellow students and I were invited to theatrical parties where I met such New School graduates as Marlon Brando, Tony Francioso, Wally Cox and Maureen Stapleton, as well as various other luminaries including Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, Jack Palance and Lee Grant. That was fun and I abandoned it reluctantly.

But what now? I knew I needed a job to support myself, but this time it was important to find a job that offered some kind of career opportunity, not merely one that paid enough money to cover my immediate expenses. My experience in the Army had shown me that I was adept at personnel work and that I enjoyed writing reports and handling organizational and administrative details. This suggested a career in business. The Army had also shown me that I had little technical or mechanical aptitude and that my talents ran along more creative and artistic lines.

After checking the want-ads and registering with a number of employment agencies, I had a feeling that I might be qualified for a job as an employment agency counselor. The work seemed very close to my former job as an Air Corps Classification Specialist. It involved many skills with which I was already familiar, such as aptitude testing, interviewing, occupational counseling, matching the right person to the right job - - all functions I had performed as part of my Drew Field assignment. I mentioned this to my counselor at the New York State Employment Service (NYSES) and he informed me that his agency was currently recruiting trainees. I thought it couldn't hurt to apply so I filled out the appropriate civil service forms, took some tests and was interviewed several times. I was hired shortly thereafter and began working for the NYSES in late 1946.

Not too long after I began working, I started night school. I applied guidance counseling techniques to my own situation and concluded that a career in advertising might be a good place for me to combine my business and artistic skills. I took some night courses in Advertising at Pace Business College. From information I obtained at NYSES, however, I learned that most entry-level jobs in advertising required a full four-year college degree, so I left Pace and enrolled in the night school Business program at New York University's downtown campus.

I completed my on-the-job training at the NYSES and became a full-fledged employment counselor specializing in the placement of business occupations: typists, secretaries, stenographers, file clerks, bookkeepers, receptionists, and the like. In the beginning, it was an interesting job and I especially enjoyed the opportunities it provided for people-to-people interaction. I did the job well enough but after a few years, it became fairly routine and it no longer challenged me. But on the whole I was making progress. I was working; I was going to school; and I still had a little time left over for backpacking on the weekends. Things were looking good! I now also had time to make good on a promise I made to myself while I was in the Army. I needed to learn how to drive a car.

I was 27 years old and, like many New Yorkers of my generation, had never found it necessary to own a car. Why bother? New York traffic was horrendous, parking impossible and New York drivers were not only the rudest in the world, they were also the most dangerous. In addition, New York's subways, *els*, trolleys and buses represented the most extensive mass transit system of any city in the world. And in those pre-token days, it was also the cheapest. For a nickel you could ride from one end of the city to the other (if you didn't count Staten Island). Owning a car in New York would have been more trouble than it was worth.

When I went into the Army, I not only didn't know how to drive, I wasn't particularly interested in learning how. I changed my mind, however, when I found that most soldiers my age had been driving for years and I felt inadequate. I therefore promised myself that, after the war, I would learn to drive as soon as I could.

One of my backpacking buddies, Sonny Kallman, owned a car and was planning to buy a different one. But he first needed to sell the car he had. It was a 1934 Model T Ford convertible and he offered to sell it to any one of our group for \$75.00. The car had seen better days but it ran well and it seemed a perfect vehicle to use for driving lessons. Three of us, Stash, Billy Kruse and myself, made Sonny a counter-offer: we would each chip in \$25.00, become partners and buy the car, but he would have to teach us all how to drive. He agreed, the deal was struck, and a month later, we all had drivers' licenses and a one-third interest in an old model T Ford.

We didn't own the car for long. Sonny had taught us how to drive a car but hadn't told us anything about automobile maintenance. We weren't aware, for example, that the engine would burn itself out if it lost all its oil and that you had to check the oil with reasonable regularity so that you could replace whatever had leaked away or burned up. Our car burned a lot of oil but, since we never checked, we never knew it and it wasn't long before its oil had completely disappeared. One day the engine froze and that was the end of that. The car wasn't worth fixing and we simply junked it. We had learned an important lesson and we had learned it the hard way.

For me, the postwar era was relatively comfortable. While my job was drifting toward dullness, I managed to satisfy my creative spirit in other ways. I did a lot of backpacking; I acted in an occasional Off-Off Broadway play; and I listened to jazz whenever I had the chance. I couldn't afford to visit Manhattan's jazz clubs too often but, every now and then, I splurged. I especially liked the great Dixieland at Nick's and Eddie Condon's club in Greenwich Village and I visited some of the jazz joints on 52nd St. I also attended the inexpensive Friday night jam sessions that were put on at a couple of Lower East side venues, Central Plaza and Stuyvesant Casino. They featured top flight jazzmen, charged \$1.25 to get in and you could buy a pitcher of beer for a buck. It was the best bargain in town.

It was about this time that I started my collection of jazz records. I learned that a couple of my co-workers at the NYSES were also jazz aficionados. They had been holding record sessions at

each other's homes and when they heard that I was interested in the music, They invited me to attend their next get-together. They worked in an interesting way. The host chose a theme and illustrated it with records from his own collection. It could be a jazz style, or a certain period of jazz history; a particular soloist or recording group, or some similar *motif*. I enjoyed these sessions very much but, since my own collection was still in its embryonic stages, I wasn't able to reciprocate until much later and by then it was too late. I had left the NYSES and moved to California.



THE REHEARSAL
(OFF BROADWAY - 1949)



OPEN SECRET
(OFF BROADWAY - 1947)

BETTY (1948-1951)

*To change your looks, change your hat;
to change your mood, change your mind;
to change your prospects, change your
location....*

(Katharine Hepburn)

I have sometimes commented, ***The big joke in our family is that Betty came to New York to find her fortune - - but found me instead***. And, while my observation probably isn't all that funny, it is nevertheless a true statement. Betty did come to New York seeking a better life and she did end up marrying me. I will let others decide whether or not she found her ***fortune***.

She was born in Portland, Oregon in 1921 and was named Betty Jane Hauxhurst. Her great-grandfather, Webley Hauxhurst, was a well-known Oregon pioneer who appears in the Oregon history books. Her great-grandmother was a full-blooded American Indian, the daughter of a chief of the Calapooya tribe.

Like me, Betty is an only child, but in a different sort of way. Her mother and father married in 1920 and divorced less than three years later. Betty is the only child of that union. Within a year after the divorce, her parents each remarried and subsequently produced several children with their new partners. And so, while Betty lists numerous half-brothers and half-sisters on her family tree, she herself has always thought of herself as an only child.

Throughout her childhood, Betty was passed from one relative to the other. After their divorce, Betty's mother, who was already taking care of a young son from a previous marriage, couldn't afford to bring up two children by herself. Betty's aunt was childless and she and her husband volunteered to accept Betty and raise her as their own. She lived with them until her aunt passed away. Betty was eleven years old at the time. She then moved in with her grandmother and remained there until her grandmother passed away about five years later. At age 16, she went to live with her father, his wife and their children.

It was a hap-hazard, disjointed kind of upbringing. Betty never felt a sense of belonging and she was always treated as an outsider. She lived with one relative or another, yet she was never a true member of the family she was with. She grew up feeling detached, unwanted and unloved and, at age eighteen, she struck out on her own.

Betty's childhood left her emotionally deprived, but it also taught her to be a survivor. Out of sheer necessity, she became a self reliant and independent young woman. She graduated from a commercial high school in Portland in 1940 where she had studied bookkeeping, typing and stenography and, from the beginning, she was able to support herself doing office work. She was eventually employed by a number of Federal agencies, culminating in an assignment with the War Food Administration. There, she met a young lady from Boise, Idaho named Pat Malinkovich. They became good friends and, for a time, shared a room together. Later, their respective jobs took each of them to different cities, but they remained in touch. When Betty learned that Pat and her sister, Anne, were planning to go to New York City in order to attend the Barbizon Modeling School and

wanted Betty to join them, she jumped at the chance.

In 1948, Pat, Anne and Betty checked into the Martha Washington Hotel in midtown Manhattan and shortly thereafter, they began their modeling classes at Barbizon. They couldn't afford to stay at the Martha Washington for very long and needed to find a less expensive place to live and, after a brief search, they rented a furnished apartment in Queens.

Pat had a friend from Boise who now lived in New York. Her name was Lee and she turned out to be the link that brought Betty and me together. Lee had recently married my former scoutmaster, Frank Swiatokos and she apparently was one of those people who liked to stir the pot. She thought it might be fun if her three newly-arrived young lady friends joined three of her husband's young gentleman friends on a triple blind date. Frank agreed and they selected Stash, Tommy McElhearn and me as likely prospects. With Lee and Frank acting as go-betweens, the negotiations were finalized. We agreed to take the girls out and the girls accepted the invitation.

We were instructed to *show 'em the town*. There are a lot of ways that term can be interpreted and we weren't exactly sure what was expected of us. We certainly couldn't afford dinner at an uptown restaurant, and dancing at a fancy night club was also expensive - - but we did want to introduce them to the city. The question was how. We discussed the problem for a bit and then one of us had a brainstorm (I forget who - - probably me!): we'd take them for a ride on the Staten Island Ferry!

For us, this strategy had a lot to recommend it: The ferry offers a magnificent view of the city. It goes right past the Statue of Liberty and the panoramic nighttime views of downtown Manhattan's window-lit skyscrapers are spectacular. Most importantly, the ferry ride was something we could afford. We were also naive enough to believe that our choice might be perceived as charming and romantic.

We, of course, had the best of the deal. We were dating three very personable young ladies who looked good enough to be models. The girls, on the other hand, must have thought we were three young innocents, without much money and not yet dry behind the ears. They weren't too far off the mark but, to their credit, they took the evening in stride. If they were disappointed, they never let it show.

Not that they needed it, but we subsequently appointed ourselves their unofficial guardians. When Thanksgiving rolled around, we took over the kitchen in their apartment and cooked them a full-course Thanksgiving dinner: turkey, stuffing, yams, cranberry sauce, the works! None of us had ever roasted a turkey before, but we didn't let that stop us. After all, we were each very capable campfire cooks and we could follow cookbook directions as well as anyone, so how hard could it be? I don't remember how it all turned out, and neither does Betty, but that can only mean that it all went well. We'd have remembered a problem.

For the next few years, Betty and I floated in and out of each other's lives. Betty was a secretary and needed to work, and I worked for the Commercial Office of the NYSES, I became her personal employment counselor and found her a job whenever she needed one.

Betty did her part to keep our friendship alive by helping me buy a car - - the first one I owned 100% by myself. It belonged to a pleasant young chiropractor named Charlie who Betty was dating at the time. Other than the fact that it was a 1936 black Pontiac four-door sedan, I remember nothing about it. It ran well and I think I drove it for quite a while before I finally traded it in for something else.

Oddly enough, I recall very little about how Betty and I finally became a couple. We seem to have drifted together at a point in our lives when each of us needed the other and our relationship, always comfortable and companionable, slowly took on a different aspect. Gradually, our friendship evolved into romance. We dated, got to know each other better and discovered a genuine attraction. A short time later, I proposed. Betty accepted and, after a brief engagement, we were married. We had wanted to be married at the famous ***Little church Around the Corner*** but it was unavailable. Instead, we selected another church nearby, The Marble Collegiate Church - - which I promptly dubbed ***The Little Church Around the Corner from the Little Church Around the Corner***. The wedding took place on schedule and without a hitch. The bride looked gorgeous, the groom nervous, my father pleased, and my mother utterly uncomfortable. (She actually dropped the wedding cake!). Stash, who was my best man, coordinated the details. We invited a small group of my backpacking friends to a small reception hosted by my parents in their Van Buren St. home. I remember very little about it but if one can believe the photos in the family album, it appears to have been a good party. The date was December 2nd, 1951



BETTY, GLORIA, ANNE
AND PAT, APPROXIMATELY 1948



BETTY AND THE PONTIAC
APPROXIMATELY 1950

BILL AND BETTY (1951-1956)

*My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But, ah, my foes, and, oh, my friends;
It gives a lovely light!*
(Edna St. Vincent Millay)

When Betty and I said our goodbyes at our wedding party, we told everyone we were leaving New York for a short honeymoon in the Pocono Mountains of eastern Pennsylvania. We lied! The Pocono area is known for its pretty scenery and for its many resort hotels and we had originally planned to honeymoon there, but we changed our minds when we learned how expensive a one-week stay would be. We decided we could use the time to better advantage if we stayed home and spruced up our new apartment and that we'd probably have a lot more fun if, instead of loafing around a honeymoon hotel, we went out on the town in New York for a couple of nights. We could always go on a real honeymoon later on. I don't remember why we decided not to tell anyone about our plans but I imagine it was because everyone expected us to go somewhere and it was easier to let them continue to think we were going to the Poconos.

We had rented a studio apartment in the Hollis section of Queens. Hollis is on the border between Queens and Long Island and you have to take the subway to the end of the line to get there. It meant a slightly longer commute each day but it was worth it. Hollis was a pleasant residential neighborhood and the rents were cheaper.

They called it an **efficiency apartment**. It consisted of a single room with a tiny bathroom and a hideaway bed that folded up into the wall during the day - - the kind they used to call a **Murphy Bed**. It was all very compact and convenient. I used to joke that it was so efficient that if you wanted to go from the living room to the kitchen, to the den, to the bedroom and back to the kitchen, all you had to do was turn around.

It didn't take much to furnish the apartment. We bought some inexpensive sectional couches, an end table and a lamp, and some dinnerware. We also bought some unpainted modular bookcase units for my growing collection of books and jazz records. We spent part of our honeymoon painting the bookcase units.

Whenever I think of that first apartment, I am reminded of an incident involving a pressure cooker we had received as a wedding gift. I worked shorter hours than Betty and I generally arrived home about a half hour before she did.. Mostly, I used the extra time to start dinner. Betty usually did the cooking but there were times when I did the honors as well. The pressure cooker came with an instruction booklet which contained a number of interesting recipes. I had mentioned that one or two of them sounded especially tempting and that I would like to try them out. Betty said they looked good to her too and promised to prepare them at the earliest opportunity. She also asked me not to attempt the recipes myself - - at least not unless she was present. I should have heeded her advice.

We had been married exactly one week and, to celebrate the anniversary, I arranged to come home even earlier than usual because I had decided to surprise Betty by preparing one of the recipes from the pressure cooker booklet. I knew that Betty had specifically asked me not to do it, but how difficult could it be? (Have I mentioned I was an excellent campfire cook?) To make certain I understood the recipe, I read it from beginning to end at least a half dozen times. I wanted no unexpected surprises. When I was convinced I knew exactly what I had to do, I dove in.

The recipe began by saying, *Heat two tbs. lard in a hot pan.* Not a problem. I placed the empty pressure cooker on the burner and, while the pan was heating, I opened a can of Crisco. When the pan was good and hot, I used a tablespoon to scoop up a heaping blob of Crisco and, with the ostentatious flourish of a master chef, deftly dropped into the hot pan. Whereupon, the lard instantly caught fire and I suddenly found myself juggling a pan full of three foot high flames. But I kept my wits about me. As though it were a *flambe* gone berserk, I carried the pan to the sink and was about to drown the fire by holding it under the cold water tap - - absolutely the worst thing to do under the circumstance - - when, without warning, the front door opened and there was Betty. My wife had come home!

The unhappy tableau is permanently etched in my memory. Betty in the doorway, her keys in her hand, staring in wide-eyed disbelief as her know-it-all husband does the tango with a panload of searing hot flames. It was a scene right out of *I Love Lucy!* Luckily, Betty's shock lasted for only a split second before she sprang into action. She quickly grabbed a box of salt from the pantry and put the fire out by pouring the salt onto the flames. It was a miracle no one was hurt and that no damage was done to the apartment. Betty eventually forgave me, but I was banned from the kitchen for years afterwards.

Fortunately, our nights on the town fared better. I no longer recall where we had dinner but our family album contains souvenir matchbook covers and napkins from the Waldorf Astoria, the Rainbow Room, and Fraunces Tavern, so it must have been at one - - or all - - of these well known establishments. We saw a Broadway show called *Remains To Be Seen*, a comedy/mystery which starred Janis Paige and Jackie Cooper. After the play, we went to an elegant supper club called *La Vie En Rose* where Pearl Bailey, an entertainer we both admired, was the featured performer. When our drinks had been served, Betty asked me what time the show started. I was about to answer that I didn't know, when Pearl Bailey came out of a nearby door and, as she passed our table on the way to the tiny stage, she said, loud enough for everyone to hear, *Heah I is, honey - - my, what a pretty hat!* It was a perfect way to top off Betty's evening.

On another night we went to hear some Dixieland at Nick's in the Village. I know who the players were that night because I made a sketch of the band on the back of a souvenir menu and I can recognize Muggsy Spanier on cornet, Buster Bailey on clarinet, and Pops Foster on bass.

About six months later, in the summer of 1952, we finally took a belated honeymoon vacation. We rented a campsite on Lake George, a beautiful island-studded body of crystal clear water located in the lower Adirondack mountains. New York State operates Lake George as a State Park and renting your own tiny island is one of the amenities the Park Service provides. Each of the available islands contains a large wall tent mounted on a wooden platform. The rental fee includes cots and bedding, a kitchen area with a two-burner propane gas cooking stove and a wooden box filled with pots, pans, dishes, cups, cutlery and a kerosene lantern. The same fee also included a canoe and two paddles. We canoed around the lake most afternoons, exploring the other islands and enjoying the gorgeous Adirondack scenery. A grocery boat visited our island daily and we were

able to purchase whatever food or supplies we needed. They brought us out to our island when we arrived and took us back again when it was time to leave. We had a ball!

I had formulated a plan to introduce Betty to hiking and backpacking and our Lake George camp-out was the first step in my campaign. Betty knew how dearly I loved the sport and she wanted very much to share my enthusiasm. Early in our marriage, I took her hiking and backpacking several times in order that she might experience for herself some of the pleasures I enjoyed so much.

One time, we drove to the Adirondacks and used one of the Marcy Dam lean-tos as a base from which we took short hikes around the vicinity of Adirondack Loj. I recalled that a nearby summit was (for me) a very easy climb so I decided to take Betty to the summit. I had forgotten, however, that there was no trail to the top and the ascent required a certain amount of bushwhacking through the dense pines and fir trees. Betty tried gamely to hold back her tears as we struggled cross-country up the hill but she was having a tough time. I led the way and, although I tried hard to avoid it, I couldn't keep some of the tree branches I pushed aside from snapping back and whipping Betty across the face. It was a disaster and I had made a huge mistake. Instead of converting her to the pleasures of mountain hiking, I had shown her how unpleasant the mountains could sometimes be.

On another occasion, I thought Betty might enjoy a week-end camp out at a lean-to on the shore of Little Long Pond. The lake is a beautiful iridescent gem nestled in a secluded valley in Vermont's Green Mountains. Getting there involves a simple, fairly level, three-mile hike from where you park your car and your camp is in a very comfortable lean-to on the western shore of the lake. We got there in fine fashion and I think Betty was beginning to enjoy herself when I goofed again.

It was that peaceful, lazy time between late afternoon and early evening. We had finished our dinner and were relaxing on some rocks in front of the lean-to. I felt so good and the lake looked so inviting, I told Betty that I was going to swim across the width of the lake and back again, a distance of about 1/4 mile each way. I was showing off of course, but I wasn't worried. I knew I could easily make it over and back it because I had already done it several times before on previous visits.

We were alone at the lean-to so I stripped off my clothes and, stark naked, dove into the lake and started swimming. I started out strongly, stroking confidently when I became aware that my breathing had become more labored. I figured I must be close to the other side and stopped a moment to tread water and check. The shore was still a considerable distance away and, more importantly, I had already passed the half-way point so I couldn't turn back. I continued swimming and my breathing became even more labored. I checked again. I was a little bit closer but still had quite a way to go. I floated for a while, dog-paddled for a bit, floated some more, then dog-paddled again until I finally reached the opposite shore. I had made it safely but I was too exhausted to swim back. As I lay there panting, I realized that all those years of smoking cigarettes had finally taken their toll on my lungs. It was a sobering thought.

When my breath returned, I yelled across the lake and told Betty I was OK. I also told her she needed to walk around the lake and bring me my clothes and boots. I was naked and barefoot and it would have been extremely difficult for me to walk back to her without some kind of protection for my feet. I also told her she needed to hurry because the sun had disappeared behind the mountains; it was getting cold and it soon would be completely dark. Betty had watched me swimming and was aware that I had been having a problem in the water. Thank heavens she didn't panic. She was frightened but, with great difficulty, did exactly as I asked. We got back to the lean-

to just as night fell. I was totally exhausted and much embarrassed; Betty was relieved and glad that she had helped avoid a disaster. I never took her hiking or backpacking again.

I did, however, teach her how to drive. Like me, Betty never had a reason to get behind the wheel, but when we traded in Charlie's old Pontiac for a blue 1951 Ford sedan, we decided it was time for Betty to get her license. She qualified for her driver's license without a hitch and, to this day, Betty is an excellent driver. She is fond of saying, ***If you can drive in New York, you can drive anywhere!***

It was about this time that my name changed from Pete to Bill. Betty was working for the Tintair Corp. in New Jersey - - a long commute - - and she had brought me to some kind of company office party. At the party, Betty introduced me to everyone as Pete. For some reason, one of Betty's co-workers insisted on addressing me as Peter for the rest of the party, a name Betty thoroughly detested. Then and there, Betty decided that I would no longer be Pete and that from that day forward, I would be known as Bill. Actually, I was quite glad to see Pete disappear. While I didn't mind the name in the beginning, I always winced later on when some misguided soul would refer to me as ***Pete Peters***. I am surprised I hadn't insisted on the change to Bill long ago.

We celebrated our first year of marriage with another night on the town. We had dinner at the Mayan Restaurant in Rockefeller Center, we saw the original Broadway production of ***Guys and Dolls***, and, to top off the evening, we went to hear Edith Piaf sing at the exclusive Club Versailles. She was magnificent.

And, as a special first-year anniversary present to ourselves, we bought (on time) our first new car. It was a 1952 Nash sedan and, to this day, I think I liked that car more than any other vehicle I have ever owned. I was especially fond of its reclining seat. It didn't just tilt back a little, it went all the way back to connect flush with the rear seat and, in this way, it converted the right-side passenger seat into a legitimate bed. I still have the invoice for this car and it lists the showroom sticker price at \$2641.19. Try to buy a new car for that price today!

The Nash made it possible for me to accomplish something I had wanted to do for a long time. I had always wanted to visit the west coast. The furthest west I had ever been was when the Army had stationed me in Brookings, So. Dakota, but that was a long way from the Pacific Ocean. Now that we had a reliable car, it was time to make my dream come true. We coordinated our vacation schedules, made detailed plans about who to visit and which routes to take and, at 10:00 P.M. in the evening on May 1st, 1953, we set out on our first big west coast adventure.

We decided to give the Nash's special reclining seat the acid test by seeing how long we could go without stopping at a motel. We divided the entire trip into three-hour shifts during which one of us drove while other one slept in the adjoining passenger side ***bed***. It worked incredibly well. Stopping only for meals, gas and oil, we drove straight through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Nebraska, and arrived at Cheyenne, Wyoming at 7:15 in the evening of May 3rd where we took a motel for the night - - not because we needed to sleep, but because we felt grungy and desperately wanted a shower!

At 7:15 the next morning, we set out again. This time our route took us over the Rockies and into Idaho and Oregon. We arrived in Portland at 4:45 in the afternoon of May 5. The Nash had performed well. It had taken us across the country, coast-to-coast, in a little more than three and one-half days.

In Portland, I met Betty's father, his wife Alma, and their children, Joe, Stan, Diane, Bernie and Bonnie. We stayed at their house and, at one point during our visit, Betty's dad decided to take

me fishing. I had tried fishing several times in the past and absolutely hated it! On the other hand, I didn't want to offend Betty's father so I didn't tell him about my distaste for the sport and pretended to welcome his invitation.

He was anxious to take me to one of his special fishing holes in the Mt. Hood area and, on the appointed day, we set out at five in the morning. The weather, however, turned bad as we approached the mountains. It started to snow heavily and Betty's dad, with great reluctance and profuse apologies, aborted the trip and we turned around and came back home. I mumbled something about *Maybe next time*, and silently counted my blessings all the way back to Portland. Betty and I took a little side trip to Mt. Hood a few days later. It was a beautiful day, it didn't snow and, needless to say, we did not go fishing. I enjoyed that trip immensely.

After a little more than a week in Portland, we continued our journey and headed down the coast to California. On the way, we stopped at Grant's Pass for a brief visit with some friends of Betty. We arrived at Betty's mother's house in Redwood City, California, on May 15 and, during the next week or so, I met Betty's half-sister, Mavis and her husband Gene, as well as her half brother Rex and his wife Carolyn. We stayed with Betty's mother for a week or so and also did some sightseeing in San Francisco. This included drinks at the Top of the Mark, and a couple of sets of Dixieland at San Francisco's famous jazz club, the Club Hangover. We stayed in Redwood City until May 23rd.

To satisfy my wanderlust, we had decided to go a little bit out of our way for some additional sightseeing before heading home. When we left Redwood City, we drove first to Lake Tahoe. Little dreaming that we'd live there one day, I fell in love with the place. I'm still not certain whether the attraction was due to the Lake's outstanding mountain scenery or because I had won my first slot machine jackpot at a Tahoe casino. From Tahoe we headed south to Lone Pine so I could have a look at Mt. Whitney. I knew I'd never get to actually climb Mt. Whitney, but I did at least want to see it, so we drove up the mountain as far as a car could go. That done, everything I had wanted to do on our trip had been successfully accomplished and it was time to head back to New York. The return trip took us through Death Valley, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Virginia and New Jersey. We arrived back in Hollis on May 31st.

It had been a wonderful trip and I came home completely enchanted. When I first saw the Rockies and the Sierras, I didn't want to go home. And after all those years in the crowded dirt and grime of New York, I loved the sweet-smelling air and the crisp, clean, uncrowded feel of the west coast cities. I had become accustomed to the tense, uptight hustle and bustle of New York and I found the easygoing, laid back demeanor of Portland and San Francisco to be a charming and refreshing change. I knew I belonged there and, on the long drive back to New York, I constantly found myself thinking about how we could move to the west coast permanently. It would happen sooner than I thought.

Betty's biological clock was ticking and we knew that if we were going to have children, it had better be soon. We had been trying to become pregnant for some time before we sought a doctor's help. We consulted a gynecologist and, after some tests and a thorough examination of us both, he told us that the reason we were unable to conceive was that Betty's Fallopian Tubes were blocked. He further told us this is a fairly common condition and it is easily corrected by means of a simple procedure. He identified the procedure by a long and unpronounceable medical name, but it is popularly referred to as *blowing the tubes*. Betty underwent the procedure and later told me that

while it was uncomfortable, it wasn't at all painful. We crossed our fingers and hoped for the best.

In May 1954 we took a short vacation at Niagara Falls. Neither of us had seen the Falls before and we were impressed not only with their grandeur and majestic beauty, but also with their awesome power. They appear especially breathtaking at night when they are lit up with a barrage of multicolored lights. We rode the ***Maid of the Mist*** and did all the usual tourist things, including a bit of shopping on the Canadian side where we had taken a motel.

In one of the shops I found a top quality English tweed sport coat. Because of the favorable tax structure of the Commonwealth countries, the coat was priced at about half of what it would have cost at home. I couldn't resist buying it. It looked great on me and it was a terrific bargain.

As we were packing for our trip home, it occurred to me that when we drove through the U.S. Customs booth from Canada, I would have to declare the coat and pay the appropriate U.S. duties and that would nullify my bargain. Unwilling to give up my savings, I considered the possibility of smuggling the coat across the border by simply wearing it as we drove through the checkpoints. I figured it was worth a try. If I were caught, I could always plead that I had forgotten I had it on, pay the duty and that would be that. I took a deep breath, donned the coat and, with a touch of uneasy apprehension, we got in the Nash and headed for the border.

There are two officials at the U.S. checkpoint: one is a U.S. Customs Inspector, the other a U.S. Immigration Officer. When the Customs guy asked if I had any merchandise to declare, I tried to sound casual as I said ***No***. He made some notes on a form, handed it to me, said, ***Thank you*** and passed us on to the Immigration officer. I felt relieved and figured the worst was over. Then I heard the Immigration guy ask Betty, ***Where were you born?*** and I grew nervous again. She calmly answered ***Portland, Oregon***, at which point he turned to me and asked the same question. I, of course, was anxious to get through the checkpoint as routinely as possible. I knew if I answered, ***Germany*** he'd have to inquire further and things would no longer be routine. I suspect I could have said ***Brooklyn*** and he would have waved us through, but I chickened out. I was already guilty of smuggling and didn't relish the idea of defending a charge of trying to enter the country illegally, so I told the truth. I confessed that I was born in Germany.

If I had had a passport or some other evidence of my citizenship, there would have been no problem. But I had nothing. My U.S. citizenship was derivative. I had become a citizen automatically when my father received his naturalization certificate but there was no documentation to verify my status. And here I was, trying to enter the country with a smuggled sport coat on my back, a suspicious Immigration Officer giving me a hard time, and no way to prove I was a citizen. Things looked grim.

Out of the blue, I had an idea. I told the officer that I worked for the NYSES and that U.S. citizenship was an eligibility requirement for New York State employees. We were in luck. The Immigration guy's brother worked for the State and he knew about the eligibility requirement. He asked to see my NYSES identification card and, after I showed it to him, he suggested I get a passport and sent us on our way. I wore that sport coat for many years afterwards and gave it to the Goodwill only after the sleeves had frizzled and it was no longer presentable. But I never put it on without recalling my brief career as a smuggler.

Ever since we had returned from the west coast, I couldn't stop thinking about how impressed I had been and I continued to wonder what it would take for us to simply pull up stakes and move there permanently. There were many questions to answer and many obstacles to

overcome. Betty could always find a job as a secretary, but how about me? Could I find a job? And what about my mother? When my father became ill in 1954, we gave up our Hollis apartment and went to live with my parents in the upstairs apartment of their new home in Bushwick. Papa passed away shortly thereafter which meant that if Betty and I moved to California, my mother would be left completely on her own. That was unacceptable and our prospects didn't look promising. Then two things happened that changed everything: Betty became pregnant, and I lost my job with NYSES.

Blowing Betty's tubes had obviously done the trick and when we learned she was pregnant, we were delighted. Losing my job was another matter. It was due to budgetary cutbacks and I was one of those affected in the reduction in force that applied to most New York State agencies.

In a way, I was glad it happened. The job had become dull and routine and opportunities for advancement were extremely limited. I looked for other work but all I could find were commission jobs with one or two commercial employment agencies. I tried them briefly, but they were too insecure. Betty and I finally decided that maybe all of this had happened for the best. Maybe fate was eliminating our obstacles for a reason and that the time had finally come for us to do something drastic. We decided we had nothing to lose. Come hell or high water, we were going to California.

The only problem now was what to do about my mother. She was less than anxious to uproot herself and move to California. We were persistent and, after much conversation and debate, we finally wore her down and she agreed to accompany us. She was understandably hesitant and not at all sure we were doing the right thing but, since Papa had died, she recognized that perhaps she too could benefit from a new beginning.

When Mama told us she would come to California with us, the last obstacle had been removed and we set about making our plans. Mama put her house on the market and it sold quickly. We methodically severed all our ties to New York and we carefully planned every detail of our trip west. Things were looking better all the time. We relished the idea that Betty was three months pregnant and that our baby would be born in California; we liked the notion of starting over on the other side of the country and, although we were all a little intimidated by our uncertain future, we instinctively knew we were making the right move. And so, in March, 1955, with high spirits and just a tinge of regret, we left New York and embarked upon a new chapter in all our lives.



MURPHY BED, HOLLIS, 1951



THE NEW NASH 1953



CANOEING ON LAKE GEORGE 1952



LEAN TO, LITTLE LONG POND 1953

BETTY AND BILL (1955-1958)

It's the problems that make life interesting.
(Ridley Scott)

When we told our doctor that we were leaving New York for good, he wished us well. When we told him that all three of us were planning to drive to California, he urged us not to take Betty with us in the car. She was entering her second trimester, a most critical point in a pregnancy, and he feared that a long, bumpy drive could easily bring on a miscarriage. He recommended that Betty take a plane to California, while Mama and I took the Nash. We heeded his advice and changed our plans. We bought a one-way airline ticket for Betty, while Mama and I prepared for a leisurely drive across the country. Mama had never learned to drive and the trip would take longer with only a single driver, but we didn't mind. We had plenty of time. We prepared the Nash for its second trip to California and treated it to a complete check-up, a final tune-up and an oil change.

My mother lived in New York for more than thirty years but, except for one or two Sunday outings to New Jersey, she had never been out of the state. She still had grave misgivings about moving to California so I thought she'd enjoy it more if we expanded the trip to include a bit of extra sightseeing. Hoping that it would take her mind off her worries, I included side trips to New Orleans, the Grand Canyon, the Painted Desert, and Death Valley. Unfortunately, we never got to see any of those places.

Betty flew to California a few days before Mama and I were scheduled to depart in the Nash. In the time remaining, I methodically went through my checklist of last minute details: I arranged to ship the furniture (both mine and my mother's), closed out the utilities, packed and re-packed the suitcases, and carefully loaded the car. Everything went according to plan and we were finally ready to go.

We spent our last night in the Bushwick house and, the following morning, started out bright and early. It was a bright, sunny day and while we were in no hurry, there was little traffic and we made good time. We had been on the road for about four hours and were approaching Baltimore where I had planned to stop for lunch. We were just outside the town of Aberdeen, Maryland when we had the accident. I no longer remember very much about it, but we saved a letter I wrote to Betty that night in which I described what happened and I can piece together some of the unhappy details.

We were going about 45 to 50 miles per hour and driving in the right lane of a 4-lane highway. Another car, a red sedan, was slightly ahead of me in the adjoining left lane. It was moving in the same direction and at roughly the same speed I was. Suddenly another car, a small Nash Rambler, came screeching out of an intersection on our left. It was traveling at a very high speed and when it entered the highway, it set in motion a rapid-fire chain of events. The Rambler cut directly in front of the red sedan on my left, causing it to swerve to the right and into my lane and directly in my path. To avoid hitting the red sedan, I was forced to swerve sharply to my right, taking me completely off the highway. Although I was braking furiously, I saw we were heading for

a deep ditch and certain disaster. To avoid the ditch, I quickly swerved back to my left and returned to the highway. All those sudden changes in direction were more than the Nash could handle. It toppled over on its left side, slid for about ten feet and then slowly rolled over to the left one more time. It came to a halt on its back with its wheels in the air.

I remember maps and oranges and toll booth change flying every which way and, when the Nash finally stopped, Mama and I were still in the car, but we were upside down. This was before seat belt laws and I don't believe we wore them. My neck was flush with the interior roof of the car, my knees were under my chin and the next thing I knew, many hands were reaching through the window, dragging us out of the vehicle. When we had been successfully extricated, we took inventory and, miraculously, we had escaped injury.

The driver of the red sedan had followed the Rambler and managed to get its license number. He returned to the scene of the accident and gave the number to the Highway Patrol officer who had just appeared. The officer radioed ahead and they apprehended the driver of the Rambler just outside Baltimore. They brought him back to the scene and it was plain to see that he had been drinking and was very much under the influence.

Mama and I took a nearby motel and assessed our situation. It wasn't good. Although we had escaped without injury, we were pretty well shaken up. The Nash looked pretty bad but seemed repairable. The insurance adjuster disagreed. He came up from Baltimore the next morning, checked it over and found that the frame was bent in so many places, he had no choice but to pronounce it completely totaled. Ironically, we had just one final payment to make and we would have owned the car free and clear. We had been looking forward to beginning our life in California unencumbered with car payments.

I telephoned Betty that evening and told her what had happened. Had it been up to me, I'd have flown to California that very night, but there was business to take care of in Aberdeen the next day. The Highway Patrol wanted me to press charges against the driver of the Rambler who, as it turned out, was the father of the Aberdeen Chief of Police. The insurance adjuster wanted me to process the paperwork for our claims; and the Nash also needed to be disposed of.

It took two days before we could get it all done but we finally attended to the last detail. We arranged for transportation to the Baltimore airport, bought two one-way tickets to California and, given the kind of luck we'd been having, prayed that nothing would happen to the airplane on the way to San Francisco. It was the first time either one of us had flown but neither one of us was in the mood to enjoy it.

Our much anticipated move to the west coast had started out badly. I don't remember much about those early days in California but things could hardly have been worse. Betty was pregnant, I had no job, and we needed a car. We found a small apartment in Redwood City across the street from Betty's mother's house. It wasn't big enough for the three of us but we coped. Although our funds were running low, we scraped together enough money to buy a used Buick and I went job hunting.

I found a job thirty-five miles to the south in up and coming San Jose. It was 1955. They hadn't yet invented Silicon Valley and San Jose was still known as the Prune Capitol of the World. I went to work as an employment counselor for the Regent Employment Agency and I must have made a go of it because I remained there for several years. When I told people in Redwood City that I commuted to San Jose every morning, they were always surprised that I didn't seem to mind. I, of course, was accustomed to spending at least an hour every morning crammed cheek-by-jowl into a

grimy subway car with a couple of hundred other people, so for me the breezy drive to San Jose was a welcome improvement.

I no longer recall how we got him or why we adopted him, but shortly after setting up residence in California, we acquired a young dog. He was a collie mix, light brown and white and we christened him Sam - - mainly because no one named their kids Sam anymore and we didn't want the name to die out. We only kept him for about a year. Sammy developed two bad habits: he became carsick and threw up all over the Buick whenever we took him for a ride and then, for no apparent reason, he'd attack anyone who came to the door, including the mailman. It broke our hearts but we finally had to have him put to sleep. Sammy was the only dog we ever had.

Our first child, a perfect little eight pound girl, was born on September 13, 1955. We named her Linda Jo. Betty said it was an easy, uncomplicated birth. The very first time I saw Linda, she reminded me of a beautiful Indian papoose and, at birth, she resembled Betty much more than me. Betty maintained a *My Baby Book* for Linda and here's how she listed Linda's first-day statistics: hair: black, brows: light brown, eyes: blue, and complexion: *fair*. We knew Linda was going to have a strong affinity for music because, at the age of nine months, she was able to whistle!

When Linda was two years old, she gave us a major scare. The doctor had prescribed an appetite suppressant for Betty called Dexedrin. Somehow, Linda found the Dexedrin box and, in an exaggerated imitation of what she had seen her mother do, swallowed almost its entire contents. Dexedrin is a mood altering drug and Linda was on a high. She kept saying, *Linda takes mommy's ol' pills, pills, pills*. I was at the office so Betty had to borrow a neighbor's car to take Linda to the hospital where they pumped out her stomach. It had been a close call.

Two and one-half years later, on March 25, 1958, Betty gave birth to our second child, a son we named Robert Brian. He weighed six pounds, 12 ounces and, with his light coloration and near-blond hair, seemed to take after me rather than Betty. Within a few years, the early resemblances of both our children completely reversed themselves: Linda looked like me, while Bobby turned dark and took after his mother.

I left the Regent agency after a few years and took a position with another employment agency, a Palo Alto outfit called Triple Service, Inc. It entailed the usual job placement duties but there was one important difference. Job resumes had become an essential part of the job placement process. Employers were asking to see a written resume of an applicant's qualifications before granting an interview and, at Triple Service, I was occasionally required to write a resume if an applicant hadn't already prepared one.

By now, I had come to dislike placement work. It was a dull and boring routine and I stayed with it simply because it was the only money-making skill I possessed. When resume writing became a part of my duties, it added something new and different to the process and provided a welcome change of pace. It also seemed to satisfy my need for some form of creative involvement.

Two important events occurred in the period between the births of our two children that would greatly affect our lives: we bought our first house, and we discovered square dancing! The house was a brand new 3-bedroom tract home in Santa Clara. The development offered several different designs and floor plans and we based our selection on two factors: the price was affordable and we liked the looks of the model house. Our lot was also special. We chose it for its proximity to a beautiful cherry orchard. It would have been charming when the cherry blossoms were in bloom. Less than a year later, I came home from work to find the orchard bulldozed away and the entire area leveled to make room for a new sub-division. I felt betrayed!

This was the first house that Betty and I had ever owned and I remember it fondly. It had an easy address: 333 Kellogg Way. It's design was quite modern for those days. The outside walls for both the front and the back of the house consisted, almost completely, of floor to ceiling glass panels. They let in lots of light and made the house seem larger than it actually was. The house came with a built-in refrigerator and freezer that hung like cabinets on the kitchen wall. We didn't have enough money to furnish the house but we figured that could come later. With the help of neighbors, we poured cement in interesting patterns of my own design to form front and back patios. We also erected a back fence with a unique zig-zag design that my neighbor originated.

Some friends of Betty in New York, had introduced me to model railroading and I built a small H-O gauge railroad layout in half of the garage. I also recall that I collected empty liquor bottles, filled them with water at various levels so they would produce different musical tones when struck with a mallet. I hung them in keyboard order on a makeshift rack in the garage and created a completely playable perpendicular booze bottle xylophone. My neighbors must have thought I had gone off the deep end!

When we needed a baby sitter, we occasionally used a baby-sitting *bank* that had been organized in our neighborhood. The way it worked was that each member of the group deposited hours by baby-sitting for other members. You could then withdraw hours from your own account as you needed them. It was a clever concept and it worked very well. One evening Betty went to sit for a neighbor couple who were taking square dance lessons. When Betty came home and told me about it, it aroused my curiosity and I wondered whether square dancing might be something we'd enjoy too. I asked Betty to find out if we could still join the class. As luck would have it, the class was open for one more week. We arranged to go, had a wonderful time, and square dancing has been an important part of our lives ever since.

It started as a minor recreation, quickly became our primary social outlet, and gradually evolved as an all-consuming professional lifestyle. I was fascinated with what the caller did and I remember driving home from our second or third lesson and telling Betty that I would like to learn how to call square dances myself - - which is, of course, exactly what happened. About a year later, I attended a callers' school and began what would ultimately become an exciting and extremely gratifying professional career.



333 KELLOGG WAY
SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA

RESUMES WRITTEN HERE (1958-1968)

Things do not change - we change!
(Henry David Thoreau)

In 1958, I was still working for Triple Service Inc. in Palo Alto. The job continued to focus on job placement activities but fees for resume writing had increased significantly. In those days, I may have been the only professional resume writer between San Francisco and Los Angeles..

I created an entirely new approach to resume composition. Even today, most people treat a resume as an historical document, a record that lists an applicant's education, employment background and vital statistics - - but little else. While such resumes provide relevant facts about an applicant's qualifications, they do not tell a potential employer how the applicant would like those facts to be interpreted. They simply display an employment history and hope that something about it will strike a responsive chord. In most cases, an applicant's employment history isn't strong enough to insure that an employer will reach the desired conclusion on his own. I used to tell my clients, that you can't simply run it up the flagpole, cross your fingers and hope that someone will salute.

I designed a format that was both informative and persuasive. It provided not only the requisite factual data every employer expected, but a tasteful bit of motivational copy as well. My job as a resume writer was part historian and part soft-sell pitchman.

Reading a resume rarely produces a job offer. That decision comes only after a successful interview. The function of a resume is to generate an interview, nothing more. Once the applicant is face-to-face with a potential employer, the resume has done its job; it has achieved its purpose; it has put the applicant in a position where he and the employer may discuss what each can do for the other.

The problem with most resumes of the time is that after citing the applicant's education, they immediately listed his employment history. In my format, the employment history came last. My resumes began by identifying a specific job objective and then summarizing, in narrative fashion, exactly why and how the applicant's experience supported the job he was seeking. I left nothing to chance. I emphasized the applicant's strong points, minimized his weak ones, and underscored what the applicant regarded to be his edge over his competitors. I felt that a resume was successful if it aroused curiosity about an applicant's qualifications and that it was counter-productive for a resume to anticipate and answer every question an employer might raise. I used simple language and made a special point of keeping the entire document to a single page if at all possible.

It sounds disarmingly simple and obvious but, in those days, these were revolutionary concepts. Most resumes of that time merely duplicated an employer's application form. My format was new and different and I received much positive feedback about their effectiveness. So much so, in fact, that it was decided to open a special Triple Service Resume Writing Division with me in charge. We hired a typist/secretary to assist me, bought a second-hand offset press so we could print

copies and, by 1960, I was no longer involved in the employment agency business. I had become a full-time resume writer.

The Resume Division was successful, but only mildly so. The business grew but not as rapidly or as profitably as we had hoped. I wondered if location might have something to do with our lackluster volume and whether I'd do better writing resumes in San Jose. All of this happened roughly forty years ago and the details are no longer clear. I cannot today recall why or when I decided to leave Triple Service and go to work for a competitor in San Jose, but that is exactly what I did.

Profile Resume Service was a small company that an energetic young fellow named Darryl Monda had started in San Jose. Darryl was different. He had a shock of bright red hair and a huckster's gift of gab. His conversation was typically peppered with references to the numerous projects and money-making schemes he was planning or had already accomplished, and I quickly pegged him as a stereotypical fast-talking con man.

I answered Darryl's ad for an experienced resume writer. He told me he needed someone to take over the Profile office and operate the business while he went to work on some other projects. He told me that he liked my experience and tested me by having me process his next customer. He observed my interview technique and, when he saw the resume I prepared for that client - - and how pleased the client was with what I had written - - he offered me the job. We arranged that I would receive a small guaranteed salary plus 70% of the remaining profits. It sounded too good to pass up and I accepted his offer. The year was approximately 1961.

It was a one-man operation and I was alone in the office. After a few weeks, it looked like things were going to work out for us. He made arrangements with his bank which allowed me to sign company checks and, for a time, our prospects looked bright.

But Darryl was a strange young man. At first, he came by the office every two weeks or so. He'd look over my records, we'd settle up our finances, have lunch and, after that, he'd take off and I wouldn't see or hear from him for four to six weeks at a time; then not for eight or ten weeks, and finally he stopped coming altogether. I had no address for him, only a telephone number - - and half the time, no one answered when I called. Our business held steady, but it didn't increase either. We weren't exactly setting the world on fire and, for the first time, I worried about the future.

While all this was going on, we bought a new house. Our house on Kellogg Way was a three-bedroom affair and it suited us fine. Then our son Bob was born. For the first few years, he and Linda shared a bedroom. By 1962, however, it was clear that Bob and Linda were now old enough to require separate bedrooms and that we had outgrown our home. Now, we needed a four-bedroom house: one bedroom each for Linda and Bob, one for Oma, and one for Betty and me. Johnny Barbour, a friend we met through square dancing, was both a caller and a real estate broker and I asked him to help us sell the house on Kellogg Way and to also help us find something more suitable for our current needs. He came through on both counts.

In the Spring of 1962, we sold the house on Kellogg Way and moved into our new home at 5046 Amondo Drive in San Jose. It was a lovely house. It was located near Westgate in one of San Jose's better neighborhoods. We had to convert a dining area into a separate bedroom by installing a new wall, but that done, the floor plan suited us perfectly. We lived there until I retired, nearly twenty-four years later.

This was also about the time I quit smoking. In 1964, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a now-famous report which proved, incontestably, that smoking was a dangerous health hazard. It unnerved me. I was, by any definition, a heavy smoker. I had been smoking cigarettes since I was fourteen years old and, at the time the report first came out, I was smoking a little more than three packs a day.

I was totally and unequivocally addicted to nicotine. I used to joke that when my alarm went off in the morning and my hand came out from under the covers to shut it off, a lit cigarette would mysteriously materialize between my fingers before they ever reached the alarm's off-button. For years, the upper parts of my right index and middle fingers bore the telltale yellow stain that identifies every heavy cigarette smoker. My teeth also turned yellow and they remain so to this day. I had the perpetual, easy-to-recognize hacking cough that sooner or later afflicts every cigarette smoker.

Even before the Surgeon General's report was published, I knew instinctively that smoking was unhealthy. But I also knew how powerful my addiction was and I never allowed myself to even think about quitting. I knew wasn't strong enough to resist my addiction and that any attempt to give up smoking was doomed to fail. So why bother? Why deliberately court failure?

Then one day I wandered into a portable exhibit that the TB association was carrying from one neighborhood to another in a big mobile van. One of the exhibits consisted of two large glass jars. One jar contained a healthy lung, the other, the lung of a ten-year smoker. The healthy lung was a bright shade of pink. It positively glowed! The smoker's lung, on the other hand, looked like a desiccated sponge. Its color was almost totally black and it seemed so dry and brittle that it would crumble if you touched it.

For some reason, the sight of that black lung scared me where nothing else had. It lingered in the back of mind for several days and the implications of that exhibit continued to plague me. One morning, the alarm went off and, with a lit cigarette in hand, I stumbled to the bathroom. Betty witnessed what happened next and likes to tell this part of the story. My first drag on my cigarette, set off a fit of coughing that continued a lot longer than usual. When the coughing finally subsided, Betty tells me that I looked disdainfully at the cigarette I held between my fingers and then, slowly, deliberately, and with unforgiving vengeance, ground it to a pulp in an ash tray, all the while muttering, ***You crazy fool you.*** I vowed, then and there, I would quit.

I went to work and didn't smoke that entire morning. It was difficult but I held on. After lunch I couldn't take it any longer. I gave in and lit a cigarette. I almost welcomed my defeat. I had predicted I'd never make it and sure enough, I hadn't. I thought I had definitely fallen off the wagon but then, after only a couple of puffs, my resolve returned. I told myself, ***No dammit! You've quit!*** and I ground out that cigarette with even greater vengeance than before. It was the last cigarette I ever smoked.

I quit cold turkey. But I'd be lying if I said it was easy. Quite the contrary. It was enormously difficult. I had no idea the withdrawal symptoms would be as severe as they were and, like the recovering alcoholic with an unopened bottle of whiskey in his cupboard, I carried an

unopened pack of cigarettes in my shirt pocket for a long time. I called it my *emergency pack*. I knew the time would eventually come when I'd be unable to resist the temptation to light up and I wanted to be sure I had cigarettes available when that happened. Thankfully, I never needed to open it. I was tempted more times than I care to remember, but whenever I decided I couldn't stand it any longer and I fumbled to open the emergency pack, I was reminded that I had given up smoking and that if I lit up now, all the misery and pain I had endured would have been for nothing. It would mean that all of the terrible withdrawal pangs I had suffered would have been wasted and I refused to let that happen. It took about six months for the cravings to disappear completely but, eventually, they did. I haven't smoked since.

Not only had giving up cigarettes improved my health, it provided another surprising benefit: it expanded my vocal range in both its upper and lower registers by a full tone. In my job as a square dance caller, there was a particular song I liked where one part of the melody was just a touch too high for me to sing comfortably and I had to harmonize my way around it. One night after I had quit smoking for about six months, I was calling that song and, as I approached the troublesome high spot, I realized that, for the first time, I would be able to sing that note without straining. And I did! When I sang it this time, I hit the note clear as a bell. That song never gave me a problem again.

Meanwhile I continued to earn a living at Profile, but just barely. With two children and a mortgage to worry about, money was tight. Since Oma lived with us and didn't mind baby-sitting, Betty decided she'd like to go back to work and, that same year, she returned to the labor force as one of the early employees of a new computer chip manufacturer called Fairchild Semiconductor Co. They were one of the first computer-based corporations to locate in the Santa Clara Valley. They, in turn, attracted numerous other companies to the area and, before long, the famous orchards of San Jose and Santa Clara had given way to office buildings, laboratories and electronic production facilities. The Prune Capitol of the World had become Silicon Valley. Betty's office skills were still intact and she worked for Fairchild as a secretary for a couple of years. The extra income helped considerably.

Ever so gradually, business began to improve at Profile. At least a little bit. I had begun to develop a reputation as one of the best resume writer in northern California and there was a marked increase in the number of word-of-mouth referrals. I was feeling pretty good about things when, one morning, Darryl telephoned to tell me that his lease had expired and he was going to abandon the resume business. That was his word: *abandon!* He said that resumes weren't producing the kind of profits he had hoped for so he was shutting Profile down. He was also closing the checking account and he wanted me to settle our finances by the end of the week. I asked him what I should do about the furniture, the typewriters and the offset press. He answered me with two words. He said, *Keep 'em!* I think he didn't want to be bothered with the nuisance of attending to their disposition himself and that giving the equipment to me was a spur-of-the-moment, easy way out decision.

Thinking I had lost my job, my end of this conversation had been less than enthusiastic. But when Darryl indicated that he was abandoning not only the business, but its equipment as well, something clicked. I thought I saw a golden opportunity. I asked him again if he was absolutely sure that this was what he wanted to do and, when he confirmed that it was, I asked him if he would mind if I continued to operate the business under the same name but in a new location. He said, *I don't really care. Do what you like.* I asked him to send me a deed or a letter or some form of written conveyance that would verify that he had transferred ownership of the equipment to me. He said he

would but it never came. I became the owner of Profile Resume Service by default. I never heard from Darryl Monda again.

Actually, nothing had changed except that for the first time in my life, I was self-employed. I rented new offices less than a block from our old address, opened a new checking account in a different bank, moved the furniture and equipment into my new offices, arranged for a new telephone and, with hardly a hiccup, we were operating as before. I would be involved with the Profile Resume Service it for at least a few more years.

Despite my enthusiasm, the business didn't improve and I was barely making enough money to get by. I wondered how I might expand the operation and decided to try a branch office in Sunnyvale. Sunnyvale was now in the heart of Silicon Valley and it was here that most resume customers now sought employment. My idea was to rent a small office in Sunnyvale and then hire two part-time minimum-wage receptionists, one for each office. I divided my time between the two locations: mornings in San Jose and afternoons in Sunnyvale. There was a receptionist in each office to greet customers, answer the telephone and make interview appointments whenever I was away. It was a very busy schedule and, while it did slightly increase the overall profits, it wasn't worth all the extra effort.

I next decided to see if I could train someone else to write my kind of resume and install him in yet another branch office, this one in San Francisco. I was hoping that it might be possible for me to develop a training program that would make franchising feasible. If I could teach others to write the style of resume I had originated, I could conceivably develop and sell a chain of Profile Resume Service franchises all across the state. It never happened.

I rented space in a San Francisco office for about a month and tried to train a couple of likely prospects. But while they understood the concepts of my resume style, they seemed unable to actually write them. One of my trainees was promotionally oriented but lacked skills as a wordsmith; the other could write but lacked the ability to produce promotional copy. It was all very frustrating and I finally had to admit defeat. Apparently no one could write a Peters style resume but Peters and I returned to operating a one-man business out of my San Jose office.

I continued to work in that office until 1968. During this time I had become a square dance caller and when there wasn't enough resume business to warrant my attention at the office, I occupied my time with square dancing. I studied square dance choreography, wrote square dance books and I edited a square dance caller's note service. And since these were all income-producing activities, I did it with a clear conscience.

Gradually the workload shifted. While, in the beginning, I would spend most of my office time writing resumes and only devoted a stolen moment or two to square dance matters, that balance, almost imperceptibly, slowly reversed itself. As my career as a square dance caller prospered, I found that my energies at the office were concerned more and more with square dancing and less and less with resumes until, over a period of several years, the resume end of the business faded away completely. Whether my resume business failed because my square dance business succeeded, or whether it was the other way around, is hard to tell.

In 1968, for reasons I have already described, my mother decided that she would leave the U.S. to reside permanently in Germany. Her room in our house suddenly became available and it no longer made sense to rent an office in downtown San Jose when I had available office space at home. It didn't take much to convert Oma's room into my square dance office and I found a corner in our garage where I could set up Profile's offset press, which I now used to print a monthly

callers' publication instead of resumes. Although I had actually become a full-time professional square dance caller at least a year before I closed the San Jose office, the shift to an office in my home made the transition complete. I was now officially a square dance caller.



DAD, NEWBORN LINDA
& SAM



DAD, MOM, NEWBORN BOB & LINDA



5046 AMONDO DR., SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

CALLER-IN-TRAINING (1958 - 1959)

*The dilettante studies until he understands;
The master is a student forever.
(George Santayana))*

We learned to square dance in the summer of 1957. Our square dance diplomas are dated August 28th of that year and I remember the lessons consisted of fifteen weekly sessions - - which means they probably began sometime in mid-May. We still have pictures of our graduation party and, while I recognize the faces of every classmate captured by the snapshots, I am no longer able to identify them by name. The only faces whose names I can still remember are those of the caller and his wife, Bob and Dede Tripp.

Bob was a competent caller and a excellent teacher; his wife, Dede, a congenial and personable assistant. They had recently arrived in the Bay Area from southern California. Although I later considered Bob's calling commonplace, it didn't seem that way at the time. He made our introduction to square dancing a happy experience and, during the class, he impressed me greatly. Our class was the first set of lessons he conducted in northern California and he taught us well. When we graduated, we could hold our own with most of the other dancers in the community.

Everyone admired Dede. She was the perfect caller's partner and her role as Bob's *aide de camp*, a textbook example of how a caller's wife functioned in those days. While Bob taught us the mechanics of square dancing, she was our mother hen and taught us how to *be* square dancers. She came to every dance, took the attendance, collected the fees, made the coffee and prepared the refreshments; she mingled with the students, answered our many questions and served as the group's social director. She was, in every way, an important and irreplaceable part of the teaching team. Betty and I have never discussed it, but it wouldn't surprise me if, subliminally, Betty chose Dede as her role model when I took up calling and thrust Betty in the same role.

Bob, however, did not inspire me to become a caller. Only two things drew me the microphone: my irrepressible ego and my innate drive to always seek the center ring. I am sure I would have become a square dance caller no matter who my original teacher had been. Over the years, I have admired many callers and Bob Tripp was the first of a long and illustrious list of callers who dazzled me. I eventually found Bob's calling to be routinely predictable. This does not mean that his calling did not, to some degree, affect my own. It did, but in an odd sort of way. Bob was not a showman and his performances lacked the flair and flamboyance that characterizes the work of a true entertainer. It sounds arrogant to say so now, but even as a beginning dancer, I remember telling myself as I listened to him call, ***I could do that - - and I bet I could do it better!***

I also remember an occasion a few years later when, as a result of a weird coincidence, Bob and I found ourselves seated as potential jurors in the same jury box. As it turned out, we were both excused before the trial opened, probably because we were both callers, and we never actually served on the same jury. Too bad, I suspect he was as disappointed as I was.

After I became a caller, Bob Tripp and I were professional colleagues in the Santa Clara Valley square dance community. I don't believe we ever called a dance together and our relationship, while always cordial, never became close. He was not a gregarious person; not standoffish exactly, but he wore a tough outer shell that was difficult to crack. He joined the local callers' association and paid his dues, but rarely came to the meetings. Everyone was shocked some years later, when he and Dede divorced. He got married again to a lady who seemed more like his mother than his wife. He eventually gave up calling altogether. Long before we retired to Hawaii, he had moved there and purchased a home on Maui. It was the last place we ever saw him. The year was 1986.

Betty and I had just initiated our own retirement which, in those days, included two months every winter in a Kaanapali condo. During our first season on Maui, I called Bob. I had gotten his telephone number from someone and, after the usual pleasantries, we arranged to meet at a local square dance. It was fun meeting him again after all that time. We talked a little about the old days and we were each asked to call a guest tip. After the dance, Bob and his wife invited us to dinner in their new Kihei home. I remember the evening as one of those awkward, uncomfortable affairs where two couples with very little in common try, grimly and unsuccessfully, to establish some kind of rapport. I have since heard that Bob later moved to the Big Island and, even though Betty and I are now full-time Maui residents, we have never been motivated to track him down.

None of this, however, in any way mitigates the special thanks that Betty and I owe Bob Tripp for teaching us how to square dance. Not only were his lessons fun, he kept our interest alive and he made us want to return week after week. And that, of course, is the only true yardstick of any caller's success. Long-time caller, Cal Golden, summed it up nicely when he said : ***You can always tell how successful a caller is by watching his dancers' feet. If they're going into the hall, he's doing something right. If they're going out, he's doing something wrong!***

Square dancing provided us with quick and easy access to a social life we would never have experienced otherwise. I remember, as beginning dancers, we used to take turns visiting each other's homes between our weekly lessons so that we might accumulate some extra practice by dancing to records. We enjoyed the activity's dance aspects and took great pleasure in responding to its rhythms and in moving to square dance music. I was personally fascinated by the symmetrical nature of square dance choreography and I admired its inherent logic. I enjoyed participating in the highly cooperative, joint-venture team effort that square dancing required; an effort in which eight individual dancers share an objective that can only be achieved by following precisely the directions of their caller. It was unlike any form of recreation Betty and I had ever experienced.

When we graduated from Bob Tripp's class, none of us wanted it to be over and we were all a little bewildered to be so unceremoniously cast adrift. We recognized that it wasn't Bob's fault. In northern California, the traditional post-graduation path for a new dancer, is to join the particular club for whom their teacher calls. We were unable to follow that custom because Bob was not yet calling for a club. Instead, he advised us to make the rounds and to visit as many of the local square dance clubs as possible. ***Dance with them all***, he said, ***and , if one of them strikes your fancy, apply for membership.***

After attending the dances of many clubs, Betty and I joined the Korn Crackers, a San Jose group where Lou Hughes was the caller. We danced with them for about a year, during which time my urge to become a caller gradually intensified. While the Korn Crackers remained our official club, my infatuation with square dancing had become so pronounced that we continued to visit other

clubs whenever possible. I studied the way their callers performed; I compared and evaluated the differences in their choreography techniques and in their personal calling styles; and I especially coveted their easy ability to please and connect with their audience. When I gave up acting shortly after the war, I thought that my yen to establish some kind of career as a performer/actor/showman had been put behind me for good; that I had forever subjugated such ambitions. But now, out of the blue, they suddenly all came rushing back at me and I found myself once again wondering what it would take to work on-stage, only this time as a square dance caller.

Bill Fowler was a well-known northern California caller, one of the first to emerge during the square dance renaissance that occurred immediately after World War Two. His personal calling style was a bit too condescending for my taste but he seemed to be the only caller in the Santa Clara Valley who trained new callers. He periodically conducted a callers' class that purported to teach neophytes like me the tricks of the trade. He usually ran his classes once every 12 to 18 months and, when I saw an ad in the local square dance magazine announcing the formation of the next one, I was one of the first dancers to sign up.

Fowler's caller classes were held on Sunday afternoons at the K-5 Barn in Cupertino. The K-5 was a marvelous old square dance hall owned by a lady named *Peep* Kenoyer and I have many delightful memories of the numerous dances I either attended or called there. Peep herself was an avid square dancer and vowed never to sell the property, promising that there would always be square dancing at the K-5. But several years later, when the price of real estate in what had now become Silicon Valley first began to escalate and property values routinely soared to obscene heights, a housing developer made Peep an offer she would have been insane to pass up. Reluctantly, she sold her property and the Santa Clara Valley lost one of the finest square dance halls it ever had. With the possible exception of the old Almaden Barn in south San Jose, no other local square dance venue was ever able to take its place.

Fowler's school for newer callers ran for eight consecutive Sunday afternoons and consisted of lectures, demonstrations and student calling. As a teacher/caller coach, Fowler was adequate and, while I derived some benefit from the class, I learned very little that I didn't already know from reading square dance books and magazines and from listening to other callers. For me, the primary value of Fowler's class was that it provided an opportunity for its students to work with real dancers. Student callers traditionally spend a lot of time calling to a spot on their bedroom walls. In Fowler's class, we were required to bring our partners to every class session and we thus acquired a weekly opportunity to call to live dancers - - ourselves!

As we each completed our turn on the microphone, Fowler evaluated our efforts and made some sort of critical commentary. I didn't find his critiques to be especially insightful or useful and I often disagreed with his advice, not just when he assessed my own work, but also when he judged the efforts of the other students. At first I thought I was missing something. How could someone as inexperienced as I was in those days, take issue with the opinions of someone with Bill Fowler's stature and reputation? Was I so far off base? Was there something I didn't understand? Fowler's work as a coach was acceptable but I am convinced that one of the reasons I later became a caller coach was because I knew I could do a better job than Fowler.

Traditionally, every dancer couple retains a warm spot in their hearts for the caller who originally taught them to dance. Most callers tend to remember their first caller coach the same way. Just as Betty and I still have fond memories of Bob Tripp, I continue to hold Bill Fowler in the highest regard, if for no other reason but that he got me started as a caller.

Fowler retired in the 1970s and moved to the Carmel area where I understand he took up raising kiwi fruit. In 1997, Betty and I were invited to a reunion of one of Fowler's early San Jose square dance clubs, the *Shooting Stars*. It was held at a dancer's home in Nevada City, California and, for the first time in approximately thirty years, we saw Fowler again. Like all of us, he had aged a bit but, other than that, he really hadn't changed. We were delighted to see him and we were soon reminiscing about the good old days. As he had always done all those years ago, he consistently managed to steer the conversation toward his own glory days as a caller and he also went to great pains to resurrect an old feud he once had with another old-time northern California caller, Bill Castner. No one present that day could understand why he kept harping on his problems with Castner, especially since Castner had passed away at least ten years earlier. No one cared any more and no one remembered anything about it but Fowler himself. It was sad.

The time-honored first step for almost every would-be caller is to learn to sing a singing call.¹ I was no exception. Months before I enrolled in Bill Fowler's callers' class, I had memorized the words and choreography of a call on the Bogan label entitled, *I Saw Your Face in the Moon*. It was the very first singing call I ever sang. The tune was bouncy and bubbly and I worked up a stylized, showman-like arrangement for its presentation.

I practiced and practiced that call for weeks but I could never find anywhere to call it. The opportunity finally came, however, when the Korn Krackers club scheduled a special amateur night party. My tip was well received and I basked in the approval of my fellow dancers. Everyone urged me to continue my efforts. Club caller Lou Hughes was especially complimentary and that, of course, was all the encouragement I needed. I bought some additional singing call records and began to build a singing call repertoire.

1.. For readers unfamiliar with square dance terminology, a *singing call* is a type of square dance in which a caller sings a well-known song but substitutes square dance directions for most of the song's original lyrics. The term *patter call* identifies a more conventional dance form in which a caller chants the calls to a traditional musical accompaniment. Although there are many exceptions, a *tip* usually consists of a patter call followed by a singing call.

When Fowler's caller class came to an end, he sponsored a graduation dance at the K-5 Barn. It was well attended and we had a full hall - - about twenty squares of dancers. The date was May 28, 1958, just about a year from the time Betty and I attended our first night of square dance lessons. All the students called (I remember there were eight of us) and the dance was a huge success - - especially for me. At the conclusion of my tip, I received a warm round of applause and many compliments from the dancers and from my fellow students as well. I was later approached by Paul and Valeta Rice, a caller - round dance couple from the Salinas area who operated a square dance club in nearby Castroville. They asked if I would be interested in calling a dance for their club the following month and offered a fee of ten dollars. I jumped at the chance. It was the first money I ever earned as a square dance caller.

We learn to call in many ways. There are week-long callers' schools; there are weekly classes similar to Fowler's; and there are caller clinics or seminars that may last anywhere from an entire week-end to a brief hour or two at a callers' association meeting. There is a vast amount of calling literature available including books, magazine articles, and subscription choreography services. They deal with almost every aspect of the caller's job and student callers can learn a lot from them. There is also mentoring, a program in which an experienced caller agrees to train an inexperienced novice. The scope of these programs may range from a formally structured one-on-one apprenticeship, to a

series of informal chats after a dance. Many successful callers have gotten started by participating in such a program. I am one of them.

After I completed Bill Fowler's callers' class, I also had the good fortune, for about six months or so, to have had a popular San Jose caller volunteer to be my personal mentor. His name was Jerry Firenzi. Jerry was an optometrist who had also become one of San Jose's top-rated callers. He called for The Gadabouts, a well-known square dance club. As a caller, Jerry was technically proficient and, in addition, boasted a flashy, highly personal mike style. He also played the accordion and organized an excellent square dance band that frequently played at our local dances,

The way a caller got started in those days was to recruit and teach a beginners' class. When the time came for me to start mine, I not only needed to find new dancers, I also needed to be sure I could teach them properly. I mentioned this to Jerry. He told me that while he couldn't help me find students, he'd be pleased to assist me with my teaching. Jerry was himself starting a new beginners' class at that time and suggested that I monitor his lessons each week to observe what he taught and how he taught it. It turned out that the night of the week that Jerry had chosen for his new class immediately preceded the night I had selected for my own class sessions. We therefore devised a plan in which I would observe each one of Jerry's lessons and then, at my own session the following night, repeat what Jerry had done the night before. When I reported back the following week, I would describe whatever problems I encountered and Jerry would recommend possible solutions. It turned out to be an invaluable experience and I learned a lot from it.

I owe a lot to Jerry Firenzi. Not only was he directly responsible for making my first beginners' class a success, he helped me in many other ways. He took me under his wing, gave freely of his time and provided much needed guidance and counsel in practically every calling skill. I believe the reason Jerry and I hit it off so well was because, as an instinctive showman himself, he recognized the same tendencies in me and each of us considered the other to be a kindred spirit. At

a time in my calling career when I needed it, Jerry's faith in my potential ability bolstered and reinforced my confidence and I will always be grateful for his support.

Bill Fowler had taught one or two callers' classes prior to the one I attended. Without his sponsorship and wholly on their own, his graduates formed a kind of self-help group for newer callers. They called themselves **Fowler's Howlers** and any alumnus of Fowler's callers' classes was eligible for membership. They convened once each month to exchange choreography, to discuss new teaching techniques, and to listen to each other call. They periodically sponsored special student dances. These were known as **Beginner Hoedowns** and the concept was later expanded to become a popular area-wide institution. One or two of the Howler's members would take turns calling these dances (for which they took no fee) and the profits were used to hire well known caller coaches to conduct training seminars or clinics at future meetings. I joined the group as soon as I became eligible and they helped me greatly. The Howlers provided a friendly forum for a stimulating interaction with my peers, they validated my own status as a competent caller and, in general, allowed me to establish my **bona fides** in the local square dance community.

One often hears stories about how insecure callers are; about how their dealings with other callers are characterized by jealousy, mistrust and suspicion. This was not the case with the Howlers. I remember them as a very accommodating group who were genuinely and unselfishly committed to helping newer callers. Years later, there was a time when I was the only one teaching callers in the Santa Clara Valley. In those days I often suggested that my own graduates form a similar group, but nothing ever came of it. I am certain that affiliations like the Howler's have existed before in other parts of the square dance world, and that some may even be active today - - but I have never encountered a single one. Pity!

There comes a time in every new caller's career when he must put up or shut up; when the academic part of his training is over and when he must, for the first time, actually function as a caller. Up until that point he has learned by studying, reading, listening and observing. Sooner or later, he must also learn by doing.

I had been thinking along these lines ever since completing my class with Bill Fowler and now that time had come. I had been studying how to swim; now it was time to jump into the pool! I bought a second-hand public address set from a well-known East Bay caller named Virginia Johnson. It was an old beat-up red Newcomb and it had definitely seen better days. Nevertheless, it had all the requisite components: amplifier, variable speed turntable, a matched set of speakers, a microphone, and box crammed full of assorted cords and cables. I forget how much I paid for it, but it couldn't have been very much. The main thing was that everything worked and I was ready to try my wings! With Jerry Firenzi as my guide and mentor, I couldn't put it off any longer.

Betty and I set about organizing a class. Betty talked to neighbors and I arranged for the use of a nearby school cafeteria. I printed up some announcement flyers which I hung on hundreds of doorknobs in the neighborhood and which I also distributed at local supermarkets and shopping centers. In addition, we talked to as many people as possible and on our first night, succeeded in attracting six couples.

I was pleased. My main objective had been to put together a class of at least a single square so that I would be able to teach a complete set of lessons. My six couples were a square and a half, more than enough to satisfy my objectives. The challenge now was to show them all a good time so that they would return the following week. I went through my evening's program and they all had fun (A caller can always tell!) I gave our group a pep talk at the end of the evening and made them

each promise to bring another couple the following week.

I could hardly wait for the week to go by. Imagine our delight when, the following week, the number of sign-ups had risen to two and one-half squares. The increase was largely due to the efforts of a friend and neighbor, Grace Brill. Grace had a get-things-done kind of personality and she and her husband Don were one of the six couples who had attended our first night. She decided to insure that the class continued by almost single-handedly recruiting the four additional couples. I remember some, but by no means all, of the couples who made up that first class: Ralph and Mickey Oppido, Tim and Jan Bachuber, Bob and Betty Thompson and, of course, Don and Grace Brill.

And so, with the help of Grace Brill, the guidance of Jerry Firenzi, and the support and encouragement of my wife Betty, I launched my career as a square dance caller. Week after week I taught my students how to square dance and, week after week, they kept coming back for more. For me, it was an enormously gratifying series of events. It was not unlike a doctor's internship. By accepting sole responsibility for the planning and for the hands-on implementation of every aspect of a weekly square dance program, my competence as a caller rose significantly. More than any other part of my training, that class encouraged me to think of myself as a caller. Not only did it fine tune my abilities to perform most of the standard calling skills, it provided an ongoing means for me to express myself artistically and creatively - something I had been seeking all my life.

It had been my intention, at the completion of the class, to organize the group into a new square dance club with me as their caller. This was customarily what a new caller did with his first beginners' class and I was looking forward to it. As luck would have it, however, a small square dance club in Sunnyvale had lost their caller shortly before our class was due to graduate and they were actively seeking a replacement. They had heard about me and had been anxious to check me out. The club was about four years old and was called the Western Squarenaders.

A delegation from this group came to our class one evening to hear me call and, apparently, they were pleased. They came back every night thereafter and ended up by hiring me to call a couple of club dances for them. I was flattered and I accepted their invitation. It was an audition of sorts and I must have done well because at the end of the second night, they offered me a job as their permanent club caller. I accepted and I became their official caller of record.

As it turned out, the club was fairly small and I suspect they were more impressed with my soon-to-be-graduated beginner class, than they were with my calling ability. In any event, they offered to sponsor our graduation party at their hall in Sunnyvale. They were obviously eager to make a favorable impression on the class and everyone knew that their real motive was to extend invitations to each of the new couples join their club. I had no objections. Since I had now become their club caller, I also encouraged my students to join and, indeed, most of them did.

I have always viewed this series of events as a reversal of the usual procedure. In most cases, a class joins a club and while, strictly speaking, that is indeed what happened here, it must be remembered that our class of nine couples outnumbered, by at least half, the total membership of the Western Squarenaders which is why I have always considered that, in this instance, the club joined the class.

It has been my experience that a person's career rarely turns out to be the one he trained for and that most of us end up making a living doing something we hadn't prepared for. This is not a hard and fast rule, of course, and there are many exceptions. I will grant you, for example, that most people who study the law become lawyers, most med-school students become doctors and most graduates of engineering schools will typically find work as engineers but all of that

notwithstanding, in the majority of cases, the average person today is probably working in an occupation he hadn't planned on or trained for. This has certainly been true with me. I am fond of saying that if someone had told me when I was a teen ager growing up in Williamsburg, that I would one day make a comfortable living calling square dances, I'd have stolen their hubcaps! But that is exactly how my life turned out. In my mind, I was now a full-fledged caller. I had been to school, I had recruited and taught a complete beginners' class, and I was working as the accepted caller for a recognized area square dance club. My life had taken a very positive turn. I sensed big things were in store for me and that success was just around the corner.



A BRAND NEW CALLER - 1959



FIRST FORMAL PHOTOS
CALIFORNIA STATE CONVENTION, 1960

CALLER-IN-RESIDENCE (1959-1985)

*The rule of my life is to make business a
pleasure, and pleasure my business,
(Aaron Burr)*

My calling career began when I enrolled in Bill Fowler's school in 1958. I became a working caller when I taught my first beginners' class in 1959, and a club caller when the Western Squarenaders hired me later that same year. When it became evident that I could earn more money calling square dances than writing resumes, I closed my San Jose office and devoted my energies to calling full-time. In 1985, I retired and Betty and I moved to Lake Tahoe. I had been a square dance caller for more than twenty-seven years.

To follow my calling career, it is necessary to understand how square dancing is organized in northern California. Most square dance clubs are dancer-operated, but there are also a number of caller-operated groups. Almost all the clubs dance on mid-week nights; there are Monday clubs, Tuesday clubs, Wednesday clubs, and so on. And while no clubs dance weekly on Saturday nights, each mid-week club typically sponsors one or two Saturday night **Hoedowns** per year. For such dances, they usually hire a caller other than their own, someone who is well-known and who, it is hoped, will attract a big turnout. Hoedown callers are specifically hired for their box-office appeal and their popularity is easily measured by counting how often they work on Saturday nights.

Despite frequent out-of-town engagements in both domestic and overseas locations, I always maintained a locally-based home program. My yearly date books between 1958 and 1985 clearly show the extent of that activity. During my career, I have been the club caller for four different dancer-operated clubs and I have taught a total of sixty-five separate beginner classes. I have successfully operated a number of regularly-scheduled caller-run workshop groups and I have taught several Advanced dancing classes at both the A-1 and A-2 levels. I was a popular Saturday night caller and, for a large part of my calling career, I worked an average of forty-eight Saturdays a year.

The Western Squarenaders was the first club to hire me. They had been around a few years but I knew nothing else about them. I guessed they had probably had some problems but I had no idea what they might have been. When they hired me, their membership was only three or four couples and they acted like a club anxious to make a fresh start. One of the first things they did was to change their name: they dropped **Western** from their title and became **The Squarenaders**. With a new name and a new caller they were, for all intents and purposes, a new club.

Soon after I became their caller, they sponsored my second beginners' class. The graduation photo, dated September 1959, shows three full squares of smiling faces, all of whom joined the club and we continued to grow. I taught a class for the Squarenaders every year after that and, in this way, insured an infusion of new dancers at regular intervals. During this time, I acquired valuable experience in the techniques of club calling, especially in the art of programming. The hardest part of any club caller's job is to keep his choreography fresh and interesting and to entertain the same

group of dancers week after week after week. Weekly programming is one of a club caller's most difficult responsibilities. Calling for the Squarenaders added this critical skill to my repertoire.

The Squarenaders went against custom and made their annual anniversary Hoedown a split-bill dance. They hired me, a relative unknown, to share the program with a guest caller. This was quite generous and I appreciated it. It gave me my first Saturday night exposure. Not only did the Squarenader hoedowns introduce me to Saturday night calling, they provided a convenient platform for me to demonstrate my talents as a showman.

It was my idea to assign a theme or *motif* to each Squarenader anniversary dance. Two of them were particularly memorable. One year we put on a Circus Dance and everyone came in an appropriate costume. There were lion tamers, acrobats, bearded ladies, belly dancers and lots and lots of clowns. I, of course, came dressed as the Ringmaster. The hall was decorated to look like the inside of a circus tent and we played taped calliope music outside the hall and had circus barkers greet the dancers as they arrived.

Another year we had a Polynesian theme with palm tree decorations; everyone wore hula skirts, sarongs, scruffy beachcomber outfits and similar costumes. At this dance we introduced a running-gag between the tips. A minute or two after the first tip had ended, we played a tape of a loud, clanging fire engine bell. A pretty young lady in a hula skirt suddenly came running through the hall, weaving her way between the dancers and screaming loudly. I was running directly behind her, chasing her with a pair of scissors as if I meant to cut away her hula skirt. The entire scene lasted only a minute, just long enough to catch everyone's attention and then, just as suddenly, it disappeared. During the next break, we did it again only this time I wielded a large pair of garden shears. Next break I had a lawn mower and, the break after that, a noisy power lawn mower. That last time, however, I quickly re-entered the hall, smiling lewdly as I strolled through the crowd, jubilantly waving the hula skirt I had been chasing. My assistant in the hula skirt was Jeannie Spaulding. We met Jeanne and her husband Chuck at a dance and we became good friends. They later retired to Oregon but we still hear from them via e-mail.

One of my most memorable showmanship efforts was the Mad Hatters Dance. This was a so-called beginners' hoedown, a Saturday night dance deliberately programmed for students still in lessons. It became an enormously successful annual event. The gimmick here was to encourage everyone to wear a hat and, during a mid-dance Hatter's Parade, we awarded prizes for the biggest hat, the smallest hat, the craziest hat, the most original, and so on. Charlie Miller, a friend from another club, was a hat collector and he let me borrow some of his hats each year. As the official Mad Hatter, I would change my hat several times during each tip. I'd wear a fireman's helmet, a bull fighter's hat, a fez, a Conquistador's helmet, a Viking's hat with horns, a London Bobby's hat, a full-feathered Indian head dress, and many others. Charlie's hats were all genuine and part of the fun of every Mad Hatter's dance was to see what kind of hat I'd wear next.

In the 1960s and 1970s, attendance at the Mad Hatter dances averaged between 40 to 50 squares per dance. The record, however, was a Mad Hatters dance in San Jose where more than 100 squares were in the hall. I later also called Mad Hatter dances in Yuba City, Santa Rosa, Reno and Los Angeles. They too were successful.

Shortly after I began calling for the Squarenaders, I was approached by a small group of square dancers who worked at the large IBM plant in south San Jose. They were hoping to form a new IBM-sponsored square dance club and wondered if I would be interested in becoming their club caller.

In many respects, it was an unusual offer. As far as I knew, this kind of thing had never been tried before, at least not in northern California. Their proposal intrigued me. Corporate sponsorship was a novel concept and, if their plan worked out, it could have far-reaching consequences for the entire activity.

It was also unusual that they came to me. I was pleased, of course, but not a little surprised. My skills were improving all the time but I was still the new kid on the block and, at that time, I had yet to complete my first year as a club caller. Nevertheless, I sensed a challenge and agreed to consider their proposal.

Their plan was to recruit a new beginners' class at the IBM plant and, once the class was underway, apply for sponsorship under the IBM Watson Trophy program. The Watson Trophy is part of IBM's employee recreation organization. It sponsors and funds IBM's sports teams and hobby groups. The idea was to form a club of IBM dancers and then ask IBM for sponsorship. Until a class was actually up and running, we would need to be financially self-sustaining. If we were subsequently allowed to join the Watson Trophy program, IBM would underwrite all our expenses, including hall rent, badges, refreshment gear, caller fees and the rest. It sounded very promising and I told them to count me in.

They rented an old grange hall in the little town of Almaden about five miles from the IBM plant. We christened it the Almaden Barn, made up flyers and distributed them throughout the IBM facility. Four squares of beginners showed up the first night and after two more sessions, we had assembled more than six squares of IBM dancers who were eager to learn how to square dance. When that class graduated, we immediately started a second class which added five more squares to our group. In less than a year we had become a viable weekly square dance club.

Meanwhile, talks with the Watson Trophy people had reached a non-negotiable impasse. The Watson Trophy is an annual prize awarded to the best in each of their sponsored activities: to the baseball team that won the most games, to the bowling team with the highest scores, to the bridge players who survived the elimination play-offs, and so on. I was asked to develop a contest that would determine the winners of a Watson Trophy for square dancing; to devise a competition that would decide which of our dancers were better than all the others. I simply couldn't do it.

Traditionally, square dancing has always boasted that it is a non-competitive activity. While there are many differences among individual dancers, we welcome our dissimilarities and we count our diversity as an asset. It is an important part of our heritage that no one dancer outshines or outclasses the other. Some may have a clearer understanding of the choreography, others a keener sense of grace and rhythm; some may dance more stylishly, while others might wear flashier costumes, but none of that matters. On the dance floor we are all equal and it goes against the grain to turn square dancing into a contest. Fortunately, the IBM dancers shared this philosophy and so, with a touch of regret, we withdrew our request to join the Watson Trophy program.

We did not, however, give up our newly formed square dance club. We were having far too much fun for that. We decided to keep the group going without an IBM connection. At my suggestion, we named the club the *Square Hoppers* and, instead of joining the Watson Trophy program, we applied for membership in the Santa Clara Valley Square Dance Association. We became a very successful area club.

The group continued to prosper and, at one point several years later, we were the largest club in the area with a regular dues-paying membership of up to thirty squares. We became too large for the Almaden Barn and moved to Nordahl Hall in Saratoga. I taught the Square Hoppers' beginner

classes and remained their club caller until I retired in 1985, a period of more than twenty-five years. It was the longest - - and the most fondly remembered - - affiliation I have had with any one square dance club.

With the formation of the Square Hoppers, in 1959 , my popularity as a caller in the area accelerated rapidly. I now called for two clubs and I taught their beginner classes as well. I decided the time might be right to see if I could attract enough dancers to sustain a twice-a-month pay-as-you-go square dance workshop. The Squarenaders and the Square Hoppers were both dancer-operated clubs. The group I now had in mind would be strictly caller-run and would offer a workshop program designed to improve and upgrade the dancers' knowledge of the calls in both standard and non-standard applications. It would also explore some of the many experimental new calls that were beginning to appear. I hoped, in this way, to provide a place for dancers who, in addition to dancing with their own clubs, would enjoy something just a little bit different.

I called it the Sidewinders Workshop and, in the beginning, it was slow to build a following. It eventually caught on, however, and we regularly danced upwards of six to seven squares. My date book shows that the Sidewinders began in September 1959 and lasted for more than ten years.

Sidewinders danced twice a month on alternate Friday evenings. After the second year, I added a second workshop called the *Adventurers*. They danced on the Fridays the Sidewinders were dark and while I did most of the calling, I often surprised our dancers by hiring an out-of-town guest caller. I later expanded the Sidewinders and Adventurers to include dances in Santa Cruz and Salinas.

I cherish a memory of one particular Sidewinders dance I called in the Salinas High School Music Room. During the dance, the school band returned from a football game to drop off their instruments. So as not to interfere with our dancing, they quietly placed their instruments on chairs and tables and silently left the room. The Music Room had no stage and I was calling on a raised platform. Unable to find a table, the band's cymbalist gingerly placed his cymbals at my feet on the platform and, smiling apologetically, silently tip-toed out. He hadn't disturb me in the slightest and I kept on calling. However, the proximity of those two giant cymbals had given me a delicious idea.

I had always nurtured a secret longing to crash two large cymbals together - - just as I had seen them do in the movies - - and here , at last, was my chance. I waited until the dance was over and, as the dancers were leaving, I quickly strapped a cymbal securely onto each wrist and then, with a mischievous gleam in my eye , I triumphantly clanged them together. It was absolutely magical! They made a beautiful crashing sound and it reverberated majestically all through the room. Everyone stopped dead in their tracks and turned to see what had happened. I smiled sheepishly, returned the cymbals to the platform, packed up my equipment and, with a self-satisfied grin, drove home to San Jose. Those cymbals had made my day!

According to my date book, I stopped calling for the Squarenaders in October, 1967. I no longer recall why or how it happened. I remember resigning and I also dimly recall that there may have been some ill feeling when I left. I cannot now remember any of the details. I know I came away from whatever our disagreement had been, with a strong resolve to never again call for two clubs in the same geographical area. The Squarenaders may have perceived the Square Hoppers as rivals for my attention and I have a vague recollection that the situation came to a head when one or two beginner couples from a class I taught for the Squarenaders, joined the Square Hoppers instead . In any case, we parted under less than amicable circumstances and I am sure I regretted it. The Squarenaders were my first club and I will always remember them kindly.

About a year after I left the Squarenaders I learned that the Whirlaways, a well-known club in South San Francisco, had lost their caller and were actively seeking a replacement. Despite the fact that I would have to drive to South San Francisco each week - - a tedious forty-five minute trip each way - - I was definitely interested in auditioning for them and decided to throw my hat in the ring.

Originally organized by veteran caller Bill Castner, the Whirlaways were one of northern California's oldest and most respected clubs. They were among the earliest members of the Northern California Square Dancers Association (NCSDA). While I would be pleased to play a role in the Whirlaways long and colorful history and, while I could always use the extra income, it was their membership in the NCSDA that interested me most.

The NCSDA held an anniversary dance each January known as the ***Top Ten Dance***. In those days, the NCSDA comprised more than 200 clubs throughout the greater northern California region. By mutual agreement, San Jose area clubs were ineligible for membership in the NCSDA and could only affiliate with their sister organization to the south, the Santa Clara Valley Dancers Association. Once a year, from a list of the callers who called for NCSDA clubs, each NCSDA club voted for its favorite callers and the top ten vote getters were chosen to call their anniversary dance. In those days, it was not only an honor to be elected to the top ten, it substantially increased that caller's ability to attract dancers to his Saturday night hoedowns and that translated into more bookings and increased caller income,.

I had always wanted to be a part of this popularity contest but, due to the geography of the clubs I called for, I had always been ineligible to compete. That would change if I became the caller for the Whirlaways. I contacted them to arrange for an audition. We set a date and I called a couple of dances for them. They were a friendly group and they danced well and we seemed to hit it off. Each of us had been favorably impressed and, after agreeing on what each expected from the other, I became club caller for the Whirlaways of South San Francisco. The date was September, 1968. It proved to be a mutually pleasant association and, for the next seventeen years, I continued as their caller. I was still calling for them when I retired in 1985. I was also chosen as one of the top ten anniversary callers the very first year I became eligible and I was elected to the top ten list each year thereafter until my retirement.

The drive to and from South San Francisco turned out to be less of a nuisance than I had anticipated and only one time was it a problem. On that particular night, something I ate for dinner didn't agree with me and I suffered an attack of gallstones. I remember feeling queasy on the drive up to South San Francisco. During the dance, however, my nausea turned into a severe and unrelenting pain in the middle of my solar plexus and it quickly became unbearable. I was unable to continue calling and, for the first and only time in my career, I was forced to shut down a dance. Betty didn't always accompany me to the Whirlaways dances but, fortunately for me, this time she had come along and I had someone to drive me home. They say we don't remember pain and that's probably true but, on the way back to San Jose, I distinctly recall rolling around doubled up in the back seat of the car, writhing and twisting miserably as I sought a position that would ease the pain. Nothing helped and we both cursed the day I ever agreed to call for a club so far away.

The moment we arrived home, Betty called the doctor and he told us to go directly to the hospital. He met us there, administered a pain-killer and a sedative and got me admitted. It was my first overnight stay in a hospital since I had my tonsils removed when I was a child. When the doctor came by the following morning, the pain had dissipated and I felt fine. They had me take some tests

which showed that I had gallstones and the doctors recommended surgery to remove my gall bladder. I asked if this was a life or death decision and they told me that while a proper diet might possibly avoid another attack, they nevertheless urged me to approve an operation. I asked how long I'd be laid up and was told that gall bladder surgery would require a minimum of six weeks in bed. I had some prestigious out-of-town bookings scheduled during the next six weeks and I'd have to cancel them if I agreed to go under the knife. I was extremely reluctant to cancel these dates, especially on such short notice, so I repeated my question: would I die if I opted against the surgery. They told me no, but told me that the risk of another attack was not insignificant. I weighed the alternatives for about a minute, then decided I would take a chance on diet therapy. I thanked them for their warning but declined the surgery. For a long time thereafter, I was very careful about my diet. The attack happened nearly thirty years ago and there has been no recurrence. And I still have my gall bladder!

My stay in the hospital was noteworthy for another reason. The gall bladder attack happened shortly after my fiftieth birthday and at this particular hospital, fifty-year olds were automatically assigned to the geriatrics ward. It was my first formal notice that I had turned the corner and was now cruising on the downslope of my life. My ward mates were all in their seventies and one of them, poor soul, moaned and groaned all night long. I told Betty that they'd better discharge me that day because I wasn't going to spend another night in this asylum.

I called for one other club prior to my retirement. It was a newly-formed singles club, the San Mateo chapter of the Bachelors and Bachelorettes (B&Bs). As had been the case with all my other clubs, a delegation of dancers approached me to see if I might be interested in calling for them. I wasn't. At that time, I only had one free night and I was disinclined to give it up. On the other hand, I had very little background calling for singles and, upon reflection, it occurred to me that calling regularly for a singles club would round out my experience. Singles danced with a different partner every tip and engaged in a different style of social interaction. It would all be new to me and would doubtless make me a better caller. I thought about it long and hard and, in the end, I accepted their offer. I became the San Mateo B&B's caller in September, 1974 and I remained so until I retired. I had been with them nearly twelve years.

In the late 1970s, Advanced Dancing became a formally structured, internationally-accepted dance program. It was divided into two parts: A-1 with nearly 50 new calls, and A-2, which added nearly 40 more. Workshop dancers took to the new programs like ducks to water and suddenly Advanced Workshops were all the rage. I was calling for three clubs in those days and teaching their beginner classes as well. Although I was no longer operating my own workshops, I called hoedowns on most Saturday nights and I was frequently out of town calling week-end festivals or conducting callers' clinics and seminars. I had a full schedule and when the new Advanced Dancing programs were introduced, I wasn't anxious to jump on the bandwagon. It would mean a lot of work. I would have to learn the definitions of almost ninety new calls, discover how they interacted with each other and acquire some experience in calling at two new Advanced program levels. It represented a major investment of precious time and adrenalin because the only way I could do it would be to personally organize and teach my own Advanced Dancing class.

I was loath to take on any new projects. At first I thought I could ignore it; I hoped it was just a fad and that it would disappear as quickly as it had appeared. I was wrong. The Advanced programs had captured the fancy of the workshop dancer market and it wasn't long before every professional caller needed the ability to call an effective dance at both the A-1 and A-2 levels. When

I realized that my unfamiliarity with Advanced Dancing might adversely affect my potential ability to be considered for festivals and hoedown dates, I concluded, albeit reluctantly, that I'd better learn how to call Advanced Level dances.

Finding a free night to start an Advanced class was the first problem I encountered -- until my good friend and fellow top-ten caller, Roger Morris had an idea. At that time, Roger was already running an Advanced group in Santa Rosa called the Diamond Dancers. They danced on the first and third Friday nights in the beautiful Monroe Clubhouse in Santa Rosa and Roger was thinking of starting an Advanced class on the second and fourth Friday nights. Roger's schedule was as busy as mine and he wasn't looking forward to the new class, so he suggested that we solve both our problems by letting me teach the new class instead. I called Saturday night hoedowns in Santa Rosa fairly regularly and had developed a loyal local following. Roger's suggestion seemed made to order for me and I quickly went along with the plan.

I studied the Advanced calls and taught both the A-1 and A-2 programs to the Diamond Dancers' class and that did the trick. In less time than I had expected, I acquired the ability to call the Advanced programs proficiently. When the class was finished, the club became an every Friday night affair with Roger continuing on first and third Fridays, while I continued to call on the alternate Friday nights.

Roger Morris was a good caller and a long-time friend. He lived in Sacramento but would often telephone me in San Jose to talk shop or swap stories. He succumbed to prostate cancer in 1994 and I spoke at his eulogy. He had a wry sense of humor. When the doctor who diagnosed his disease told him that he was terminal, Roger didn't miss a beat and immediately responded, ***So are you!*** I miss him.

Browsing through my date book, it would appear that my Saturday night bookings began to fill up after I had been calling for about five or six years. Many of my Saturdays were out-of-town dates and required week-end travel. Most of them, however, especially in the early days, were in northern California. I worked for clubs in the greater San Francisco Bay Area including clubs located in the South Bay, East Bay and throughout the Santa Clara Valley. My local Saturday night travels took me from Ukiah and Santa Rosa in the north; to Yuba city and Sacramento in the east; to Santa Cruz and Carmel in the west; and south to Gilroy and Salinas. I was a very popular Saturday night caller.

As a publicity device, some callers made up Fan Badges (***I Love John Smith*** or something similar) and sold them to their dancers. My version of the fan badge was something called The Swinging Peters badge which I gave away to the dancers, at no cost, at a special Swinging Peters dance sponsored annually by the Question Marks club in Santa Rosa. Actually some Question Marks dancers originated the idea and surprised me with it. They were a small group of square dance friends who called themselves the Santa Rosa Hoers. They wore Hoer badges that proudly proclaimed their motto: ***Y'gotta be a Goer if y'wanna be a Hoer***. They made Betty and me honorary members.

One Saturday night they came to a dance I called in Marin County and, as we socialized at a pizza parlor after the dance, I mentioned that I had been thinking about developing a fan badge of my own. They agreed it would be a good idea and proposed the concept of an annual Bill Peters Badge Dance. They designed the badges, made them up, and the very next dance I called for the Question Marks was designated as a Swinging Peters Dance. The date was April, 1971 and it was the first of many. It became an annual affair and I called fifteen Swinging Peters dances altogether.

The badge was rectangular, approximately two inches by two and one-half inches. It was black and had a large white letter **P** as its design. The curve of the **P** bore the legend, *The Swinging Peters* spelled backwards (sretepgnigniweht). Each badge had a 1/4 inch hole in the lower right-hand corner through which a white 3-inch cord was attached by tying a knot at each end of the cord.

These dances were very well attended, Purchasing those badges and giving them away was one of the smartest career investments I ever made. We called the dance every year and to those dancers who already had badges, I gave a little colored paste-on circle, called a ball, which they could stick onto the margin of the badge. The ball for each dance was a different color and some dancers enjoyed comparing badges to see who had the most balls.

Calling square dances is a performance art and it sometimes difficult to ascertain why one performer is successful and another is not. Why are some callers more fun to dance to than others? Why do some callers regularly attract large numbers of dancers while others do not? As a caller coach, I have studied these questions and definitive answers are elusive. A caller's job combines a broad range of independent skills. I have often likened a caller to a juggler who keeps many balls in the air at the same time. There are some exceptions, but the basic techniques of a square dance caller fall into three separate and distinct categories: Choreography, Showmanship, and Leadership. A caller's popularity depends heavily on his abilities in these three areas and no caller can succeed without at least some degree of expertise in all of them.

I was a successful caller and I have often asked myself why. Why was I popular? Why did my calling appeal to the dancers? I had obviously mastered the basic presentation skills: I could sing rhythmically and on pitch and I knew how to deliver the choreography so that it blended and flowed smoothly from one call to the next. My material was always interesting, unusual, and fun to dance, although I freely confess that very little of it was original and most of it had been written by others. My choreographic judgments have always relied on a built-in sixth-sense ability to predict beforehand the kind of a choreography that a given group of dancers would enjoy and my willingness to take the time and effort to find it.

These are essentially mechanical skills; they represent the science of calling and they are relatively easy to acquire. Once learned, they are also easy to perform. I share this expertise with hundreds of other callers and, while this knowledge has contributed to my success, it alone does not explain it. What made me stand out from most other callers was my innate talents as a showman.

It is one thing to present a program of square dance choreography to the dancers. It is quite another to do so in a showman-like manner. This skill embodies the art of calling and it is in this area where I believe I have excelled. From the start, my calling has consistently demonstrated a high level of showmanship. I have cultivated a unique and highly personal microphone style for the presentation of both patter and singing calls. My patter is presented crisply and cleanly and my patter chant is always pitched on the appropriate musical chord. My singing calls are carefully-crafted musical arrangements specifically designed to demonstrate my individual talents as a singer, musical arranger and showman.

Callers use 45 r.p.m. records for their musical accompaniment, which means that we all use the same music. To avoid sounding like everyone else, a caller needs to deliberately personalize his rendition of a given singing call and try to make his version stand out from the rest. I have created all of my singing call arrangements. Each singing call presentation bears the unique imprint of my own individuality. It is immediately recognizable and hard to duplicate.

My musical tastes have always leaned toward jazz and the tunes of the big band era. These preferences have guided my decisions about which calls to sing and how to sing them. I have always preferred the pop music of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and have generally shied away from the country-western and rock and roll tunes that seem to impress most modern callers. My arrangements embody jazz-like improvisations and feature a wide range of harmonic variations. I present some calls in an easy, relaxed and laid back manner, while others gradually build to an irresistible, hard-driving crescendo.

One such number has become my signature call. Its title is ***Down On Bourbon Street***. It is an old New Orleans jazz number and the band plays it in a rambunctious Dixieland style. My arrangement matches - - and then surpasses - - the *joi d' vivre* of the musicians; my enthusiasm builds to a fever pitch of excitement that is so intense, I can only call the number the end of a dance because anything that follows pales in comparison and would seem anticlimactic. For most of my career, Down on Bourbon Street was my most requested singing call.

I have demonstrated singing call showmanship in other ways. I wrote and recorded a number called ***Nineteen Minutes Left To Go***. For this number, I turned an old New England folk song into a singing call square dance. It tells the story of a poor soul on the gallows ticking off the minutes before they spring the trap door. The dance starts with nineteen minutes left to go, then eighteen, then seventeen, and so on down the line until, at the end of the call, there are no minutes left and he is hanged. When I called this piece, I sometimes had difficulty keeping track of how many minutes were left, so I had Betty stand near the stage and hold her hand to her face showing the correct number of fingers to remind me of my progress through the call. At the end of the dance she showed only one finger. (Why was it always the middle finger?)

Betty helped me with other showmanship gimmicks. I called a festival weekend in Anchorage, Alaska and, for the after party, we rehearsed an old vaudeville routine that I had seen many years ago. I set up a table full of various kinds of noisemakers including duck calls, New Year's Eve horns, tambourines, honkers, rattles, maracas, popping balloons, and just about anything else that would make noise. Betty held a large taxi horn in one hand - - the kind that honks when you squeeze a large rubber bulb - - and she stood in front of a music stand, slowly turning the pages as if she were studiously following the music as it was played. The music was a Dixieland record of Tiger Rag and I scrambled madly about the table rhythmically playing all the noisemakers on the table in a traditional Spike Jones style and pretended to have difficulty keeping up. As my antics became more frenzied, Betty calmly turned the pages of her music and looked bored until, at the final coda, she nonchalantly gave the horn a single, satisfying Ho-o-onk to end the number. It brought down the house!

I took advantage of every opportunity to entertain the dancers. For a number of years, a large group of Square Hoppers went to the Straw Hat Pizza Parlor after their dance on Thursday nights. A 4-piece band had been installed to entertain us and I frequently sat in with the musicians, playing my harmonica or singing jazz songs.

Add this to the theme hoedowns, the Mad hatter's dances, the Swinging Peters badges, and a host of similar on-stage elaborations, and the extent to which showmanship has played a part in my career becomes evident. While I enjoyed square dancing and took pleasure in entertaining my dancers with clever choreography, there can be little doubt that what I enjoyed most about calling was the opportunity it afforded me to perform regularly as an on-stage showman and entertainer.



CIRCUS HOEDOWN - 1963



MAD HATTER'S DANCE - 1965



ENTERTAINING AT THE STRAW HAT - 1965

A CALLER'S CALLER (1963 - 1985)

Those having torches will pass them on to others.

(Plato)

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

(Henry Adams)

I don't know where the notion that I could teach callers came from, especially so early in my career. I had barely been calling for five years when I announced that I was going to teach a callers' class in San Jose. I was hardly a seasoned veteran and the news must have raised many an eyebrow among the more experienced callers in the Valley. On the other hand, I wasn't totally without experience. During the self-help sessions at our Fowler's Howlers meetings, I was often asked to assist newer callers and found that I was able to provide suggestions and guidance in cases where other members could not.

Perhaps this was what emboldened me to consider teaching a callers' class. Or perhaps it was because I believed I could improve upon Bill Fowler's training program. Or maybe it was simply because there hadn't been a callers' class in the area for several years and I sensed that this might be a good time to offer one. Whatever the reason, I took the plunge in 1963 and hung out my shingle as a caller coach.

I prepared a detailed curriculum and wrote a number of handouts describing the calling skills I planned to teach. I rented a hall for eight Sunday afternoons, placed an ad in the local square dance magazine, and was pleasantly surprised when six eager students and their partners showed up for our first session.

As always happens in such situations, the teacher learned more than his students. I discovered that teaching callers wasn't as easy as I had imagined and that I had a lot to learn about coaching. However, I taught my program as planned and several of my students went on to become popular callers in the Santa Clara Valley. Since this was my first school, I carefully monitored my progress and made notes of what worked and what didn't. I thought about how I might improve my lectures and how to make my demonstrations more meaningful; I re-evaluated and re-edited my handouts and, in general, looked for ways to make my coaching better.

I don't know how it happened but when my first school was over, I seemed suddenly to have acquired a word-of-mouth reputation as an effective coach and, during the next few months, I received numerous inquiries asking if I intended to conduct another school in the future. About a year later, I started up my second callers' class and it too turned out well. Not only had I learned a new skill, I had discovered a new source of square dance income.

I continued teaching local caller classes on a regular basis - - roughly one class per year - - until I retired. These were home based schools and I always taught them on Sunday afternoons. I later increased the length of the class from eight sessions to ten. Most of these schools were conducted in San Jose, including one or two in my remodeled garage. I also taught two schools in Santa Rosa and another two in the San Francisco area. The San Francisco schools were sponsored by the Northern California Callers' Association and in those sessions, I shared the teaching and coaching duties with Bill Castner. Some of the most popular callers in the Santa Clara Valley, many of whom are still calling today, are graduates of my home based northern California caller classes.

In the 1970s, a new caller training format emerged on the east coast. It probably started in New England in the mid 1960s when two very well known eastern callers, Earl Johnson and Al Brundage, pioneered a concept where the students came to a resort hotel for an intensive program of caller training. The program was five days long and the school provided complete classroom, dancing, dining room and living facilities. It was an efficient arrangement and the idea soon spread to other eastern cities. Its rapid proliferation suggested two things: first, that I was ready to conduct a live-in school of my own, and second, that the west coast was the logical place to do it.

By the mid 1970s, my national visibility as a festival caller had increased and my reputation as a caller coach was similarly upgraded. I had written and published my first how-to-do-it book about square dance calling and I was also the editor and publisher of a monthly callers' note service with a respectable international subscription list. I wondered whether my name alone carried enough weight to make an out-of-town Bill Peters school feasible. I decided to find out.

In 1974, I completed a calling engagement at a popular square dance camp near South Fork, Colorado. It was called Fun Valley and it was situated 8000 feet above sea-level in a remote part of the Rockies. Snow closed the mountain passes in the winter and the resort could only remain open between June and September. Their typical season began on the Memorial Day weekend and closed right after Labor Day and, during this time, they hired callers hoping to attract vacationing square dancers to their resort. When I considered the problem of where to conduct a western live-in school, Fun Valley came immediately to mind. Its location and its facilities seemed ideal for the kind of school I contemplated. The scenery was breathtaking and, while the cabins had seen better days, the resort featured a generous kitchen. The food was delicious and they fed you often; there was a spacious dining hall which could also be used for after parties. The dance hall was in a separate building and could do double duty as a classroom for the morning and afternoon school sessions, and as a dance hall in the evenings.

The owner of the Fun Valley Resort was a gruff old Texan named Mac Henson. He was a colorful character who would bet you that in a room full of 30 or 40 strangers, at least two individuals shared the same birthday. He was seldom wrong! When I spoke to Mac about renting the facility for a callers' school, he told me that he had been thinking about extending his season by a week or two and that my idea of running a callers' school sounded good to him. We settled on terms, struck a deal and the first Bill Peters Callers' School was held at Fun Valley in September, 1975.

I planned to hold three sessions per day for five consecutive days. This was a heavy schedule and too much for me to handle by myself. I would definitely need someone to assist me. I hired Bill Davis. Bill was a fine caller whom I had known since the 1960s. He was a Ph.D. with degrees in Physics, Electronics and Mathematics; he worked for the Lockheed Aerospace Corporation in Sunnyvale. Our initial interactions were casual and seldom involved more than small talk at callers' association meetings. As time went by, however, we discovered that we shared an interest in backpacking and we went on a number of weekend hikes together in the Sierras. Sometimes we took our kids along and sometimes it was just the two of us. I came to admire and respect Bill's keen intellect and his devastatingly precise turn of mind, especially in the field of square dance choreography.

Bill had analyzed the structure of modern square dance choreography in a way that, as far as I knew, no other caller had done before. He unselfishly shared these perceptions with me and provided choreographic insights I hadn't previously understood or appreciated. Where I was a talented showman, he was an equally talented choreographer/technician and we represented a unique combination of both the art and science of calling. We genuinely liked each other and we made an excellent coaching team.

Our first Fun Valley School turned out well and we taught another one at the same location the following year. I then moved the school to the Showboat Hotel in Las Vegas where the schools were even more successful. Between 1977 and 1985, we taught one or more schools at the Showboat each year. While our first schools comprised a single five-day program and catered to the needs of both beginning and experienced callers, we later expanded our operations to offer two schools: a five-day program for newer callers and a second five-day program for callers with experience. The two schools ran one after the other, separated by a two-day weekend which gave the staff some time to rest up, refresh and regroup. All in all, Bill Davis and I taught over a dozen schools together.

Although we now live an ocean apart, we have remained good friends and, through his wife, Bobbie, we remain in touch by e-mail. Bill suffered a stroke a number of years ago which severely impaired his ability to communicate. His brilliant mind is as active as ever but his verbal abilities are substantially diminished. With great difficulty, he is able to put simple sentences together but it is very difficult for him and his end of the conversation rarely amounts to more than simple yes or no responses. It is a heart breaking tragedy.

The success of the Bill Peters Callers' Schools led to other provocative coaching collaborations. In addition to operating my own schools, I have especially appreciated the several schools I shared with Jim Mayo and I have also enjoyed the schools I taught with Al Stevens in Europe.

I first met Jim Mayo at the Leadership Conference organized by square dancing's former national magazine, Sets In Order. It was held at U.C.L.A. in July, 1964. We didn't work together, however, until nearly ten years later when we met again at the now-famous Asilomar meeting of January, 1973. CALLERLAB, the International Association of Square Dance Callers was created at this historic session and Jim and I were among those who helped originate, develop and implement its basic concepts. We were members of its first Board of Governors.

We came to know each other as a result of our work in CALLERLAB. We worked on many projects together and served on the same committees. We developed a mutual respect, appreciated each others talents, and listened to each other's opinions. Jim is well educated, highly articulate,

level-headed and open-minded. He is an excellent speaker and a prolific square dance author. He also drinks single malt scotch and has a connoisseur's affinity for fine French wines. That we would join together to teach callers' schools was inevitable.

Jim and I have shared the podium at numerous caller clinics and seminars but the one I remember most fondly was a formal debate we had at a CALLERLAB convention in Miami Beach in the 1970s. It dealt with the question of whether the proliferation of choreographic complexity was harmful to square dancing. Jim argued that it was, while I took the opposite view. We had had this debate privately many times before and it continues to this very day. And while neither one of us has as yet completely won over the other, we have, over the years narrowed the gulf and each of us has inched a bit closer to the center. Since every caller must sooner or later decide how much choreographic difficulty to include in his own programs, Jim and I have deliberately discussed this subject in each of the schools we have taught together.

We are both concerned with the future of square dancing and, when our viewpoints diverge, they are not so much disagreements as they are sincere efforts to discover how we might reconcile our differences. It is also important to observe that our many discussions have been singularly devoid of acrimony or mean-spiritedness.

We have jointly conducted callers' schools in Georgia and Texas and also in several cities in Australia and New Zealand. Together with John Kaltenthaler and Herb Egender, we operated the successful Superschool East and West programs. These schools were conducted annually between 1985 and 1993 and were very well attended.

Jim introduced me to the pleasures of fine French wines. He is regarded as CALLERLAB's resident wine connoisseur and, on one occasion, I teased him about it. I suggested that all this to-do about fine wine was a deliberate hoax perpetrated by wine merchants; that its so-called *mystique* was sheer snobbery, and that there really wasn't much difference between one bottle and the next.

Jim promptly set me straight. I was scheduled to stay with Jim and JoAnn at their New Hampshire home on an upcoming calling tour and, during that visit, he conducted a special wine tasting for my benefit. It had been specifically designed to educate my palate. It compared supermarket Cabernets with both medium grade and premium grade Cabernets from France. The difference between them was astonishing! But now that he has taught me to recognize and appreciate those differences, I don't know whether to thank him or curse him. It is a mixed blessing. Do I thank him for introducing me to the enjoyment of fine wines? Or do I curse him for creating a preference for wines I cannot afford?

Al Stevens is one of the best callers I know. His patter is consistently interesting and his singing calls are a sheer delight. He was a career Air Force Sergeant who retired in Germany in the late 1980s and chose to remain there. He has been a square dance caller for about as long as I have and he is now recognized as one of the top callers in Europe.

He says we first met many years ago at a Northern California Callers' Association Meeting in Alameda. I'm sure he's right but I have no memory of it. My first memory of Al goes back to the first calling tour I organized in Europe in 1980. Al had booked me for a dance in Bitburg, Germany. It turned out to be a great dance and I remember asking Al if he would like to share a final singing call with me. I also remember asking him if he could harmonize. That's like asking Fred Astaire if he can do the time step! We sang Down on Bourbon Street and his ability to coordinate his style with my own blew me away! It was an exciting performance which left the audience clamoring for more. We have since repeated it many times. Betty steadfastly insists that when it

comes to a singing call duet, especially a rouser like Bourbon Street, Al is the only one who can hold his own with me. I tend to agree .

After the Bitburg dance, Al brought me back to Europe four more times - - in 1987, 1989, 1992 and 1996. The purpose of these tours was to teach callers' schools and call weekend festivals. Although we served as co-teachers during the first 1987 schools, I essentially functioned as Al's mentor and my primary responsibility was to show Al the tricks of the coaching trade. I played a similar role during the 1989 schools but that year I also administered part of the oral exams required for Al's formal accreditation as a CALLERLAB. Caller Coach. By the time of the 1992 schools, Al had become accredited and had gained a lot more coaching experience. In the schools we taught that year, as well as in the ones we taught in 1996, Al and I worked side by side as full and complete partners.

In addition to working with Bill Castner, Bill Davis, Jim Mayo and Al Stevens, I have also conducted full-program schools with such well-known coaches and callers as Dave Taylor, Lee Kopman, Cal Golden, Dick Han, Daryl Clendenin, Vaughn Parrish, Stan Burdick, Gloria Roth, Martin Mallard, and others. I have served on the staff of seventy-one full program callers' schools.

I have also been hired to conduct a large number of caller training clinics and seminars. These are typically weekend affairs and will often include an open dance on Saturday night in addition to lectures and demonstrations during the day-time sessions. While the typical five-day live-in school format almost always features student calling sessions, clinics rarely do. According to my date book, I have conducted sixty-six such clinics in all parts of the U.S and Canada and I have worked for most of the activity's leading callers' associations. The last seminar I conducted was the annual Labor Day Weekend Seminar sponsored by the Michigan State Callers' Association in 1997. I had been the featured coach for this event once before, twenty years earlier!

I am also one of the very few coaches who has taught schools especially designed to train caller coaches. In fact, it wouldn't surprise me if the idea for such a school originated with me. In April of 1982, I persuaded Al Brundage, Cal Golden, Jack Lasry, Jim Mayo and Bob Van Antwerp to join me in conducting a three-day training program for student caller coaches. We ran the program immediately before the start of the 1982 CALLERLAB convention in Reno and, despite a terrible snow-storm which closed the roads through the Sierras, our pioneering venture turned out well.

Jim Mayo had called some dances in northern California and we had arranged to meet somewhere in so that he and JoAnn could drive to Reno with us. As luck would have it, there was a huge snowstorm on our travel day and they closed the roads a little past Sacramento. Hoping that they might re-open the roads the next morning, we spent the night in a Sacramento motel. The storm continued all that night and it was still snowing the next morning. The roads remained closed so we decided to drive back to the Oakland airport, park our car and fly into Reno. The coach school, the first ever conducted anywhere, was a big success. I forget how many students we had, but I remember feeling very good about how well the program went and about how effectively our staff of coaching superstars worked together.

At my suggestion, the Superschool staff added a coach school to the program in 1990. We offered it again a few years later. The coach school ran in conjunction with our regular callers' schools. The idea was that in addition to their own special lectures and demonstrations, part of our coach students' training would include observing our experienced staff actually working at a real ongoing callers' school. They would listen to our lectures and presentations and monitor how we worked one-on-one with real caller students. Nothing like it had ever been available before. I later

convinced Al Stevens to allow me to offer a similar coach training program at several of our European schools.

One of my major assignments at CALLERLAB was to serve as the first Chairman of its Caller Training Committee. The committee consisted of a select panel of the activity's leading coaches and, working together, we developed a standardized caller school curriculum. We selected the subjects to be taught and assigned a priority to each of them. We suggested what percentage of a school's total training time be devoted to each of the recommended subjects. This Curriculum has become the accepted guideline followed by all callers' schools operating at the present time.

It may be immodest to say so, but I believe that my greatest contribution to square dancing has been my work as a caller coach. While I am a competent caller, I am a superb coach. As a caller, I have an enviable record of festival bookings and prestigious calling dates. There are, however, many callers whose success equals mine and many more who have enjoyed an even greater popularity. On the other hand, there are only a handful of callers whose coaching background approaches mine. I have been a pioneer in the coaching field and I have made many innovative contributions. It is where I have achieved my greatest reputation.

I have frequently been called a *caller's caller*. If someone had conducted a nationwide poll when I retired in 1985 and asked the average caller to name the top 7 or 8 coaches in the business, I suspect my name would have appeared on most lists. As boastful as it must sound, I'd be less than honest if I said I disagreed.



WITH BILL & BOBBIE DAVIS
LAS VEGAS, 1977



WITH JIM MAYO, EL PASO, 1979



WITH AL STEVENS, DREISSEN, 1987

ON THE ROAD AGAIN.....AND AGAIN.....AND AGAIN (1962-1997)

*On the road again.
I can't wait to get on the road again.
Having fun and making music with my
friends,
I can't wait to get on the road again.
(Willie Nelson)*

A working caller spends a lot of time behind the wheel of his car. In the mid 1970s, I was calling - - and driving - - every night of the week. In addition to club, class and workshop dates in San Jose, I was also driving to weekly engagements in San Mateo and South San Francisco and twice a month to workshops in Santa Rosa and Salinas. On Saturdays, I called dances all across California and beyond: from Eureka in the north to San Diego in the south; from Sacramento, Yuba City and Reno in the east; to all points in between. The miles piled up.

If a Saturday night dance involves a drive longer than three or four hours, most callers prefer to take a motel or stay with friends and drive home the next day. We never did. No matter how long the drive, we preferred to drive home right after the dance. My rationale was that if I stayed over, I lost the next day; Sunday became a travel day which meant that a single dance cost me two days plus the price of a motel. That made the dance unprofitable. But if, on the other hand, we drove home immediately after the dance - - even if it meant driving all night - - we woke up in our own beds on Sunday with the rest of the day still awaiting our pleasure. To me, that made a lot more sense and, as a result, we did a lot of middle-of-the-night driving over the weekends.

At the peak of my career, for example, I called Saturday night dances in the greater Los Angeles area at least a half-dozen times a year. I would always try to amortize the trip, which averaged about six to six and 1/2 hours one way, by promoting a second dance on either the night before or the day after the Saturday dance. This made the event a two-dance weekend and justified staying over. This wasn't always possible and we'd often leave San Jose around noon on a Saturday, drive to L.A., call a dance and, when it was over, turn the car around and drive right back home again. After a while, we came to know intimately every turn in the road, every rest stop, and every Denny's restaurant on California's Interstate 5 freeway.

We could never have done it, if Betty hadn't shared the wheel with me. We originally tested our you-drive-while-I-sleep technique on our 1953 coast-to-coast trip in the Nash. We perfected and refined it when I became a traveling caller. For us, the most efficient strategy was to change drivers every two hours, even if the driver didn't feel tired or the sleeper wasn't ready to wake up. We always felt better if we deliberately swapped roles every two hours and we adhered to that discipline whenever possible.

When it became evident that my calling career would require a lot of nighttime driving, we traded in our car and bought a shiny new, customized GMC van. It was a working vehicle in every respect. Its color was a bright, shiny blue and I personalized the interior to accommodate our long

haul driving habits. I had special shelves and compartments installed in the back to carry my sound equipment. The van's interior was totally carpeted and there were comfortable captain's chairs for the driver and the co-pilot. We had a CB radio and there was a long rod for hanging clothes and petticoats, plus a small closet for things like road maps, a coffee maker/hot plate, a first aid kit, a flashlight, and similar on-the-road necessities. I built a special stand for our vacuum thermos so that the driver could pump a cup of hot coffee while driving. The *piece de resistance*, however, was a sofa across the back that opened out into a double bed -- although I don't recall that we ever used it that way. On most trips, one of us drove while the other one slept stretched out across the back seat sofa.

I remember the van's shakedown cruise. I called a weekend festival in Missoula, Montana and extended the trip to include an extra night at nearby Flathead Lake for a reunion party with some friends who had been with us on our first Hawaii tour. The drive to Missoula was enjoyable but uneventful. The drive home was a bit more interesting.

We decided to leave Flathead Lake about 10:00 PM and we planned to drive straight through to San Jose -- a long journey, but a good way to test the van's nighttime niceties. One thing worried us about leaving so early. After leaving Missoula, the country was so sparsely populated that the nearest town where we might expect to find an all-night gas station was Twin Falls, Idaho. It was 300 miles away and beyond the range of the van's 250 mile gas tank. We mentioned our concerns to our friends at Flathead Lake and they told us that about 150 miles down the highway, we'd come to a small town in Idaho called Arco. They told us that, upon our arrival there, we should drive around until the local sheriff pulled in behind us and then tell him we needed gas. Which is exactly what we did.

We arrived in Arco at three or four in the morning and, after only a minute or two, we saw that a police car had pulled in behind us. I waved the officer over and told him we needed gas. He smiled and politely asked us to follow him. He led us to a closed Chevron station, opened it, filled our tank and even made change and wished us bon voyage before sending us back on our way. It was a lovely, Only-in-America experience. It also, however, alerted us to a possible future problem and the very next week, I doubled our driving range by adding a second gas tank to the van.

We drove the van during most of my calling career and took it with us to Lake Tahoe when we retired in 1985. We finally sold it when Lake Tahoe's annual snowfall made it necessary that both our cars be equipped with four-wheel drive. By that time the van was on its second engine and the odometer showed that it had racked up well over 300,000 miles. It had served us well.

While we certainly did a lot of driving, I was never the sort of traveling caller who, like an old-time itinerant dancing master, traveled from one town to the next calling square dances. I always maintained a healthy mid-week home program and most of my traveling occurred on the weekends. I got my start on the road calling in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. According to my date book, my first out-of-town tour came in June, 1963 when I called consecutive dances in Portland, Tillamook, Richland and Spokane. Many similar tours followed and, over the years, I have called dances in just about every major city in the northwestern U.S. and Canada.

In 1978, I decided to see what life on the road was really like and I booked a major driving tour with dances in Boise, Casper, Omaha, Columbus, Boston, Pocono Pines, Washington, D.C., Skowhegan, Nova Scotia, Beckley, West Virginia, Nashville, Pensacola, Baton Rouge, San Antonio, and Hobbs, New Mexico. The entire trip took exactly three weeks. Most of the dances were on

consecutive nights and usually required a long day's drive from one dance to the next. It was certainly different and I think we enjoyed it - - to a point. What I remember most was how hard it was; how quickly the driving became tiresome and how we chafed under the never-ending pressure of having to make it to the next town in time to call the next dance.

Mechanically, the van performed beautifully but it seemed to grow smaller with each passing day and we were relieved when we finished the tour and finally pulled into our San Jose driveway. While the tour was profitable and the dances paid more than my local club dances, Betty and I agreed that full-time touring took too much out of you and that it was no way to make a living.

Another interesting trip in the van occurred in May 1980. I had been booked to call a dance in Pasco, Washington just two days after the Mt. St. Helens volcano erupted. The air was full of ash and, after two days, it was still so thick that it ruined your car's engine if you drove through it. The local residents kept the ash out of their engines by stretching an old panty hose over their radiators. The Pasco dancers were concerned about our car and they telephoned me at home right after the eruption and told me to park my car 70 miles south in Portland and that they would come and pick us up. After the dance, we spent the night with a caller in Pasco. We watched him as, every hour, he hosed down all of the shrubbery around his house to keep the ash from killing his plants.

We drove the van to Colorado the four times I called or taught schools at Fun Valley. On one of those trips Betty drove there without me. I had accepted a festival booking in North Carolina the weekend before the Fun Valley sessions were due to begin. The travel logistics were complex. First, I would fly to North Carolina on a commercial airline and, on the return trip, fly back to Denver. We then enlisted the aid of our very special Square Hopper buddies, Don and Lu McPherson. We arranged for Betty and Lu to drive the van to Fun Valley while Don, who was a pilot and belonged to a flying club, would fly to the Denver airport in the club's single engine Cessna. Don would meet my plane when it arrived from North Carolina and the two of us would then fly in the Cessna from Denver to Alamosa. Alamosa was the closest landing strip to Fun Valley and, if it all worked out as planned, that's where Betty and Lu would meet us. The four of us would then drive the few remaining miles to Fun Valley.

It all came off without a hitch.. And it was fun! Betty and Lu had a fine time on the drive up and told us that they sang their way through a mild snowstorm over Wolf Creek Pass. Don was not allowed to land his single engine plane at the Denver airport so he found an old abandoned airfield just outside of Denver and parked his plane there. He caught a taxi to the main Denver airport, met my plane and we took another taxi back to the Cessna.

The abandoned airfield where Don had left the Cessna reminded me of an old World War Two aviation movie. Fade In: some old hangars with broken windows and dilapidated shutters banging in the breeze, dust flying in the air and tumbleweeds rolling all around. The music swells, then fades as we hear the sounds of an airplane engine and we segue back in time to 1943. I bet that at least a half dozen films started out that way - - and this old airport looked just like that!

By the time Don and I took off, night had fallen and we flew from Denver to Alamosa in the dark. It was over the Rockies so there were no lights visible below; there was no moon and clouds blacked out the stars. It was eerie. Everything was inky black and you couldn't tell up from down. Don was flying on instruments and after a bit he told me to look to my right and suddenly the blue landing lights of the deserted Alamosa air strip were turned on. Don landed the Cessna and there were Betty, Lu and our trusty old blue van waiting for us. We were all relieved to see each other.

On another occasion, Don and Lu and Betty and I flew in the same Cessna from San Jose to the National Square Dance Convention in Oklahoma City. On the way home, we stopped in Las Vegas to visit Don and Lu's daughter and her family. We spent the night visiting and gambling and the next morning began the last leg of our journey home. It is necessary, when flying west out of Las Vegas, to fly over 4000 foot Mt. Charleston and on this particular morning, the headwinds above 3000 feet were so strong that Don's little Cessna lacked the power to fly over the crest. Don checked his maps as we flew south along the mountain ridges looking for a pass low enough for us to cross. The closest and lowest pass was at Tehachapee near Bakersfield. We flew there and tried several times to fly over the mountains but the winds kept turning us back. We decided we'd better land the plane at the Tehachapee air strip, find a motel for the night and hope that the weather was better in the morning.

For the preceding hour or so, the air had been exceptionally bumpy and I became terribly airsick. The moment we landed and the plane came to a stop, I clambered out of the cabin, ran behind the nearest bush and upchucked everything I had eaten that day. Lu had apparently suffered the same problem for she found her own bush and joined me in my misery. Betty and Don were made of sterner stuff and were unaffected by the turbulence. They stood calmly by, sympathetically waiting for Lu and I to regain our composure.

The Tehachapee air strip consisted of 300 feet of beat-up runway, an old wind sock, and a telephone booth. On a wall of the phone booth was a sign with the name of a motel. It said that if you rented a room, they'd come and pick you up. We called them, rented a double/double, spent the night and, the next morning found that the weather had cleared up. We had an early breakfast and flew home to San Jose without further incident. It had been an exciting week end.

I remember two other adventures in a single engine aircraft. In 1979, I was hired to call the Alaska State square dance festival in Anchorage. It was one of the few festivals where they also paid the airfare for the caller's wife, so Betty came along. When they met us at the airport, they told me that before taking us to our hotel, they had arranged for a publicity interview aboard the single engine plane that a local radio station used to report traffic conditions. Between descriptions of the rush hour traffic in downtown Anchorage, the pilot interviewed visiting celebrities and encouraged them to plug the event that brought them to Anchorage. As we circled the city, I told them all about our upcoming dance.

There was a downtown furrier who allowed George Ioanin, a local caller, to borrow fur coats for visiting callers to wear during their stay in Anchorage. George took us to the furrier's shop where, from a rack filled with expensive furs, Betty and I were each allowed to make a selection. We picked matching sealskin parkas trimmed in white wolverine fur. They were beautiful and worth about ten thousand dollars each. It is probably politically incorrect to wear such furs today, but we felt sinfully pampered at the time. I called the Alaska State festival again in 1982 and we repeated the identical routine.

That first time in Anchorage also stands out in my memory because they paid me in ***cold cash***. My calling fee for the weekend was \$300.00 plus airfare and expenses, so they froze three one hundred dollar bills in a huge cake of ice and gave it to me on stage at the beginning of the dance. They gave me an ice pick, told me my fee was in the ice and, during the breaks between tips, I had to hack at the ice to get my money. It was a great gag! It was also weird to finish calling close to midnight and walk out of the hall to find that the sun hadn't gone down and it was still daylight outside.

On that same trip, they took me up in a single engine aircraft one last time. When the festival was over, one of the dancers, a bush pilot, took me in his plane for a low-level flight over the Mendenhall glacier. It was spectacular. He even let me take over the controls and fly the plane for a few minutes before we landed.

There is no question that it was exciting to be gallivanting around the country, taking in the sights and meeting new people, but it wasn't always fun and games. We had many unpleasant experiences, especially on the highway. Ask anyone who is on the road a lot and they'll tell you that the two things they fear the most are bad weather and the Highway Patrol. We had run-ins with both.

There have been many times in the van when the rain was so heavy, the windshield wipers were unable to deal with the volume and we had to pull over to the side of the road and wait for the rain to subside. We haven't done much snow driving on our calling trips, but there were several times when a snowstorm caught us unexpectedly while driving over the Siskiyou Mountains near the California-Oregon border. On one occasion, we were following an Oregon State snow removal truck traveling south on the I-5 near the Siskiyou summit and we got stuck in the snow. I tried every trick I knew, but I couldn't break out. The wheels kept spinning and my efforts to free us only churned a deeper hole in the snow. Fortunately, the driver of the snow removal truck had seen us and was aware of our plight. He came back to rescue us. He slowly maneuvered his truck behind our vehicle and gently pushed us out of the hole my spinning wheels had made. We were then able to carefully drive over the summit, out of the snow and onto dry pavement.

The Siskiyous are also known for black ice. The term ***black ice*** defines a highway condition in which the surface of the roadway looks like wet pavement but is actually a thin layer of solid ice. Its appearance is very deceptive and, because the driver doesn't recognize the black patch as ice and drives over it as though it was merely a wet stretch of roadway, it can sometimes result in uncontrollable skidding. It is extremely hazardous. We have slipped and skidded our way over the Siskiyous on more than one occasion.

We have also had to contend with heavy fog, especially in California's Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. Sometimes the fog was so thick and impenetrable that you could barely make out the tail lights of the car in front of you. I used to call a Mad Hatter's dance in Yuba City every January, a time when the Sacramento Valley creates its worst fog. The trip home each year was almost always touch and go.

For me, the most fearsome highway menace was the Highway Patrol. I have always found it difficult to keep my speed to the 55 miles per hour legal limit when driving on on freeways designed for much higher speeds and I have been ticketed many times. One year, I had three tickets in a twelve month period. I was given an assigned risk status by the insurance companies and my premiums skyrocketed.

I contested almost every ticket in court and, while I didn't win every time, I often managed

to have my case dismissed. Sometimes, the officer who wrote me up failed to appear and I was off the hook. One of my more amusing court appearances occurred before a San Mateo judge. Truth to tell, with most of the tickets I have received, I have been guilty as charged. This time, however, I was unjustly accused.

I was driving home on a Saturday night from a dance I had called in Ukiah. It was about two in the morning and I had just come over the Golden Gate Bridge and had driven about ten miles on Interstate 280 on the last leg of our trip home when I saw flashing red lights behind me. I pulled over and stopped. The officer casually sauntered over to the van and told me that not only had he observed me speeding, he had seen me weaving dangerously and recklessly changing lanes.

I was certain the officer was mistaken and could only conclude that he had seen another blue van because I knew - - unequivocally and for an absolute fact - - that it couldn't possibly have been me. Despite my protestations, I was unable to convince the officer that he was mistaken. He insisted I had been drinking and when I told him that I had just come from a square dance where drinking is forbidden, he muttered something about people always drank at barn dances and proceeded to administer the usual roadside D.U.I. tests. He had me walk a straight line and do the touch-your-fingers-to-your-nose routines. It seemed to annoy him when I passed every test and he was unable to establish that I was driving under the influence of alcohol. He wrote me up for speeding anyway. I was livid and vowed to see him in court.

It turns out that not only was the officer incorrect when he gave me the ticket, he also assigned me to the wrong venue. At our court appearance, the judge asked me what I was doing in his courtroom and I told him that that was precisely what I wanted to know. I told him I was on my way home from a square dance when..... The moment he heard the words *square dance*, the judge interrupted me.

Square dance, he said, *Do you know Chick Burgess?*

Chick Burgess was a cantankerous old caller in the North Bay and we had known each other for years. He was, in fact, the former caller of the Whirlaways and despite the fact that I had replaced him, we had remained friends and colleagues. Apparently, Chick was also active in North Bay politics and, as I later learned, he and the judge often played poker together.

Yes sir, I told the judge, *Chick's a very good friend of mine.*

That was all the judge needed to hear. Before I could continue my defense, he banged his gavel and dismissed the case.

My travels also required a lot of flying. These were mostly festival bookings or caller clinic/seminar dates. I've experienced all the usual horror stories about lost baggage, missed connections, canceled flights and the like, but several incidents remain in the forefront of my memory. Like the time I was the only passenger on a huge L1011 aircraft

I was coming home from a caller seminar in Orlando, Florida. My flight was scheduled as a non-stop trip direct to San Francisco but, for some reason, they changed my routing when I checked in at Orlando. Instead of a direct flight to San Francisco, they put me on a short hop to Jacksonville and from there I could catch a direct flight to San Francisco. They told me this was necessary due to aircraft availability problems.

I was unhappy about this unexpected change in schedule and I grumbled and muttered obscenities as I walked to the gate. I had expected that the plane for the fifteen minute flight to Jacksonville would be one of those small puddle jumpers they usually use for short commuter runs, but I was wrong. My plane was a gigantic L1011 and I was its only paying passenger. As I boarded

the aircraft, the entire cabin crew were at the door to welcome me. They pointed to the first class section and told me to sit anywhere I liked. They were as amused as I was at the idea that I had this large aircraft all to myself. For fifteen minutes it was my own private jet. The plane out of Jacksonville was another story. It was completely booked and full of squalling babies. It was cramped, dirty and noisy. It was quite a comedown.

The last time I flew on square dance business was in September 1997 when I conducted the Labor Day Weekend Caller Clinic and Dance for the Michigan State Callers Association. I had to fly to Detroit and then catch a commuter flight to Flint, Michigan. The Detroit connection was tight and, to make matters worse, we arrived late. As is always the case, the gate for my connecting flight was at the other end of the airport and by the time I arrived there, they had just closed the doors and my plane was moving to the take-off runway. I asked the girl at the gate what I should do and she got on the telephone and somehow arranged for the plane to return to the gate to pick me up.

Everyone glowered at me as I boarded the aircraft. We would now be late coming into Flint and it was all my fault. I pretended not to notice, found my seat and strapped myself in. It was a twenty minute flight and I spent most of it worrying about the luggage I had checked. It appeared that I was going to make it to Flint more or less on time, but how about my luggage?

I'd had this problem once before. There had been a similar delay and while I made it to the dance in time, my bags did not. It was in Durham, North Carolina and I remember that I had to borrow a shirt from my fellow caller, Bob Fisk, so I would have something clean to wear at the Friday night dance. When we arrived in Flint, I positioned myself at the baggage carousel fully expecting the worst. I needn't have worried. My bag was the very first one out of the chute!

I've conducted three square dance tours to Hawaii. The first was in January, 1973 when Boeing had just introduced its brand new 747 jumbo jet. It was a huge plane and, to attract passengers, they set up two small lounges for the economy class passengers: one in the front and one in the rear. In the front lounge, they served free Mai Tais and you could help yourself from a tray full of *pupus* (Hawaiian finger foods). The rear lounge had several sofas and a magazine rack. We asked a flight attendant if we could square dance in the back lounge and she said why not. So we did. Flying was fun in those days!

The second Hawaii tour took place in 1975 and I led yet another one in 1977. That one turned out to be an exceptionally large and highly profitable affair. Caller Bob Page had just gotten into the travel agency business and, when I was hired as the featured caller for the 1977 Hawaii State Square Dance Festival in Honolulu, he asked me if I would like to lead a tour. In addition to free passage and housing in Hawaii for Betty and me, he offered to pay me an additional fee for each person who signed on.

Bob bent over backwards to promote this tour. He placed ads in *Sets In Order* and other square dance publications and we enlisted enough square dancers from all parts of the country to charter our own airplane from Western Airlines. We were what the travel business calls an Affinity Group.

We had arranged for our passengers to assemble at the Oakland airport on a Wednesday morning in February. We were all gathered in a waiting room when the captain of the plane approached me to ask when we would like to leave. It seems that as the nominal leader of the tour, such matters were left entirely to my discretion. I tried not to look as though this was my first time. I smiled and told him, ***Whenever you're ready, Captain; whenever you're ready.***

Although I have had several opportunities to lead other tours, the 1977 tour was my last. I

found shepherding such a large group to be more trouble than it was worth. Every passenger with a problem dumped it in your lap and expected an immediate solution. The incident that cinched my decision to never lead a tour again occurred when a honeymoon couple came to me in Kauai to complain that they had been assigned a room with twin beds and would I please do something about it.

I have called in 49 of the 50 states. I don't know why, but I have never been asked to call in Iowa. It pleases me to recall that many of my dates were repeat bookings. A caller's repeats are an accurate barometer of his success. Before I retired, I used to call every year at Chuck Goodman's beautiful hall in New Orleans; for about six or seven years in a row, I opened Dave Abbott's Dance Country season in McCloud, California every Memorial Day weekend; I called the Spokane Salmon Festival twice, the Alaska State Festival twice, the Hawaii State Federation Festival three times and, by the time I finish writing this book, I will have called the annual No Ka Oe Festival in Maui for the thirteenth consecutive year.

As I look over my old calling calendars, I can hardly believe how much traveling we actually did, both in the van and in the air. Today, it all seems a bit too much but I didn't think so at the time. Back then I thought it was fun and I truly enjoyed the hectic lifestyle of a busy square dance caller.



COLD CASH, ALASKA, , 1969
(This picture did not copy from the original)

BRAND NEW GMC VAN, 1975

OVERSEAS CHARMS (1977-1996)

When I travel abroad, there is only one thing more remarkable than how unlike everything is from the world I know , and that is how alike it really is.

(Mark Twain)

Betty rarely came with me when I flew to an engagement in the U.S. or Canada.. She always accompanied me, however, when I flew overseas.. I called my first dance in a foreign country in 1977. Since then, we have flown overseas more than twenty times. I have called three times in Japan, twice in Taipei, three times in Australia, five times in New Zealand, and seven times in Europe. Except for Saudi Arabia, I have called in every known square dance venue in the world.

It all started when I called the 1975 State Festival in Hawaii, sharing the bill with Canadian caller, Earle Park. Among the eighty squares who attended the dance were seven squares of dancers from Japan. They delighted us all! They were cheerful and charming, and they danced superbly. I remember thinking, how could we possibly have gone to war with such lovely people.

For our final tip on Saturday night, Earle and I sang a singing call duet. I no longer recall its name but it was an up-tempo, wild and wooly rabble rouser. One of the Japanese dancers, a caller named Matt Asanuma, observed us from the sidelines. He was smiling from ear to ear, totally caught up in our jubilant presentation. As we began building toward the climax of the call, he was unable to restrain himself. He ran up onto the stage and, fully matching our own enthusiasm, joined us as we launched into the final chorus. When we finished, there was unbridled pandemonium in the hall as the crowd roared its approval. It was an unforgettable moment.

Before that dance ended, I was invited to come back to Hawaii to call the 1977 dance and my acceptance was announced from the stage. Shortly after we returned home to California, I received a letter from one of the Japanese callers asking if I would be interested in calling the 20th anniversary dance for the Fukyukai Square Dance Club of Tokyo. Their dance was scheduled for the weekend immediately following the 1977 Hawaii Festival and, while they couldn't afford to pay me a fee, they asked if I would consider calling their dance if they sent round trip airline tickets from Honolulu to Tokyo for Betty and me and took care of all our expenses while we were in Japan. I couldn't get to my typewriter fast enough to write and tell them **Yes!**

That trip to Japan was my first overseas assignment. It was a fantastic experience. As a traveling caller, I have often received the red carpet treatment from my hosts and sponsors, but I was unprepared for how elegantly we were treated in Japan. They couldn't do enough for us. We were introduced to a lovely Japanese lady named Tokuko Yasaraoka. She had been in the Emperor's service for many years and spoke excellent English. She was also a square dancer and had volunteered to be our guide and translator while we were in Japan. She was warm and gracious and she anticipated our every need. We fell in love with her.

We spent our first night at an upscale hotel in downtown Tokyo and the next morning we were driven some eighty miles away to a resort hotel in the little town of Hakone, near Mt. Fuji.

Most of the dancers stayed in dormitory accommodations, but Betty and I were assigned a room all to ourselves. It was very nice, except there was no bed! I didn't understand. The floor was covered with *tatami* mats, but were we supposed to sleep on them?

After the dance that evening, we returned to our room and found that someone had taken cushions and bedding from a wall closet and had fashioned two beds out of them. I remained dubious. The cushions were probably better than the *tatamis*, but they weren't real beds and I was afraid we'd be sleeping on the floor after all! I needn't have worried. That night I lay down on the cushions and I fell asleep as soon as my head hit the tiny cylindrical pillow. I slept comfortably all the time we were there. Betty did too.

Emperor Hirohito's second son, Prince Mikasa, is a square dancer and a charter member of the Fukyukai Club. He came to the weekend and hosted a pre-dance dinner in our honor. The officers of the Japanese Square Dance Society and their wives were also invited. It was an elegant affair. The food was exquisite; it was served on delicate Japanese china and we ate it with solid gold cutlery.

A strict protocol dictated the seating arrangements: as the Prince's honored guests, Betty and I sat on either side of him. Betty was on his right and all the other ladies sat in a row on Betty's right side. All the men sat on my left down the other side. The exact seating depended on how high a position you held in the association hierarchy; the association President sat next to me, then the Vice President and so on down the line. The Prince was served first, then all the men, then Betty and finally, the remaining ladies. The Prince spoke fluent English and our dinner conversation was polite and formal, but mostly small talk.

Our dining room was situated at the opposite end of the hotel from the dance hall and, when dinner was over, we formed a procession and paraded through a series of busy lobbies to make our way to the dance. There was a protocol for this as well. A uniformed hotel employee served as our guide and led the way. Then came the Prince, followed by Betty and me and, in the same order that had prevailed around the dinner table, each of the other couples fell in behind us. The lobbies were filled with noisy, chattering people but as our entourage entered, a hush fell over the crowd and everyone bowed respectfully. They remained that way, heads bowed and silent, until the Prince, like Moses parting the Red Sea, had led us safely through the crowds.

The dance was in progress when we arrived. The Prince entered and again, everything stopped. The dancers bowed deferentially as he walked to a chair near the stage. He took off his jacket and draped it neatly over the back of the chair. It was a signal. By removing his jacket, the Prince, whom the Japanese consider to be a direct descendant of God, became a mortal square dancer. It was as though he had set his divinity aside and had suddenly become human and approachable. The dance resumed. Many of the Japanese ladies asked the Prince to dance and he himself asked Betty to join him in a square. I had been warned that duties of state prevented the Prince from dancing very often and would I please keep the choreography simple whenever I spotted him on the floor.

As I had observed in Hawaii two years earlier, the Japanese dancers were very enthusiastic and even though most of them couldn't speak English and had memorized the calls phonetically, they were exceptionally proficient on the dance floor. Their exuberance inspired me and I called extraordinarily well that evening.

Like most American festivals, this one included an after party. It was a typical post-dance after party except for one thing. In Japan, between the end of the dance and the start of the after

party, it was customary for everyone to bathe.

The area around Mt. Fuji is known for its therapeutic hot springs and the hotel offered three separate bathing accommodations: a Men's Bath, a Ladies Bath, and a Family Bath. Betty and I decided we weren't quite ready for the Family Bath and opted for the appropriate one-sex-only facilities. Betty and I were each assigned a guide and they told us to put on our hotel robes and slippers. We'd proceed directly to the after party when we finished bathing but that was OK since it was the accepted custom for everyone to attend the after party in their robes, kimonos and slippers. Determined to adhere to local custom, Betty and I went to our room, disrobed and clad only in robes and slippers, our guides led us to our separate baths.

The ritual of the Japanese bath is an unmitigated pleasure. First you sit on a tiny milking stool in front of a cold water tap located about a foot above the floor and, using a tiny washcloth and soap, you clean and rinse your body. After that, you sit for fifteen unruffled minutes in a large bathing pool, up to your chin in the soothing hot spring waters, a small white washcloth draped casually atop your head. There were a half dozen other fellows in the pool with us; everyone smiled and nodded politely to everyone else. It was all very formal and civilized. When you step out of the hot pool, it is customary to deliberately shock your body by immediately dousing yourself with ice cold water from the tap. I forget whether this opens or closes your pores, but it is supposed to prevent colds. I don't know whether it does or not, but it certainly qualifies as an eye opener!

The after party was in full swing when we arrived and most of the dancers were indeed clad in robes and kimonos. There were lavish refreshments, they put on skits and other entertainments and I surprised everyone when I played my harmonica with the small 4-piece band, all of whom were callers. When the after party ended, a series of after-after parties were hosted in various hotel rooms and Betty and I were expected to spend a few minutes at each of them. As they escorted us through the hallways from one gathering to the next, we could always locate the next party room by the large mound of one-size-fits-all slippers piled outside the door.

We didn't stay at any one party long enough to sit down; we exchanged a few pleasantries, then took off for the next party. A group of young singles were singing Japanese folk songs at the last one we visited. It seemed like fun so we stayed there a bit longer. We contributed to the festivities by singing a few American folk songs and we had a fine time. But there was one slight problem.

We were all wearing robes and kimonos and I assumed that, like me, no one had anything on underneath. I was mistaken! No one had told me that, after the bath, we were supposed to wear an undergarment under our robes and I was flabbergasted to discover that I was the only one in the room who was stark naked under his robe! There were no chairs in the room and everyone sat on the ever-present *tatami* mats. The knee-length hotel robe kept me decent as long as I remained standing, but it was next to impossible to maintain my decorum if I tried to sit on the floor. No matter how I pulled or where I tugged, the robe never seemed to cover me completely. The young Japanese ladies couldn't help but notice my embarrassed squirming and they tittered nervously. I faked a smile and tried to look unconcerned.. After a few more songs, however, nobody cared and, for the rest of the party, we all enjoyed a marvelous hands-across-the-sea experience. The one song everyone seemed to know was On Top of Old Smokey.

We found the Japanese to be an interesting people: serious but fun-loving, steadfast and single-minded yet full of contradictions. They worship history and tradition, but are determined to be in tune with the present - - a paradox made evident one afternoon when I rode the Tokyo subway

and found myself seated between two pretty young ladies. One was clad in a traditional kimono, *obi* and *zori*; the other wore expensive designer jeans and spike-heeled Gucci shoes.

The Japanese are courteous and almost too polite. Adherence to form and something called *face* are all-important. When we drove back to Tokyo after the dance, we were on a street so narrow that two cars coming from opposite directions could not pass each other. No sooner had I realized this when a car suddenly appeared and it was traveling directly toward us. The two cars stopped nose to nose and both drivers got out. They bowed politely and, after a brief exchange, returned to their vehicles. The other driver backed up to the first side street, backed in and allowed us to pass. I asked our driver how they had decided that the other car should back up and not us. My driver answered, ***I told him I carried honored guests from America.*** The other driver would have lost *face* had he insisted on the right of way.

Our next overseas visit came three years later in 1980 when I was hired by the European Callers and Teachers Association (ECTA) to call a dance and conduct a caller clinic in Heidelberg, Germany. It wouldn't have been profitable to travel that far for the ECTA date alone, but there was no way we were going to pass up an opportunity to go to Europe. I made some inquiries, wrote some letters and picked up some additional engagements in England, plus two more dances in Germany and managed to put together a short European tour. I also scheduled overnight stopovers in Paris and Interlaken, plus a brief visit with some of my relatives near Düsseldorf.

At first, I wasn't sure I wanted to visit my relatives. I knew their names and I had their addresses, but all I really knew about them was what my mother had told me. I am an only child so my parents were the only family I ever knew. I was aware I had uncles and aunts and quite a few cousins, but we had been separated by an ocean far too long for there to be any genuine familial connection between us. We were strangers and I feared our meeting might be awkward and uncomfortable with neither of us knowing what to say to the other. Betty pointed out, however, that such a meeting could just as easily turn out to be a wonderful, heart-warming experience and that I'd hate myself forever if I let the chance go by. She was right. After all, the worst that could happen was that we'd feel ill at ease for a day or two and then it would all be over. I wrote to my family to let them know we were coming.

They responded quickly. They were delighted we were flying to Germany and they were already planning a huge family get together. For reasons I have never understood, my cousin Karola, was estranged from the rest of the family. She and her husband Gerd met us in Heidelberg on the day I finished the ECTA caller clinic and the four of us drove in their brand new Mercedes to their home near Düsseldorf. The next morning she took us on a whirlwind tour of the city and, that afternoon, my cousin Hans arrived to take us to Lintorf where we were to meet my aunt Gretchen and my uncle Hans.

Our brief visit with Karola had been cordial but she had remained strangely distant and aloof. As we drove to Lintorf, I wondered if we'd get a similar reception from the rest of the family. Despite repeated efforts on my part to keep in touch by mail, we never heard from Karola again.

In Lintorf, we stayed with my aunt Gretchen, whose longevity and general demeanor made her the undisputed matriarch of the family. We hadn't been there more than a few minutes when she deftly established her status by reminding me that she had attended my birth and that she had held me in her arms when I was barely five minutes old.

Two family meetings had been arranged: one at aunt Gretchen's and one at the home of my

uncle Hans in Eggerscheidt. I met dozens of my relatives and, as we exchanged stories about my mother and told each other about our lives, a strange new feeling came over me. In the midst of all this *gemütlichkeit*, I slowly realized that I was inescapably linked to these people, that I was, indeed, one of them. We shared a common heritage; their blood was my blood; I belonged to them and they belonged to me. For the first time in my life, I experienced a real sense of family. It overwhelmed me. It was a highly charged, deeply emotional moment and I have never quite gotten over it.

If my aunt Gretchen was the family matriarch, my uncle Hans was the family rogue. He was a lovable old reprobate and a bit of a rascal. He took me for a walk, supposedly to show me where my birth house once stood, but we ended up in a local *Bierstube* where he bought us each a large *Schnapps*. Both Gretchen and Hans are gone now and I am glad we had the opportunity to see them before they passed away. We became friends with Hans' young son, who is also named Hans. We visited them on almost all of my subsequent European tours and they have stayed with us at Lake Tahoe. Cousin Hans is our primary contact with my family these days. We are very fond of him.

There is much that I remember about the 1980 tour. It began in England where Pete Skiffins, a former student in my 1978 Las Vegas callers' school, had arranged a series of calling dates for me in Southampton, East Anglia and Nottingham. Pete had set up an ingenious travel plan. The morning after a dance, each host club's caller drove us half way to the following evening's engagement, where he would hand us over to the caller for the next club. We completed our travels in London where I conducted a weekend caller clinic. The night before the clinic, however, was a free night and Pete took us to an old-time English Music Hall where Kenny Ball's British Dixieland Band was playing. They were terrific.

Upon completing my assignments in England, we crossed the Channel by hovercraft and, after spending some tourist time in Paris and Interlaken, I conducted the ECTA clinic in Heidelberg and called dances in Bitburg, Berlin and Munich. It all went off as planned.

Paris memories include obligatory visits to Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysee, but mostly I remember a delightful lunch in a small side-street café. A large sign containing its sandwich menu hung on the wall. It was in French and I didn't understand a word of it until I saw that they had listed Sandwich No. 12 as *Frommage*. It was a word I recognized; I had run across it several times before in crossword puzzles. It was the French word for cheese and, when the waiter came, I threw caution to the winds. I tried to sound like a seasoned world traveler as I ordered, ***Deux Sandwich Frommage***. The waiter nodded perfunctorily and returned in a short while bearing two enormous cheese sandwiches. Each sandwich consisted of a single baguette of freshly baked French bread, sliced in half lengthwise and thickly smeared with a magnificently pungent French *Brie*. The sandwiches were delicious and I was proud of how competently I had improvised my way around the language barrier. So proud, in fact, that when Betty suggested returning to the same café for lunch the next day, I told her I wanted to see if my competence worked elsewhere and insisted we look for a different restaurant. We found a charming little sidewalk café near Notre Dame. I gave the waiter the same order and waited for the same result. Not this time! These sandwiches were two slices of plain white buttered bread with a single slice of packaged yellow cheese carelessly thrust between them. We were crushed! We resolutely wrapped the sandwiches in some napkins to be eaten later as snacks and beat a hasty retreat to the first café. It must have been difficult for her, but Betty never once said, ***I told you so***.

For no reason other than a desire to see the Swiss Alps, I included Interlaken in our travel plans. I was glad I did. It was a lovely place, fresh and clean with an ever-present scent of pine in the

air. There was also a nice surprise in store for us. When we checked into our *Gasthaus*, the concierge, a lovely Swiss lady who spoke perfect English, asked what my occupation was. I told her I was a square dance caller and expected the same raised eyebrow that answer usually produces. It was not forthcoming. Without looking up from the hotel register, she casually said, ***How nice. There's an American square dance tour staying in a hotel down the street and they're having a dance this evening. You should go.*** It turned out to be a caller from Ohio who was known for leading travel tours for square dancers. He had some other callers I knew on the tour with him, and even some dancers from San Jose. We spent most of the evening commenting about what a small world it had become.

From Interlaken, we traveled by train to Heidelberg. There was a scary moment when we changed trains in Basel. We only had six minutes to make our connection and we were late arriving in Basel. We were running with all our baggage to catch our next train, which had already started moving. Aware of our plight, the *Bahnhofmeister*, who looked exactly like S.Z. Sakall, the old Warner Brothers character actor, literally threw me and my bags onto the slowly accelerating train. By the time he turned to do the same with Betty, it was too late. The train was moving too fast and, as I stared helplessly out of the window, I watched Betty grow smaller and smaller until she finally faded into the distance. I frantically pulled the cord which I assumed would stop the train. It didn't! I was trying to decide what to do next when the train stopped at another station. We were still in Basel. I got off as fast as I could only to encounter another difficulty!

Since Basel is on the border between Germany and Switzerland, I had to go through the Swiss Immigration checkpoint. Before we had become separated, I had given Betty my wallet and passport to hold for safekeeping and I now stood before the official with no passport, no wallet, and no way to prove my identity. In my perfect, unaccented German, I explained what had happened and assured him that my bags held mostly dirty laundry. He looked at me skeptically for a moment and then, probably thinking of all the forms he'd have to fill out if he detained me, he discreetly waved me through. I caught a taxi and we hurried through Basel's cobblestoned streets back to the train station where I had left Betty.

I found her, calm and unruffled, sitting on a bench on the same platform where I had last seen her. She had wisely reasoned that rather than try to chase after me, it would be best if she stayed where she was and let me find her. The station master had tried to put Betty on another train, but she held her ground and wouldn't budge. After we reunited, we caught the next train to Heidelberg and, as we were pulling out, saw the station master on the platform. We waved to each other and he grinned broadly and mouthed the words, ***Gott sei dank*** which is German for ***Thank God***. I have never deliberately separated myself from my passport again.

We concluded the 1980 tour with dances in Berlin and Munich. Both cities are rich in history. Our Berlin hosts showed us the Berlin Wall and the Brandenburg Gate, and in Munich we were taken to see the famous cathedral tower bell ringers in Munich's public square. A few days later, we were back home again.

As travel became a more frequent part of our lives, we started to collect gold and silver souvenir charms which Betty hung on a charm ring which she could also wear as a pendant. It had become our custom to buy an appropriate charm from each new place we visited and it wasn't long before it took two rings to hold them all.

We packed our overseas bags again two years later. I had already accepted an invitation to do a two week tour in New Zealand and Australia in 1982 when I received another invitation to call the Fukyukai's 25th anniversary dance in Japan. It was scheduled for the weekend following the

Down Under Tour and it was too good an offer to pass up. It would mean adding an extra week to the tour but I could make it work. When I completed my dances in Sydney, we could fly to Tokyo and there would even be time for an overnight stopover in Hong Kong on the way. It was an ambitious itinerary but it turned out well and Betty was able to add at least a half dozen new charms to her collection.

A direct flight from San Francisco to Auckland normally takes fourteen hours so I decided it might be better if we made the trip in two stages. Spending a night in Honolulu would minimize the inevitable jet lag problems and, since we were leaving on Dec. 24th 1981, it would also allow us spend a romantic Christmas in Hawaii. We left California as scheduled and spent the holiday in Honolulu. After Christmas dinner we had a nightcap at The Dolphin Room, a small lounge located in the lobby of our Waikiki hotel. The entertainment that night featured a young couple named Keith and Carmen Haugen whose performance captivated us. Keith is a mid-westerner who became fascinated by the culture of Hawaii and its language. He has, in addition, become something of an expert in the history of Hawaiian music. In their act, Keith plays the guitar and sings old Hawaiian songs while his charming Polynesian wife, Carmen, plays the ukulele and dances the hula with the grace of an angel. Their act is pure Hawaiian and totally devoid of the glitzy trappings that most of today's hotel performers seem to prefer. We found them utterly enchanting. During a break, they sat at our table for a bit and we chatted. We have seen them perform many times since that Christmas night and they always recognize us and call us by name. The next morning we flew to Auckland and began the New Zealand portion of our tour. I had been booked to teach two schools, one in Auckland and another in Christchurch, and also to call a dance in each location. It was a wonderful experience and we met many New Zealand dancers and most of their callers, some of whom became good friends and we still keep in touch by e-mail.

We then flew to Sydney where I called a dance for caller Barry Wonson in Goolagong, near Sydney, plus another dance in the Australian Capital City of Canberra. We were there in mid-January which is mid-summer in Australia. It was incredibly hot in Canberra on the night of our dance. The hall had no air conditioning and I found it impossible to get any kind of excitement going. We were all glad when I finished the final tip.

It had been our first trip to New Zealand and Australia and we were much impressed by the spectacular beauty of their countryside and the unique character of the natives. Both the Aussies and the Kiwis are a warm, generous and fun-loving people; they are friendly and gregarious, and exhibit a quick sense of humor. Their local colloquialisms and their broad regional dialects often made them difficult to understand but, as they delighted in reminding us, we were in their country and we were the ones with the funny accents!

Before we knew it, it was time to leave for Japan. I was now collecting countries like merit badges and rarely missed an opportunity to add another new location to an upcoming itinerary, which is why I arranged for us to spend a night in Hong Kong on our way from Sydney to Tokyo. I also wanted to surprise Betty by making our brief stay in Hong Kong a first-class, first-cabin experience in every respect. Without telling her, I had booked us into The Peninsula Hotel, Hong Kong's most prestigious hotel and had arranged to be met at the airport by a liveried chauffeur driving a Daimler limousine. Unfortunately Betty wasn't aware that outside of the U.S., a Daimler was considered to be even more upscale than a Rolls Royce and while she was pleased, she wasn't especially impressed by the Daimler and would have preferred the Rolls. She conceded, however, that the chauffeur in livery was a nice touch.

We were both bowled over by the service and sumptuous facilities of the Peninsula Hotel.

Our limo was greeted at the curb by a dignified Chinese gentleman in striped pants, tailcoat and winged collar who escorted us to the front desk to supervise our check-in. A team of three young assistants dressed in smart white uniforms and wearing white pillbox hats, took care of our bags. Our escort showed us to our room and made a special point of demonstrating the comforts of its elegant bathroom. He proudly showed us its sunken tub of Italian marble and tapped the spotless clear glass shower walls with his white-gloved knuckles. They were so clean that some hotel guests didn't see them and hurt themselves trying to walk through them. The toilet was in a separate little room off the main bathroom and had its own telephone extension on the wall. It was the first time I was ever able to avail myself of such decadent luxury and I regretted I didn't know anyone in Hong Kong to telephone. We didn't have time for sightseeing, but we did take a few minutes for some shopping and we added another charm to Betty's pendant ring. The next afternoon, we boarded the plane for Tokyo.

The Fukyukai Club's 25th anniversary dance was very similar to the anniversary dance I had called there five years earlier. It was even more successful. This time the dance was held in a hotel in Ito, a small town approximately 70 miles northwest of Tokyo. We had a joyful reunion with Tokuko who had once again volunteered to be our translator and guide. We also enjoyed reconnecting with many of the dancers and callers we had met on our earlier visit.

As he had done five years before, Prince Mikasa came to the dance. This time his wife accompanied him and he once again hosted a dinner in our honor. The Mayor of Ito and some other public officials were also invited and this dinner was even more elegant than the earlier one. It was prepared by a famous Japanese chef; the printed menu was in French and had been translated into Japanese. That didn't help us and we had no idea what we ate, but every dish was a gourmet's dream. A different wine was served with every course. I hadn't yet cultivated my interest in wine so I didn't fully appreciate what I was drinking. What I do remember is that every wine was uniquely delicious and that I was especially impressed by how they were served. Several uniformed wine stewards stood behind the dinner table and, as you took a sip of wine, a steward unobtrusively stepped up to the table to refill your glass. When the next course was served, your glass was removed, replaced with a clean one and a new wine, selected especially for that particular course, was poured. Be still, my drooling palate!

A standout memory from that trip to Japan was a singing call duet that Betty and I performed at the Saturday night dance. On our previous trip, we had heard a pretty Japanese song called, ***I Will Show You the Way*** and I had suggested to my own record producer that he allow a Japanese caller to record it on one of his labels. When I was looking for something special to call at the Saturday night dance, that record came immediately to mind. I knew that our audience would especially enjoy it if Betty and I called it as a duet and that they would enjoy it even more if we called part of the song in Japanese. I asked one of our Square Hoppers ladies, Aiko Tauchi, who was fluent in both Japanese and English, if she could help us learn the words. She said she'd be happy to try.

Aiko wrote down the Japanese words to the original song so that we would be able to memorize them phonetically. Betty and I then devised and rehearsed a showman-like vocal arrangement in which I called the choreography of the dance in normal fashion, and Betty joined me singing harmony at the tag lines. We deliberately sang them in English until the final chorus when, we suddenly surprised everyone by singing them in Japanese. The dancers went wild and the applause was deafening. Even Bourbon Street couldn't top it! Our duet turned out to be the high point of the week end.

The after party was also very similar to the one five years before except this time everyone

bathed privately in their respective hotel rooms. There was much food, skits we couldn't understand and I again played my harmonica with a small band. The goodbys at the Sayonara dance the next morning were even more sorrowful than they had been the last time.



WITH PRINCE MIKASA & HIS WIFE, TOKUKO (on right)



BETTY & THE PRINCE

AFTER PARTY IN THE KIMONO

(This picture did not come from the original)

SIGHTSEEING AT KAMAKURA

WORDS AND MUSIC (1962-1999)

*True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
(Alexander Pope)*

*If a man can write a better book, preach a better
sermon, or make a better mousetrap, than his
neighbor, though he builds his home in the woods,
the world will make a beaten path to his door.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)*

I am not a clever wordsmith, yet I have written nearly a dozen books. My prose is less than eloquent, yet, for almost fifteen years, I wrote and published a profitable monthly periodical. My writing style is often clumsy and unimaginative, yet I have produced dozens of articles and essays dealing with a wide range of subjects in the field of caller training. Perhaps it is precisely because my writing is so unremarkable that I am able to accomplish it so easily. That, and the fact that I am thoroughly knowledgeable with the subjects I choose to write about.

I became an author very early in my square dance career. In 1963, I served as the Moderator for a Leadership Conference sponsored by the Santa Clara Valley Square Dance Association. (SCVSDA). At this meeting, I presented a 23 page paper entitled, ***A Manual of Successful Square Dance Club Operations***, which the SCVSDA published and distributed to its member clubs. It was a handbook designed to assist the officers of a square dance club in the week-by-week administration and operation of club activities. It was very well received..

That same year, I wrote a series of handouts for my first callers' class and followed that with a 35 page booklet entitled, ***Calling at Beginner Hoedowns***. I can no longer remember whether I sold it or gave it away to my caller students. A year later, I wrote another pamphlet called, ***Effective Singing Call Techniques***, which later served as the model for the Singing Call chapter in a subsequent book.

The success of these early experiments encouraged me to write my first text book for student callers. I called it ***The Other Side of the Mike*** and it became a best seller. It brought my name to the attention of the national/international square dance scene in a major way. The year was 1965.

Back then, precious little training material had been published with the modern caller in mind. Caller literature, what there was of it, consisted almost exclusively of anthologies of old-time dances or collections of choreographic routines. Very little instructional material was available: an occasional article in *Sets In Order*, a paragraph or two of helpful hints in a callers' note service, but that was all. No one had yet written a book that described, in depth, the full range of skills that a modern square dance caller practiced.

The market for such a book was clearly ripe and ready for the picking.. It was also self-replenishing and would continue to grow. New callers created new dancers who, in turn, produced

new callers. It was the mid 1960s; square dancing was at the height of its post World War II renaissance and the demand for callers had increased significantly.

Every caller begins his career as a dancer who, at some point, becomes curious about what it is like to be *on the other side of the mike*. But in the early 1960s, no single reference book existed that could satisfy that curiosity. I decided to fill the void.

Writing the book was an ambitious, time consuming project. My research was thorough and extensive and it took me nearly a year to complete the writing. What was needed was an easy-to-read manual that identified all of a working caller's skills and which also provided step-by-step instructions in how to perform them. The first requirement was to write an accurate job description: to segregate and analyze each individual calling skill, to define its working mechanics, and to describe how that skill is used during a dance. It was then necessary to demonstrate how each technique interacts with a caller's other skills to achieve his previously determined program goals.

I studied my own calling and made a list of the performing skills I regularly used. I was surprised at how many there were! I next compared my methods with those of other callers and checked the list to see if I had left anything out. I read everything available about each individual technique and, when I was sure I understood exactly how it worked, I described the skill in writing, taking pains to keep my language as clear and as precise as possible. To quote from the book's Introduction:

It is the purpose of this book to provide today's student caller with a comprehensive, in-depth occupational study that will cover, in as detailed a manner as possible, each and all of the specialized skills and techniques of a modern square dance caller - - to provide a contemporary ...student with a contemporary text book that describes the art, the science and the total craft of a contemporary caller.

I wrote all 346 pages of *The Other Side of the Mike* in my resume office while that business was still operating. I also edited it, printed it, collated it, and bound it, all between writing resumes and without knowing whether the book would sell even a single copy. And I did it all on a typewriter, long before the miracle of computerized word processing had become commonplace. In those days, if a writer needed to cut and paste, he literally cut out the copy with a pair of scissors and physically glued it into its new location. Next to his typewriter, a bottle of rubber cement was a writer's most indispensable tool.

When the book was finished, I crossed my fingers and put it on the market and, to my delight, it sold very well. I credit that success to an aggressive ad campaign. I contracted with Sets In Order, the leading square dance magazine of the day, to run a half-page ad every month. I mailed review copies of the book to about a dozen well known, highly respected callers around the country, asking them for their opinions and suggestions. Most responded with a short note containing a noncommittal Great-Job-Bill-Keep-Up-The-Good-Work kind of comment - - which was exactly what I had hoped for. I was able to excerpt portions of those comments, use them as endorsements and quote them in my ads - - a technique I remembered from my theatrical days. I notified each of the reviewers exactly which of their comments I intended to quote, telling them that if I didn't hear from them by such and such a date, I would assume I had their permission to do so. My strategy may have been sneaky, but it was effective. I alternated three or four different endorsements in each month's ad and that did the trick. Orders for the book trickled in and it wasn't long before I was

selling books through the mails at the rate of fifteen to twenty copies each month. I was officially an author-for-profit and other writing projects were quick to follow.

Among callers, the term Note Service refers to a monthly newsletter which contains program ideas, new call definitions, suggestions for new ways to use existing calls, and bits and pieces of news about square dancing in general and calling in particular. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, at least ten such publications were available and most callers subscribed to at least one of them. Some of these services were published by regional callers' associations, but mostly they were written, published and distributed by a single individual. I subscribed to three or four of the most popular of these publications and, in 1972, I had an idea about how to present note service choreography in a more meaningful way. I briefly considered offering my idea to those who were already publishing note services, when it occurred to me that there was no reason why I couldn't publish a note service of my own.

I had frequently complained that the editorial content of the existing note services consisted, almost exclusively, of new call descriptions and columns of choreographic routines. But not much else! I would have preferred more tutorials describing new techniques and more cutting edge articles dealing with other caller-related subjects, but such material rarely appeared. I felt that a callers' note service was ideally suited for keeping its readers current and up to date on the latest professional techniques and that while it was OK for a note service to focus on experimental new choreography, it would be far more useful if it also showed how all choreography might be exploited to better advantage. I had some ideas along those lines and, when I combined them with my new method of describing choreography, I realized I had something new and different to offer the caller market and I became even more emboldened to try publishing a note service of my own.

Mechanically, I was ideally set up for it. To give the publication a formal appearance, I would use the IBM Executive typewriter I had left over from my former resume business. I also had a printing press that could grind out as many copies as I needed, and enough space in my resume office to expedite the collating, stapling, folding, and mailing operations. I decided to go for it. I told myself, you'll never swim if you don't jump in the water. I named my new note service, Choreo Breakdown, and the only question still remaining was how to acquire enough paying subscribers to justify my time and effort.

The only stratagem I could think of was to prepare an inaugural first issue, mail a free sample to as many callers as possible, along with a subscription form. It would require a significant outlay of time and money, but I honestly believed I had built a better mousetrap and that new subscribers would eventually beat a path to my door. The first issue of Choreo Breakdown was dated, March 1972.

Over the years, I had collected membership rosters of caller associations from all over the country and I mailed a sample issue of Choreo Breakdown to every caller on every list. I also gave a sample copy to every caller I met in my travels and, before the first month had passed, I was pleased to discover that I had compiled a subscription list of over 150 paid subscribers -- more than enough to keep going. That was only the beginning. The word spread and, at the end of my first year, I had over a thousand subscribers. The other publishers rarely disclosed how many subscribers they had, but at one point, my subscription list totaled close to 1600 callers and, if that number wasn't the highest in the business, I suspect it came very close.

A folk art never stands still; it constantly reinvents itself as it modifies and adapts to changes in the society that created it. This is certainly true of square dancing. By the late 1970s, square dancing had changed considerably from what it had been in the early 1960s. It was more structured and less carefree; many more calls had been added to the vocabulary; music and dance had become less important than the difficulty and complexity of the choreography.

All of these changes affected the job of a caller. To accommodate them, an imposing array of new skills and techniques had surfaced and, while I described and reviewed them all in the monthly issues of Choreo Breakdown, I was aware that another result of these changes was that many parts of *The Other Side of the Mike* were now outdated. The book was no longer the **contemporary text book** it claimed to be and, although parts of the book were still valid and had held up well over the years, other parts badly needed updating. I decided to rewrite it. It turned out to be a much bigger job than I thought.

I had barely gotten started when I realized that a caller's job had changed so drastically that my original everything-in-a-single-volume concept was no longer practical. I decided that it now made more sense to present the material as a series of instructional guidebooks in which each major subject was assigned its own separate book. What I had initially thought would be a simple, quickly-accomplished rewrite, had suddenly turned into a major overhaul.

But it was worth it. By dividing the subjects into individual guidebooks, I was able to write about each calling skill in greater detail and I could now focus the reader's attention more precisely on exactly how each skill is acquired. Another advantage of the new format was that there was no pressure to complete the project all at once; I could update, rewrite and publish the material at my leisure, one volume at a time.

I called the complete collection, the Bill Peters Caller's Guidebook Series. It consisted of eight individual volumes: Presentation Techniques (1979), The Mighty Module (1979), Modules Galore (1979), Sight Calling Made Easy (1979), Formation Management (1987), Singing Call Techniques (1979), The Art of Programming (1984), and the Business side of Calling (1983). These books, now sold separately, replaced *The Other Side of the Mike* and they were even more successful than the original.

I continued to publish and market the collection even after I officially retired but, when my existing stock of books ran out and it became necessary to reprint them, I assigned the rights to a major distributor of square dance products who took over my entire book sales operation. They still include my books in their catalogs and they continue to send me a small royalty check with each reprinting. In 1982, with my permission, two of the volumes, *The Mighty Module* and *Sight Calling Made Easy*, were translated into German by Andreas Macke, a well known caller in Berlin.

In addition to writing books and composing note service copy, I also wrote the syllabus for each of my callers' schools. A syllabus is a mini-textbook that supports and supplements a school's

curriculum. It describes in writing each of the subjects I discuss in my lectures and, for some schools, the syllabus is a detailed , lengthy document, extensive in scope and rich in useful information.

My last major publishing effort took place in 1985, when I was asked to organize and edit The Caller Text, a compilation of all of the caller-oriented articles that appeared in Sets In Order magazine during the nearly forty years of its history. Because it would be perceived as an open acknowledgment of my skill and expertise in the field of caller training, I was both pleased and flattered when publisher, Bob Osgood, asked me to do it.

The book is an anthology and, in order to select the articles that would be included, it was first necessary to read every issue of the magazine between 1948 and 1985. I then determined a basic outline for the book based on the CALLERLAB caller training curriculum guidelines. This provided a logical continuity of subject matter and insured that each of the selected articles would be viewed in its appropriate context. I had personally written about a half dozen of the articles that were included in the anthology and, in one or two cases, I even wrote special articles covering subjects that, in the interests of completeness, needed to be included but which, for one reason or another, had never appeared in the magazine before. Bob wrote a brief introduction for each of the chapters and I reviewed and edited them as well. In the book's introduction, Bob recognized my contributions:

A very special thank you to Bill Peters, who has been our strong right arm in editing the information you find in these pages.

I also have the distinction of writing the first and only work of fiction Sets In Order ever published, a silly little short story called The Hoedown Caper. It was a spoof of the hard-boiled detective **genre** as it might appear in a square dance setting. With my tongue way up in my cheek, it chronicled the adventures of Pete Promenade, private eye by day and square dance caller by night, as he tried to foil a meticulously-planned banner raid by the sinister Kaliko Klunkers Square dance club. Osgood was amused by the story and he published it. He sent a brief thank-you note:

....Really, Bill, we're quite delighted with this and we can just imagine that our readers will be also.Although I realize this wasn't expected - and it certainly isn't anything we usually do - I'd like you to accept this check as a living proof that you sold your story for cash money.

When I started calling, everyone wanted to cut a record. I know I did. I think we believed that if we could add the words **Recording Artist** after our name, we would somehow be able to attract more calling dates - - which is a little strange because, in reality, it worked the other way around. Only the most popular callers were asked to record. The record companies used only those callers whose reputations were likely to generate sales. You didn't get more dates because you recorded, you recorded because you got more dates.

In the early days, each of the major producers of square dance records had a recording staff of three or four well known callers. While these staff callers were seldom paid a recording fee, most of them received a small royalty based on the sales of the records they had cut. But when, in the late 1960s, the record companies discovered that many callers would actually pay for the privilege of cutting a record, most of the producers accommodated this new market by adding a so-called

Vanity Label to their operations and they recorded practically anyone - - for a fee! All the term Recording Artist now signified was that a caller had probably bought his way onto a record.

I never recorded on a vanity label. I cut my first record for the Lighted Lantern label in 1962. I received no money for recording but instead, they gave me one hundred records that I was free to sell at my dances. I personally never had any contact with the record company. All the arrangements had been made by a local San Jose musician/square dancer whose name I have long since forgotten. He had put together a small band and, after negotiating some kind of deal with the owner of Lighted Lantern Records, he asked if I was interested in cutting a record - - at absolutely no cost to me. The price was right and I jumped at the chance.

It is customary for the recording caller to pick his own tune so I selected an old-time Dixieland favorite called I Wish I Could Shimmy like My Sister Kate. Unfortunately, the band had no feeling for jazz and the music sounded uncertain and amateurish. In spite of its poor quality however, the company sold enough records to turn a profit. I received my hundred record fee and although I never sold the records at dances, I gave them away to friends and other callers. My reward was to see my name in the Lighted Lantern ad in Sets In Order magazine and to learn that the record had sold well.

I was still hoping to join the staff of a major square dance record label and, in 1964, I made it happen. Several of the labels had recently issued records consisting of nothing more than simple chord changes. A caller could either use these records for patter presentations, or for any one of a number of different singing calls where the melody was based on that particular chord pattern. They had names like Chords Galore and Morkords, and they gave me an idea.

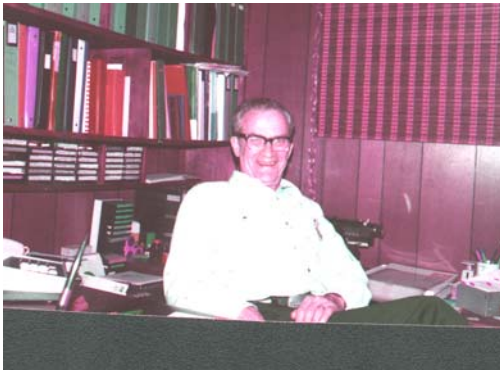
At that time, just about every singing call record of a tune based on the chord pattern for the song, Just Because, had been a hit. They included such best sellers as Mama Don't 'Low, She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain, Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms and several others. The record called Morkords used these chords as well. I reasoned that it was the chords rather than the tune that the dancers enjoyed, so I composed a completely new song using the identical chord changes. I called it Two Timing Blues and, with Morkords as my accompaniment, I made a demo tape and sent it to C.O. Guest, the owner of the Kalox, Longhorn, and Belco labels.

I have forgotten why I chose to send it to C.O., but it proved to be a wise choice. C.O. liked the idea of publishing the only song ever written specifically as a singing call. He agreed to put it on his Longhorn label and let me record it in 1964. I'm happy to say that it was the number one selling square dance record for two months running, and it remains, to this day, the only song ever written specifically as a square dance. It continued to sell and C.O. sent me a royalty check - - two cents per record - - every year for several years. Shortly thereafter, I was promoted to C.O.'s flagship label, Kalox, where the royalties were a nickel a record.

I remained a staff caller for C.O. Guest until he died in the early 1980s. I made about fifteen records for him, many of which became best sellers. They include Ballin' the Jack, Baby, Wont You Please Come Home, Nineteen Minutes To Go, and Blue Eyes Cryin' in the Rain. I later joined the staff of Daryl Clendenin's Chinook label and cut a couple of records for him. In the mid 1990s, when Fred Beem bought the rights to Macgregor Records and reissued some of the more popular hits from the Macgregor library, I recorded about a half dozen records for him. One of them, I Don't Know Why, also became a Number One best seller.

My work as an author and my output as a square dance recording artist provided a welcome and gratifying boost to my career. They distinguished me from my competitors and helped to make

my name instantly recognizable among both dancers and callers. Since becoming a square dance caller, my annual income had increased dramatically. When I added the subscriptions to Choreo Breakdown and mail order sales of The Other Side of the Mike to what I earned as a caller and caller coach, I could count on enough bottom-line income to justify closing down the resume office. As soon as my lease was up, I shut down the resume business, converted Oma's former room in our home to my full-time square dance headquarters, installed the print shop in our garage and, from that point forward, I worked at home. It is interesting to observe that for the first few years after closing the resume business, several of my former clients managed to track me down at home and telephoned to see if I would prepare an upgraded resume for them. I almost always obliged.



AT WORK IN THE NEW HOME OFFICE



IN THE RECORDING STUDIO

FOLLOW MY LEAD (1958-1999)

Whether or not the caller wants or is prepared for (it)..... the leadership role is inescapable. The choice is not whether to be a leader but what kind of leader to be.

(Callerlab Curriculum Guidelines)

Callers not only provide leadership on the dance floor, they have traditionally been the guiding force behind every aspect of the activity. By definition, every caller is a square dance leader. The moment he takes up the microphone, he automatically assumes certain leadership responsibilities. He cannot avoid them; they go with the territory. I accepted my leadership role willingly, although I confess it is sometimes difficult to determine whether I was motivated more by an honest recognition of my duty, or by a need to stand in the center ring and seek the approval of my peers. I suspect it was a little bit of both.

I differed from most of my colleagues in that my leadership functions extended beyond the local level. I was a member of two northern California callers' associations and, although I attended meetings and paid dues, I never held office in either one. I was, on the other hand, one of a handful of callers who recognized the need for a callers' association at the national/international level and who participated in the formation of such a group. It is called CALLERLAB and it has probably had a greater impact on world-wide square dancing than any other single group or organization. I helped establish its initial policies and programs. I served on its first Board of Governors and have been a member of its Executive Committee. I also organized and served as first chairman of several important CALLERLAB committees, mostly in the areas of accreditation and caller training.

My leadership activities at the national level go back to July 1964, when I was invited to attend a Leadership Conference co-sponsored by both U.C.L.A. and Sets In Order magazine. It was an interesting two-day meeting but, while there was a lot of earnest conversation, it lacked direction and nothing much came of it.

On the occasion of Sets In Order's 25th anniversary in 1973, Bob Osgood invited each of the SIO Hall of Fame callers to attend a special brainstorming session at the Asilomar Resort near Carmel, California. Its purpose was to discuss the current state of the activity and to suggest ways in which it might be improved. This august group consisted of fourteen callers and they quickly concluded that it was too big a job for them to tackle alone. They decided to hold a second meeting at Asilomar to which each of the Hall of Famers would invite two caller/leaders from his own area. I was one of those invited.

I was in a quandary when my invitation to attend the meeting came in the mail. I checked my calling calendar and discovered a major conflict. At the time of the meeting, I was scheduled to be half-way across the Pacific, leading my first square dance tour to Hawaii and I wondered how I was going to be in two places at once. I was torn between two important responsibilities. I couldn't back out of the Hawaii tour, nor did I want to. But I wasn't about to skip the Asilomar meeting either. I

knew I had to honor my commitment to accompany the dancers who had signed up for the tour. But I also knew that the Asilomar meeting offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with some of square dancing's most well known callers on projects that would greatly benefit the entire activity. Just to be a member of this group would be an honor. It would be a unique feather in my professional cap and provide an unparalleled boost to my career. I couldn't pass it up!

I discussed the problem with Betty and we agreed that I could place the tour in her hands for 48 hours, fly to Carmel, conduct my business at Asilomar, and then fly back to Honolulu and rejoin the tour. I also checked with many of those who had signed up for the tour and they agreed that it would be a shame if I let this opportunity slip through my fingers. And so, in February 1974, with Betty's assistance, and with the best wishes of our tour members, I attended the now historic second Asilomar session. It was out of that meeting's deliberations that the idea for CALLERLAB was born and I am privileged to have been a part of it.

Since CALLERLAB was to be an organization of working square dance callers, one of its first tasks was to decide who was - - and who was not - - a caller. We formed a Caller Accreditation Committee and I became its first chairman. Our charter was to establish the criteria and develop the accreditation procedures that would determine eligibility for membership in our new association. It turned out to be a far more difficult assignment than anyone had anticipated.

We all knew what it took to be a caller and no one found it difficult to compile an imposing list of skills and qualifications which, taken together, comprised the specialized expertise of a working practitioner of our craft. The problem was that for every skill on the list, each of us knew one or more callers who lacked that skill, but who were highly successful performers nevertheless. We found the one thing that all successful callers had in common, was not their specialized combination of skills, but their uninterrupted longevity on the job - - their ability, week after week, to keep the dancers coming back. In the final analysis, that was the skill that every caller needed and, after much debate, it became the basis upon which CALLERLAB's Caller Accreditation Procedure was finally predicated.

I was later asked to form a new committee to develop an accreditation process for Caller Coaches. To achieve this goal, we decided that accreditation as a coach would require a two-step process. It would first be necessary to complete a written examination designed to test an applicant's theoretical knowledge of a caller's technical skills. Those who successfully passed the written test would be eligible to sit for an oral interview with two already accredited coaches who would investigate and explore the applicant's qualifications and verify the details of his actual coaching experience. In addition to serving as chairman and guiding the work of the committee in general, I also directed and coordinated the preparation of the written test and validated its final versions.

I was next appointed Chairman of the Caller Training Committee with a directed responsibility to devise a recommended curriculum for a full program callers' school. The task required identifying which subjects should be included in a full-program curriculum and exactly how much emphasis should be assigned to each of the recommended subjects. We suggested a curriculum of twenty-one separate topics and provided broad guidelines for their implementation in a callers' school. Jim Mayo became Chairman of this Committee after I retired and he expanded our previous work by overseeing the preparation of a 172 page Curriculum Guidelines document. This is a mini textbook in which each of the twenty-one curriculum subjects is assigned a separate chapter. I wrote eight of them.

I was active in CALLERLAB from its inception in 1974 to my retirement in 1985. In 1986, I

was awarded CALLERLAB's most prestigious honor, The Milestone Award which is given only to those whose *contributions have withstood the test of time*. Bob Van Antwerp made the presentation at that year's convention:

.....this caller and his wife have made square dancing their life.....he is very deserving in all aspects of the calling profession.

In 1999, I became one of only a dozen or so retired callers classified as Gold Card members. It provides the recipient with a lifetime membership. The presentation was made by Jim Mayo at the 1999 convention:

....He was Chairman of the Caller Training Committee and chief writer and editor of the Curriculum Guidelines for Caller Training. When the Technical supplement to that document was published, Bill wrote several major sections of it and shared actively in editing the whole document. His most recent contribution came during the development of CALLERLAB's Standard Applications documents. The presentation format that makes these documents understandable was created by Bill Peters.

THE SETS IN ORDER U.C.L.A. CONFERENCE, 1964



MORE OVERSEAS CHARMS (1983-1996)

*So put out the news
I'll be losin' the blues
When I put on my travelin' shoes
(Irving Berlin)*

In the 1980s, my square dance career shifted into high gear. My home programs were well-attended and showed no signs of slackening; I was booked to call hoedowns or festivals almost every weekend; my income from book sales and Choreo Breakdown continued to rise; and my reputation as a top caller coach was acknowledged throughout the activity. This combination of factors no doubt accounted for the many invitations I continued to receive from overseas.

In almost every case, my overseas sponsors were callers or callers' associations who hired me to conduct a caller training program and who used the income from the dances I called to pay my fees and expenses. My second European tour took place in the Spring of 1983. The caller clinic I had done in England three years earlier had gone over so well that Pete Skiffins was able to persuade the Caller's Club of Great Britain to bring me back for a repeat performance. The 1983 clinic was held in Nottingham and I also called dances in Wyvern, Sheffield, West Hampton, Alford and Boscombe.

There was little time for sightseeing but Pete did take us to The Old Palace in Hatfield. It is now a popular tourist attraction and features an *Olde Tyme Elizabethan Dinner*. It was built in 1480, acquired by King Henry VIII in 1538 and even though the palace today fairly reeks with commercialism, it is hard to avoid the feeling that you are somehow a part of its hallowed history. When you enter the Great Hall on your way to the dining room, your guide asks you to look up at the massive oak beams in the roof and off-handedly mentions that King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth saw the same beams when they looked up. In a spacious dining hall, large-planked wooden tables are arranged in a *U* along three walls and diners sit on long wooden benches. A *chekyne* dinner is served by comely young ladies dressed in low-cut period costumes and guests are encouraged to demand more mead by noisily banging their tankards on the table and shouting, *Ho, wench!*. It is a wry, mischievous, tongue-in-cheek display of the collective British humor.

After ten days in England, we flew to Germany where I had expanded the tour to include dances in Heidelberg, Duisberg, Hannover, Munich, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels and Stockholm. The Munich dance was their annual Maypole Festival and I shared the program with the well known U.S. Caller, Sam Mitchell. It was a big dance.

Even bigger was the dance in Stockholm where I discovered that I was the first American caller ever to be hired to call a dance in Sweden. I also remember a wet and rainy day in Amsterdam when our Dutch hosts insisted we ride the canal boats, visit the windmills and eat their local delicacy, smoked eels. In Sweden we drank *aqua vit* for the first time and were introduced to a special Nordic appetizer: avocado and caviar. They cut an avocado in half, remove the pit, fill the hole with a mound of caviar and sprinkle it with lemon juice. The smoked eels were surprisingly tasty, the *aqua vit*, extremely potent, and the caviar, unbelievably delicious.

Other memories include a rigorous search of my carry-ons by an East German official at the Berlin airport. While he barely glanced at the square dance records and microphone I always carry in my attache case, he singled out my harmonica for a detailed inspection. It has a valve-like button on the side which enables the player to play a full chromatic scale. The inspector picked up the harmonica, studied it skeptically and, arching an eyebrow, asked, *Harmonika ?*. I nodded. He handed it to me and requested *Spiel etwas* (Play something). His tone was far from frivolous, so I gravely improvised a half chorus of Yankee Doodle. It seemed to satisfy him and he sternly waved us through. I had played my first European command performance!

I had also arranged to visit my family again while we were in Germany and a large delegation came to watch me call a dance in Duisberg. Dressed in their best Sunday finery, they watched soberly as I called my dance. They were not impressed. When it was over, they were very polite and commented on how well I sang, but I could tell they thought it was all a colossal waste of time and a ridiculous way for a grown man to make a living.

Al Stevens, whom we had met in Bitburg on our first European tour, brought us back for our third visit to Europe in 1987. Al was interested in becoming a caller coach and had already taught one or two schools in Germany. He regarded me as his coaching mentor and, on this trip, we co-taught a five-day callers' school. It was held in *Die Lochmühle*, a small hotel near Dreisen in the Pfalz. The building had formerly been a gristmill and while it lacked modern conveniences - - we all shared a hall toilet and shower - - it was clean and inexpensive and its school facilities were more than adequate for our needs. Al was an apt pupil and the school was very successful.

The day school ended we drove from Dreisen to the Black Forest where Al and I called a two-day square dance weekend that Al identified as *Die Schwarzwald Klinik* after a very popular German TV soap opera. It drew a large crowd. I also discovered that calling a dance weekend to a large group of sophisticated German dancers immediately after an intense five-day school session, took a lot out of you. The upside was that it was also quite profitable and, over the next ten years, Al and I would repeat this pattern many times.

I had added some dances in England prior to the callers' school and had also arranged to spend a few days with my cousin Hans in Ratingen. For our final engagement on this tour, we took an overnight sleeper train to Stockholm where I called the Ericsson Square Dance Festival.

I had expected our train compartment to resemble the comfortable accommodations we see so often in the movies. It didn't! When we boarded the train in Hamburg at about 6:00 PM, they had already converted our compartment's seats into upper and lower berths. There was no place to sit and the tiny compartment was so cramped there was barely enough room to climb into bed.. I had also looked forward to enjoying a leisurely dinner in the dining car before retiring but again, we were disappointed. There was no dining car. Our only option was to order a couple of cellophane-wrapped sandwiches from the Steward, eat them as we lay in our bunks and hope that we'd fall asleep quickly.

Eight months later, in June 1988, I flew to Germany again to call the 35th anniversary of the Swinging Bears square dance club in Berlin. I booked a dance in Hamburg on the preceding night and, on the day after the dance, I arranged for Al Stevens to meet me at the Frankfurt airport, drive me to his home near Karlsruhe where I would administer one part of the oral examination for his accreditation as a caller coach. The entire trip required no more than five days from start to finish and it was the only overseas trip I ever made where Betty did not accompany me. I remember two things about it: the drive from Hamburg to Berlin, and sitting in with my harmonica at a German

Dixieland jam session.

After I had called my dance for the *Stintfang* square dance club in Hamburg, my hosts drove me to Berlin. It was 1988 and the Berlin Wall had not yet come down. It was the time of the Cold War and Germany had not yet reunited. When we got to the East German border, the official at the gate told me that I would have to surrender my passport and that it would be returned to me when we reached Berlin. I was understandably reluctant to release my passport, especially to the East Germans, but my hosts told me not to worry. They said this was how they treated all travelers from the west; that it was done deliberately and for no other reason but to create a nuisance. I remained uneasy but I trusted my hosts and let the East German authorities take my passport.

After a careful search of our car, we were allowed to enter East Germany. We were warned to maintain a constant speed of 80 kilometers per hour and they told us the exact time they expected us to arrive in Berlin. If we were more than five minutes late, a helicopter would immediately be dispatched to find us. We drove through the drab East German countryside and arrived in Berlin at the point of entry the Americans nicknamed Checkpoint Charlie. We were precisely on schedule and they gave me back my passport. We entered West Berlin and to this day I don't know how my passport got there before I did.

The Berlin dance was great. Instead of an after party, it was traditional for the Swinging Bears to host a breakfast gala on the morning after the dance. It was held in an outdoor *Biergarten* and, while some of the German callers called a few tips, the main entertainment was a six-piece German Dixieland band. My German *Tasse ranneth über!*. My Hamburg friends knew I played harmonica and conspired with the band leader to ask me - - over the microphone - - to join them for a set. I was on the stage in a New Orleans minute. We played All of Me, I Can't Give You Anything But Love, and a beautiful, long, slow blues. It was a marvelous and totally unexpected way to end a great weekend in Berlin.

That afternoon I flew to Frankfurt and, after a slight mix-up with our connections, managed to meet up with Al. We drove to his apartment and after concluding our coach exam procedures, stayed up most of the night talking shop and drinking *Spätlese*. It had been a busy five days.

Al Stevens brought us back to Europe four more times: in 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1996. The 1990 trip was to substitute for Jack Lasry, a well-known Florida Coach who had suddenly passed away. For all of these sessions, Al put together a series of one-week programs, each consisting of a 5-day school followed by a 2-day dance festival. He scheduled them one right after the other and each week was in a different country. Although the tours were fun and I earned good money, I worked very hard and found them very tiring.

The 1992 itinerary was especially taxing. Al had scheduled four consecutive school/dance packages in Denmark, Sweden, England and Germany and, as a favor to Jeannette Stäuble, a former student, we agreed to end the month-long program with a dance in Zürich. As if that weren't enough, good friends Al and Carole Green from England, had arranged to meet us in Zürich and, since Carole knew Italy very well, she had prevailed upon us to extend our trip by one more week so she could show us *her* Italy. It sounded like a god idea at the time and it is difficult to deny Carole anything, so we agreed. We should have known better.

After all those schools and dances, we were simply too fatigued and run down to derive any pleasure from the busy schedule Carole had mapped out for us. The weather had been rainy and November-damp the entire time and both Betty and I had caught bad colds. Half-way through the tour, we both realized we were too tired to enjoy what Carole had been showing us. We had seen

Genoa, Pisa and Rome and were about to travel to Venice, San Remo and Florence. We weren't looking forward to it and decided to cut the trip short and fly home. Carole was disappointed but understanding. She could also see that we were in no shape to continue. She helped us change our air reservations and booked herself on a tour of Sardinia. Utterly exhausted, we took the next flight home.

Although these last three European tours had involved a lot of hard work, they were, nevertheless, the source of many pleasant memories. In the south of England, I enjoyed being on the same bill with country singer George Hamilton IV at an American Music Festival in Bognor Regis. I was also thrilled to see a performance of Hamlet at London's National Theatre. And imagine my delight when we accidentally stumbled upon a very good Czech Dixieland band playing for pass-the-hat money in a church square in Prague. It was also unique to have the students of our school in Prague roast a suckling pig on a spit at their graduation party. These were the trips where we visited Windsor Castle, Helsingore (Hamlet's Elsinore in Denmark), an amazingly old viking ship in Stockholm, the Leaning Tower of Pisa and Rome's Colosseum.

Nor were our overseas junkets restricted to Europe. In the 1980s and 1990s, we also traveled extensively throughout the Pacific Rim with visits to New Zealand (1986, 1989, 1992, 1993), Australia (1984, 1986), Japan (1992) and Taiwan (1992, 1995). These tours involved the usual combination of schools and dances and I have pleasant memories of them all.

I remember Geoff and Margaret Hinton in Christchurch taking us to see majestic Mt. Cook and telling us how lucky we were that the clouds had parted long enough to let us actually see the summit. I also recall watching a new form of insanity called bungee jumping along the way; I remember a marvelous winery tour with Jim Mayo in Australia. That was also the trip that Jim and I taught a school in Perth and met Kevin Kelly, an excellent Aussie caller. Kevin was a chiropractor who worked on race horses and he let us accompany him on his rounds of the racing stables one Saturday morning to watch him align the spines of some of Australia's most well-known race horses. It was fascinating. I remember buying opals for Betty at a jewelry wholesaler in Melbourne and buying a few opal chips from a caller in our school in Sidney who was also an amateur rock hound. I remember being disappointed by a detour to Tahiti on the way home from one of these trips - it wasn't worth the time or the expense.

In 1992, we returned to Japan to call another anniversary weekend for the Fukyuai dancers. We hadn't been there for ten years but very little had changed. Most of the dancers and callers we had met on our earlier trips were still dancing and it was good to see them all again. What I remember most about this trip is the night Matt Asanuma and Motohiro Yoshimura took us to a country-western bar in Tokyo. It was a small cellar club on the Ginza and it featured a four-piece western band. They didn't sell drinks at the bar, only set-ups. To get a drink you had to buy a full unopened bottle and, when you did, they took a Polaroid picture of you and scotch-taped it to the bottle. This identified the bottle as yours and you could drink from it as long as it lasted.

It was also the custom at this bar for the patrons to sing with the band and Matt and Moto insisted that I do at least one number. I didn't know the words to any country-western songs but remembered the melody for Bobby McGee so I had the band play the song as I improvised a scat rendition of my own. It tore the house down and everyone, including the boys in the band, applauded wildly. Both Matt and Moto gained face because I was their guest.

I recall two trips to Taiwan, courtesy of Doc Casey. I first met Doc as a student in a callers' school I conducted in Honolulu where Doc was a TV newsman. We hit it off right away. We had

much in common. We laughed at the same things and shared a taste for single malt scotch . I suggested to Doc that we do something together at a New Year's Eve dance after party and he readily agreed. We memorized the lines and performed the famous Abbott and Costello Who's on First routine. It went over so well that we did something similar at a dance weekend I called on Kauai the following year. This time we performed the Marx Brothers Tootsy-Frootsie Ice Cream scene. Doc was Groucho and I played Chico and it too was a crowd pleaser. A short time later, Doc accepted a job managing an English-speaking radio network in Teipei. He joined the Taiwanese square dance program and was able to bring us to Teipei on two occasions.

My travels as a square dance caller has made it possible for Betty and I to see the world not as tourists, but through the eyes of the local square dancers. It provides an entirely different perspective and our experience of each new place we have visited is remembered more for its people than its places. The two pendants containing Betty's collection of charms are now chock full, with each charm a memento triggering a cascading flood of exciting memories.



COUNTRY BAR ON THE GINZA, 1992
(WITH MATT ASANUMA)



PASS-THE-HAT DIXIE IN PRAGUE



WITH DOC CASEY, KOKEE , 1989

Chapter 20

HOW DO YOU SPELL *EMERITUS* ?

Don't let it be too late!
(Billy Bob Thornton)

It was 1984 and I had been calling for more than thirty-five years. Square dancing had been good to me, but it had also taken over my life. I had created a lifestyle that effectively excluded anything not connected with square dancing and, what's more, I had done it deliberately. For many years, the life I lived was exactly the life I wanted. But now I found myself wishing I had time to do other things. I still enjoyed calling but it was harder to generate enthusiasm for my weekly club dates and, after fifteen years of uninterrupted publishing, I had come to dread the unforgiving monthly deadlines of Choreo Breakdown. I was definitely ready for a change and I wondered whether the time had come to think about retirement. I would turn sixty-two the following year and be eligible for Social Security. Would the extra income make a comfortable retirement possible? And what would that retirement be like?

I tried to imagine the kind of retirement I'd choose if I had enough money to do anything I wanted. I had always yearned to live in the mountains and Betty and I both enjoyed our frequent visits to Lake Tahoe. Could we move there? I wasn't sure I'd enjoy Tahoe's snowy winters, however, so why not become a snowbird? We could live at the Lake for most of the year, and spend the winter months some place warm and sunny - - like Maui. It was an ambitious plan and we probably couldn't afford it, but I decided to check it out anyway.

I was astonished to find that while a Tahoe/Maui scenario would be expensive, it was definitely feasible. I checked and rechecked the numbers and there was no mistake. With the retirement income I expected to have when we added my Social Security checks to the pot, it was a decidedly possible. At least financially. I hadn't been this excited since I discovered square dancing!

I discussed my scheme with Betty and although she had some reservations about whether we could afford the annual trips to Maui, she agreed that it was worth a try. We spent the next year working out the details. We couldn't quite swing three months a year on Maui, so we settled for two. We chose January and February because we guessed those months probably produced the most snow each winter. December and March were also snow-prone, but we figured we had reduced the risks substantially and that if a problem did occur, it would be both minimal and manageable. If it snowed in December, Maui was only weeks away; if it snowed in March, Springtime was just around the corner. We could cope!

We still lived in the Amondo Drive house and thought we'd have to sell it. When we told our daughter Linda and her former husband about our plans, they asked if they could rent it from us instead. It would be one less detail for us to worry about, so we agreed. She and Joe moved in when Betty and I moved out. They were married in that house in 1986.

Next, I had to dispose of Choreo Breakdown. After some lengthy discussions, I sold the entire enterprise to Don Beck, a New England caller and a good friend. We agreed upon a price and

a monthly payment plan and we closed the deal. My Farewell Issue of Choreo Breakdown was dated December 1984 and Don took over in 1985. It turned out that Don handled deadlines badly and after his first year, he often published late or missed an issue completely. He never missed a payment to me, however, and we settled our contract on time. He continued to publish Choreo Breakdown but slowly lost subscribers and, after a few years, ceased publishing altogether.

I was calling and teaching classes for three weekly clubs at that time: The Square Hoppers (26 years), the Whirlaways (17 years), and the San Mateo B&Bs (11 years). I told them of our intention to move to Lake Tahoe and gave them each three-months or more to find a replacement caller. Before we left, each club threw a big farewell party for Betty and me and while they didn't want us to leave and the goodbyes were tearful and charged with emotion, everyone wished us well. We had all had some good times together and the three clubs are still actively dancing today.

I wasn't giving up calling completely so I didn't cancel any of my weekend engagements. My plan was to continue to work on Saturday nights until those bookings no longer came in, but that changed after our first winter when, before escaping to Maui, we had to drive down the hill through a treacherous snowstorm to make a Saturday night commitment in Santa Rosa. After the dance, we stayed with friends and, the next day, headed back to Lake Tahoe only to be stopped at Placerville because the snow had continued all night and they had closed the roads. We took a motel and weren't allowed to return home until the following morning. Shortly thereafter, I examined my calendar and canceled every date that involved driving off the mountain during the months when snow was likely to mess up the roads.

Rather than buy a house at Lake Tahoe, we decided to rent one until we were sure we were going to like living at the Lake. I had been checking the Tahoe real estate ads and had a pretty good idea of what was available and what the rents were. Early in 1985, we drove to the Lake on a weekend house-hunting excursion and rented the first house we looked at.

The house was located on a large corner lot in Skyland, an upscale, well maintained residential community in Zephyr Cove on the Nevada side of the Lake. It was a large 3-bedroom house with a spacious 3-level floor plan not counting a large room over the garage that could be used as a den or playroom. It was probably more house than we needed, but it came furnished and the rent fit our budget. We signed a lease and moved in on May 3rd, 1985. In less than three months time, we had completely changed our lifestyle. My retirement was turning into everything I had hoped for and more!

One of the first things I did was to take two courses at South Lake Tahoe Junior College. One was Water Color Painting and the other was Wine Appreciation. I enjoyed both classes. I got a B+ in Water Color and an A in Wine Appreciation.

Wil and Lori Bernard, an East Bay square dance couple with whom we had become friendly, afforded me the opportunity to buy premium French wines at the bargain basement price of a buck or two a bottle. Wil worked for a spirits distributor in Oakland and he was able to acquire supposedly damaged merchandise at ridiculously low prices. The distributor sold mostly to fine restaurants who required that each bottle they bought be in absolutely mint condition. It often happened that, en route from France, a cork might chip, a label might tear or become stained and, while this in no way affected or disturbed the wine, such bottles were regarded as damaged merchandise. They couldn't be sold and had to be returned to the seller. It was cost-prohibitive to ship them back across the Atlantic so the seller gave instructions for the bottles to be destroyed. But that seemed wasteful, even sacrilegious, so rather than destroy them, the distributor sold the

damaged bottles to his employees for a token fee. Wil bought all he could get and asked me if I would be interested in buying some bottles too. I told him that, at those prices, I would buy all the French and German wines he cared to sell me.

Wil and Lori visited us at the Lake every Labor day weekend and they'd bring up about twenty cases of French wine every time they came. When they arrived, we'd unload their car and I would go through the cases of wine like a kid opening presents on Christmas morning. The wines were mostly upper medium-grade Rhones, Bordeaux and Burgundies, but I'd occasionally find some top-rated treasures too. I converted the room over the garage into a wine cellar and at one point, it contained more than 800 bottles of premium French vintages.

I knew my good fortune couldn't last. One day, the distributor caught some of his workers selling the bottles at a flea market and that was the end of that: they stopped selling the wines to their employees. Wil's source had dried up. For me, it had been an unexpected stroke of good luck and I am grateful to Wil and Lori for allowing me to indulge my taste for fine wines. I have long since polished off almost all the wines they brought me. About a dozen bottles of the really good wines remain and I hoard them jealously. Wil and Lori now live in Reno and our friendship continues. We exchange e-mails regularly and we drop in to see them whenever we are on the Mainland.

Anyone who enjoys the mountains would agree that we had made the perfect move and that our new home was ideally located. From our front door, I could walk one block to the Lake's eastern shore and, in the opposite direction, walk another block to a place where I could enter a part of the Lake Tahoe National Forest that hardly anyone ever visited. We lived at the Lake for nearly fifteen years and, for most of that time, I regarded this small tract of the Sierra wilderness as my own private hiking preserve. I called it *The Mountain*. The Park Service maintains no hiking trails here, but numerous old logging roads and game trails still criss-cross the area and I came to know them all. I also did a lot of off-trail hiking.

During the time we lived at the Lake, I hiked in some part of the Forest nearly every day. I hiked solo, which could have been a real problem if something happened to me while I was alone on The Mountain, but I felt it was a risk worth taking. I was fairly woods-wise and I usually took the precaution of telling Betty where I planned to hike on any given day. My hikes would usually last one, two or three hours and Betty always made me tell her how long I planned to be gone so that she would know when it was time to begin worrying.

Fortunately, I experienced no problems and I have many beautiful memories of my daily walks. While there were no peaks to ascend, there were many high ridges with excellent views of Lake Tahoe. I hiked them all. A broad assortment of wildlife lived on The Mountain and, in addition to the ever-present chipmunks and mountain squirrels, I frequently crossed paths with deer, raccoons, weasels, foxes and, one time, I even happened upon a mother bear and two cubs.

I was coming down The Mountain and was heading home when I saw the bear just off the trail. I was about twenty feet away and the moment I saw her, I froze. I was simultaneously frightened and fascinated. The big brown mother bear was busily scratching for grubs in an old fallen log and she completely ignored me. The cubs, on the other hand, watched me intently. I didn't know what to do, so I did nothing. Not wanting to disturb a mother bear with cubs, I remained stock still. I wondered why she wasn't aware of my presence, but she kept on pawing at the log and seemed oblivious to anything else. Finally, unable to stand it any longer, I took a very slow and tentative step forward. She kept scratching. I took another. She still ignored me. Then

another and another and another - - the two cubs watching my every move - - until I was well past them and out of sight. I quickly walked the rest of the way home. I still couldn't believe that the bear hadn't seen me and when I told my neighbor about the encounter the next day, he suggested a possible explanation. He reasoned that, without my ever seeing her, the bear had often seen me on The Mountain. She must have long ago decided I posed no threat and allowed me to share her habitat unchallenged. Could be! I never saw the bear or her cubs again.

On one of my hikes, I discovered a tall dead fir tree on a high ridge with a large osprey nest at the very top. Ospreys are large, migrating sea eagles who mate for life. Their nests are disc-shaped and are approximately three feet in diameter. The same pair of osprey returned to this particular nest every spring. I took a bird-watching friend to see them and he mentioned them to a Park Ranger he knew. This particular ranger was responsible for counting Lake Tahoe's wildlife. She telephoned and asked if I would take her to see *my* osprey and we arranged a time. When we had seen the birds and were hiking back to her vehicle, she told me that my birds were the ninth pair of nesting osprey she had thus far recorded around the entire perimeter of the Lake and that their nest was the furthest inland.

On another occasion, I crested a ridge and, on the other side and about thirty feet from where I stood, I saw a group of eight grazing deer. As soon as I appeared on the ridge, we all froze and stared at each other. We stood there, *en tableaux*, for about a minute or two, when the largest deer - - the only one with antlers, - - slowly turned and calmly trotted off down the hillside. The others wheeled in behind him and, in single file, they followed him down the trail. I suppose that, like the bear, I didn't threaten them either.

From the early spring, when the snow plants poke their bright red tops through the crusted snow, to the late fall when a profusion of white mountain asters cover the sides of every stream, The Mountain is awash with wild flowers. Although I didn't always know their names, I recognized most of them by sight and I always enjoyed their ever-changing kaleidoscope of rampant color. One day I decided to see how many Sierra wild flowers I could identify and capture on film. I bought some guidebooks, loaded my camera and carried it with me on every hike. In only two seasons, I identified and photographed more than a hundred different species.

It had become our custom to have dinner every Sunday evening at the Lakeside Casino, a small and friendly establishment whose motto was *Lakeside Loves Locals*. We became regulars and the casino personnel - - from pit bosses and money changers to dealers and slot mechanics - - knew our names. We were often *comped* to dinner and were always invited to the special Christmas party they hosted each year for their special patrons. Toni was our favorite waitress at the restaurant. She knew exactly how we liked our martinis and we could trust her to tell us when to select - - or avoid - - this or that item on the menu.

After dinner we'd gamble. Betty would hit the slot machines and I would try my luck at a blackjack table. When we first moved to the Lake, I was a bit apprehensive about what affect the nearby casinos might have on our retirement budget. Betty and I both enjoy gambling and while I had included gambling as a fixed-figure expense in our monthly Tahoe budget, I wasn't certain that we'd have the discipline to stick to it. I needn't have worried. The entire time we lived at the Lake, I kept careful records of our combined wins and losses and found that at year's end, we were never more than one or two hundred dollars on either side of the break-even line. We soon learned to take separate cars to the casino on Sundays. Betty spent a lot more time at the machines than I did at the tables and it was therefore important for each of us to have our own transportation.

I had promised myself that if the time ever came when I had some adrenalin to spare for things other than square dancing, I would explore the possibility of working with a community theater group. For forty years my job as a caller had gratified my need to perform on stage. It wasn't acting, however, and I had never lost my keen desire to perform as a thespian. At Lake Tahoe, the opportunity presented itself sooner than I expected.

I was seated at a blackjack table one Sunday evening, playing with one of my favorite dealers, a charming and vivacious young lady named Liz Niven. During our usual mid-game banter, she mentioned that she had performed professionally in musical theater and I immediately sensed a kindred spirit. I told her of my short-lived flirtation with the Broadway stage. She countered by telling me that she was attending an audition for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that the Drama Department of the Junior College would soon be putting on and suggested that I try out too. That off-hand conversation ignited a spark that would once again make acting an important part of my life.

I went to the audition and found that it was much more casual than the ones I remembered from my younger days on Broadway. Tryouts were still competitive, but they were nowhere near as stressful as the ones I had previously experienced. On that night, the actors I competed with were either young students or hobby actors like myself and the uneasy aura of quiet desperation and cut-throat determination that characterized my earlier auditions, was completely absent. I read for several roles and, to my delight, was cast as Aegeus. It was a small part, but I had no complaints. I was back on the boards, and in Shakespeare, no less! I was in seventh heaven.

Liz, I discovered, is a very talented performer. She is a fine actress and sings like a nightingale - - from Ethel Merman to Julie Andrews and all points in between. In this show she was cast as Puck and she was perfect in the part. It marked the first time we appeared in a show together and, over the next few years, we appeared in several others. We still keep in touch via e-mail.

A Midsummer Night's Dream was my introduction to community theater in South Lake Tahoe and Carson City where three major show producers are active: the South Lake Tahoe Community College, the Community College of Northern Nevada, and the Brewery Arts Theater of Carson City. They select shows from a broad spectrum of classic theater, straight plays and musicals. I was involved in this theatrical *milieu* for about eight years and played everything from leads and important featured roles, to small character parts and walk-on bits. I played in Shakespeare and Sophocles, Thornton Wilder and Agatha Christie - - and that's not counting the musicals. Because I always claimed to be an actor who sang rather than a singer who acted, I usually landed parts requiring little or no singing. I appeared in *Kiss Me Kate* (Baptista), *My Fair Lady* (Col. Pickering), *Carousel* (Starkeeper), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Erroneous), *How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (Mr. Womper), and *Man of La Mancha* (the Governor). To stretch myself, I accepted a role in the chorus of *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. It was a rock musical and I absolutely hated it!

After *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, my next role was in Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, a quirky play that demands an audience with an unconventional imagination. The director could never figure out if it was a comedy or a tragedy so we played it campy. I enjoyed it because I played the lead (Mr. Antrobus).

I played in only one comedy, the whimsical play about a six-foot rabbit called Harvey. I played Dr. Chumley, the psychiatrist. It was a great role that provided a welcome opportunity to work on my comic timing skills. I found comedy far more difficult to perform than tragedy. The

audience dynamics are different. On one night, a certain line may produce uproarious laughter and , on another, be greeted with barely audible snickers. A line may sometimes generate nervous titters and other times, even though it is delivered in the exact same way, it produces a frightening silence. I observed this phenomenon for the first time when I played in Harvey. No one can explain it. It is scary.

One of my most unsettling on-stage experiences occurred during a performance of Measure For Measure. I played Duke Vincentio and Liz played my daughter and we were doing the show arena style - - the stage in the center pit and the audience seated around us on all four sides. For the audience, there was only one exit to the lobby. There is a scene in the play where only Liz and I are on-stage. We are engaged in an ardent exchange of difficult Shakespearean dialogue. One night, during this scene, a lady in the audience got up from her seat and, in the middle of my most impassioned speech, marched across the stage and , moving directly between us, continued out the exit door. It was unnerving to say the least and for the only time in my acting career, I went up in my lines. I was so shocked, I forgot where we were or what we were doing. Luckily, Liz stayed in character. In perfect iambic pentameter, she was able to improvise dialogue that steered me back to one of my key lines and we were able to complete the scene. The lady who interrupted us never did understand what all the fuss was about.. She desperately needed to use the rest room and the only way she could get to it was to walk across the stage. When she was ready to return to her seat, they had to physically restrain her from going back the same way she had come.

I played Tiresius in Oedipus Rex .which was also staged arena-style but with an interesting difference: Instead of the actors constantly turning to give all sides of the house an equal view of the action, the director mounted the stage on a large motorized turntable that slowly rotated throughout the entire play. Most of us were skeptical, but it worked.

My favorite musical was My Fair Lady with Liz as Eliza Doolittle. I played Col. Pickering. It is an actor-proof show and we did it especially well. I also remember Gypsy in which I played a dual role. In the early scenes, I played Rose's father but later I became Mr. Goldstone. To underscore that this was a different character, I wore a false mustache as Mr. Goldstone and, during one particularly hectic performance, the action became so abandoned that one of the enthusiastic young dancers inadvertently brushed the mustache right off my upper lip. I hurriedly clapped my hand over my mouth and finished the scene as though I had a toothache.

For the part of General MacKenzie in Agatha Christie's classic murder mystery, Ten Little Indians, I wanted a stiff, bristly, white military mustache so I decided, for the first and only time in my life, to grow a real one. It came in fine but it was mousey greyish-blond in color and I had to sprinkle it with talcum powder to get the look I wanted. Sometimes, when I made my entrance and spoke my first lines, I shook some of the powder loose and the audience must have wondered why a thin cloud of white dust had suddenly appeared around my head. Halfway through the second act, the plot required me to die on stage and, in full view of the audience, lie quiet for the rest of the act. Lying dead on stage is one of the easiest things an actor has to do - - unless, like me, you have Parkinson's Disease and must control your tremor. I managed, but barely.

Harrah's Casino is the biggest casino at Lake Tahoe and, as a public relations gesture, they allow Brian Farnon, their former musical director, now retired, to stage a musical production of Dickens' classic Christmas Carol using only local actors. It is called Ebenezer Scroge and, among the locals residents, the show has become an eagerly anticipated annual tradition. The show is staged in Harrah's main showroom and it sells out every year. Brian wrote the show , which is

quite good and he shamelessly mugs his way through the lead part of Scrooge. I was asked to join the cast in 1992 and appeared as the Merchant and the Monsignor every year until we left the Lake.

My theatrical endeavors at Lake Tahoe are among the most enjoyable experiences I have ever had. The only downside was that they required me to leave Betty alone for many evenings while I was off rehearsing and performing in a show. For me, however, they were an unparalleled delight. I miss them.

While we lived at Lake Tahoe, I did a little bit of calling in Carson City and Reno, especially during the first few years. I ran an Advanced Level Workshop in Carson City and taught several Advanced classes. On other occasions, I conducted a Plus Level Workshop at Harold's Club in Reno (1992), and I was hired as club caller for the Reno B&Bs (1993). I also taught their beginners' class. I had grown unaccustomed to the drudgery of a weekly commitment, however, and I felt tied down and constricted. I left them both after a year or two.

For a number of years, I also called some one-night stands at the Lake. I became associated with a musical booking agent who specialized in providing live music for the many conventions that were held at Lake Tahoe. Whenever he had a request for a country-western band, he'd suggest that for a just a little bit extra, they could add an excellent square dance caller to the program and, for several years, he booked a dance or two for me each year. I liked them because they were easy gigs and they usually paid well.

Shortly after retiring to the Lake, CALLERLAB granted me status as a Caller Coach Emeritus, a new category created especially for retired master coaches who might still be available for an occasional seminar or clinic. It is a very select club; only about a half dozen or so coaches have thus far received this designation.

We moved to Lake Tahoe in the spring of 1985 and we began our annual snowbird trips to Hawaii the next winter. We rented a one bedroom oceanside condo at Lokelane on Maui's Kaanapali Beach. We spent our time acquiring a tan and exploring the island. We also got to know the dancers in the Maui square dance community. I experimented with water color painting and tried to teach Betty how to swim. I did fairly well with my water colors, but failed dismally to show Betty how to stay on top of the water. Betty shopped and enjoyed the sun.

After the second year we realized that, other than the usual tourist activities -- most of which we had experienced several times -- there wasn't much to do on Maui. We decided to divide our Hawaii stay the next year by spending half our time on Oahu, where we hoped to find a bit more action. That seemed to work. There was lots more to do on Oahu and the square dance program was much larger. We followed this Maui/Oahu pattern for two or three more years, until one year, it rained in Hawaii for almost the entire two months we were there. We were also aware that ever since we had been coming to Hawaii on an annual basis, the winters at the Lake had been fairly mild; that while they had had some snow, it wasn't very serious and it created few problems. We decided to skip Hawaii the following year and see if we could tough out the entire winter at Tahoe.

About this time we found ourselves in the middle of a major legal problem between our Tahoe landlord and his lender. During this dispute, there was a question about who should receive our monthly rent, with both sides insisting it should go to them. We had been called to court several times by the lender and each time the judge told us that since the landlord had filed for bankruptcy, he had no jurisdiction in the matter and that we should keep on doing what we were doing -- which we did.

In March 1989, we came back from our Hawaii trip to find that the locks had been changed and a SOLD sign was standing in our front yard. Our furniture and other possessions had been moved out and placed in storage in Reno. The details are still too painful to describe, except to say that the lender had gone out of his way to make things as difficult for us as possible and had deliberately orchestrated the proceedings so that they occurred while we were on our annual two-month sojourn in Hawaii. It was all perfectly legal and there wasn't a thing we could do about it.

The one bright side to the whole sorry affair was that we were able to find another comfortable house to rent in Skyland which we liked better than the first one. It cost us roughly \$11,000 to bail out our furniture and have it delivered to our new address. We lived in the new house until the end of 1998.



FIRST LAKE TAHOE HOUSE



SECOND LAKE TAHOE HOUSE



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(MONKS, EGGINGS, SWINGERS)



THE TOP TEN GANG
Bud Grass, Roger Morris, Milt Adams, Dave H



DON & LU McPHERSON



HAL & LENA RIVELAND



AL & CAROLE GREEN



GEORGE JAMES



WIL & LORI BRNARD

IN MEMORIAM



Bill Peters 1924 - 2004

In December 2004 one of the true giants of square dancing passed on to that big square dance in the sky. **Bill Peters** was one of the Founding Fathers of CALLERLAB and provided a huge positive and long lasting impact on the square dance activity. Bill was presented the CALLERLAB Milestone Award in 1986 and was awarded Life (Gold Card) Membership in 1999. Bill served on the CALLERLAB Board Of Governors from 1974 to 1986. He attended the very first CALLERLAB Convention and was a highly respected panelist at numerous CALLERLAB Conventions. He served as Chairman of many CALLERLAB committees and was an active supporting member of several others. His influence is still with us today in the Curriculum Guidelines used by our Caller-Coaches, in the Formations & Arrangements Pictograms, in the Standard Applications books and numerous other CALLERLAB handouts and materials.

Bill passed away Tuesday morning, December 14, 2004. He had gotten up early, went to the computer to work on another chapter for his autobiography but never completed the sign-on process. (The autobiography, *Shades of Grey*, is available without charge on dosado.com) Bill was 81 and had been fighting Parkinson's for several years. His ashes will be spread in the mountains he loved around Tahoe, NV. He is survived by his wife Betty, his son and daughter and several grandchildren. The family has requested memorial contributions in his name be made to the CALLERLAB Foundation.