STORIES ALONG THE WAY

Paul T. Owens
Stories Along the Way

by

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About the Cover: Beverly Park of the 1950’s is now, in 2013, The Beverly Center, a high fashion mall located at Beverly and La Cienega Blvds., Los Angeles, CA.
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“Paul T. Owens—a good friend and great writer.”
   Jim Murray, Los Angeles Times
About Paul Owens

Paul T. Owens has written ten books, ranging from humor to sports. He was feature writer for the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. He served as Senior Staff Writer and Public Relations Supervisor for the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee and Coaching Staff Writer for the Dallas Cowboys, and writer/consultant for sports, television and movies.

Mr. Owens also served as Public Service Coordinator for the United States Olympic Committee.

He attended University of Southern California and Columbia University.

His books can be viewed on his website,

There is always a story of someone and someone’s friend or friends, and everyone’s story is the best to someone. As best as they can remember, some collaborative truth, some exactly as it was, without a sign of fiction, even a hint of it.

The following is a story of people who were there as I grew up, from the first kids I played with to the high school queen, early on and then later, several years later—at reunions and in the news of what happened to everyone. It is a generation of coming and going. All that is left is the dancing memories to keep the wolf of insignificance from the door. The purpose was fun, and we only knew that in retrospect. There is no living in the past; it just keeps repeating itself whenever you need it. Right now, there it goes again.

I was fortunate—a life front-loaded growing up in the late 1950s in Beverly Hills—a great plenty, and a well-bred adolescence.

My dad developed a major renovation of Rodeo Drive, building a hotel in the middle of the two-and-a-half-block business area that would become as he had envisioned, a fashion plate for women, business action for men, and a destination tourist spot for the entire world. A universal insignia would mark it as the place to go when coming to California, and the USA.

I watched the street grow from a tiny vein in the small village of Beverly Hills to the resounding vertical strip that roars with a vengeance—high tech art as the feature color of its sales décor. The cozy environment has burgeoned into billboards
for the products and companies they publicize, and the world of people attracted to them attend the display of sophisticated merchandising of the scene as the product. Rodeo Drive is a fashion artistic capital of the world. The new edition of the street and its public spectacle helped create an entire renaissance for Beverly Hills, and another mega universal commercial identity.

Along his way, Dad became friends with Joe DiMaggio and Duke Ellington, who both stayed at the hotel. DiMaggio stayed without fanfare. Dad had a piano sent to Ellington’s penthouse suite for his practice and recitals.

“Remember, it is only two and a half blocks long, and look what happened,” he said just before he died, 35 years after he sold the hotel to a major conglomerate in 1969.

I was born in 1942, parents initiating conception based on the hope that I might survive World War II. We lived in Detroit and came to Los Angeles, California six years later with my younger brother and sister. Two years later my family moved to Beverly Hills. My dad was in the meat business first, than moved onto real estate where he developed homes in Palos Verdes, California, and the hotel on Rodeo Drive. I worked as a laborer on the building of the hotel, a dishwasher and front desk clerk at the hotel during my time at USC, after graduating Beverly Hills High School in June 1960.

The neighborhood was gifted with talent—Doris Day, Ella Fitzgerald, Dean Martin, Johnny Mathis, Danny Thomas, Freddy Martin, Russ Morgan, Dorothy Lamour, Lana Turner, Dinah Shore, Frank Sinatra and Ralph Edwards. Writers Irving Stone, Jerome Kern, and Horace McCoy were there too. Terry Melcher was Doris Day’s son, a DDS, as he was called, and she sang songs written by a man a few blocks from where she lived, Paul Francis Webster.

I taught in Compton, California, and wrote the words and grammar forms of the students in my classes, ethnic black speech patterns. In the summer of 1967 I went to Columbia University to be in their Writers Program and returned to
Compton to continue writing my book with a teacher friend. In 1968, he left for a teaching position at a college in northern California. While visiting him, we attended a conference at Stanford University on education and teaching in divergent neighborhoods. I met a professor who encouraged me to attend Stanford. I told her that based on my past academics, I would not be accepted in their graduate program. She assured me that I would be based on my writing. I applied and was accepted. The next fall I drove to Palo Alto, began to enroll and decided against it. In reflection it was the right thing to do, but in reality I always wish I had. The acceptance letter is framed on my wall. The book was published the following summer.

When I returned to Los Angeles I got a job teaching for four years in Palos Verdes. In 1976, I was fortunate to have a feature article published in the New York Times, and meet an official for the National Football League. We collaborated on a book for a year—and he died just as the book was published. It was as if someone told me that I would meet a man, and the purpose of my life for a year was to help him write a book, for then he would be gone. So it was. While writing the book, I met a coach with the Dallas Cowboys—Ben Agajanian—who hired me to write a biography with him. From that book came an instruction book with the head coach of the Cowboys, Tom Landry. I was also hired to write for the Victor Awards, which would be the basic model for the ESPYs sports award television program.

I continued writing articles for the New York Times, and in 1981, was hired by Peter V. Ueberroth to be Editor, Senior Staff Writer and Public Relations Supervisor for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee. Fun, high-end pressure, and being part of the greatest sports spectacular show on earth. My life was now “middle-loaded.” You get the best job ever, what else is there? I met a man who was running for president of the USA. When I told him that I had worked for the Olympic Games of 1984, he replied. “What else are you going to do. That’s the highest you can go.”
I replied, “At least I am not running for president,” he laughed.

After working for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, and serving as Public Service Coordinator for the United States Olympic Committee in 1987, I started nonprofit work—as a writer for the Junior Blind of America, The City of Hope National Medical Center——cancer care and research, and an international education institution. I was fortunate to have met people who survived the Holocaust, and I helped write their cases for presentation to the Claims Conference Against the German Government.

In the Olympic arena, I helped write the proclamation that reinstated the victories of Jim Thorpe in the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games—Decathlon and Pentathlon—and was there when his children were given his new medals in 1983.

The man representing the company who bought my father’s hotel in 1969 died the following week in Hawaii. His children grew up to be part of the support of a giant tolerance and holocaust museum in the Midwest. I directed them to acquiring research and archives for the museum.

In 2007 I began writing and organizing my own books, some original essays, a compilation of what I had written for the New York Times, excerpts from some of the biographies I assisted others in writing, and my own story.

My story begins here with play. Life is a playground that never ends.
When your purpose is to play,
what else would you want?
Why else would you follow?
Passing the Ball and the Center of Attention

In 1948, at the age of six, Jake Strauss and I threw a football back and forth on a hot summer-baked day in a camp in the desert of southern California, near Palm Springs.

Ten years later, we threw a football as we ran and caught it on the asphalt streets between our houses. We made each other run faster by throwing the ball farther than we thought the other could run to reach it, and were surprised at the speed we had to reach it.

Fifty years later, on a beach of wet hard sand, by rocks and streams that moved into the ocean, we ran and threw a football, the same way we did in 1948, the same running angles, go out and keep going; fake a cut in and flare out into the open, letting the ball make us run faster and faster to catch it. Now 60 years from when we first played, we played again, running the same plays and catching the ball still. Now the hope is that in 70 years and 80 years from the first time, we will continue going out--reaching beyond to catch.

The center position on a football team is the place where all motion begins on the start of each play. The center is the player who throws or snaps the ball under his legs to someone in the backfield. In October 1955, I was the center on the local junior high school football team. On one play, I snapped the ball to our quarterback, Ronnie Weber, who I played with since 1951, and the ball went over his head, and I believe that the ball never has come down. I see the ball going over his head and everyone else running for it every time something in my life does not go well. To me, the ball is still in the air and has not come down for anyone to grab it. I hope someone tells me who has the ball, and where it is so that I can try the play again.
Brooke P., your father invented many things, but not a cover for your open shoulder white dress, which Mike S. looked down when we all stood posed for our junior high school graduation picture.

Joan G. told Phillip D. that she would go steady with him when he asked at the Saturday night dance during the summer between their 8th and 9th grades. He gave her a ring, which she did not wear, appearing at school the following Monday wearing the ring of her boyfriend, John D., who was away at camp. Phillip was never told, and Joan did not speak to him the rest of the summer, but she always wore the ring of John, and had a friend give Phillip his ring back. Several years later, they met by coincidence, and she apologized for her cruel adolescent behavior.
In the spring of 1957, I chose running over attempting to be a football player, and was on the track team at a very small boarding high school 20 miles from my home. The coach of the team was also the coach of the swim team and he kept telling us to keep our heads down when we ran. On one practice run, I ran onto the baseball practice field and into a bench, head down. I broke two bones in my right leg and no one could figure out why I had run into the bench as I was carted off bloodied, the bones visible to those watching. I healed in a few months, and the following year I enrolled in Beverly Hills High School, two miles from home. I was on the track team for a while, while my grades were high enough to make me eligible. You had to do well in school to play on a team.

While on the track team, I got nervously excited when my name was called to be at the starting blocks, and so nervous that I would not come to the beginning of the race. The tension was unbearable, so I stayed on the bench around the corner from the track instead of finishing in front of everyone else. Who needed to see me fail? So, the bench was my savior. The coach told the team that he would not tolerate someone on his team not competing, so I was given recognition for not being at the beginning of a race. I quit the team before I was told that I would be declared ineligible, saving everyone future embarrassment.

My grades did not get better, instead of track to divert me from studying more; I got a girl friend, Francine Lessenberry. Both of us had in common our ability not to succeed at school. Our parents finally forbid us from seeing each other, so we planned to run away. She stayed in our guest house for a few hours until her mother came with her best friend looking for her. My father chased me around the house yelling that I was making her a hostage by storing her where we lived. Hostage was used on television for the acts of criminals, now it was a homegrown word. At least I wasn't in jail.
Twelve years later another woman was in my life. I went with her to a track meet at the high school, and we sat on the bench where I once hid. We then walked out to the track to see that everyone who was supposed to run showed up in their lanes to compete, and I was thankful for that. Someone else had run to fill in for what I had missed.

Francine phoned me 20 years later, after returning from New York with a child and a divorce. We dated again for a while, then separated without a fanfare like in high school, and remained friends. A few years later she remarried, and had another son soon thereafter. When the child was three, Francine was run over walking across a crowded street. Her husband called me to stay with the son while she was in a hospital recovering.

A few days later she fell into a coma and died. At the funeral, her father, the man who forbid me from seeing her in high school, told me, “If you had married her, none of this would have happened.”

What could I say? If I had been a better student, or had run away with her as planned, none of this would have happened either. What could I have said when the biology teacher in high school took me into the laboratory, away from everyone else to tell me how sorry he was that he had to fail me? He was sorrier than I was.

There is a small curved bench of stone where she is buried.

I was asked to attend the funeral of Francine’s mother in 2008 by her two sons. I spoke to her youngest, who was now 27, and told him how wonderful she was. He thanked me, no one had told him before.
DOLORES RESTAURANT
CORNER WILSHIRE AND LA CIENEGA BLVDS.
BEVERLY HILLS, CA 1950S
Chapter 1: Love to Remember—Growing Up in the 1950s

First Car, Oldest Student

Conrad Goodson was the oldest boy in our grade. He was about two years ahead of us, and the first to get his license to drive. And the first to have his own car, a large Pontiac. Parents were happy. He would be the most popular one, with control of taking everyone anywhere.

He used the car to create fear in the playing of not-so-nice games. He took several people to school, with one route—the alley-way, knocking down garbage cans and ash cans. The girls would scream, the boys would hide their heads in their jackets in disbelief that he did it again and again. Goodson got a sports car because his parents were pleased he was such a nice boy, attending school, and not causing any trouble. No more carpool with the alley-driving crew.

Conrad became a businessman at the age of 18, partnering with a friend who had a station wagon. They delivered poultry goods to several neighbors. He teased the children of the families they delivered to by chasing them around their homes, into the backyards, across the streets, throwing eggs at them. No parent complained. “They love it. They watch and laugh. They can’t control their kids, and I punish them for it,” he would tell his partner.

When the partner went away to college, Conrad told everyone on their route that the business would have to dissolve. Conrad took over his father’s business upon graduation, and sold fruits and vegetables, yelling and screaming orders to drivers and making sure that every piece was accounted for. He sold his sports car, and bought a new oversized Cadillac, as a sign that business was always good.
There were cars that were fast, and drivers who raced themselves into popularity and prominence from the speed of the engines and the driver’s ability to increase and control that speed.

Sly and slender, small and slick, Carol Milstein and her boyfriend Gerald Steiner were the perfect reclusive pair who raced in the speed circuit, anyone, any time. There were school records for almost everything. Carol and Gerald set records for going faster on the asphalt streets than anyone could imagine. No back seat, trunk empty, you went faster with less weight. I remember Carol sitting so close to Gerald that she was invisible with the passing speed. The speed of our memory can never out race the wonder of the speed that cruised across our youth. How fast we remember will soon match the speed we watched as they went faster than our imagination could follow.
Chapter 1: Love to Remember—Growing Up in the 1950s

The Girl, the Car, the Marriage and the Death of the Girl

August 1, 1959

Lowered in the front, angled, slanted downward, the 1955 Chevy two-door slowly moved on a deserted road, with four guys from our neighborhood sitting inside tired from a long night of racing the car in a town a few hours away from our neighborhood. The car’s fast engine had been tested and won all of the races.

Without specific directions back to the restaurant where everyone met everyone else in their racing crowd, we were lost and all of us were falling asleep. The car’s lights illuminated a stop sign in the distance, but the rest of life was dark. The driver had a choice at the coming intersection, go left, right, or straight ahead: sleeping, he unknowingly chose straight ahead. The car crept along and through the stop sign, across the road, over a gravel area and down 25 feet of an embankment.

The crash sent the two guys in the back seat forward, one breaking his wrist against the driver’s visor, the other cracking his skull against the driver’s rear view mirror, leaving him with a gash over one eye. The driver had temporary amnesia, and I, the passenger in the front seat, had a gash in my chin. We climbed up the hill behind us and wandered aimlessly for a half-hour, walking off the tension of the shock and wondering who would come for us.

I had a picture of Ronda Berens, a girl who did not have a picture of me, a girl who did not know that she was my phantom girlfriend, whose image in picture form I had become infatuated with; who was sacred to me as a statement to my alienation and fear of the world.

Evan Harris was a friend of one of the guys who was in the back seat and was aware of where we might be, and arrived to help. He took all of us in his truck to the local hospital, and while we were waiting for care, began speaking to me about my
picture of Ronda Berens that was in my wallet. When I told him that she went to his high school and that she did not even know that I existed, that I was only using her for comfort because I had a crush on her, he said nothing, just nodded, and said I was lucky to have someone at this tragic time.

Within a few months, Evan Harris and Ronda Berens were romantically together. He told me that it was only accidental that she was my phantom friend, but I laughed at the irony. Four years later, they were married. I did not know this until Ronda Berens’ graduating class had their 20-year reunion. Friends of mine who knew of my madness with her early on convinced me to go as their guest to the dance and party.

“You have to meet her, even though she is married. I told her about you and she wants to meet you, finally,” one of our mutual friends convinced me.

I went, Ronda was excited, Evan could not stop talking about how he saved everyone’s lives in 1959, and I was given credit for getting them together. True or not, I accepted the

‘55 Chevy, ‘56 Ford, ‘57 Corvette
credit. The following day we joined everyone else at a local park for a family picnic.

The following Tuesday, I got a call from Ronda. She wanted to see me.

“There was such a chemistry between us,” she said, “And, you could see that Evan and I are through. We are getting a big divorce. The happiest we have been is being with you. And, I want to see you.”

“What?” I questioned. “You are married.”

“It’s going to be over real soon. Let’s meet.” she encouraged. “Our kid plays baseball this Thursday. We’ll go, have dinner, and the next day, you and I will get together. Evan is going out of town on business for the weekend and part of next week. He’ll be in New York, so you don’t have to worry.”

How do I get away from this, I asked myself, and then asked myself how do I not go forward and do just what we both want to do. I reasoned Evan would be glad, that someone would make her happy, and she would be gone, out of his life. That reasoning was not as strong as my wanting to be with her, period. I waited to see the divorce papers first, and then could not keep my hands away, but there was so much anger and fighting over everything with Evan that I had to retreat to my fantasy life. It was better and definitely safer.

Ronda and I stayed in contact, she developed breast cancer, and in a few years died. One of her nieces called to tell me and said that Ronda requested that I be a pallbearer. Evan was not named. At the funeral home, Evan and I sat across from each other. He only spoke to his new wife, telling her about me—I overheard him—that I was some guy who Ronda had met and gone with, without mentioning his involvement about the accident, without recognizing me at all, without thanking me for making his divorce easier, and without thanking me for showing him the picture. I, of course, could thank him again for saving us at the accident scene many years before as he went in for the final viewing of Ronda, but decided not to. I smiled at his
current wife, and she smiled back. However, I was not attracted to her as I was to his first wife.

But this is about car culture. We meet because of what happened to a car, and we nurtured our lives as kids growing up because of cars, the foundation of a raw youth toward independence. There was a restaurant in the neighborhood that was based on cars. Food was served while we stayed in our cars. Cars were parked in lanes that were aimed at the restaurant, which was in the middle of a circle. There was a lane behind the cars where other cars moved with people watching those who were eating in their cars, and the people eating were watching those cruising around and around. People got out of their cars and into others, guys piled in for effect, food was consumed as nervous social energy dictated ease with extra double-deck burgers, cherry and vanilla cokes, French fries and heavy malted shakes to keep everyone hyper-electrified. If you had the nerve, you danced. The waiters and waitresses served on roller skates. The music blared from each car. If you chose not to study during the week, you spent most of the time remembering who was there and who was not, and trying to tell anyone who would listen what you knew.

The identities of many were measured by the cars they had. If you had a girl to go along with it, you had the best of both worlds. To have the right car, the right girl and right grades, you were perfect. You could have two of them, maybe, but not three. No one was perfect.
Chapter 1: Love to Remember—Growing Up in the 1950s

The Drive-In 1960

Where are Jerry Madigan and Gina Baretta?

In high school they were a romantic item, and it withered away. Jerry had too many girls to go with; Gina wanted to be with one person all the time.

A few miles from the high school was a drive-in movie theater. The theater used to be a field where tomatoes, lettuce and spinach grew. A family bought the field and covered it with asphalt, and it became a parking lot for people to watch moving pictures on a giant screen. White lines were painted on the asphalt to designate places for each car or truck. A concession store was in the middle of the asphalt field that sold food such as popcorn, colas and hot dogs.

The theater was a social scene. School groups identified where they would park, couples would identify who they were by where they parked and what they would do.

Jerry was a football player and a violinist in the orchestra. He was a rough and rugged, strong, in-your-face bruising blocking force on the field, and was a compelling dancer, who controlled everything and everyone.

Gina was tall and lanky, stylish with the latest clothes, and as someone in awe of her said, ‘She is just drop-dead gorgeous.’ Gina had told Jerry that she was not happy with his arrangement with other women, “Do what you want, with whoever you want, but I won’t be included. We are through,” she said.

But Jerry was an adamant hero, who could only do what he wanted.

They met again at the drive-in after Gina’s breakup with Jerry. Gina went with Buddy Graves in his car; Jerry went with a group of friends from the football team, in Tubby Tyler’s car. Buddy was at his best listening to both sides of the turmoil of teenage romance.
While Jerry was walking to the concession store, he noticed Gina in Buddy’s car and immediately came over to them.

Jerry motioned for Buddy to roll down the window.

“Get out of the car,” he demanded of Buddy.

“What do you mean? We’re here just watching the movie,” Buddy explained.

Gina covered her head with her arms and curled into a ball.

“Give me the keys, and get out,” Jerry continued. “Go over to Tyler’s car over there,” he pointed to the car.

Buddy gave him the keys.

“What are you doing, Madigan?” Buddy exclaimed. “This isn’t fair and it isn’t right.”

Gina screamed, “What are you doing? We’re through.”

“I know you are through, and we are through, but I am not. Just be quiet, other people are watching the show,” he exhorted.

DRIVE-IN BY 3RD AND FAIRFAX, LOS ANGELES, CA
“Get your hands off me,” she shouted.

“I’ll keep my hands off you,” he said as he pushed her swinging hands away from him as he did oncoming linemen who pushed and pulled at him on the football field, and Gina kicked and swung at him.

While Buddy Graves walked to Tyler’s car, Gina and Jerry fought in the front seat of his 1957 Chevy. Twenty miles south of the drive-in, a jazz pianist performed at a night club a few steps from the sand in Hermosa Beach. The song he was singing as Gina and Jerry pushed and grabbed each other was about how a panther was in town, was on the prowl, and the lyrics stated, “Lock up your wife and hide your daughter.” Neither Jerry nor Gina knew who was singing, neither knew he was singing their song.

There were intense arguments, disagreements, and even physical fights at the drive-in. Competition started with the cars being compared, drivers also had arrogance because they went to certain schools that others did not. Some guys had to prove their fighting superiority and fists-hammering-wind brawls were part of the insult parade.

A guy who was the self-appointed peacekeeping lover would come by and condescend to everyone involved, pronouncing, “You can’t legislate against mayhem. Boys will be boys.”

A girl would announce, “At least they had the decency not to damage their cars as they knocked each other to the ground.”

The cars remained just like the tough-looking guys wanted to be, tough looking, but not touchable. Do not mess up the waxed wavy hair. All both sides wanted was a tough stare-down. Each side giving the other massive brutally tough looks. Beneath the facade, the feeling was, “I am tough-looking, but will break on contact. In fact, if I am stared at too seriously, I might bend myself to the ground. Statues only, please. Look, but do not touch!!!”

Steve Tearson belonged to a car club whose main goal was fixing up old cars and collecting the speaker boxes that
stories along the way

were on white metal poles that fed the sound track of the movie into each car. Club members had to show their prowess as peer vandals by ripping the wires of the boxes off the pole stands and driving away with them. Members applauded the person who took the most speaker boxes.

Mrs. Tearson was a single mother, and negotiated the price for paying drive-in management to replace the boxes he stole with a promise that no one would contact the school where Steve was to graduate, or the colleges he applied for to become an engineering student about his stealing.

All driving was to music. Faster music, faster driving. Slower music, slower movement on the streets.

Every couple had their own song, as though the composers had written them just for them. If you had five steady girl or boyfriends in each year of high school, you had 20 songs dedicated to you. In college, let’s say you had three a year, which meant 12, so the total by the time you were 21 or 22 was 32. Thirty-two songs dedicated to the ONE I LOVE.

For the rest of your life, anytime you listen to one of these songs, you are taking a break, time to reminisce, “Sorry, honey, I’ve got to embrace the past.”
Chapter 1: Love to Remember—Growing Up in the 1950s

People in a Car on Grad Night

The four of us, two guys and two girls, drove in a hardtop Ford convertible, open top, to Palm Springs at night for parties after the girls’ high school graduation ceremony. The two guys—Tim McLane and I—were three years older than the girls.

One of the girls sat in the front seat with me, the other girl sat on the top of the rear seat with Tim. As I turned the car off the main highway onto the short road that led directly to Palm Springs, the balmy wind touched the faces of the two in the back seat.

The girl in the front seat changed the radio stations to find the music to match the mood and said to me, “You know, this night has to last forever. You only do this once.” Then we both turned to smile at our friends sitting atop the back seat, and listened to the wind blend in with their laughter into the dark blue sky—the music went on the wind as a voice to sing to the moon.
Tale of Two Sisters

There were two sisters who attended Beverly Hills High School with me. One lived in total fantasy, the other among the ruins of a losing football season. Jenny Beetermen was a year older than her sister, Patricia, and though gifted scholastically, had her way of inventing love patterns that flickered in fantasy land. This was a few years after Disneyland opened 30 miles away. Jenny had a crush on Jimmy Mars, and Jimmy did not have a crush on her, nor was he interested in having much at all to do with her, saying no to her invites for lunch and discussions on any subjects. Jimmy was a great avoider, but Jenny did not mind. It was not rejection. Jimmy was just not ready for a great girl like Jenny. She would wait in quiet pursuit.

In the summer after they graduated, Jenny painted graphic pictures in her mind about the way life would be when Jim came to his senses about her. To live out her dream, she called Jim’s father to ask about Jim, who was stationed in Army training 450 miles away. His father was pleasant and accepting of Jenny’s interest in his son, and welcomed her when she said she wanted to drop the cookies she baked for Jim at their home nearby. Soon, Mr. Mars looked forward to Jenny’s visits, and the two of them often walked to the post office to mail the cookies. Then came dinners, and lunches and church attendance. Both believed in destiny, and if not Jimmy, then the father of Jimmy, Jenny reasoned. Why not? He was a solid man who was lost from the divorce of his beloved wife. Jenny was up to the task of saving him from the pending loneliness that he had inherited.

Within a month, Jenny kissed Mr. Mars, the first one dedicated to Jimmy for his ignorance of what a good thing he was missing, the rest were for Mr. Mars and his new love life. When Jimmy found out about them, he blamed himself for not interceding earlier. Mr. Mars agreed at first with Jimmy to leave her alone, but told him that he was so surprised that he could love someone as lovely as Jenny, that he deserved to give himself a chance with her. Jimmy left his reasons out of discussions with
his father, and accepted him for what he was, a lonely man who was now not as lonely as he could be. And soon everyone in Mr. Mars's family loved and appreciated Jenny. Jimmy even kissed her on the cheek when he returned home to visit.

Within a few months Jim returned again, this time for the wedding. Jenny’s parents, who were younger than Mr. Mars, had to resolve their shock at the quick news and realities, but stood steadfast at the ceremony, pleased that someone real had come to take care of Jenny. The greatest concern of those in attendance was, “Wasn’t Jenny the girl who thought Jimmy was the perfect one for her?”

So it went at the local church, which Jenny renamed the Church of Our Destiny, to honor those who believed that anyone can appear to make the impossible occur.

Patricia Beetermen, her sister, grew up as a high-functioning person, liked by all, loved by a few, especially the high school fullback. Patricia had only one major disappointment. In the seventh grade she auditioned for the choir, and cried so well when she did not make it, that the choir director accepted her with the understanding that she perform without singing. She agreed. One of the nicest and brightest in her class, even the whole damn school, Mr. Beetermen would say when he dressed as Santa Claus and had the entire neighborhood over apple cider under their tree that was decorated by who else, Patricia.

Merton Franks carried the ball as a fullback for a losing team. All the punishment he had to take and with nothing to show for it.

He was accepted to a junior college for football. His girlfriend, Patricia, was an honor student and went to a private women’s college 500 miles away from the high school drama she led. In college, she was student body president, and later a principal of elementary schools. Both married, Merton three times, with one child, Patricia once to a man who died after an enormous bout of care given by her.
Whatever happened to them in the 50 years since their high school days, they would intermittently bond whenever there was an emotional gap with other people they met. The high school memory was theirs forever, and the love they shared nurtured them whenever it could. The cheering romance was played over and over. The time of high school was perfect; no one they believed ever touched them as deeply as then. Merton had a son, and he wanted to introduce him to her, as the woman who should have been his mother. He did not tell Patricia about the fantasy, but he had it often. Patricia spent football seasons with her husband watching their local professional team, and on many plays picturing Merton as the ball carrier. They saw each other at various times later after her husband died, but they could not reconcile their differences emotionally, politically or psychologically, to move on together. The romance they shared would always be the most precious time of their lives.

With the advent of the computer, Merton communicated with Patricia daily. He was retired from his private detective career, and Patricia spent her time taking care of ill friends. They lived a thousand miles away from each other.

“And there was the time I had to stop writing her, because I would have been on the next plane to be with her, and that would have destroyed all the dreams, but you never know. I am here and she is there is all I know. I am married to her in my heart, I will always love her, and she is the only person I will love forever. That is all I know. Yes, I love everyone, but she is the only person I ever loved. Doesn’t make sense, does it?” He said to me on the afternoon that both of us attended the funeral of one of the players who was on the high school football team with him.

When I spoke with Patricia that evening, she asked, “Did you see Merton? What did he say about me, you have to tell me.”

I told her that I did not say anything to him, that I went by him as we left the church, and he was with a woman. “What do you think he said to me? Nothing; he just nodded, but it was the nod that said, this one isn’t Patricia either.”
Early to Wed and Too Early to Say Goodbye

Baron Himmel played the game of push and shove with the best of those who played push and shove. We would throw each other on the grassy hill and bushes that were the lunch area. Grabbing, pinching, falling, pushing, running, chasing and catching each other were the game’s moves.

Baron gave his loose change from his pocket to Pam, his girlfriend and next door neighbor, whenever another game was about to be played. They were a couple that was always together. Pam watched the games and laughed as we rolled on the three-tier hill of our playing field. Wrestling and rolling up and down. Green stains, dirt stains on our light-colored pants and blue jeans were marks of bravery and victory.

No one knew at the time that Baron played so well, so hard, and so long, as Pam said, because in 10 years after we graduated, Baron would be tackled by cancer at his throat and his lungs and given a horrible tumble down the hill of life. No one knew. Pam said that their life was so intense and so much alive because it would be so short and over too soon. She said that at the age of 28, pregnant, when he was buried.

“My life is over without him. Our kid will never know him. It was a dream, and reality has to last forever. You guys played so well together, I will always have that,” she told all of us at his funeral.
We had a bully who beat any and everybody, any time he wanted. Sam Canofsky. No one challenged him. He made cuts and bruises on our faces, scars forever. And all of us he considered his friends. We screamed and ran home and yelled at our parents to do something. No one did.

Mr. Hudson had two children, a son, James, and a daughter, Janette. One day the Hudsons had a party, invited Sam and his parents, who lived across the street from the Canofskys. Janette was wearing a white blouse with her name embroidered on the left front pocket.

Sam asked her, “If the left is named Janette, what do you call the other one?”

Mr. Hudson overheard the question while talking to someone in another conversation, and grabbed Sam by the neck and pushed him down quickly, demanding, “What’s the name of boys who don’t know how to be nice to girls?” He pushed Sam’s neck back and forth.

“You’re choking me,” Sam called out as he tried to put his hands on Mr. Hudson’s grip.

“That’s exactly what I should do,” Mr. Hudson said as he released him to trip over himself as he stumbled to the floor.

“You could have killed me,” Sam exclaimed.

“I wouldn’t do that. That’s too nice. Now go tell my daughter how sorry you are.” Mr. Hudson said and swatted him on the behind.

Sam turned away from Mr. Hudson, and ran down the stone stair steps yelling how sorry he was, out the front door, onto the grass, hopped over the sidewalk, jumped into the street and ran to his home, opened the front door and disappeared.

A week later, Sam and his father gave boxing lessons to Sam’s supposed friends. His father exhorted Sam’s friends on how to be offensive with their fists towards Sam and reminded
him of how to protect himself. One of his friends slipped a wild punch past Sam and knocked one of his front teeth out, which made him less of a bully, and more afraid of his father, who yelled at him how much he was open for such a hit. Sam was embarrassed, and for a long while stopped bullying everyone.

Some of the players on the football team did not play for the glory of the school, victories for their families but to be there at practices to taunt and hit the bully. They were successful as one day, the bully tore off his uniform, threw his shoulder pads on the grass and walked off the field, explaining to the head coach, “I am always getting hit harder than anyone else. What kind of teammates do I have!!!” He threw his helmet towards the locker room dressing room as he marched off the field.

The bullied players watched in silence as the head coach ordered the bully to make damn sure he picked up his helmet as he left the field. The players went to their awards banquet, and all smiled when the coach described them as winners, brave men, who fought gallantly every game. They all hugged each other with smiles, and all kidded about how winning was really getting rid of the bully.

One in Some Billions, One-in-One Shot

Benny Davis wound up making at least three billion dollars, probably more, without going to college, just from going straight into the entertainment industry. Lonnie Dietz inherited millions and could not add to the numbers, and one day shot himself to death—he was 31 years old. He had supposedly everything: the house, the wife and the kids, but needed more, and this was the way never to have to worry about getting it.

Benny remembers fondly being dazed in his early days of pedaling in and out of the way of passing cars on his bicycle. Kids pedaling their bicycles, shouting the names of the people in the houses they passed, the names of the people they saw in their living rooms on television sets, or in theaters with popcorn or heard on the radio or record player.
The bicycle spokes with playing cards flicking, as though they were making their own movies, the sounds of the flicking like the sounds of the first movies ever made, rolling by. That was the city then. Kids pedaling by.

Queen of the World at 17

“Why be alive if you can’t be jealous of someone, and you have to have someone jealous of you to balance all of it. In fact, if there is no balance, there is no life.” These were the words of Ilene Felzer, who was not selected a beauty queen or class princess in any of the four years she attended high school. She had the best rationale for being on the sidelines.

There was a basketball tournament at school during the Christmas season. Thirty-two teams from local schools participated. There was an all-tournament team of the best players and there was a queen and a court of girls who were chosen from each class-freshman through senior years. The gymnasium was a swim-gym, named for the fact that under the hardwood gym floor was a swimming pool. Press a button and the gym floor went underneath the grandstands and diving boards went up, and the diving and swimming began.

One of the best years of the tournament was when the queen took her reign without a hint of the complications involved in her wake. She was Janice Wayman. She was elegant and beautiful to everyone. The final night of the tournament included the queen and the princesses escorted to the seating of the court at one end of the grandstands, usually by her boyfriend. At halftime of the final game, there was the seating ceremony. For the two days before that night, the winning girls were preparing, and the student body was wondering who they were.

Janice was four blocks away from the school in the office of a doctor who was aborting a fetus inside of her. Her father and mother were with her.
Chapter 1: Love to Remember—Growing Up in the 1950s

At halftime the four girls who represented each grade were escorted to their places at the side of the queen’s chair. The tension of who the queen was consumed everyone. Finally, she appeared, in full regalia.

She waved to the crowd, and everyone cheered wildly. Everyone expected her boyfriend to be her escort. It was her father. There was a hush and then more cheering, constant blasting cheers and raucous trumpeting from the brass band.

Janice Wayman looked and waved at everyone, and the applause continued. After she climbed to the top of the stands to her seat, she turned and with both arms made a motion of throwing kisses to everyone. She looked down across the gym and saw a small child slipping in and out of her parents’ grasps, and focused on the child. She began to cry, the tears blurred her vision. She felt horrible that her child was gone, and that somehow everyone knew it, the cheering was a jeering pain throughout her. She kept smiling as the child ran away from her parents, and as they chased her up the stairs to bring her back to her seat. Janice waved more and the people in the gym cheered more. The tears kept on pouring down her face, rivers through the pride of her make-up and beauty. She was the queen of the world, she presided over everyone, and it was all a tribute to a child she would never know.

Matchmaker Elaine Jacobs

In 1960, Elaine Jacobs was the center of romantic geometry, fixing people up with each other, making compatible angles of people coordinates, bringing together natural chemistry that needed her stirring hands.

Elaine fixed me up with Jennifer Rothstein, who was two years younger than me, a three-time relationship that wove in and around 25 years. We dated in high school, and I was taking her to school, as she lived a few blocks away. One day she told me on the way home that she did not like the way I spoke to
someone, and that one day I might talk to her that way, and she
did not want to be talked to like that, so she did not want to date
me anymore. She could tolerate me taking her to school, but
the dating was over. I decided that I could live without her in
the car on the way and returning from school, so we would avoid
each other completely.

Five years later, she was in college, and one of her friends
encouraged her to call me, so we began dating again. I was
shocked, and said yes; why should I learn anything from a first
time with anyone, hope had rekindled itself. A few weeks later
it ended. She had to tell me that she did not know if it was her
or me that was boring but one of us was, and because she did
not have the tolerance for waiting for one of us to become more
interesting or exciting, she began her second trip away from me
immediately.

The boredom must have grown again, for after 20 years,
and with a child, Jennifer and her husband divorced. I happened
to run into her brother-in-law and we laughed about how I had
gone with Jennifer twice before, but that I was vulnerable to my
past, and in its honor, why of course, I would call her, which I
did.

I received an exit letter a month later, which was sent
without my requesting it. Among the great arrows thrown in my
direction, “I don’t want to be a wife, I want to be a lover, all the
time. I can hug my dog. You are becoming overly possessive,
which makes me think of my ex-husband, who is not looking so
bad now.”

And, most predictive, she was bored again. I had learned
absolutely nothing. She mentioned that she was not running a
hotel for misfits. “I thought that I was very fond of you, and I
do not want to be mean or cruel to you, and I certainly do not
want to be mean or cruel to myself either. I don’t think our ideas
for an ideal relationship mesh. I have no answers.”

In high school, I had one other girlfriend who made
things beautiful. She is an artist, and later we met again and did
a book together. She made up for what was to happen later with
Jennifer Rothstein. Her name is Connie Solsby. Francine, Connie and Jennifer got me through high school, and the hereafter. I survived.

Elaine Jacobs scored again 10 years after I graduated high school. She set me up with her cousin, and within a few months, I had to leave. Reason? The ex-husband gave her so much grief that she could barely function. If this was a love life, how could I be in it? When I discussed the splitting up, she told me, “What do you mean you’re leaving me, with all the great things we had going for us. What kinda crap is that? You just don’t like yourself enough to like anyone else. Just do what you have to do, and crawl in your selfish hole and die.”

What could I say? I always wanted everything to be my fault, and it was, whether she left me or I had to leave. All of whatever did not work was my responsibility; I committed the sin of even trying to make things work, and I will take whatever blame anyone wants to give me. No explanations, without rationale or reasons. Definitely no excuses. It is me.
Girl Protects Herself,  
a Murder in the House

There was a girl in a class behind us who was arrested for killing her mother’s boyfriend. She was Vivian Deering. She was acquitted of the charges, and returned to school. No one knew what to say to her. She obviously was not guilty to us, for if you were guilty you would be in jail. She wanted to play on the tennis team and be in the science club, but she feared others, that they would not want her around. No one knew she wanted to join, so no one offered her a chance. The guys wondered how it was to murder anyone, and get away with it. Some speculated that her mother did it, and that Vivian was protecting her. Others said Vivian did it because the boyfriend offended her in some perverse way. Some of the girls felt that the man who was killed should have been killed twice for what he did to her.

But no one asked her if she wanted to join the team or the club.

The Fastest Bridge

Glenda Steinfeld was the smartest girl in the neighborhood, too smart to have too much to do with me. A fresh-look subtle sexiness, but it was understood that we were just friends from the far side of our interests—academia to socializing.

When we were in college, we were separated by a bridge. I knew she loved sports cars, and when a friend wanted to borrow my four door car for double dating, he was quick to offer his Corvette in exchange. Now she could say yes, and I could have the nerve to ask, and of course the Corvette would be the reason.

I was driving on the bridge back to her campus from our school’s dance and shifting gears as the rain fell on the windshield. The red lights from the cars in front of us were sparkling
as were the white lights of the oncoming cars in the adjacent lane—one lane going each way. Like diamonds beaming towards us. Glenda asked if I remembered chasing her around the block when we were 10 years old and not being able to catch her. I shifted into another gear, put on the left turn blinker, and sped into the oncoming lane to pass the cars in front of us, faster than the rain flying off the windows.

She reached across the gear shift, took my hand, and said, “Why so fast?” and with the other hand covered her mouth in shock. I couldn’t go back to being 10 years old but I could try to make time go faster and faster. Sex is speed, even if there is no sex; sex goes on and on, faster and faster. I was not chasing Glenda Steinfeld anymore. For another few miles until the end of the bridge, we were as far and as fast as we would ever be. She took a deep breath at the end of the bridge, raised her eyebrows, and said, “Where did you learn to drive that way?”

I shrugged my shoulders, and left the answer to myself—when you finally take out a girl you always want to, and know it is only going to be once, life gives you an instinctive driving lesson, so you can reach down and shift away your fears.
Those Who Went Too Soon

Bill Clendenon, who returned from two tours of duty in Vietnam in 1967 at 24 years old, was killed while driving to Santa Barbara for his wedding when he veered across the highway, and hit a truck head on. He was a helicopter medic during the war, and the helicopter personnel who rescued him could not bring him back to life.

Tommy Ishman, whose father was an orthopedic surgeon who fixed broken legs, knees and elbows, could not fix Tom, after he was thrown from the sailboat he sat on while it was being towed by a car to a marina launching. Tom should not have been in the boat, but he took the risk and landed dead on the sidewalk by the car and the boat wreckage. Tom was going to be 27 the following month.

And Peter D. Jones, who married his only high school girlfriend, had two kids before the age of 30. Peter fell in love with flying, planes that did not love back, and one day returning from a short flight plunged to his death on a beach of sand and shallow water on the coast line of the Pacific Ocean, a mile from his first date with his only girlfriend.

Go ahead, ask his wife about living without him, a wife who walked by the sand where he landed the plane, and pleaded with the winds to bring him back. Go ahead, ask her how she could believe in the power of the winds, how she has to believe in anything ever again.

These people left in horror, horribly early, and where are the years they did not get to live stored? Where is the energy and life they did not spend? Not just what might have been, but where would they be right now?
Chapter 1: Love to Remember—Growing Up in the 1950s

Unknown Talent

No one in school knew Harold Fastnow could play the guitar, how well he could play and how well he could sing while he played, except his parents. It was a secret among the three of them.

When Harold’s father received the results of Harold’s junior high aptitude test, the three discussed how Harold needed to become good, very good at doing one thing, and it was decided that it would be the guitar. Harold’s only concern was that they would tell no one about his guitar playing, no music school teachers, band directors, his own friends, or anyone else. Playing was a private affair. He would practice in private, away from everyone.

Harold was a greaser kid of the late 1950s, who molded his social life around friends who cleaned spark plugs and adjusted gas lines to benefit the racing dynamics of any car. His
favorite high school classes were auto shop, print shop, stage crew management, and the accounting of the drama business. He wore grease with pride, as a symbol of the lifestyle of a kid who could get a garage trolley down on the ground and underneath a car to fix a hanging muffler in record-breaking time.

He read every car magazine and talked transmissions, rear axles and elapsed time for quarter time dragsters with anyone who would listen. One of the girls who liked him asked, “What would you do if you didn’t have cars in your life?”

“Simple. I’d raise horses to race, and make them go faster,” he answered.

On the day of the all school talent show, Harold was in charge of managing the entry and exit of all acts on the stage. He motioned entertainment on and off the stage with the same confident force that he directed drag racing starts at the Saturday night dirt track a few miles from school.

While the student body audience was applauding an act, Harold stepped out from the behind the stage curtain and adjusted the microphone that stood at the opening of the curtain. He faced the audience and said shyly,

“The dancers in our next act are still warming up, and they asked me to ask you if it was alright for me to sing you a song while you are waiting.”

The students were immediately quiet, in shocking disbelief. All thought unanimously, “This is Harold Fastnow, a greaser, he can’t sing. What an embarrassment.”

Then a few students yelled out, “Yea, sing, go ahead, Fastnow. Show us how you can sing.” Laughter came from everywhere in the audience.

Harold reached behind the curtain, and brought out his guitar, placed it in front of him, took the guitar strap and put it over his shoulder, then tuned the strings with his fingers.

“Can you hear me?” he said, leaning over and speaking into the microphone.
“Yes.” Everyone roared.

And Harold Fastnow began to play the most popular song of the time, and within a minute the students in the audience were singing with him. Girls were soon dancing by themselves at their seats, then soon moved to the aisles. And as momentum from the music and singing built, Harold was joined on stage by many from the audience, most of all his friends, the greasers. The curtains were drawn open and the dancers who were warming up, were dancing to the singing and Harold’s playing.

Harold adjusted the microphone a few times out of nervous energy, and the playing and singing continued. Louder and louder it became, and soon the bells rang to end the show and send everyone to class, but no one could hear them, as everyone became wilder and louder with their dancing and singing. Ten minutes after the bell rang, the principal of the school came on stage and motioned everyone to stop for an announcement.

“If Harold will continue singing, I’ll let you all return to your next classes and have the music piped into your rooms through the public address system.”

Everyone yelled approval and began moving to the doors of the auditorium as Harold continued singing.

Years later, at the fifth, tenth, 20th, 30th, 40th and 50th year class reunion of his high school class, people remembered most the all-school talent show and the playing and singing of Harold Fastnow. No one knew about Harold’s guitar playing, not even his greasy car friends, guys who hid their car magazines inside school texts and study sheets, who went to school only as a break from their life with cars. A song that Harold would make everyone forget who made it famous. One song and Harold Fastnow was the most spectacular and popular guy in the entire school forever.
A record was made of his playing, and at every reunion it was played. Where were you sitting when Harold came out from behind the curtain and played was the most asked question by everyone who had or did not have an answer.

“Oh, you weren’t there. Harold Fastnow was better than everybody, and to think, no one knew.”

BOB’S BIG BOY GLENDALE, CA
Accident Anniversary

On the 50th anniversary of the August 1, 1959 accident, where four of us went over an embankment, and survived, an incredible coincidence happened.

That night, as though in a movie with coincidental charm and irony, I saw a ’55 Chevy, in perfect mint condition. It was on a flatbed trailer pulled by a pickup truck. It moved in a quiet slow force besides me as I was driving on a main boulevard. When we were both stopped at a stop light, I opened my window and said to the passenger in the cab of the truck:

“It’s a beautiful car with a great color.”

“Thank you, I am glad you enjoy it,” he said.

The same car, the same night, 50 years ago, now a copy passes as tribute to our survival.

When I got home, something almost as eerie and sobering. Conrad Goodson, our friend from high school driving days, had recently died from cancer.

I called his mother to acknowledge it and give comfort. She bragged about him. He had been a fun-loving kid, always teasing and bringing so much laughter to everyone. That’s what he liked to do, and he was so good at it. He was a true comedian.

Mrs. Goodson said it best, “He loved to have fun. He had everything he ever needed. Anyone who didn’t like him for it, was only jealous of him. He could not sit still. He was driven to have a good time and I know he had one. All the time.”
The Class 50 Years Later

One of the graduates had a small gathering at his house a few months before the 50th all-class reunion. The Queen of the School, a freshman class princess, and then the Queen of the School as a senior, Sandra Schwartz, was there and came up to Gerry Timberlane, who had become a plastic surgeon.

“I’ve got to come in to see you in your office,” she said.

“What for?” he asked.

“You have to fix things. I am not 17 anymore,” she answered.

“What do you mean?” he asked. “You look great,” he continued as he touched her face.

“You’re being so kind, but you know, something has to be done,” she said.

“I can’t improve this. The gods have prevailed,” he quipped.

He took her by the arm and they turned to face everyone else in the room. Everyone had to comment about Sandra, to themselves and to her, and it was all positive.

The rest of the evening people who had not known each other growing up introduced themselves, people who did not remember why they liked or disliked someone else reacquainted themselves, and in a few hours everyone was gone, away to their recent lives, looking forward to meeting again at the entire class reunion a few months away.

Some were so bemused by the effect of the entire evening that when they left for home started thinking what would they be doing the next day, what they would wear, what books they would have to carry and where they would park their cars, and then wondering what they would do better the second time around as high school seniors tomorrow when the first bell for school rang.
Chapter 1: Love to Remember—Growing Up in the 1950s

Sandra Schwartz did not come to the all-class reunion. It was the time of the anniversary of her son’s death.

Someone on the reunion committee spoke with her, and Sandra said, “Besides, I can’t live in the past; sure it was a better time for me, and of course I would love to do it again and again, but it is over.”

She is entitled to her feelings and perspective. She did not ask to be the prettiest girl in school, she might have liked it, but did not vote herself to it, someone else did. She happened to be one of the best students in the class, a member of the science club, a tutor for slow students in calculus and geometry, a dancer in the school plays, and a varsity cheerleader. She was just everywhere, and to everyone she did it with what appeared no effort at all. She couldn’t win, for everyone had the automatic response, “What else did you want from her, she was the best looking girl, period,” one of the disappointed guys said when he found out that she wasn’t coming to the reunion.

Sandra was missed not only for her beauty. She was nice to everyone, gracious, kind and decent, always cognizant that she could be perceived as wearing the goddess trophy, which could drop at any moment and ruin everything. Someone who helped organize the reunion said, “Thank goodness there is room to have an uneventful life. Glad that happened to me.”
People come to a 50th reunion to congratulate themselves for living so long. Money defines, but status is more from how well you are preserved. Did you endure, and how much do you look as you did when you were in high school?

Magic—you were there, you are here now, and it has all been a blur, you want to ask if it really happened. In a blink it is remembered, revisited, realigned, brought into new perspective, and gone.

You only know for sure that Sandra Schwartz was there 50 years ago. She marched into the night, and it all disappeared. No dancing can bring it back again.

There does not have to be a 60th year reunion, nor a 55th year one. People will meet when they want to, with whomever they want to, whenever, but not as organized as we were for the 50th.

In reflection, the 50th year reunion had some interesting incidents. Anita Decart died 20 years ago from a nerve disease. Her husband came with her older sister to honor her memory and share her history with some of her childhood friends. Some of us thought it strange that her husband would show up with her sister. They showed up, and the husband was a dancer. He asked wives of sitting husbands to take the floor with him, and he danced every dance with them.

One of the sitting husbands got up while they were dancing and decided it was time for him and his wife to leave. He tapped Mr. Decart on the shoulder and declared, “We’re leaving.”

“But we’re not through dancing,” Decart explained.

“You’re through dancing with her, she’s my wife, and we’re going,” he said directly and defiantly.
“Let us finish this one and the next one. It will be short one, it’s a slow dance,” Decart said.

“There’s plenty of guys whose wives would love to dance with you. They are sitting everywhere,” the husband finished.

“O.K, O.K, you don’t have to break my arm. I am a dancer, not a fighter,” he said as he removed the grip on his right hand that the hurried husband had, and walked toward the sitting women.

Barton Richards was there, and was through drinking heavy alcohol as he did when he was in school and in his 20s. He was off the wagon now, he said, and others reminded him of the time he took the ice cream truck from the neighborhood vendor and drove it himself through the streets where everyone lived. Barton rang the bell of arrival and played the music on the loud speaker as he announced that he was selling vanilla and chocolate ice cream as the new vendor in the truck that he had stolen. We all were shocked that he rationalized that he was making money for the guy who was trying to get him arrested for selling ice cream his own way.

“I wasn’t a thief. I took the truck, sure, but he got all the money I made for him. And you are calling me a thief. I am lucky they didn’t arrest me, but I am no thief. I may have been an alcoholic, but I am not a thief.”

Thomas Zeigfried attended with his wife. Tom’s father trained everyone in their family how to evacuate their home in case of fire or other devastation. They practiced mass exit at least once a month. After Tom and his sister graduated high school, Mr. Zeigfried sold the home and Mr. Zeigfried had sessions with the new family on how to leave.

While the children of the new family were at school and the parents at work, an electrical short ignited the curtains and the fire burned the house down. The housekeeper held the map of the exit plans in her hands when the fireman carried her to safety from the burning flames.
“Nobody was hurt, but my dad was intent on the fire taking over. I am sure he is somewhere in hell right now talking about fires and how to avoid them,” Tom finished.

Jeff Tandem asked Fred Stram if he ever kept in touch with Jane Lewellan, the girl he had a crush on, who ran down the steps of the grandstand and jumped over the wire fence when Stram fell in one of his track races. Jane ran over to Stram, who was lying on the track and pounding the surface in frustration. She screamed for someone to help Stram and held him in her arms the way she held her books as they walked through the halls, telling everyone they were only friends.

“Oh, yes. Jane is sitting over there,” he pointed to another table, “with her new boyfriend. You know she never married,” Stram said.

“Of course not. She never got over you,” Jeff finished.

Gary Germain was an unsung hero of the class; zero to many, loosely strolled through the halls, eating as he walked around the lunch picnic area, moved slowly, saying nothing to anyone, as big as he was, was as much as he was unnoticed. He had his human contact from the few who were greasers, who worked on cars, and after they worked on their cars, worked on someone else’s car. Not much time for study, no time for serious dating; cars and what went with them were his life. Learned to be uncomfortable with everything else at an early age.

Every day after school and on Saturdays he spent with his father and friends at his father’s automotive warehouse, where he arranged parts for the people who rented space from his father. His father sold scrap metal to reconstruction companies and individuals, who shipped most of the scrap to foreign countries. Gary learned the dealings with scrap metal people and was fascinated with it. His oil-greased fingers could be found on the books he read for his classes. Oh, he studied, but only if there was nothing to do in the warehouse. The pencil he answered algebra tests questions with was the same one he used to write up orders from the warehouse.
He graduated high school, went to two classes at the local junior college, and quit by December after June’s graduation, and never returned to structured learning.

At the reunion, there were awards for the persons who came the farthest, two women from Washington, D.C., a guy who ran a construction company that rebuilt famous vintage hotels, and another who became the musical arranger for popular singers.

The last recognized person was the one who had the longest tenure at the same job. “From 1949 through 2010, for his work as a distributor of metals and auto parts, the longest work record of any one in the same business, would be Gary Germain. Come forward, please.” I called out, as I was the head of the reunion committee.

Gary stood next to his best friend, and froze in disbelief. Gary had never been called out for any recognition for anything in any group of people larger than his few friends. His name was called out again, and he came forward, and stood as far as possible away from the view of the rest of the 180 others in attendance. Everyone stood and applauded. He did not move.

I motioned him over to where I was, in the center of the stage. “Here, in honor of your work, here is a picture of the cars that were parked by our class’ favorite outdoor restaurant. We are honored to have had you in the class, and salute your life of work.”

He shyly accepted the framed picture, and stunned by the applause, acknowledged everyone, and like he did in school, quietly swaggered his overweight body across the dance floor, trying to decide with his hands how to hold the picture, keeping his surprise and pride to himself as he returned to where he could stand with his best friend and become frozen in time again.

If you are raised in Beverly Hills in the 1950s, amidst the power and influence, the high end personages your parents were,
your first step away is down. You don’t have to be judged for what happened since you left. You just wonder if there will be another time to reunite and cheer for your survival.

I met Edward Craigstein, a graduate, a few weeks later and he thanked me for helping put on the reunion. He told me his view of things. “The first thing you remember about school is that you are not the guy who walks the queen of the school across the floor for her coronation as queen. You share that watching with the rest of the guys in the entire school, and there is a damn good chance that you never get over that your entire life.

“Then you go to college and there is the presentation of the girls in the sororities, and you go and stand in line and look at all of them, and none are interested in you. You take that right in the shorts too. Then there are all the women you almost had in your life. Don’t forget, of course, those who were in your life and caused great joy. But in the end, even if you have a wife and kids, you are marked forever by what you could not have. If you had lived in New York, there would be millions who would have passed you every day, and they walked by quickly. You don’t think that doesn’t count as much as the girl at the coronation and college girls with the white dresses smiling as you passed into their oblivion. It does. It all adds up, and you have your fantasies, and the work of your imagination, that’s it.

“But in the end, wouldn’t you have been better had you walked off the stage at high school graduation, gotten into a limousine and asked to be taken to the closest cemetery for immediate burial? Face it, high school was the pinnacle of your life. Like it or not, the game was over before it began. The reunion had a drawing for bottles of wine. The stubs on our tickets said, ‘Winners must be present.’ Someone won, there had to be a winner, and it certainly wasn’t the guy who walked the queen down the aisle at her coronation. He’s long gone, and the rest of us are left in the dust.”

We both agreed that the faster you move into the future, the less possible it is for the past to catch up and bite you. “All
we did was repeat what we did in high school over and over again as we lived our lives,” he concluded.

Some of us survived very well. There are some who had families and their spouses died and their children went away, and all they knew what to do was call old romantic interests from high school. Like a shell on the shore that has eroded from its battle with life, it can be picked up from the sand, and someone can think that, “Maybe this time it will be better, or just more of the same. Can I get another chance?” Even reflecting on what we did and who we were was being filtered through a fading elusive glare.

The people move on. They take their memoirs of who they were, who they knew, and what they did and where they did it. Pictures help to remember for those who were not there. Every ten or twenty years a grand sheet covers the city, and when it is raised, new places appear, artistic themes, stores, cultures, foreigners who have created a new destination where someone else once was.

It is all the same, all that has been changed are the names and the mixing of colors. Everyone who survives one generation into another has only the names. Some retain their dignity, a reputation, an institution; others fade as the coming tide re-moves them.

Names of night clubs and restaurants that have gone, and others that have stayed include: El Trocadero, M’Combo, Crescendo, Ciro’s, Moulin Rouge, Musso Franks, The Luau, Scandia, The Coconut Grove, The Brown Derby, Le Rue, Perrinos, The Polo Lounge, Tail o’ The Cock, Tally Ho, Melody Lane, Blum’s, Bumbles, Monkey Bar, Cock n’ Bull, Kings Four-in-Hand, The Daisy, Pips, Dino’s, PJs, Inside the Outside, Whiskey a Go Go, Chasen’s, Garden of Allah, Trader Vic’s, Purple Onion, The Pacific Dining Car, Pandora’s Box, Nate n’ Al’s, Pig n’ Whistle, Linny’s, and whatever comes later.

Stores create their own culture. No one has to forget: Armani, Hermes, Versace, Gucci, Fendi, Zegna, Ralph Lauren,

Another culture awaits; the space was once nothing. Now how soon will that time return?

_In tribute to the evolutions of Rodeo Drive..._
All stories will become shorter due to the expansion of technology that shortens our attention spans. Shortness of communications, short sketches, shorter stories, short scenes, and fast transitions from one to another. The short story will have to become shorter as there is less time to read and listen to it. Shortness will continue becoming shorter until there is nothing to say.

When will the short story no longer be short or a story? Who will write it when there is nothing to say? A few words will be left, and everyone will throw them down and up, across a page.

Who will write about the short story when it leaves?

How long will that short story be?
Any and Everything

The Best

How do I know I did my best? What else do you want to call it? If you don’t know, call it my best.

Demands

You have to have a voice on demand, a book on demand, and at least one friend on demand.

Permission

I resent what you did to me. If we had never met, I would not have the resentment. I am going to give you my resentment of you, you can give it to someone else. I give you that permission.

Understanding

I repeat myself even though I know you will not understand, and do not care to understand, and could not understand no matter how I explain it.
Wind Up Space

Everyone winds up where they wind up, who cares how they got there unless they took some of your space at the end or on the way.

Truck Stop

This truck stops for children passing. This truck stops at railroad crossings. This truck stops to wait for a tow truck to tow it.

Irritation

When someone does an irritating thing, I can tell them, or I can keep my feelings about it to myself, and do what they did that is irritating when no one is watching.

Call Back

I do not have to have anyone call me back; It allows me to call others who will call me back. Soon those who did not call back will tell me that they called me and I did not call them back.
Success

The farther away greatness happened, you can’t believe it happened. You take more credit for its success then should be given to you. And all you remember are how people treated you, and maybe how you treated them.

Free Kids

Kids are always free. What about parents who act as kids? What if no one is a kid or a parent, who’s free?

There Are Only Two Cars Like This One

One you see on your way from Los Angeles to Oxnard, another you see on your way from Oxnard to Santa Barbara, and another you see on your way from Santa Barbara to San Francisco; one and one is three.
Three Booths at an Antique Firearms Festival

We have the gun that was used to kill the infamous robber, no, we have the gun that was used to kill the infamous robber, and another booth bragged that they had the gun that was used to kill the infamous robber, and everyone knows the gun was never found.

Three Strikes And You Are Out

A three-way corner, A three-way diversion, A three-way issue—you, them and me.

Ways You Don’t Want To Go:

One—Frozen  
Two—Starve  
Three—Surrender
Good About Good

What good is good, good of you to ask, to think good thoughts is good but where do good thoughts and intentions take you, how often does good win, does it win enough?

If you are damaged goods, how much good is left when the damage is ever undone? Is your talent for being good ever fully realized? Where do you go to make good even better?

Conditions of the Unconditional:

World’s greatest garlic bread creates the world’s greatest stomach aches. There will be times when there is not enough energy to think of having a good time. If everyone is honest, someone is going to get hurt.

Saying

What you can’t or won’t say,
What you could say,
What you will say.
Chapter 2  Quick Stories, Sketches & Scenes

Battles

You won’t fight.
Yours but someone else can fight.
Yours fought for others who are not here anymore.

Control and the Computer

I control my computer,
my computer controls me.
I will not destroy my computer physically and I am almost sure my computer can not destroy me physically.

No, No, No

No written forms, computers, verbal sounds or letters, just our own created monologue—invented stories only for ourselves.
So, no one has anything to communicate to anyone else? Right.
Asylum Seeking Circle

Seeking asylum from those who brutally enforce life, coming to another place for escape, and causing brutal force and mischiefous mayhem there, causing those abused to seek asylum where the first asylum seekers left, seeking asylum.

Sorry for Being Sorry

Fred S. was sorry for still trying to impress those he grew up with what he had done since. He needed to do it to keep young and to chase the wolves of insignificance from breaking down the doors and devouring him.

Sally A. was sorry for having someone else to take the blame for things she was sorry for having done.

Both Fred and Sally married from their sorrow, and spent much concern feeling sorry for others who never were as sorry for things they should have been sorry for.
Working Man At Play
Late In Life

I

The 63-year old businessman stopped working for five days so he could fly four hours to play at a fantasy baseball camp for people who had never played major league professional baseball.

The businessman had a pacemaker stored in his heart, in his chest area, a tumor recently removed from his brain, a tremor shaking his head and arms every ten minutes, and was surviving on a blood thinner regime.

II

Two months before leaving for the camp, he hired an athletic trainer who prepared him for the types of play at the camp. The businessman stretched every muscle he would need to survive the rigors of late age play.

His recent girl friend was impressed and hinted that he should see a medical doctor for advice.

“We all have to die, and if the gods of play deem it is my time, I will be having fun as I go,” he responded to her concerns.

III

She reasoned, “That’s all I need is a lover to come home and wake up in the middle of the night with a nightmare that a ball he could not catch at camp is coming through the window and landing in his hands, or worse, a hole in my wall.

And someone will ask me why didn’t I stop the ball, or better, him from getting up and trying to fly. We are through. He can sleep somewhere else when he returns. He’s barely alive and he is trying to be a kid again, and ruin my life; no thank you.”
Waiting For Some Help

The heavyset security guard, dressed in a windbreaker jacket and shining police slacks, watched over the people and circumstances at an all-night fast food service restaurant.

A freshman college woman came into the restaurant close to midnight on a school day, and sat on the edge of one of the restaurant’s tables.

The guard asked her not to sit on the table, that the seats are for sitting, to which the woman said, “This is a free country.”

“We do not know where you have been sitting, and you could very easily break the table,” he replied.

“When I graduate, I will be making ten times as much as you, so don’t tell me what to do,” she exclaimed.

“You can make, or steal all the money you want, but for now, I want you to obey the rules. I am here to protect the people who come in here and the property. If you sit in a seat then I am doing my job.” he followed.

“So, what are you going to do, throw me out?” she questioned.

“I am asking you again to do what the owner wants, which is to make the place a pleasant environment for people to come and eat.” he answered.

“You can’t move me,” she stated.

“I can’t move you but I can call the police and I don’t want to do that,” he said.

The table began to crack from her leaning and sitting and she fell on it as it collapsed onto the floor.

“Now are you happy?” she shouted. “Get me up and out of her,” she demanded as she reached for him, and kicked her legs in the air.
The counter cashier said he would call for an ambulance, and the security guard said he would take care of things himself.

The customers at the counter turned and quickly ran to the front of the restaurant, and used the guard’s back to balance their running. After the guard picked the freshman college woman up, she brushed her fallen hair and straightened her blouse and dress, and said, “You are still going to be here when I graduate from college, and then some.”

“Fine,” the guard said, “I may be, and I will still be the one to pick you up because that’s my job.”

Family Two

Robert T. was a high school principal who was very proud of his wife and three children. His wife, Diane, was a retired nurse, the children: a doctor, professor and attorney. Robert was a teacher first, than a football coach and assistant principal on his way to becoming principal of Peyton Payus High School.

Terri B. was Robert’s assistant. They worked very closely together, inseparable, attending games, meetings and away from school conferences. Not the usual principal-assistant relationship Diane often said with slight agitation to Robert, which he replied, “Without her, we don’t have this house, and I don’t keep the job.”

Diane questioned Robert when Terri took leave to give birth to a child. “We know she was not married, but she must have had a boyfriend.” Robert shrugged his shoulders, “She’s got someone. I never met him. We don’t discuss it.”

Robert’s wife helped him with his work while Terri was out, and was amazed how often Terri checked in at the office.

Because Robert and Diane had separate checking accounts, she did not know that Robert gave Terri a certain
stipend to support their child. Terri was waiting for Robert to leave Diane and come with her for his new family and life they dreamed of together.

When Terri returned to work Robert summoned the district office to request a transfer for her. Because she knew now that Robert would not live her dream, she wrote a letter to Anthony, the attorney son, divulging the truth of the other family member, another boy.

Anthony did not confront his father about the other family expansion. Diane threw out innuendos often, but nothing piercing enough to insist on a confession. Robert confided in an old friend the happenings, and accepted a Superintendent position in a school district ten miles away. He met with his new son once a week and cut off all communication with Terri. The check for support was always sent, even after the child was beyond the age of required support.

Diane had friends who supported her belief that Robert and Terri had a child together. In a few years, Diane contracted aging diseases, forgetfulness, disorientation, unrelenting depression, followed by aggressive cancer. She died while Robert was applying for the position of state director of education.

Robert did not get the director’s position, and sought extra work, even volunteer positions to ease the pain of his guilt and loneliness. He kept the families separate.

As close as Anthony became with his father, he decided it best not to ask about his other brother. He tore up the letter from Terri and slowly drifted away from his father and siblings.

The message on the answer phone at Robert’s home was still Diane’s outgoing message. Anthony suggested that his dad change it to his own voice and message. Robert declined.

Anthony said, “Why not, it is time to move on. Mom is gone. We all know that she is not going to get the messages anyone leaves. And mom doesn’t know about anything, dad, I know.
And no one is ever going to know, dad, I'll make sure of it,” he said as he closed the door of the house and walked slowly to his car in the driveway.

Not Good Enough

I am not good at it.  
I am good at telling others how good they are.  
I have done many things, but now I have to apologize to myself and others for not convincing myself that I am good with all that I have done.

Ways of Adornment

Someone tells you of your greatness.  
You tell someone of their greatness.  
You tell yourself how great you are.

The Music Man

The song writer—band leader plants flowers on his front lawn, by the sidewalk near the street, while he is away from making his music at the piano.

Cars drive by, some drivers are singers of his songs. They know his music and that their singing makes the money to buy their high maintenance chrome cars, but they do not know him or his planting hands.
STORIES ALONG THE WAY

||

Had the song writer—band leader and singers lived in a generation past, they might have had known each other, as writers and singers gathered together often at one of their homes.

||

The song writer—band leader rises from his position planting and returns to the piano in his home. One of the singing drivers turns his car dashboard to play a song created by the song writer—band leader so he can sing along. Barking dogs call out and run for the cars, then return to guard the plants as the songwriter—band leader presses the pedals of his piano to make more music that moves the world.

Conversations

Conversations begin in the middle of three thoughts, from a corner of an emerging midst, “You know,” which is followed by its answer, “You know what I am saying,” which means you don’t have to understand or question anything being communicated, because “It’s like, you know, well,” the hope is it is better not to say anything, “You know, so please don’t go there,” which is no place to go since you are busy only knowing not to say anything, “You know,” for all you want is not to have to say or write anything as everyone already knows everything, “You know,” so you know what I am saying, so don’t make me say it.

At the end of the circle that never completes itself is the other side of even wanting to know, which is there because no one has to say anything, anyways.

As you know from the beginning of the circle is the fact that since I don’t have to say it, what difference does it make if I do or do not say it, “You know what I am saying.” You don’t say, do you?”

You know, maybe you were saying something else, ’you know,’ did you mean anything else? I know it does not matter, what was meant to be said or not, you know; you could have said nothing.
Coach Told The Parents of The Kids On His Team:

I am someone you do not have to like.
I do not need your opinion about my coaching, who should play and what plays I should use to instruct the players to do.
The more you instruct me about how I should coach, the more I am inclined not to play your child.

High School Work Out

You hated working out in physical education classes in high school. You pay someone fifty years later to get you to do the same exercises that you hated to do in your high school physical education classes. As much as you pay fifty years later, you can never fix your body to look younger than when the high school physical education classes began.
The high school queen is escorted across the finely-polished wooden basketball court to her throne, and crowned. Every boy who is not her escort does not live long enough to forget the feel of the pain of not being her escort.

The queen goes to graduation night festivities for her high school and finishes celebrating by driving in a convertible car to a city 100 miles away, sitting on the top of the rear seats, her hair blown by the wind as though being carried in a wave to the moon.

In the fall of her freshman year in college the queen sits with other girls at a sorority house presentation ceremony for the girls to meet the long row of young men who come to admire them in their high fashion white dresses, corsage smiles and shake their perfumed hands with radiant colored nails.

A boy who has watched her in all of these three pictures wondered to a friend, “Do you think she will ever forget that she is the prettiest girl in the room?”

“The gift to the queen is that she never has to know anything else. She may grow to think differently, but she will always know that she is,” the friend answered.
Scott M. was always the fastest runner on the high school track team. The track coach knew that Scott could always run faster than he performed and prompted him to practice more than he would. The team needed him to run and jump in several events for each meet.

Dick B. was an average runner, who was encouraged by the coach to join the team. The thinking was, Dick needed a purpose other than barely passing his classes to motivate him to accomplish more in life. He realized he could not perform well and was always seeking a way to keep himself out of races and off the team. Once, he did not show up at the starting line in a meet, and the coach warned him that if he did it again, he would be off the team.

Once Dick adjusted his starting blocks for a qualifying race so that when the gun went off, he would stumble out of the blocks and fall on the track. The trick worked. As he fell to the ground, the coach yelled out to Scott, “You did that, I know you did.”

Scott came running over to the coach. “I did not. Why would I do that? He can lose the race on his own. I did not have to help him.”

“You just lost on your own. You are off the team for this meet and the league meet, which means you won’t qualify for the state meet. That will show you what happens when you mess around in someone else’s life.” The coach concluded.

“You’re not going to ask Dick or anyone else around who did it, are you?” he questioned the coach.

“What are they going to tell me, that they did it? No, I don’t have to ask anyone,” he finished.
Dick did not want Scott off the team, so he told the coach that he adjusted the starting blocks so that he would stumble and fall out of them.

“I don’t believe you. Scott did it, and don’t you ever forget it,” the coach retorted.

Friends Forever

Jimmy B. and Pressley G. were close friends from the 5th grade onward. In the 10th grade they played basketball games against each other, two out of three wins. Pressley was taller and much better of a player than Jimmy, but Pressley let Jimmy win two games straight. Pressley figured it would be easier on the relationship for Jimmy to win than to have real competition and have to hear about Jimmy’s losing, how aggravated and frustrated he would be if he lost.

They attended the same high school, and Jimmy excelled academically, being accepted to attend a high level university. Pressley attended an average ranked college, which suited him fine, and the job he took when he first graduated attracted the attention of the graduate faculty at the school where Jimmy attended and the school offered him admission. Although he was proud and surprised that the school accepted him, he did not tell his friend Jimmy, reasoning that Jimmy would become competitive and start to compare his getting accepted as an undergraduate to Pressley’s being accepted later. When Jimmy married, Pressley flew cross country to be his best man. When Pressley attended a graduate school in New York, Jimmy let him stay in his apartment, while he served basic training in the Army.

Pressley helped Jimmy keep his own acceptance of himself as great and winning. No comparisons, just help each other is how you keep a friendship. Pressley often thanked himself for how decent he was and even thought that Jimmy would have appreciated Pressley’s not telling him about how decent he was to him.
Winner At The End Of The World

Let’s figure this out, dad, and you too, mom. What is six times six? Easy, 36. Alright, I lost 36 matches, and won 6, and three of those wins were byes, matches given to me because the other team did not have a wrestler for me to wrestle. The other team had no person for me to wrestle, so I won by forfeit, which is not a win; I won by struggling with air, which is not winning, so, I won three matches and lost 36. Got it. 36.

The coach gave me the award for “Most Inspirational” at the Awards banquet for filling in when no one else would be there. I won matches by default. Your team does not have a player, so I win. What kind of winning is that? I could not even find a way to lose. Of course, I got the award. I got an award for not staying in my room in a reclusive position, refusing to attend the meet. I showed up. Raising my hand as the world’s loser. I came back for more. I did not give up. And, I am given the “Most Inspirational” Award. Inspiration goes to the biggest and best loser—me—my name is on the trophy.

Everyone shook my hand to confirm to themselves that I was not dead. Of course, no one on the team has my good attitude. They could compete with me if they lost 36 matches, and won three by default. Loser is the best person, least victories won qualifies you to win the award.

So, in the ninth grade of a supposed regular life, with a regular family, and a life filled with non events, I step out and become an inspiration to the world. I don’t need to step out, I don’t want to be inspirational to myself or anyone else.

I do not need to watch horror movies to see what the end of the universe looks like when the world is all over. I have been to the end of the world when I was given, without my voting it, the award of most inspirational.

Help me with this, please. How much do I need to practice to become better when it takes no effort, no more wins to
repeat as most inspirational? If I can disappear from next year’s team, I will be the most magical teammate. Gone.

Answer me this. Why come back from the end of the universe? I am inspired to stay here. I want to leave the team, taking away my award, and setting an example for others coming along to take my place.

WILL THERE EVER BE AN AWARD FOR NO MORE AWARDS?
Love

Three States

I love you,
you love me, but not so fast,
I love you now not at all.

Love First

Love is first and must remain way
ahead of what is in second place.
What is in second place?
What is a love life, anyway?

Reasons Why You Did Not Marry Me:

Your father told you I would not make
enough money for you and the
family you wanted.
You were told by my friends that I
would be boring, and no one wants
a boring person around.
Your friends told you that you could
do better than me, and you listened,
and they were right.
Reasons Why I Did Not Marry You:

I like to act as a child most of the time, not an adult.

Your ex-husband and you argued on the phone while you and I were in bed. It seemed he would never leave you alone.

Every time you and I discussed our needs, I was invariably blamed for everything that was not right, which made me feel like I was going to eventually take over your ex-husband’s position of talking to you on the phone while you were in bed with your next husband.

Best Times Couples Know When The Marriage Won’t Make It:

Engagement rings are still being thrown in different directions.
Invitations state: No presents, please.
Walking down the aisle.
Mixed Blessings

He is yours,
you don’t want him around,
he comes around,
he does not want to be here either.

Mothers Know

Mothers know. You do not know that they do, they cannot always tell you, you might not want to know that they know. Fathers know, but mothers know better and they know it first.

When Jack S. was 25, he wanted to marry Virginia T. who was 23, and asked his mother for her wedding ring so he could give it to her for their engagement. His mother said, “No, I am not dead. Your wife should not have my ring if I am still alive. I wear it.” Jack married Virginia and they divorced within six months. His mother was delighted but said nothing to Jack of her delight. His father was also delighted.

Ten years later, Jack met another woman, Heidi, and introduced her to his mother. His mother and father lived in Florida now, Jack still lived in California. Jack was not ready to ask her to marry him, but his mother and father liked her for Jack, and one day she sent Jack her wedding ring, no card, no instructions, just the ring. Jack and Heidi opened the box with the ring together and laughed when they found the ring. Heidi knew, but did not say any advancing comments.

Jack called his mother and asked why she sent the ring in the box. His mother said, “Don’t ask me, ask her.”

“But, mom, you are still alive!!” he exclaimed.

“I am still alive. That’s why I sent it to you,” she answered.
Jack held onto that thought and the ring for a few weeks, and one day, as there appeared a lack of enthusiasm in his relationship with Heidi, brought out the box and asked her to marry him.

There was a wedding, his mother and father came, a few months later his father died, and his mother came to live in California. Jack’s mother and Heidi became very close. They went to lunch often, held hands, hugged sincerely, and were genuinely interested in each other. When mother slid into needing around the clock care, and moved to a place within a mile of Jack and Heidi, Heidi took charge of all aspects of her life.

Jack continued his job as a paint salesman, Heidi was still an artist, but her basic commitment was to Jack’s mother.

One day Jack asked his mother about the ring and the box. His mother explained, “You might not have married her. You made a mistake the first time. Not this time. You might have been ambivalent about Heidi, but your dad and I knew. Mothers always know. They might not know how to tell you what they know, and maybe they should not tell you, but there reaches a point sometime when they have to let you know. So, I sent you the ring.”

“You were right. I never thought of it that way,” he replied.

“The best way to think about it is to consider who you made happy. Your father, me, your sister and brothers, Heidi and her family. All of us were made happier with the ring in the box. And look how happy you are because we are so happy for you. Mothers know, and now you know,” she finished.
Doctors Manage Mayhem

Two doctors of pain management have themselves to manage. Drs. Marisa D. and Michael D. have to resolve a solution, a next step episode to their marriage. When she found receipts from a hotel, heard voicemail evidence and written notes of amorous activity and excitement between Dr. Michael and at least three women suitors, she was forced to confront him, and with it were verbal accusation, denials and wishes.

“Look at what you have done to us,” she exclaimed, throwing the hotel receipts at him.

“I wish it were true, so I could admit it and we could move on, but none of what you have imagined is true,” he attempted at reason. “I only spoke with these people. We talk, people talk all the time.”

“So, you went to them for therapy, not sex, or was it sex therapy. Is that what you did?” She asked.

“You are accusing me of what I never did, and that hurts me. That’s what you want, isn’t it?” he answered.

“Everyone tells me, what do I need, a building to fall on my head. What is wrong with me, am I allergic to reality. Don’t I get it that I am living with poison,” she continued.

“Whatever you want to believe is what you want to believe. And don’t bring up therapy. I am not going. And, I am not leaving the house. Our marriage will survive your paranoia, too,” he finished.

“How could you destroy what we had,” she said.

“I destroyed nothing. You are just pushing me away,” he said.

“I just want the truth,” she continued.
“I told you the truth. Nothing with any of them, I promise. On my mother’s life, nothing with any of them.” he stated matter-of-factly.

“You are such a liar, and you are bringing in your mother,” she accused.

“I am happily married. That’s the truth,” he responded.

“Happily married with side dishes,” she said. “You are happy because you get away with it.”

“I am happy because you know I would never cheat on you,” he explained.

“Who are you cheating then? God? Our sacred vows? You lied to him and you lied to everyone who saw us get married. When did you start cheating, in medical school. God, I will hate you forever for this,” she said.

“For what, telling the truth?” he asked. “Look, you are my wife, plain and simple,” he reasoned.

“The only way is for us to divorce, and you start all over, dating me, courting me, with your great promises. That is what I will need. And then we will see if you can stay committed again to try to have what we had planned all along, kids and a grand life. But without that, there is no hope for us at all,” she concluded.

A few weeks later, Dr. Michael returned to his tenure at a hospital thirty miles away and called often to find out how his wife was doing, once on the phone to her while he was making poison with another woman, one his wife knew nothing about, and accusing his wife of seeing other men and asking her how she would answer to God for such disgraces in their marriage.
Remember
As Long As You Live

In a gym, where men and boys trained and retrained their bodies for muscle and breathing endurance and human survival, young boys were boasting of where they were going after their workouts, who they might see, who they could meet and what could happen if they ‘got lucky’ and met a woman they would have sex with. An older man listened to their bravado and interrupted their speeches to each other:

“Remember this, young men, and remember this for the rest of your life. If the girl you meet gets pregnant, and you are the only one who could have gotten her pregnant, and she wants to have the baby, and she has the baby, you will be connected to her for the rest of your life. Let’s say you find out that you do not want to have anything to do with her, that she is not the kind of woman you would want to marry, forget about it, she is in your life for good. The kid you made will be there too, and you might not want to have anything to do with that kid, but you will be related to him or her for the rest of your life. Whether you pay for it in money, or emotional and psychological strain, that kid will always be there.

Then you meet someone you want to be with, and she doesn’t want to have anything to do with you or that new kid you just conceived tonight. Go ahead, find a way to unlive tonight. You, mister anybody, mister everybody drinking yourself into oblivion, and then causing the world to suffer because someone was cute and you were just your ignorant wild masculine self. Wait for a woman you want to be with a long time, and do not take chances with everyone. Sure, you can protect yourself, but if that protection does not work, you have a great chance of suffering unwanted times with people you don’t want long in your life. So, go ahead, meet and greet your next conquest, your next lover, but know that anyone can do what you are doing, and
some have to pay for their pleasure. However, on the other side, if she is great and you sense that, and realize that it could last, then forget everything I have said. Forget it as long as you live. Then there is nothing I said that has to be remembered for as long as you live.”
Business

Real Currency

I can’t have a business unless I get into someone else’s business. My business gets bigger the more I know about your business. The only currency of my business is what I can tell others of your business.

Money Mantras

Money does not make me, I make money. Money and friendship mix well if no one cares what happens to the friendship. Money unspent is income earned. Jealousy given towards those perceived as being given the money they have is filled with at least one of the following titles: Born with a silver spoon in his/her mouth. Poor Little Rich Boy/Girl. Trust Fund baby.
Discounts Must Be Given for the Following:

For taking a very long time to decide which thing to buy at the store.
Promising never to come back to the store or restaurant.
A divorce party to cost half of what the wedding cost, if done in the first year after the wedding.

The Boss Had Three Requisites
The Next Person Hired Not Be:

A beauty queen.
A person who relies on drama to express themselves.
A person who has to be happy all the time.

Business Boasting We Would Like to See:

Homemade by a household of degenerates.
One owner—a sole-practioner of deceit, dishonesty and corruption.
Good Eats—Somewhere else, certainly not here.
I Refuse, You Accuse, and Now I Must Leave?

I refuse to feel bad for doing my best to have a good time, for making my time defined here as fun, what other purpose is more important? Others can tend to details and plans to complete: a job and the job requirements. If things go array on the way, I cannot be blamed.

How can anyone criticize me having to always have a good time? I have a responsibility to fun, and anything that forces me away from it can cause chaos for me and probably everyone else.

So, please accuse me of something else than not being responsible for whatever else did not get accomplished. And do not remember me as being incompetent, but as a free for fun living person who is for anything and everything that makes fun happen. Why else would you want any other impression of me?
Dogs

Veterans Sailing Their Boats

A small group of 90 plus-year old veterans of the second world war played golf every day except Monday. The course was closed on Mondays and they raced their remote control boats on one of the lakes on the course. They would hold their plastic battery boxes on their laps when they sat or by their waist, when they stood.

One day, in the middle of a muggy afternoon while the men were all standing controlling their boats, a tall lanky young man about 35 years old walked behind the men, controlling his dog with a slight leash. When the dog stopped to void excrement, the 35 year old man looked at the sky, at the sun, and began lightly singing to himself. The men did not notice the man or his dog, and the man did not apologize for what his dog was doing or make an effort to clean up after the dog.

A passerby, who was not a second world war veteran, noticed the man’s dog and went up to a few of the boaters to notify them of the dog. One of them men told the passerby as he saw the dog’s leavings, “I remember having to kill a guy who had a dog in the war. We took the dog and loved him. Let that guy take his dog. I don’t have the energy to get angry with him. Who knows, if he were closer, maybe we would have taken the dog, and gone after the guy. I don’t like dogs who do that, but the guy let him. He’s lucky; you should tell one of the other guys here. They might jump the guy and try to bring back the war. Start it all over again.”
Eddie F. Against

Eddie F. is against animals living with humans, in their homes, no matter how much affection there was between man and animal. He thought animals should roam by themselves with themselves, and be with humans in petting zoos or in circus acts.

Yet Eddie had a soft spot for a miniature dog who lived in the neighborhood. Eddie F. believed that the dog and he were related in a former life, and sometimes fantasized that they would be closely related in a future life. It did not matter that Zee Zee was on a leash or not. Eddie held her and petted her with great affection.

Eddie did care that many dogs in the neighborhood went without leashes and without their owners picking up their leaving on the road and in his garden.

Liz C. walked the neighborhood with her dog Billy One, and did so without a leash. Eddie asked her why she did not use a leash. She replied, “Why don’t you mind your own business.”

“My business is you and your dog if you walk around here without a leash on him and without a bag to clean up after him,” he stated. “It is my business if you don’t make it your business to follow those simple rules.”

“There’s also an unwritten law that says, lonely old men should stay inside and talk to no one,” she finished.

Eddie was not that old and not that lonely; he had many friends, and decided it best to nod her a yes, and move on slowly out of her way.
For The Dogs

After the man who owned the dogs that barked all day and night was killed by a neighbor who asked often belligerently for the man to keep his dogs inside his house at night at least, the barking dogs continued barking, and when the dead man's house was sold the new owners kept the dogs and let them bark all day and night outside, which was thought to be a death wish by some, but the belligerent neighbor who killed the dog owner was in jail and the new owner befriended everyone in the neighborhood by letting their dogs play in the yard with the barking dogs who stopped barking as they now had dogs to play with, and soon no one spoke of the dead man, and no asked about the man who killed him.
Agree

No Argument

My feelings get no argument from anyone. My feelings are how I feel. Why do I want to argue with your feelings, why argue with mine?

Feelings

Feeling good is ok.
Feeling bad is better.
Feeling awful is the best.

Politics

If someone disagrees with you, does that mean that you are wrong?
If I agree with you, does that mean I don’t have opinions of my own?
If I know your politics first, I know how to survive our discussion.
Chapter 2  Quick Stories, Sketches & Scenes

Chosen Argument

I choose not to argue with you,
I could get mad if you win the argu-
ment, and I do not want an
argument to change how I think
about you or anything.

Rules for Social Playing

I won’t be yelled at.
I can’t be criticized.
I will decide what is fair play.

And Some Rules for Shopping

Women shop in twos or more.
When men shop alone, they must
return any item that at least one
woman judges as unsuitable.
Men who shop alone are entitled to
an extra discount just for shopping
alone.
To the leaders who became mass murderers, we must ask, what did their mothers and fathers have in mind for them to become instead of mass murderers or were their parents only hoping that since more would have to die before there was complete world peace, that why not, let their sons and daughters aspire to be one of the mass murderers who murdered on the way to world peace?

What is worse, mass murderers, the killing of millions, or the hiding from justice and punishment those who perpetrated the mass murders?

How mad were the children of mass murderers that they might not have the chance to duplicate the numbers of what their parents did?
Enough is Enough Already

It was not that I was in seven concentration camps from the age of 14 to 17 in the Second World War, and that when the war was over I became a displaced person and was trained to be a mechanic so that I could become a citizen in another country and use my new skills to build new military war machinery.

It was not enough that my life was wars, and the killing of all living species, that sometime maybe I could survive all acts of depravation, and now with three children and seven grandchildren who have suffered from my being in the war, I still have more to endure.

I hear the Nazis still better than I can hear my own wife. I was going with her to an appointment for my hearing a 50 miles from here, and she had a heart attack on the way, and I had to take her to a hospital. Remember, I can help her for some of the trouble, but we needed a doctor, so I had to take her to a hospital. It is not enough that I have had to fight countries during peace time to get back what was stolen from my father and mother. Now, I have to fight time, all the time. How long can I live, and was it worth it? Why ask me.

When you get this old, you just hold on until they throw you into the pit with all those who went before you. Before, earlier, it was unimaginable that I was alive, and now it is not living, you never get over it. What is this idea of a future. What are you supposed to do? When I die, it won't be over. I won't be able to forget it then, either, he said as he opened the door of his car for his wife so she could turn and be lifted into her mobile mechanical chair and she could steer herself to the ramp that would lead her to the front door of the house, so he could open it for her.

This door is not the one I open to put me in the death house. I have been there many years ago. Any time they want to take me, come on. I have been gone forever, anyway.
The Fire, the Gym, the Shot

Ten years after the nation of Israel was formed, two college students shared a dormitory room in a United States university.

When Student A entered their dormitory room one evening, he noticed that his mattress was burned. There were five cigarettes in the middle of the fire worn mattress. Student A looked in his closet and there were no clothes. In the waste basket were his books, also burned. He said to his roommate, Student B, “Do you know who did this?”

“No. All Jews must burn. It is what Hitler started, and someone has to continue his directive,” He mumbled while continuing to read his book at his desk.

“So, you remember that?” Student A questioned.

“I do,” Student B stated.

“Where are my clothes?” Student A questioned.

“In the gym. Hitler says Jews must play and work before they die,” Student B explained.

Student A turned and walked slowly out the door and went to the gym. A janitor was there, sweeping the clothes from the center of the basketball court to the sides. “I will pick them up later,” Student A told the janitor, and left the gym for a friend’s room on the other side of campus.

The friend, Student C, said that there was no other choice of action, retaliation was the only option as he opened his top drawer and pulled out a revolver.

“Now, go back to your room, and shoot these tear gas pellets under your door. They will explode and cause blurred vision, nothing more. They are only temporary damage. He will come out enraged and you can tell him that he is lucky that they were not real bullets.”
Chapter 2  Quick Stories, Sketches & Scenes

III

Student A asked, “What good will shooting do?”

Student C answered, “You are learning the greatest lesson of all; everyone who does not like you or want you around must stay away from you. You are simply running away and giving him the chance to run away. You have reacted to being attacked, and you have told him that he should find someone else to abuse. Hitler had to give up when he was surrounded. Wish that your roommate stops hating before the bullets are real. Now go on, don’t let this opportunity to learn go away.”

Student A turned and walked out of the room, securely placing the gun between his pants and shirt, slowly pacing himself to his room.
Making Things Right

Jerry G. and the Mrs.

The hospital cared for those with cancer, diabetes, blood diseases and aging impairments. Because of the high volume of donations to help support patient care and research, a special attorney was hired to supervise the acceptance, maintenance and sale of properties for the hospital.

His name was Jerry G. He managed all aspects of real and personal properties. In his accumulation of power, he and his wife, also an attorney, devised a plan where a company they created would outbid other bids for the sale of hospital owned real estate. Their company would then sell the property at a much higher price.

Their practice of deception was discovered by a hospital administrator who was hired to assist Jerry with the disposal of properties. The administrator, Susan W., reported Jerry to the head attorney of the hospital, and routinely reminded that attorney of the case against Jerry and his wife, and warned that if the attorney did not hasten the investigation and complaint against Jerry that she would go to a higher authority with the news, even bring public exposure to the fraud. Within appropriate time, as deemed by Susan, the attorneys of the hospital forced the prosecution of Jerry and his wife.

Jerry and his wife received prison sentences; Jerry for four years, his wife for two. Both were not allowed to practice law again in the state.

There was much arrogance and condescension from Jerry to many employees during his time working at the hospital. Many saw Jerry’s crime as being for the way he treated them, and took a bus to the federal prison when he was released, making a protest that he should never be allowed out. They all laughed when they heard he was going to be released early because of good behavior.
Father and Sons

David had four children, three boys and one girl. One of his sons went to law school, passed the course work, but could not pass the bar examination, allowing the practice of law. Four times the bar test was taken by the law school son, and all results were negative.

All of the other children had careers that they could depend on for independence. One of the other sons came to his parents’ home after the results of the last failure to pass were given. He met David as he was about to enter the backyard and walk towards the swimming pool.

“You can fail, and find a way to deal with it, and survive, but when your kid fails, two people have failed. When you fail, you can know that you will get up, but when your kid fails too many times, you move into despair. You don’t know if they will ever get up. I am going into the pool, and hope that I don’t come up,” he said as he dove into the water. A loud splash sounded and he glided to the other side of the pool. He came to the surface and let the water bring him to stillness. He slowly raised his head and wiped the water from his face, then turned over on this back and blew water out of his mouth.

He looked over to his son who was standing on the side of the pool. “I did not want to come up. I’d rather drink all of this and drown, but I can’t. I hope he finds something else to do. I paid for him to go to a law school in another state, one that would accept him, because he could not get in here, and four impossible years later he takes this test four times, which is two more years, six years altogether, and he winds up with no paper to do anything.”

“He can always go into business, “The son encouraged.

“Sure, and then what does he have to fall back on?” David asked. “I built this pool for everyone to come over and enjoy themselves, and look what I got now, a place to drown.”

“I am sure he will wind up in a good place,” his son continued.
“When I am gone, he might have to, but right now, he still thinks I am always going to be there dishing him out,” David reasoned. “I just want him to win somewhere on his own.”

“You and all of us will survive this shock well. We have done it before, we will work our way out of this, too,” His son said.

“You tell me how I don’t stop blaming myself for making his life too easy. He had it all, and he can’t do anything. He’ll float around until the bottom falls out again and again and again.” David continued. “Look, you have your own issues. This has nothing to do with you. You have a girl friend, and you have a job, and one day you’ll get married, and have kids of your own. Life might be better to you.”

“And, maybe I will have a kid who doesn’t do well along the way, and we will talk it through,” he said.

“You can forget all that talk business. That’s for people who don’t have to do anything. Just make sure you get kids who can make it, and I don’t know how to tell you how,” David summarized.

“Dad, I’ll just have to have a pool and a son to talk about it with,” He continued. “Hold on, dad, I am coming in.” He took off his shirt, threw it on the cement siding of the pool and jumped in, hugged his father and told him he loved him.
My Bar, Your Money

Arnie C. owned a hotel he built with the help of a few partners, but it was his hotel. He was the face of the hotel, the promoter to make the street it was on one of the major fashion and business places in the world.

The hiring and firing of people were among Arnie’s responsibilities. The hotel had a restaurant, and the restaurant had a bar and next to the bar was a piano. Arnie made a mistake at the opening of the hotel’s restaurant. He bought the best settings of silverware and they were stolen within the first week. Employees, it was agreed upon by everyone, did the stealing. Who? No one would say. Within a week he hired a detective to monitor habits of honesty. The detective found that a bartender was stealing. After Arnie calmed down from exploding after he received the news, he called the bartender and asked him to come in early before his next shift.

When they met in the restaurant, just the two of them, Arnie adjusted his tie, and looked the man in the eyes: “When I hired you, I overlooked the fact on your report that said you stole from another guy. I figured you sounded good to me, you needed a break and I gave it to you.

“Now, you have stolen from me, almost made me broke. And don’t start to explain that you did not. I pay people to watch you and they reported seeing you take from the till, the cash box. They saw you put money people gave you into your own pocket, and the people drink as much as they wanted. That, my friend, is like pouring my blood into the streets.

“They got jails for guys like you, and I am not going to the cemetery for you. And, no, you aren’t going to jail. I’ll let the next guy do that for you. You will leave here today without any more words from me. We are through. I gave you another chance and you tried to bury me.

“What did you say to me when I hired you, ‘Arnie, we will always be friends.’ You shook my hand and looked me square in
the eyes. And now, my friend, do not call me for a letter of recommendation. Take my name off your list of who you know, and the people you are sorry for stealing from. You are only sorry for getting caught. You made a choice, you chose yourself over a guy who gave you a break to make a living. How many guys are you going to find who are going to give you that? You said we would always be friends, when I hired you. That’s a friend? I am going to make this easy. I don’t want to see you ever again.”
Chapter 2  Quick Stories, Sketches & Scenes

Abort

Attitudes

| The mother and father did not know if they wanted the child, and could not make up their minds what to do about the child; the grandparents and the brother of the mother helped support the child, and the neighbors applauded everyone.

Then the mother had two more children with two different men, and all three men came to visit and argued over whose child was getting the best treatment, and there were aunts and uncles for each child and the mother never knew them all, and the children were never sure to whom they belonged, and no one wanted a wedding because they could not agree who would come for whom, for the fathers had children with other women, and they wanted to write a story about everyone, but no one wanted to write it.

||

The 26-year old man killed his girl friend who had an abortion of the child they created. “She did not have to kill the baby in the womb, or out of the womb,” he said. “All she had to do was have the baby and give it to me, so I could care for it and love it, but she wanted nothing to do with me or the baby.”

He went to the police and admitted what he had done, and said he had no alternative course of action. She had killed his child, and he wanted to make things right, so he did what she forced him to do. There was no other way for him, he would always think about the child or he would always have taken care of it, and since she kept him from taking care of it, she had to be punished.

At the time of his court sentencing to several lives to be served for his killing action, he told everyone that he was sorry for his family for not being there with them anymore, but he could not live well knowing someone had killed his child, so
prison was fine with him, and most emphatically expressed to the woman's family. "I am sorry for what happened and that you have to live with it, but if she were right in front of me now, and I were free to do what I could do, I would have no other choice. I made my choice. Justice is not always nice, but it must be served."

III

Dr. Z. performed abortions on over 500 women, yet not 600, he estimated and survived several protests at the clinics where he operated. Protests against the dismissal of human unborn life. He felt fortunate that he was not butchered and beaten for this work.

He survived the screaming and violent threats until one day he was forced to be the only doctor who could perform a dangerous abortion operation on his own daughter for the sake of her survival. After she survived he changed his ways and strongly agreed with the protestors who cried for the heads of doctors for committing evil deeds to the sanctity of life.

Dr. Z. was now the doctor of record to care for the doctors who performed abortions who received bodily harm, blunt force trauma, and knockout-thrown punches from protestors who spewed out venomous epithets, and reviled the 'wrong hands of medicine.' He saved the doctors from being murdered, and then joined the protestors, and then one day decided he would leave every cause about living or not. He was through with that argument, and taking sides.
Complicated and Confusing

Tommy T. created chaos between his mother and father when he was born five months after his virgin father and white-dressed mother were married. His married father, Joseph, pushed and shoved his wife, Alice, into a wall, asked why she picked him to betray, waited for no answer, packed one suitcase and vanished.

Tommy’s mother found another man, Arthur, and together they brought into the world, Linda, a sister for Tommy. Arthur had other families from before this union and in time Alice tired of his involvement with everyone else and decided to separate from him.

Alice sought the companionship of Phillip, the biological father of Tommy. Soon Alice was pregnant again, which made Phillip leave again, and for solace, the only person she could find was Arthur, who returned and did not complain when the third child, Jacob, was born, knowing the boy was not his. Arthur was dutiful, and had nothing now to do with his other families, but Arthur soon became ill and died.

Now Phillip returned to Alice, this time ready for a family, enough money to assist with supporting whatever the children needed, and wanted the boys to know that they were all related, a fact that Alice did not want known, as it could make life complicated and confusing for everyone. And, no paternity tests were taken. Alice lived with Phillip, and the boys were excited about Phillip because they all were so much alike. They were the family everyone wanted. And their happiness was short lived as Alice contracted cancer and died in the third year of her time with Phillip.

And Phillip took care of the boys and became very close to their children. The boys often teased Phillip that he was really their father, and Phillip merely laughed and refused to take a paternity test when the boys suggested one.
Retirement

The Three-Man Theme

The 75-year man needed to improve his hearing and asked a 55-year doctor how and the doctor gave him advice and he did not hear better, so he asked the doctor again for other methods to hear better and the doctor answered.

“Try picturing a 35-year old man who had perfect hearing 500 years ago, but died as that was the age that men died then.”

The 75-year old man closed his eyes and pictured a man 35-years old 500 years ago. The doctor continued, “Now when the man from 500 years ago sees you he will wave, and when you think you hear the music he is listening to, please wave back to him.”

The 75-year old man waved back and opened his eyes, and told the doctor, “I cannot hear any better.”

“You are not listening well enough to the music,” the 55-year old.

Your Final Phase’s Purpose:

To do nothing and do it well.
To accept and realize what you have is just what you should have.
To start your next life, what changes will you make.
Chapter 2  Quick Stories, Sketches & Scenes

Moving Friends

He lived his life without exercise, moving only as necessary as a father of three, a big-rig driver; and when he was through working, had such heavy debilitating arthritis, he became an exercise walker in the shallow end of the park’s swimming pool near where he lived.

His friend, who was a brick mason, exercised every day after work, and when he retired, did absolutely nothing, no working out; able-bodied, he had only enough energy to watch and wait for his wife to carry shopping bags from the car in the garage up their two flights of stairs.

“Are you waiting for the mortician to come and take you away,” She yelled one day, “You’ll probably run to get in the coffin,” She finished, as the cans of peaches and pears broke through the paper bags and tumbled down the staircase on their way back to the garage.

Ways and Means of the Post-Work Environment

Become a medical consumer.
Retail therapy, spending for clothes that never will be worn.
Increasing the list of hobbies that won’t be done.
House of Never

Where I never went,
what I never made,
who I never forgot.

Never Ever

There will never be a person who passes away who wanted to spend one more day at the office.
The fan is still the most important player.
STORIES ALONG THE WAY

108
Sport Shorts

All you have in later years are the colors of play, the stadium and the fans blending together, the cries of the crowd to win and win forever, and you don’t want any of the playing to end.

And then you wonder about those who will come several years from now and wonder that so many came and played, watched and wondered if there would be play forever.
Kiss Mate Scores - Dan Meets Sue

Kiss me softly in slow motion,
I know you are my winning mate,
our team just scored a touchdown
to celebrate our matching fate.

Fandemics 1

Yea, Yea, Yea for the price of admission
for in it includes the greatest permission,
the right to drink out in the open and
swear, act as madmen who for blood
alone do care!

Where else can we blast the air from
our lungs
with a chance to recycle the
vocabulary of our tongues?
Whose living room
could take our
trashing disorders,
and withstand the
behavior on which
ours borders?
Fandemics 2

Oh say, I can’t see from my seat in the stands, far above the end zone, the highest rent in the land. My eyes focus barely on the game down below, I can see us losing, it’s true; oh no, oh no.

Fandemics 3

Season tickets for all sports reasons, a year round view for every sitting season; since season tickets are not the best exercise, I joined a gym, but the workouts I came to despise, so I got a TV for the room with the steamer and watched others play as a spectator teamer.
Fandemics 4

David E. sells insurance downstairs in the arena lobby, for those who live each game as their life, not just a hobby. He has machines that measure blood flow and heart beat before the game and when play gets people out of their seats. He sells policies which guarantee high levels of action, with clauses that pay more for cardiac infarction. Premiums are high if your team must be a winner, and even higher if you have to digest your dinner. You can insure against players not doing as well as you can, and take their place and let them become your biggest fan. You can get insured against any game defeat, and get paid until they get back on their feet.
Fandemics 5

Play for me, sweat for me
tennis player, as I sit and
sweetly
sip myself with cool beer—
gentle calorie machine am I
moving not at all, though
getting excited from your moving
graces,
I am the great appreciator, having let
you take
over my need to play and when ev-
eryone wonders
why I watch you so often I tell them
that the more I
watch you, the less I have to play, so
please, go ahead,
wind up for your serve, and play for-
ever, isn’t life one stroke
following another, if you find out
differently, please let me know.

Fandemics 6

When I asked you for your autograph,
you grabbed me and twisted my
arm,
I only wanted your signature, not to
find out you had no charm.
Waitress in Western Michigan

When we were state champions everything was good for everybody, it seemed, but they started to lose, I don’t know why, and the town people got rotten to each other. The team’s all we really got. If we didn’t have that field house over there at school I don’t know what people would do. One night someone called the coach a dog and he went right into the stands after the guy and the whole crowd went wild, and the kids didn’t want to play anymore, they just seemed like they wanted to fight everyone. But next year we’re supposed to have a better team and that’ll be good for everybody. We’re more civil to each other when the kids play right.
Big Boy Bill

If people want to pay to follow what he does on the basketball court, that is more than kind, but do we have to wait around until he’s washed the sweat off his body to find out what’s on his mind?
Old Man Speaks

The old man spoke of his accomplishment in sports and the people listened in amazement. One of the boys who had heard him often said, “Which story is the truth, I have heard so many?” “They are all true,” the man said. “But each time you tell them, they are so different.” The boy said. “I know, the truth is each time I tell them I remember them better,” the man responded.

Mother Sunday

She won’t wear any lipstick or high heel shoes, she’s out of the kitchen, got to get her tackling dues. So tape her legs in adhesive, pad her shoulders to her ears and let her carry the wish that’s been pregnant too many years.
Yes, make way for her the triumph of
the total female plan
as the rights of human suffrage open
to play its favorite fan.
And as she runs through the line with
guts beyond any dare,
stand up, cheer for six points of
mother’s tender love and care.

“You can chase her far and fast,
and promise your heart that it will last,
but she is the touchdown lady, my friend,
and a broken heart is how you’ll bend.”
Good Son Hitter

If you can’t get a hit, son, why play at all?
But dad, how can I every time hit the ball?
Now, don’t give me excuses for what you can’t do.
But, dad, I try my best, isn’t that enough for you?
Trying is a good thing, but a hit is the only way to be.
So, mom is the only one who will love me unconditionally?

Number One Consideration

J. B. Oh! J. B., we’ve followed you so long, all the way through grade school and college, we’ve been your cheering throng.
They say that you’ll have to leave us when you turn pro and play your life in another city, we’re crying as you go.

We’ll get out a petition everyone will have to sign that will make you city property, the architect’s design, and declare you the number one issue and public frustration; our mayor must make you the number one consideration.
All

All we have after the running of the horses in races are their names. All the horses who ran the fastest, who took on the quickest speed, the greatest victories, the biggest purses. After all the flying dirt, the grass patted steps in grand motion along the rail. When all the horses are gone, pictures have captured their speed, all then that remains is the sound of their names.

Go ahead, pick a winner. We all win with the names. The odds are, the favorites, the trainers, the owners, the long shot, and the paddock, but in the winner’s circle is the horse and all of the names before and those that will follow. Imagine all of the great winning names

Ack Ack, Affirmed, Alydar, Alysheba, Arts and Letters, and Azucar.

Bold Ruler, Cannonero, Cigar, Count Fleet, Coventry, and Citation. Cigar is the name of a horse!!!

Light in the air of Dancer’s Image, Equipoise, Ferdinand, Find and Foolish Pleasure. Go race a Gallant Fox, or a Jim Dandy.

John Henry was a man and a horse; Kelso, Man o’ War, to Majestic Prince, mix all of the names with the sound of the thunderous strides around the track.
There goes Nashua, Native Dancer, Needles, Noor, Quicken Tree and Round Table: who wouldn’t want to be a horse for one of those names?

Here comes Ruffian, Seabiscuit, Seattle Slew, Secretariat, Silky Sullivan, and Social Outcast. You can be the fastest, but you have to have the greatest name to ride with you.

Out of the gates, they’re off. Sham, Stymie, Swaps, Tell—A horse’s name is Tell. The only sound its equal is Tim Tam, or Twenty Grand.

And what about War Admiral, Whereforartthou, Whichone, Whirlaway, and the one you can never forget, Zenyatta.

We have pictures of speed, but the names always win, no matter who is the jockey, what type of weather, the ground is dirt or grass, the winner always is the sound of the name.

When the races are over, when everyone has left the track, all that remains is the name, the sound of the winning name is all that lives on.
Four Gold Medal Laundry Lady

The athlete was the greatest in Olympic history, having won more gold and silver medals than anyone else in several Olympic Games. In his first Olympic Games, the crowd protested that he did not do as many efforts as they thought he should have in one event. He waved to the crowd, and asked publicly for their understanding, that he was preserving his energy for other events. The crowd was unrelenting, and did not want to understand. They booed as he waved and smiled at them.

A person on the committee that organized this Olympic Games called his coach and offered a place of solace for the athlete. The athlete accepted, and was taken to it, a few blocks from the stadium. It was two rooms in an apartment complex; there he and a running mate could relax, far from the criticism of the screaming crowd.

The athlete met a very old lady doing her laundry while he was doing his. He introduced himself, and she said who she was.

“Are you a laundry man?” She asked.

“Yes, I am,” He answered.

The next day, after he had won his second gold medal, he went to the laundry room again.
“It is nice to see you. Always there is laundry, people come and go, but laundry does not stop.” She said.

He smiled, “You are right. Always laundry.” He said.

Two days later, he came to laundry with his third gold medal around his neck.

“Why are you wearing that jewelry?” The lady said.

“I just want to. I am happy wearing it,” He said.

“It is very heavy for a laundry man, don’t you think?” She asked.

“I got the medal for ....” He offered.

“For being a laundry man?” She finished.

“Yes, that is right. For being a laundry man.” He said.

They both laughed.

The next day he won another medal and returned to the laundry room with all of four of them hanging on a chain from his neck.

The lady said, “You have four medals for being a laundry man.”

“I like doing laundry so I can win more medals.” He responded.

“Let me see one of them.” She asked.

He gave one of them to her. She looked at it, turned it over, looked at him, and said, “This is for being an Olympic athlete, not for being a laundry man. You aren’t really a laundry man, you just said you were.”

“I know. I did not want to brag about them. I hid them at first, and I found solace here, away from the disapproving crowds,” he said.

“Can I put it on?” She asked.

“Sure,” He said.

“Now, where are the people who didn’t want you to stop jumping. Where are they? Let me tell them that you had to get
back to do your laundry. I’ll tell them you had to help the laundry lady; that is why you could not jump another six times.” she finished.

The athlete took his other three medals off his neck and gave them to her. She put them on, took his arm, and together they marched outside to find the crowds who disapproved.

The Phone, the Queen, and the Player

There was a high school basketball tournament where several teams from different areas came and played each other. During the finals of the playing was a coronation of the queen of the tournament, who was presented to those in attendance, and given a crown to wear as she sat the at the top of the seats of the gymnasium.

On one of the walls of the gymnasium was a telephone affixed and used in the finals game by the brother of one of the players to call their father, who was in a hospital, and let him know how his son was doing. The brother posted a sign on the telephone that said OUT OF ORDER, so that no one would try to use the phone when he was not using it. The brother spent his time going back and forth from his seat to the phone during the game in which his brother went back and forth on the basketball court below.

The basketball playing brother would look up to see his brother climbing the steps to go to the phone to call their father and once yelled to him, “Tell dad, I just scored two for him.” and
the rest of those in attendance at the game heard his yelling and began screaming, “Tell dad, I just scored two for him.”

And the other players on the playing brother’s team threw the ball to the basketball playing brother most of the time because no one wanted to be the one who stopped the flow of conversation between the crowd and the brother who was standing at the telephone telling their father how well the basketball playing brother was doing.

Basketball Player

Simon B. was the best player for his age at 18, all the colleges asking him to play, and he chose to stay near his home, playing for a small school in the local gymnasium. He was the team leader, making all on his team play better while he was on the court. After his mother died, he would not play anymore, just went to the gymnasium and sat and stared at others playing, going back and forth in games. Soon he would not go to school and chose to work at the gym, sweeping the floor and helping to push back the grandstands against the wall after each game.

One day a player who was much older came into the gym, handicapped with spastic motion, to be on a team for games with other players who were also physically challenged. Simon offered to help the older player practice playing and soon became a coach for their games.

When the players Simon coached could not play in the gymnasium, they practiced in the garage next door, in and around cars, wearing braces on their legs and extra thick knee pads to cushion themselves if they ever tried to increase their usual speed and hit the ground in a fall.
Chapter 3  Sport Shorts

The world’s appetite for giving everything to the all around sports fan has to consider needs for changes to the stadiums, tax system, and favorite fan designation.

The stadiums have to be built for all seasons with living environments and conditions. Yes, whether the venue is for one or more sports, it must include walls that have condominium homes — on the side or above the field of play. You can live above 2nd base and cheer for a great double play or yell plays to your quarterback from your bedroom above the 40 yard line. Tax codes have to allow fans to deduct from their gross income some compensation for the emotional stress of having unsolicited commercial appeals interrupt their sports enjoyment. What about a tax deduction for emotional depravation when the local hero is traded; how about tax benefits for having to endure the insult to one’s emotional stability for having him leave the team. What about the emotional cost translated into tax benefits. Let the deprived fan benefit on the tax page. Why not?

Stadiums will eventually have to provide for designated seating to be based on the volume and intensity of the average fan, so that the loudest and most vociferous fans will sit by themselves.

And when will all games eventually be watched from home, in living rooms, with the average exercise being the walk or run to the kitchen for extra drinks and extra heavy caloric intake foods, with dumbbells of various weight hanging from the go-getter’s waist.

(from articles in the NY Times)
Why Teams Run In Football:

Ball thrown—not caught.
Ball thrown—intercepted.
Ball thrown—caught and dropped.

Number 29 Again

He wore number 29 for his college football efforts, catching balls, scoring touchdowns, and waving to crowds on memorable plays, and winning scores. Everyone jumping for joy, screaming applause, loud and louder. Those cheers he never heard again in anything else he did after screaming football.

He was buried in one of his uniforms. Silent cheers as the door to the coffin shut.

A friend of his collected uniforms from such greatness, adorned a room in his home as a shrine for sports heroics. He sits in the room with the clothing draped on the walls, and imagines great plays being played over and over, again and again. He cheers like the people at the games several years before, and imagines the fallen heroes of those times cheering for him as he takes one of the uniforms off the wall, puts it on, grabs a ball and races outside, picturing the world chasing him as he runs through the neighborhood.

Two Man List

Two men worked with each other every day for forty years, operating a sports library for the entire community of a large city. They compiled lists, stories, and statistics of major and minor sports played throughout the world. They inspired
children and adults to become researchers and writers on any subject related to teams and players.

One of the men died abruptly at the age of 68 of a heart attack in his office, smoking was blamed. He left his legacy to his friend who followed suit, within two weeks he died at his home while watching a hockey game. His wife said that she knew he would not live much longer than his friend because they were so closely connected in everything they did.

“They lived as one team and for them to thrive, they both had to be alive, it became that one could not be without the other.”

One of the lists they were compiling was of early professional football teams in America. They were intrigued that the Detroit Lions were once the Pottsville Spartans. Red Grange helped expand professional football in between his playing times for the Chicago Bears. What team did Grange create during his two stints with the Bears? The New York Yankees; and not the baseball team.

Here is the rest of the list, though, “No list is ever complete of things that happened way before our time,” one of them said. “Remember, some teams moved and their names were changed. The names of the teams though, where they were and where they went live on.”

Akron Professionals
Alameda Mustangs
Baltimore Colts
Bloomfield Rams
Boston Bulldogs
Boston Redskins
Boston Yanks
Bristol Westends
Brooklyn Dodgers
Brooklyn Horsemen

Brooklyn Lions
Buffalo Bills
Buffalo Bisons
Buffalo Indians
Canton Bulldogs
Chicago Rockets
Chicago Bears
Chicago Bulls
Chicago Dodgers
Chicago Staleys
Chicago Cardinals  Long Beach Bulldogs
Cincinnati Bengals  Louisville Tanks
Cincinnati Reds  Maryland Yellow Jackets
Cleveland Browns  Massillon Tigers
Cleveland Bulldogs  Miami Seahawks
Cleveland Indians  Milwaukee Badgers
Cleveland Tigers  New York Yankees
Cleveland Rams  New York Black Hawks
Cleveland Panthers  Newark Bears
Columbus Bullies  Oakland Cardinals
Dallas Texans  Oakland Giants
Danbury Trojans  Oakland Hornets
Dayton Bombers  Oakland Oaks
Dayton Triangles  Paterson Panthers
Decatur Illinois Staleys  Philadelphia Quakers
Detroit Wolverines  Pittsburgh Amercs
El Monte Chiefs  Pittsburgh Pirates
Frankford Yellow Jacket  Pittsburgh Tigers
Fresno Crushers  Portland Rockets
Hawaiian Warriors  Pottsville Maroons
Hollywood Bears  Providence Steamrollers
Hollywood Braves  Richmond Boilermakers
Hollywood Generals  Rock Island Independents
Hollywood Rangers  Rock Island Tigers
Jacksonville All Stars  Rochester Jeffersons
Los Angeles Angels  Rochester Kodaks
Los Angeles Blues  Rochester Tigers
Los Angeles Buccaneers  Sacramento Nuggets
Los Angeles Bulldogs  San Francisco Clippers
Los Angeles Chargers  San Francisco 49ers
Los Angeles Dons  San Francisco Bay Packers
Los Angeles Dons  San Francisco Tigers
Los Angeles Maroons  San Jose Mustangs
Los Angeles Mustang  Salinas Iceberg Packers
Los Angeles Rams  Salt Lake Seagulls
Los Angeles Saints  San Diego Bombers
Los Angeles Tigers  San Diego Gunners
Los Angeles Wildcats  San Diego Gunners
The list they wanted to start was of great names of players. Here are a few: Pug Manders, Spec Sanders, Hamp Pool, Verl Lillywhite, Vitamin T. Smith, and the best, Pudge Heffelfinger.

Go ahead, find better names. Go ahead!

Only a Game

It is only a game but it means too much to too many people just to be a game, better the game not be played or watched or listened to, or the results having to be known. Could we find something else to cheer for? What about yelling and screaming for ourselves, winning just for effort given, for hope promised?

Will there be a time when no one plays for anyone else?
So you rode in a circle on a carousel horse, playing your part in a constantly moving circus.

You want to imagine what would happen if the people in the stories you read became real and rode off into the world and lived forever.
Joe in his speech for student body president, praised each of the six people running against him,
spoke of how good a person each was,
said he didn’t know what he could do
as president, except tell the students nicely
what the administration wouldn’t be able to tell them
nicely.
He had no other qualifications and said everyone
running against him could do it as well as he could,
and that he would vote for the person he thought
needed most the title “student body president”
next to his or her name when they applied for college.
In a tightly wrapped blanket
Tina sleeps on the steps
leading up to the front of the school
her head resting on a jacket puffed pillow
the morning after her mother had sold her bed,
her clothes, and told her she was dead
because she had gone and gotten the abortion;
Tina lying in her new angled way,
waiting the alarm of the sun rising clock
upon her face.
Only one pull up, Jason Manover?
Is that all you can do?
You’re almost 12 and you can only do one, Jason!
The girls were watching and still you could only do one.
You’d like maybe to go stand over there with the girls and watch the boys do them?
“Can I go to my locker to get my glasses?”
“Sit down. No one leaves class. You know that.”
“But I have to. I can’t see without them.”
“You should have thought about that before.”
“I know, but I forgot them this time. I’m sorry.”
“The rule is that no one leaves, so no one leaves.”
“I’m sorry. I told you; I’m sorry.”
“That doesn’t change anything.”
“Why not? I admit I forgot.”
“Yes, but we have rules to follow and one of them is that you don’t leave. It’s right to obey rules, isn’t it?”
“But this time. Just this one time. Please.” she said, jumping up and down and whining; and as the teacher turned to walk away, she grabbed his arm and gently turned him around.
“At home I can get my glasses.”
“I do not think your parents know the difference between right and wrong with you anymore. They must have rules that you just break.”
“At least we don’t have rules that can’t be broken for a good reason.”
Heather was taken off the floor at the dance, when she couldn’t go on by her own wits, the beer having shaken her head dizzily, her arms hanging at a low-slung angle from a friend’s shoulder. Heather was the newest shame of the school, dressed as she was in school colors—without pride and for the sake of fun—Heather degenerated before everyone but woke up to the smile that everyone liked her more for what had happened, and she promised herself she wouldn’t be a stiff, stuck-up, smiling, love-me-everybody cheerleader ever again.
The head coach sent his assistant into the dressing room at the state championship meet to tell the team he wouldn’t be at the meet because coaching wasn’t good for him any more, that his wife would leave him if he stayed with it one more minute, that he was sorry for abandoning them now, but he had to think of his family. He wished the team well, would pray for them, said they should remember everything about life and wrestling he taught them, that he still believed everything himself, but couldn’t be with them, that his life was completely out of his hands now and he was sorrier than they could imagine – sorry, yes, sorrier.
Hayman, give me your paper,
you’re cheating
let me have it
right this minute!
    I’m not the only one!
    How come you only caught me?
All right, class, who else
is cheating?
No one answers, Hayman,
so I guess you’re
the only one.
    You just wanted to catch me,
didn’t you?
I caught you cause you’re a sneak,
    Hayman. If I didn’t keep a close
watch on you, you’d crawl right out
of here.
And I caught you because
I don’t like you.
Anyone who makes me
watch them like a hawk, I don’t like.
Got that, Hayman? Got that?
As long as you’re in my class
I’ll watch everything you do. Understand?
I am so far behind, —No you’re not, you’re only doing the best you can, you do not have to do as well as others

I am, but I am so far behind everybody else... —You’re not behind anyone because you can only do as well as you can.

I know, but... —No one is ahead of you, they’re only doing as well as they can.

But, I am still behind!
Why are you so upset:
Because we still don’t know?
Either find us a new way to learn
or forget it.
Don’t teach it to us at all.
Maybe we can’t learn,
or you can’t teach,
but don’t get so upset about it
because it will kill you,
and it doesn’t do us any good
to see you
going down.
Chapter 4  Under the First of Circumstance

Marvin T. is the same one
who everybody’s thrown out of everywhere he’s gone,
and now your not letting him back in school
is going to give him one more reason
to one day steal everything
and never learn it doesn’t belong to him,
it until they shoot him dead,
or put him away in jail;
and you had a chance,
a better chance than anybody to care for him,
and nobody cares about Marvin but the police.
You put one more Marvin out in the street for
the police
to look after, and don’t go telling him it wasn’t
your fault.
Your school, big as it is,
sure got enough room for one more to handle,
and you could have said yes to him
when he said, “Please – give me another chance,
just one more, please.”
On the third time
Gynella F. was caught
smoking,
she was suspended from school
for ten days.
Her mother took it all very
easily, called the babysitter,
told her that it wasn’t necessary to come
for the next ten days,
went to the store
with two thoughts on her mind:
how much money she would save
not having to pay the babysitter,
and how many cigarettes
Gynella F. would want to smoke
while she was at home.
“Would you help me clean up the room? I would really appreciate it.”
“Told you didn’t like me. I always knew it. Ever since I came into this class, you never liked me.”
“That isn’t so. I don’t dislike any of my students.”
“That’s not true. You like everybody but me.”
“Why? Because I asked you to help me?”
“Not just that. I got a low grade on my last notebook. You just don’t like me, face it. But I’ll help you clean your room, since you asked so nicely. I’m just glad I know for sure now how you feel about me.”
“Why do you give us homework, anyway?
No one likes to do it. It makes us hate
everything we are supposed to learn.”
“Your parents like you to do it. They know that
if you’re busy,
you won’t bother them like you bother me
through the crazy dizzy day.”
“You mean my mom and dad want me to have
homework?”
“Right. They’re the ones who’d be upset if you
didn’t have any.”
“You mean my parents don’t like me, either?
Is that what you’re
trying to say? Go ahead, say it.”
“I don’t know about that. Don’t ask me how
your parents feel
about you, ask them.”
The child was causing the mother to be late for the opening of school: a low to the ground heavy 6 year old. She couldn't carry him anymore; so she dragged him, shoes on their sides, he tugged on her hands for support; and when his feet stumbled on an uneven concrete block, causing her to break her awkward struggling rhythm, she stopped, and focusing on his behind, hit him, halfway between a fist and an open hand as the other children stopped to look on.
Fairinks was proud
of the sign painted
on the high brick wall
that told him where he could shove
the boys physical education department.
That he could shove it right up there
gave him more reason for arrogance
and uncontrolled power
as he walked back and forth
in front of the boys,
who were dressed in shorts and T-shirts
during the below-zero weather,
the cold air coming from their mouths –
shaking, shivering
Fairinks spoke of how “discipline”
came from the word “disciple,”
and that, “History was made
of those who wanted to be disciples
and those who needed to have them.
Discipline does not have to be learned.
All you need to do is obey, which takes
no thought. An animal can follow, so can you.”
BECOME FAMOUS!

The notice said,
write down your opinion
how dogs are treated
on school grounds—
dogs who have not bitten anyone,
dogs who are just loving, walking, curious, simple
people with four legs,
dogs who are quieter than the rest of us,
dogs who keep us constantly reminded
that we don’t belong
in school.

YEAH DOGS!

Sooooo

support your local
DOG

and make yourself and the rest of the world
FAMOUS!

“Vote dogs into campus life.”
The tent was four-pointed
and put up in a few hours for the festival
by the children, while their chubby,
peach shaped teacher shrieked directions.
She was new
and did not know not to scream
and took everything her students did
personally;
so when the tent fell,
she plopped to the grass
and her face fell into her hands,
tears streaked her face,
while she tried to cover
her visible frustration
and the students came over
to comfort her.
Chapter 4  Under the First of Circumstance

Practice was held twice a day; in the morning before school and three hours after, and players didn’t get home until many family dinners were through. Players felt better about being with the team at school and when it came for vacations, none wanted to go, fathers and mothers complained they had families to raise and love, “You guys do everything but sleep with them. They don’t even have time to go out with girls, they stay out late; they don’t even have time to kiss anybody but your ass,” one father complained to the head coach at a meeting he arranged between the coaches and some of the other fathers. “Look, I’ve got a team to make win, and we’ve got to feel like a family or we won’t and I am sorry if your sons have to make a choice, but I am here to make them win and I feel they stay with us because they want to.”
Red owed some small money to Ellis, who kept asking about it in front of a lot of people. And Red became more against paying each time Ellis asked. Red got mad once and told Ellis if he didn’t stop, he would never get it, that he was out to make him look bad. But Ellis didn’t care how Red looked, he wanted his money, and warned Red he would get a gun if he didn’t pay him now.

“Right now, man. Your money is starting to get to me, ’cause I don’t have it yet, and it’s mine.”

“It ain’t yours, Red, cause I ain’t gonna give it to you.”

The teacher told them to stop, and they did. Ellis left, mad—said he would get Red good, and came back in twenty minutes and didn’t ask Red anything, just told him,

“Sucker, you got my money,” pointed a gun at his chest, pulled the trigger, and ran.
He parked
in the middle of the entrance to the school,
and when the teacher told him to move,
he said
he wouldn’t be told what to do
unless it was nicely said.
“I’ll give it to you nice! Now move it!”
The boy began
to walk away.
The teacher grabbed
his arm,
and the boy turned
and grabbed his suit
and flung him to the ground.
The teacher got up,
took a leg of the boy
and dragged him back to the car,
yelling, “How nice!”
and “Now
the car will move!”
Taylor was taken
out of the classroom
because students
and parents complained
he could not manage a class.
But he could not be fired
for he was tenured: permanent status!
So the principal, after trying
to get him to another school,
created a position for him,
“fire director,”
paid as a regular teacher,
he pulled the fire alarm
once a month
for the practice fire drill.
Mr. M. accused John B.
of not writing his term paper of 25 pages,
said it wasn’t his own writing:
    he hadn’t matured yet
    to do “this well.”
And John B. informed him that
    he, Mr. M., had not been taught
    how to accept the work
    of students who might be
    smarter than himself.
At which Mr. M. turned
flushed red of face and told John B.
he’d better leave
and come back with respect.
    “When they bring on someone
    who treats us right and
    is not insulted by our thoughts,” John B. said.
Mr. M. tightened his body sharply
and rocked back and forth in his chair;
and as the silence of the class
    got stiller,
    he got up, took his book
    threw it into his briefcase,
    pulled the handle of it quickly to his side,
grabbed his coat
and umbrella
and keeping his face
tight
took long, stiff strides to the door.
He was a coach –
not for the money
but for the spirit
he could generate out of himself,
out of the kids.
And it was good –
good for him
good for the kids.
   But it wasn’t enough.
   He could not win –
   no matter his enthusiasm,
   his understanding,
   he could not produce.
So they offered him a job
in the new office running the school,
with more money,
more prestige
   which he didn’t want,
   couldn’t work for,
   while concerned with everybody
looking at him,
believing what one coach said:
“Those who mess up, move up.”
He told them
their arguing and fierce discussions
were the best way,
that all learning was a coming
out,
and that the classroom
was just another place to let it
come
that as their teacher, he taught them
nothing,
just gave them
a chance to find out what was already there.
The teacher could give the boy only one reason to stay in school: that he would wind up in the street like his brother—which he didn’t like to hear because he liked his brother and was proud of the trouble he made.

Because the world was out to get both of them and it didn’t matter, it didn’t make any difference where they’d get him—in school or out. But the world was out to get them. And that was how he walked, and he didn’t care where.
It was windy, very windy, too windy
yet he insisted they practice
outside on the grass in their uniforms.

“You’re the worst band I’ve ever taught or ever heard.
None of you, I’ll bet practice at home
so you’re not going home
until I hear something worth listening to.
You’re not going to embarrass me again.”

And they played with paper and sand blowing into them—
the trumpets, saxophones, trombones filling up
until the boy on second trumpet stopped, raised his hand, yelling,
“Do you think we could practice in the gym,
since we’re going to play there tomorrow
for the basketball game?”

“No.”

“Well, why are we out here? Are you trying to punish us for what we can’t do? Maybe we shouldn’t play at all.”
“Shut up! This is my band, and I run it the way I want to.
When you run a band, you run it the way you want to,
and see if you can do it any better.
    “You know what you can do with your band!” and he started to walk off.
“Stand right there! Don’t go anywhere!
I didn’t say you could leave.
Now here is somebody who will never amount to anything: he’s a quitter.”
    And the boy walked off
the others listened, scared, wanting
the nerve
to be a quitter.
The sand into their eyes, they put
their mouth pieces back into their mouths
and continued playing.
The man told the boy to begin running down the hill.
“No,” the boy said,
“I am not running down any hill—”
“Yes, you are!”
“I am not!”
“You’ll do like everybody!”
“I won’t!”
“You will ‘cause I am running too!”
“No!”

And the man pushed him into a patch of sticking bushes—
told him he’d better get up and run—
which the he did
blood running from the openings the bushes had made
on his face—
the man following behind.
The red headed girl waited for the teacher to stop his rage at her, calling her a sneak, the likes of which he had never seen, ever, (a distinct deliberate threat to his rule). She asked politely, smiling, if he was finished and capable of listening to her side. The girl waited and waited and then said, “I didn’t think you could or would.”
The teacher told the board of education how teachers were trained to teach, not stay after school to watch—to supervise activities that were not related to subjects. “Hell!” a board member spoke, getting out of his seat, “I would rather you see this thing as who’s going to sit with our kids: us or you? Teachers can stay later. That’s what we’re paying them for.”
I don’t have to read
‘cause my big brother
doesn’t read
and my cousin doesn’t read
and they’re as big
as I want to be.

Star, I am giving you this grade,
giving it to you, ‘cause someone’s
got to do something for you, Star,
before you’ll do something for
yourself.
After a conference on the relative closeness of Overwhelming Strictness and hate the principal wrote, on a large cardboard poster he tacked to the bulletin in the faculty room: “Those who hate kids have the discipline problems, those who hate themselves don’t want to be here. Anyone needing my help, see me.”
The girl said she was sorry, knew her teacher was mad, said she’d be good. The teacher said she didn’t have to be good, she only had to be quiet.

“Shut up and sit down — right now!” he yelled to two students. “You don’t like us,” one of them said. “My mother told me never to use that word.”
Julie got permission from herself to talk to Mr. Smith. She said she didn’t need a note from him excusing her for being late. He didn’t give her permission to be late. She wanted to talk to him, and she was her own excuse: “I gave myself permission.”

5th and 6th grades

“What grade are you in?”
“5th. What grade are you in?”
“6th. There really isn’t much difference. Just the questions they ask.”
Stephens, the assistant administrator, was a father and mother to many of the students:

- had them over to dinner often,
- social-calendared them,
- disciplined them as a parent,
- gave them advice,
- ran their lives,
- cried at graduation when they left,
- went to their weddings,
- and gave final approval of their mates.
Karen’s father found the kitchen dishes uncleaned in the morning. The ones she had promised to do the night before and would not take her to school so she walked and was late to take her final examination. Her teacher told her she would let her take it another time only if her father called and confirmed her story.
They use words
they don’t understand;
use the sentence
as an excuse
to hold the words
together.
But don’t know how
to put words
in a way
to tell
what they think they’re saying.
They have no motivation
to write it
right.
They don’t want
the responsibility.
Their only obligation is
the confusion
they have to offer.
The child was 12 years old
and played
during the summer
at school in the morning
with a teacher who
he didn’t feel it was fair
to get three times the money
his mother made
for sweating in a laundry
while the teacher
taught him
what he thought
his mother should.
He told them on the first day
it was all simple,
that grades were already
determined,
that there wasn’t much
they could do about it, no matter how well
they learned,
grades were based
50% on how much he liked them
and
50% on the two examinations
and each of the two was based
90% on how much he liked them.
The students were told that
grades would be given,
nothing would be earned:
“I give them, you get them,
and it is almost completely true that,
the A’s are for God
the B’s are for me
the C’s, D’s and F’s
are for everyone else—
but don’t worry! We’re here
to give ourselves
a good
and creative
time.
The principal was not concerned with a teacher’s background; only wanted people who could relate to kids, cared less about subject matter or training methods or lesson objectives. “The method,” he said, “is personality, and I transfer out of the school every teacher I can whose personality doesn’t mix well with the kids.”
I don’t want to
hurt your feelings
Mom,
but you seem
more interested
than me,
and I really
think you care
a lot more
about all of us learning
than I do,
no matter
how hard I
know you’re trying to
make us
learn more.
Krisandra F., caught
for forging a note that she was sick,
was brought in by the teacher
who had caught her
and told if she continued to do this,
she would one day write
bad checks and would
lie her way out of even
bigger things.
Her parents were called in
and listened to the teacher
make his predications to them,
and her father told him
it was none of his
damn business
what she did.
Her mother sat surprised, but
proud.
Nancy N. was found writing graffiti on the walls of the girl’s room. And when her mother came to learn of the situation, she objected to any type of punishment. “My child is fourteen and is going through changes that come normally, and she has to express herself, and you people at school have to make allowances for that.”
Mrs. Mary,
I stayed later
to tell you I
love you cause
everyone would laugh
at me
and you’re
the only one
I can tell.

Wrestling coach,
won the state championship–had to teach
geometry,
hated it
one week ahead of the kids,
and gave points for grades
to those who sold candy
for wrestling uniforms.
Tyrone could not
be put back a grade or two
to learn to read,
because the school felt he was too
big and, emotionally, would be worse
for not going on with his friends.
But teachers didn’t want him in class;
he tried to disrupt everything
the class tried to do.
One teacher had a plan:
asked him to read,
he said no,
asked him the next day,
he said no
and never came back to class.
Students were given tests once a year to see how well they compared to students in other schools, in the city and state. Each teacher gave the tests to his students and gave the results to the principal. Teachers concerned with maintaining an image that they were the best went over the test with the students before so no one could score less than 90% of everything right. The students, they were sure would say nothing, their final grades being greatly influenced by how well they did on these tests.
miss sharon
how much you get paid
for playing with us,
five dollars?

if all I got was
five dollars
i’d give it to you
and let you do my work.

Linda wrote
a note to her teacher
she wanted to throw away
but didn’t:
that he looked like and thought
  like her father
and that he made her
  think of him,
  “And that’s all I get
  at home,
  and I can’t have it
  all the time.”
The teacher known
for good disposition and humor
thumb on her nose
bent down over the boy and said,
“Sure, I’ll fight you, Put ‘em up,”
and he flung his fist on her face
in between the nose and left eye.

The head Basketball Coach
married the girl
he helped his star player
get along with during the season, one year
after both graduated.
Mr. D. wove
science into English,
took math and grew art into it,
gave history “now” metaphors
for spinning away with wind-up
carousels of imaginations.
Mr. D.—the first “yes”
on everyone’s acclaiming tongue—
went to become principal
and was good for everyone,
much in favor of new ideas
and enthusiasm for unselfish thought,
so infectious
no one argued or became
verbally combative.
Said the man who attacked the officer for beating the boy who ran across the field naked after graduation.

“I am an ex-marine,
I am a flag waver,
I am a no-nonsense guy;
but—
I just snapped
when I saw the cop beat that kid who was just standing there naked and scared with handcuffs tied behind his back out in the stark cold with everybody looking at him.”
Jackson, a new and young teacher, with energies directed towards collecting higher salaries and general complaints about the handling of the school, was judged by his superiors as inadequate. The summary about him spoke of how it was not conceivable he could do well in the classroom if his interests were so preoccupied in the teachers’ cause, that students were sure to be suffering because of his own personal interests.
Chapter 4  Under the First of Circumstance

The door to the boys room flung back and hit the building as Dan darted down the hall, Cindy, his girlfriend running after him and into him when he stopped suddenly, grabbed her as she began to fall laughingly to the ground. Both got up, climbing into each other, as the vice principal looked on, yelled at them to stop their horseplay. “But we’re not being horses,” Dan objected. “We’re having fun,” the girl said and kissed Dan on the cheek. “Don’t do that here!” the man demanded, and as he started to separate them, Dan reached across to try to kiss her again, but taking each of them by the arm, the man walked to his office, where he wrote a report that they had used affection to the point of insubordination, underlining the words: “with one last kiss.”
Harris, the geography teacher, was told by the principal that if he wanted to look up a girl’s dress, not to do it when she would know; that a woman had complained her daughter could not learn respect for authority if the authority had no respect for the girl as a child.
Spitting
was the main expression of the team
in the bus
on their way home
from the last game of the season.
and that soon was not enough.
Empty bottles were thrown
from the windows—
not directly at people but at passing cars—
and one lady
yelled to them to stop.
The coach, distraught over the team’s many losses
told the driver to stop,
and demanded to know
who was doing it.
Six came forward, and the coach ordered them to get off
told them that he had taken a busload of
boys to play,
not a group of
animals, who didn’t know how to lose.
The boy missed two easy shots at the end of the game
and the coach yelled from the bench,

“That did it!
You’ve ruined our chances!
Do you realized that, Johnson?
Do you realize we could have won?”

The coach threw his hands up
and walking in front of the bench,
looked at the clock
of time remaining in the game,
then threw his pointing finger right hand at the player:

“You’re a joke, Johnson.
Anyone else in there
could’ve made ‘em.”

Later, after the players showered
the coach came to Johnson for an explanation of his missed shots.
“What did you expect? You kicked the best players off the team. You got what you deserved.”
The band played at half time
longer than they were allowed,
and when the teams came onto the field
the coach ran over to the band leader,
told him to get his idiots off.
The leader said he wasn’t through,
had one more number he promised he’d let the
kids play,
and the coach grabbed him by the coat,
told him to get his ass off right now, and pushed.
The players, watching, started pushing the kids
in the band,
taking their instruments.
The people in the bleachers began booing, and
several of them
came onto the field to stop it, but soon were
fighting
with the players and kids in the band.
Three men jumped on a player,
ripped his uniform—
a lady got a helmet,
put it on, and swung her purse at
anyone close.
It got good—
didn’t want to stop—
nobody.
Julie and Ellory were cheerleaders and deciding before the game on things the cheering sections would do, and were met by John and Forrest two boys who were not good enough to make the team, who grabbed them and flung them into the locker room where the boys were dressing; they both fought hard to get free, Julie crying out closing her eyes, Ellory breaking away from Forrest by kicking him and running out onto the field, Forrest following all the way.
The girls dressed
in football shirts and blue jeans
met in the morning
before the powderpuff game—
girls against girls—
and decided they would not play
unless the rules were changed,
and they could use foul language,
y they spoke to the administration,
who told them it wasn’t lady-like.

“But we want to play football
and that’s not lady-like
to begin with,
and we have no intention of making it
lady-like.

If football means we get rough
and push each other around,
and if it makes us swear
then we want to do it—
all of it.”

The rules were changed, but the game was
cancelled for the following year:
not just because
girls were hurt in practice
and in the game,
but for what one girl said:
“We were having too much fun, and they
couldn’t stand it.”
“They started throwing papers and books and beat up one of their friends; I just sat there, marked them down as being present and tried to keep safe. I am not a psychiatrist or policeman,”
the substitute teacher wrote of her day.

What we say, what we mean, and what we’re going to do are three different things. And as long as we don’t do any of them, All three are true.
Janice T. would not move to the front of the room, and the teacher said she’d better, or she would have to leave the class, permanently;
that he had wasted enough energy trying to make the class suitable for her needs.

Janice said she wouldn’t move, and she wanted him to know how she felt.
He said he would listen, and she made him promise not to tell anyone else about a letter she would write and give him tomorrow about her feelings. The letter said:

I am not about to move to please you.
I think that stinks to make us move from our friends.
If you move me, I will have a fit.
You make me so ill, I can hardly wait until this class is over for me. You make me ill,
did you know that?

The teacher was glad she expressed herself, told her so and that she was free to leave the class or move to the front of the room; that he was glad she hadn't said out loud what she wrote, that she would not have had such a choice then.
The coach ran onto the track
where the boy lay
holding his knee,
looking at the blood-scraped skin
the crushed brick surface had made
when he had fallen over the hurdle,
flung the boy’s arm away,
yelling at him to get up—
finish!
that he’d have plenty of time to hurt
when the race was over.
The boy tried,
pushing on the ground
lifting, fell
grimaced in pain,
and two boys who came to help him
were held back by the coach
as he watched the boy
try again.
He had just gotten back from the war
and had seen scenes that made
coaching young boys basketball
less to be obsessed about,
and would not yell,
scream,
or treat
a missed shot or play
as the end
of a boy’s life;
wouldn’t make anybody feel
less for not playing well,
that everybody was only
doing and redoing life
to make it more and more
of their own kind of perfect.
He also told a newspaper reporter,
who inquired about his
passiveness from the bench,
that competition was
just one way to improve.
“I can just give what I can
and silently watch the rest, hoping.”
The girl wanted to stay out of his class and told her counselor he wasn’t good for her that she would feel intimidated—that he was cruel and took out all the things he couldn’t get with women on us.

A member of the school board the minister of a local church asked each of the teachers new to the district at the meeting introducing them what church they attended and how regularly.
“Opportunities” is the name of the class where students who aren’t acceptable or tolerated in any other class are given a chance to get together and make their own theme. “Free time” is when students in Opportunity class are allowed to go out in the hall and have water at the fountain.

Nancy Sue tripped coming down the mountain trail 200 yards from the end of the race over the deliberate foot of Charles, stuck out from bushes beside the trail so that one of the boys would be first.
They would not let
Stephanie
play with them.
So she had to watch,
and with enough envy
she went
to the lockers
to steal their gear,
so the day of the big game,
no one
could appear.

Mr. R., my grade is not
nice enough for my mother
to be nice,
and I am not nice, she feels,
and now I don’t feel
I am nice,
but you can change
everybody’s feeling about me.
Mary, a famous athlete,
did not come
to school much.
On the road
traveling,
she got credit
for her classes
from the principal
for her work
because she had
“learned more
in the places she went
than in the classroom,”
he told a meeting of teachers
who felt she wasn’t getting
everything they had to offer her,
and some students wanted
credit consideration
for trips they wanted to take.
On the toilet seat
with a stack of papers
next to him—term papers
(15 pages minimum)—he picked up
a few at a time, put grades on them
according to whether the student
was going to college or
how well he liked the student’s personality;
returned to class, had a girl
record them in the record book,
passed them out, and listened to each student
compare
how unfair or fair he was
in evaluating them.
Stanford H., the school principal, asked Jacob G., assistant track coach, if he wanted to be head track coach for the coming year and Jacob said no. And Stanford said, “You’re it, you’re head track coach.” Jacob said he didn’t want all the responsibility and Stanford said he understood but he was still going to be head coach and Jacob said he wouldn’t care how he did the job and Stanford said that was alright, the kids will meet a lot of people in their lives who don’t like what they do, people who aren’t fully responsible for what they do, and one person here or there won’t make much difference to them. You’re it, you’ll do better than you ever expect; I am sure.
samuel was wrestling
with david
on the grass in front of the school
and soon they were fighting.

samuel
was kneeing him as he smothered the back
of his head into the muddy grass with his arms.

dr. vick, the vice principal,
rans from his office to break it up,
grabbing samuel
and throwing him off
which wasn’t good enough
for samuel got up and
hit dr. vick in the jaw
and slid his fist
up his face
where his glasses
fell off
and he dropped down
onto the sidewalk.

mr. lee, the wood shop teacher,
came to get samuel, which he did,
pinning him down so that dr. vick could get up
and lift samuel by his hair
up and down quickly into the mud and grass
which was a good feeling
for dr. vick
who didn’t like guys with long hair
anyway.
I get bad grades because I have bad teachers. I shouldn’t have to get bad grades because I have bad teachers, should I? Or can someone give me one good reason why I should?
Mrs. K. told her daughter Wendy if she got too good at playing tennis, the boys wouldn't come running after her that the family would have to worry about her no matter how pretty she was. “I’m not worried,” she told her mother, “If a boy can’t handle what I like to do and how good I am at it than I don’t want to be with him anyways.” “I hope you find someone who’s not like James; you know he broke the arms on the trophies you have because he didn’t like you playing so well.” “How can you say that when he came to all the matches and kissed me whether I won or lost.” “But what was he doing? Sitting around and doing nothing, just getting jealous, that’s all. That’s why he left you for that girl who does nothing.” “Oh, mom. You’re so wrong. I can’t believe how wrong you are.” “You call me wrong if you want, but James goes with a girl who does nothing and I’m sure of it.”
The coach told the team
GOD was on our side this time,
that he didn’t let us down
when smith
made the last shot
that give the team
the game
and championship,
that all his prayers
had been answered
and he was
proud
he was their coach,
and robert,
one of the players
who never played
wondered why
GOD had given the coach
the ability to
win without him.
I know I won’t do well
in Mr. Q.’s class,
mom,
he only smiles at the cute girls
and though I know you
always tell me how
pretty I am, you know I’m not
so don’t expect me to get a good grade
in Mr. Q.’s class
don’t expect anything great.

I won’t be yelled at for being honest.
You can yell at me for what I can’t do
but I won’t be yelled at for being honest,
the girl who records the basketball team’s statistics
yelled at the coach who had yelled at her for having a big mouth when she kept reminding the officials how many fouls his team’s players had committed.
The boy told the school authorities
the only way he could listen to what they had to say,
what they wanted him to do
was for him to be loaded on some kind of drug
that he has bad trouble with people telling him what to do,
that he gets along with his parents and everyone else better
if he doesn't have to discuss anything with them,
just to let them know he’ll do what they say
but he has to be ‘stoned’ on something
so that he won't have to get upset and want to argue about it,
“So whatever you want
whatever it is
it’s alright with me.”
The school would not pay
to hire a coach
for a volleyball team
so the mothers
    the fathers
of the boys who would be
on the team
wanted to raise money
to have a coach
and put together a sale of
“old clothes for a new coach”
in garages of two homes
and the coach sat on a high stool
sipping a can of beer
as people came by,
looking through the piles
looking at the clothes
back at the coach
back at the clothes, deciding
if he’s
worth it or not.
She better expect to
count on her looks to get by
because she won’t make it on anything else.
She’s always upset because she never
does her work, but then,
she looks good even when she’s upset,
so maybe she doesn’t have to do
her work.
Even when she tries to say
why she doesn’t do her work
and doesn’t know how to say it
she looks good,
(so how can you
expect her
to want to do well in school?)
Freddie didn’t mind the teacher having pets, it was only right to like some people more than others, he conceded, but what wasn’t fair was that the pets were always girls and that no guys were pets, even for the lady teachers. the guys don’t have a chance Freddie figured, it doesn’t seem right, and boys are nicer and still, none of us can be pets.
You give a kid a D or fail him
and the kid’s upset,
his parents are upset
(with the kid and maybe with you)
the school’s upset, the community’s upset,
you’ve lowered everyone’s standards;
but you give the kid a higher grade
and everybody’s happy;
the kid and the parents, and the school’s
got high standards;
it looks like everyone’s doing a great job.
A little simple marking of the pen and the
whole world’s got something to
smile about.
Credits

Artists
Stan Cline
Lee Fields
Stan Silver

Photography
Richard Mackson
Long Photography
Walter Loos Photography

Editing
Eleanor Biviano
Paul T. Owens has written ten books, ranging from sports to humor. In this book, *Stories Along the Way*, he writes of growing up in Beverly Hills in the 1950s, makes short snapshot stories and observations, and creates scenes from the world of sports, where he served as:

...Feature Writer for the New York Times
...Feature Writer for the Los Angeles Times
...Senior Staff Writer for the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee
...Coaching Staff Writer for the Dallas Cowboys
...Biographer--NFL officials
...Writer/Consultant--Sports television and movies

He also includes short poetic pictures of education. Mr. Owens attended the University of Southern California and Columbia University.

*Quotes from this book:*

“...You’re through dancing with her, she’s my wife and we’re going.”
—Dick S., Reunion, 2010

“If you had married her, none of this would have happened.”
—Mr. Lessenberry, 1984

*Endorsers of Paul T. Owens’ books*

Joe DiMaggio, New York Yankees
Merlin Olsen, Los Angeles Rams
Harold Connolly, Olympic Gold Medalist
Dwight Stones, Olympian
Tom Landry, Dallas Cowboys
Dr. Jim Wooley, Olympian

Jim Murray, Los Angeles Times
Kate Schmidt, Olympian
Bill Toomey, Olympic Decathlon Champion
Dr. Jim Tunney, NFL Official