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## Legends from the Horse's Mouth

**25 January 1996 (Thursday)**

The way we perceive ourselves is often quite different from the way others perceive us. Then, too, there are some personal characteristics which we can agree upon. This journal is to be a series (hopefully daily) of entries exploring experiences, thoughts, and questions as they arise in my mind which address the myths and realities of John Martin Ramsay. There will undoubtedly be some of each from both the inward and the outward perspective.

The realization that there are two John Ramsays came home to me back in 1981 (?). I returned to the John C. Campbell Folk School, where I had been Director for six years, and stood in line to register for the annual conference of the Folk Education Association of America which was being held at the School. The secretary, from the Folk School staff, was looking down at her list when it was my turn to register seeing only my torso with her peripheral vision. She said, "Name, please." I answered, "John Ramsay," in what I think was my normally mild mannered way. Then she looked up, her eyes got larger, and her faced showed obvious surprise as she processed what she saw. "You're John Ramsay?" she queried. "Yes," I replied. And then I added, "I understand that there used to be a John Ramsay here, but I'm not that one; I've never been here before."

What I said was true. We are each different each day and so are the places we visit. *Deja vu* is not normal and, therefore, has it's own word designated for having been there before. We generally recognize that *deja vu* is imaginal. Normally we cannot revisit a place partly because we are continually changing and partly because everything else is changing, too.

But, I was curious to meet this John Ramsay of the clerk's mind. What was surprising about me? ...that I was alive? ...that I was mild-mannered? What had she heard about me to lead her to show such shock? I had no opportunity to explore this with her.

That was not the last time that I have met someone who has indicated that they have heard about me before we met. Usually, the reaction shows more delight at meeting me than that time at Brasstown (understandable since I left there unpleasantly and suddenly).

Last Saturday, for example, Berni and I went to Nashville to help honor Ruby and Hibbard Thatcher at a program dedicated to them. One of the older dancers, a grey-haired woman with a pleasant face said, "I'm so glad to meet you. I've heard a lot about you." We were able to chat a bit. She knew that I had been active in country dance circles and played some part in its development. She had wanted to get to Berea for a dance and knew about the overseas trips I had engineered. She said, "I'm glad to be able to meet the real person." I told her, "I would like to meet him, too. I keep hearing about this legendary John Ramsay and wonder what he is like."

Others will obviously need to fill in that picture. I will mostly have to explore who I think I am, or who I am to myself. At times I am given some hint as to that other John Ramsay, but mostly he remains a curiosity to me.

Two times I have been confronted with the disparity between my own view and that of others. Once, a retired couple registered for a Quadrille week we held at the Berea Folk Center. The couple were club square dancers and interested in the historic background Frantisek Bonus, the instructor, could give to the link the quadrille and western style square dancing. In my role as organizer of the event, I undertook to get acquainted with the man and learned that he was a regular volunteer at the John C. Campbell Folk School. He was quite happy to talk about his own experiences, how much he and his wife valued the Folk School experience, how often they returned, etc. He showed no interest in any reaction from me and, in fact, hardly gave me a chance to get a word in edgewise. He wanted to share his own enthusiasm with anyone and had no idea that I had had some relationship with the School. I could have stopped him and told him, but remember thinking, "No, you need to listen to him and not try to direct the attention to yourself. You are the host, and it seems that he may not like to have you interfere with his enthusiasm." However, when he began telling me how the local people were pilfering lumber from the lumber shed and he was installing doors with locks to stop the theft, I felt obliged to step in for fear that he would say something to me he might later regret. I interjected with, "I used to be at the Folk School." He wanted to know when I was there and I told him it was in the late '60's until 1973. He quickly took the lead again by informing me that that was when the School was run by a bunch of hippies!

I find that amusing. I am not, nor have I ever been a hippie. But, I can understand how someone might confuse my liberal political views and anti-war sentiments with the hippie movement. Actually, during my tenure at Brasstown, the hippie element and its repercussions began to reach Cherokee and Clay Counties, and I, in my role as Director of the Folk School became one channel for this development in spite of putting my personal political views in the closet. I gave my attention to the vitality of the School and it's surrounding communities, e.g. teaching trellis tomato culture to low income farmers and their wives, starting a community cannery, and working very hard to reestablish some form of winter folk school. I don't deserve to be labeled a hippie and am very disappointed that the greater dreams I had for the Folk School could so easily be swept aside. I failed to inspire enough of the neighbors, and perhaps even the

residual staff (those left after my departure), with what we were trying to do. It really had nothing to do with long hair, mustaches, granny dresses, and moth eaten sweaters.

The second confrontation between myself and my legend took place in Berea. A group of my close friends secretly tried to organize a contra dance program. They were certain that I favored English Country Dance and would be upset with them for putting energy into a new dance program in our small community. But, in the end they had to approach me for permission to use the Berea Folk Center in which to hold their dances. I was President of the Folk Circle Association, the incorporation that owned the Folk Center, and I was the chief one responsible for having the Folk Center built in Berea.

These close friends didn't realize that they were achieving what I had been striving for for years. I didn't care if it was contra or some other form of activity. The important thing to me was to have local citizens organizing a non-competitive, non-commercial, participatory activity. I was particularly struck with how effectively these young adults had bonded together and how committed they were to run the dance in a successful but principled way.

I immediately gave them my enthusiastic support and was certain that rather than diminish the English Country Dance group, such energy given to the contra dance would spill over and enhance English dancing as well. I did make a plea to nourish communication and support between the two groups. I'm delighted to report that both groups are doing well and there has been considerable crossing over. For the most part, the contra group, called Oh Contraire, has attracted a whole new set of people to the folk dance activity. Oh Contraire never put me on their Board nor have they asked me to call, but I have attended whenever I was in town and paid the entrance fee as a show of support. Actually, I'm delighted with what they have accomplished and am even happier to sweat with them than to dance with the English group which has become increasingly mild and foregoes skipping at all costs.

Now, the English group, variously known as Berea Folk, Adult Group, Community Country Dance Group, are convinced that John Ramsay considers the English dancing too elitist. In actuality, my first love is the English dances and its music. What I object to is the elitist attitude of a few of the aging people who come to those dances. Does no-one know the real John Ramsay?

# Inside Out

**26 January 1996 (Friday)**

Physical appearance seems almost to be a reverse situation to personality. Appearance can only be seen outside the body while personality derives from inside. I can only see myself secondhand: in a mirror, a photo, or a movie. Others most often see me firsthand as a physical being.

The way I see my physical self is mostly a legend put together as feedback from other people. What I see in the mirror does not match much of the feedback I get. People generally consider me good looking, even sexy. I see myself in the mirror as gangly and awkward. At times I get a glimpse of what they see, but there seems to be an inner conviction that I have a long neck carried too far forward and narrow features which are too refined to be really manly.

Some feedback has reinforced that image. Oliver Rice, back in college days, commented once that I had an effeminate walk. I never forgot that feedback! And I worked on a more manly swagger. It was successful but not natural. When I saw Oliver after twenty-five years had passed, I made sure to use my manly walk—the remembrance was paramount although we had many other things to share. I did so well that he commented favorably upon how much I had changed. His image of me was changing although I was still the same guy.

I think that my physical appearance has always plagued me. I did not like being pegged as effeminate—detested such a reputation. But much of that must have been in my own mind. It certainly had something to do with sexuality. Certainly the girls were after me. Classmates said that brother Bill was cute but John was good looking. A whole series of girls chased me: Frieda in high school, then Lori, Annabelle, Mavis (yes, I heard that she planned to marry me), and others. But I was very shy and unsure of my sexuality even though the hormones flowed copiously in those years. I needed to accept myself first before seeking a mate.

How differently I feel being married to Berni. For the first time in my life I feel whole. She is such a vivacious, sparkly, attractive, sexy, dark-eyed, black-haired, talented person, and she has married me! Not only that, we admire each other, enjoy each other, and I know that she loves my sexuality. With a substrate like that it has been easier to work out our differences and flaws. I am much less shy, much more secure in myself, and can accept myself as I am. I feel that having this experience, even if only once, is enough to last a lifetime. No one can ever shake me again. I am much in love with Berni. The love is unexplainable. A small part of it, altho an important one, is that she love me. I also love her above and beyond that she loves me. It seems like a once in a lifetime relationship.

I'm pleased that some people find me physically attractive. Certainly I have been blessed with a strong body and the coordination of a dancer although I don't have the hand-eye

coordination to catch a ball! It would be terrible to long for some other physical body. How sorry I feel for those who have not accepted themselves. The lesson seems to be that acceptance of ourselves is linked somewhere to acceptance from at least one other human being.

I think of a friend of my sister's in Columbus, Ohio who has tumors or warts all over his face. Somewhere he has found acceptance of himself and the beauty of his personality shines through. He is an active volunteer in many organizations and works especially with youth. It is probably the youth who have accepted him and given him the feedback needed for him to know what a beautiful person he is.

# Principled or Stubborn

**27 January (Saturday)**

Principled or stubborn? Like so many perceptions, they can be described in two ways. I think most people think of me a man of principle and I believe I am. I can't think of when I did something which was against my principles. Oh yes, I did buy Berni Lottery tickets for Christmas; they were something she wanted and, altho I think gambling counter productive and dangerous for some people, I don't think it is a sin to gamble. Maybe that wasn't going against my principles; it seemed harmless enough and perhaps would help get the Lottery fever out of her system. I try not to judge others, to allow them to hold different views of the world. Perhaps that is what I was doing—supporting Berni, allowing her to know that I will support her even when we differ. I am not so generous with myself.

One of my failings has been to complain when frustrated. I have worked not to be that way and realize that the complaining usually makes things worse. Rissie was a master at resolving developing animosities by pouring on good doses of kindness. She would even confide in me that she could "kill with kindness". I, myself, could usually not believe that she didn't mean the kind words; it was like she had the capacity to look at things several ways. Berni is also skillful at this; she can give enthusiastic support to others when I know that she also would prefer not to. I have been too honest with myself and could hardly keep it from showing when I was upset, much less be an enthusiastic supporter. That is one of my failings, and one to work on. In principle, I would like to always be an enthusiastic supporter of life in its many expressions.

The hurt of Winona, my first wife, saying that I was a hypocrite is still there after 25 years. She knew that I believed in everyone being one big happy family, that was my goal. The fact that the two of us were not able to realize that for ourselves is probably what led her to call me a hypocrite. But, I still think it was unfair. I always did the best I knew how. It hurt to have my wife with whom I shared my innermost feelings, thoughts, and activities say it was all a sham. It wasn't all a sham and still isn't even though the dreams were not realized. I do try to the best of my ability. Most people would agree with that.

Al Perkins, when he was the new Academic Dean at Berea College, called me in to learn about Recreation Extension, one of the departments assigned to him. I was Director of Recreation Extension. After I had enthusiastically outlined what we did he asked, "How much of this is just an extension of John Ramsay's personality?" I felt a mix of alarm and of flattery. My response was, I think, appropriate and honest. "I can see how someone might confuse the program with the personality because I have given myself to the program one hundred percent. But I think you should realize that all of the activities were here when I came: Country Dancers, Christmas School, Spring Festival, Danish American Exchange, foreign travel. I have given

these activities my best effort." I think I have proven the point by severing active connections with the programs upon retirement. They have always been Berea College programs and I had been *hired* by the College to direct them. I retired and the programs continue!

I have stubbornly been true to my principles—followed my conscience. Being a person of principle and being stubborn are compatible. They are two sides of the same coin.

# Dolly Parton

28 January 1996 (Sunday)

Last night Berni and I finished reading to each other Dolly Parton's autobiography, Dolly My Life and Other Unfinished Business. Marilyn Feldkamp shared her copy which Bill had given her for Christmas. What an interesting mixture Dolly has combined in her belief system. She says, again and again, "I truly believe that God is in everything I do and that all my work glorifies him. I don't think you have to be a religious fanatic to do God's work." and, "The longer I live, the more apparent it becomes to me that paradise is not a goal at the end of the road, but the road itself. As a believer, I know that the true paradise awaits me in the next life. But, I also know that it is each person's right , and in fact his duty, to try to come as close as he can get to it in this life."

In answer to the question, "If you could tell teenagers one thing, what would it be?" she responds, "...always act like it's raining and wear your rubbers. Now I've embarrassed myself, and that's hard to do. I would say stick to your dreams, stick to your guns. Have faith in yourself." And to the question, "How can you claim to be so God-fearing and have such a dirty mouth?" she replies. "I don't really talk dirty to be dirty. It's just a way of communication. Some people are just born cussers. I don't even realize I'm doing it. If I have offended anybody with any of my language in this book, all I can say is, 'Tough titty!'"

I share Dolly Parton's religious views but would never resort to her titilating chatter.



# My Wife and My God

29 January 1996 (Monday)

Richard Mende once called me a "splendid maverick". I like that and liked it even more when I looked up maverick in the dictionary just to be sure. One of its definitions is, "An unbranded calf". I am not owned by anyone unless it would be my wife and God.

My wife is very real and very nearby, so her desires and whims must be dealt with even when they are, and this is often, in conflict with my own desires and whims. We have been able to balance these in the give and take of a successful marriage. Both of us feel that we do most of the giving in!

My God cannot be dealt with in any such conscious way. I can't even conceive of what God is. And yet I feel that I am God's child. There is no give and take with the Absolute. My task is to try to decipher, to feel the pulse, to encompass, or at least plug into, the Cosmic Being. To try to understand the Infinite with my finite capacities is impossible. That is why the techniques applied in the domestic relationship are different from those applied in the religious one. Religion requires a broader form of listening, of giving, of accepting, of devotion than marriage, altho there are similarities.

Yet, I do believe that there is that of God in each of us, that we do have an eternal soul, altho not necessarily in the form that seems to be the common perception. Or is our true perception not exactly what we articulate because we have no words to describe what we see only darkly?

I acknowledge the right of atheists to build a different sort of paradigm, one in which life has no purpose. But I personally cannot see life as a chance, temporary, and unplanned configuration of chemicals. There is too much design, mind boggling design, for me to believe that it dignifies nothing. Then there is beauty such as I experienced in the midst of overwhelming fall colors in the Nantahala forest one fall; can beauty be relegated to a meaningless configuration? And last of all, am —a conscious, sentient, living, aware being— nothing? I think not! I do count for something and am compelled to play out this life to the best of my ability.

Marriage is a relationship between equals and that makes it an adventure. My relationship to the Universe is an unequalled adventure!

# Move toward Fitness

30 January 1996 (Tuesday)

This entry can be considered the leg end of the legend!

I've been working out on the weight machines at our club house Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I'm very pleasantly surprised at how much difference it has made in the way I feel! I once thought that I would never deign to use a machine for fitness when there are so many more productive activities. But, the sedentary lifestyle has caught up with me. The exercises are painful and require effort. Perhaps that was behind my "deign." So I have devised a carrot to help fortify my willpower—I take a sauna when I finish. However, even there I end the sauna with a fully cold shower, something I always dreaded and always avoided. Now, I find that I am learning to tolerate the shock and really do enjoy the feeling of exhilaration that comes afterwards. I walk back to our apartment with a spring in my step! I am really a different person each year! The new John has learned, finally, that instant gratification and instant pain should not always be the overriding determinants in life. Long range repercussions need to be factored into daily activities. I guess I've always known that, but not in such a personalized way.

# SIA, DAE, FEAA

31 January 1886 (Wednesday)

The reality is that I am publicly modest but personally vain. My vanity would like to set the record straight, at least in this private journal.

I consider myself the founder of Settlement Institutions of Appalachia (SIA), Danish American Exchange (DAE), and Folk Education Association of America (FEAA). In each case, I was not the only person involved; one person does not constitute an organization. But, I consider myself the inspirator, the spark, the one who took the initial steps to get the ball rolling.

Burton Rogers at Pine Mountain Settlement School was my collaborator in founding SIA and agreed to host the first conference (If I recall correctly, we had a preliminary planning session at the Campbell Folk School where I was Director at the time). I wouldn't have written the first, invitational letter without Burton's expressed interest during our discussion at the Fontana meeting of the Council of the Southern Mountains, the CSM meeting was a great disappointment to Burton and me. I proposed the idea of starting our own organization to meet our needs and the needs of our institutions, such as group health insurance for our workers, a pension plan, fund raising and other efforts which we could better accomplish together than separately. Burton liked the idea and so I went home and sent out a letter to other institutions. The SIA records, housed at Berea College, will tell the rest of the story. I was Chairman for the formative years. I should also mention that Loren Kramer became a vital element in the development of SIA in subsequent years.

I also consider myself the founder of DAE altho publicly I give Ethel Capps credit for the first exchange. An exchange was not her idea. An exchange *was* the hope of DDGU, the Danish host organization. But I was the one who saw the potential and pursued the relationship. In this case, I also developed the relationship: designing the teen exchange, which hatched during a drive with Lillian Lang and Karen Bjerre Madsen to Fulgsø back in 1971 (?), and the other exchanges-- Adult (into which I classed Ethel's tour and her return invitation to gymnasts), Individual (which was really Henning Møller Andersen's idea), Center (which was my idea as a means to let the program grow beyond the limits of my time and would also include people such as Svend Hamborg instead of shutting them out), and Family (I don't recall where that thrust came from, but my son Martin and Arne Rasmussen and their families have been the only bona fide Family exchange)-- grew as the program grew. In recent years, with the introduction of Karl Iversen as Danish contact and the structural changes rumbling in DDGU, the one on one, clearly defined structures broke down and it is no longer clear what tours are official parts of the Exchange and what ones are not-- to the point where no one is sure just what DAE is. That is a shame at this critical time, as I have retired and new people have responsibility for the program. Or, maybe chaos is the prelude to new arrangements—an idea not lost on a geneticist!

The confusion is partly my fault. The American side of DAE has not been formalized. I did get permission from the Berea College Administration back in 1973, to continue with the teen exchange I had begun planning while at Brasstown. They also gave approval for the next few exchanges and then general approval for the exchange program as a part of my work as Director of Recreation Extension at the College. There was nothing in writing at this time and the approvals were mostly *defacto*. With Weatherford's retirement, I could see the importance of including DAE as a recognized part of Recreation Extension, just as Christmas School and the Mountain Folk Festival were. College documents will show that DAE was included in my reports. The reports were accepted but without any understanding by the College officials of what was happening, as far as I know. They were very uncommunicative and seemed to prefer that I continue doing a good job and not bother them with how I was doing that.

We did attempt to formally organize DAE when I went on leave from the College in 1981 (I went to Denmark as an Individual Exchangee). Jim Ramsay was elected President and Rose Ramsay undertook to produce a newsletter. That effort fell apart when I returned because it was easier to let John take the responsibility in view of the impossibility of holding meetings with a widely scattered board.

Somewhere, about this time, we acknowledged Barbara Harding's importance to the program. Dulles had become the entry and departure point for virtually all of the exchanges and Barbara organized hospitality for them. I asked Barbara to act with me as American co-contact for DAE. Thereafter, Barbara was supposed to get copies of all communications but in reality I still was carrying most of the weight. Publicly, I am happy to share the credit with her; the Exchange could not have developed as it has without her efforts and support. It has been a fruitful partnership.

I smart a bit more over FEAA. Soon after coming to Berea College in 1973, I met Kay Parke who was a volunteer at the College Library. We found that we shared interest in, experience with, and enthusiasm for the Scandinavian folk schools. We both wanted to see something happen along those lines in the United States. I was the one to say, let's do something, we can collaborate and pull together all the various threads of folk school influence in the United States and bring them together to share their dreams. Kay shared the dream but remained doubtful that we could do anything; but the dream was strong enough that she could allow me to be the one to dare to try to do something. Kay did put her shoulder to the wheel, and without her the Conference would never have happened nor would the organization have survived. Still, in my heart I feel that I started the organization, I was the one to take the initiative. I sometimes feel overlooked.

Is my own view my own legend? It is certainly one-sided. How do Burton Rogers, Barbara Harding, Kay Parke and all the others who contributed to the programs see their part? And does it matter? Only for the ego. For the most part, I am content with how the programs have contributed in a positive way to the lives of many individuals and there is no need for them to know of my part in it. For that little part, I would like some recognition and for history to be

portrayed as accurately as possible. Setting down my perspective is sufficient whether it is ever read or not. What happens to me is not important but what happens to the world is of extreme importance.

# Earl Morning Inspirations

1 February 1996 (Thursday)

Normally, I begin thinking about my journal entry each morning while still in bed or in the wee hours of the morning while waiting for sleep to come again. Those early hours, while I am flat on my back, have always been productive times for me. Inspirations, solutions, or clarity have suddenly appeared, sometimes so forcefully that I have been compelled to get up and jot them down, especially those which I feel prone to lose, like a dream which recedes with wakefulness.

I had no such inspiration last night. This entry is started without any preconceived thrust. Sometimes I have written under those conditions, off the cuff; perhaps something needed to be composed but I had not given it any thought or had no clarity about proceeding.

The more usual case is to have some kernel of an idea on which to hang the writing at the start, getting it down and then beginning the hard work of taking a second look at it, revising it, organizing it, re-reading it, polishing it and working with it until I am sick of it and can no longer focus on what it is saying. My mind, at those times, gets confused, can't remember what it was I was really wanting to do because some new tangent has captured my attention, and forgets what was deleted or shuffled off to another part of the article. That is the time to 'put the blame thing away' and come back to it a few days or weeks later for a fresh look and nearly final revision, usually a structural one. The final step is a final polishing. I am not one of those who can envision an entire piece before starting out. This Legend is a case in point-- I have not put any work into what I have jotted down. To write well, I have to work at what I write.

One problem is the creative urge. Often, my mind keeps coming up with new ideas, new perspectives, new tangents-- and they come with such rapidity that I cannot get them down before the next appears. That's when I get bogged down and have to work at sorting it all out.

It also happens, especially with those wee hour insights, that the daylight shows them to be ridiculous, or, if there was some true inspiration, it has already evaporated and cannot be reclaimed. On the other hand, I have inexplicably found myself, at times, completely turned around and arguing for some point at odds with an earlier one. More often I have been amazed and amused to find that I have reinvented an earlier 'wheel'-- an idea seems like a new insight and I really like it, I write it down, and then find, sometime later, that I have written the same thing years earlier. At times like that I wonder how well I know myself; how much of my legend have I recreated, forgotten, and patched up again?

# Life Cycles

2 February 1996 (Friday)

A Republican Presidential candidate (can't recall his name), was reported on on the radio last night. He spoke forcefully for addressing the Nation's ills by talking about moral issues. That made me perk up my ears because I have been saying the same thing for several years. Systems, legislation, and documentation do not insure a productive, safe, and enjoyable society. When our morality is in tact, the system and legislation are *relatively* unimportant.

It was, therefore, with great disappointment that I heard the candidate use abortion as the ultimate indicator of our troubled morality.

Life is precious. That is one of my cardinal beliefs, perhaps even my ultimate belief! I am a pacifist; war seems to me to be absolute insanity. Surely we can devise better ways to solve our problems. Yet, some problems come down to a choice between life and death. For my own part, I would rather give up my own life than to deprive someone else of theirs. So, how can I condone abortion? And why do I endorse euthanasia?

As in most aspects of life, we are faced with paradoxes resulting from our finite view of an infinite universe. When we speak of life we normally limit it to our own temporary condition rather than seeing the infinite view. From our point of view, we consider our life to be the totality and try to build an eternal construct for ourselves. From an infinite point of view, I am here for a very brief time.

Dinosaurs have come and gone, and humans may well follow. Death and extinction are always the flip side of life. Yet, without the tiny bits of life we each represent, there is no life at all. Herein is the paradox. We are not insignificant and yet we are not individually significant.

I see this paradox pattern throughout nature, God's creation. In the cycle of life, the frog swallows the fly, the heron captures the frog, the fox kills and eats the heron and so on. Some of it is quite gruesome. Each individual is fighting to stay alive but in the end must die. But then, even in death we are consumed by new life. This is even clearer among the plant world with an annual cycle of life and death.

So, I have come to terms with death and welcome its wisdom in the eternal plan. The old must make room for the young; I cannot imagine it any other way. The world would choke upon itself and stagnate if the cycle stopped. The eternal perspective seems reasonable, that life in the long run is better served by a continuous cycle of death and renewal; this plan allows for growth, development, continuing energy, and adaptation-- *from an infinite perspective*. Yet, life is the miracle. Death is nothing.

Abortion, to me, is preferable to a life of misery, of being unwanted, of meeting death at a time of greater consciousness. Nature herself supplies a surfeit of young, most of which do not survive. We ourselves ingest seed of corn and grain by the tons, eggs by the dozens, and eat veal. I, for one, prefer not to eat hamburgers but, in respect for the sacrificed animal, certainly would not discard a half-eaten one in the trash. When I do eat, plant or animal, I like to say a little prayer of thanks to the plant or animal. In effect, I'm saying, "Excuse me, but I have need of you. Thank you!" Life, even in its surfeit, is not to be taken lightly.

I don't like to see the necessity for an abortion. Where are those who promote behavior which will make abortions unnecessary? That is where the focus should be. The mother should have the right to decide; I firmly believe in choice. The choice will be difficult enough for her without others claiming that a fetus has sacred rights above and beyond those who have made it into the world. I cannot see myself playing God; how can I see eternal wisdom?

I am incredulous that so many of those who seem to grant the life of a fetus with a sanctity above the people who share this planet, also seem to be the most militant regarding the lives of their fellow citizens and will even willingly murder an abortionist (recently in the news) or a Muslim (Gulf War), or a black. What is the morality of that?

The black politician's attention to abortion has thwarted his claim to be the champion of morality. Let's talk, instead, about honesty, unselfishness, trustfulness, and love. These are the moral issues needing attention. When our media menu encourages us to apply life-enhancing traits to the complexities of the eternal cycle we seek to traverse, then the world will be a better, happier, and inspiring journey for us.



# Orchestra Intraplay

3 February 1996 (Saturday)

Last night Coleen Foster took Berni and me to hear Robert Hart Baker direct the St. Louis Philharmonic Orchestra. It was a great artistic experience. The opening number, Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio Italien*, startled and moved me because of the-- I was going to say the *interplay*, but that doesn't get it quite right; so, I'll say the-- *intraplay* between conductor and orchestra. Baker was always on top of the music, sometimes even in a crouch in his readiness to fire off the next salvo, and the orchestra was always ready for the trigger signal to launch the sound projectiles. They fully supported each other.

But what was most amazing and satisfying was how the-- I was going to say *spotlight*, but that doesn't quite get it right; so, I'll say the-- *floodlight* was seamlessly shifted from section to section in an exhilarating kaleidoscope of sound, the focus always at the shifting center of the brilliance but the peripheral sounds very much in the picture.

This floodlighting seemed to be characteristic of Baker's conducting, but the orchestra was obviously also inspired with the vision and ready and able to make it happen. Baker and the orchestra were like two playful cats instantly reacting to each other's pounces this way and that. I was on the edge of my seat!

# Behind a Folk School

4 February 1996 (Sunday)

Here is a new attempt to describe my basic belief system. To be alive is to know while death is unknown. To be alive is to be plugged into a stream of consciousness which savors eternity. Our personal segment of life is finite but it gives us a view of and means of being part of the eternal, the infinite. The energy of life shines like a light. Death is darkness.

Procreation is a vital part of the stream of life altho there are other aspects of the stream. Likely, *all* aspects of life (at least those that contribute to life or enhance life) become part of the eternal-- again, like a light that shines from star to star and then beyond the stars... Procreation is just a very special part of the infinity of creation, the physical continuation of the creation. The other aspects are either spiritual or social/cultural contributions to the creation.

A folk school is a formalized attempt to develop life from the above perspective.

The above entry was set down at 2:26 AM. Now it is just past noon. I won't try to develop the entry here in the journal, that job will be worked on in another file (Basic Belief Paradigm) and over a few week's time. But, I would like to note that trying to capture the basic essence of the inspiration behind the folk schools has been a challenge to me for 30 years.

The challenge was revived again yesterday as I drove Berni, Steve and Peg (Robert and Magdalene) Stephenson, and friend Simon to the Masonic rest home near Sullivan, IL to see brother Ned Nyborg, a Unity friend. Steve asked me to explain what a folk school is. Each time I am confronted with the task, I'm again at a loss for a way to convey the simplicity of the basic idea while also indicating it's overwhelming import in application. The life and death approach came to me in the wee hours; I'll be eager to see how that plays out.

# Failing Grade in PE

5 February 1996 (Monday)

Berni has gone off for her allergy shot and I am leaving soon for my first St Louis Community College class, Strength Training with a Personal Trainer, PE 775 760 carrying 1.28 credits. This will be the first PE class I have taken since repeating PE at Berea College back in the fall of 1950 because I received an F the previous spring!

I never did figure just why I received an F from Oscar Gunkler. Certainly, I did well on the written test and I wasn't a complete failure on the practical test—bar work as I recall. In addition to various skills we had practiced in class, we were asked to do a maneuver we had never attempted in class. We sat on top of the bar and were to slip off backward so that the knees locked around it and we could then swing down, hanging from the knees, continue the swing, and flip into a standing position under the bar. I came down on the back of my neck and, I found out later, I had cracked my sternum. That completed the tests.

My grade was posted as a D but that had been rubbed out and replaced with an F. Maurice Wesley was in the class with me and passed. Grades, at that time, were sent home to parents and mine arrived during the summer holiday to our farm in Georgia. I can't recall any repercussions from my parents; I had been an above average student in general, sometimes superior, altho I must admit that I received (earned) a D in algebra in High School (North High School in Columbus OH) because I was not doing my homework—that's another story! Anyway, I wrote to Gunkler to find out why I had an F but got no reply. When I returned to Berea in the fall, I went to see him about it before registering but he claimed not to have kept the tests nor to be able to tell me why I had an F. But it was clear that I would have to take the class over again, which I did with good grace.

Did Gunkler see Maurice and I slip out of class after the roll was taken one time? Maurice did that several times and once I joined him. As the class went out to the tennis courts or some field event, Maurice would detour to Williams dormitory where we roomed, right next to Seabury Gym. If this was the case, why didn't Gunkler confront me with it? Perhaps he had it in for me because of an incident at Westervelt, the open evening at the College's woodworking shop. Gunkler was a fine craftsman and was working on some of his furniture items at the sander. I had some sanding to do and came several times to see when I might be able to have the machine, but he was there for perhaps all of the evening. The third time I appeared he said, "Well, you don't have to act like I'm a hog." I had not appeared impatient, as far as I know, and was much embarrassed by his retort.

The strange thing is that Gunkler never taught the PE class, it was always in the hands of his PE majors; I don't recall him ever attending even one class session, the students did it all. The irony is that I ended up on the Faculty at Berea College and taught PE classes myself! When

I took the makeup class for the one I failed, I, a Country Dancer, signed up for the dance section; it was boys learning country dances I already knew dancing with other boys in equally smelly gym shorts.

# Early Memories

**6 February 1996 (Tuesday)**

As I get older, I realize what a special thing it is to have known someone who was born during the depression and lived in the era of the New Deal. The life of those times is fast receding and it seemed that it might be instructive to set down some of my remembrances of a kid who lived during those times.

I once knew a John Ramsay who lived in the 1930's. He remembers Model T Fords, especially the one his Uncle John outfitted for a trip to Alaska; the back seat was removed and it had jacks and other greasy tools on the floorboards but there was room for three young boys to squat back there for a ride. The clutch and brake pedals were curved iron levers protruding straight through holes in the floor with no carpeting to camouflage their operation. The gas pedal was a lever on the steering wheel with a ratchet for setting it from closed to wide open. The horn, activated by pressing a button in the center of the steering wheel, said, "Oogah!" You started the machine by hand cranking the engine with a removable crank which fit into a slot under the radiator. You had to be careful to let the crank fall away in case the engine kicked back; many people broke their arms when that happened. He also remembers riding in rumble seats.

For Christmas during one of those years he was given a sleek cast-metal racing car; it must have been 8-10 inches long, was a metallic green and he dearly loved it as one of those memorable gifts one receives during a lifetime; what ever happened to it? Probably it suffered from the metal fatigue to which cast-metal toys were prone. (22 April 96...Berni and I were at the St. Louis History Museum yesterday afternoon for a program honoring Thomas Jefferson. On the way out my eye caught the sight of a toy car which made my heart actually knot up...it was my racing car, but in red! The model on display was made in 1927 by the Kingsbury Manufacturing Company of America and was modeled after the Sunbeam vehicle in which British Major Seagraves broke the land speed record earlier that year.)

His father purchased a nine passenger Hudson with two little fold up seats right behind the front seat. The next car was a nine passenger 1939 Buick. It was demolished after the family had moved to a house on a curve of Route 60 between Fountain Hill and Allentown. Late one night when his father was away leaving the lad as the man of the house, a drunk in a Chevy coupe slammed into the Buick which was parked in front of the house. The force was great enough to catapult the Buick on top of a 5 foot high privet hedge in front of the house and to leave the coupe as a pile of scrap which had to be scooped up to haul away. The drunk died and his companion was sent to the hospital in one of the family's Indian blankets brought out to keep the chill of the night air off.

Because of the war effort, it was difficult to find a replacement vehicle and, with help from the insurance company, a black six passenger 39 Buick was finally found. John can



remember being in that car when the attack on Pearl Harbor was announced on the car radio. Four months later, the family moved from Route 60 on icy roads to Ashland, Kentucky, with the car stuffed with both parents, four children ages 8, 10, 12, and 14, and a long-haired cocker pup called Boots.

# Mrs. Edison

7 February 1996 (Wednesday)

A memorable event of my childhood was having breakfast with Mrs. Thomas A. Edison. There aren't many people living who have such a personal link to the inventor of the light bulb; my, how that invention has changed the world!

The second Mrs. Edison was known affectionately by members of the Oxford Group, later called Moral ReArmament, as Mother New Jersey. My parents were very active in MRA and Patty, Billy, Dicky and I were raised with the "four absolutes" (absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love), "quiet times" (in which we "listened to God" and shared what He conveyed to us), and a wonderful array of MRA songs. I don't recall what the occasion was for the breakfast, but it was on one of the trips to an MRA event most likely in New York City, when the breakfast was arranged. Perhaps it was the time that Dad spoke to the Oxford Group's convention at Madison Square Garden.

Mrs. Edison was a grandmotherly woman and we four children felt quite comfortable with her. During the breakfast conversation, she asked each of us, "What is love?" I don't recall our answers but am certain that we each had some reasonable reply.

(I found this photo of the Ramsay family on the stage in 1940 at Madison Square Garden)

We were living in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania at the time, so I would have been about 8 or 10 (1938-40), putting Dick, the youngest, at 4 or 5. Dad was probably working for the CIO by that time. He had lost his job with Bethlehem Steel (in the open hearth furnace area) because of his involvement with organizing the Steelworkers in Bethlehem-- he was first President of SWOC in Bethlehem. Because of his deep faith in "doing what's right" and following Jesus' example in seeking to better conditions during the Great Depression and it's aftermath, he had found kindred spirits in MRA and they, in turn, needed someone like Dad to help them understand the point of view of America's vital laboring class.

The family was featured in PM Magazine as a result of the connection with MRA and Dad was sent to Switzerland with "the team" in 1939. We all went to New York City to see him off on the Aquitania.

MRA was a big part of our upbringing and we "kids" can still sing "Wise Old Horsey", "You Can Defend America" (MRA's answer to the War Effort), and "Nice Cup of Tea".

# Accounting Systems

8 February 1996 (Thursday)

I'm working on closing out the finances for 1995 and getting tax information to Patty so she can prepare my tax report to Uncle Sam. It certainly is a complicated business.

I like to be fiscally responsible and have always been that way. I consider myself frugal; it is a part of my conservation attitude. Waste is sinful—am I a Depression child? Not too many years ago I 'watched my pennies', literally. After Berea College gave me a big raise and I was getting closer to the next stage of *not being able to take it with you*, I loosened up a bit. Today, a quarter has less respect than a penny used to have. I wouldn't even stoop over to pick up a dirty penny on the street, today. But I retain the compulsion to live within my means.

I began using a credit card only after Berni and I married. Previously, I may have been afraid that I would not be able to control my spending if I became addicted to a credit card. I carried one for a decade, at first a Texaco card so I could get gas if I ran out of cash on the road—that had happened in 1973. But, I used cash and kept strict account of what I spent for gas, even to the point of being able to calculate, each year, what sort of mileage the car had given, how many miles I travelled, and how much it cost per mile to operate the car. Risse had a Visa card which carried no annual fee, so I took out a MasterCard from the Berea National Bank with no annual fee. But again, I carried it more for insurance.

Berni uses her credit card for many things and carries very little cash, \$5-\$10 even for a trip from Berea to St. Louis. So, I capitulated and began using the credit card as my preferred method of payment for everything. I have a system. Each receipt, when signed, and the credit card go into my wallet; I keep the wallet in my hand until the clerk returns both the card and the receipt to me. When the receipts begin to make my wallet bulge, or I want to see where I stand, I enter them under the credit card account on Managing Your Money, the computer program I bought to keep my accounts. I can tell you at any time how much I have run up in credit card charges and reconcile the account each month when I pay up—I never let it get into finance charges, except the time I returned from Sweden and was one day late getting the bill in; it cost me \$30 in 'finance charges'! Each receipt is assigned to its proper account such as gasoline, food, eating out, etc.

I have even been able to go a step further with this system and now make entries for cash expenditures and reconcile that account now and then. I have been ending up with only \$5-\$10 per month in unaccounted for expenditures—it used to be \$200-300! So, my accounts are documented, I know where I am at any point, budgeting is made easy, and I feel good about it.



# Marriage Learning

9 February 1996 (Friday)

How can one understand oneself? Yesterday afternoon, Berni expressed her feeling that we had been distant from each other. I agreed. We both would prefer to feel close at all times. Berni wanted to talk about it right then and there, but she was on call forwarding and at work and I knew that if we got into it, the phone would ring and she would instantly and completely focus on her client. I approve and accept that about her; I'm proud that she is a diligent and expert counselor with her clients and her friends, which are sometimes one and the same. However, I feel that she almost never gives me the same level of attention and that the likelihood of me having it now during work hours were unrealistic. There was also a bit of hurt perhaps? So many times during the past two days she has tried to focus on me, asking, "And how are you?" or "What was your morning like?" I begin to respond but find that before I am even halfway thru a sentence, her mind is on something else and her subsequent questions prove that she hasn't heard anything I have said. I am a bit disappointed when this happens; it would be nice to have her truly interested in what I'm doing—I certainly give her that kind of attention. But I can't say that I am distressed by this response. It is just another part of the give and take needed in any relationship and I know that things will turn around in a few days—that the mood will change. What is it that controls our moods?

But, Berni was upset when I suggested that we wait until we had a block of time to ourselves to talk. She said that she didn't know if she would be able to focus on her work as long as this distance was weighing on her heart, but I didn't give in this time. There had been many opportunities for us to talk for the past two weeks but at such times she preferred to watch TV or talk for an hour with a friend on the phone, work a crossword puzzle, spend hours looking at real estate adds, or stay up until 2:30 am dreaming about what goals to set for her business so that she can match the six figure incomes of some of her clients. I had spent hours watching TV, making puzzles, looking at real estate, asking about her friends, and keeping accounts for the businesses, all this just to be with her and give her my attention. I have tried to even get interested in these activities, altho that is not too easy—the TV she watches is inane at best and poisonous at worst. I will watch these with her for an hour or two before I have had more than enough and head for one of my projects. There are good TV programs, but when these are on she switches channels or leaves the room to call a friend; I usually turn the TV off, but sometimes then she will return and tune into another program I don't like to be subjected to.

Berni went into the living room and sobbed, took a few calls and fell asleep on the couch. Actually, I think that she had worn herself out by staying up until 2:30 am the night before, setting the goal of 20 matches a day in order to reach the income potential she would like to have, working all day at that goal without a break and continuing with calls into the evening. She didn't sleep well the next night and had an early appointment yesterday morning. No

wonder she was emotionally distraught. She didn't sleep well last night either and is off this morning for her allergy shot and then to spend some time with Marilyn Coleman, a close friend.

We did talk after supper. It was good to make the attempt but we didn't end up close like we had wished, altho not quite so distant either. After an hour of talking and then being quiet together on the couch, Berni wanted to watch Seinfeld. I watched it with her. She offered to do something I would be interested in and so, I asked to take a look at our income tax calculations—whether we should file separately (the plan) or jointly. She spent a few minutes digging out her figures for me but then went back to TV and watched another hour of Seinfeld and ate marshmallows. I joined her for the news at 10 and we went to bed at 11 for another restless night.

My purpose in setting this down is to try to understand myself. I don't feel jealous of Berni's friends. I'm not distraught that we aren't always close to each other. I feel that I have given Berni much attention, affection, and time, even tho it means dangling on the end of string while waiting upon her or being batted about like a ping pong ball as she follows her whims. But I also think that I must have my own feet on the ground at least enough of the time to be a stable force. There are some things I won't give up. Is that what is causing the distance? After being batted around as Berni jumps from one interest to another and often being left hanging when she changes her mind, there comes a point when I need to insulate myself from the buffeting.

All in all, I love Berni dearly. She is lovely to look at and be with, she is intelligent and has an active mind, she is a great listener, she is a smart business woman, she is serious about religious orientation, she has a very tender heart for others, and we get along together very well. She is my best companion.

# Proscar

**10 February 1996 (Saturday)**

I had to get a refill of Proscar yesterday. My prostate began to interfere with urination about four years ago. I was concerned, since Dad had had the same problem which developed into such a serious condition that his bladder couldn't empty and would have burst without the surgical procedure he, and the family, had to suffer. I am told that most men have problems with enlarged prostate as they reach my age.

Dr. Desai made a visual examination of my bladder about four years ago; that involved an afternoon in the hospital and some sort of fibre optics. I was a very good patient: relaxed, cooperative, and interested in the technique. There was some deterioration of the bladder wall, I was warned to have my kidneys checked periodically, and (if I recall correctly) to put off surgery as long as possible. Surgery, at that time, meant reaming (cutting) out part of the gland which would also irreparably damage sexual performance.

As the problems continued, Desai recommended that I undergo laparoscopy, inserting a balloon to stretch open the passages. I went, for a second opinion, to a urologist at the Ohio State University School of Medicine in Columbus OH recommended by friend Dr. Franklin Banks. That \$75 was well spent; the doctor explained that laparoscopy, which cost about \$5,000, would be effective for about 9 months and would then have to be repeated. He recommended not doing anything until forced to because new techniques were being developed such as laser surgery.

Another year went by altho it did become increasingly difficult to pee. My kidneys were not yet being damaged, apparently, but Dr. Desai recommended trying Proscar, a hormonal type drug which seemed to stop prostate growth altho it would not undo the problems already developed. I began taking Proscar daily just about this time two years ago. Urination improved (I think Proscar actually caused my prostate to shrink a bit) and there seemed to be no side effects.

The drug was new when I began taking it. Now, two years later, more information is in concerning what side effects may be expected. The Special Instructions printed out with this latest purchase say, "This leaflet is intended to help you take your medication correctly, NOT to confuse you." Berni and I had a good laugh over that statement (she read the Instructions to me as we drove to Dierbergs to shop after picking up the prescription).

They also said:

"Do not take nonprescription cough/cold, asthma, hayfever, sleep aid or diet medications without asking your doctor or pharmacist." Desai had told me the same

thing two years ago, explaining that antihistamines put a strain on the kidneys and bladder.

"The amount of ejaculate may be decreased during treatment with this medication. This decrease does not interfere with normal sexual function." This is a lessening of concern from previous Instructions which said that it could cause a decrease or at times an increase in sexual function. I had been concerned about that since I began the drug just before marrying Berni. We have enjoyed sex very much.

"WOMEN: Crushed tablets of this medication SHOULD NOT be handled by a woman who is pregnant or who may become pregnant because of the potential risk to a male fetus." Previously, the warning cautioned women in general not to touch the pill (which is very small, is a light blue, and has a heart shape)! This spells out the dangers a bit more precisely, altho it also make one wonder that if it can cause such damage to a fetus what about to the whole hormonal structure of the woman! Potent stuff.

"Also, avoid contact with your partner's sperm." Wow! What a curve ball that is.

"POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: ...most patients experience little or no problems while taking this medication. However, be sure to tell your doctor if the following occur: impotence, a loss of sexual drive, or any other unusual, bothersome effects."

I applaud our government requiring drug companies to provide patients with such information. Years ago we would have been left in the dark. I AM confused, however!

### **11 February 1996 (Sunday), 4:30 am**

Berni and I are experiencing changes in our sexual relationship. Increasingly, since about November, I have had the feeling that Berni's sexual urges have changed considerably, she seems to avoid foreplay. During the last month or two I have felt that mine have lessened as well. We have discussed the situation several times, looking for psychological explanations. Those have been problematic. Why does Berni feel that I always wait for her to take the initiative and that, since I don't, that I don't really find her attractive. Why do I feel that she shies away from any situation in which we can become amorous and fails to respond to my overtures? Is this really the case?

Or do our drugs have a secret hold on our emotional orientation? Is Proscar affecting me? Is it affecting Berni (it is recommended that women not even touch Proscar pills). Berni is on estrogen hormones. A TV program last week told us that decreased libido is one common side effect of estrogen therapy. Is this what is going on? How can one tell? How much are we in control of our own feelings? How well do any of us know ourselves?

# Planning for El Salvador

12 February 1996 (Monday)

Perhaps its time for one of the Country Dancer travel tales. There are so many to choose from. One of the most dramatic is the story of the visas for El Salvador, and it illustrates a process which is, I think, characteristic of one which was in play for most engagements we completed successfully, and that was all of them!

Ken DeWire contacted me while he and Patsy were stationed in El Salvador. Patsy, his wife, was Education Officer for the US AID program in the country, which was at the time in a civil war between the terribly rich and powerful big landowners and the incredibly impoverished peasants. Ken was eager to spur a small country dance group he and Patsy had started (they always used country dance and amateur theater to weld friendships while on assignment). He wondered if I could come down to help. I responded that it might be fun to bring the Berea College Country Dancers down for a Short Term. Would he be interested and could he arrange an invitation which would cover expenses? Ken said he would have to explore that and would get back to me, and I would get back to him after discussing the opportunity with Joe Tarter who was directing the Dancers at the time.

Joe had been Acting Director of Recreation Extension the previous year during Risse's illness and death. This fall we split the job and salary half and half, drawing up a paper dividing responsibilities: I was teaching the classes, managing the office, and organizing the Spring Festival, Joe was directing the Country Dancers and Christmas School. Joe was agreeable to the idea but only if it could be done without cost. Joe also wanted to know what my part in an El Salvador trip would be since he was officially the Director of the troupe. I agreed to be the business manager while Joe would be the Dancer's Director. He approved, so I was about to call Ken (it was September, as I recall, and we would leave in January—not much time to organize it all) when I realized that we better first have the Dean's approval before pursuing the matter further. So, I called Dean Perkins and secured his approval since it wouldn't cost the College a dime and would be quite an experience for the student dancers to be hosted by the American foreign mission personnel in San Salvador. He trusted me that we would be in good hands and gave his initial approval.

Joe was furious and came down to my home to get things out in the open. He felt that I was usurping him at many points. My vision was that we had been assisting each other as friends. But Joe was threatened by me, I'm sure, because I had been his teacher and leader for years and must have felt it hard to take if I so much as looked here or there. We were best of friends, I had been best man at Joe and Patty's wedding, and Joe had been my right hand man for many, many events. But by calling the Dean, it meant that, in the Dean's eye, I was in control again. I was very sorry that Joe felt we could not work together, but quickly agreed to be much more careful and to let him take the lead even to the extent of having him negotiate directly with Ken.

But Ken was having his problems, too, and we were not able to pull it all together, a normal 'setback' part of the process of putting a tour together. Instead, I went to El Salvador alone to call dances at a couple of parties and explore the possibility of a Country Dancer tour for the following January. Actually, I wasn't alone, Risse's sister joined me in Boston where I had gone to visit my brother for a holiday. Ken's wife, Patsy had been previously married to Risse's and Ramona's brother Rexford. This is also a typical part of the process, using personal contacts to develop a tour.

While I was in El Salvador, the peace accords were signed in Mexico City and El Salvador was at peace for the first time in 12 years. Ken and Patsy took us into sections of the country which had been off limits to Americans for some time. The Salvadorans were wonderful everywhere. We were able to organize a tour for the following year; everyone felt that the Salvadorans were ready to dance and put the war behind them. There was such a spirited wisdom everywhere—a realization that peace would not work if people held grudges or looked back, the focus must be on the future and cooperation. They knew the hell of war and wanted no more of it and realized that that meant that they must work together to build a new El Salvador. The United Nations was playing a key role in brokering the peace and would monitor it. The United States suddenly changed its policy, from supplying arms to those in control, to rebuilding schools and bridges for the peasants in the areas which had recently been off limits. Oh, what learning could take place among the Berea dancers by spending a month in El Salvador!

Patsy retired in June, but we had appointed another person in the US community in San Salvador to coordinate the tour. I had no response from that person during the summer. When students arrived for the fall term in Berea, it was time to get serious. I had to make some educated guesses about the tour, definitely a characteristic part of tour planning: is the tour viable? what will it cost? can I attract enough good dancers to put on a creditable show? So many vital questions which no one could answer but which I had to second guess.

I was pleased with the response from the students; they signed up for Adventure to El Salvador as their Short Term class and were willing to come up with their part of the funds (a guess on my part, remember). The administration approved my plans and even gave us some funds, if I recall correctly. I was beginning to get flight and travel plans in place and students were getting passports. But I had no word from El Salvador! Typical! Always something missing.

The best way to force a response is to make it personal, so I finally secured pictures from the dancers (I think I had to substitute one picture for a negligent student in order to complete the mug shots) and sent them off to El Salvador with an official schedule, including many guesses such as flight dates etc. I was also in touch with Ken by phone and he was in contact with his friends in El Salvador. I finally got a response by phone in late October. The lady said that she didn't realize that we were coming in January and that it was not a good time for us to come (I learned later that she had planned her vacation for that time). We had gone too far to cancel (at

least without considerable mud-on-the-face), another point one reaches in planning a tour. Ken located another person to coordinate the tour for us and Ken and Patsy agreed to accompany us on the tour (I think I offered to pay their way and put Patsy on as an instructor for the tour)! That made me breathe easier. Doug, our new contact, didn't dig in right away either, I guess it all seemed so remote. So, I planned to send Ken down to El Salvador as our advance man. Throughout the tour he was able to stay a few jumps ahead of us, often hardly a day in advance, but what a tireless, enthusiastic, persistent worker he was. The tour wouldn't have made it without his gigantic efforts. Every tour needs such a support person on the scene.

On the home front, we were putting our program together, learning Spanish and about El Salvador, and getting costumes in shape. The full troupe would attend Christmas School for in depth rehearsals and getting into physical shape; foreign tours are always grueling.

Finally, I got all passports from the students, always a problem because of some birth certificates not meeting regulations. I sent them off to the Salvadoran Consulate in Washington by overnight mail with a paid return overnight envelope; we were in contact by phone to make sure that we did not mess up at this point. It was already into December and I learned that the Consulate would close in a few days for the holiday and would not reopen until January 3 (?). We were to leave Berea on the next day in our own bus, the New Nag, headed for our flight from Miami (the cheapest way to put the tour together; I was always pretty good at finding low cost ways to make the trips possible). It was a good feeling to finally have everything in order for the trip.

The passports were not returned the next day. I called the Consulate after they opened the next morning, the last day before the holiday. They had not been sent out. I reminded the girl that we would be leaving before they reopened after Christmas-New Year. She said that she would do what she could. Of course they did not arrive the next day and all other calls were not answered. This was another to-be-expected last minute hurdle. My procedure was to always forge ahead as long as there was hope but to also make contingency plans. In this case we had to have the passports, but there were a few days yet in which to get them, even if we had to leave Berea without them and pick them up in Miami. I retained my confidence that the problem could be worked out and didn't make a big deal, nor a big secret out of it. Being above board and open is also one of my characteristics, I think.

On January 3rd I was on the phone to the Consulate early until they finally opened. The passports were still there. I explained that we were leaving the next morning but, if they would get them in the overnight mail by 2:00 pm, our postmaster would call me at 4:00 am when they would arrive and permit me to come up to the post office to pick them up (there are advantages to small towns). The Consulate said they would do what they could. It was time for contingencies.

We had made arrangements to park our bus in Miami at Park and Fly and to have some costumes sent to them from Sears, to be held until our arrival. The person I spoke to left me a bit

uneasy, so I decided to find another contact in Miami to hold the passports if we could get them sent to them while we were in route; the bus trip included three overnights and several performances to help us earn our expenses. I knew that Stacia Berry had a son in Miami and contacted her. Unfortunately, he was out of town. Stacia took it upon herself to go thru the Alumni addresses and picked one. It turned out that he was still in the employ of Eastern Airlines, altho the company had cut back it's operations. He said that he would be happy to receive the passports and deliver them to us at the airport. I appraised Glenna Rice, a classmate of mine and former Country Dancer and who was at the time living next door to me on Adams Street, of the situation and asked her to have the passports forwarded to Miami should they arrive after we left Berea. She also had a copy of our detailed schedule, which I always found very important to prepare and update continuously, so that she could contact us at any stopping point during the trip. Betsy Philyaw, our mail route person on Adams street, was also aware that we were looking for the passports. If the passports didn't arrive I was aware that we could simply drive back to Berea and study El Salvador on the campus.

Betsy called Glenna the next day from the Post Office and told Glenna that she had seen the passports, they had arrived, but that she had better get up to the post office right away, which Glenna did. The official on duty would not turn the passports over to Glenna since they were addressed to me, even with Betsy there to urge otherwise. The passports would be returned to Washington! Glenna was not even allowed to touch the passports. She finally convinced the official to send them on to me in Miami c/o our contact there altho he said it was against regulations. I can't recall if I had left Glenna money to have them forwarded or if she worked that out. She did call me to let me know that they were on the way and I called our Miami contact to make arrangements to have them delivered (he, too, had our schedule with flight numbers, departure times etc.).

Its a good thing we didn't send the passports to Park and Fly; the Sears package had arrived but they had refused to receive it, claiming to know nothing about a John Ramsay. Al White and I dropped off the students and Karen Busk Sørensen, a Danish special student we arranged to take with us to take a Miami flight to Brazil, and went to park the bus, leaving the troupe in the hands of the men's and women's leaders who were duly appraised about the passport situation. We were cutting it close! Al and I got back just as the last Country Dancers were finishing check-in with all our costumes, gear, instruments, and baggage; it was 20 minutes before flight time. The passports had arrived. The contact drove by the departure area, saw some Berea CD jackets, called one of the dancers over to his car, handed over the passports, and drove off. I never did get to meet him!

We had a marvelous trip to El Salvador-- absolutely a mind-changing adventure.

How could all of this have worked out? Were we simply lucky? If so, I have been lucky again and again. Or are all things possible to those who have faith? Or what?



# Sellenger's Round

13 February 1996 (Tuesday)

Legends are always partial. Today, I will set down one of the missing pieces. Sellengers Round was not my favorite Playford dance. In fact, I used to mentally sing a little ditty to myself during the chorus, "Its hard on your ankles and hard on your toes, but that is the dance and that's how it goes." But we kept using it because it is danced in a big circle and because of it's alternative title, The Beginning of the World. Those two elements made it a useful ceremony.

About 1970, in Brasstown, as we were dancing Sellenger's Round, likely at the end of Short Course, my son Martin sang the tune-- la, la, la-- the last time thru. Everyone quickly chimed in and a tradition was born. Everywhere, even around the world today, people sing the last verse and are unaware that it wasn't always danced that way. The tradition went from Brasstown out to communities where the Short Course residents had come from. Then, I took it with me to Berea, to Christmas School (where it is used to welcome in the New Year), the Country Dancers, and the Mountain Folk Festival. Everywhere, people responded with delight.

At the Mountain Folk Festival the dance is used in the opening suite, following the processional entrance in which each dancer carries a 'branch of May.' Up until about 1993 we had collected the branches from the individual dancers, right after the processional, and put them into a big pile in the center of the room. Then, we danced Sellengers Round around the pile of May branches. The next year, I decided to have the dancers keep hold of the branches during Sellengers Round and to raise them high when all set to the center for the chorus. That too, has caught on. Martin and I will live on with our unknown contributions to dance!

# Cosmic Love

14 February 1996 (Wednesday, Valentine's Day)

## COSMIC LOVE

Sunlight entered,  
traveled by fiber-optic  
from eye to heart  
emitting pulsars,  
quickenning the heartbeat,  
warming the soul.

Life becomes solar-powered.

Eyes, lit from within,  
shine upon a world made new;  
ears hear whispers  
amplified by secret antennae,  
flashed by gleaming teeth  
in coded transmission  
between smiles.

Eternity is tapped.

Distance is conquered.

Joy is in perpetual motion.

Photosynthesis occurs.

Sunlight has entered.

To Berni  
From John  
October 1993

# Microscopic Love

## MICROSCOPIC LOVE

Two years ago there was cosmic love  
flooding my heart, and mind, and soul.

Since that time, rain from above  
collecting in an earthly pool,

Reflects the web the heaven's wove  
in strands most delicately tooled.

And there has been time to gently prove  
the strength of each tempered jewel;

With closer look in each hidden cove  
surprises bloom amongst the dew,

There, my love, is a peaceful dove  
daily heaven-sent just for you.

To Berni  
From John  
Valentine's Day, 1996

# Coexist

15 February 1996 (Thursday)

Last night, Berni and I spent a cozy evening by the fire reading. She was reading the Classified adds and I was reading Enlightenment in an International Perspective, two quite different selections! We were sharing back and forth what we were reading.

Berni related at one point that there was an add from a man, something funny like, "Getting married. Must sell collection of 100 adult videos. \$250." Another raised Berni's hackles, "Dominant white male seeking submissive black female."

I was trying to work thru, "...Grundtvig was working on what we would call the theory of knowledge. What does it mean to understand something? What is the foundation of understanding? And not least: How does the understanding of this or that become a personal, i.e. internalized, understanding? There were two reasons why Grundtvig had confronted these questions. One was the Romanticists, with H.C. Ørsted, the holistic thinker of the time, as the prominent figure. He represented a harmonizing philosophy which would finally dissolve all differences, for example between the spirit in nature and a natural spirit. Ultimately everything was the same in God and so signified the same. Thus, for better or for worse, the order of the creation, such as it was accessible to man through history, according to Grundtvig, was turned upside down. The other reason was the Rationalists, for instance of H. N. Clausen's kind (though Clausen had not yet published his Dogmatics) who, first and last, saw reason as the only truly human characteristic and thus the authentic manifestation of the purpose of man." (pp 30-31)

You can see why I needed Berni's help. But she was also pleased that I wanted to share the insights with her because she has been struggling with these sorts of concepts for some time and to understand my faith.

My reading ended with, "To Grundtvig, the question was how reason might be fettered by something beyond itself and still be credited with complete validity...How does one do justice to *the whole man* (sic) without becoming holistic or gnostic? Or how should one do justice to reason without becoming a rationalist?"

I penned into the margin, "The rational and the irrational can coexist just like the finite exists in the infinite."

It was a warm, cozy evening! And we both saw the humor in it. Humor, then, is also (always ?) a recognition and interplay between the rational and the irrational? I like that resolution to the question, What is humor?—a question I have considered seriously since my college days. This seems like a fitting evening to have finally understood it! It is the interplay between the rational and the irrational!

# Apple Stock

16 February 1996 (Friday)

This morning I purchased my first stocks. At the Gateway Area Mac Users Group meeting last Tuesday, the speakers were two young guys employed by Apple Computers. One of the fellows, after outlining the bad press Apple has been getting the past two weeks, said that this was a good time to buy Apple, the stocks were way down but he was certain that Apple will remain a successful company. He noted that the Apple logo is the second most recognized logo in the world, second only to Coca Cola.

I've been wanting to do something with the funds I have sitting in my bank account, drawing very little interest. I have also demanded that my investments (retirement funds and an IRA) be invested in socially responsible ways. Since I fully support computers and am impressed with Apple's *user-friendly* approach, this seemed like the time to get into the market.

I went to the bank, found that they will buy stocks with no commission—only a \$40 processing fee per transaction—and that I can easily make changes by telephone. I also learned that, on April 15, Commerce Bank will be able to have customers make transactions from their personal computers. We do live in the computer age and I am sure that much more is to come.

I went to the Library to research Apple's performance and found that the stock had indeed dropped by \$25 recently but had been up in the \$70's previously. The company has restructured and has a new CEO who seems like a solid person.

I like that computers use very small amounts of electricity. I like that e-mail and the internet save paper. They make it possible for people to freely associate in new ways and give the public ready access to an incredible breadth of information. The computer can enhance life for us all; of course it can also be misused, but thus far it seems that the public is generally using it for good, productive, honest pursuits. And I like it that I can now contact Loren daily in Denmark!

So, I purchased 50 shares of Apple Computer at \$29 1/4. Go Apple!

# Sell Estill

**17-18 February 1996 (Saturday-Sunday)** Trip to Berea for Valentine's Ball

**19 February 1996 (Monday)**

We've decided to sell the house at 314 Estill Street. It is quite apparent to me that Berni loves working as a matchmaker and that she is very good at that job. Altho she carried on with the business while we were in Berea, it is going much better since being located here in St. Louis. And her friends are here, her father is nearby, her church is in St. Louis, and she knows the area.

Berni also loves the Estill Street house and the community of Berea. She wishes she had the doll room, the dining room furniture and bay window, etc. She, in fact, asked if we couldn't move the house to St. Louis. She wonders if I don't feel any emotion about deciding to sell the place. After all, I lived there with my parents, designed the addition, used Dodge Gym materials in the addition, and must have other attachments. But, I don't feel prominent attachments. I know that sooner or later we all must move on and that change unfolds new adventures which can be turned into good times. I am ready to cut loose again, to forge out, seek a new place and begin building a new life, yet again. Yes, its a bit scary, but I've taken many scary steps in my life and they have turned into some of the richest adventures.

Berni is often playing the angles, keeping her options open, but it is often an impossible fantasy and finally lets her down. So, we did not sell the Estill Street house when we moved to St. Louis, altho I had a buyer. We gave ourselves a year to be gone with an option to return. Berni has been spending hours going thru real estate adds and we have spent several afternoons looking at homes for sale. Yet, she hasn't wanted to sell. It is time to release the Berea option. We can still return to Berea someday and buy another place there. I've pushed to sell Estill Street now and focus on St. Louis. After the camera incident this weekend, Berni is emotionally ready to agree.

We have a good relationship. Our problems always resolve in an agreeable way. It does require patience and I am very patient.

# Tired of Responsibility

21 February 1996 (Tuesday)

While at the party at Theresa's house after the Valentine's Ball, I had a chance to catch up with the White family. Rachael was not there but Al and Alice said that she was doing great and was into computer aided design as the new interest in her life (Rachael is about 12 years old and has been severely handicapped with muscular dystrophy). I commented about what a great idea that was because as I was looking thru want adds, I noted many jobs for people with CAD experience.

There was immediate interest from the friends standing around when Al asked if I was job hunting. To my, Yes, he asked what kind of job I was looking for. I said, "Something in which I didn't have to be responsible for people." That brought quite a reaction from my friends and made me blush visibly.

But, its true. I did get very tired of going out on a limb, myself, while depending on others—even some of those standing around me there in Theresa's home—and not knowing if they would come thru. That was always the most burdensome part of my job and I don't want to get that involved again for a long time. I would rather be in a position to "pass the buck" than where "the buck stops here."

# In a Bathroom Mirror

21 February 1996 (Wednesday)

I watch my father shave each morning. He notices with his peripheral vision and his eyes twinkle in response. I'm glad to know that it makes him happy to have me watch him.

We do look alike. I wonder if we also have some of the same thoughts and drives. Maybe; if so, I am not quite as self-contained as I have sometimes assumed. Have I been able to program myself, design my life, or control my reactions without parental interference? As a teenager I was cocky enough to think so. Now, as I shave, I wonder if I am genetically programmed?

His glance catches mine in the bathroom mirror and we match smiles; it is his shy, playful smile—the one that lets you know that life is a fine adventure. Yes, I have gone thru the same stages of life which he experienced. I know he knew. It makes me happy to have him watch me.



# Follow Up

**22 February 1996 (Thursday)**

John Ramsay is good at setting up systems but falls short when it comes to the discipline to make them work. I'm thinking mostly of filing.

It seems to be a pattern of my life that I can create systems, such as the accounting system I worked out for Recreation Extension or the way I currently keep up with credit card and cash expenditures. Both allow me to keep track of every penny I spend—but only if kept up to date. For the first years at Berea College, the system for Recreation Extension didn't work. I didn't have time to keep it updated myself and had to depend on student labor for the daily chore of updating. It was still a useful system but accounts didn't always reconcile. But finally I found a meticulous student, Lucretia Boyle, who understood the system and was devoted to keeping it up to date. She saved us lots of money by tracking pennies and reconciling accounts which uncovered other people's errors. She and Marilyn appreciated my system and made it work.

I am able to keep my own credit card and cash expenditures fully recorded, today. I have a system, and for once have the time to make it work (see the article I wrote for GAMUG, or Legend entry for Feb 8).

But, my video tapes are still disorganized. I have the system in place, but it will take many hours of cataloging to finally be able to find and video segment I want. In the meantime I have piles of tapes which I'm continuously sorting thru and thereby lose track of what is there.

I have devised an album system for organizing family heirloom pictures. It is a good system, but it will take hours of work to put the pictures in the album. In the meantime, there are boxes of pictures which I must shuffle thru to find one and each time I shuffle, I get more and more lost.

This week I began to systematize my computer files. I have a system in mind, at last. There always needs to be a backup when dealing with computers. One file will be chronological and the copy will be sorted by categories. But it will take hours to "Save As" before the system is operating. In the meantime, its a mess with lots of duplication and some losses.

My paper filing is the same way and my desk is usually covered with paper piles which eventually get shuffled. I keep thinking that if I took the time to get it all organized just once that I would then be able to keep things up to date. But with the paper file, more than the other systems, I keep forgetting what the file headings are and end up with duplicate files, half files, and lost files.

Maybe I am great at conceiving systems but lousy at follow thru. Or am I unrealistic about the amount of time I can, or will, invest in being organized? I do know that being disorganized is frustrating and wastes more time in shuffling than would be spent keeping updated.

# Self Control

23 February 1996 (Friday)

What are the limits to self-discipline? I have certainly made progress over the years. As a teenager, I had a fearful temper. It was under control, buried deep under social constraints which I don't understand, but much nearer the surface when at home with my siblings; I could express myself in their presence.

Age 16 seems to have been a significant time regarding self-discipline. First, I learned the power of habit. I too often had not been brushing my teeth on a daily basis. I knew that it was important to brush them, but many days just didn't feel like taking the time. Then I decided that I wanted to take care of my teeth and would make myself brush first thing each morning. Perhaps it was at that time that I also found that a mixture of baking soda and salt served in place of commercial toothpaste. I was pleased to have an inexpensive, natural substance to use and found that I could brush each morning. This pleased me—I was learning discipline and that fact reinforced the daily brushing and it turned into a habit which survives to this day. I even feel unclean each morning until I have brushed!

The significant feature, as far as this journal entry goes, is that I was conscious of the fact that I had for once conquered my druthers and lazy nature; it was a step in becoming more like the person I wanted to be—and my subconscious asks me to add, more like my mother. She was a model to me.

I certainly felt more attached to my mother, emotionally, than to my father during my growing up and on until 1979 when my parents moved in with me in Berea. I always respected Dad, but living with them I also learned to love him in a new way and, at the same time, to see some of the less admirable features of my mother's nature. Her nature, like mine, was one that required taming. Dad was much more solid gold.

Another memorable event when I was 16 was when Bill was teasing me, which he was want to do until I reached the boiling point. I don't remember why I was so furious with him, but I felt the uncontrollable urge to retaliate. I took the milk stool in my hand and felt like smashing it on his head. But I controlled myself! I knew that smashing his head would bring results which I didn't wish—it was a momentary inner battle between raw emotion and reasoned thought. I vented my anger by smashing the milk stool against the side of the barn. The act was violent enough and with sufficient force to scare Bill into sobriety and fear. My immediate response to the venting was to realize that I had reigned in my temper enough to avert a tragedy and I felt greatly empowered and proud. It was a significant point in my life.

I seldom lose my temper anymore and when I do it is channeled into some sort of verbal expression, like channeling the stool toward the wall of the barn, e.g. the time I told Loretta

Manley at the account window at Berea College, " ...I'm tired of your lip" in such a tone as to cause the entire office to look startled and Loretta to get red in the face! It slipped out in a flare of temper which is why everyone took notice. She said, "Oh, look at him!" But she gave me what I wanted.

It is comforting to see that I have mellowed as the years have gone by and I have been able to become an extremely patient person. I think that my relationship with Berni has helped this development; I am so content, so securely loved, that I have no need for anger. Love has crowded it out.

# Finding Keepers

24 February 1996 (Saturday)

Berni talks about writing a book, [Finding Keepers, how to find and keep a lifetime marriage partner](#). Berni and I have both been married three times. I want to collaborate in writing the book and am ready to get the project started. This will be a first draft of my first input, looking at the topic from the man's point of view. For this Legend the input will be in the first tense.

Men and women are both human and therefore have the most important human characteristics in common. However, there are differences. One of the differences is in sexuality, men's being expressed in visible form by an erect or flaccid penis.

I can remember the overwhelming realization, one night, that I could be a father! I was lying half awake, while at a church camp at Blufton College, with all sorts of thoughts and feelings running thru me. It was a joyful realization that I could be a father, but quite a surprise when I unconsciously reached down to my penis and found it bathed in slimy goo. I was 15 and had experienced my first wet dream.

Throughout my remaining teenage years, I was plagued with unsolicited erections. They would occur during a ride in a car and make me dread getting out and standing up. I would wake up in the morning with an erection. They did not occur when I was physically involved in a project which seemed to distract me but could occur in a boring classroom at college. I learned that I could relieve myself of the erection if given some privacy, a marvelous insight which I thought I had invented and wished I could share with my younger brothers, such a marvelous experience. Who else could it be shared with?

These developments caused me to become a very private person, preferring to have time alone and being afraid to be out in public too much.

I imagine that what happens to young men during puberty has a strong influence on their subsequent character development. If I had shared my discoveries with my brothers, with a buddy, with an adult, a parent, or with a girlfriend, my whole sexual construct may have developed quite differently. But, regardless of how the sexual constructs develop, all men must deal with the visible sign of sexuality beginning, and especially undeniable, during the early teens.

With the loss of virginity, the situation changes radically. The change was traumatic for me. The flip side to not being able to hide an erection is the inability to fake one. On my wedding night I was in such a state of excitement and of anxiety that I was internally flipping from one condition to another. I had not purchased condoms, and Winona did not want

intercourse without them since she planned her pregnancies carefully. I vowed to get some the next day, altho I really dreaded asking a clerk for them. I couldn't sleep and developed a terrible ache in my testicles, one which was so painful that I was forced to go to the bathroom to relieve myself. But I couldn't! At least the pain subsided. Back in bed, Winona changed her mind and we tried to have intercourse (she did have a diaphragm), but I failed to have an erection!

Failed erections become the new fear. Men feel strong sexual urges, they initiate contact and are usually ready to perform. But they also know that nothing may happen. During delays the hormones subside or burn out. Emotional complexities overlay the underlying feelings and get mixed up with them, triggering or neutralizing the hormones. Rational considerations, external conditions, and almost any other factor can also intervene. This knowledge is always there to monitor a man's initiative or response. Erections are not controlled by the will alone. The man is visibly vulnerable. Only with a secure love can couples deal with such deeply imbedded factors in their relationship.

# Domestic Men

25 February 1996 (Sunday)

Mother wanted her sons to be good fathers. This included domestic competence. It is interesting that Patty never took an interest in cooking until she was engaged to Earl at which time she amused me by really putting her mind to it. All three of us boys took to cooking with considerable pleasure right from the start.

I made my first cake when I was 6. We lived at 48 Garrison Street in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania at the time, in a small half of a duplex which still is much as it was sixty years ago. Mother taught me how to read a recipe and let me choose the kind of cake. I chose a Lady Baltimore cake. I remember her assistance at measuring the ingredients but that I did the stirring. I don't recall what kind of oven we had, probably gas in our dark and dinky kitchen.

Bill and Dick got their chance as they reached the age when they could stir. Dick, today, is the owner/operator of a Mexican restaurant, Casa del Sol, located in his home in Putney, Vermont.

In the spring of 1947, when I was 17, Bill was 15, and Dick was 13, Mother went with Dad on one of the trips connected with his work, leaving we three boys at home on the farm in Lithia Springs, Georgia. Patty was in college at Ohio State University. This had been mother's plan all along, I'm sure—that we boys should be able to manage for ourselves. She and Dad were gone at least a week.

Some of the girls at Douglasville High School showed great sympathy for Bill and me—Dick was still in middle school, I believe—and wondered how we could manage not to starve. So, we invited two or three of them to Sunday dinner. We created a full fledged dinner with Southern fried chicken, gravy and mashed potatoes, vegetables of various sorts and a cherry pie a la mode. We prepared a half fryer apiece taken from our flock in the chicken house. The girls were so taken aback with the quantity and quality of the food that they hardly ate anything and we had lots of left overs.

As I recall, two of the girls had 'reputations', and they likely were prostitutes. One used purple lip-stick, a sure sign of a loose woman back then. They were probably as much taken aback by our gentlemanly behavior as by our cooking. I do recall that both girls made advances to Bill and me at school and teased us with seductive looks and sweet talk. Dad had raised us to respect all people even as Jesus befriended the harlot, so, we were comfortable with having the girls to dinner in a respectful and friendly gesture. The dinner certainly stopped the advances at school whether out of respect or disappointment, I'll never know. I went off to college, myself, shortly afterwards.

# My Sons

26 February 1996 (Monday)

I remember the days when Martin was born and when Loren was born. Those two brothers are very different and arrived very differently.

Martin took a long time to get here, a labor of 30 hours. When the nurse finally brought me the precious bundle of my first son and I turned back the baby blanket to see him for the first time, and was shocked! I don't know what I was expecting— some sort of extension of myself. But here, at first glance, I knew he was an independent person with his own personality, ideas, and will. I even announced to everyone to whom I sent cards, that I could see that this brand new person had been entrusted to my care for his first few years and that I felt that responsibility with some mixture of trepidation and joy.

Loren arrived before we were ready for him. The Doctor did not even have time to scrub up. When the nurse brought Loren to me I was again surprised—his head was large and bent out of shape. Martin had been small, with fine dark hair, reddish complexion, and wizened skin. Martin seemed tense with arms reaching out and fists clenched. Loren was so fair that he almost seemed too tender and he was peaceful and relaxed. I thought, this will be yet another new experience. How will the world accept a kid who is ungainly?

Martin soon became a very comely child with golden curls and pleasing proportions. He quickly showed that he was a precocious kid and could use his tongue with amazing dexterity. Before age two he was saying Constantinople like a flutist tonguing an arpeggio. He was interested in everything and I really enjoyed the role of father: carrying him on my shoulders, taking him with me on the tractor, giving him the opportunity to feed the chickens or plant the garden. At Saturday night dances he was soon keeping rhythm by bouncing in his springlike chair.

Loren soon showed his sense of humor and delighted in making us laugh. He was a sweet natured comic and can best be described as a clown. His personality endeared him to me, he was so kind. I wasn't able to give him the same amount of attention as I had given Martin; I had two jobs—teaching school and running the dairy. But the boys were constant playmates for each other and it was interesting to see them create their relationship.

Loren was active in a major-motor way. He wore a baseball outfit for his first day at school and was posed like he was ready to steal from first to second base while waiting for the bus. He spent hours kicking a football incredibly high, strait up, and then catching it. He had incredible hand-eye coordination. Martin spent hours creating little clay figures and arranging them in engaging scenes using blocks—his was a more micro-motor orientation.



Both boys tested with the same IQ but they are not like peas in a pod. There are many differences: politically, in religion, and in stature. But have both grown into fine men and I am very proud of each.

# Cousin Ed

**29 February 1996 (Thursday)**

Berni and I left rather early yesterday morning to meet Ed Martin at the St Louis airport, just a few miles from our apartment. Ed is letting us use 6 of his TWA EEE tickets for our family journey to Denmark in May. We had to meet Ed in person to obtain the tickets. They are now assigned to Berni, myself, Patty, Earl, Susan, and Andy @ ~\$220, round trip to London. The round trip tickets from London to Aarhus cost more than that!

I'm glad that Berni got to meet another of my cousins. Ed is a very interesting person. He is on his way to Japan to meet his Bujikan Ninjutsu students for a week of study under the grand master. Ed is a 7th Dan (pronounced Don). Ninjutsu is not a sport like Karate or Tai Chi and never has competitions. It is a way of teaching total awareness and using that, plus an understanding of movement, for self defense.

When Ed arrived, he had an old Australian leather bushman's hat on, a cane, and hand baggage with a colorful bird house sticking out of one. He has an outdoors complexion which is deeply lined, strong, and handsome. The lines, however, follow the signature of a pleasant, kindly nature, and his eyes crinkle and sparkle.

He told us that he is alarmed about education in the United States. He is at odds with the National Education Association because their policies toward an amorphous view of education without giving students the basic tools, especially the ability to read. Without the ability to read, he said, people are cut off from information and cannot be informed citizens. The power of voting citizens is important to him. He also traced the historic right of juries to exercise their own judgement irregardless of the instructions of the judge—to a decision which was rendered in England regarding William Penn. In ruling in Penn's favor, the King bestowed Pennsylvania on Penn as a proprietary colony.

I had the feeling that Ed is a fine example of the Martin heritage. He is an independent thinker, has strongly held moral values, and puts his beliefs into action. I see these traits in Uncle Fritz who was an old fashioned country doctor doing his best to keep people out of the hospital and now unwilling to go into a nursing home where he can receive the care he needs. I see them in Aunt Grace, whom Ed adores, who survived the communist revolution in China, the Japanese internment in Los Baños, and now a colostomy, but retains her deep Christian commitment to serve others. Gertrude, my mother, also had a strong, active character. Uncle Clarence has carried the special brand of Martin independence to an extreme in his active resistance to taxation and Federal regulations.

Where did these traits come from? How much of them has rubbed off on me? I do like being called a "splendid maverick!"

# Liberal or Conservative

**1 March 1996 (Friday)**

I changed from a liberal to a conservative and learned something about organizations when I was elected to the Board of the Council of the Southern Mountains back in the early 70's. As Director of the John C. Campbell Folk School I attended the Council's annual conferences. The Council was organized by John C. Campbell back in the first decade of this century to address the problems faced by people working in the Southern Highlands (Appalachians). As a student at Berea College in the late 40's and early 50's, I knew about the Council and remember being impressed that the Council and Country Dance seemed to be linked with many of the more vibrant communities in Appalachia.

The Conference in the early 70s was held at Fontana Dam Village. Loyal Jones was by then Executive Director and Phil Young was President. This was the just past the peak of the War on Poverty in which the Council was deeply involved. A large group of 'grass roots' people swelled the ranks of the normal registrants who had been Council members for some years. The new registrants, in keeping with the anti-establishment movement of the '60s, were almost herded to the Conference by their self-appointed champions and supported by well meaning Council leaders. Give 'the people' a voice, empowerment to 'the people', etc. were the catch phrases. Willis Weatherford, then President of Berea College, had provided \$500 in scholarship funds to enable participation by the poor.

Fears developed among the more traditional members of the Council when they began to hear some of the revolutionary plans being made by the champions. The champions were often tied to mainline churches from outside the Southern Highlands and I got the impression that they were like the Iowa Quakers I had seen attempting to get involved in the Civil Rights movement, just a few years earlier, but in fact, as a black man pointed out, were trying to "save their souls on us." The champions were similarly trying to save their own souls from the comfort of established, blind conservative, status quo religion. The herd they assembled came along mostly for a free ride.

The first item of business was to change the rules so that "anyone who cared enough to attend the Conference should be allowed to vote." This was hotly debated and became a question of takeover tactics. It was resolved, or more accurately side-stepped, by recognizing that legally only members could vote but putting the voting on the honor system. Unfortunately, those who have few rights can feel just as self-righteous as those who have the advantage. It came to a vote after much debate which was eating away at time needed for the work of the Conference. The vote passed by a show of hands although it was about even and many were no doubt encouraged to vote who were not members. Even many members had to wrestle with their desire to trust people, their wish to see people empowered, and their understanding of

organizational responsibilities. I had some of those conflicts, myself, but came down on the side of organization as opposed to what I saw as anarchy, mainly because I sensed that the non-members really didn't care much about the Council while I, coming from the John C. Campbell Folk School, did care deeply about Campbell's organization.

After the vote, I remember feeling briefly dismayed but then deciding to put my best efforts into making the process work from where it was. Little did I know how much work would be involved. Plans were presented by the champions to reorganize the entire structure of the Council to make it more accessible to grass roots people and to address their problems. The Board was restructured and I was surprised when I won over Edith Easterling, a grass roots radical. I had a reputation as a radical, myself, altho I considered myself in the liberal camp. Was I considered by this crowd to be more radical than Edith? She, like Myles Horton, was an agitator, which is akin to a radical altho Edith seemed to be motivated out of some inner confusion while Myles had a clearer vision of right and wrong. Both were most comfortable when stirring people up. I, on the other hand, had equally deep commitments but desired to apply them by unifying people to take responsibility for their lives and to call for others to strengthen what was right rather than to attack what was wrong and blame it on others. All of us were liberals but I was less radical than Edith or Myles. I was not an agitator. I had seen how my father had been able to work with all segments of society from the union halls and in the mills to the churches and offices of top management. All of us were fearless in applying our principles.

The new Board met 23 times during the following year to try to straighten out the organizational mess left in the wake of Fontana. Each meeting required me to drive from Brasstown to Berea at my own expense. We learned that what happened at Fontana was illegal and that we were, therefore, not legally a elected Board. All the actions taken at Fontana were not official even though many good ideas came out of them. Without recognizing Fontana, the organization would face a serious setback. An alternative was to reconvene the old Board and have them ratify the actions taken at Fontana. First, we had to take the actions of Fontana and place them in some reasonable format. In the meantime, the Council's funding sources became quite suspicious about the outcome of the organization. Would you put money into something so unsteady? The old Board was called together and voted, by one vote, to ratify the actions of Fontana. I understand that Weatherford voted in favor of ratification. I had mixed feelings; I liked the fresh developments which resulted from Fontana but I also resented the tactics by which they had been achieved. I would have voted not to ratify and then approved what the new Board had come up with, considering it to be a recommendation from an ad hoc committee.

At one point, Phil Young was being criticized from right and left during these Board meetings. Everything seemed to be in a shambles and anarchy reigned with the self-styled champions always ready to push for their own ideas, wording, or even preferences. Finally, one of the new Board members, a usually silent black man from Asheville, spoke up. Since he seldom spoke, everyone listened. He counseled that in his organization back in North Carolina, the members had elected a president and they gave him the support he needed to function as their leader. A leader is necessary, he said, but cannot function without support. I realized the truth of

this. We must actively support our leadership regardless of our personal preferences which are best kept to oneself. If a leader is seriously going too far in the wrong way, the members have the right to replace him; but unless that point is reached, the leader should not be picked at to the point of dysfunctionality. If you elect a leader, give your support.

The new Board, now legally recognized, drafted wording for new membership rules and set up entirely new committees following the actions voted on at Fontana. The new designs showed much potential. We began to plan the next Conference. But here we ran into a snag. The 'herd' at Fontana had done a lot of physical damage such as breaking down doors, ripping sinks off the wall, etc. and the Council was banned from meeting at Fontana again. The new Board elected me to be Conference chair! Apparently, I had more than a liberal reputation; I also had the reputation as being a responsible person—another location may be willing to deal with me.

I was able to make arrangements for the Conference to be held at the Methodist facilities at Lake Junaluska. I always seek to bring in local people when strangers from other places come into a community. Local people need a chance to see what is going on. We opened the Friday night concert by Jean Ritchie to the community. It followed the opening business session.

Can you imagine my dismay when I found that the Conference had again been invaded by a large group of non-members, this time they were welfare recipients, I believe. The first item presented was a request to allow all who cared enough to attend the Conference to vote. Phil Young's response was to outline the new regulations which had been hammered out after Fontana. There were agitated objections. Mary Farris, another new Board member, from Berea's black community, got up and said, "You can't do that. We tried last year and found that it is not possible." The response was that "we don't want any God-dammed Board members telling us what you can and what you cannot do." Mary responded in tears, "But you don't understand." Tensions grew and no resolution appeared. I now understood why the SBI were at the Conference. It did seem that there could be a riot. Time was running on and local people were arriving for Jean's concert and were exposed to shouting matches. I asked Phil to end the Business session, but that too was attacked as a tactic to disenfranchise 'the people.' He asked me to ask the meeting to adjourn, which I did and explained that it was past time for the concert and that discussion could continue after it. The business meeting was recessed and Jean came onto the stage with her great presence. She began to sing quietly. It was miraculous how she transformed feelings from hot anger to quiet kinship.

The second revolution which took place at Lake Junaluska was enough for me. I resigned from the Board at the end of the Conference. I had spent a year being educated. Apparently there were other people who needed the experience. Within a few months, Loyal resigned and the Council was briefly run by a 'triumvirate' which sounded like the Soviet 'troika' to many people. That didn't last long and finally one man was left to use the Council as an action agency serving his anti strip mining cause. The office was moved from Berea to West Virginia,

the Bookstore, long a great regional resource, was bled dry and finally closed. In a few years the Council also folded.

That is how I was pushed from being a liberal to a conservative. It may be more accurate to say that I became less of a radical but still retained my liberal views. I am not an agitator but neither am I without very strong ideals.

# Becoming a Teacher

2 March 1996 (Saturday)

What are you going to be when you grow up? I liked that question and enjoyed dreaming about what I would do. My first remembrance, which still brings its happy feeling, was that I would love to drive a garbage truck. The clanging of cans and roar of the truck with me up in the driver's seat while serving people somehow attracted me. But in my 8th grade geometry class while in Ashland, Kentucky in 1942, I decided that I would like to be a teacher. Geometry was so interesting, with its theorems and proofs, its compasses and protractors, and the figures that we constructed out of paper. What fun it would be to pass on those pleasures to other children. I don't know my teacher's name, but I enjoyed her class.

I have been a teacher most of my life, beginning as Agriculture Instructor at Warren Wilson Junior College (1952-55), 10th grade biology and 9th grade math at Micaville (1956-57), followed by all 7th grade subjects in a room with a pot-bellied stove when the Micaville School became 1-8 (1957-59), 7th grade general science and English in Swannanoa (1960-61), and finally Animal Breeding and recreation classes at Berea College (1974-95).

My skills as a teacher developed over the years. I got better, especially after I found my own style and the philosophy to support it. There were no textbooks available for the recreation courses at Berea College and I had to design the courses to fit into what I had to contribute and what student needs were within the General Studies curriculum and Cultural Area requirement. I gradually learned that Grundtvig was right—most learning takes place from person to person and that faculty can learn as much from students as students learn from faculty, an open dialogue is important. When I really cut loose from my own personal agenda and was eager to listen to students, then the dialogue and the learning became vibrant.

I developed course plans which outlined out the topic for the course content. Then I drew up a set of principles which were the great truths I really wanted to teach such as "prejudice is usually a matter of ignorance." I provided the outline to the students but kept the principles to myself. I was also prepared to shelve the outline at any time the students seemed headed for another direction. Then I looked for ways to put the students in charge of their own learning, no forced feeding from textbooks in my classes anymore. I gave no exams since they implied that I knew what the students needed to know. I devised other means of grading since I was required to give grades, grade requirements were provided at the first class and the students could decide which grade they would work for. I also asked for them to treat me fairly, to work as hard in my class as they did in others.

I can best illustrate the results by describing what I still consider the peak event of my teaching career. I had made the assignment that each student should select and list their three favorite hymns, see what they could find out about the hymns, and report back to class. Note

that the students chose their own hymns and that they were to share what they learned with others in the class, including me. I did warn them that the library did not have a complete set of the world's knowledge and that they may want to explore other sources of information for hymns not reported on in the library; perhaps they could discover material which could be added to the library someday. Note that this was one of my principles, "not all useful information has been written down."

The discussion of the hymns was filled with exciting discovery. The students had uncovered wonderful tales about music which already had meaning to them. The sharing was intense for all but two students. When I noticed that those two were not caught up in the class exchange, I gave them my attention and asked what they had to share. The girl was from Wisconsin and did not know any of the gospel hymns the rest of the class were so excitedly sharing. She reported on her hymns which were all 'high church' from her American Lutheran background. Then I asked Mike Blanton, a fine looking and strapping basketball player, about his research. He said that he couldn't find anything about his favorite hymns and, in response to my question regarding his church affiliation, he said that he belonged to the United Baptists in Salyersville, Kentucky, that his church didn't believe in using musical instruments, and sang a different type of hymn. The period was over at that point.

The next time the class met, I was prepared to make my contribution to the class, which a teacher should be able to do as required. When the students were seated in our usual circle, I put on a record. An eerie, droning, sound gathered strength as a congregation began to sing in a slow, meandering cadence. When Mike heard the singing, his head shot up and he said, "Where'd you get that? That's what I was telling you about!" I asked him if he recognized the hymn and he responded affirmatively. I asked him what the hymn was, which caused him to listen more intently. The rest of the class was naturally listening with unusual interest. Why did Mike react so strongly? There was something going on here. Mike wanted to know if I had recorded singing at his church.

I pressed Mike further to identify the tune being sung and suggested that he wait for the song leader to line out the next phase. When that happened, Mike looked puzzled and said, "It must have been a bad tape recorder." I responded, "No, Mike, the recording was made on the island of Lewis in Scotland and they are singing in Gaelic!"

For the next several minutes I told about the Reformation during which the laity took control of their own worship, demanded the opportunity to participate in the singing, reading the Bible, and offering prayers. I told about the Westminster Assembly of the Scottish Protestants (Presbyterians) in 1646 (? my notes are in Berea). The Westminster Assembly decided to continue to 'line out' the verse for congregational singing. I told Mike that his style of singing had great historical significance. We learned from Mike that his father was the song leader (precentor) and that his grandfather was editor of the United Baptist song book.



The students asked Mike to sing for them! He was embarrassed, said that he never had led a song, even at home. I encouraged him and the students said, "Do it for us, Mike. Do it for us." He replied that we didn't know any of his songs. I asked if they didn't sing Amazing Grace and he had to admit that they did. "Do it for us, Mike. Do it for us." So, he did. Mike embraced his heritage in a recreation class.

But now was the time, while the student's hearts were open, to teach one of my principles! I asked the class to recall their feelings when they heard the record as the class began. I asked them if they now listened to the singing with different ears. I guided them to see that prejudice is often a matter of ignorance and that, after this, when they met some new situation to be very careful about their response. Instead of making disparaging remarks such as would have made Mike feel badly, to rephrase responses e.g. "That is a different sound." or "I've not heard anything like that before."

For the final exam, as you might guess, there was no exam but, instead, an evaluation of the class. The highlight of the term for this class was, "The day we learned about prejudice." Facts, dates, details were not of final significance. New attitudes and insights would now permeate these students for the rest of their lives. Mike presented me with a copy of the United Baptists songbook.

# Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin

3 March 1996 (Sunday)

Blossom Hill Amanda Dunloggin became part of my legend. She was in the herd at Warren Wilson College when I went there as dairy manager in 1952. She had been purchased by Howard Wheeler who had been dairy manager until his untimely death. Wheeler must have been a skillful dairyman for he had assembled a fine group of cows. Number 67, as Amanda was usually referred to, came from the Blossom Hill Farm in, I believe, New Jersey. She had one or two lactations and showed great promise. The herd had been well cared for by an interim dairy manager (Mr. Seth?) but many details were left to be dealt with by the permanent manager when he was hired. It should be noted that the students and the dairy manager were the sole source of manpower for the dairy part of the operation altho other students and Bernhard Larsen, farm manager, were responsible for the crops, beef and pig farms. Larsen looked at the dairy as a cattleman looked at sheep herders in the wild west.

The main problem with the herd, as I saw it, was breeding records and the calving season. It was not at all clear which cows were 'open' and which were pregnant, a critical matter for milk production as cows give less and less milk until they 'freshen' again with a new calf. Most of the calves were being born in the spring. Being fresh and enjoying the quality of spring grazing meant that milk production was in great surplus during the spring and early summer, much to the delight of Larsen and his pigs. However, only a skeleton crew of students remained at the College for the summer and thus a drastic reduction in the need for milk in the kitchen and there was too little milk during the winter term.

The spring surplus matched the surplus of other dairies. Surplus milk sold at surplus prices. In addition, the price for the year's production was 'based' on the amount sold during the winter months. We had none to sell during the base setting season!

I hired veterinarian Julian Cornwall (or his older brother) in to do pregnancy checks, not something I had learned as a student at Berea. It cost \$5 per cow. Julian became a good friend and was willing to make me an educated client. On a Sunday, I kept a sampling of cows in various stages of pregnancy, according to Cornwall's diagnosis, in the barn and examined them myself; I had no glove, but, shoot, a dairyman can't help but touch cow manure now and then. I remember thinking that for \$5 I would put my hand in almost anything altho it took some willpower to enter the first cow's rectum so that I could palpitate the uterus underneath.

I still don't quite know how I did it, but within the three years I was at Warren Wilson, we turned the breeding cycle around, established a base, and were able to sell the surplus milk. Larsen was not pleased but we were being pressured by the Buncombe County Health Department to sell our milk for processing since we had been serving the students raw milk direct from the College farm. Mrs. Larsen, Kathryn, was dietician for the College; we made

daily deliveries of milk each morning to the kitchen in 10 gallon cans as well as to faculty homes in their personal containers. Deliveries were made from an old pickup truck which was the only piece of 'farm' machinery that the dairy owned. As we delivered the milk and picked up empty cans, we also picking up garbage to be delivered to the pig farm. The Health Department was also forcing Larsen to boil the garbage before feeding it to the pigs.

67 was one of the cows we succeeded in getting pregnant after several tries and she was due to freshen in the fall. I approached the student crew and asked if they would like to try for a state record. I explained that it would require special handling and extra work. They agreed. After calving, we milked her by hand three times a day and fed her the best hay. Her production peaked at 15 gallons a day, 43 pounds at each of the three milkings!

Unfortunately, there wasn't the support for the dairy from the administration. Larsen was entrenched as farm manager and convinced them that beef and hogs were better operations for the College. I could see the Health Department soon requiring a new milk house in the near future. The administration did not plan to rebuild. By this time, Winona and I had married and the very early morning schedule, weekend work, and smelly work clothes were less acceptable. We decided to leave. The College decided to sell the dairy herd.

The students objected! Gene Hileman, one of my dairy crew, ended up being appointed as dairy manager and actually carried on for the summer months after I left at the end of May. It should be pointed out that my salary was \$80 a month plus housing and lunch. The College promptly terminated Dairy Herd Improvement Association official record keeping when I left. 67 was able to complete only 300, of the standard 305, days of lactation on record. But, it was a North Carolina state record, more than 27,000 lbs. of milk, and stood for about 8 years!

Sam Queen, a dairyman/politician from Waynesville, NC bought the herd. However, he excluded several cows from the purchase, 67 being one of them. He didn't want a cow with such a pendulous udder. Of course her record had not yet been published. When I came for a visit after spending the summer in Berea's first season of the outdoor drama "Wilderness Road," I found 67 and 55 still at the barn and were scheduled to be slaughtered. A pregnancy check made by myself proved both to be with calf! Larsen agreed to trade them to me for an equivalent beef animal which would yield more palatable beef for Kathryn to serve.

That is how I ended up with a record producing cow in starting the dairy operation at Celso. After 67 freshened, people from miles around would drive by on Sunday afternoon to see this amazing cow the likes of which Yancey County had never seen.

# An Unfinished Dream

4 March 1996 (Monday) 6:54am

I'm not sure how far I will get trying to set down the dream I just interrupted by waking up. I was so close to understanding the situation. It seemed so real and I was deeply involved in working out what was going on.

Salah Galal, it turned out, was the owner of a piece of property down in the river bottoms to which some of my students, including Margaret Sluder and Terry York had been coming. It adjoined property owned by Theresa and Bill Lowder which had been in their family for years. We had just learned from Salah that there had been an ancient Phoenician civilization not far away on land that was now flooded out and washed away, leaving only some buried ruins. I had not known about the ruins. It was all so fascinating.

The ruins were to explain how Salah came to own the property. He somehow inherited this property. He was also extremely wealthy. I was about to find out what was going on in the whole situation but was continually being interrupted by people coming in which meant that we could no longer confide in each other until they left.

The students were staying in a basement room in Theresa's place, in a building down near the road and across from Salah's. Salah was keeping stacks of beds, or some other articles in the room and had some relationship there. They were staying there at my suggestion since it seemed quite suited to their needs. They had Theresa's blessing, but I hadn't realized that Salah was the actual owner and had allowed the students to stay. I was about to find the connection when I woke up. He wouldn't tell me until we were alone. The students had apparently been royally treated by Salah at times when he was in town and had perhaps been taking some liberties when he was not. Terry had previously been staying with Salah across the road which I had not been aware of. I felt responsible to figure out what was behind all of these connections and had just established that Salah did know what was going on, at least for the most part, but preferred to keep it secret. Theresa was above board in her dealings with the students but was not aware of some of the sumptuous meals and lavish parties which Salah showered on the students at times, particularly before they moved across the road. While he was out of town Al Perkins, his assistant, had sent the students packing and had given Salah false information in justifying the action. Salah had been too busy to pay attention to such domestic problems.

During one of the private moments, Terry acknowledged that sex was part of the connection with Salah. I had not yet determined if it was homosexual or heterosexual. But sex was not the entire picture. The Phoenician culture had something to do with what was going on. I wanted to understand what that something was. Knowledge would allow me to make decisions that would be best for all. They all trusted me and I didn't see anyone else in a position to unravel the whole story. Everyone in the story was a good and honorable friend. But the secrecy

left everyone open to great misunderstanding and especially to criticism from a suspicious public.

Here, I woke up! The dream quickly evaporated and the details are much less real now. I do know that Salah Galal was an Egyptian friend from our days as Animal Breeding graduate students at Iowa State University. Theresa and Bill live in Berea, have opened their home to many people, and work closely with growing teenagers who attend the Festival Dancers which Theresa directs. Terry York was loyal to me when he was a Country Dancer altho the other students made fun of his ultra conservative political views. Margaret Sluder was my right hand person in Recreation Extension as a student secretary. Al Perkins, Academic Dean at Berea College and thus my boss for a time, was always cast in the role of the villain to me. The river bottom and washed out city may be linked to my learning last week that Ferdinand, MO (?) was destroyed by a flood in the years following Lewis and Clark's visit to the site. The beds pretty definitely refer to the oak flooring which was stored in the hayloft of the dairy barn at Warren Wilson College and which I had sold to Ira Martin to clear it out and to assist him in building his retirement home at Black Mountain's Last Resort Community. It turned out that Warren Wilson's President, Arthur Bannerman, had had Bernhard Larsen, the Farm Manager, store it in the dairy barn awaiting the building of his new home on the campus. No one had told me what the lumber was for and I hadn't thought to ask! I just wanted to clean the cluttered and dusty place up.

# The Reality

**6 March 1996 (Wednesday)**

A friend of ours tried to end her life. We all knew this was a possibility, could see the signs, and made some attempts to help. But after the fact, one wonders if additional effort could not have been made. "If only..."

Upon what seemed like premature release from the hospital Berni had guilt feelings and wondered if we shouldn't have her live with us in our tiny apartment for the initial week or so. I was pleased that she considered such a selfless gift but vetoed the idea and the feelings. I learned back in 1954-5 that I couldn't resolve the problems of every individual, let alone the entire world.

Oh yes, I left college and entered the real adult world filled with idealism and enthusiasm. I felt prepared in my heart with the needed visions and commitment to make the difference. And then I met Dean Barton.

Dean came to Warren Wilson College as a non-traditional student. He was older than I, perhaps he was 30 at the time and was sent to Warren Wilson by his foster parents, good Presbyterians. Dean was promptly assigned to the dairy crew, probably because Fessor and Coach, being older and wiser, could see problems in the offing and kindly dumped him on naive and cocky me.

I quickly integrated Dean into the dairy operation, treated him like a brother, expected him to pull his share, and became his friend. However, he needed more.

I was newly married, so my friendship had its limits; I had made other commitments. Dean received a great deal of attention from the rest of the campus and was soon a spiritual leader in worship services and had the admiration of his younger classmates. But, you know, when you work with someone, shoulder to shoulder, especially in the wee hours of the morning, you get to know them pretty well. I knew there was something wrong with Dean as he told me his story week by week.

Dean was an orphan. The orphanage burned and he was placed in an alternate home in Canada. The records in the orphanage had been destroyed in the fire. He had served in Korea as a United States soldier. He was not given veteran benefits because of the Canadian connection and lack of records of American birth. He had been taken as a prisoner of war. He was tortured. Congress was going to pass a special bill to give him veteran's benefits and US citizenship.

Somewhere along the line I realized that the story was being fabricated. Coupled with each new and increasingly abusive segment was an expression of greater need for my complete

attention and affection. It got to the point where supper at our apartment now and then, an evening's discussion or a lingering discussion following work was taking up too much of my time and infringing on my other commitments. Whenever I pulled back from giving 100%, Dean would add another horror story to his saga. The FBI were investigating, etc. etc....

I thought that if I were willing to give him my unstinting love, time, and attention, which he had apparently lacked in growing up, I could heal him. But I was unwilling to do this. It was a step in my own maturing process. I remember thinking that here I had thought I was prepared to make a big difference in the world and wasn't even willing, or maybe not even able, to make the difference for one person. I had some guilt feelings about not giving of myself to the extent necessary to help Dean. But I also knew that this he was not really my only responsibility nor was I his only hope of salvation, altho I liked to think that I could be.

As it turned out, the FBI were investigating Dean. I had invited a group of faculty and students to the dairy barn to observe #67 give birth. Our presence was disturbing her, so we had turned out all lights and were being very quiet. A car drove up to the dairy and three men got out, came into the barn and went up into the hay loft where they lit up a cigarette. That was very dangerous, of course, so I shouted out, "Put that cigarette out!" and started up into the loft. They jumped out of the big hayloft door, quite a daring feat since it was maybe 15 feet from the ground and ran for their car. Another faculty member was just arriving on foot (cars were scarce on our salaries) and recognized Dean as one of the three men. Dean disappeared and was a missing person until two years later when he was located posing as a preacher in a church in Kansas (?). He was wanted on several criminal charges of embezzlement.

That is why I understand that I can't undertake full responsibility for our suicidal friend today. I have given several days and spent close to \$100 in trying to sell her MR2 so that she can begin to solve some of her cash flow problems. We will continue to give her support, but realize that she is responsible, in the end, for what happens to her.

# Another Reality Story

7 March 1996 (Thursday)

Some true stories seem more like fiction. The story of Bob Schmidt is one of the sort which make legends. It was the second time in my life that I dealt with a skillful con man. Kit French, driving from Boston to Brasstown to visit his sister Topsy, picked up a hitch hiker, a large young man by the name of Bob Schmidt; at least he did use his real name!

Long trips are conducive to sharing life's most intimate concerns with perfect strangers. So it was with Kit and Bob. Bob was at loose ends. He had just lost his parents, sister, and girlfriend in the terrible Wilkes Barre floods. Bob had worked for the Kennedy campaign. He had experience as a successful fund raiser and had started a college in his small hometown in Illinois (I am no longer certain all of the details).

Kit told Bob about the Campbell Folk School where his sister's husband, Loren Kramer, was employed. Kit shared that the school was struggling financially and that since Bob had fund raising skills and was at loose ends, the two men decided that Bob should accompany Kit to Brasstown and to see if Bob could put his talents to work for the school.

We all felt that Bob's arrival was like an answer to a prayer. Bob agreed to organize a fund raising campaign for the School without pay (we had none to offer, I was Director at the time, 1971 (?)). He told me of his experiences in fund raising, produced a copy of the Congressional Record in which he has commended for his efforts in behalf of a college in Illinois, and said that he was personally acquainted with Kaltenborn (or some such big name newscaster).

Bob soon had all of the staff analyzing their needs, discussing the future of the school, and drawing up a master fund raising plan. After setting priorities and preparing PR materials, Bob would get us featured on a national news program to give us name recognition and launch the campaign. He truly was the spark to ignite our dreams, organize them, and sift them down into a unified plan. But, I realized, we were putting a lot of trust in this young man—soon I would no longer be in control of what could transpire. I became cautious since I had been given the ultimate responsibility for the School when I was made Director.

I'm not sure when my suspicions were actively aroused. Perhaps it was when Bob told me that he had worked for the FBI in a secret operation and that I should be aware of this should they try to contact him. I was not to acknowledge that I knew him. I certainly became alarmed when Ruth Lockman, a wonderful volunteer who was then assisting us, agreed to check out his claimed friendship with the national commentator, which had not yet aired the promised feature. Ruth was a marvel. She knew how to get thru to the newscaster and speak with him in person. He did not recall knowing Bob, nor had he been contacted by Bob regarding a program on the



school. My flags were up altho the rest of the community were too caught up in the dreams to see the dangers.

I called the FBI. They were not helpful but did claim that a Bob Schmidt had never worked for them. Can one believe the FBI? I pulled out the Congressional Record which Bob had given me. It gave his hometown and father's name. I called directory assistance, got a number, and called it. His father answered. He hadn't died in the Wilkes Barre flood! Mr. Schmidt acknowledged that Bob was his son but also said that he wanted nothing to do with him.

It was time for action. I called a meeting of key friends: the Kramers, Ruth Lockman, and the Kelischeks, as I recall, and told them of my discoveries. We all realized, by this time, that Bob was a very skillful and clever young man but must be in some deep trouble and unhealthy mental condition. We considered ourselves to be his true friends and thus in a position to help him face the truth and straighten himself out. We also knew that he had real talent and could put it to good use if he got on the right track. We really thought that he would quickly respond to such genuine friendship instead of taking it as an attack for being so dishonest with us. We all agreed to this true friendship approach and called a meeting with him.

It took some courage from us to confront Bob. There were serious parts of him we did not understand. I know that Toppo was fearful because she had her two young children and had this stranger living in their home. Perhaps he had a gun and would become violent.

We met in the Kramers living room in Hill House, a gathering of loving friends. When I confronted Bob with the information that I had gathered from the newscaster, the FBI and his father, he was furious. We responded with expressions of continuing affection, admiration of his good qualities, and offers to continue to work with him. He stormed out.

I, too, was now alarmed. I called the FBI and told them of my alarm. They said that they could not become involved unless some federal law had already been broken. That is a stupid stance! I wasn't asking them to arrest him! I asked that they at least check out his name since he had claimed to have worked for them. Was he dangerous? They declined to help. I spoke to Bob and told him that he must leave the Folk School; I told the staff that he no longer represented the School in any way.

Bob moved into the old potato storage house in Brasstown and became active in the Green Cove Baptist Church. He did not bother the Folk School and we seldom saw him. However, people in the community reported on him now and then. He became a leader in the church and was well respected in the community. But within a year he had split the church into two groups over some issue. He left. and finally was pursued by the FBI. He had been on their wanted list for passing forged checks.

# Universal and Local

**8 March 1996 (Friday)**

"Thou shalt not kill," is about as straightforward a religious commandment as it is possible to articulate. I have always assumed that the command referred only to killing humans but, personally, felt that its sentiments should extend it to undergird a reverence for ALL life. I could not in good conscience ignore the commandment's basic tenet and join the US military. The induction oath during the joining process replaced one's allegiance to God with allegiance to country and officers. It also placed one under military law. Soldiers do not share the same judicial rights as civilians. "Thou shalt not kill," is directly upheld as by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. Being raised in a Christian home and Christian culture, this commandment was deeply imbedded within me.

I had refused to join the US Army during its participation on the Korean battlefields. I respected my dear friend, Maurice Wesley, who did; he was one of the few who went with a feeling of conviction—most young men went to battle because it was the easiest and most popular thing to do. I learned how hard it was to go against the current.

The war in Viet Nam seemed like yet another inappropriate response by my country in its efforts to address what it saw as the most dangerous modern menace, Communism. The American public were led to believe that if we didn't take a stand in Viet Nam all of Asia would soon fall to the Communists and eventually, by the domino theory, we would sooner or later be in a violent fight for our way of life and our very lives right here on our own soil.

As the war progressed, there were hints that things were not going well. We kept having to send in more and more troops; the Viet Cong (which was supposed to be synonymous with Russian/Chinese directed Communists) proved to be an amazingly entrenched, creative, and daring adversary; and we had to build secured model village havens to protect the Vietnamese people and fenced them into these "sanctuaries" with barbed wire. Why didn't the Vietnamese welcome our efforts on their behalf? Who were we forced to protect the people from? Many of the events as reported puzzled me.

One day I suddenly realized that if I would replace the word Viet Cong with Vietnamese people, that everything made sense; we were not fighting the Communists, we were fighting a civil war among the Vietnamese people. That would explain the extreme tenacity of the guerillas and why we had to entice some villagers into enclaves and then protect them from their neighbors. I wrote a letter to the editor of the Des Moines register expressing this point of view.

At the same time, the media in the United States were continuing the "Communist plot to take over the world" theory. Life magazine, the ultimate in American media at the time, came out with a cover which had featured Ho Chi Min, the North Viet Nam leader, in a progression of

Communist leaders from Lenin and Stalin to the leaders of Communist countries around the world. It was a powerful visual representation of the plot. It angered me deeply to think that my country and my countrymen, especially knowledgeable people like the editors of Life, would encourage such false views which were causing horrible death to innocent Americans as well as Vietnamese.

I was an activist during those times. I wrote letters to the editor, became President of the Student Peace Union at Iowa State University where I was earning my PhD at the time, went on marches, participated and planned demonstrations, and even went to a missile base in Omaha to hold a vigil of penance.

Americans were not ready for the truth of Viet Nam. Americans, like their soldiers, put their faith in their Presidents (Kennedy and Johnson) and in their media. We activists were not appreciated, experienced backlash, and were called unpatriotic names. I couldn't see, at that time, that our demonstrations were doing any good except for our own souls. It almost seemed as if we were hardening people against the truth.

I can understand, as later reported by Bill Moyer in his televised interview with Clark Clifford, how difficult it must have been for Lyndon Johnson to face the truth and how it caused him to drop out of politics and all too quickly out of life. We were so wrong. How hard that is for Americans to admit!

And was I so right? I certainly didn't feel very self-righteous; instead, there was anguish that I hadn't been able to communicate truth. Part of my decision to accept the post at Brasstown was to try working in a different way to make the world a better place. It would be moving from the 'macro' activities represented by demonstrations, media battles, and public vigils, to the 'micro' level. By becoming a fully integrated part of one community, a community where people would be known in their totality, perhaps in that situation I could be a more effective agent for a just, loving, and peaceful society. Could I make a difference in one community? That was my new challenge.

I consciously put my macro techniques and causes behind me. I was no longer going to address what I saw as national problems. I realized that my views on Viet Nam, my conscientious objection to war, my political, and my religious views would not be acceptable in the Bible belt. Could I instead demonstrate my faith by my daily life? I welcomed this new challenge.

While at Brasstown, I was careful to retain my integrity, to live out my conscience, but within the narrow confines of our community. I was also careful to not misuse my position as Director of the John C. Campbell Folk School to promote my own personal views. As I had with Maurice Wesley, I respected and even supported the views and the conscience of my neighbors. I focused on areas where we found common ground and could work together.

# Second Anniversary

**11 March 1996 (Monday)**

Today is Berni and my second wedding anniversary. It has been two of the happiest years of my life. Ours relationship has all of the ups and downs, all the adjustments, which all married couples face. But this time there is something extra special which provides a loving substrate to give the marriage a certain kind of stability.

Our relationship is not something I can explain. It is even difficult to try to describe. I just know that I feel a comfort which has been lacking throughout my life. I think Berni truly loves me. It is not simply respect. And I love her in a way I have not experienced before. The experience is partly because it is 100%. Berni loves all parts of me and I am attracted to her, whether for charm, beauty, whimsy, skill, intelligence, and tender heart. At some deep level we see life thru the same eyes and can stand together as we collaborate in facing each challenge, each opportunity, and each joy or sorrow.

Maybe love is made in heaven. Maybe the third time around is a charm. Maybe love is blind. Maybe love is a cultivated flower. I don't know!

# Rosella Stuart

## 12 March 1996 (Tuesday)

Berni and I do love to dance. We met at a dance. We were at a dance weekend in Berea last Friday and Saturday. Then we had the regular St. Louis English Country Dance group last night.

## 24 March 1996 (Sunday, evening)

I got off the track! Will try to get back on again. Berni and I just arrived back from the 15th Nashville Playford Ball weekend. It was crowded and we forgot Berni's dress. But there were good times and such great music by Bare Necessities.

Berni and I were hosted by Rosella and Walter Stuart. Rosella was a Country Dancer before my time, she graduated from Berea College in 1942. Ruby Thatcher put us with the Stuarts so that Rosella and I could get better acquainted. We had only met a few times. I wished that I had our conversations on video, but Rosella was too modest for that. The insights she gave into some dance history at Berea College were important enough that I will try to set them down here while they are still fresh.

Rosella Morgan was born in 1919. Her parents divorced when she was young and an aunt made arrangements for her to attend school at Berea College in the elementary school to which many faculty sent their children. Frank and Leila Smith offered to keep Rosella; the Smiths had one daughter, Ruth, who was 6 years younger than Rosella but they apparently thought it would be good for her to have an 'older sister.' Rosella was 12 at the time, the school year was 1931-32. Rosella loved the Smiths. I tried to get at some of their character in talking with her, for I could see it shine through Rosella's eyes and in her smile as she talked.

She told of one evening when they had an "upside-down" evening. Ruth and Rosella assumed the parts of Frank and Leila while the elder Smiths became the girls. This obviously developed from Frank's years of experience with drama and role playing. One can just see the fun they must have had that evening and Rosella's face still beams and twinkles as she recalls it.

She also told of Leila making clothespin dolls as favors for guests at a dinner in their home. They were living in an apartment on Jackson Street at the time. I know that the Smith's home was always put to use in the service of creating joyful living. They were such fun people to be with. Some of Leila's craft interest and skills rubbed off on Rosella. Rosella organized the girls at school into a secret club which met under one of the back rooms of Presser Music Hall, a place which was surely off limits. One of her club's activities involved Rosella making each girl a cape which they actually wore to school one day.

Rosella recalled that Frank had been a conscientious objector during the first World War and had perhaps been in prison. He went to Denmark because of the problems his pacifism created in England. It was while he was in Denmark that Frank developed an interest in folk dancing. Rosella volunteered this information without prompting from me. It was good to have the information I had heard elsewhere confirmed in this way.

I was curious as to why Frank had discussed his pacifism with Rosella yet had never said anything to me about it while I was a student dealing with the same issues; he must have known.

I was also interested to learn that the Smiths went to England for the summer of 1932, which meant that Rosella had to be taken in elsewhere. She didn't know if Frank and Leila attended dance courses while there, but I suspect they did.

Some years later, after one year of college in Dayton (Akron ?), OH, Rosella received a telegram from Berea College accepting her for the second year. The telegram arrived the day she had to drop further schooling in Dayton for lack of funds. She arrived at Berea College with \$25 she had borrowed from a school superintendent. She left three years later with \$75 in her pocket.

Frank invited Rosella to be a Country Dancer and she participated in short trips and festivals until she graduated. She volunteered, in our conversation, that Frank felt that the College didn't really appreciate what he did, a feeling I know all too well.

Rosella's student labor was at the Berea College Hospital. She recalled being amazed at Frank's age when she was processing his records. His spirit was so youthful but his real age, to her, seemed very old indeed. She mentioned that he was not well the year he played Uncle Eph in Wilderness Road. I was a member of the troupe for the first season, too. He certainly played his part with such a sprightliness that some cast members felt he upstaged the professionals.

Rosella is a very demure lady. Her home is well appointed with an elegant charm. She served us with a gracious and proper style. But underneath there is always the element of fun, a feeling that life is to be enjoyed. A poster of Clinton and Gore is affixed to the screen-door at the entrance to the house to tease her Republican sister when she visits in a day or two.

Rosella and Walter have travelled around the world, often just taking off for such places as Guatemala or China. They have wide ranging interests. Rosella credits the Smiths and Berea College with giving her a great start for dealing with what life has in store and making the best of it.

# Manhattan Dinner

**26 March 1996 (Tuesday)**

One of the tales I shared with Rosella and Walt was about one of the Country Dancer trips to Fairfield, Connecticut, a trip we took annually for several years to participate in an Appalachian Celebration held at Fairfield University. The trip required leaving Berea after Country Dancer practice on Thursday evening, driving the Blue Nag, our schoolbus, all night and most of Friday to arrive in Fairfield Friday afternoon. We performed all day Saturday and Sunday and left Sunday at 6:00 pm driving all night to arrive in Berea in time for Monday afternoon classes and labor. It was a grueling schedule.

But, one of the big incentives to the dancers to sign up for the trip was the chance to see New York City. Of course we only had time to drive around Manhattan; can you visualize the Blue Nag battling the taxis on Broadway, Times Square, and 5th Avenue?

This particular year we had decided to make the drive Sunday as we headed home. I told the dancers that if they would wait to eat supper, we would try to find a place to eat in the City. They enthusiastically agreed. It turned out not to be easy to find a place to park our bus and we drove around from west to east, getting more and more hungry since we had danced hard all day, the dancers had growing, youthful appetites, and it was getting on toward 9:00 pm. Finally, we found a parking spot near the United Nations. There were no restaurants in sight, but I was sure that we could find one within walking distance. Within a couple of blocks I spied a sign down a side street-- Beijing. We headed for it. I believe that our musicians had their own transportation that year and had gone on, leaving 19 of us looking for supper in New York.

The menu outside was simply pictures of elegant arrangements of Chinese food. There were no prices. I went in alone to make arrangements. A Chinese in a western business suit greeted me and asked if I was alone. I told him that I had 18 others outside and we wondered if they could serve us supper. He asked what we would like. I told him that I would like to see a menu. He smiled and said that he was sure that he could serve us something suitable. I repeated that I really would like to see a menu and he responded that they did not have menus. I was forced to say that what I really needed to know was what the meal would cost. He responded that that depended on what we would like. I asked what a meal might cost in general. He said, "Shall we say \$25?" I said, "No." He said, "What shall we say?" I did some quick calculating: we had budgeted \$5 per meal but had done a cheap meal at a grocery store on the way up and had been served by the Appalachian Volunteers on Saturday night, and I remember thinking that a dinner at Boone Tavern costs \$15 so the College could not easily complain if we spent that much. So I suggested \$15. He said that he would check it out with the cook.

The owner returned with the chief cook, a Chinaman in a black tuxedo complete with tails. They agreed to provide a special soup and five entrées for \$15. I agreed and brought the

dancers in off the sidewalk. We were given seating at several round tables with fine linen tablecloths, linen napkins, hand-painted china plates, crystal goblets, and silver chopsticks and spoons with cloisonné handles. The restaurant was relatively empty but the tables took up all space for the usual crowds; we were fortunate that we arrived late on a Sunday night.

The dancers were quite excited and were making comments such as, "My first glass of water in New York City!" They quickly charmed the owner who then went out of his way to explain things to us, "The soup may taste rotten but it is supposed to taste that way." I found that the rotten taste was not a dead rotten but had a mix of spices which made the rotten flavor alive. Fortunately we were all hungry and all enjoyed the soup. I had learned over the years to try to whet appetites and postpone serving until all are quite hungry; then food tastes much better and I got fewer complaints and more appreciation.

There was a candied beef dish, whole green beans with such a savory coating that you wanted to suck each one before eating it, a broccoli dish which, like everything else, was peppery and made the saliva flow. The owner explained it all and that the chief cook was the man who had prepared the banquet for Nixon when he was in China. The cook was giving a cooking class to interns at the restaurant.

We learned that the owner had been in the choir at Michigan State as a graduate student and had himself gone on tour.

We wanted to dance for him, but there was no room in the restaurant. So, we decided to sing a shape note hymn for him. But, he asked us to wait before we sang. He brought out the chief cook with his two assistants, both also in tuxedos; and behind them came 12 interns all dressed in white and with tall white chef's caps.

We left New York with our hunger fully satisfied and dozed throughout the night as we rode back to Berea. I wrote the man a nice thank you note when we got back home. It had been another memorable Country Dancer trip.



# School Consolidation

27 March 1996 (Wednesday)

To: Talk of the Nation

Re: Program aired Tuesday, 26 March 1996

Topic: Carnegie Report on Secondary School Reform

From: John M. Ramsay

Much of your discussion, today, related to the size of school units.

I have had experience as a student and as a teacher in both large urban schools and in small rural schools. The years of this experience span the consolidation of the American High School which followed the Conant report of the 1940's. There are advantages to large size which I would not like to give up. But, I also see a society in trouble and in need of the human development which seems to require a more personal approach to education. If I had to choose, I would choose a one room school over the huge mega school for which Conant argued. Why shouldn't we develop models which include both large and small units?

School consolidation reached the isolated mountain communities of western North Carolina and eastern Kentucky late, in the early 1970's, almost forced on us by federal and state policies. In addition to dismantling community structure which centered in the small local schools, consolidation meant arduous and wasteful bus rides for many students, sometimes totaling more than two hours a day.

At that time, I proposed a combination of large and small which I still think could be useful. Two-teacher school units would be set up within walking distance of ~60 students and would be referred to as Community Schools. They would meet three days a week.

On the remaining two days, one of the Community teachers would take the students to the Consolidated School to benefit from all the high-tech, costly, and high-powered instruction which large size makes possible. The accompanying teacher could possibly drive the 60 passenger bus, would see to it that the students had personalized attention, and would bring the material they studied back to the Community School for integration with the more practical and wholistic community program. The Consolidated School would give students the experience of what to expect in the multi-national world of modern society. It would be possible to offer a great variety of subjects, e.g. five foreign languages.

The other Community School teacher would have two days without students—one day to be spent with peers "developing the soldiers," i.e. learning how to be a creative Community School teacher whose aim is to develop a more humane citizenry than seems possible in the larger schools. The second free day would be used to set up programs for the next weeks. I also envision parental and community participation in the Community School, all of which must be organized. There could be lots of field trips, projects, on the job training, etc.

The Consolidated School would be supported by a large number of communities, enabling it to offer many subjects. However, only 1/3 of the Community Schools would be in attendance on any one day. This would give the Consolidated teachers the incentive to prepare lessons which would be repeated three times but with small classes.

I don't believe that this system would require an increase in staff nor would it require additional facilities since many communities still have old schools. Current resources would be shifted around. The Community Schools should be dependent on and responsive to the individual community and should have great freedom to innovate. The Consolidated School would be the major responsibility of the larger school system administrative unit and should reflect a broader view of educational needs.

I would be pleased to share further ideas about this model. It seems to me that it would embrace the technological developments which have so impacted our society, prepare our students to live in the emerging one-world community, and yet retain their humanity as they deal with the personal and community relationships which undergird any society.

I am grateful to the Carnegie Commission for initiating this dialog and to National Public Radio for airing it.

# The 60's Come to Berea

28 March 1996 (Thursday)

Back in the mid 1970's, George Quinlan, a Country Dancer, told me that he was fed up with the pot parties which took place near his room in Danforth residence hall. He found it difficult to study and abhorred the filth, puke, odors, and noise which a group of fellow students created. George was a great, strong and Christian man. He was tough as well and not given to complaining; in fact, he was full of fun and everyone, including his teachers, liked him.

Berea College was experiencing problems in the area of student life, as it was called. There were problems with drugs, vandalism, and immorality in the dorms. The social upheavals of the 1960's in the rest of the country had finally reached Berea. Much of the anti-establishment mood I could support; but drugs, vandalism, and immorality were the evil side-effects of tearing down past social injustices.

I told George that I would support him if he wanted to do something about the problems in his dorm. I was serving on the Student Conduct Board at the time, and knew that unsubstantiated allegations did not stand a chance. In fact, I witnessed obviously guilty students getting away with breaking the rules on technicalities. We seemed to be living in an increasingly litigious society. Problems were swept under the rug in the name of innocent until proven guilty. How can anything ever be proven, or even if it can, the individuals can find some legal maneuver to derail facing up to it. I told George to let me know when one of the pot parties was going on if he was willing to try to deal with the problem.

College officials, especially the Dean of Students and his staff, had fallen into the litigious mentality. When a problem arose which was difficult to deal with they would engineer a process which ended with passing yet another regulation to be printed in the Student Handbook, thus making a recurrence of the problem an illegal action on paper. Rules upon rules, procedures upon procedures, filled the Conduct code for Berea students but failed to deal with the mounting problems. It was reaching crisis proportions.

George called late one night and told me that a party was going on. I told him to sit tight and that I would call the Head Resident, Kris Kogerma, a classmate of mine back in the 1950's, and then get back to George. I called Kris who said that he would investigate. I asked him to report back to me. He didn't call and George said that the party was still going on when I called him. I called Kris again. He said that he had sent his student assistant up to investigate and the student found no problem. I remonstrated. Kris told me, "Keep your nose out of my business." I reported to George and we agreed to talk with Dean Hickerson the next day.

I set up the appointment with Hickerson, Dean of Student Life. George was apprehensive about talking with him and told me that his life could be endangered if he 'blew the whistle.'

That was unsettling to me because George was really a solid fellow with strong character, almost a daredevil, and well built. But he agreed to go thru with the meeting since I was going with him. Hickerson's response to the situation was to question George as to whether he really wanted to rat on his fellow students. Neither George nor I felt that he was on our side. He pointed out to George that the other students could make life difficult for him, almost as if George would be the criminal by bringing charges. George, wisely, asked for time to consider what he should do. It was a very bad situation for George, to accuse fellow students of breaking the rules (actually possession of marijuana was a criminal offense, and one of the students was even growing pot in his room), and yet not to have the support of College officials. I went to President Weatherford and Dean Stolte alone. It is still impossible for me to understand their response. They told me that there was nothing that they could do about it! I got the impression that Kris Kogerm, or was it Hickerson could not be dealt with. I don't question the integrity of Weatherford or Stolte but they were obviously not going to divulge to me what they were thinking.

I reported to George my shock at not being able to give him the support he deserved. But George had his own shocker. Before he had time to get back to the dorm after our visit with Hickerson, Hickerson had called Kogerma and told him that George might blow the whistle! He said that he would give George time to reconsider and then in effect stabbed him in the back. George was forced to be wary day and night. His life was in jeopardy.

Kogerma brought a Chinese student before the student conduct board for breaking the co-ed visitation rules. A Chinese girl from ECU had been trying to get in touch with the Berea student concerning some regional meeting of Chinese students. At that time, there were no phones in the student's rooms, only one in the lobby. Messages often were undelivered or phones not answered if no one was in the lobby. She finally came to Danforth at 7 am to see the Berea student and went up to his room. The student knew that she should not be there and quickly ushered her into his room and closed the door. The rules actually specified that it was also illegal to have a girl in the room at any time with the door closed. I don't know how Kogerma found her, but, at the Student Conduct Board to which he took the case, he told the student in front of the Board that he was foolish to have allowed her in at that time because the student knew that Kogerma checked the dorm at 7:30 am. The student was found guilty. I was at least able to change the wording to 'technically guilty.' I don't know what penalty was meted out. To me it was a gross misuse of the judicial system. Those who are guilty were going free and those who were innocent were found guilty.

But, the story is not over. Residents on Bluebird lane, where Kogerma lived during the summer when the dorm was closed, complained to Kogerma that one of his sons, a twin who had returned home for the summer, was firing a gun in the area of the College gardens. Kogerma's response was that it could not be his son. The man did not like to face real problems and then would cover up this fact by confronting a Chinese student with what was really a paper problem. I was sitting on my front porch (the Taylor house on Prospect Street not far from Bluebird) when I heard shots one afternoon. Soon police cars came zooming by. Kris's son had shot and killed

his father, his mother, and his grandmother. He also wounded George Noss, the next door neighbor, when he tried to intervene.

The College brought in outside consultants to study the situation in the residence halls; that is another modern technique for pushing responsibility off onto someone else. The consultants recommended that my brother Bill be made Dean of Students; he seemed to be the best person on campus to deal with the residence halls and student life problems. It took Bill several years to turn things around. He had to replace most of the residence hall staff and devise new procedures for dealing with problems. Fewer cases were brought to the Student Conduct Board and it was finally restructured. Instead, when a student got into trouble Bill would call the student into his office and talk with him or her about the problem. Often, the student would break down in tears and plead for help in overcoming what was really a problem to themselves as well as to others. This approach by Bill meant that he had to be personally involved in the student's lives and their often serious problems. It took its toll on Bill and Rose. They served Berea College and Berea's students with love and compassion day and night, year after year. Drugs all but disappeared from the campus.

# Age 66

**9 April 1996 (Tuesday)**

Today I am 66 years old. Age comes on very slowly; it's almost imperceptible. I really feel quite young and ready for the new adventures which keep popping up. Last summer we moved to St. Louis and tried apartment living. We kept the house at 314 Estill Street in Berea because we liked it and had notions that we would like to retire in Berea. We still may but that kind of retirement is years down the road!

Two weeks ago we decided that it was not wise to keep the house in Berea. For the next five years or so we will be in St. Louis. Berni really likes her work and it is much easier to do well being here in St. Louis rather than relying on call forwarding as we did last year. We are paying \$580 rent on this apartment; that is money we will never see again. So we decided to buy a house here and have been house hunting.

House hunting has tied us up and I haven't had the time to make Journal entries. In addition, I have been getting materials ready for our programs in Denmark in May. Loren has invited his family to give a dance program at Loren and Inge's country dance weekend. It is all very exciting. We found a house we like and can perhaps buy it when we get back from Denmark. In the meantime, Charlie got on the ball and has found a buyer for the Berea house. It is under contract less than a week after Martin put the sign up in front of the house. In fact, Charlie said she had a call about the house before Martin even got home from putting the sign up.

Berni and I went to the regular St. Louis English Country Dance session last night. When we got home it was past midnight and so we had a birthday party in our birthday suits.

# Legends areBorn

**11 December 2010 (Friday)**

How I became "Emeritus Teaching Faculty at the College." Perhaps this is how legends are born! The Berea College Magazine for fall 2010 devotes a column on page 39 to me, John M. Ramsay, '52. My name is spelled correctly for the lead in, misspelled twice in the following paragraph and then correctly again in the caption to Jeff Sadler's photo. The article dates the "founding...of the Folk Circle Association" as 1995. It should be 1985. Typos like this are understandable. What is not as easily understood is how and where I was designated "Emeritus Teaching Faculty at the College." It is news to me and could be pursued for clarification. I am happy if it is true. If it is not correct, it probably does no harm and certainly will not affect my daily life. However, the designation of "caller for Webster Groves English Country Dancers" would not be appreciated by other callers who give of their talents to the group much more frequently; I am only one of many.

I do not know how the above legends crept in. But, they have a healthy start! The Berea College Magazine has a pretty good circulation. Many of those who receive it already know me and will likely take what they read in this collegiate publication as accurate. The photo is for real—sort of. Possibly, since the Berea College Magazine is published by Berea College with its student labor program, a student was given the assignment of writing the article...but, be careful, John, you may be starting another legend! I am actually a great supporter of student labor and have many wonderful stories about the impact it has had on young lives.

**13 December 2010 (Tuesday)**

I had to smile! The legend has taken root! In today's mail, I received page B1 of The Berea Citizen sent to me by my son, Martin. The byline is "Special to the Citizen." It is word for word from the Berea College Magazine and even includes the same Jeff Sadler's photo of me dancing Patty Cake Polka in Springfield, Illinois at the Lincoln Presidential Museum with a nameless girl. Martha Edwards is the one who noticed the photo's potential; she lifted my part from a shot of a whole circle doing the dance. In that way, the photo is taken out of context and that changes people's responses to it. I am only one of many. Jeff is a talented photographer and so the segment has withstood enlargement for publication and has been circulated widely:

<http://www.childgrove.org/pdf/>

<http://web.mac.com/johnmramsay/>  
Berea College Alumni Today 2011  
CDSS News, Fall 2010  
Berea College Magazine, Fall 2010, p 39  
The Berea Citizen, Thursday, December 12, 2010, Page B1

Once a legend starts it is difficult to stop. What about the legends that make you cry instead of smile. Let's keep that in mind when we hear hearsay—even when it appears in print. Legends are vital to our development as we process a very complex world and attempt to take our position in it. But, responses are likely motivated by something more basic than what is acquired through our senses. May the spirit of our Creator motivate us all.