

FINAL INTRODUCTION*

Without question, the greatest invention in the history of humankind is the zero. Without nothing, there cannot truly be something, because everything needs its opposite to become complete. Two brief examples will suffice.

My dear friend and former law partner Richard Cole was handed the chairmanship of our Wall Street firm's Associates' Lunch, a once-a-month gathering of all lawyers, not just associates. It was always well attended, at a fancy business club nearby. 'The partners ate thousands of meals there every year, excellent meals, which were deducted for tax purposes because they were business-related, The chairmanship was a nothing job, and Richard did it to perfection. On one unusual occasion, the senior partner attended, and while Richard was making his introductory remarks, that man happened to knock over his water glass. Without missing a beat, Richard spread his hands wide and announced that everyone should now knock over their own water glass, but it was not mandatory—in other words, an order that need not be obeyed. He got the laugh he deserved, no more water was spilled, but that remark completed the event and allowed us to move on. Perfect in every way.

The other example was the greatest trade in NBA history, that of Dick Van Arsdale for his identical twin, Tom. The twins switched uniforms between Indianapolis and Phoenix, but otherwise nothing changed. They had played together, both All-Americans, at Indiana University, but it was clear to the league on draft date that they should not be allowed to play for the same team, because that would be too good and possibly lead to cries of conspiracy. So they went their separate ways. During their careers before the trade, they each played point guard, and their statistics, in points per game, free throw percentages, assists, time lost to injuries, fouls, and probably in the total amount of soap they used while showering both after games and throughout their lives, were identical, to a tenth of a percentage point—or cake of soap, as the ease may be.

So one year, as the trading deadline approached, the general managers of those two teams came up with the astonishingly brilliant stroke of swapping their star point guards. After the trade, the Arsdales' performances continued to be essentially mirror images of each other. But, just as on wall Street when we use

the term "activity as the proxy for progress," the general managers did something, which they definitely could not fail to do, but also did nothing, because that was all they could reasonably do in the circumstances.

On the flight back to California after fiftieth law school reunion, it came to me that I had been retired for fifteen years. Not having been in legal practice for that extended period, I told myself that if I limited my scope to true stories, there was a chance that people would actually believe me. That's what this book is. Forty-three true stories about my life and also about some other occurrences that I know absolutely to be true. I believe there is not nearly enough laughter and humor in our world now, or in the world altogether since the dawn of time, so I want to do my part to change that as much as one man can, which is as close to nothing as there is, but also not nothing at all.

Enjoy every word! I know I have. Best wishes to all.

Michael Parish

2020

*I call this the final introduction for the paradox involved in the phrase and because the first version was no good, but this one is. Take my word for it, since it's the only one you will see.

I. NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF LAWYERS GIVE THE REST OF US A BAD NAME

Due to practicing law with a large NYC firm for 30 years as a partner doing corporate finance, I was fortunate to be served for many of my financial needs by the private banking group of a large bank with a household name, and had an individual assigned to me. After a few years of perfectly happy interactions with a series of such individuals, I was lucky enough to be assisted by a genuine jewel of a woman who often anticipated my needs and if not always took care of business promptly and skillfully. This included covering otherwise bounceable checks, acquiring co-op apartments and financing the same, and finally obtaining a home equity line of credit (HELOC), since cash flow when you were rising in the firm and needed every

year both to live on what you expected to earn and to keep repatriating part of the money into the firm, was a balancing act year in and year out.

After the HELOC was in place, I called Marion to thank her both for this latest matter and for the whole succession of well-performed exercises. She kindly expressed her appreciation for my business and being so easy to work with, and on the spur of the moment I asked, having never met her face to face, if I could buy her lunch as a way of expressing my thanks. She made a small giggle and then said she would love that, and we set a date and a place, a northern Italian place a block from my office with linen tablecloths and good food, although when you got the check you saw that you were also funding the midtown location, the décor and the starch in the waiters' always speckless jackets.

She was already seated when I arrived and waved away my apologies for being five minutes late. I knew from prior conversations that she had high school aged twins from her now-ended marriage and a steady boyfriend with whom she enjoyed taking motorcycle trips with his club on weekends, so I was a little surprised, but pleasantly so, at how elegantly turned out she was—again reflecting, while mocking my addiction to this habit of observation by one who had grown up in very modest circumstances, that I must have at least paid for the tasteful low heels I noticed when she stood up to greet me.

We toasted the occasion with a simple glass of white wine and had a little bit of small talk about our families and vacation plans and got our orders into the waiter's notebook when she put her glass down and said "This is really a very nice place, and there's something I want to share with you." Little as I knew her, I had completely no idea what that might be, but, as Ross Perot said in a debate the year he helped Bill Clinton into the White House, I was "all ears," and just inquired briefly what that might be.

"Well," she said, "I've been working in our private banking group for almost 18 years now, you know, and it's a good job since I do deal mostly with people who are smart and educated and successful and have excellent manners." She stopped for a moment and I nodded in encouragement for her to go on.

"And here's the thing," she continued. "In all that time with all those people, you're the first one who ever bought me lunch, or even a drink." We both sputtered with laughter and, that topic having been fully addressed, changed the subject, although

it is a story I have often remembered during my further dealings with our profession.

II. WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A “GOOD LAWYER”?

The head of the firm I spent over 20 years at liked to tell the story of how a friend of his had helped him define the meaning of “a good lawyer.” The friend received an appointment as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, something nobody would sneeze at since it’s the most prominent and prestigious U.S. Attorney’s office in the country. The New York Law Journal, a semi-official publication widely read in the legal community both for news and for information concerning cases, schedules and other official legal business, then published a small notice on its front page concerning every such appointment, and so his name and particulars appeared there in that fashion.

On his second day he received a call from a woman speaking in a low voice and saying—this was previous to our current elongated state of derangement about national security—that she had information about an important matter concerning that subject which she could not speak about over the telephone but was sure he would want to know about it and hopefully do something about it. She asked if he might be available in an hour or so since she lived downtown close to his offices and so, his calendar not having started to get crowded, he consented.

She arrived on schedule and he showed her into his sparsely decorated new office, observing that she appeared to be of late middle age and was plainly and neatly dressed, and that she carried only her purse, rather than any folders or document case. She quickly explained, leaning forward and dropping her voice, that she was being spied upon by Martians, who could witness everything she did and also see through her clothes, which was agonizing and she hadn’t been able to stop them or get them to leave. He asked if she had contacted anyone else and she responded affirmatively, citing other Assistant U.S. Attorneys in his office, “But they always say they can’t help or call back later and tell me the same thing. You know, I’m sure these Martians are everywhere, but the people they spy on are too fearful or just don’t know what to do, but you can bet your life that I’m not the only one that’s suffering through this horrible situation—that’s why I need to keep making the effort, because it’s really a nation-wide problem, if people really knew what’s going on!”

He put his fingers together in front of him, tip to tip, and reflected on what she had said. In front of him the desk was empty except for a telephone, in and out boxes and a desk pad with the standard green blotter in it and a small pile of yellow legal pads. Alongside that were two pencil cups, filled with sharpened pencils, a stapler with boxes of extra staples, a tape dispenser, scissors and a box of paper clips. He reached for the box of clips and stood up to hand them to her. Remaining standing, he asked her to open them and put two of them together, which she did.

“Now, you know how to make a chain out of these, don’t you?” he asked in a friendly and matter of fact way, and she nodded in the affirmative. He sat back down and continued “Now, if you make a chain out of these that goes all the way around your waist, and then add another chain on the side that goes down your side to just above your hemline, which you can do in our ladies room before you leave the building, that will render you invisible to these Martians and they will stop bothering you because they won’t know how to find you and they will get frustrated and go away. But you need to not tell anyone about this, over the phone or in person, because that will alert them and they will take countermeasures to defeat our plan. Do you understand me? Do you have any questions? Stop in the ladies room and do as I’ve outlined and, “abracadabra!” you’ll have your life back and not be troubled anymore.”

She popped out of her chair and came around the desk to give him a hug of thanks, which he managed to forestall somewhat by taking hold of her by the shoulder of her leading arm, and putting his other arm across his chest. With that, he helped her back around to pick up her purse, walked her to the door, saw her out with a pat on the back and she was never seen or heard from again.

“Now that’s a good lawyer,” my senior partner would say. “Takes the time to analyze the problem, considers his resources, his or hers, fits the solution to the client’s particular needs and circumstances, makes sure the client is satisfied and has no further questions, and sticks the landing. Who could want more? He, or she, also recognizes, courtesy of the great legal text ANIMAL FARM, that just as all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others, all clients are crazy—because by definition they are crazy or they would never have to resort to our profession-- but some are just a little crazier than others.”

II. THE BROWN DERBY

That was Al Smith's sobriquet when he was Governor of New York and a Presidential candidate against Hoover in 1928. It served to emphasize, like his accent, his connection to real people, and not to the "swells" who have always been at the center of politics and power in our country. A favorite pub of mine in New York has a framed photo of Babe Ruth, wearing a "Smith for President" button, with a half-smoked cigar in the corner of his mouth and a derby on his head. During the time Smith was governor, the father of a friend of mine, a lawyer, lived on the Lower East Side, was Jewish and interested in politics, especially since a number of Jews had replaced earlier residents, but the area was dominated by Italians, who were largely Democrats.

He was a protégé of the Republican leader, "Boss" Koenig, famous for the truism "You can't beat someone with no one," and who offered to support my friend's father in what looked like a hopeless race, just to have a candidate. At one point early in the campaign had a sit-down with his opponent, his bodyguards and his own, having stipulated in advance that everyone would put their firearms on the table at the beginning. He ran against very long odds, but won by 6 votes, his first victory in a long line leading to a substantial career in statewide office. The Assembly was then composed of people with terms of a single year. When he arrived in Albany and was sworn in at the Statehouse, he immediately received a message from the Governor saying his presence was required "on the Second Floor," as the Governor's office is still commonly referred to there. He made his way and was shown in to Smith's inner office. The Governor waved at him and did not get up or shake hands, but motioned him to one of the armchairs on the other side of the desk, which he took.

Smith put down his own cigar, called him by his last name, receiving a nod in return, and then said "You're from the 6th AD, right?" and received another nod in return. "You won by six votes" the Governor continued. Al Smith was later known to respond to the questions of reporters-- after visiting his rival and by then President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt-- when they asked him what he had managed to get the President to promise for New York State, "Did you ever try to nail a custard pie to the wall?" This time his message was more succinct. He leaned forward, pointed at his visitor and said "Don't do it again," and dismissed him with a wave.

VI. "THAT'S DIFFERENT"

A good deal of my decision during law school not to become a courtroom lawyer or litigator was driven by the fact that I found them generally obnoxious and overbearing, as well as imbued with a world view that encompassed only win/lose encounters. Their view of a perfect world seemed to consist of a series of incidents in which they kicked someone hard in the groin, knocked them down, speared them in the chest and throat and then stood over the corpse pounding their chests and emitting Tarzan-like shrieks. A little of that goes a long way, in my opinion, and as a firm believer in the superior beauty of win/win solutions the last thing I wanted to do was to spend my life in the company of such primitive dolts. But as always, there was one exception that proved the rule, who became a close, lifelong friend, with whom I never had the misfortune to cross swords in a legal venue. For openers, he started his remarks at his 60th birthday party, to a large room full of legal and personal friends, by saying that he'd finally abandoned his youthful dream of winning a Nobel Prize, and was interrupted by one of his partners, saying to universal laughter that if there were a Nobel for interrogatories, he would have won it long ago.

Between the ages of 4 and 6, I lived in Germany where my father, a captain in the US Army, was busily engaged in ferreting out Russian operatives, along with underground surviving and active Nazis who had escaped the nets of the conquering forces and continued to conduct sabotage and espionage against the occupying partners. Starting in 1947, my family lived in an 18 room house with 13 servants including a chauffeur, a gardener/handyman, plus various cooks and chambermaids and the like. I was the little prince of the kitchen, speaking German in one direction and English in the other, almost at the same time, and the gardener and I often took long walks in the woods with our boxer dog, Argo. At this time, there were still people in Germany starving to death and work was difficult to find, so these jobs were precious to our staff. During the walks, we would pass from time to time an area surrounded by 10 foot high steel fencing with razor ribbon along the top and Quonset huts inside, peopled by sad looking individuals in heavy coats and parkas with their hands in their pockets, not appearing to be doing much of anything. These were displaced persons from the war and, as I learned during law school, my friend Marty had been in that very camp with his family while I was on the outside living in considerable comfort. They would ultimately immigrate to New York City, where he, as the oldest child and the best English speaker, would lead his parents and younger brother and sister thru the mysteries of the subway system, developing an authoritative manner that would suit him well in later life.

Marty was an outstanding student with a prodigious memory. When he later became a partner in an extremely prestigious Manhattan law firm, he told me that part of what enabled him to succeed was that he had essentially memorized every document in each case he tried. He also let me in on the litigator's trick, when challenged by the judge or the opposition to provide some legal authority or precedent for his legal position, to say "The McWithers case sets that position forth undeniably, Your Honor." Then he would send his junior lawyer back to find the case that actually did support the argument, because there always is such a case, somewhere, the law being the jumble that it is. He would then call the judge and his opponent and provide the citation, along with an apology for having misstated the name of the case. When he did get the news of his promotion to partnership and called me, he also started the conversation, after addressing me in the tried and true Ivy League manner of calling me by last name, with the famous Nixonian words "The long national nightmare is over." To be sure. When I asked him, some years later, about how the oral argument in the Supreme Court had gone on a case he was involved with he simply said "Well, when (name of former Supreme Court Justice) got us lost on the way to the Supreme Court, I had a feeling it was not going to be our day."

Once during dinner at his house, I paused the lively conversation to observe that in what I hoped would be the long period of time we would be friends, the discussion would be both more pleasant and proceed more efficiently if he could start restraining his habit of responding to virtually everything I said with "You're wrong." He disputed that, of course, and I barked "See what I mean? There you go again." He turned to his wife to support his position and she said "Mike's right. You do that all the time, to everybody." He paused for a moment, put his hands in front of him in a kind of supplicatory gesture and said "But, but, that's different." Who could argue with that?

On another occasion we were having lunch and I asked if they were planning any trips in the near future. He indicated that they were going to Taiwan very soon. "Business or pleasure," I asked, not being familiar enough with Taiwan to offer anything more specific, and was met with a slightly disdainful expression which stayed fixed on his face for the long moment it took me to say "Oh, I get it. Nobody goes to Taiwan for pleasure, right?" and got the nod he had been waiting to give. I asked what the case was about and if he could tell me. He responded by asking if I was familiar with an insider trading case involving a sort of mogul whose last name

was Lee and I excitedly asked “Lee? You’ve got Lee?” to be met with the response of ‘I wish I had Lee. My guy’s innocent!’”

To round out the portrait, Marty is also an extremely generous person, to our law school and many other worthy charities, and does his giving anonymously, because that was the teaching of Maimonides, that the proper purpose of giving is not to polish one’s reputation, but do good humbly and not proudly. He also has a very fine sense of humor, as demonstrated by the following: at one time he decided to study the cello, as a diversion from his intense focus on his profession and also with the thought, when he became adequately proficient, of renting a hall and inviting his family, friends and legal associates to a recital. This plan never eventuated, but he did put in several years taking lessons and went for several summers to an upstate college where there a music camp was conducted, mostly for younger students but for a few more advanced in years. His one problem was that he’s always been an early riser, while the youngsters tended to stay up very late and the breakfast facilities didn’t open until 8 am or so, so he had to bring his own coffee maker, but still found it difficult to get to sleep because of the noise from the younger students before midnight and even after.

His ever resourceful wife tried to help solve this problem by purchasing for him a good-sized black sleep mask to take along with him. The night before she was going to drive him up to the college, he was packing and she was making a lunch for them in the kitchen. She heard his voice behind her and when she turned around he was standing there, wearing nothing but the sleep mask and beginning a verbatim recital of the introduction that followed the William Tell Overture at the beginning of each episode of “The Lone Ranger,” –pow pow (imitating two gun draw and shooting) Hi-ho, Silver! A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty ‘Hi-ho Silver—The Lone Ranger! Hi-ho Silver, away! With his faithful Indian companion, Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early West. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. The Lone Ranger rides again!’”

He also hosted the most nickel and dime poker game ever held on Riverside Drive once a month, with current and former lawyers from his firm, including judges and other alumni all mining the same vein of humor. Once, in a game of “Pass the Trash,” I was called. My response was “Eights,” Pass the Trash being a game that strongly resembles its name. Remember, we were the last two in the hand. The person who responded said “I hope that wasn’t plural.” When it was suggested

once that we occasionally have the game at the home of the source of the suggestion, on the East Side, one of us said “We haven’t even moved this game to the East side of this building, so you can forget about that.” Finally, and these, I will admit, were all litigators, one guy, before removing his coat and loosening his tie, told us that we had missed a scene in federal court that day where he was trying a securities case, that he hoped and prayed made it into the transcript.

“So I’m cross-examining this witness, and the judge asks me why I’m pursuing this line of questioning and I respond that if he knows the Consolidated Ute Supreme Court case, he’ll understand.” Marty immediately asked if this was the McWithers move and was waved off, to a general round of laughter. He continues “then the court reporter says ‘Ute?’ and I say back ‘yes, Ute,’ and the judge says ‘what is this? ‘My Cousin Vinnie?’

Do you get the picture?

VII. FRONT TOOTH

The first time my front tooth died was in tenth grade, when Richard Jones, the center on our football team, went up against me in gym class for a rebound. His elbows spread out like in a football block and the left one nailed me. I went up in the air for a couple of seconds—I weighed 150 then and stood 6 foot 3, so I was easily airborne. By the time I came down the tooth was dead, the nerve crushed by the fulcrum of his leap. It turned black in about a day and the dentist said I needed a crown, which would involve drilling my tooth out, implanting a metal post, and creating a ceramic “cap” replica of what had been there before. As I write this, the tooth pulses, even though the nerve has been “dead” for fifty years.

That cap worked thru college. When I came to New York, I played squash a lot with my college roommate. He’s more of a tennis player—tennis being an arm game and squash a wrist game, essentially. On Valentine’s Day he nicked me with a follow thru, just the merest touch of his racket on my tooth—I’m a mouth breather because of my broken nose. The impact popped the back of the cap off, although the front remained intact and in place for about five seconds. Then it fell on the white painted wooden floor of the squash court and fragmented. When I went home I rang the doorbell instead of using my key, so I could see my wife’s face when I said “Be My Valentine” with no front tooth.

Possibly there is something about holidays, because the next time was a Fourth of July barbecue I was hosting while I house-sat for the firm's senior partner—a little like a kid having a party when the parents are away. I was playing Frisbee on the sweep of grassy lawn alongside the brook and in front of the rose garden, and the party was going great and the beer and the wine were flowing. In this Arcadian New Jersey setting, the idea of a one fingered catch of the Frisbee became essential. It flipped off my finger and zinged me in—now you get it for sure—a certain exposed spot- Found it in the grass with the back missing.

Finally, came the Christmas when my daughter was three. I was sitting on the floor amidst the wrappings when she came running at me, total eye contact and Marilyn Monroe smile. I opened my arms to catch her and she tripped on the rug. In front of her, stretched out like a payload in a missile, was a Christmas book with heavy reinforced cardboard pages of exactly the type you would give only to a small child. Kaboom!

In two hours we were due a hundred miles away for dinner at my wife's sister's house. I shoved the tooth back in and kept opening presents, eating cookies, and tamping it further back in with my tongue. I sat up on the couch to collect some paper and boxes and sneezed. The whole room was full of unwrapped presents and their former adornments. My throat felt like I might have swallowed it, at least that's what my head told me. Twenty extra-long minutes later I found it sticking to a gift tag and headed off to the dentist who covers for my guy when he's away. Later, only two hours behind schedule, we sat down for Christmas dinner and drank a toast to family and resilience and to Richard Jones for his ultimately humorous elbow.

VIII. SOMEHOW, SOMEWHERE, THERE'S A PLACE FOR US

Well along in my professional career there came a period where I was doing a lot of business traveling that involved one or two night stays in the Southwest or West Coast or Hawaii, with the result that my sleep patterns, usually reliable, became interrupted and erratic to the point of confusion and dishevelment. I tried triptophan, a soporific that turkey contains, but then read something troubling about it that made me seek a substitute. Ambien had already proven to have troubling side effects, and Dramamine and antihistamines were desiccating with a sort of hangover effect, in that they lasted too long to get me rapidly back on my

regular workaday schedule. Then I read about melatonin, natural, over the counter and said to be the choice of airline pilots, an unpaid endorsement that resonated with me.

I tried it several times coming home on long flights and witnessed no untoward side effects. I had trouble falling asleep on planes even before the airlines reduced standard-sized seating to molecular dimensions, but using it on the home leg overcame that problem and the sleep on the plane compensated for the wakefulness on arrival, so things averaged out at an equilibrium I was comfortable with and that approximated my normal schedule.

After one trip home, however, I realized I had forgotten to take the pill on boarding, deep in thought as I was on a Phoenix Suns securitization that ultimately ran afoul of the secret playbook of the NBA Brass (a non-athletic team who wield enormous hidden power apparently exempt from outside authority of any kind). So, bedraggled and sleep-starved as I was on arrival at my apartment, I pulled the bottle out of my medicine cabinet and tossed one down. Surprised as I was by awaking at my normal East Coast weekend get-up time, I felt essentially refreshed, if a bit off center.

I went right into my routine, quietly closing the door on my sleeping beauty, putting the coffee machine to work and uncovering the cage and opening the door so that O'Neill, our pet cockatiel, could hop on my extended finger, then my shoulder, and assist in my floor exercises. O'Neill had that name because the sex of cockatiels, just as with infant parakeets, is virtually undeterminable. The food editor at the time for the Sunday Times was Molly O'Neill, while her beloved and much-admired brother Paul had installed himself upon his arrival from Cincinnati as the Yankees' right fielder, so we had the name problem covered. O'Neill could ask if you were a happy camper, and after 9/11 had learned to whistle the opening bars of "The Stars and Stripes Forever" in time for Christmas dinner, which involved my youngish kids and the near relations of my then Dear One, in dramatic fashion. He waited until we were sitting in the living room enjoying dessert, coffee and after-dinner drinks, then left his open cage, flew onto my extended, shoeless but not sockless right foot, and launched into it. Everyone stopped, amazed, and half the group said "What was that!?" upon which O'Neill trilled it a second time as if in response. The record will show that he never, in fact, did that trick again, but he certainly came through big time when the chips were down. More recently, he had expanded his repertoire

by marching up and down the foot of the bed while I did my morning RCAF set of exercises on the machine-made Astrakhan rug on the floor below it.

Today I did them on the living room rug while the coffee brewed, and he marched along the side of the large square coffee table, chipping in as he had learned to do. I counted out loud as I did the 40 pushups and sit-ups, although not when I did the same number of back and front leg lifts since those were pretty easy. Over a short time he had picked up some of the numbers, especially the longer words and most especially the ones toward the end of the sit-ups, the last exercise of the set. He would also anticipate some of his favorite numbers, which often came out “Seventeen, nineteen, twenty five, twenty six, thirty seven, thirty seven, thirty seven, thirty seven.” I puzzled over this for a while and concluded that as I approached the end they became somewhat more difficult, so my counting out loud assumed a more and more distressed and emphatic tone and volume. All this was also the case that morning, after which we proceeded to get the paper from the hall, pour some coffee, defrost, toast and butter a bagel, sesame today, and proceed to the dining table where I went to work on the paper, and ultimately the crossword, while O’Neil ravaged my bagel and flitted around the room, perching on the mantel, the book cases, his cage and sometimes the backs of other chairs.

Halfway through the puzzle, and not, I believe, due to anything in it, it became incumbent upon me to know the name of the capital of Sicily. This was, as I say, an internal command and not something I had read or been thinking about otherwise. I pursued the source of this—I have an unusual memory, especially for trivia. If it’s unimportant, I am almost sure to know it. A childhood full of moving almost every year, 17 schools before college and not many friends have meant that I will read anything. Encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries and newspapers constituted most of my available home material, along with six books of collected columns of the Herald Tribune’s long-time humorist (which I read at least five times each), my mother’s women’s magazines and, lastly, cereal boxes. What I came up with was to say to myself “Boy, this Metamucil is really kicking my butt!” I corrected myself quickly to melatonin, but the road to Sicily’s capital remained obscure. One of the few things I know for sure is that fugitive memories are like people of the opposite gender, in my case women, in that the more vigorously you pursue them the faster they will put distance between themselves and you. So I went back to the puzzle, comfortable with the idea that the answer lay after, although not in its successful completion by yours truly.

Saturday's puzzle is the hardest of the set, which proceeds directly from Monday. The Sunday one is big and has a theme, but can be worn down in the two and a half hours of Sunday pro football that is consumed with timeouts, commercials and halftime. This one had its quixotries, but not more than normal, so I was nearly done when I felt like thinking about the Friday night fights at St. Nick's Arena (which I now know is on St., Nicholas Avenue in central Harlem) that I used to watch with my Dad, who was a big fan of prize-fighting. That led me directly to memories of James Norris, president and CEO of the International Boxing Congress, or IBC, who was called to testify before Congress during the early days of network TV, in connection with match fixings and keeping certain fighters off the air unless they cut the IBC in on their earnings from the televised fights. He later went to prison, or at least was convicted, fined and lost his nifty monopoly for good, speaking ironically, at which I chuckled to myself, when the name Whitey Bimstein came to me.

Whitey was a famous cut man, of indeterminate age, in the realm of boxing, a master of mixtures which could staunch the bleeding and let his combatant continue without disqualification. He was also noticeable on the screen because of his shock of white or ash blond hair—they looked the same from our vantage point on the couch, and from his constant shaking of several stoppered bottles of liquid toward the end of the later rounds of fights. Then I sat up in my chair, causing the stretching that occasioned on my hamstrings because my feet were on the dining table, to put them on the floor—the feet, that is. I had just remembered the name of Whitey's co-conspirator, a man whose face you only had to look at once to know his name was FRANKY PALERMO! So there it was. The last two clues of the puzzle would be easily plugged in when I got back around to them, but it was time for two things. First, to celebrate the success of my stratagem appropriately, and second to figure out why it had taken such a long and circuitous route to track my quarry to its lair. The second was more compelling, especially since the melatonin had put me into such an obsessive-compulsive state.

After just the right amount of thinking and analysis, I concluded that the Palermo synapse in my memory had been appropriated at an early age by the fight game and the pleasant memories of watching such an odd, to me, scene as those boxing matches, on a screen which showed the activity but had no real capacity to portray the power of the punches or the sweat flying off the bodies and faces of the contestants, much less the blood drops spattering the canvas and the spectators. To learn about Sicily and its capital years later was nothing more than a footnote

to my close-up, but nevertheless distant, experience, a fairy tale but with real people, that played in our living room once a week.

Celebration remaining, and time having passed, I refreshed my own mug, poured a hot new one for the lady in waiting, and took it and the newspaper into the bedroom to find her having just awakened and happy to see me. In a while, O'Neill fluttered in and perched comfortably along the top and side of a picture frame on the slice of wall between the glass doors to our terrace and the bay windows around the seating area, with its view on this bright morning of the Hudson all the way across to the Bayonne Bridge--which glowed at night with a semicircle of emerald lights along the arch it was hung from.

Saturday newspapers can be quickly read, when there is other business to be done and a home-coming to be celebrated, and one thing led, as it often does, to another. So before long, the act of love was well under way when I heard a brief beating of wings and then felt the warm breath of the tiny bird deep between my legs, shouting "Thirty seven, thirty seven, thirty seven, thirty seven, thirty seven...."

X. ROYALTY IN HIGH RELIEF

My daughter spent the summer after college graduation on the beaches of various Aegean islands with her Italian boyfriend—nude beaches, as it would seem. In mid-August they found a rocky spare reachable only by ferry, and unpopulated because there was no fresh water there. Sweating thru every pore, they proceeded down one morning from the hillside campsite where they'd slept to an unoccupied stretch of gorgeous beach. Emerging from their refreshing dip, suit-less in the extreme, they noticed a giant yacht, with a sailboat winched up on its stern and various dinghies in tow. They also observed a host of Royale Marines buzz ashore in several black rubber, motorized craft and proceed to set up cabanas, deck chairs, an open tent with several tables, and coolers obviously meant to hold liquid and solid refreshments. The next wave then landed, including the personages of Her Majesty the Queen, Princes Philip, Charles, William and Harry and associated young lovelies in bikinis, not including the then C. P. Bowles.

My daughter and her boyfriend stayed on their end of the beach, the Royals on theirs, but one of the rubber boats soon arrived with two Royal Marines in it and one hopped out with a small canvas bag. "You know who that is, I suppose?" he

asked and/or stated and they nodded, allowing him to remark that the Family gets very little privacy and would appreciate their displacing themselves around that point over there so as to cease being visible, with the annoying part being unspoken but clearly implied. He then handed them the bag, saying “Compliments of Her Majesty,” headed back to his boat and on to the Royal encampment. They peered inside (pun intended) and saw two cold, frosty Heinekens with the caps removed therefrom, noted that the bag had no logo on it, and trundled off as requested.

At the time I learned of this, I was cultivating an English client who owned water parks in the US and a chain of beauty establishments selling his personal brand of associated products in Southeast Asia. He was a good friend of President Reagan, lived in LA and stayed at the St. Regis when in New York. One day I was enjoying lunch in his suite and decided to entertain him with my daughter’s story. As an eternal embellisher, I decided to embroider the tale by turning those two bottles into a six-pack, but he stopped me in mid-sentence to observe that I must be making that part up since that many beers were entirely beyond that family’s capacity for generosity. So I confessed error and have stuck ever since to the naked truth, at least in that case.

XII. SHE LAUGHED

Every block around Central Park has its catalogue of rich and famous and powerful. Ours had Mr. Spock, and across the way Margaret Mead in her turret at the Museum of Natural History, plus two future publishers of the NY Times, father and then 8 year old son, and the guy who wrote both “Coke is It,” AND “Join the Pepsi Generation,” together with the leading stock analyst of his generation in the realm of Big Pharma-- even before it was known by that sobriquet-- but whose name shall remain nameless in case the statute of limitations hasn’t expired in all jurisdictions-- although let us say that he was never an insider, so more likely than not he was simply prescient but never corrupt (and his identity will be confined herein to the information that his mother after divorcing his father lived over and often frequented the Cedar Bar which during its heyday was the watering hole of Pollack, Larry Rivers, Rauschenberg, Johns, Morris Louis or Louis Morris (whatever his name was), Baselitz and deKooning-- and his second earliest memories involve them pounding on his mother’s front door well after midnight with their shoes and howling her name and nicknames, now long interred with their genius. Erica Jong (“Fear of Flying” and its legendarily zipless fuck) lived two doors down and my

daughter's best friend's father was an 8th generation Harvard alum who worked for the Rockefellers and whose family owned the piece of turf where the Battle of Concord (O'er the rude bridge that arched the flood/where once the embattle farmers stood/blah blah blah blah blah/ and fired the shot heard round the world) was fought WHEN it was fought. We also featured the cellist in the world's greatest string quartet at that time. But mostly we were the block where they blew up the balloons for what N'Yorkers call "The Macy's Day Parade," and you could hear the bullhorns call out at 3 in the morning "More helium for Woody Woodpecker please, on the double."

Despite all the surrounding celebrity, the kids in the building were subject to the usual formless fears and baseless torments, plus some real ones not known or discussed otherwise than en famille. In my daughter's case my first experience with being regarded as the greatest dad in the world arose when she was just 4 and came into our bedroom at 3 am screaming that the bees were attacking her eyes and they wouldn't go away. She was holding her hands over them as she cried, and I told her to open them. Ipso facto, the bees went away, and she hugged me for all she was worth, telling me I had saved her, and more along that line, then came to bed between us, awaking with a version of the same smile that had greeted the disappearance of the bees, and all was good until another fright came into being and I told her mom that it was her turn to be the dragon slayer or whatever might be called for. Later, when HBO showed up, bringing us "Gallipoli" with the good Mel Gibson rushing into the Turkish machine gun fire never to be seen again while she was lying between us late in her fifth year and we were thereby nearly condemned to death for allowing her to have to watch that agonizing, heartbreaking scene of the useless, insane death of an entire regiment of Aussie soldiers due to Winston Churchill's ambition. We felt even guiltier than Churchill must have felt at the time, which now evokes a wish that we and she had been gifted with the knowledge of what a creep and scoundrel he became as his actual self in the not too distant future.

But the jewel in the crown of our place of residence was someone no one has ever heard of, that I know or have met, but that I also became privileged to know, one way and another. His name was Ralph Shikes, and he and his wife Ruth lived in the penthouse above us in a building that was a hollow square, abutting the New York Historical Society standing on the corner of 77th and CPW, with the block C shaped part on the southeast opposite the museum and the I shaped, most Westerly part accessed by another door, thereby closing the square. When he had our obligatory

fire while remodeling the kitchen, before my daughter was born, my wife skibbled, as she termed it, through the flames and ran upstairs three flights to find refuge with the Shikes, who were substantially older (we were quite young For our ages!), and infinitely more gracious and accommodating, so that we became friends by virtue of having been burnt out on their watch and thus invited to the book party Ralph's publisher threw for him at their apartment when his majestic catalogue raisonne of Pissarro, in many ways the father of the Impressionist movement, was published.

Ralph was old Harvard at its best. Where the money came from never arose in conversation, not need it have. He could remember from his very early teens seeing the Hooverilles established on the north side of Central Park South behind the wall and twenty foot drop to the soil. And when he majored in art in college one of the first things he did was collect, and then put out a book of black and white engravings, drawings and prints by radical artists, politically engaged geniuses like Hogarth, Daumier, Goya, Kollwitz, Max Beckmann and Otto Dix called "The Indignant Eye," which was his eye engaged with the injustice, cruelty and hypocrisy that fueled most of the wars of the last several centuries, if not all before as well. It was both the forerunner and the standard against which all the future work in this realm was regarded and measured.

In the midst of his research and assemblage of the material necessary for his Pissarro book, Ralph learned, because he was nothing if not in the loop as to these issues, that the painter's heirs had decided they were short of money since so few paintings had come down to them in the course of time. Pissarro was a hard-core left wing socialist, but managed not only to gather around him in a suburb not far from Paris a group of phenomenal artistic talents whose sympathies lay not with their clients but with the humble subjects of their work, but to produce the work necessary to fund the gathering and rearing of a good-sized family while he was at his social mission as well. It was not by accident that Ralph had homed in on Camille Pissarro as his pole star and ego ideal.

The conclusion of those children, two or three generations removed from their wellspring, was to gather together for auction all of the letters that had been received by their own forebears from the artist and have them auctioned off in a small number of lots, not too many and not too few, carefully constructed like one of his masterwork, so that the essence of his thought was parceled across those lots with an effort at equivalence of value.

Ralph flew to Paris and bought them all, his manifest determination most probably shoving aside other bidders-- dealers, connoisseurs, speculators-- so that the letters could be combined with those already archived institutionally and preserved for scholars and the public at large, including Ralph's own work to the extent he would draw on and incorporate them in his analysis and depiction.

The year after the book came out, I was walking my daughter back from a birthday party on the west side of Columbus Avenue onto our home block. She had a bag of goodies, of course, which I was carrying, of course, and in the hand that was not held in mine, she had a yellow balloon filled with helium. As we got about 5 or 6 steps onto our side of the avenue, the balloon popped with a noise loud enough to be heard, despite the buses and other traffic that constantly permeated the air there. When she first went off to summer camp, she wrote us that it was hard to get to sleep at night because of the absence of cabs honking and the sirens of police, ambulances and fireman, not to mention the subterranean roar of the A train in the midst of its enormous voyage from 59th to 125th, the longest subway run in all of New York City.

I did the natural thing, which was to drop down on my knees and hug her, comfort her for her loss, hold her tight to keep her from crying. At just that moment I heard Ralph's voice, less than 10 feet away, calling my name sharply. As I wrapped my arms around her, I looked back at him. He was pointing upward, at the past in a sense, and shouting to me "Mike! She laughed! She laughed!" Which was all we needed to know.

XIII. SAME OLD SAME OLD?

One of the most intimate, in some ways but often not in others, ways in which the small world truism applies occurs when you meet someone who shares your name, which has happened twice to me in a fairly long lifetime.

There was a bar named O'Lunney's on 2nd Avenue near 48th Street in Manhattan, near the UN, which had live music every Friday and Saturday and a decent-sized dance floor. The atmosphere was energetic and cheerful-- a lot of young ladies from abroad and many from the City as well were to be found there, and the band played a kind of Texas Tornadoes song list, with some Motown thrown in, all of

which was easy to dance to. In short, it was a Happy Hunting Ground in the best sense of the phrase, and I spent many happy nights there over several years.

Most of the time the band was headed by Alger Mitchell, a good looking typical front-man guitar player, tall and cowboy lean. Brian Slawson, the drummer, had been nominated for a Grammy based on his solo version of "The Well-Tempered Clavier" played on wood blocks with felt covered hammers and entitled "Bach on Wood." But the point of this story is the keyboard man, an even-tempered young guy who played piano and the synthesizer and had the same name as me except for having a double R in his last name where I make do with a single, which coincidentally is wise advice for long sojourns in a bar like that.

I was there often enough to get friendly with the band, all young, cheerful and optimistic except for the bass player, who was from a generation closer to mine and always hung out on the periphery when the band took five and headed out for a smoke of whatever and a beer. I bought some beers for them over time and did some small time tipping. A halfway thoughtful guy will soon recognize this as the way to a band's heart, which connects with many a girl's heart because during the breaks there were always more girls than could be counted, which meant more than there would be band members, and with me being an unofficial mascot who might be taken for their manager if you didn't follow up your surmise with a conformational question, it was ground zero for opportunity.

A serious NYC groupie during the Golden Age of the Fillmore East, Max's Kansas City, CBGB's and the like told me that the well-established groupie hierarchy worked out so that the drummer always got last pick, after the other band members had made their selections. Brian was actually the member I had the most interesting conversations with. I had never paid much attention to anything but lyrics and guitar riffs, while he knew a lot about music and liked to expound. Also, being with Brian meant that I was now the default low man on the totem pole, if you know which pole I mean. Brian later got a job which lasted several years with the road company of "Hair" or "Cats," (if you think about it, "Cats" was "Hair" with fur in any event). I got a postcard of the Washington Monument from him that mentioned his having smoked some crack with Mayor Berry, but after that we lost touch. Michael Parrish disappeared over one August when the city was shut down and when I asked about him everyone said he'd gone down to Nashville to try his hand as a studio musician there.

About a decade later I had settled down, bought a co-op and taken up golf. It was kind of expected at my workplace, and was a good way to do business on Wall Street, which had become my fate. My game not being all that good, I tried to get in some practice at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx near the Yonkers city line, one of the two oldest public courses in the USA, and not a bad taxi ride when the fares still stopped in the low two digits. It was also accessible by subway, so I decided to try that, made a tee time over the phone because I did not and still do not trust machines to look after me honestly and accurately. Most of us know that nowadays but refuse to admit it. I still call and talk to a person before I ever go out to play, which has held confusion and error to virtually nil.

But on the first ride out, which I saved for a weekday I was able to play hooky on, I discovered that most of the way was local stops, several hundred of them it felt like, and then a good 20 minute hike, toting my clubs, to the pro shop. Not surprisingly, I missed my tee time by a good half hour but the starter told me he'd get me out pretty soon, so I should just hang around and pretend to be looking for a new golf shirt or to buy some balls until I heard my name called.

In about 10 minutes that happy event took place. At the same time I said yes, so did a younger man in jeans cut off below the knee, a yellow Hawaiian shirt and Panama hat, on the other side of the starter's desk. He had a very light bag with him, not outside on the bag rack, and the clubs were all actual wooden variety woods, an ensemble of irons of various vintages and a putter I recognized as the one my dad had used, not too much effect, when I'd caddied for him in junior high many years earlier. So we were to play together, two Mike Par(r)ishes, and were both young enough to walk the course. After we paid and were walking to the first tee I told him about our mutual namesake and a little about O'Lunney's and my having lost track of him when he went off to Nashville. He stopped dead, flexed his knees and put out his arms in a bear hug stance, saying with a manly giggle "It's me, Baby! I'm back!"

It was great. He hadn't changed much at all, so to meet my namesake again after all this time was a hoot and set a great tone for our round of golf involving two par fives built for Babe Ruth when he was with the Yankees. Most perfect of all, his game was no better than mine despite his age advantage. Afterwards he gave me a ride back to the Upper West Side, where naturally enough we both had taken root, first digging around in the back of his Ford Fairlane wagon amongst a cornucopia of paraphernalia to favor me with a copy of his one record so far.

“Automobility” was selling modestly but continually and he would be going back to Nashville once he finished a couple more songs for the next one. I looked at the CD, thanked him and laughed out loud on our way out of the Bronx and into what passes in New York City for civilization, when I saw that the lead song was one I remember him playing with the band at O’Lunney’s—“Psychedelic Cowboy, Rasta Muslim, working on his PhD/ studyin’ Appalachian strummin,’ African drummin’ and Tantic Musicology.” We shared a warm goodbye outside my co-op building and I never saw him again. You know a happy ending when you run smack dab into one like we did, and you let it be.

.....

Sometime after that I returned to the 40th anniversary celebration of the founding of my high school in Northern Virginia, McLean High in Fairfax County. When we moved there my father was finishing 30 years in the US Army. He started by training infantry troops for the Pacific Theater, leading a rifle company in hand to hand combat in the Philippines and MacArthur’s island campaign, 7 years in Germany tracking down Nazis in hiding, physically and identity-wise, and some other stops. McLean was the first place I ever lived more than eighteen months, and was the only high school other than Fairfax High, in the town which was the county capital. Now there are about a dozen high schools, and possibly more. McLean was mostly farmland, plus split level and ranch single family developments. Along the Potomac sat individual high-end manor houses, some of which dated back before the Civil War and others built for river views in the flat roofed International or Bauhaus styles. While there, I raked leaves and split logs for dating money on the well-forested property of Stuart Udall, JFK’s Secretary of the Interior from the famous Western family of conservationists and political figures—probably the first modern mansion set deep in the woods that I had ever encountered.

McLean High’s territory on the more southerly side was an area known as Pimmit Hills that dated from the previous century. Working class and artisan families had been there for decades, and were typically blue collar and classically Southern. In the beginning, while the housing developments started springing up closer to the Potomac, that stock provided the school with three or four very successful years of football, basketball and baseball teams and championships, plus several pro athletes. Some of them had classic, Faulknerian names like Cline Muttsersbaugh,

Cantwell Muckenfuss and Reid Thrasher, but over time those teams became more mediocre while the Chess Team I was on won the Northern Virginia Championship. Of the top 10 kids in my class, 8 became full professors at substantial universities, one is at the National Archives where she is in charge of the Holocaust section, and then there was me, with two Ivy degrees and not a molecule of scholarly temperament in the whole of my body or brain.

It rapidly became the CIA high school as nearby Langley saw the new headquarters come into existence there. Very few students went off to boarding school, but there was an upper crust of kids whose families lived nearer the river or in a few developments dating from shortly after the Depression, when the government started morphing toward its present form. Our most famous grad was Richard (Ricky) Ames, the CIA traitor in later life who was responsible for the deaths of numerous undercover agents in the USSR, whose father was a senior officer at "The Company," whose mother was chair of our English Department and whose older sister was Head Cheerleader and Homecoming Queen. I dated a girl in my class whose dad was one of the highest-up people in the agency and, since this is a story of namesakes, I can sneak in the story of how she got her own name. She arrived back from Germany halfway thru our junior year. Her dad had been in the OSS during WW II-- the "Wild Bill" Donovan days before Allen Dulles was commissioned to turn that into the CIA.

She was born in 1943 on November 11, the height of the war and patriotic fever, and her dad was in uniform but stateside. As a hyper-traditionalist and very much devoted to her lovely and elegant mother, he declared, for reasons apparently based on the fact that she would be the only natural child they would ever have, that her name should be the same as her mother's but with the word "Junior" appended to it. They were unable to settle this disagreement, until two days after the birth, when her father came to her mother's hospital room and said he was on his way to the maternity office in the hospital to sign the certificate and specify the name. In those days new mothers were confined to bed for a week or more and had no mobility whatsoever outside of their rooms. He knew he had her between a rock and a hard place, which he made ultimately clear by saying that if she didn't agree to his wishes, this only daughter would be certified, christened and known for the rest of her life as "Armisticia," in honor of her birth, and of the thousands of Americans who had died in the First World War and had and would die in the one still far from conclusion and uncertain in its result.

So she agreed, and that was that. But in the end, it worked out all right and the Junior never proved to be a problem. Many girls share their own mother's name, so ultimately everyone assumed that pendant abbreviation was some kind of typo or scrivener's error, and ultimately it went the way of the hoop skirt and button shoes.

In our era, the kids on their way to institutions of higher learning all followed the dress code and haircuts of the Ivy League and the Seven Sisters women's colleges plus Sweetbriar, Newton College of the Sacred Heart, Rosemont and other properly named places for proper young ladies. We wore button down shirts and khakis, although some of the khakis had buckles in the back between the beltline and the pockets, some adjustable, some just for show, and called "Heiny Binders." Future geeks and dweebs also wore plastic pocket protectors to hold the multi-colored pens they would use in math and science classes. The guys who were about to conclude their formal educations wore "Bomber" loafers with exaggeratedly thick black soles, or cowboy boots or work boots like construction laborers sport, and "pegged pants," which were tight fitting and became narrower as they reached the shoe tops. They also used a ton of hair oil and grease, and combed their hair back along the sides, with a curl like Elvis had, arching down from the middle of their foreheads and a "DA," or Ducks' Ass jointure at the back.

The 40th Reunion was held at a Four Seasons Hotel in Tysons' Corners, now a large mid-rise complex of Pentagon and military contractors, consultants and computer specialists with a shopping center consisting of the likes of Nordstrom, Saks, Needless Markup (as it was called), and the Mark Crosses, Cross Pens and Gucci Gulch loafer purveyors who greatly post-dated our own era. Nearby you could find the first Giant Food Store elite location, a big chain in the DC area, whose gourmet and imported food sections had become larger than the "normal" grocery store.

In our day, Route 123, aka Chain Bridge Road (to the Potomac and DC) was a two lane, very straight, highway obviously built by military engineers, as shown by its undeviating straightness. There was a TV antenna for a local, non-network station and a one story cinder block building where you could bring your cattle or the deer and game birds you had shot, to be butchered, individually wrapped and stowed in the 12 foot horizontal freezers many families kept in their garages. We also knew very well about the straightness of the highway because Chain Bridge, along with similarly designed and constructed Georgetown Pike (from DC up to Great Falls farther north and also quite undeveloped) were originally designed, back many

years previous, to expedite military traffic in general but especially, if you can imagine this, to promptly repel invasions.

So what we did on weekends was go on double dates to athletic events, followed by sock hops in the gyms, then find places to park for an hour or two along gravel roads leading to utility substations back in the high brush, drop the girls at one or both of their homes, and finally head out for Chain Bridge or Georgetown Pike to see if your dad's Bel Air Chevy with its V-8 engine, once the largest selling car in US history, could break 100 miles per hour, and mostly it could. It took two to pull this off, one to hold the wheel steady and push the gas pedal, and the other to watch the speedometer and shout when the deed was done, since, as dumb as we were, we knew better than to try that all on our own.

Going into the dinner, it was refreshing to see not only a few recognizable faces, but to observe that the DA's (even if gray or graying), pegged pants, and sport coats with two vents in the back had held their own, as had the fancy hairdos that owed more to Scarlett O'Hara than to Vogue. Turtlenecks, possibly turtleneck tops without bodies or sleeves, abounded in certain segments of the alumni body. We were seated at tables were organized in five year segments. The school had been set up with varsity sports reserved for grades 10-12 and the 7th and 8th graders in a separate part of the facility. This permitted me to meet my other namesake, as he came and stood behind the empty chair next to me and asked if someone was sitting there, permitting me to give my stock answer of "You are," which always gets a smile and establishes a warmth at the beginning that almost never fails to set a good tone.

I stood up and we shook hands. Then we looked at our name tags and chuckled. He was actually 5 years younger, so we had never shared any space, much less classes or sports. He pointed a finger at me and said "Your phone number was E

ELmwood 6-4454" as we sat down. I laughed and nodded, then asked him why he would know and remember a thing like that. It was simple, he told me, his father's name was John, just like my dad's, and unlike my keyboard playing namesake, his family also did without the second R in Par(r)ish. But his father's middle initial was C, for Charles, while mine was M, for Mitchell, and thus earlier in the phone directory. Since my father was an Army lifer who had many friends and acquaintances having business with the Defense Department and many, many other government agencies and entities, they would get five or six calls a week, always after ten thirty at night, placed by one or more of those friends from bars

or officers' or NCO clubs which were closing very soon, and who had been more interested in addressing that dimension of their evening they were about to conclude than remembering to arrange somewhere for themselves to sleep like a room at a BOQ (Bachelor Officers' Quarters) at one of the many military establishments in and around Washington.

His father quickly tired of the late night (for school-aged kids and probably for parents in those days before Jack Paar and Steve Allen created the late night talk show on TV). He had gotten my family's phone number and taped up a piece of paper next to the phone—almost no one had two phones even then—bearing these words-- "Do you have a pen or pencil and something to write on? PAUSE. OK. The number you want is Elmwood 6-4454. Let me repeat that. REPEAT. OK. Good luck and please don't call again. That's all you need. Good luck and good night."

That was such a well-designed message, and the information, in those days before area codes, was so succinct, that no one ever called back, just as I have never seen or heard from him again. Still, I was glad to learn a little bit more about my family and the incredibly separate and secret life my father led, since I was never awake when the calls came in. We actually had two phones, one paid for by the military and in my parents' bedroom, since my father's security clearance was "COSMIC TOP SECRET" and his job was catching Russian spies, so he had to be always on call and reachable.

XIV. BROTHER ACT

Families of extremely successful siblings have always been a topic of interest for me—take Whitey Bolger, New England crime kingpin, and his brother Bill, who was the head of the Massachusetts legislature; Bruce (a legend on Wall Street nicknamed "Bid 'em up Bruce") and Wendy (Pulitzer-prize winning playwright) Wasserstein; Rahm Emmanuel (Obama Chief of Staff and Mayor of Chicago) and his brothers Ari (Big time Hollywood agent and model for the "Entourage" series on HBO) and Ezekiel (leading bioethicist and advisor to the Obama administration on health policy); and the Breyer brothers (Stephen of the Supreme Court and his sibling, who is probably the most widely admired living Federal judge not on the Supreme Court). To name a few.

What is it that happened there, in their families, to cause more than one child to rise to special achievement and recognition? The Harbaughs, Jim and John, coached against each other in a Super Bowl, but anyone who put his money on the younger of the two, presumably due to his All-American status versus his brother's lesser success on the field, would have been better off eating it—those rivalries are done, once and for all, at an early age, and even though that Super Bowl came down to the last play, the older brother won, as he had done in one on one situations throughout their lives. Jonas Salk of the polio vaccine and his brother Lee, who revolutionized dealing with infants and whose wisdom I was fortunate enough to receive as a young father, are another pair with happier results for mankind. Shirley McLaine and Warren Beatty? What better pair on which to rest my case?

But not yet. Athletic dynasties abound, as in DiMaggio, Griffey, Fielder (both great long ball specialists, perfectly enough), Norton (dad should have gotten the decision over Ali, while son won numerous Super Bowls and made a career in NFL coaching) and the endless skein of Boones in baseball, unto the third generation. Intelligence and quick twitch muscle reflexes undoubtedly play central parts in their respective domains, and some doubt must exist respecting any single answer to this question, although that still doesn't make it unworthy of investigation and analysis.

It is hard in this age to imagine, but many prosperous parents these days purport to scheme up some version of this for their offspring, although a more longstanding and enduring family culture will often be at the heart of this unusual phenomenon. Take the Adams family, as in John, Quincy, Francis Adams, Henry Adams and more, along a number of generations, or the James family, where Alice, Henry and William—at different times, but nevertheless—were acclaimed as revolutionary and insightful geniuses. As in any other derby, many may answer the call to the post, especially in this new Gilded Age of billionaires and increasing segregation by economic status and educational credentials. As the first in my own family to graduate college, I cannot assert a hereditary insight into how such things occur, although I did have a son who got into Yale and a daughter who taught me what Phi Beta Kappa was.

My closest encounter with any such involved two brothers who practiced law with two substantial Wall Street law firms, now no longer extant, but at one time occupying extremely high floors in One Chase Manhattan Plaza. That building was the cornerstone of Wall Street's architectural and commercial revival when the

juice had started flowing up into Midtown-- the similarity of it to the UN Secretariat signaled that it unmistakably by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (which sounds like a law firm, on top of everything else). That building at one time was the address of 7 of the top 15 Establishment law firms in the city. There may well have been another set of brothers comparable to those two within that mother lode of intelligence and breeding but, to paraphrase the one and only Bartleby the Scrivener, I prefer to think not.

Background first—parents were both attorneys, father a judge in Manhattan, and mother one of the earliest female members of the New York Bar. The two sons were not close in age, but followed similar paths, New York private schools, New England prep schools, Yale or Harvard, then Yale Law School. But there the similarities end.

Brother A, let's call him Reginald A, because in his bios his "nickname" is Reginald A. The Getty Archive's only image of him shows him in a three piece suit and smoking a long-stemmed brier pipe, smiling behind his horn-rimmed glasses. His office, on the 55th floor of One Chase, looked north and was very spare. He faced away from the nearby back window in front of the window, behind which lay a huge low rise gap of housing and then the Empire State, Chrysler and Rockefeller Center buildings. Plus, you get the sense you are looking down on that spectacular panoply, in front of which, dramatically backlit, he sits. The setting consists of a large Persian rug in red, yellow, brown and some black accents, which happen to be the same colors that adorn the backs of the law books occupying floor-to-ceiling sets of bookshelves on each south/north wall, ending in the window. Anyone involved in law recognizes them immediately as the Federal Reporter series, of which there are a lot of volumes, containing all the Federal cases of the era, and there are a lot of them in unbroken ranks. The desk has no drawers except perhaps a central one, so you can continue to see the rug and his legs as he sits waiting for you. No papers can be seen, even in front of him.

He welcomes you, bids you sit in one of the visitors' chairs on the south side of the desk, which match the desk itself, and asks you if you know anything about him. You've done your homework, so you know that at a young age he was made the head of a prominent branch of the Justice Department and profiled in Fortune Magazine with a photograph of him standing on the steps of the Supreme Court. He congratulates you on your answer, which feels in an odd way like a verbalized

rendition of a pat on your own back, then pulls out what can only be your resume and transcript from a folder on his blotter. A few questions follow.

He asks if you know a certain fellow student, a year ahead of you, who clerked at his firm the year before and was second in his class and the law school all three of you attended. You know the name, but nothing more. He leans forward, repeats the other student's class standing, and says what a pleasure, and indeed almost a privilege it had been to work with that young fellow, and how delightful that he would be returning after graduation to keep working together with your host. You nod and smile. He tells you about the great trip they took to Calgary on a case last summer, and how terrific it was to be able to spend not only a working day, but a social evening, with someone possessing an intellect that put him second in his law school class.

Then comes the curve ball, a question asking if you haven't been wishing that you yourself were second in your class, considering what a great career ahead of you that would betoken. You smile again, nod and say you guess so. He snorts, saying only "Yes, I would think you would, wouldn't you. Too bad it's not the case, though, isn't it? Too bad." He looks around the room as if suspecting that someone has violated the prohibition on the invisible "No Farting" sign and pushes his intercom button while picking up the phone to convey a message to the individual at the other end that he thinks we're done, and would she please summon the recruiting coordinator. You hope momentarily that when she comes in he will rip off her blouse, pull a cat o' nine tails out of that middle drawer and flog the bejesus out of her while you get to see her breasts bounce around. This, given your youth, starts to provide you the beginning of an untoward chubby down in the Delta, and you try with only moderate success to stifle a snort, which he doesn't respond to-- because, in the most important sense of things, you are no longer there to him.

I did take a job with another firm in the building on a slightly lower floor, and spent some time on the Upper East Side visiting friends, so I continued to see Reginald A from time to time. He always wore a black bowler hat and generally carried an umbrella. I would smile to him in a friendly way because I saw that he didn't like it-- he didn't know who I was, most likely because no one he didn't know should have any right whatsoever to smile his way, and he would never demean himself to ask the appropriate question, so he was stuck. On the UES, I walked down the block in the evening past his brownstone on a fair number of occasions. At least a good deal more often than not, he could be seen, spotlighted by his large desk

lamp, poring over some presumably legal papers with pen in hand in the central window of the parlor floor. As the saying goes, that was all I knew and and all I needed to.

Completely by chance however, I did go to work for the firm where his somewhat younger brother was a partner. Since I accepted their offer of permanent employment after the summer try-out, and stayed there a good while, I spent a good deal more time with that one. On only one occasion, after I'd become a partner there, I did find myself accompanying the younger one to lunch when the older one hopped on our elevator in the Citicorp building just before the doors closed. They nodded to each other, standing side by side and never turning to face each other as we went to the 17th floor private club that was obviously the destination of all concerned. On the way up my partner said "How's she taking it?" A somber moment passed, then the emptiness was filled by a response of "Well enough, under the circumstances," with a rejoinder of "Has to be pretty tough," and finally "Well, you know." We then got off and parted ways without more. I learned upon asking that this had involved the recent death of a family housecat, and the subject more or less changed itself.

Richard, the younger brother, was known as Dick, and he seemed to have inherited all the humor that had passed down to his generation. He drove a fire engine red Mercedes station wagon, 60's style full length, not the SUV version, and surely the only such ever registered in Manhattan. He was also wont to tell stories like about how he and his wife were invited to a Halloween party, to come dressed as a famous couple, and therefore acquired lab coats from a physician whose offices were on the ground floor of their Madison Avenue residence, and went as Masters and Johnson. A good start, I thought. A day I treasure the memory of occurred about three years into my tenure there when the 70's were getting some wind in their sails as to fashion, even on Wall Street. Based on considerable observation, I concluded two things that changed my life. First, I could wear Italian loafers instead of tie shoes, although I eschewed Gucci's as too obvious and common. Bally's, but only the Italian ones, not the Swiss version because you wanted a friendly formality to your shoes and not a haughty look. Equally as important, because I have always had unruly hair that required an oil truck's worth of hair glue to keep in place, I could now get away with just washing, drying and slightly toweling my hair, a development most notoriously indicated by the phenomenal popularity of a Broadway musical on the subject with a one word title which was not "Cats" or "Evita." Those came rather later. It was a bit of a coming out party without any

sexual innuendo, and I think I learned to relax somewhat, as well as come across a little more forcefully than I had previously dared to do.

One morning as I walked past the receptionist, looking straight ahead at a vision of the Statue of Liberty sitting as it seemed on a carpet of clouds with nothing around it visible, a breathtaking view some version of which greeted me every working day, I heard Dick call me in. Since my office was right next door, I dumped my coat and briefcase and bounced into one of the upholstered chairs across from where he sat. Thinking maybe we had just gotten a new deal he might want me to work on, I was getting pumped up, but then he assumed a serious look and his usual voice dropped at least an octave.

“Mike,” he said. “There’s something we need to talk about.” He folded his hands and leaned forward. He had been a Federal prosecutor before joining the firm, and he knew how to play the role convincingly. My blood went cold as I leaned toward him and asked, with all the newly developed forcefulness I could call upon, what that might be. “It’s a very big day for you,” he said, pausing, “because today is the day you decide whether you’re going to become part of the mail room staff, or go across the street into the basement and get yourself a fucking haircut, whether you think you need one or not.” It was an odd feeling. In one moment the earth had opened up to consume me, never to be seen or heard from again, and in the next we were in a Punch and Judy show with Dick as the puppet master. But what wouldn’t go away was the never to be forgotten realization that I was being watched, with people discussing my behavior and appearance, and that would always be there, no matter how free and easy I might want to feel. I might decide to do X, Y or Z, based on what I saw and gleaned, but in the future, before I took any steps, I would need to check it with someone “in the know,” which had never, at any of the multitude of places I had lived in or been involved with, been me. I had forgotten to put two and two together, and left myself exposed. Bless Dick for having made it funny, but within his humorous presentation was an arrow pointing in the direction of conformity that was important to attend to.

In the end, that proved not to have been such a horrible experience, because I did tend to my knitting and watch my back meanwhile, and so was promoted and rewarded to a satisfying degree. A side benefit of this proved to be the arrival of a new, and newly single, female attorney and the arrival of love in the first degree at our annual Christmas party, at which the entertainment was a friend of the office manager who had a portable keyboard and as I recall could only play “Proud Mary,”

although that cannot possibly have been true. The romance caught flame, the matter was discussed in the partnership, and as in all law firm decisions a conclusion was reached based purely on the economics. She had been a star student for a partner who'd just done a sabbatical to teach at a very good law school, and was expected to be highly productive as one of our lawyers, so all other issues aside, she could stay and there was nothing else to talk about. The marriage was allowed to flower into in status quo.

Dick was a popular partner--he had no airs and was simplicity itself, in an adequately complicated way, plus he frequently invited associate lawyers to the lunch club the firm subsidized, and was a good teacher with a sense of humor. I learned that again in due time. She had just found out she was pregnant, and had worked late into the night on a public offering at the financial printer's establishment on a deal with Dick. The deal was done, as was her part, so she pleaded fatigue and he gave her the day off.

As I left for work that morning, a tile man Dick had recommended to us when we admired the work on his apartment's terrace arrived to lay down some terra cotta tile in the apartment we had just bought, which was of late '20's vintage and had a stunning view of Central Park and the Museum of Natural History. But it also contained blue and yellow patterned linoleum in the kitchen and pantry that dated from the building's opening. His assistant let some ash from his cigarette fall into the 5 gallon can of "mastic," i.e. adhesive to bond the tile to the cement floor. The can went off like napalm, torching the entire back half of the apartment and my wife went dashing thru the flames out the service entrance, finding refuge with a neighbor upstairs and called me, within a minute of the time I sat down in my desk chair, to tell me the story.

The rest of the day was consumed with returning home and coping with the disaster. Inside the sturdy wooden cabinets in the kitchen, closed as they were, the fire had been hot enough that it melted the gold rims on our china so that the plates were now joined by drippings of gold linking each plate to the one underneath. When I later saw a can of the stuff, the warnings were in red and four times as long as the instructions for use. During the ensuing litigation we also learned about a case in which a workman was using it in a Long Island frame house and the heavier than air vapor exuding from the open can found its way to the pilot light on the clothes dryer in the next room, ignited and blew the man through the side of the house!

The next morning, on my way into my office, I stopped at Dick's door and thanked him for his recommendation of the tile layer, pausing to dwell at some length on the previous day's disaster and the new pregnancy's involvement therein. He put down his coffee, got up from behind his desk and shook my hand vigorously, saying with enthusiasm "She's pregnant! That's wonderful. Listen, I know a great obstetrician!"

So in this case, the question of siblings we began with may have a simple answer or none at all, but it certainly provides a question to ponder. With the father's status as a Manhattan federal judge, Dick's brother, six years older, was clearly assigned the responsibility of holding up the family reputation and carrying forth the legacy of substantial achievement. He managed to do it so thoroughly that Dick, having the type of freer temperament that is often the benefit of being a younger sibling, as well as a live brain and a substantial sense of self possession, concluded that he was off the hook-- though not so far off that he didn't put time in on government service and then become a partner in a first class law firm. The punchline, so to speak, is that his daughter went to Harvard and ended up as the head writer on a very long-running comedy series set in Manhattan. One might say that he had learned the lesson he later taught me, that it can be well enough to march to the sound of your own drummer, so long as the drummer is enough like the drummer the rest of the clan has come to feel at home with.

XV. A LOSER IS A LOSER

Three things that have been linked in New York City forever are sports, betting and crime. Now that the Supreme Court has permitted legalized gambling in New Jersey, New York won't be far behind even though its Off-Track Betting experiment failed, possibly because it was operated by the government. The greatest American novel set in New York bears the fictionalized name of the New York mobster who fixed the 1919 World Series, and every bar in the City worth its name has a football pool and is full of patrons who know the spreads and the over and under on every NFL game every week, and for the NBA three times weekly. When Jack Molinas, a Columbia grad with a genius for fixing college basketball games in the early 60's at The Garden, was killed in his Hollywood Hills backyard by an expert marksman using a scope sight, the headline being "Only Question With Molinas Killing Is Which Mob," he was still identified in the first line of the story as a New Yorker.

This came into focus for me late one summer in the 90's at Shea Stadium. I shared season tickets for the Mets with 7 friends for a few years. Each spring we would meet in a conference room at Teachers' Insurance on Lexington in the 40's and do a round robin draw of the 82 home games, with the first two going to the organizer for his efforts, and again in the fall—the Mets were good in some of those years—for playoff and World Series tickets. I got to see a game they lost 1-0 to the Braves when Mike Piazza threw over the second baseman's head on a steal attempt and the base stealer came around to score the game's only run!

The situation in question was unusual since I had exchanged my regular ticket because of a work conflict, and ended up attending a day game on a Wednesday I somehow had free. Because of the exchange, I ended up in the upper deck slightly to the left field side of home plate, but with good visibility. The Padres were our opponent and it was a lightly attended game-- we played them only two series a year and there was no rivalry to speak of. They were the one West Coast team with no New York connection, were almost always in the lower depths of the standings, and their games in California were televised when all of us were asleep or otherwise occupied.

The big attraction, if there was one, was great weather and the presence of Anthony Young on the mound for us. If he lost again today, it would be 26 losses in a row, a new major league record. From what I could tell, most fans were hoping he could "get off the schneid," as the saying goes, but the guy in the seat one over from me was almost foaming at the mouth in his enthusiasm for Young to take another fall and set the new ignominious record.

He was an athletic looking guy in his late '20's, dressed in tennis whites and matching shoes with about a pound and a half of gold jewelry on his wrists and shining out through his red, curly and super-abundant chest hair, matched by a sort of Afro and a further abundance on his arms and legs. If you had to guess what his name might be, Furry Murray (got a new kind of haircut, now Murray ain't furry anymore, the song says). The only natural redheads in our species are Russian Jews and people of Celtic descent, but the Russians are curlier by far. If man buns had been in then, he would have been a poster boy for the look.

When the first Padre up singled, he almost turned inside out with joy, but Young quickly settled down and retired the next 23 batters. He remained animated the whole time, berating Young and vociferously pulling for the Pods' hitters but to little effect. Several times I asked him why he was so hard on Young, and he kept

repeating “A loser is a loser, that’s all.” The game slogged on, and my clearest memory is of the most flavorful bratwurst I ever had anywhere. Upper deck, few fans and the warm day collaborated to slowly dry the wurst out on the grill, and concentrated the taste immeasurably, almost to the point of caramelization. The game was scoreless at the end of seven.

I was still enjoying the memory of the wurst when the top of the eighth rolled around and the second batter got on base with a walk. My neighbor immediately became agitated, shouting “No time like now,” and his mantra-- “A loser is a loser.” The next batter was Archie Cionfriddo, right hand hitting third baseman—low average hitter but with some power.

At this point it becomes important to switch the focus to the Mets’ right fielder, Bobby Bonilla, New York born and recently acquired from the Pirates. A regular All-Star when in the outfield with Barry Bonds, Bonilla got a rich contract from the Mets but never performed up to that same level again. Many said he had too many friends of all sorts in his home town to keep his mind on baseball. Bonilla later played on the Florida Marlins when they bested the Yankees in the ’03 World Series, but ultimately wore out his welcome everywhere he played with poor performance and endless complaints about playing time.

Several pitches into the at bat, Cionfriddo launched a high fly ball to the opposite field and the crowd rose to its feet. From where I stood I had a perfect line on the ball and followed it as it descended and Bonilla leapt up to try to snag it. He rose up just as the ball came down and I could see clearly as the ball descended, right between his outstretched glove and his Mets cap, missing each by about 8 inches, like a field goal settling down between the uprights for a score.

Cionfriddo received his congratulations at home plate and on re-entering the dugout, and Anthony Young kicked the dirt next to the rubber. A Little Leaguer could have made that catch with no trouble, but Bonilla found a way, against all odds, to make Anthony Young into a piece of baseball history. Young died of a brain tumor at 51 last year. My good neighbor was leaping up and down like he was at an Orthodox wedding doing the Kazotsky. I even succumbed to high-fiving him, and finally we sat down. After a moment he leaned over to me and smiled, saying “Bobby Bo just made me twenty five K, my friend. I got ten-to-one odds on Young to break the record. A loser is a loser. Don’t ever forget it! Here’s to me.”

The footnote that brings the story full circle is that Bonilla later came back to the Mets, still under the grossly overpaid contract he'd gotten in the first place. The Mets at that point would have had to pay him \$6.8 million dollars to terminate the contract, but Fred Wilpon, the Mets' owner, was heavily invested with Bernie Madoff, possibly the most famous criminal in the history of American finance, who was paying out a steady ten percent to his original investors, using money he was taking in from new ones lured by his phony returns. The interest on the Bonilla contract settlement was 8 percent, so Wilpon put the money with Madoff and laughed all the way home over the two percent spread he would be getting by deferring his payments until the period 2009 to 2035. So now Bonilla, without playing a single game, gets \$1.19 million every year in July on what is informally celebrated as "Bobby Bo Day," and Fred Wilpon, finally understanding that the joke was on him, holds Bernie Madoff's IOU.

So if you want to know what went wrong with the New York Mets, ask yourself this. How can Fred Wilpon, an accountant by training, make a decision based on the following assumptions? He puts about \$6 million with Bernie Madoff in 1993 and gets 10% a year on it every year, without fail, until 2035 or later. Which is to say he makes simple interest of 420%, not even compounded interest on that amount, and during that period the one thing he can be sure of is that the \$6 million is accruing 8% annual interest. With Bernie Madoff, who also shoots 83 every time he goes out on the golf course, without fail. What's wrong with the New York Mets? Is a loser a loser, or what? Am I right, or am I right?

* * *

Fifteen years later, I was reminded of that game and Bonilla's goof when I went to Riker's Island for the first and only time. Janos, a high school buddy of my son's, was at Fordham Law School. As a public service project, he had organized a "moot court" on Sundays in the juvenile section for teenagers who had qualified for more contact with the outside world. Aside from what we don't know about a ton of countries we support with aid and arms and probably torture techniques, Riker's is the largest prison on the planet, and people wait there, sometimes for years, to go to trial. As noted earlier, New York and crime are said in the same breath almost as often as not.

A moot court is a mock trial and forms part of every law school education. Two law students play the attorneys for the plaintiff and defendant, and others are witnesses, jury members or court officers—almost like on Judge Judy and Judge Wapner of “Rain Man,” but they do only civil cases, where one citizen sues another. There is also a set of facts based on something like the arresting officer’s report—we did only criminal cases at Riker’s. Janos sent the fact sheet over during the week and the officers distributed it, then helped the inmates decide who would play what role. We visitors, some lawyers, some law students, were the judges and coached the lawyers.

Once the trials got under way, it was fascinating to see how difficult it was for the prosecutors to put together a case and present it in an orderly way, while the defense teams were very sharp and aggressive. You could see this was the side they had studied and learned about from their experience. The six trials were held in the gym, using that kind of geometrical Naugahyde stuffed red, yellow and blue furniture that can be arranged in different ways for group activities. My judicial bench reached just above my knees, and I sat on a cubical ottoman about the height of the bench, but once we got started everyone played it straight.

This week’s case involved the arrest of a young man living in a project who had been arrested for sticking up a bodega, taking money and a pack of cigarettes, then being found later with three of the cigarettes. Those wise to the ways of the ghetto know that cigarettes are normally sold there in parcels of three, which I learned during the trial. Given the participants, Janos told me beforehand, very few guilty verdicts were returned.

But before we reached the first witness, we had to undergo the normal screening, which took over half an hour. Then we were marched down to the gym and watched for another half hour as the boys, and then the furniture, were added to the scene and the “courtrooms” were set up. All of this time provided leisure to inspect the surroundings, which generally looked like any other junior high or even high school basketball court you’ve ever seen, including two sets of fold-up, wooden seat bleachers on either side.

What I noticed was that the wall above the West basket was painted with the pro jerseys of about 10 NBA greats. Walt “Clyde” Frazier was there to represent the Knicks, partly due to his still doing live commentary for the games on TV. Clyde may have said “The Knicks are playing defense with their hands and not with their feet” a few times too often for my taste, but he was never wrong when he said it. Then

too, one of my best early memories of NYC was riding in a cab uptown through the narrow tunnel on Park Avenue around 33rd to 37th Streets and seeing the smiling face of a man driving a Rolls Royce and wearing a white mink coat and matching fedora behind the wheel of a car with the license plate “WCF” on his way to work.

The other jerseys featured an interesting mix of young and old heroes, black and white—Jordan, Bird, Dr. J. Maravich, Kareem, Shaq, Russell, Wilt Chamberlain and Cousy. A surprise to me was Rasheed Wallace, a tough and combative black forward of recent vintage who in many ways exemplified an ego ideal for the boys, young men, who saw these precincts the most often. Then there was one jersey that had been painted over in a medium blue, not too dark, that allowed you to see, when you looked closely, whose name it bore. Isiah Thomas—Isaiah Lord Thomas III on his birth certificate. NBA Hall of Famer, two-time NBA champion, 12 time NBA All Star, NCAA champion with an undefeated Bobby Knight Indiana team, Olympic Gold Medal Winner, leader of the “bad boy” Detroit Pistons, married man, and by most accounts an all-around creep and low-life.

When the lamentable Knicks owner James Dolan made him President of the club, Thomas ended up costing them \$11.6 million for sexual harassment of a woman who had a strong resume at a high level in women’s basketball. Then Dolan, to universal opprobrium, hired him back. Thomas has hung around basketball despite having become a pariah, and presumably has nothing else to do. What resonated with me was that here in this criminal establishment, the street-wise adolescents to whom NBA basketball is most likely greater than religion—the dream of every black kid in America—the collective insight of the inmates was clear. He didn’t belong on any wall of heroes. His memory deserved to be extinguished and cast out. I have said for many years that I learned more from my two children than I ever did from my parents, and if there’s anyone out there who has ever seen a college athlete say “Hi Dad,” when the camera crew approaches him on the sideline I’d like to see the evidence. We have learned a lot more than we wanted to know about the Isiah Thomas’s of the world in very recent times, but we are much better off for it, better off by far.

XVII. Mr. O

As the old saying goes, if the chairs could talk.... One place where it’s doubtless a good thing they can’t is The Bull and The Bear, the bar at the Waldorf Astoria at the

back side of the hotel, not the fancy Park Avenue entrance. Low ceilings, a room that still feels filled with smoke years after the ban went into effect, the same staff that's been there for at least 25 years. When I did my first IPO I ended up meeting with the independent accountant, a partner in one of the firms then known as the Big 8, now the Big 4, whose signature I needed for the SEC filing package. He suggested the place, theretofore unknown to me, and bought me a couple of Remy Martins to cushion my journey back down to Wall Street to finish assembling all the documents around midnight.

More recently, I was in the midst, at about 5:30 in the afternoon, of a shaggy dog story with Oscar, El Supremo among the bartenders, when a white-haired man with a florid complexion walked in. "Mr. O!" Oscar and several of the waiters exclaimed simultaneously. Mr. O gave a big wave and shook Oscar's hand, Oscar introduced us to each other and then confirmed that Mr. O wanted the usual.

"I haven't been up here in a while," he said, settling on his barstool. "But we're back big time now. Got a new company and it looks like we'll be doing a deal to go public. Last one didn't work out so well—that's why I moved to Florida. Homestead exemption and all that, you know."

He laughed. "I got to know my mailman so well, from all the subpoenas and legal papers when they sued us, that I don't only know his kids' birthdays, I know their blood types and what they like to eat at McDonald's." He laughed again at his own joke and tagged me immediately as a lawyer. "But you have an honest face," he said. "That's kind of disorienting. But it's worked for me, I know that for sure. You wouldn't know it to look at me, but I'm fifteen sixteenths Sicilian, one part Irish. The O at the beginning of my name instead of the end has been worth its weight in gold!"

We discussed finance, Wall Street, the market and the economy as we savored our refreshments. "You know," he said, "my wife and daughter are meeting me here. Out shopping, then we're going to Bobby Van's Steak House for dinner. She wants to go to law school, my daughter—you'll like her—and I'd appreciate it if you would talk to her, answer any questions she might have about the subject. Here, this one's on me. Confusion to the enemy."

The wife and daughter arrived and we moved to the other side of the bar. With the daughter was a well-dressed man in his early 30's, short hair slicked back, nothing ostentatious. Mr. O informed me he was the fiancé, and we smiled at each

other and shook hands. Mrs. O was on the left side of me, with the daughter in between, and on to my other side was the fiancée, Mark, with Mr. O holding down the right flank.

Miss O could not have been sweeter or more charming. We had a lovely discussion, she asked good questions, and it became apparent that she was easily smart enough to do the law thing, so I abandoned my usual reservations on the subject. My own daughter announced when she was about four that she would never be a lawyer—in response to my asking why, she said “Well, you and mom are both lawyers and you both hate your jobs. What am I supposed to think about that?” She’s been like that all her life, and I’m sure it will always stand her in good stead.

As Miss O and I continued to meander through the legal maze, I kept an ear tuned to the conversation between Mr. O and Mark, yielding the following.

“So what’s with your Uncle Tony,” he asked Mark. “I don’t see him around lately. How’s he doing?” Long pause, accompanied by throat clearing. “Well, there were some things that had to be taken care of, you know. He’s not part of the picture now.” Out of the corner of my eye I could see Mr. O squeeze Mark’s elbow as he said, in the immediate past tense, “Well, he was that way, you know.” About two minutes later as I made my exit, I reminded myself to be grateful that I hadn’t proffered my business card, and hoped the marriage would be as happy and carefree as possible.

XVIII. READIN’, WRITIN’ AND ‘RITHMATIC

People constantly deny the benefits of college education, and especially liberal arts and humanities studies in places like the Ivy League or similar highly rated, usually by their own graduates, but who could be better qualified? That, in itself, is your first clue. Pay attention, and there might be more for you. We all know all that figures lie, and liars figure. We also know that a story or two, if it’s of the right sort, is worth any number of algorithms, which in fact is what any number of algorithms are, if you’ve followed me so far. I’ll settle for two stories, very similar, because 2 is my favorite prime number, the only one that’s even and not odd, so you’re essentially obliged to trust it. Nor is it the loneliest number, as one comes to know. Plus, it’s not the infamous “scientific sample of one,” which is to cite some anomaly

that appeals to your case as representing all of the possibilities there are, but restricts its sample, and thus yours, to Number One. But enough theorizing.

I have two good friends who both went to very prestigious universities, one was my best friend in high school, who majored in English and obtained a PhD in that subject, and the other is a History major who has climbed the highest mountain on each continent except Antarctica. I don't know why, but I'm impressed just the same. Both of them were of draft age during the Vietnam War. They both lived in prosperous suburbs of Washington, D.C. They also both went into the Peace Corps after graduation from college, and when they came home, both found notices to report for induction into the United States Army awaiting them. Each complied and served two years, receiving honorable discharges.

How those facts support my premise is something you might think would be hard to show, but check this out. Both are named Dave, so to distinguish them I will refer to them as Abe (for Able) and Baker (for obvious reasons). Abe is one year older, but that makes no never mind in this situation.

Abe came from a politically liberal family. When drafted, he was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for basic infantry training and stayed for advanced infantry training. During the second part of that, he helped found an anti-war coffee house just outside the main gates of Fort Bragg. While I was studying for the bar exam after law school, I received a visit from a man from the FBI, who took off his hat as he sat down, then took out his notebook and asked if he could ask me a few questions about Abe, to which I said of course. The reason, he explained to me, was that Abe was being considered for a position of trust and confidence with the United States Government, and so this was a standard background check. The interview went on for about half an hour, and after a while I put together the pattern of his questions, so that for each one that required a factual answer, the next one veered into opinion territory, specifically relating to Abe's loyalty to our country, his membership in prohibited political groups, any expressions of antipathy toward "our country's position on the war" and whether he had been known to have written or spoken anything that a reasonable person would consider treasonous!

Innocent as I have always been of the evil and deceit that characterizes our species—a friend of mine claims that because of Eve, every human being has a worm in his apple and that's just for starters—I caught on to his game. Abe was being considered for a broadly and horizontally striped suit in which he would find it easy to grab a piece of wall, spread 'em and let his pants get pulled down so the

people empowered by law to do so could poke up inside him and see if he was concealing some contraband such as dynamite or automatic weapons. I didn't see much trust or confidence anywhere near that particular MOS (military occupational specialty).

The oddest or most ironic thing about it was that Abe's family was a paragon of loyalty to a much higher level of American patriotism, and loved this country more for what it stood for and could stand for, than just about anyone I had ever met. I respected and admired them so much that in high school I even prayed that I would get adopted into Abe's family, without anything bad happening to my parents of course, but it would have been such an obvious step up it was very hard not to want it badly. So without even a whiff of "perjury" or "making false statements to an officer of the law," I could tell the total truth and give this jerkoff a notebook full of rapturous praise for his prospective jailbird, and because I was a liberal arts student and a prospective lawyer, I could cast my praise in the very language of our founding documents and patriots' speeches.

Abe didn't think it was so funny when I called him—I knew better than to write him and arranged through his parents to talk directly. I was dead on in my analysis, but to him it was far from a laugh because he had already gotten unequivocal warnings that they wanted badly to make an example of him, and send him, Dreyfus-like, to Leavenworth for long enough to grind his bones to make their bread.

I won't claim any credit for the result, because of the high regard I have always had for Abe. So I'm sure that his being reclassified from a grunt made of cannon fodder for Viet Cong ambushers into a clerk-typist headed for Germany and a role helping to put out the base newspaper was his doing, not mine. The Army is good at very few things, but one of them is removing a square peg from a round hole. They knew that sending Abe to Nam would not remove the danger of his undermining morale or, since he was a plausible Communist, at least in their eyes, starting to spy for the other team. But they did know that he'd been to college, and they knew he could type and organize paperwork, and that Germany was the other side of the globe from Southeast Asia.

I was delighted with the result. He received an honorable discharge, got his PhD, taught literature in college, became the head of the department and wrote a literature textbook that is widely used today, even after he retired. He has also

spent a lot of time enjoying Fulbright grants to teach about our country and study other cultures all over the world, entirely on the taxpayer's nickel.

I would, or could, say "Beat that!" or "Top that!" but I will spare you the effort and give you Dave # 2, AKA, or better known as (BKA) Baker.

I only learned Baker's story later although we went to college together but never met, but when he caught up with me the comps with Abe proved incredible, and that, in part, is why I argue for a "liberal" education. Some doowah in Ohio recently told his congregation to make sure they never sent a child to a place that would teach that child anything that the parents didn't already know. In an area that some otherwise acceptable American born citizens call "Dumb-fuckistan," so they would never qualify for actual American citizenship, this preacher and his posse, or whatever they call it thereabouts.

Baker did the same as Abe, up to a point. Liberal Arts, Peace Corps, draft notice upon completing "Government Service," and off to Fort Dix, New Jersey. Baker, for reasons he alone knows, had confidence he would survive. Among young people who fail to gain a liberal arts degree, this is rare, because you are stuck with only two stories (remember the number 2, please) the life you're living, and the cases, all business cases, where the numbers have been cooked to show the result the prof wants, and will earn you a small job in a big operation where your life, or anything about you, is automatically referred to HR, So confidence is rarely available in situations where you have no foundation such as experience in the real world or education.

But Baker sits tight, is cool, and thinks about the mountains he will climb in years to come. He doesn't qualify for advanced infantry training, but does come down with food poisoning at the mess tent (like military music and military intelligence, one of the few perfectly oxymoronic situations). He gets sent off to the infirmary for a couple of days, and when he comes back, ta da, his whole basic training unit has shipped out for the Big Muddy, thereby gaining the opportunity to come home one of two ways, and no one needs instruction on what they were. Emphasis on were.

The sergeant who runs the barracks looks at him and asks what he's doing here. He reminds Sarge that he had been sent to the infirmary, taken in a stretcher by Medics, because he was puking his guts out and shitting his brains out. He thinks

for a moment about noting that each of those is an expression which is not literally true, but clams up, awaiting further developments.

Sarge looks at him and asks if he can type. Says to him, straight out, didn't you go to college and learn typing? He acknowledges those facts and Sarge takes a deep breath, smiles, and says that all these forms he's got to fill out from Baker's bunch of so-called soldiers is eating him alive, because he never went to any GD college and he cannot F_____ type!

Being as they are enlisted and non-com Army people, respectively, career and draftee, they do not shake hands, but they do agree that until the next batch comes through and finishes their preparation for the great beyond, whatever its terms might ultimately be, if he types his ass off and keeps in shape and his head down, no one will make a fuss, and everybody will do all right in the meantime.

Basic training is 6 weeks. After about 2 weeks, Sarge is playing pool and buying beers at the NCO club with an unusually cheerful mien. The other NCOs, being a touch brighter than a bucket of hair, buy him more beers and find out that Baker is his joy boy. College, some kind of Ivy League, and can type like Rafer Johnson can throw the javelin in the Olympics.

Within a day or two, word gets to the Colonel, whose assistants are NCOs, that Sarge has a guy salted away in his barracks who is a world champion typist and he's keeping him all to himself! Colonel goes down to investigate, and they agree in almost no time at all that Baker belongs at HQ, not in some outlying barracks where the Army cannot make the best of use of him in the National Interest. No hard feelings, and Sarge, you know you got a lot of mileage out of this boy like he was a friggin' Jaguar XKE, so no tears and thanks for the memories.

Baker and the Big Man hit it off incredibly well. Next thing you know, Baker is caddying for the Colonel on his twice a week golf game, and they are talking about all kinds of stuff, both real and unreal, that you can hear them laugh a fairway or two away.

But no one says anything about that, since if you know one thing, it's not to cross the Colonel. How do you think he got there? By being anybody's best friend for more than 5 minutes? Excuse me.

Close as they are, and lonely as Colonels who are CEOs, or any CEO as such, can be, the Colonel lets Baker in on a secret, which is that he cannot hold him back here at

Dix any longer. All the options have been exercised and all the alternatives have been put on direct current, so there is just one way out.

Promotion! He tells Baker he is promoting him, while changing his MOS, which does happen more than you might think since the U S Army does need some flexibility and this is about all they've ever been able to think of and get done. So Baker becomes a Clerk-Typist First Class, a separate category but not that much unlike good old Abe's road to both safety and lederhosen.

But to confirm this promotion, Baker needs to go to Fort Benjamin Harrison, in Indiana, where it sends guys who can really, really type and file! Baker did more filing for his senior thesis at a fine institution of learning than he ever came close to at Fort BH, frequently referred to as Fort BJ because it was a soft post near a lot of women's colleges.

Like many graduates of rigorous training such as his alma mater, Baker comes in first in his class, and nobody minds, because they saw him at work, many exclaiming "Well, he did go to some college, though," and he rides out to his next assignment.

By this time, Baker's enlistment is half over. He gets sent to Los Alamos, where the Army needs someone to type up the notes of General Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, the boss of Oppenheimer, Fermi, von Neumann, Fynemann and hundreds of other geniuses-- because Groves was a military man, and this was a military project. Groves is now part of history, front page, world class history and don't forget what Baker majored in. Not accounting, not farming, not even marine biology.

Please follow this—the liberal arts major, although from a very good institution of higher learning, was one night away from being turned into something dead and gone, but he got sick on the food afforded his classification. Due to various factors that followed that, he avoided that fate, met lots of interesting people, had the leisure to translate the handwriting of a man in charge of a thousand men smarter than he was, mostly far smarter, who had to deliver a product he never really understood very much about. So, first, Baker had, almost undoubtedly, a much better time on the Manhattan Project transcription than General Groves, although Groves got a nice medal. But so did Baker, as well as an honorable discharge and the wherewithal to get his MBA from Stanford, another one of those high-faluting spots some say are not worth the money. But he did then make a ton of money, go mountain climbing to his heart's content (although he ultimately needed

titanium balls in both knee joints), and end up living in beautiful Santiago, Chile, within view of the Andes, and with an American passport.

The secret, of course, is imagination, flexibility, and patience. Both my subjects had that, along with a college degree ultimately worth freedom, avoidance of jail and wartime suffering, etc. That's part one, if that's not enough for you.

Part two is best explained by my book club of six over-seventy year old guys who have similar backgrounds, and of course degrees, from similar institutions. We have a great bunch, assembled by one of our number several years ago. We meet monthly, read real, serious books that are not mass market or genre-icious, have lunch, and talk for a long and worthwhile time. The first time we met, we were perfect gentlemen. We talked a little about ourselves, but mostly asked questions about each other, for information and glad-handing, so they understood how important they were in our eyes.

By the second meeting, we tried a little bit of that small talk to begin-- BTW, we don't drink anymore, most of us, or at least not there. But within almost no time after the opening chit-chat, the testosterone emerged and we got to talking Board Scores, as in SATs, LSATs, GREs, GPAs and the like. You could hear a "whoosh" shoot through the room. These guys majored in one pure science or another, politics, history, engineering and the like. I majored in English Literature. The essence of literature is telling the false from the true, combining them in different and amazing ways, and considering how and why one thing can be false and its virtual twin true, and why things can often look more real upside down than they do right side up. Fun stuff like that.

I enjoyed this and, to be honest, giggled inside about this thing that guys cannot help but do. I also waited for everyone to wave their you-know-what's to the amazement and adoration of each other, and then I threw in, casually, my own numbers. These were not real numbers, but numbers derived from what numbers I had to beat, and so they did. Because nobody knows "The Truth" and never will, which is what one learns if you pay attention in the courses I took and loved. And still do

XIX. THREE STICKS—CFM III, THE DON AND THE LOBSTER

We all know that Cameron joined the firm as a partner in '75, as Jeff Johnson, a YLS classmate, has confirmed. Jeff's clear memory of this is evidenced by his also having "made partner" on the same day as Cam, January 1, 1975, when Cam joined his father, then the presiding partner, as a member of the firm. It was said that we had a one vote system—Cam Sr. was the man, and he had the vote.

During 1966, his last law school year, Cam was named an editor of the Yale Law Journal. Another classmate of theirs and a partner in the firm as well, Chuck Burger, was there to witness the ennoblement. The set-up was straightforward. Once the editors were chosen—a process I know nothing about but it happened every year - the key event was for all of them to get individual offices along a row, each with a wooden door holding 9 panes of frosted glass held in place by slender wooden strips. The minions apparently shared a common set of table space with individual work spaces.

Joining the Journal itself was simple then, although it has changed, as everything does. Top ten in GPS for the first semester were ID'd and anointed. End of the year, those in the top 25 but not among the original 10 joined the forever elite. One member of my class finished 11th and 26th and then tried writing a Note or Comment to gain admission, but his work was rejected by those who had edged him out previously. He later became General Counsel for the National Organization of Women. *Res Ipsa Loquitur*.

At the end of Cam's next to last year, once the elections and the office assignments had been taken care of, and the current year's editors had decamped, the newbys moved in. Once that occurred, one door was found with an engraved calling card bearing the name "Cameron Farquahar MacRae III" squarely affixed by a thumb tack. A propos of the proper style, it bore neither an address nor a telephone number. But the "Three Sticks" in Ivy League parlance, behind his name did more than speak volumes on his behalf.

The best previous story about a calling card relates to Austin Scott ("Scott on Trusts") a notable HLS student, and later professor, when Oliver Wendell Holmes held a chair there. Holmes had invited Scott, then in his third year, over for tea one Saturday, and asked him to bring a friend of his choosing from their class. As they walked over, Scott and his friend McNeil speculated about what majestic words the great Holmes would greet them with. They were admitted, and placed their own calling cards on the silver tray proffered by Holmes's butler, who took the tray upstairs and vanished, presumably by the back stairs so as not to interfere with the

great man's entrance. As Holmes walked down the impressive staircase from the second floor, they watched in awe as he came to greet them, playing with their cards in a random manner and saying "First you shuffle and then you deal. Which is Scott and which McNeil?"

In the case at hand, the other 6 or 7 offices-- of the Editor in Chief, Articles editors, Notes and Comments editors, Book Review editors, et alia, were festooned within ten minutes by hand-lettered 3x5 index cards reading "Peter Farquahar Zimroth III, Benno Farquahar Schmidt III," "Larry Farquahar Simon III," "Betsy Farquahar Levin III, et seq., which remained in place until the end of the upcoming academic year.

When Cam joined LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby & MacRae, Michael Iovenko, (his predecessor at the NYS Banking Department as General Counsel and then as a partner at LeBoeuf), and Donald J. Greene, also from Queens and cut from similar cloth, co-sponsored a welcoming luncheon at the City Midday Drug and Chemical Club in a private room on the east side of 140 Broadway. Our offices were in that building then, following the move from One Chase Manhattan Plaza next door. History and logic would suggest, although I cannot confirm it, that the Dewey firm, with whom our later merger soon led to the largest law firm bankruptcy in American history, had vacated those offices for us to move into.

After cocktails, we were ushered into the dining room, with a large square table arrangement and about 30 or so of the firm's members. Don's seat, with Cam next to him, defined the head of an otherwise headless table, and he sat in the middle of the east side of the square, with the windows and the light behind him. Iovenko sat on the right side, for whatever reason, and I recall all this since I sat opposite Don and Cam, and to Michael's right.

The headwaiter came around to take orders as the cocktail conversation continued, and when he got to Don, Don ordered a lobster salad and a steak. The reason I recall that is because the headwaiter asked "A lobster salad, sir?" Don ramped up his voice so we could all hear him shout "Didn't I just say lobster salad? Are you hard of hearing?" The man nodded and moved on.

Cam Senior was not there, nor were the other name partners, now all retired or almost so. As we waited for our meals, the conversation grew more muted, due in part to a modest discomfort relating to the arrival among us of an ostensible heir apparent, but one who was clearly not to be that, since Don was making it clear who that heir would be, and indeed became. Nothing unpleasant, but a quietude

commenced to reign, interrupted only by the arrival among the appetizers of a certain lobster salad, and the reverberant response to its being placed where it had been ordered of “What the hell is this?” from Don. The answer was that it was the lobster salad he had ordered, rather than the more customary lobster cocktail appetizer. The salad was three times bigger, and dwarfed the vichyssoise, clam chowder, shrimp cocktails, littleneck clams and other appetizers that now bedecked the table. The headwaiter confirmed what it was, which was immediately denied by the person we had all heard order it and make a fuss in the process. We waited while the salad was removed and a lobster cocktail substituted, followed by a lot of eating and not much talk. The main course followed and orders were discretely taken for dessert.

The subject on many minds was indeed hereditary succession and similar matters, and it fell to Jeff to raise the subject of King George III (surprise, surprise—Freud lives in all of us, and certainly on that occasion) of England. It had recently been determined that his madness was due to a hereditary condition known as porphyria, afflicting those with DNA containing the genome (neither of those words were common currency as they are now) possessing it, and its manifestation being caused by exposure to bright sunlight for extensive periods, which happens, if infrequently, in and around the London area in the summer.

Iovenko breathed new life into the stiffening conversation by relating a story concerning a dinner he’d been part of at Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia the previous weekend. The host had been a collector of rare and unusual objects and had a cabinet full of them, a smallish version of the Sir John Soames museum in London, above Fleet Street and not far from Chancery Lane, where several shops have cash registers bearing individual keys for wigs and robes.

During Iovenko’s dinner, the most remarkable object in the collector’s possession was a smallish, somewhat calcified object which had been taken from its glass box and passed around from hand to hand. As it made its journey, the object was announced to have been attested to as Napoleon’s penis. A bit of a giggle started to circulate at this point, loosening up our own luncheon party, and then the doors opened for the headwaiter, leading his crew of waiters bearing trays holding our dessert. He had reinvigorated himself from his previous humiliation by now, and proudly shouted out “Who has the Napoleon?”

Amidst the uproar, one timid slender hand was raised, to increasing laughter. Dear reader, that hand was mine. Let it ever be said that I know how to take one for the team! And the Napoleon was all anyone could have wanted.

XXI. THE RADIOACTIVE RABBIT IN THE HATBOX IN THE CLOSET

The lobster in the story of Don Greene, Cameron Farquahar MacRae III and Napoleon's penis was not the only lobster in the story of the law firm known as LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby & MacRae, by a long shot. When senior partner Doug Hawes took a "sabbatical" in 1973 to teach law at a law school outside New York that was well regarded in 1972 or 73, he recruited a young woman named Susan, who had been first in her class, to come and join the firm after graduation. When Susan joined the firm, she had just gotten divorced from her first husband, who had graduated a year earlier and later worked at Davis, Polk and Wardwell, which was in the same building as LeBoeuf occupied, One Chase Manhattan Plaza. The entire top section of the elevator bank was occupied by The Wall Street Club (a tax-deductible men's "business club"), Breed Abbott, Cravath Swaine, Willkie Farr, Milbank Tweed, LeBoeuf Lamb, Davis Polk and Reavis McGrath. Hopefully it's not out of place to note that some firms had nicknames, like Brer Rabbit, Milkweed, and, of course, The Ranch.

Doug was a person of substantial energy and charm, and a good recruiter and business getter. His employment at the firm was courtesy of a close connection through his brother, as I was told, to Roy Ferguson, the head of St. Regis Paper Co. St. Regis was one of the forest products oligopoly that is now smaller but most likely not very different from those days, and they had a boatload of anti-trust and corporate work which made them an "anchor tenant" of the firm's practice. I became Susan's second husband, and she is the mother of our wonderful children, so let's put that out there right away. The animal and vegetable kingdoms parallel each other in many ways, so the term tree is as useful for humans as it is for the flora, although vine would be an equally good one, given the intertwining that human stories, like this one, proliferate in.

So, the first parallel here is that after Susan and I intertwined, Doug successfully recruited another lovely female associate, with whom he spent an enormous amount of time early on. I had the office next to him and never saw him devote so much time with a single associate hovering over papers on his desk. It involved, he

told me, a model set of by-laws, more than likely not billable. An ungenerous skeptic might well have wondered which set Doug was focusing on at the time. She was blonde and extremely attractive, and her name was and is Ronda Muir, a good Scottish name. She was so readily noticeable that her nickname sprung full blown from Philip McGuigan's forehead, unofficial master of revels as he was at the firm under the tutelage of Paul Russell, his mentor. Paul was widely admired at the time for dating Julie Newmarr, who played Stupefying Jones, the brunette bombshell in the Broadway production of "Li'l Abner," but he later married the daughter of a Hong Kong shipping magnate, before dying in Bangkok of AIDS long after he left the firm.

Phil immediately dubbed her Ron Demure, an apt and ironic sobriquet, given that while she was extremely well-mannered and cool as the coolest of cucumbers, she came across as the least demure of all the damsels aboard the good ship LeBoeuf. The final irony of Ronda (Doug did divorce his first wife and married a French countess he had met while attending a good many international securities seminars on the firm's nickel—to forage for business, undoubtedly, after Ronda left), was that she left because she married a partner at Davis Polk, where Cameron F. MacRae III had started, although Ronda's husband had also played a season or two for the New York Giants before finding the law a more congenial profession.

So in addition to the well-known connection between Dewey and LeBoeuf, there was a distaff bond of sorts between Davis Polk and our firm, involving extraordinary women. Ronda went on to greater glory by becoming, according to her Google profile, "Founder and Principal of Law People Management LLC, and one of the country's leading authorities on the personal attributes of lawyers and the application of behavioral science to the legal workplace," causing a person to wonder if that all started when Doug Hawes smothered her with attention in the cause of developing the model set of non-billable by-laws. In addition to many others, there was Kimba Wood AKA Lovejoy, primus inter pares, about whom we all know a great many wonderful and admirable things, who was then married to Jesse Lovejoy, also a partner at Davis Polk.

One we don't all know is that Philip McGuigan had an office close to her and would bellow out "KIMBA!" from time to time in the secretarial bay that adjoined their offices while pounding his chest in the "appropriate" gorilla-like fashion. His second act, as a 70's style UES "swordsmen," would be to regale the secretaries who constituted his captive audience with tales of his sexual exploits the previous night,

which involved a variety of lovelies he had brought to their knees, literally, with his overpowering charm and manliness.

The firm was growing rapidly then, which caused our move across the way to 140 Broadway, but recalling the Christmas parties of '75 and '77 makes the evolution particularly clear. For the first one, with Emily Cutler, later Essex--as Randall LeBoeuf's secretary/assistant-- actively involved in administration, we held it in the basement of the Gramercy Park Hotel, on the north side, where Emily lived. The entertainment was provided by a middle-aged man who carried in his own portable keyboard. It was an early model of the keyboards which produce drum sounds, horns, reeds and synthesizer noises as well as the piano. He only knew three or four songs, as we soon learned, the one which stands out being "Proud Mary." He played that 20 or 30 times, since some of the young wags kept going over to him and asking if he knew it. To show rather than tell, he would play and sing it again. Nevertheless, for a brief while, it became our song, Susan's and mine, because that was where the romance began.

Two years later, the Christmas party was at a hotel on Lexington Avenue across from the Waldorf, in a large ballroom, with elevated cuisine and a real band. Since Susan and I had married in the meanwhile, plus she was pregnant and Dave Bicks's masonry recommendation had torched our new co-op apartment on the West Side a week or two before, I missed the party. Nevertheless, I can profile the highlights briefly.

Our number included a secretary from an outer borough named LuAnn. She was young, quite slender, sunny and highly competent. She was also popular with just about everyone, and later married one of our partners, which occurred some years later after we had moved uptown to 520 Madison. The party was for lunch, with dancing and entertainment afterwards, so LuAnn had arranged with her boyfriend of the time to be picked up on the 50th Street side of the hotel, after which they were to grab a quick bite and catch a show on Broadway.

The party, however, burst out with the kind of enthusiasm our parties often did, the alcohol flowed and the dancing got better and livelier. I believe someone stepped up and paid the band to play for another hour, which luckily was not a problem for the hotel since they had plenty of time before their evening event. While the carousers caroused, the boyfriend waited dutifully downstairs inside the hotel entrance until finally, his patience more than exhausted, he came up to the ballroom. There he promptly zeroed in on LuAnn, dancing simultaneously with two

black guys, Harold and Robert, who ran our mail room, on a floor crowded with other dancers. So our young Lochinvar dove right into the action, throwing several wild punches and precipitating a melee that actually caused very little corporal damage, because the onlookers turned quickly into peacemakers.

The china, however, was not so lucky. A large table laden with stacks of the Waldorf Astoria's best crockery was tipped over, resulting in something like \$10,000 worth of breakage, according to the word that got around. Two significant results ensued. The thin and lovely LuAnn became known, forever after, as "The Bone of Contention," for one. The other involved our head tax partner, Harold Seidel, and Cameron MacRae Senior. That one related, as many items involving Scotsmen do, to issues of cost and appropriate allocation thereof. There was no question that the Waldorf would get paid what it asked, which would be replacement cost. No, the question was deductibility. At bottom, was the breakage an "ordinary and necessary" business expense? Harold, in his puckish way, had his doubts, even in a firm where most of the partners ate a good many of their lunches with each other at fine gentlemen's clubs, but deducted the entire amount of that enjoyment, because merely being in each other's presence made it clear that there was business on the menu.

The MacRae had no doubts that the Internal Revenue Service would ultimately be picking up the tab, and that any questions arising would be successfully negotiated by Harold. His reasoning was simple—the fracas was as ordinary as anything ever seen at an Irish or Polish wedding, for a start, and many hillbilly ones as well. Second, the necessity of the deduction (not the expense, but he hurdled that without breaking stride) was that it was our money, not the government's, and that was it, sum and substance, although we never did go back to that hotel.

But what of Susan and the lobster, you say. Wasn't that where we started? OK. When Susan and I returned from our honeymoon in Paris and Le Cote d'Azur, we came back to a newly purchased Central Park West pre-war co-op apartment that had not yet been incinerated in the Dave Bicks fire, but for which we had planned some renovations. The first one was to take the wall down between the living room, on the west side of the apartment-- looking over the roof of the Museum of Natural History and the first bedroom-- so we could double the size of the spectacular view past the museum to the park and several pre-war architectural masterpieces in that direction. Our super knew a man who specialized in this simple work. First, knock down the wall of thin cinderblocks with a sledge hammer.

Then even up the ends of the former wall with the other attendant walls and votre chateau est complet. Since the man was non-union and had a weekday job, he would have to do this on a Sunday, but it was a one-day task and the loud part would go quite quickly. Being a 7th Day Adventist, he didn't work Saturdays, so Sunday was the only day he was free.

We had returned, that Friday, to learn that part of the deal was for us to acquire a galvanized ten gallon wash tub, some number of bags of plaster and lime, four "corner beams," and a step ladder. Part of the scheme was for him to show up with only his bag of tools to avoid suspicion from the weekend staff, who were vigilant about keeping non-union workers at bay. So the next morning, Saturday, we rented a station wagon (this was long before SUVs), went to the recommended vendors to pick up the goods, got the stuff up to the apartment, which was half empty at that point because we hadn't fully moved in yet, and got the super to come up and assure us that everything was all set. At this point he told us that the plaster and lime needed to be mixed in the washtub, then covered with a wet cloth overnight, so the plaster would be ready for the man to use when he came in the next morning.

As it happened, we were due at an afternoon wedding and reception at the Plaza Hotel that same day, so we were more than a little nonplussed. Our super explained how to do it, amazed that we weren't intimately familiar with such a basic process, and assured us that we could actually accomplish the task quickly. After we got back from the reception and before going to bed. The wedding involved a former LeBoeuf secretary named Lisa Radoyevich—aka "Radish," a delightful young lady whose father, Boris Radoyevich, was a stalwart Republican Long Island friend of Randall LeBoeuf's, and a local bankruptcy judge. Lisa had attended the Katherine Gibbs School of Secretarial Something and lived in a hotel solely for students attending Katy Gibbs. Through her own set of connections, she had then immediately been taken on by our firm and put to work for Taylor Briggs. Radish was very bright, highly energetic and an all-around "good scout," as the saying went. Boris's plan had obviously been to get her married into the LeBoeuf family, as it were. But he also had the good sense to get her joined up in the Upper East Side Manhattan Republican Club, which was ultimately where she found her husband. Even better, he provided her with a much more appropriate last name, his own name being Tim Sweet.

I have never understood the expression about this being where the cheese binds, but it seems appropriate here, because part of Lisa's sojourn at the firm had included several sorties through the ranks of the partners, her boss of course, but also several of the younger ones, including yours truly (for not that long a time—it was the 70's, hey!? But nevertheless). By the time we had recovered from the news on the plaster front, taken a half hour nap to compensate for still being on Paris time, gotten properly gussied up and managed to wrangle a cab to the Plaza, the tension had started to build. Susan had wanted to take a pass on the wedding, but I had remained a big fan of Radish and ended up with a warm and happy relationship with her, a genuine friendship that lasted long past her wedding, so I was determined to go.

Our notion, the event being at the Plaza, and the East Side Republican Club being in essence the home team, was that we'd be offered some cucumber sandwiches and modest canapes, perhaps devilled eggs, a couple of glasses of Long Island champagne, the wedding cake, and then off we would all go back to our individual hidey-holes. What ensued was otherwise. Boris laid it on thick and put all of Yugoslavia, as it then was, on display. Lots of hors d'oeuvres, champagne and wine, a sit-down dinner with Balkan delicacies and staples, plenty of potatoes, a steamship round of beef, and finally the cake. The dinner took hours, we ate and drank our fill, having no alternative. But why would you want one? So we forgot all about the two lobsters and two bottles of champagne we had bought earlier that day-- on our rounds through the world of interior construction-- and that even now lay in our refrigerator.

Finally, we floated home, with darkness looming and very little lighting available in our apartment, getting grouchier with each flip of the meter as we faced our remaining endeavor. We agreed the lobsters were a lost cause, acknowledging that Boris's noble repast had carried the day, got down to our skivvies and started preparing the water, the plaster and the lime for their amalgamation. In our current state of exhausted and inebriated inexperience in this realm, and working in near darkness, we kept bumping into each other while lugging the bags around, only barely remembering to put a shower curtain down to protect the parquet in the entry hall.

Meanwhile, the focus shifted from the work at hand to how long Radish and I had interacted, what I had said to the bride during my turn on the dance floor, and so on, right down the hill with Jack and Jill. Finally, not to be denied in my

determination to get this part of the job done, I plunged my bare hands into the mixture, smoothing out the lumps and stirring it vigorously to insure that it would move easily from tub to trowel to wall. Not that long into the exercise, I felt the heat begin to build as I stirred and the chemistry of merger began in earnest. A huge amount, to say the least, of heat energy is released when you create the chemical reaction that produces plaster. By the time I was done, I had 8 or 9 half dollar sized blisters on my hands, wrists and forearms, which I then displayed with venomous pride to the woman I had promised not very long before to love, honor and cherish forever.

Dawn came, as it repeatedly insists on doing. The lack of curtains and our big windows facing the park denied further slumber, so we woke up, managed somehow to laugh about the whole previous day, and became friends again. The wall man was due in a little over an hour, designed to coincide with the neighbors heading off to church or brunch if we were lucky, and we were starved. Susan is a great cook and we had done some other provisioning of the refrigerator, so we headed out to the kitchen to do up some eggs and toast before the workman came.

First, we pulled the bag with the lobsters out, sure that they had perished and been rendered inedible. I put it down on the kitchen counter and we looked at it momentarily with mutual sighs. Then something moved within, and it fell over "KERPLUNK!" We froze for a second, but then the inevitable sheepish, gleeful grins got themselves plastered on our faces, followed by a whirlwind of water heating, lemon slicing, butter drawing, table setting, champagne popping, toasting both the French bread and each other-- which finally brought us, grinning from ear to ear, tying each other's plastic bibs from the fish store tightly in the back and sitting down to a return from a honeymoon in Paris breakfast that couldn't be beat, as Arlo Guthrie once notably sang or drawled.

Of course this took more time than we had allowed, and the workman came when we were about halfway through. We took off the bibs, shook his hand, pointed at the wall to be removed, the corner beams, which were slender 12 foot long (the length of the walls from floor to ceiling) right angles of thin steel to make the corners of the walls flush and square, left him to his work, and went back to our breakfast. So we went on that morning, living our parallel lives, somewhat abashed at the idea that this man had come all the way from Brooklyn on the subway to see how people on Central Park West went about having their Sunday breakfasts-- always involving champagne it would seem and yes, at last, delicious, fresh,

fantastic boiled lobster at its best! Mel Brooks could not have done it better, although he probably wouldn't have done it that way in the first place.

.....

But wait, as they say in the commercials for the triple track storm and screen window sets, the Veg-O-Matics, the 32 various length sets of kitchen knives, and the easy-to-put-together various sized sheds for your lawn tools, snow blowers and badminton and croquet sets—wait, there's more! And it features the most famous lobster of all, at least in this context.

Susan is the product of your typical marriage between a Sicilian doctor and a Welsh nurse whose father was a doctor. Of course there is no such typical marriage, or perhaps not more than one, but it did give rise to some imagination and amusement along the way. Her maternal grandfather, also a doctor, had a lovely house with a circular driveway in front that he loved and kept in fresh white gravel as long as he lived there, despite his wife's endless complaints about how the cars threw the stones into the flower beds, which had to be picked out, by her, piece by piece every week. When she woke up one morning and found that he had died in his sleep, she reached for the phone and called the paving company to come and put in the asphalt before she called the funeral home to come and haul him away. A sister of Grandma's, also Welsh, lived alone for many years after her husband died, including some with a bit of dementia. This was enlivened by two of her grandsons in their late teens dressing up, like old Welsh ladies from her Candy Striper coterie, and visiting her for afternoon tea while pretending to be two of her long-departed lady friends. No Facebook and no video games either. But fun to be sure.

The most famous story, however, occurred when she was about 9 or so. She entered her parents' bedroom in the middle of the night, stood at the foot of the bed—don't forget this was the Cold War, when the specter of nuclear annihilation was constantly pushed in our faces to justify the "defense budget"—and awakened her parents with the news that there was a radioactive rabbit in a hatbox in her bedroom closet, and somebody had better do something about it right now! She has always had a commanding presence and a lively imagination, both of which clearly started on the early side.

In the interval between our Christmas party encounter in the Grammercy Park Hotel and the honeymoon lobster homecoming extravaganza, a similar event arose. Our romance was still undercover and in its early months, but I had moved into her one bedroom fourth floor brownstone walkup apartment on West 70th Street in the park block. Please read that sentence twice and figure out where to fit in the comma it must need, because I can't and I need to finish the story. It was a cozy place, with a decent living room and eat-in kitchen, so just enough room for two. Oddly enough, and through no doing of our own, we had been teamed up on several clients, one of which was Hackensack Water, where Adrian Leiby and Doug Hawes had put the two of us together. In this case, it was a first mortgage bond deal, (there's that comma!) and we were due to go effective, price and go to market the next day. Since it was something like the 37th first mortgage bond issuance by the company, the deal had been smooth, the players knew each other and everything seemed to be set for a smooth launch.

In the fashion of that time, we left at the end of the work day, cabbied it over to the financial printer to finalize the prospectus and registration statement, assemble the package, turn it over to them to take it to the SEC in Washington, trigger the effectiveness and do the deal. Also in the usual way, the printers themselves always took a lunch or dinner break around 8 that lasted a couple of hours. That meant you would have no copy to review and sign off on, which meant in turn that the printing company would take the lawyers, the company personnel if any, and the investment bankers out to a nice dinner lasting around two hours, although usually a little bit more-- the dinners were pretty substantial events, and since you were on the glide path by then, a good time could generally be had by all.

On this evening, we were taken to The Palm Steak House, which was about as good as it got. No one from the company was there. The numbers had all been cleared, and all the fine tuning was in the legal end. It was Susan's first time there. When she heard lobster was on the menu, she perked up and showed a keen interest. With a lot of encouragement from the rest of the team, she finally settled on their famous 5 pound lobster. Susan weighed under a hundred pounds herself at this time, so when the boiled beast was presented, she nearly fell off her chair, to a huge round of laughter from the rest of us. Her dinner looked almost as big as she was. She was also, however, true to her commitment, and showed considerable energy and enthusiasm at her task while the rest of us munched our ways through some powerful steak dish or other.

Dinner being done, and just the tidying up around the edges left, I played the partner role to the hilt and announced I'd be heading home, and that Susan would cover the finishing touches. I hopped a taxi back to her place and fell asleep, full of comfort and the satisfaction of a job well done. At around two o'clock I woke up as she finally appeared. She explained that one of the bankers had luckily done a last-time-around check and discovered a mistake in the financial table in the front. That error affected a lot of the numbers, especially the interest coverage ratio, on which the rating of the bonds depended. It was a glitch, to say the least, that had to be corrected or we had no deal.

The company was headquartered in Weehawken, New Jersey, in a tall building that was a perfect replica of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, at the top of the cliff overlooking the New Jersey entrance/exit for the Lincoln Tunnel, close to where Burr did for Hamilton, once and for all—until the musical, that is. The CFO, whose responsibility these numbers ultimately were, lived in suburban Connecticut, an hour and a half away from headquarters. When he got our call, he explained that his papers, which would yield the necessary information, were in his desk at headquarters and that the night watchman spoke only Italian. This was on the speaker phone and a universal groan met the news. But then the CFO laughed and said "Relax and get a brain! My name is not Joe Pope for nothing. We parlez Italiano all the time, this guy and me." In those primitive long ago days, there was no way for the crew at the printer to do anything but wait and try to stay away from the printer's free, high end hooch while the parlay went forward.

An hour went by in virtual silence. Then Joe Pope called and said he had a fax at home and would send the correct numbers down right then. Once checked, the new, corrected, figures were set in place, the new pages cleared, and finally, finally, the package was checked again, signed off on and the night was done.

All of this, without computers and e-mail, is amazing to recall, and I'm not even sure how the financial printers have evolved to stay in business. They were always hugely profitable, as witness the tickets to championship fights, Triple Crown races, elaborate dinners and "nights out on the town," which their salesmen proffered at every opportunity. When Susan told me the story, I recalled my first night of that sort, working for Dave Bicks on a GAC Properties Credit subordinated debenture issue. Dave might differ, but I ended up with a sense that GAC Properties itself had no trouble peddling its retirement real estate in Florida and Arizona whether it was above or below water, and also whether some part or other of the property might

also belong to the National Park System or the Everglades or Sonoran Desert State Park. But I'm sure controls and methods by which an appropriate margin of safety had been established were buried deep in the documents I hadn't really had time to read before being called in on printer duty. That night, Dave had the accountant in Miami, someone named Marty, on the speaker phone in a large conference room at the printer's. The "BarChris" case had just come down from the Supreme Court, and people had become especially antsy about accountants' comfort letters. Ours had not been finalized, so Dave was asking when it would be ready.

Dave and the accountant were properly matched. Dave very New York and authoritative, Marty down south perfectly evasive Miami, each highly comfortable in their own skins and speaking loudly so everyone could hear. It was nearly 8 o'clock, which meant the two hour dinner hour loomed, and Dave was trying to tease out of the accountant his commitment to when we would have "the number" we needed. Finally, after a soliloquy or two about the difficulty of his work and the various steps, checks and double checks it involved, Marty caved in, as it seemed, and said "OK, I know I gotta give you something here, so I'm going to say we will have the number for you by 10:30, maybe a little later but before 11." People around the table smiled and nodded enthusiastically, then Dave responded, saying "That's great Marty, so we'll be back by then for certain. Should we call you or just wait?" Marty was silent for a moment, then he said "No, you just sit tight and wait. But Dave, I think I should tell you. It could be kind of an iffy number." The room erupted for a moment and then, as the noise abated, you could hear Marty laughing as he said "I'm glad everybody's appreciating my sense of humor. Enjoy your dinner. Talk to you later." Very hard to imagine that happening now. Very little Damon Runyon in the world these days.

But with this digression, I almost forgot the lobster, which is where we started and where we need to end. At about 4:30 that morning, me having gone back to sleep for a couple of hours, Susan starts pulling on my shoulder and shaking me. I sit up and ask what the matter is. Her eyes are so wide open I can see their whites clearly in the darkened room. She looks frantic, like someone out of "Wuthering Heights." Then she starts picking with both her hands at something I can't see and almost shouting "That thing. That thing. That thing." This is a hundred year old Manhattan brownstone, so I voice the first thing I can think of and say "Cockroach? Are you talking about a cockroach?" and she responds, almost sobbing, "No, the lobster. The lobster was supposed to be attached to the registration statement as an exhibit and I forgot to include it! I forgot!"

XXIII. NIGHT COURT

I have a good friend, Phil, a classmate from college, math whiz, who used to walk around our small campus wearing a tweed jacket, turtleneck and cavalry tweed slacks, carrying a shoulder holster with a Walter PPK automatic handgun, and kept a boa constrictor in his room, which was a “single” if you didn’t count the snake.

After law school in New York, he started to write spy novels in a series based on James Bond. The James Bond novels established the Gold Standard in that genre, to be sure. The Matt Helm spy novels (remember the movies with Dean Martin?) which were derivative of the Bond works, came next. Then came my friend’s versions, which were knock-offs of the Helm capers. When I found out he was using the pen name Chase, I promptly deduced, which he acknowledged, that his plan was to get on the book shelf between Raymond Chandler and Agatha Christie. His work had a propensity to go high and low at the same time, so that an international conference about the law of the sea would lead directly to a fictional threesome involving African, Nordic and Brazilian participants, two of whom later died, one strangled by—yes, a boa, with a denouement at Windows on the World .

Later he graduated to the Scott Turow-style courtroom dramas with murder as the subject. These were a definite step up and earned him nice chunks of change with paperback top ten best sellers and one that got excellent reviews and sold well in hardcover. He was and is a good friend, with a puckish sense of humor that allowed him to put my last name second on the letterhead of the law firm where the defendant was also a senior partner, and to give all the characters in one work first and last names of dorms and classroom buildings at the University we both graduated from.

This story actually begins when he called me up to cancel a lunch, something we did 4 or 5 times a year, because the chief of the criminal division of the Manhattan DA’s office had found an opening in his own lunch schedule for that same spot. “I have to go, you know,” he said. “He doesn’t get free that often, and God forbid I should have to make up these stories for the books myself.”

Then, two weeks later, he called me in the afternoon and asked if I could have drinks with him at the Players’ Club on Gramercy Square, founded by Edwin Booth, brother of John Wilkes, and then go on to dinner at the National Arts Club for the

quarterly meeting of the New York Chapter of the Mystery Writers of America. Our host for drinks would be a good friend of his who had been awarded several Edgars, the mystery writer's Oscar, and was a favorite of mine. So I gave him a quick yes and the game was on. The famous writer and the Players' Club with its portraits of famous actors and stage paraphernalia were outstanding, but the dinner otherwise.

I had expected lively repartee about plots, methods of murder, odd ball protagonists and villains and detective methods I could pass on to my own family and friends, but it was all about rotten agents, lying publishers, getting cheated on royalties, shelf space, advertising budgets—a perfect snoozeroo! So I felt a little let down as we departed, but then Phil said that our mutual companion was working on a book that involved an extensive episode in night court, and had never been to a session, so he wanted to go down to Foley Square and watch some of the proceedings. Did I want to go? I was newly divorced and at loose ends for the moment, so anything seemed better than going back to my bachelor digs and having one or two more drinks I didn't need to help me get to sleep.

So we taxied down. With three of us in the cab, the level of conversation lifted quite a bit—we also had the dinner and our companions to dissect and patronize in the way one almost always does after a gathering with strangers. I had come straight from the office, with my attaché case and camel hair overcoat, suitable for the season. So, because I was the one practicing lawyer in the group, I led the way up the stairs and into the building. The lobby was empty except for a folding cafeteria table to empty your pockets into the plastic bowls and a metal detector to walk through, with several bailiffs or officers of the court manning the station in their navy slacks, white shirts, ties and gold-looking badges.

The first man behind the table was a solidly built black man of about 35. As I put my case down and started emptying my pockets he leaned toward me with a funny smile and said “Would you by any chance be a lawyer?” I laughed and responded that he shouldn't let my camel coat, Brooks Brother's attaché case and Paul Stuart suit, shirt and tie mislead him, and we both chuckled. Then he said “Would you happen to be a lawyer named John Michael Parish, by any chance?” My jaw literally dropped and then he said “Harold Johnson, man! How are you Mr. Parish? So good to see you,” and we both zipped to the end of the table and engaged in a vigorous bear hug for a bit.

Harold had been the head of the mail room, at the law firm I was part of for over 20 years, when I first got out of law school. He was a delightful guy, full of energy and good cheer, very competent at his job and respected by both the staff and the lawyers. He became part of our basketball team—don't be surprised if I told you he was the only "non-white" player, although more than one opponent snickered at me when they saw him play, asking if that was the best we could do in the way of a black ringer. But Harold was lively, fun and no one ever questioned or regretted having him with us. I had lost track of him over the years, and I now learned that he had gotten his college degree at John Jay, the police university sponsored by the city and gone right into the civil service in this respect. I told him he looked great in his uniform and we slapped each other on the shoulder as I introduced my friends and told him about our mission.

We got the tour deluxe. He introduced us to everyone all the way into the courtroom, told us who did what, then wished us well and said he had to get back to his post but how great it was to see me again and meet my friends. So we settled in to watch. It was a quiet moment, so the judge picked up her hardcover copy of "The Joy Luck Club," and we eyeballed various detainees, sitting together and surrounded by real cops, and speculated about the goings on until the door burst open and about 30 "ladies of the boulevard" bounced in, cuffed and with several long chains linking them. They were singing and doing a Conga line as best they could. The dresses, if you could call them that, make-up, giant wigs and hair styles, and high heels made for a lively down-market Copacabana event as the policemen led them up in front of the judge, who put down her book, took off her glasses and leaned forward to hear the Assistant DA of the evening read off the charges.

That was enough for our gang and we thanked Harold on the way out, one more hug and a high five, with no idea that I'd be back in less than three weeks. I did 40 years of corporate law with major Wall Street firms and appeared in court fewer than 10 times, always as co-counsel with a real litigator to keep him or her on track with the facts. Litigators are said, for more reason than one, to have "bathtub minds." This means they pour the facts of the case into the tub, which represents what they know of the law and courtroom tactics et al, and when the case is over they pull the plug and start over again. So when they stumble, as they often do, on whether they are trying a merger case or an air rights conflict, someone has to make a hand motion of either the two hands interlocking or like what birds do when they do anything interesting.

But once again, my life proved to be what happened while I was making plans otherwise. Stopping by my old apartment to pick up my children for an overnight, I received to my surprise a call from my office saying I had an urgent voice mail. When I dialed in, I found a message from a colleague and close friend of one of my very favorite client, an interesting character who had sent me a lot of work and with whom I had almost a brotherly relationship. Where his funny bone should have been, as in my case, he had a wild and crazy bone instead, and the deals were always fun and different. In one case it allowed me to stay in a Holiday Inn in downtown Jackson, Mississippi, so that on the way down in the elevator to breakfast I met for the first and only time in my life a young adult, a Caucasian, wearing a floppy straw hat, no shirt or shoes, and newish overalls cross-hitched in the back. That's all I can remember since they put him over by the window after we had ridden in silence without a gesture of recognition. So Marc had become a dear friend, a buddy in fact, as well as a source of well-paying and interesting work and travel.

Quickly, he was an investment banker who started at Goldman after a Harvard MBA. Before that, he majored in piano and accounting and served as a walk-on member of a basketball team that went to the Final Four and lost to either Larry Bird's team or Magic Johnson's in the semi-finals. He was 6'6" and athletic, with cafe au lait skin and blue eyes. Back then, I described him as a better looking and smarter O.J. Simpson, but that's fallen off his resume and characterization for obvious reasons. He once told me about coming home from the firm Christmas party with three of the women from there, making—it had already been a long night—two dear friends and one permanent enemy. That should be all the background you need, except that while at Harvard he had shared an apartment with four female classmates from Latin America. He ended up some years later married to the one from Mexico, whose father was one of the 99 richest Mexicans (not one of the Nine Rich Mexicans—they only marry each other).

But in this case he was, the message related, in Manhattan Central Booking, which meant The Tombs, adjacent to Night Court, and needed to get out so he could show up for work the next day. The key was that his employer not find out about this and he needed not only to be released, but to get some help cooking up a cover story and finding a "Real Lawyer," who could hopefully get all this mess to go away with minimal consequences. There had been property damage, but no third party involvement, I learned from the message, so Marc was hopeful that I could do the same fine job he had come to expect from me.

The kids and my future ex agreed that I needed to reschedule the overnight and leap into action, on the condition I tell them the whole story when it had resolved itself, and I was downstairs in the subway nearby in less than five minutes. I popped up at Foley Square in about 20 minutes, the dark just beginning to descend on the city, and walked across the square to the courthouse, to find my lucky charm, Harold, standing in front of the lunch wagon out by the curb paying for his sandwich and 7-Up and pocketing his change. I caught him before he could turn around, gave him a strong but tender shoulder rub on both sides of his well-muscled neck, leaned forward and whispered in his ear. "So good to see you again, my good man. This time we've got some work to do."

No hugs or high fives this time—he had something in each hand and I was already pushing him up the steps. In we went, whizzing thru the metal detector and down the hall, where he introduced me to the clerk of the court, showed me how to fill out the forms necessary to enter an appearance and be recognized and accepted as an attorney and counsellor at law in the State and County of New York. In a remarkably short period of time he had also introduced me to the head bailiff, who conferred with a junior bailiff who had retrieved Marc from his holding cell. I shook his hand, hugged him and we started to sit down. Before we got that far, the head bailiff took me by the shoulder, saying that the Asst. DA on the other side of the courtroom would like a word from me first. I pulled out my business card, handed it to him, said I'd be right behind him and motioned to Marc to be seated and hang tight until I could talk to him.

I doubt that any ADA looks forward to catching a Night Court assignment, where you are the best dressed and groomed person in the room by far and probably have a considerable amount of trouble understanding what most of the other people in the courtroom are trying to say. This gentleman fully fit the picture. As I approached his desk, he held out my card between the fingers of his left hand and thumped it with the thumb and middle finger of his right, stopping for a moment to shake my extended hand while he said "LeBoeuf, Lamb, Leiby Ampersand MacRae! Well, how-di-do, Mr. Parish and company. I don't quite know what to say. You know we get very few PRIVATE COUNSEL in these chambers. How may I help you?" Once he'd unloaded whatever hostility that represented, he was actually very civil and helpful, agreeing right away to release Marc into my custody and getting the judge to set a return date I could pass on to the Real Lawyer who would do the Real Lawyering. After signing the papers he put in front of me, I surveyed the courtroom before returning to collect Marc and noticed that the ADA,

yours truly and a pallid thirtyish looking man in an olive green raincoat were the only people not of color. Marc told me on the way out that the man was an airline pilot who had fallen behind on his alimony and child support, and nobody's happy camper at that point because he'd just missed his flight without being able to contact the airline and was sure he would lose his job now on top of everything else.

We sat down several minutes later in a dimly lit Italian "red sauce" joint two blocks from Foley Square. The City never sleeps, and neither do its constituent parts, lawyers and clients included, along with cooks, waiters, bartenders and cloak room attendants, known as hat check girls in times that were both worse and better than our own. I ordered a large Pellegrino and a bottle of red not enshrouded in straw or pluggable by means of a candle and looked at him. I still hadn't stopped to see what the charges were-- that would occur when it occurred—and simply said "Are we having fun, or what?"

He took a healthy drink of his water, looked me in the eye and said, slowly in his still North Side of Chicago accent—"You are the Dog. No. You are the Super Dog! How did you get that done so fast? I thought I'd be there for a week, like that poor pilot chump. And when I finally got out they'd give me a shoeshine box and a subway token!"

"A," I said, "I acted like I knew something, which I often do in fact, although less and less frequently, and B, the subway token went out with Lindsay, almost before you were born. Why are we here? Did you do something? Does someone want to get you for something you already did, or were going to do, or he or she thought you might possibly do if you got the chance? Whose wife did you screw without permission? Whose expense account did you countersign without looking at the bar bill from the hooker establishment? Fly high as the night—but you're still a crow on probation. Look at the menu. How might I help you at the moment? Give it to me baby. I know it's going to be good. It always is with you. "

We were done with dinner by the time he finished his saga, so here's the boiled down version. After the kids were born, his wife—the Mexican heiress with the MBA from Harvard—decided she was bored and wanted to get back into the action of the business world and run something of her own. They had a live-in nanny already, so she poked around, decided the travel agency business looked good because there were a lot of travel benefits and not too much heavy lifting. They located a veteran of the business, a guy who even helped them find a good deal on

14th Street, close to their home in the West Village, to operate out of. Marc devoted his latest bonus to the project and they were off and flying.

Marc was a free-wheeling guy, as noted previously, and believed his wife knew about and accepted the so-called 300 mile rule, which involved any infidelity committed on most business trips being outside the marriage contract, especially with stewardesses and waitresses, cocktail or otherwise. The night before last his wife had been in Chicago with her second in command checking out hotels and restaurants in connection with putting together a package group tour. As he sat in his armchair watching some sports event on TV he was overcome by an uncomfortable feeling that led him to the 14th Street office, then into her desk and computer, where he found conclusive evidence that she believed the 300 mile rule was as much sauce for the goose as for the gander. The crowning blow was the e-mail reminiscing about their night in the Warsaw Hilton where she realized that she had never known there could be so many uses for KY jelly!

Marc lost it. He found a hammer in a tool kit and smashed all the computer monitors, opened the extensive wet bar and threw liquor bottles all over the room, breaking the bottles and anything they hit, overturned all the chairs, tipped over file cabinets and demolished whatever else he could as a very fit and athletic 40 year old impersonating a bull elephant in “Musth,” as it is known in Tanganyika and similar venues. Then he took a cab home, poured himself a large scotch on the rocks, sat back down in his chair and knocked back a large slug.

Before he could even feel the fresh burn in his belly, a scream rang out on the street right outside his living room, a woman calling frantically for help from someone. He jumped up, rushed out his front door and the front door of the small co-op he lived in, looked down the street and saw, no more than 30 feet away, a woman being manhandled by two good-sized men. He ran up behind the one with his back turned and clouted him on the side of his head, knocking him down with his head hitting the sidewalk with full force. The other one had obtained a firm grip on her handbag and was shoving her with his free hand, which offered Marc a perfect target for a haymaker right in the kisser and a kick in the ribs for each of them to make sure they stayed down.

“It’s okay, hon, it’s okay,” he said to the woman, wrapping his arm around her and stomping on the knees of the assailants to further neutralize them. I did tell you he was from Chicago and played in the Final Four in college, right? Now you know I’m telling it like it was. Everything flashed by in an instant after that—he

recognized the woman as his upstairs neighbor, a squad car showed up in record time, he gave one of the cops the recap and their info to follow up, was allowed to return to their building and escorted the lady, who was still crying and hugging him and thanking him for saving her. He saw her to her door, they had a big hug and he patted her shoulder and went back to his Scotch.

But after that lightning bolt of adrenalin, the alcohol had no appeal. He felt like he was on fire, literally, and had to “do something.” In times of stress, we often regress is a maxim I know the truth of, and Marc did just that. He grabbed his Burberry trench-coat, standard issue for Wall Street types, went outside, hailed a cab and went back to the “scene of the crime.” As he told me, all he could think of was that there must be something in the travel agency that he hadn’t broken, and he very much needed to take care of that omission.

The building’s super had been awakened from his early slumbers by the noise on the second floor, so Marc was greeted as he walked in by that man and 6 cops and plainclothes detectives. He looked at them, opened his arms, and said, believe it or not “I’m did that.” One of the few available lines which gives the attorney in question zilch to work with.

Once in the holding cell in The Tombs, things got much better. Except for the pilot with the alimony problem, he was the only one there wearing more than a thin jacket, and everyone else was black too. His Burberry spoke for itself, and when he told his story—still pumped up as he was—he got nothing but sympathy, including one guy who said he’d like to “take your wife out, just to stay in practice,” an expression that got a resounding “YEAH,” from the others. For whatever reason, the time of night being about 4 am, his A list wardrobe or whatever, they had failed to discover his cell phone, a flip phone, but that was before the revolution that will now imprison and enslave us until the end of time. There was a pay phone outside the cell, but the line was endless and few had any money.

He offered his phone’s use to everyone, but only after he had left a short, cryptic message for his wife and the kids’ nanny and put an SOS out to his friend who had called me. Marc knew he could just call in sick, and did, for a day.

Then he curled up and caught some Zzzz’s, after which you know most of the rest already. The ADA released him into my custody, and the next day I got one of my partners, a former Assistant US Attorney in Manhattan, to represent him, and my own go to guy worked out an ACD—Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal.

That means if you keep your nose clean for two years or so, the docket is sealed forever and everything goes away. A perfect ending to the nightmare. Marc's bonus several years previous had paid for the set-up of the beloved travel business. And if there is one thing true in America, for sure it's that property trumps (pardon the expression and desecration of that verb) everything else, and that it subsumes, within any version of what it might mean, the right to destroy it pretty close to however you want, as long as you don't over-destroy someone else's at the same time.

Nobody but George W. is born on third base and believes firmly he hit a triple to get there. So I want to acknowledge the enormous leg up I got from my dear friend Phil, and from the rock solid Harold Johnson, hopefully retired and playing pick-up basketball in some gym in the Piedmont section (by far the best educated and least racist part) of North Carolina. Marc and his wife divorced with reasonable "friendliness." They were clearly both ready for a change, but for sure loved their kids. Also, both were well-off, well-educated and, as MBAs, had no trouble being cold-blooded about the whole contretemps. Not the worst thing, by any means.

Sometime later, Marc told me over dinner that a producer friend was wanting to make a TV movie on the subject of object. Denzel was on the cap around doing it so but about 55-45 in his thinking. But meanwhile Marc wanted to know about my role. I said either Woody Allen or Kevin Costner, so we shook proeses Costner, but the movie never got made. Even more, I want to thank my best buddy for life and my very best client ever—after amount one telecomm deal he threw the after-party up on a blues joint in Chicago on Rusk Street and then danced out about 3 a.m. -- and I mean bigtime for assured danced, a danced, slapping high fives and doing spins I still can't believe I pulled off—laughing like happy fools--the one and only Marc. Among other things, without him there would have been no story for me to write. This way is better.

XXV. HOCKEY GOALIES

I was lucky enough to get an invitation before the last Winter Olympics to a Yale Law School breakfast seminar hosted at a fancy Manhattan law firm, elegant is the word most often associated with its name, in a conference room located in the high 40's as to floors and with great views south from Midtown. The subject was,

understandably enough, rules and judges at Olympic games in general, and the host was a senior partner who had been such a judge at four or five previous Olympiads. Not a judge of events, but of eligibility, rules violations and disqualifications. He was joined on the panel by Mike Richter, an Olympic goalie for the USA and the goalie on the New York Ranger team that in 1994 won the first Ranger Stanley Cup since 1937, along with Sarah Hughes, the figure-skating gold medalist at the Salt Lake City games. Richter then retired and got his degree from Yale but his professional status prevented him from displaying his talents on the rink designed by Eero Saarinen and known as The Yale Whale for its shape.

If you remember the Salt Lake City games, you should also recall Sarah's unbelievably great performance that won the top spot. She was on fire during her whole program and projected phenomenally right through the TV screen as if she were in the room.

In my former marriage, we had a joke about exceptions to the contract that started with Liam Neeson (but only if he showed up in a tux, inside a stretch limo, with a dozen long-stemmed red roses and Veuve Cliquot on ice for the ride to the Rainbow Room for dinner and a show). Nicole Kidman joined the list without any qualifications or requirements whatsoever, based on her performance in "To Die For," and then Sarah, solely based on that incredible exhibition of energy, glamor and talent. The one wrinkle in that case was activation of the exemption necessitated her reaching the age of consent, since she was only 16 when she won the big one. As of that breakfast, she had done just that in the course of graduating from Yale despite her father having been Cornell's hockey captain and, I believe, an Olympian himself.

In the meantime, however, she had been linked in the newspapers with Andrew Giuliani. While in high school, Andrew had been the place kicker on a nationally ranked football team fielded by St. Joseph's in far northern New Jersey, where he presumably lived with his mother. In order to protect the precious leg, he was driven onto the field in a golf cart whenever he attempted a field goal or extra point. Then he went to Duke and managed to get kicked off the golf team when he didn't qualify for one of the six playing positions, but only as a backup and protested vociferously and rudely. Wonder where he got that from, right? But that, long before his father shaming himself publicly as the cartoon lawyer for a cartoon

president, had been enough for me to drop Sarah. This would have made a difference if I'd still been married or if there was an ice cube's chance in hell that anything would come of it, but I was glad to stand by my principles. Was glad, that is, because when I entered the room and found a seat not far from and with a good view of HER!

The lawyer host did the introductions and, having been in the seats for her famous performance, lit the torch again with his description of how clear it had been, down to the soles of their feet, to everyone in the arena and watching on TV that she was the winner. He spoke with some brevity, and Richter a bit longer. Then Sarah took over again and blew away the entire room full of snooty Ivy League graduates of the best law school in the history of the galaxy. To say that she had all of us eating out of her hand and made us each feel as if she was the only person in the room is in no way an overstatement. She ruled. She blazed with a pure white flame that was hypnotic. I am still, some time later, unsure if I should just cave in and put her back on the list or insist that she break up with Andrew as a condition. I really want her to dump him in the worst way (both the want and the dump!).

The meeting adjourned to considerable applause with handshakes among the panelists and smiles upon smiles, and the good-sized crowd headed for the elevators and a painful time to return to ordinary life. Ever alert for bathroom break opportunities, I excused myself and headed for the men's room where, at the urinal for the disabled and the very rare 10 year old male visitors at this sky temple of the law, I found Mike Richter's son clad in a Rangers' jersey with the name Lundqvist on the back above the number. Henrik Lundqvist is the current goalie for the Rangers.

In addition, the Richter family and I shared a garage with several other Upper West Siders and I had seen them often, going or coming home from wherever their weekend retreat might be. I had seen the family in the audience at the breakfast, so there was no doubt about it. As I stood next to him, I said the first thing that came into my head, which was "You don't look much like a Lundqvist!" He turned his head my way and gave me a grin so adorable I thought maybe he was related to Sarah Hughes, but then again his mom is totally cute and Mike has a nice leprechaun look about him as well, so I guess it was all home grown. We then turned to the basins to wash our hands, and I got exactly what I had been hoping

for. Like a true hockey player, young Mr. Richter dried his hands thoroughly on the front of his jersey, both sides, smiled at me again and headed out to join his family.

XXVI. HELL ON A HOT NIGHT

My son is married to a full-blooded Navajo woman who is deeply involved in tribal and environmental matters, as are her parents. His two daughters have Native American names, Tohaana (Guardian of the waters) and Alowaan (Song). He came into being, and remains, the son of two New York City lawyers who practiced finance law for a large Wall Street firm, where they met, and Columbia University, where his mom spent more than half of her career. So, he made sure both their names had a Triple A rating, if you look back to earlier in this paragraph. I was the only one who picked up on it, but he confirmed my hypothesis. This is, however, the lead-in to a Woody Allen story, so I've got to cut to the chase and segue to the name Bayard Chapin.

Bayard has a two million dollar name. He worked for me and other partners at a law firm that included the name of a man who had been Secretary of War for both Presidents Roosevelt, both of them. It was also where Felix Frankfurter, the notable Supreme Court Justice and Harvard Law School Professor, was the first Jewish lawyer, which would have been back in the first term of Woodrow Wilson as President, if you can believe that. An unusual and distinguished place I enjoyed and appreciated in many ways, without ever feeling thoroughly integrated there.

There are a lot of Bayard names around Manhattan, including a street now part of Chinatown, and a building on Bleecker Street that is the only work in NYC done by the great 19th century architect Louis Sullivan, appropriately named The Bayard Building. The Bayard family are descendants of Alexis Irene Du Pont, the founder of the DuPont enterprise. A number of US Senators, Governors and Lieutenant Governors, as well as board members of that company, are closely related to the Bayard of whom we speak here. A major street in Princeton bears that name as well.

And then there is Miss Chapin's School, still near Gracie Mansion where the mayors lived before Bloomberg, who bunked with his long-time girlfriend in the house next to the one his ex-wife and daughters lived in. Miss Chapin made a name for herself

in the early 20's at the Fifth Avenue girls' school where she became principal, then struck out for mayoral domain and proprietorship near the East River. To show you what she was made of, she insisted on buying the air rights of the surrounding properties, so her school would always have good light and an estuarial sea breeze for her girls. Jackie O and Stockard Channing, plus all the granddaughters of the Havemeyer family, who founded American Sugar in 1807 (the factory being located just on the Brooklyn side of the East River) and somewhat less than 200 years later gave hundreds of millions of dollars of French Impressionist paintings to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After that donation, they sold off hundreds of millions of dollars more at Sotheby's or Christie's, while watching the auction from behind a large, permanent one way mirror, sipping champagne and nibbling on foie gras.

OK, maybe Bayard's name was a 5 million dollar moniker. He was a fine guy who had more to him than his high net worth relatives and ancestors-- a good worker and a reliable team member. So when he got engaged to be married at the very appropriate age of just under 30, my wife and I were on the invitation list. That list, as I learned, was separate and apart from invitations to the wedding and reception to be held several months later. His wife-to-be was herself well-credentialed and lovely in every way, which I saw for myself when I arrived for the event, at the Cosmopolitan Club, between Park and Lexington and happily close to Bloomingdale's.

I had done my homework the day before. Since this was a club I had never heard of or visited, but knowing Bayard as I did-- and considering the various glittery names-- I wanted to be prepared and aware of the nature of the venue and the scene I was about to witness. Originally named the Cosmos Club, and situated on E. 33rd St in The Gibson Building (as in "Gibson Girls") it was founded in 1909 by governesses but, once their employers took it over, it assumed the more dignified and reserved name it now bears. It also left the neighborhood of Macy's and Gimbel's, and the all too common Empire State Building, moving up closer to Bloomingdale's and the beginning blocks of the prime Upper East Side residential sector.

Among many distinguished members were early suffragettes, other social activists and household names such as Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (Nelson's and David's

mother). It is irresistible at this point not to mention that when the original, ultimately tragic World Trade Center was built, it was done to get Nelson the Republican nomination for president by showing he could win by a large margin in New York State, running for Governor. To accomplish this, he and his brother determined to secure the support of the building trades unions in the City by erecting these two skyscrapers. Nelson got the legislation through to create the proper public authorities for condemnation of what was there at the time, and David, as the head of Chase Manhattan Bank, provided the financing, so the buildings were forever known by union members and certain financial insiders as Nelson and David, with a knowing guffaw often accompanying that phrase. That story ends with Barry Goldwater and involves a consolation prize named after Spiro Agnew.

Woody, eager to take his place on the stage, just elbowed me to redirect myself from that digression, with only one item to be addressed on the subject of the club. It is as lovely as one might imagine, has a fine garden in the back and, since it was a bit of the way into summer, had a kind of white picket fence-ish feeling on the main floor where the party was in full swing when I arrived. Eleanor Roosevelt, Pearl Buck, Willa Cather, Marion Anderson, Ellen Glasgow and Custer's widow were all members as well.

Woody's role, without further ado, involved Bayard's fiancée being his personal executive assistant for a number of years, right out of Finch College, formerly on Upper Park Avenue, from which Tricia Nixon graduated, and where once a week in season, as I learned from a friend who was on the faculty there, lobster salad was the dish of the day. I knew none of this, having an essentially professional relationship with Bayard. This was just a few months after Woody's emergence as a figure of controversy for having "liberated" his young adoptive daughter from the confines of his wife, Mia Farrow's home. Soon-Yi should be the start of a Christmas carol, but of course Woody is Jewish, so there goes that.

I was working down at Battery Park, with a nice view of the Statue of Liberty, and it was quite a warm mid-July day, so my trip up, while earlier than usual, occurred as rush hour hit its first swell. In addition, the only nearby subway went up the West Side, not the East, and you had to either walk 8 blocks crosstown underground or take a bus through Central Park at 66th to get to the club. Which

meant only that I was half an hour late. When I phoned my wife, inside at the party, she said she'd meet me at the front door since the party was packed and she could use some air. I arrived and we had our usual quick huggy kissy thing. As we separated, she grabbed me by the shoulders and said "Guess who's here?" I threw a few random guesses like Hillary, Caroline K, or Mandy Patinkin, always a favorite actor and vocalist.

"No!" she burst out, wiping some of the perspiration from her face and neck. "Soon-Yi! And Woody!" Then she grabbed my arm and we set sail to see this in the round. As we crossed the thresh-hold, she leaned toward me and half-whispered through a giggle "He looks like Hell on a hot night!" Not seeing Bayard or knowing his intended, we bee-lined for the largest group on the dance floor and were rewarded in full by the spectacle. Soon-Yi stood tall, and the sweat flowed over her thinly and smoothly, almost as if it didn't exist to her, but only in the eyes of her beholders. The other Man of the Hour, her consort, hued closely to my wife's description. If you saw the great documentary about his jazz tour of Europe accompanied by her, "Wild Man Blues," you will recall that she was extremely self-assured, ordering him and appropriate others around in a firm clear voice sprinkled with youthful laughter. The recent scandal, the heat, the fact that he really didn't want to be there to begin with-- more than likely she had insisted on going, to show off, plus participate fully in her new role--embodied itself by making him look like a wet mop after a rugged evening's session on the terrazzo entry hall floor of a Newport mansion. A few seconds of that sufficed, so we turned to seek relief from a passing waiter bearing champagne, and his sidekick with the canapes and hors d'oeuvres. We happily loaded up on as much as our little plates could handle, then located the evening's other happy couple and their families and toasted their good fortune and their future lives together.

Angelo Dundee, the wise and resourceful trainer of Muhammad Ali-- who also helped 14 other world champions achieve their goal-- provided the winning strategy for Ali's great comeback win against then champion George Foreman, known as "The Rumble in the Jungle," by sneaking into Foreman's training camp and watching, from a hidden vantage point, Foreman working out with his sparring partners. He noted that Foreman kept his feet somewhat too close together in order to be able to quickstep toward and away from his adversary. He had clearly taken dancing lessons or had similar instruction, since he was slick and comfortable

doing it. What Dundee extracted from seeing this was as follows: that stance left Foreman poorly equipped to withstand a good solid shot to the body, followed by another of the same. Dundee reasoned that two of these blows could cause Foreman to lose his balance, possibly slip trying to keep from falling, and leave himself wide open for a rifle shot to the knicker. He also knew that Foreman expected Ali to float like a butterfly, dance and stick, dance and stick, before trying to sting like a bee, but not to wade in throwing leather like blows from the Hammer of Thor.

So he and Ali worked on that until it became second nature. Being in the Congo, it was certainly a hot night for that spectacle, and the strategy worked to perfection, making Ali again “The Greatest,” in every respect. When Dundee was interviewed, sometime after the fight, he staked his claim to a share of the credit for the upset victory, using the deathless phrase only a Philadelphia Eye-talian could craft—“Because when I see things with my eyes, I See Things.” Having been where I was, and done what I did, I also can make that claim, and I will tell anybody standing still long enough to hear me out that it was something to see, make no mistake about that.

I went down the following day to Bayard’s office and enthusiastically thanked him. I had learned something worth knowing in a general sense, which was that Woody Allen and I were both uninvited to the actual wedding festivities, and my whole conversation with Bayard addressed Woody and Soon-Yi, and nothing more.

XXVIII. THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

One of my best friends is a thorough-going contrarian with a quicksilver mind. Jewish, born and raised on the Upper West Side with a doctor as a father, he became a doctor and then realized it was largely to please his father. So he immediately quit medicine, turned to law school and, after passing the bar, found his way into Big Pharma. He belongs to the NRA because he loves knowing about weapons and shoots only at targets. Finally, he thinks everything is funny, or perhaps has a way of finding everything to be, at bottom, funny, often in highly original ways. At our monthly Chinese lunch group, during one of NYC’s recurrent real estate boom, one of us challenged the group to name any place where prices weren’t rocketing upward. Roger said, with a semi-second’s hesitation “Ramallah.”

If you don't know, that's a Palestinian city in the middle of the West Bank. Is that funny or what?

His continual off-beat analytical methods led him, fairly early in his career, to come up with a solution to a product problem that threatened to bankrupt his employer. The solution was like the purloined letter in the Poe story—it was sitting right in front of everyone, but also too close to home for anyone but Roger to see. In fairly short order he became “the pro from Dover,” like Mr. Wolf in PULP FICTION, who is called in to solve unsolvable problems. For the latter half of his career he had no title and no reporting lines in the company's org chart, because he worked only for the CEO, as an employee without portfolio. For a company as large as his employer, there were always snafus of magnitude to hand over to him, together with possession of the CEO's proxy.

This unusual arrangement was based on two principles. First, unusually in corporate America, someone who did not have a big title, big office or big ego got paid a very handsome sum for solving problems no one else could solve—a good quality to have, but generally underappreciated. Second, since he had no authority other than the kind conferred on a case by case basis, his compensation was exempt from the SEC requirements for disclosure to shareholders in annual reports and proxy statements. Which meant, more importantly, that none of the other officers had any idea how well he was being paid, so he didn't become the subject of a hatchet job or character assassination, but could relish, year in, year out, the amount he made and that no one other than the boss knew about!

His finest hour, in the opinion of many of his friends, however, was outside the corporate ambit—the president of his co-op board in the high 60's on Third Avenue. Being the co-op's leader is often a job avoided at all costs—one chairman of my own co-op actually arranged for his firm to transfer him to London so he could get out of the job. The other side of the coin appears in the form of someone who hasn't risen very high up the corporate or professional ladder, and manages to use this post to satisfy the need for power his occupational post doesn't sate. But negotiating contracts with vendors, getting special perks and services from the staff, and in the worst cases dipping his pen in the company's checking account, i.e. embezzling from his neighbors and friends, seems to plug that hole in his desolate interior.

Roger was more the former than the latter. He had great occupational satisfaction and freedom. Unfortunately, his talent for problem solving and seeing things others couldn't made him the go to guy at home as well as at work. Despite his untoward political leanings, Roger actually did have an active social conscience and enjoyed helping others. So he was elected, once he'd said yes, year after year.

Accordingly, he received a phone call at about 9:01 on a Saturday morning while sitting at his desk and actually going over some building reports and financial materials.

"Mr. Goldstein," a woman's nervous voice was heard to say, "This is Mrs. Meyer in 3B, Apartment 3B." Then silence. "Yes, Mrs. Meyer, how are you today?" Roger responded.

"Terrible, Mr. Goldstein, just terrible. And terrified. I am scared to death and I need you to do something about it right away. Right now."

Roger affected deep concern, sorrow at learning of her plight and a willingness to help however he could, which unleashed a torrent of words in an increasingly agitated and somewhat confused manner. The essence of the situation involved some things known to him, and others that were brand new. Yes, he did know that the tenant in 3A, the apartment next to Mrs. Meyer, was known to everyone but the police to be a drug addict and small time dealer, and that the man's live-in girlfriend was also addicted. The only issues they had previously presented, though, involved playing music too loud and occasionally being a bit late with their maintenance payments. Neither of those was unique in the building so the low level annoyance had been consistently overlooked in the name of peace in the valley.

No, he had not read the newspapers or looked at the morning news on TV. Oh, really, that was interesting. Would she please repeat it. She definitely would. Two nights ago, the couple had apparently waited until after midnight to make a foray into the upstairs unit of the antiques store that had occupied a building three blocks up for decades, with the owner living in the upper portion. The couple were short on funds, desperately short, one might say, and in their drug-addled dementia had decided that the old man who had owned the shop for a very long time must have some money or pawnable items, but preferably money, secreted in the upstairs. Old and weak as he was, it should be a simple matter to surprise him in his bed,

threaten him with severe bodily harm, and cause him to disclose the whereabouts of his hoard, thus enabling the purchase of the chemical necessities that were at the heart of the quest.

So they did as they planned, tying him down on top of his bed, and then, after gagging him to keep his screams as inaudible as possible, but also recognizing that he lived alone, searing the soles of his feet with the flames of a small gas torch of the sort used to caramelize the sugar in the course of preparing a delicious crème brûlée. He was tougher than they had expected, so they pulled down his pajama tops and applied the flame to his gonads. This produced not only hair-raising screams, but a fatal heart attack. No one knew how long he had held out, but the attempts at resuscitation failed completely.

At this point, the tenant in 3A had apparently thought and acted quickly. He realized that there was no bringing the antique dealer back, and only one other witness to the crime. So he picked up the knife they had used to subdue their victim and promptly stabbed his girlfriend in the heart, rendering her beyond rescue. He did a quick and clumsy job of cutting the dealer loose, putting the girlfriend's body on top of the old man's with the knife in both their hands, and skedaddled back home.

It was there that the police found him, well before noon the following day, not having had any trouble attaching the address on the woman's driver's license to her likely abode, with the bonus of finding the tenant himself on his couch with an empty bottle of bourbon and a generally catatonic mien. So he had been arraigned and sequestered at Riker's Island, and the entire city's media was now in full cry on the subject of the foul deed or deeds right out of "Crime and Punishment."

"So," Mrs. Meyer continued, "I want him evicted right now. I won't be able to sleep or hardly even breathe, trying to sleep with my bedroom wall right up against his. You have to help me, Mr. Goldstein! It's your responsibility."

Roger drew a deep breath and exhaled slowly, then took a gulp of his by then rapidly cooling coffee. "Well, Mrs. Meyer, criminal law is by no means a specialty of mine, but I did take several courses in that area as we were all required to do. I also did rather well in the real estate area of the curriculum. So to be honest as well as frank with you, you must know that your neighbor has a proprietary lease on his apartment, as all of us do, and that there are limited causes permitted to

justify eviction. Being arrested is not one of them, in this building or, I believe, any other co-op or condominium in the entire city. You might remember that criminal and civil law are two entirely different legal realms, which gives rise to the criminal code on the one hand, and the civil code on the other.”

“But he did it. He killed them both, and everyone knows it. What if he’s let out on bail and comes back in. I think even seeing him in the hall or the mail room would give me a fatal heart attack right on the spot. Please, Mr. Goldstein, please.”

“Mrs. Meyer, I would like more than anything to solve this problem for you, but several things stand in the way. Everybody may know it, but no one has determined as a matter of law that he did it. Like everyone, he is entitled to a trial before a jury and to present whatever defense he can come up with. Don’t forget the presumption of innocence that every criminal defendant is entitled to. It can only be overturned in the time-honored way I just went over with you.

“Plus, I very much need to add, in a case like this, as you have recounted it to me, the benefit of bail has an exclusion ‘where the act is heinous and the evidence is strong,’ which sounds like you should feel well protected.”

“Oh, Mr. Goldstein, I’m so disappointed in you. Is that the best you can do for me? I’m an old widow and I have no one to protect me. I’m shaking as I talk to you. I can hardly hold the telephone. This is horrible. Please, please, please.”

Roger leaned back, crossed his leg and scratched his ankle, which had on many previous occasions spurred him past the real world into an area something like “The Twilight Zone,” in which entirely different rules applied and solutions no one would ever regard as anything but crazy turned out to have superior applicability and force that the humdrum every day stuff could ever bring to bear.

“Mrs. Meyer, let me try this out on you. I just had a brainstorm. Here is something I can do which I think will solve your problem, which I recognize is a problem for all of us here in the building, come to think of it. I will locate our super and discuss the matter with him. I’m sure he must be, as you are and apparently everyone but me is, familiar with this horrible situation. He has the master key to all of the apartments. We will go into 3A and examine the premises. And if his floor is not, as required by our proprietary lease, 75% carpeted, his butt is out of here, and pronto!” Then, to cut short the inevitable and most likely interminable expressions

of thanks, relief and enshrinement in the Co-Op Chairmen's Hall of Fame, he told her he had to get on with his mission, hung up, and went back to reviewing the building reports and financial statements, confident that, as proved to be the case, he would not hear from her again.