





# **Blindless**

**William Loughborough**

*The events in these essays are real - as are the names*

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This book is dedicated to: Bill Gerrey, Jerry Kuns, 3 Mikes (Cole, May & Cozzolino) Tom Fowle, Jay & Kathy Williams, Kevin & Colin Malcolm, Larry Scadden, Monica Schaff, Steve Mendelsohn, Jeff Moyer, Mark Dubnick, Louis Maher, Chris Cooke, Tim Cranmer, Emerson Foulke, John Fales, Jolie Mason, Rick Joy, Debbie Cook, Harvey Lauer, Pat Beattie, Debee Norling, Kathy Auriemma, Josh Miele, Betty Bird, Kelly Ford, Sue Boaz, Randy Brooks, Winifred Downing, Anita Baldwin, Tom Karnes, Gregory Rosmaita, and all the others who enabled me to see the tunnel at the beginning of the light.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This section is fun to write but sort of a drag to read because it traditionally consists of name-dropping or lists of unfamiliar people. I list members of two categories - backers and inspirations.

I list backers because they believed in what the author was doing over the years and provided the backing (financial, moral or spiritual) that enabled him to stare idly at a word processor while his peers were commuting to work, filling out time sheets and otherwise accounting for their uselessness.

I identify inspirations because it makes me seem a bit more humble by not displaying pride of authorship while precariously balanced on the shoulders of giants, who did or thought of all these things before.

I will allude specifically to members of both categories in the essays themselves, particularly those who were my inspirations; I list here some whose help and guidance were of a more general kind.

My backers (in addition to my many family members) included David "Buck" Wheat, Bill Davison, PeeWee & Mary Russell, Orville and Catherine Jacobson, David Bell, Les Smith, Bill & Jane Buck, Donlon Arques, Chet Baker, Vernon Crank, Ray Price, John Dowie, Robert Hightower, Gary Ward, Bob Krauss, Ward Bond, and lots more I forget. I plead creeping senility and memory loss.

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My current career's success is due to Al Alden, Erich Sutter, and Jules Madey.

Without the help of Arthur Jampolsky I would be in jail, dead or living in LA. Thank you Arthur!



# Foreword

Dr. Jampolsky explains how to deliver a lecture, present a scientific paper, write an article, or communicate verbally: "first you tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em, then you tell 'em, then you tell 'em what you told 'em."

I will tell you what you know but may not agree with: the world is much more us and them than us against them; conflict is a form of cooperation; we are all members of one another.

To avoid arguments I should avoid discussing politics, religion, sex, and music; I add economics, race, and gender to that list. Naturally I will expose my feelings about all these.

There are three kinds of truth: things that are true whether or not spoken of, such as sunup; things true only if spoken, "foul ball"; things only true if unspoken, "check's in the mail", which if spoken are called lies.

## WHO

I have been a lot of different people and that led to this book. As I write this I am 70 years old but inside I still feel about 14. These lives, events, and choices have interested me and I think will amuse you. My "WHO"

should be made clear by the autobiographical notes that start each section.

## **WHAT**

The "WHAT's" are the conclusions I reached from being in so many different bags. Most of you have not had this many opportunities to take part in this many cultures. I got to hot-walk some outstanding race horses, fool with gamecocks who were determined to kill their fellows, be in ensembles with outstanding musicians and actors, do cutting edge scientific stuff, and stand behind a catcher who was receiving 90 mph fast balls which he hoped I would greet with "strike."

These lives have things in common that I hope to persuade you are universal truths about your own humanity and that of your fellow travelers on our "spaceship earth."

## **WHEN**

It starts when there were daily knocks on the door by men who were willing to work for a meal and extends to when people stand by the road with "work for food" signs. The punctuations of war and pendulum swings of fashion mark points along the way.

## **WHERE**

I finally got to Europe and Australia while participating in an effort to make the World Wide Web accessible for PWD (People With Disabilities). I was a sailor in the Philippines, a tourist in Mexico and Polynesia, and a musician and scientist in Canada.

## **WHY**

I have always headed straight for my heart's desire. I never took a job I didn't love. I never passed GO or collected \$200. I write this as a laxative to relieve myself of a constipation of ideas. The purpose is to infect you with the disease of universal brotherhood.

## **HOW**

I loosely arrange the essays into groups defined by physical characteristics (Sighted White Male Young Old Smart), career choices (Arbiter Odds maker Musician Director Horseman Cockfighter), or a combination of nature and nurture (Ethnic Rich Straight). I am a cultural anthropologist without portfolio and I will show you no stinking badges, references, or footnotes.

# ARGUMENT

*...for whom is this written*

My purpose in discussing others is to push through our preconceptions and bigotry to an appreciation of people with different labels. The divisions between men/women, whites/blacks, hip/square resist healing just like those between Protestant/Catholic Irish, Serb/Muslim Yugoslavs, or Arab/Jewish Semites. The symptoms range from rhetoric to murder.

Maybe if we examine enough misconceptions about "outsiders" we will find cures for our bad attitudes and prejudices. The theory is that knowledge of something reduces its mystery and terror. If you "get it" you will get over being a slave to an idea that tastes bitter.

Psychoanalysis is based on this theory and it may not always work perfectly, but we are going to try it out.

A "white supremacist" leader had his values changed when his son was born with a cleft palate and his cohorts urged him to exterminate the boy. His transformation extended to the "Negro Issue" and even sympathy for women's rights.

Because I changed through living with or paying attention to different cultures, I believe this may help you open your mind (and heart?). Some of these

subcultures are majorities, some reviled, some pitied. They all experience exclusion from the mainstream.

My trigger was experiences with blind friends. The title piece outlines the sorts of separation I hope to "heal." We may not understand how demeaning our pity can be.

Alan Myerson asked in relation to theatrical work "what's this about?": this is about the joys of privilege without the selfishness of exclusivity. The sharing enhances shared privileges.

As we change from hunters & gatherers or farmers & animal husbanders to become consumers & spectators - from being subjects of the king into being customers - we can see that the gaze of the mob does not spoil beauty.

Except for Greek Letter Fraternities and Country Clubs, our cultures welcome new members, even if we don't actively recruit them.

Many groups suffer discrimination; I examine some I am in or close to whose problems arise from their exclusion. The problems blind people have because they cannot see are distinct from the difficulties sighted people impose. I don't know if this imposition is because of unfamiliarity and insensitivity or if we insist that we keep some people "in their place" to enhance our privilege.

We all bridle at our enslavement as children, but as we mature we lose our rage and renege on our vows to do something about it when we become the enslavers. As we age we endure society's "old folks" attitudes. In youth we create a new language and other secret places to avoid the stupidity of our elders; as "seniors" we put up with weirdness and bide our time until we exit.

Some of my cultures are by their nature exclusive - you can use just so many baseball umpires. I want my experiences in these things to give you the feeling of what it's like and how that relates to your own experiences. Maybe you will try some cultural expansion beyond your present horizons. Even if you only take part as a spectator, you become a participant.

A word about the semantics/philosophy/intent of the title: it is arbitrary that we think/speak of non-outsiders as being some sort of decreed "norm". In reality there is no more reason to speak of people with various colors of skin as if the basic/"correct" condition were that of least (forget about Albinos – they don't count!) pigmentation, but thinking of "white" people as "blancs" might be more appropriate – just as those of us wasting much of our brain-power to serve retinal function could well be called "blindless" instead of "sighted".

I hope the reader shares my privilege. The writer gets to experience absolute exclusivity!

# BLINDLESS

*...in a sighted world*

*The first blind person I met was Col. Hawkins, a family acquaintance who had a full time attendant. My mother portrayed him as a helpless object of pity - an image of blind people that persists in our culture.*

*At that time there were many blind beggars, one of whom I often encountered in downtown San Antonio near the Texas Theater, with his guide dog and tin cup of pencils for sale. He read aloud from his huge Braille bible and was reputed to be wealthy from donated coins. A few wayward youths stole pencils.*

*Sixty years later I am close to blind people who are psychologist, engineer, geologist, lawyer, mathematician. I have acquired the attitudes that pervade this work. I learned that the sighted people who outlawed begging have taken over the tin cups, stolen the pencils, and told the blind folks that those gold coins they heard hitting the bottom of the cup were nickels and dimes.*

*As I learned that "seeing is believing" isn't the best of "watchwords", I began to "see" why it is not a fact that "clothes make the man." I have learned to institute a "semantic pause" before embracing such concepts, and hope I have become blindless instead of just sighted.*

If you want to find out how it feels to be blind you could restrict or eliminate vision temporarily with blindfolds or special distorting eyeglasses. A few people even had their eyelids sutured closed! These things may let you lose eyesight but they won't let you know what it's like to be blind. It takes more than loss of vision to experience blindness. I won't propose having your eyes removed to join the blind subculture.

People who became blind after living with eyesight (euphemistically called "adventitiously blind") typically "mourn" a few years before learning to use long cane, guide dog, or Braille. They often exhibit denial symptoms, even taking falls rather than learning mobility skills. There are cases of people who were born blind due to cataracts, learned to live "in the world of darkness" and after their "vision was restored" through surgery became so depressed during the process of learning to see that they went mad and longed for a return to blindness.

The disadvantages of being blind are not so profound as what "sighties" fear. One cliché, "if I went blind, I'd kill myself!" is a threat seldom pursued. Most people learn to be very effective after becoming blind late in life. A friend walking to his job was asked by a religious zealot (who splashed strawberry scented water on my pal's forehead), "don't you want to see again, brother?" The immediate rejoinder, "not if it's gonna make me late for work!"

## **Problems of Blindness**

Strange as it may seem to most sighted people there are disadvantages to depending on eyesight for everything. Sleight-of-hand can defraud you in a lot of ways, not just amuse you in a performance setting. For many, "seeing," "sight," "vision," etc. are thought of as active functions, e.g. to "look at" something, "eye contact," and such imply that vision is some kind of ray put out by the eyeball, although physics makes it clear that light activates retinas, not the other way around. In fact vision takes place at a higher level of the brain than the retina or optic nerve bundle. This is even truer of "in-," "fore-," "hindsight" and "seeing" as "understanding."

One of the most familiar mistakes the sighted make is to have faith in "seeing is believing." Although beauty may very well be in the eye of the beholder, "what you see" isn't "what you get" and how you say things really shouldn't be as important as what you say in most situations.

As I read about Styles in Desktop Publishing I am struck by the importance placed on "visual" effects, and try as I might to ignore all that fancy stuff I know that putting a little DYNAMITE in the message works to catch the reader's attention.

Because delusion is promoted through the long-term brainwashing of "medium is message" technology we (unfortunately?) tend to communicate with illustrations, icons, color, type faces and other beguiling devices. Perhaps

reading skills are suffering because the teaching of reading has been moved from McGuffey to Disney?

The allegory of The Emperor's Clothes shows we can control the "attention" function. We often don't "notice" something because our attention was elsewhere. Visual distraction is so commonplace that some of our most cherished activities, playing music and making love, are often done with closed eyes. We "space out" even with "eyes wide open" so as to be unaware of things happening "right in front of our eyes."

Stage magic is an example of how our eye gets tricked. *Trompe l'oeille* (French for "fool the eye") is the name of an art form wherein a painting tries to make the viewer think she is not looking at a picture but at what the picture is of.

Gaining control of one's focus can make the illusory less "real." In some senses there is no "magic" for the magician because he sees through an illusion to how things really are. Although at first this seems like the loss of something precious, the increased awareness of not being fooled can provide pleasure for the knowledgeable. The attitude of being "blindless" instead of "sighted" helped me to avoid always "going for the okeydoke."

Illusions are precursors of delusion and history is full of trickery by ideologues, demagogues and fashion engineers who control our minds through our eyes. We buy a new model automobile every year, but the driving feel doesn't change; last year's ally is our new enemy as war flips from Hell to Noble Cause with a few "sincere" speeches by leaders.

These manipulations utilize enough nonvisual factors to fool many blind folks, but: if you drop your "blind faith" in "seeing is believing" you may fool the foolers.

So far this is all fairly obvious, though perhaps not too familiar, but so what? I guess it's being written for us sighties, so it must be that I found something useful to learn about us from bats. After I met a great many competent blind guys I became less awed by their abilities as hero super detectives, and more motivated to attack some factors in the environment that, if repaired, would enable them to become more at ease, while easing my own creeping senility.

As I did this I found that many of us who make our living off "help the blind" projects have a vested interest in keeping blind people out of the decision-making as to what should be done with the funds that are raised in the name of blindness.

The first inkling that much of our drive for privilege focused on exclusivity drove me to share a concept: privileges are at least as rewarding when they are not exclusive as they are when you are in some kind of elite.

People who seek fame and fortune often suffer severe regrets when they get too much - their lives are no longer their own and this is often quite painful. Be careful what you wish for: you may get it!

## **Problems of Sightlessness**

So how is it around blind guys? First I was uncomfortable, wondering if it was unfeeling to make all the usual

"mistakes," like "it's the blue one" or "right over there." Is it OK to say "see you later," should I feel embarrassed by these things? Blind people hear these many times a day all their lives and more often have to deal with dealing with it than with it.

The next step was a sort of hero worship: isn't it amazing how they can feed themselves without sticking a fork in their lip. Finally it became clear that blind people are firstly people within a subcategory: blind.

Blind guys make a point of using "see you" to put sighties at ease, although after what they are so often put through by us, I wonder why they should care about our little discomforts.

For blind people, a major annoyance is being grabbed by the arm and pushed around instead of being offered an elbow and letting the guide's movements serve as silent clues. Most people don't need "here's a step" when they can feel you up-or down-ing.

There is a rule prohibiting long canes on some airlines, and a decree that blind people are incompetent to sit in exit row seats. Unless obesity, panic proclivity or slow reactions are also considered this is obvious discrimination.

Most of my blind friends have been blind almost from birth - those who ever had vision are in the same boat after a few years' "lights out" blindness. As in the Afro-American subculture there is sometimes certain stratification within blindworld about "high partials," "low vision" and "legally blind." People who are aware of being discriminated against

are still able to have prejudices.

Even the visual impairment brought on by age brings reduced competence, but total blindness brings a vulnerability that over a long period profoundly affects personality. Blind people learn that survival depends on accepting dependence with as much dignity as is allowed without endangerment.

Blind people expect bad information about "left/right" but they dread being shoved into bad situations. They trust long canes or dog guides for mobility aid more than they do many people. A major problem is constant disorientation and its consequence: dependence on an often incompetent sighted population; once a blind person learns that many sighties don't know right from left it becomes less demeaning that one doesn't know North from South - but it is hard to forgive someone who sends you into traffic by describing the condition of a traffic signal that is 90 degrees from the safe path.

To be a good sighted guide, give just enough cues to enable your companion to move about with confidence. Your body language tells if you are going to step up or go through a narrow place. Instead of the unnecessaries, you should give information that your friend could not get because of visual impairment.

Some people like to hear all the signs read. Many people are interested in stuff that seems strictly visual; when color and pattern say something of interest, a description is often welcome.

Most of us are embarrassed when a fellow sightie tries to communicate around our blind companion with visual gestures. I am not above turning this around by translating: "he's signifying with his eyebrows that..." It may trouble the person who was trying to give you a fraternal communication but it's like telling a waiter who talks loud to a blind person "she hears OK it's her eyes that don't work." Often when you are asked "what does she want for dessert?" and you ask, "what do you want for dessert" the waiter doesn't even get it. It may seem rude to say "why don't you just ask her?" but it may be instructive to the waiter as well as amusing to you and your friend.

There are some clichés that turn off people in some cultures: "Some of my best friends are...", "I really admire Joe Louis", and "you people are so good at..." It's not hard to be The Ugly American when you trample through somebody's garden. Find out something about protocol and manners before you go to a Bar Mitzvah.

One of the dilemmas I waffle on is whether to face bigotry with "women drivers are actually less likely to have wrecks" or "I'd rather you didn't say 'nigger' - my mother is African-American." On the one hand there's the "do as the Romans" aspect, on the other you would like to let people know about inappropriate behavior.

When I flame about social inequities some people argue that "honey attracts, vinegar repels"; but "squeaking wheel gets oil." I don't think there would be curb cuts if "wheelies" hadn't chained themselves to inaccessible transportation systems. You must rock the boat to send an S.O.S.

It's obviously vain for me to speak for blind folks but I think it's OK to address some of these issues in my role as an "honorary blind" as long as I point out that I really don't know what I'm talking about. I do discuss these things with my pals and try to make some kind of sense. The main thing I want to get across is that there is a lot being missed by our society because we tend to forget what deSaint-Exupery said in *The Little Prince*: "What the eye can perceive isn't worth seeing."



# MALE

*...in a world of women*

*I was raised in a family of women - father died at 45, most uncles died young - two sisters, no brother - one male cousin, lots of aunts. My peer group was boys; in fact I can't remember any non-family childhood friends who weren't male.*

*Before my mother moved me into military boarding school at age 11 it was clear that in the school world female students were better at almost everything (except throwing a ball) than males of the same age. The boys were oblivious to an obvious fact: girls weren't inferior beings. Our delusions were examples of the need for blindness.*

**M**y mother was successfully self-employed, and not home much. My oldest sister and I were very close and she was my personal "head start" program. She had me reading the newspaper on my fourth birthday.

My earliest memory of widespread wrong-headedness in our culture had to do with my peers' attitude towards girls and women. Most boys (and the men I occasionally encountered) were blatant male chauvinist pigs. This has changed a little, but the effects continue to poison society. "Women drivers" always evoked

male laughter; older men agreed that the downfall of society occurred around 1920 when women were enfranchised. The concept of women in positions of authority, with the curious exception of schoolteachers, was unthinkable and any suggestion of military service, except as nurses, never surfaced.

Abortions were illegal but countenanced so long as they were dangerous. The stigma on male homosexuality was largely based on the concept that these were men who were traitors to their gender. It was almost universally accepted that women could not be composers, chess masters, or chefs. Any evidence to the contrary was ignored or branded a lie.

I lived around females who were, if anything, more intelligent and admirable than the males I met. These experiences started me on my cultural anthropology path, which uncovered examples ending in my awareness of what it means to be blindless.

As in many areas I explore, the culture of women cannot be "joined" by an outsider, transsexuals aside. Acceptance of men in women's world is rare but we are welcome to share their awareness of the misanthropy rampant in mainstream culture.

I don't presume to speak for women, particularly since so many of them have done so eloquently. I speak to what constitutes the gender equivalent of what I call blindlessness. Despite all the vive la difference items which enable us to divide what is essentially indivisible, we can adjust attitudes so that even if we don't subscribe to tenets of womanhood,

we bring respect. Whatever the swings of fashion (not in the sense of attire) bring to their culture that may be different from ours, they're entitled.

Membership in groups often requires initiation rituals as well as qualification. Some of these entrance requirements are disappearing through legislation, others through acknowledgement of absurdity. An example of the former is the acceptance of women into public service organizations like police and fire departments; the latter by the increase in female jockeys.

Just as you might be proud if a member of your club wins some award, so women might exult in governorship and soon a presidency. Just as all groups have their secret handshakes and initiation rites, so do women. Just as those who exclude them vilify many groups, this group has suffered great injustice.

In this area the prospects for continuing change are bright to me because of my long observation of epochal changes. In the last sixty years' study of this matter, I have observed astounding turnarounds: when I entered MIT, a nominally coed school, there were two female students in a class of almost two thousand, the current entering classes are more than one-third women; the number of mayors, governors, and congresspersons (how's that for PC?) is still tokenistic, but the individuals who get to that level have mostly avoided the appearance of ruthless greed so common in politics; recruiting ads on TV dutifully show women in what are essentially combat roles.

I have more daughters than sons so I want to make sure that all of you straighten out your act in relating to women. I'm sure there's still a "glass ceiling" but from where it was to where it is has proven exhilarating to one promoting blindness.

# WHITE

*...in a world of color*

*Because my mother worked 60-80 hours a week I was "raised" (when not in boarding school) by maids. Many of these were black women and the most affecting was Arabelle Brown who had no children and lived in our house. She indulged my food cravings like the stereotypical doting mother. She would arrange the household budget to include T-bone steaks for my lunch and her apple dumplings (made only for me) are a most cherished memory.*

*She also let me know, without seeming to try, that the outside world had enormous misconceptions about the capabilities of Black people. Peer pressure kept me from espousing this concept at school or play - being called a "nigger lover" carried ostracism as well as hurt.*

*My inner conclusions seemed unassailable - still do.*

**I**n those days the acceptable designation was "colored" and colored musicians were clearly superior to their white counterparts. It was an age when Benny Goodman was the "King of Swing" but his band was a pale imitation of the Lunceford band. Marian Anderson was denied access to the DAR auditorium. A colored person invited to the White House was regarded as yet another nail in the coffin of

The American Way. I cried in joy when Althea Gibson won at Wimbledon, raged at the news of Medgar Evers' murder and became a baseball fan because Jackie Robinson "broke the color line."

I finally got over being ashamed of being white but I still feel we are drowning in racist mire. The debate about this matter has been "all the rage" for all of my life and so much has been written that what I may add will probably not shed much new heat or light on the issue.

I still believe in integration, whatever that is. When I read Mezz Mezzrow's "Really the Blues" it was one of the first times I knew that some white guys (tried to?) lived in the Black culture. When he went to prison he insisted he was "colored" so he could live in the correct environment.

Even Elvis Presley was basically trying to sound black.

During the civil rights movement it was a widespread argument that "our nigras" were OK with their lot but these "outside agitators" were the real problem. The next generation acknowledges that as error but has the same set of denials concerning "welfare queens" or immigrants. Even Native Americans are descendants of immigrants and we are all on welfare.

Jackie Robinson pointed out that "baseball did it," meaning that human rights laws weren't the big items that cause changes. Michael Jordan is one of the world's most recognized (and admired) people on the planet as is Muhammad Ali. The influence on music, sports, attitude,

language, and human relationships brought to us by people who "came in chains" has been enormous. There are so many examples of African-American influence that it is still a puzzle how long it is taking to overcome the counterproductive action/reaction of prejudice and its machismo backlash.

I have no solutions that aren't reprises of Judeo-Christian ethical positions. How to move from the "Love thy neighbor" talk to the "Do unto others" walk eluded us for a couple of millennia - but it's better than it was. At least I hope and think so.

One powerful factor in this healing is public service. As the spectator class proliferates, it is evident that each generation produces more of us who find the Black experience seductive.

Politicians are performers in the entertainment industry. Perhaps the kind of charisma that is so obvious in other endangerment figures will let us suffer the benefits of African-American leaders.

When you become blindless, you really won't give a shit about skin color. If we can continue the many-to-many intercommunication that is flooding us, we may yet have a meritocracy.



# YOUNG

*...in an adult world*

*During the first years of my life I was young - as were we all. I bridled at being treated with condescension and resolved that when I was in a position to do anything about it, I would be an activist in changing the slave-like condition of young people.*

*To my discredit I largely forgot this resolve when I came of age and although I think I was at least kind to my own children, I haven't been very militant in trying to effect significant changes in how we treat ourselves as the "present of the future."*

*From being in the youth culture of my time I found out about secret languages and the pleasures of mocking my elders. Older people seemed so dumb and scared of new things. I expected to be able to change things when I got in a position to do something about it. Things have changed some but I regret that I didn't do much to help.*

**When** I arrived in San Francisco the put down phrase for young people was "juvie" which signified juvenile delinquent. There was a panel of "leaders" looking for solutions to the problem. OUR youth were completely out of hand and

the community's wise elders would meet and come up with something that would end this curse. Aside from major ink (in 1951 news was more printed than aired), the major outcome was an ordinance banning switchblade knives! This attack on what had become the symbol of j.d. affected me in that I liked a pocketknife that could be easily opened with one hand and didn't break my fingernails. But for the safety and greater good of society I was prohibited from purchasing a properly designed pocketknife in the City and County of San Francisco.

Much attention is on curfews and court rulings about whether minors have rights that are stepped on by making it illegal for certain people, those under 17, to be loose in the city after a certain hour. The courts have ruled that there is no such right. In effect we have always held that young people BELONG to somebody. The only real contention among the empowered is whether the owners are the parents or the state. In matters of education (or more properly forced schooling) and certain medical procedures (inoculations and transfusions, in particular) the state takes precedence; in most other areas ownership is vested in parents.

We have all been through youth and if we can remember our participation in that culture without accepting that we were all wrong in our observations that we were a persecuted minority, we might better understand how people in other outcast cultures feel. People who raise and fight gamecocks are NOT bloodthirsty perverts; southern whites are NOT bigots; African-Americans are NOT shiftless.

There are sociopaths among us from just about every culture

but if we adopt a stance of blindnessness we can learn that  
WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.

I have ten children who suffer either some of my genetics or  
the influence forced on them by our relationship not of their  
own making. I hope they get to live in a world in which  
conflict is one particular of cooperation and above all, not  
deadly.



# OLD

*...in a youthful world*

*I was prepared for being old because of reading about it a lot and knowing some old people. As I experienced all the traditional aging signs - teachers and policemen seemed younger, people said "sir" a lot - I noticed that inside I still felt young.*

*My faculties seem largely intact and the physical attributes changed so gradually that I even risked hitting fastballs in the batting cage at age 70. I have had some heart attacks that made my condition worse but after surgery it isn't too bad.*

**The** conditions that go with becoming part of another disadvantaged group are mainly the same as with the young, disabled and women - people talk over you to your companion and usually talk slower and louder.

Although we all get (have?) to be young, only most of us are privileged to be old. Of course those who don't are dead or blank. I find it fascinating because I keep looking for the conventional effects of aging. Diminution of sensory acuities, lessened sexual compulsion, short term memory impairment, deteriorating physical functioning: significant as these

may be, it is a lot like blindness - a more insidious problem is how one is mistreated, or at least misunderstood.

It's not as bad to hear a bit less well as it is to be patronized. I still wonder if it might not be more politically correct to say "matronized." It is easy for non-old people to lump together all persons over a certain age; more careful observers discover that the fact that somebody is more stooped doesn't necessarily mean they have also become more stupid. Just as there are no "instant trees" so one cannot have fifty years' experience by the age of 35.

Although I still find formal schooling oppressive as well as boring, I have continued to learn in my dotage. I am monolingual and have never been good at memorizing, but I regularly undertake acquiring new disciplines. In their early days, I purposefully avoided involvement with computing machines but when they became non-elitist I embraced them. I learned the Braille alphabet, but not the ability to read it by touch. These practices are part of "Brain Aerobics" and I hope this book's exercises will help the reader perform the rituals that might help make many-to-many communication universal.

# SMART

*...in a stupid world*

*I could read newspapers on my fourth birthday. I was one of the youngest freshmen in MIT's class of 1946 at age 16. I always found school boring and dropped out at the first opportunity and went into the Navy near the end of WWII after my first fling at the jazz life.*

**A**t first it was hard to realize that SMART qualified as a disability. I knew that my fellows treated me with a strange mixture of respect, disdain, and hostility. A similar thing happened when I was a bicycle messenger at an army quartermaster depot and zipped through a six hour featherbed assignment in 45 minutes - "don't do that, you'll spoil it for the rest of us." I heard that in the war plant where I thought we should all be doing our best to defeat Hitler but the union steward AND the shift manager told me to slow down.

Our prejudices aren't confined to those we deem inferior; we also express bigotry against those who outperform us. We are infected with a disease whose symptoms include a lust for exclusivity. Even being elite qualifies one for ostracism but if we remember that the chairman of the board also fucks up a lot, we might have a healthier chance to move towards

whatever it is we're moving towards.

SMART is a peculiar thing because it depends on some fairly arbitrary norms. A visiting Martian might not think the ability to do crossword puzzles in ink was as significant as skill at arcade games. Mental tests are designed by people who belong to an elite group and have tried to get in a position that their tests are called "objective."

In the uproar over "preferential hiring" the "angry white male" who scored higher on some "aptitude" test thinks that he somehow proved he was better qualified because the test was biased in his favor. IQ tests measure something; they just don't measure "intelligence" - whatever that is.

# ARBITER

*...in a competitive world*

*I first officiated a sporting event while I was in the navy and the referee for a league touch football game didn't show up. It was interesting because it was automatic for me to "call 'em like I saw 'em."*

*In San Antonio I had a baseball team that played all comers and again one day when no umpire showed up, I volunteered and found that I could be objective even though it might adversely affect my team's fortunes.*

*When I moved to San Francisco, I heard of a need for professional umpires to handle local high-level sandlot games and as I had no job I took it on with enough success that I was in demand and worked 7 or 8 games a week.*

**Very** few people are willing to endure the verbal (mostly) attacks associated with being judge, jury and executioner in an area where competition is so fierce. I was a baseball fan since the Jackie Robinson inclusion. With umpiring, I learned a great deal about being simultaneously disinterested and arbitrary.

Umpiring is a perfect example of the second kind of

truth. Like a TV commercial in which an actress playing an underwear inspector says, "It can't say 'Haynes' until I say it can say 'Haynes'" so in baseball, you're not safe until the umpire says you're safe. Such truths irritate the participants, witness the violent squabbles rampant in many games, but it is also well understood that the game could not be played without having an independent truth maker. The same theory applies to the institution of government or business. Somebody has to decide which scene gets shown, which winds up on the cutting-room floor.

On their surface athletic contests seem to be conflict but it soon is evident that they are fully cooperative efforts. This is also true of business competition, fights, and even war. The advent of instant universal communication brings us together in a huge verbal network so that we can hope to eliminate borders and other barriers. Just as Jackie Robinson's use of baseball as a demonstration of the obsolescence of separate leagues for Negroes, so the jetliner and satellite communication are changing such customs as Customs Services.

Baseball played by high school and older amateur athletes is much like its professional model - a world unto itself. The participants' lives are heavy with the lore and exuberance of participation.

The most telling thing I learned is that competition is a form of cooperation, not of conflict.

Umpiring gives a unique feeling; one makes of oneself a sort of stimulus/response machine and merely calls the plays reflexively. It is a very detached thing; when the players argue it often seems quite absurd and always becomes a sort of "theater of confrontation."

Most of the time there is full cooperation between competitors and officials because it is accepted that without impartial arbitration the game becomes impossible. In our culture we focus on competition as conflict but conjunctive effort is a more appropriate model. At one time the rules of baseball forbade fraternization among competitors before contests, now we aren't surprised when a football player tells his rival "nice hit."

The techniques used by baseball umpires are little appreciated by fans or players. A famous catcher turned TV analyst holds forth about certain players "getting the calls" and the methods he used when playing to influence decisions. I often wonder if a year of calling balls and strikes would make him aware of certain psychological facts: there is no time to call pitches if one waits to see where the catcher's mitt receives the ball - the call is made prior to that, when the ball crosses or misses the plate.

When I was umpiring I was unaware of who's a rookie and who a star. You wouldn't last a month as a professional umpire if you had all the prejudices and influences cited by reporters.

One of the few instances of cannabian interference with performance was trying to umpire while high. I tried it once,

and was too laid back to have an attitude of importance about what I was doing. Calls were delayed and I'm sure I seemed indifferent - which doesn't work well. Indecision when the job is deciding just doesn't qualify.

# BACKSTAGE

*...in a spectator world*

*When my mother died I used my inheritance (about twenty grand) to build my long dreamt of recording studio. My partner in this was Henry Jacobs whom I had known in Chicago. We issued some rather esoteric records, one of which, a reading of Haiku poems by Alan Watts and Henry's Japanese wife, Sumire, had some success because of a favorable review in the first Sunday New York Times printed after a long strike. We also issued some recordings of S. I. Hayakawa reading articles he had written. Our main financial success was recording commercials for Japan Airlines. Henry and John Korty got nominated for an Oscar for a satirical documentary designed to combat cigarette smoking called "Breaking the Habit."*

*Henry knew Gary Goodrow, a member of a new troupe that did improvisational theater, which we recorded. That's how I met Alan Myerson. Alan had started The Committee, a satirical troupe with political focus based on similar undertakings in London and Chicago. It was like an in person Saturday Night Live. I offered to become Alan's apprentice in the theater direction field and before a year was out I became the general manager. A few years later I was also the company's director.*

My interest in theater was sociopolitical rather than show business; a main objective was getting our boys back from Vietnam, plus a lot of other goals frequently associated with people of the peace and love persuasion. We helped sponsor one of the first initiatives to decriminalize marijuana and also ran actor John Brent for mayor. If Ronald Reagan could be governor of California, surely San Francisco could use an acting mayor.

At the height of our commercial success we had two theaters in San Francisco, one in Los Angeles and sometimes a road company. We did a TV special as well as being guests on several major shows. I dropped out after about 7 years. The war had ended and theater per se didn't hold much interest. Alan and many of the actors enjoy (at least experience) success in the entertainment industry. I went back once more to science, this time into the World of Blindness exploitation.

Theater is as heavy as dance or music. While the popular feeling is that playacting is an imitation of real living, it is frequently the other way around. We act out; we refer to sexual performance; we engage in role-playing.

Stories and dramas are structures that we impose on experience. Events are not themselves systematically structured with beginnings, middles, and ends.

Language, religion, and theater are viruses that infect existence in miraculous ways. Actors and other victims of celebrity are revered in our culture, but reverence is one of

the most insidious forms of bigotry. We put our celebrities on pedestals so that we may more easily annoy them.

The most familiar notables often require bodyguards just to finish a meal in public.

There are actors who belong to or vilify other cultures, but they, like attorneys, can play the part of the other side. In a sense all our public interrelationships hinge on our ability to make believe that Spics, Kikes, and Guineas are actually acceptable, even if inside we bristle at the notion that they are allowed to possess the same artifacts that make us so special.

In a world where busboys (or worse yet, dishwashers) can own cars, it is becoming imperative that privilege and exclusivity become separate. That busboy may also have a doctorate in philosophy or comparative religion, just as that pimple-faced kid may be your only hope of learning to use a computer.

Although the most predacious sharks of the entertainment industry are notorious for bad faith and utterly selfish actions, they are still able to do business with a wink and a nod - handshakes are left as preliminaries to a boxing match. The film is finished before the contracts are signed.

The role of the director in a theatrical undertaking is fascinating because on the surface it seems to belie the attitude that we are all partners in life. The director (coach, chief executive, parent) seems to be necessarily above, or at least apart from the others in an ensemble.

There can only be one captain. The buck stops here. So long as the exit remains unlocked during business hours, this isn't "slavery". If the goal requires the use of some form of dictatorship it matters little to the participants. A director can improve the efficacy of the other performers but the troupe still has the ultimate veto power. Even prisoners can win concessions from their keepers.

Del Close pointed out that the widely accepted notion that drama emerges from conflict overlooks a fundamental verity: conflict is but one form of cooperation. The many instances of former rivals recognizing this include the aging vets from opposing sides of a war cutting up old touches in their dotage and boxers before a fight explaining how they will mar each other's features.

Although I believe we're all in this together, putting on shows made us use women to play roles in scenes about women and African-Americans to play Blacks.

A couple of our pieces illustrate the relevance of this. A white lady played by Ruth Silveira is onstage and answers the knock to find a black man, Everett Cornell, looking at a piece of paper. He says "I must have the wrong place, I was looking for a Mrs. Johnson." She says she's the one who called for the repairman. He says something to the effect that Johnson is a "black" name.

I am reminded that although some early presidents were slave owners, the surnames Washington and Jefferson are quite frequently found with black people. Just as it was presumed a decade ago that black people in professional

football couldn't be quarterbacks or coaches, it is now so clear that white people can't be defensive backs that in order for Brigham Young University to be competitive in college football, the Mormon church had to have a talk with God about their traditional allocation of black people to second class status.

Although on occasion Chris Ross, a white actor was very effective in a sort of surreal piece whose key line was "We Negroes love our watermelon!" at which the white waiter, Roger Bowen behaved as though stuck with a knife, most of the time it was probably impossible for the audience if, for example, in a scene based on the book "Black Like Me", Roger Bowen and Mel Stewart (for a while Kalim al-Rashid) traded roles. To experience other cultures you don't really have to be an actor pretending to be something you are not. In the instance of groups proud of their identity, you will probably be welcome as an observer since your willingness to learn has to feature respect. I went in as an apprentice in a field of which I was totally ignorant and became director of one of the most successful theaters in San Francisco, and more importantly I learned a lot about us/them.

Some of this sort of experience can be had by volunteering at a Senior Citizens' Center or playing with your grandchildren in their clubhouse - if you adopt a good attitude: you are there to learn as you help. Accept condescension but don't practice it.



# GAME

*...in a dunghill world*

*After our goal to stop the Vietnam War was achieved I closed down The Committee and was eking out a meager living playing poker in card rooms around San Francisco. I was living in a skid row hotel and Chubby Crank took me in. I lived in a beanbag on his living room floor and our fortunes were enhanced by winning efforts in our popular high stakes poker sessions.*

*Chub was musical director for a successful singer, Ray Price. Ray had a ranch in East Texas where he raised racehorses and gamecocks. I didn't know about the latter but Chubby assured me that they were part of a very fascinating world that was extensive though almost entirely a secret from the real world. For a season we lived on Ray's place and attended about a dozen derbies. The following year we had our own operation and fought roosters all over North America.*

**I** was a novice at raising gamecocks but with the aid of Stan Mack my poultry won a couple of fights. The teams I was associated with won some big events but I had to give it up and return to the world of science when my backers encountered some legal problems.

One thing I noticed during all this was that it was

possible for success to make relationships worse instead of better. When we won a big derby in Arizona and were in the hotel room with thousands of dollars in cash on the bed, the partners began wrangling about who deserved the most credit, or more accurately the most cash. I didn't participate since none of it was mine, but the discussions put a strain on what should have been a triumph. I wondered if victorious athletic teams had this kind of problem.

Chicken fighting is about the only "blood sport" that is legal in this country since bare knuckles were outlawed in prize fighting. There are underground full contact "anything goes" fights but these are usually illegal and not sanctioned by my ethics. Gamecock fighting is another matter. It is legal in a few states, though often the associated betting is at best frowned upon.

The ethics of betting are interesting in that there are some arcane practices. Someone stands and shouts, "I'll lay 100 to 80." It is bad practice to ask which rooster he is selecting; if you lay the odds you pick the bird. Also you might be favorably surprised when he picks the bird you don't want. If you lose the bet, form dictates that you seek out the winner and pay him. Very seldom is this protocol violated.

Another convention is when you are in a position to win a big purse by winning one final match. In this case you are expected to "hedge" by betting against your own chicken because if you lose you will at least get some consolation money, if you win the purse makes the loss of one bet insignificant.

There are three full-time journals filled with articles about the "derbies" and advertisements for fowl and the gear used in the sport. The people involved are seldom concerned with justifying their activity because they maintain secrecy and recognize that in this country the public just "isn't ready" to accept what they know to be true about their game.

In most of Latin America, the Philippines, and Asia cockfighting is a major national passion. One of the most surprising things to most people is that in France it is very widespread, yet almost no tourists are even aware that it's happening.

Unlike bull fighting, cockfighting is quite safe for the human participants. Occasionally people will get mad at each other over the handling of the combatants or because of a perceived welching on a bet, but mainly the passion is over the courage shown by the fowl. This characteristic is where the word "game" gets one of its meanings.

When we arrived at the pit the day before the derby the parking lot had pickups with shells; participants were moving their charges into a dirt-floor cockpit filling with caged roosters who strutted about, looking good.

Gamecocks are quite colorful with long tails and "boastful" posture. They scratch the ground, flap wings, stretch and try to outcrow all their fellows. Their heads move about rapidly and if you get to hold one its body feels as hard as a football. They are ready to kill something.

Their genetic selection is based a little on their athletic

ability and fighting skills, a lot on their courage. When we use the word "game" to describe a prizefighter that can absorb punishment we are paying tribute to the life/death focus of these descendants of the jungle fowl originally from Indonesia. The difference between this poultry and the "dunghill" creatures that wind up in a bag at a fast food establishment is that we, at least in lip service, can identify with gamecocks as having nobility.

Although they weigh around five pounds, they will back down from no living thing. They are no match for a dog but they often die rather than fly. When pitted against another rooster they will try to fight after they have legs and wings broken - by just pecking at their opponent. If they show any "dirt" by playing dead or running they will never be sires.

The morning of the derby a lottery matches them by weight and care is used to prevent common interests from competing when possible. As in horse racing there is a lot of talk about cheating but after a couple of seasons it seems more often to be paranoia than conspiracy.

Each contest is preceded by a weigh-in and a check of the weapons. Gaffs must be pointed but without sharp edges and their curve must meet a standard. The other weapons, called knives, are mostly used in Asia and Latin America. The consensus in the Southeastern U.S. is that the quality of gameness is best illustrated with gaffs because with knives chance plays a greater role in the outcome. Padded covers over the birds' natural spurs are sometimes used when sparring cocks in training to find suitable warriors. Outsiders sometimes propose making cockfighting a sporting event

instead of a blood sport. The best handlers don't put a lot of stock in sparring ability and are completely uninterested in "boxing matches" with the outcome decided by judges.

We like to think certain mental states are strictly human but it is very easy to come to believe that these birds have a specific intent to kill. It's not about territory or sex. It has nothing to do with food. They want to kill the other rooster.

When our match is called Stan takes our rooster to the center of the cockpit for a face off in which both pitters hold their charges in a position where they bite and tug at each other's combs and wattles. Although these are trimmed, they must be left large enough to act as radiators for the heat they are soon to build. The referee calls for the fight to begin and the two gamecocks attack often flying several feet in the air for their first set-to.

The most effective strategy is to get atop the back of your opponent and drive a gaff into the heart. Headshots and other flailing with the legs look spectacular but don't often get the job done. Sometimes it's all over in one quick flurry but more often both combatants are wounded and the outcome is deferred for several encounters. When the contest isn't finished in a few minutes they go to a small outside arena called a drag pit. Sometimes they are both so hurt that the decision is reached because only one is still able to show any fight.

Although it is very bloody and savage, it is not cruel. And we don't eat them.



# BACKSTRETCH

*...in a front-side world*

*The first time I heard anybody speak with a certain glow about horse racing was on a troop ship heading for the Philippine Islands in 1945. I could recognize a certain wonder in the attitude of one of my fellow passengers who made playing horses sound as good as sex.*

*When I got out of the navy and settled in Chicago to attend the Conservatory of Music on the GI Bill I had an opportunity to go to my first horse races. I didn't know the old horseplayers' axiom "don't make mind bets. You can afford to lose your money." I didn't have any money but my mind bets were so conservative that I managed to retain a modicum of sanity.*

*My experiences were with people who bet on races but never got to smell any horseshit. Much later I met Gary Ward who trained and loved horses; he introduced me to the backstretch, where the magic lies. We often went to Bay Meadows on the San Francisco peninsula. One day we saw a three-year-old gelding named Coyotero who blew away a rather mediocre field. It was love at first sight. We had to have that horse.*

Ward was working as a dealer at a local card room and among all his fellow employees we couldn't come close to getting the money to buy the horse. A player in the club, steel company executive Bob Krauss heard of our dilemma and made a deal to get Coyotero and we were off to Hollywood Park to spring our secret monster on the unsuspecting people at one of the premiere tracks in the world.

I spent a year with Gary and Coyotero putting in days on the backstretch as a hot walker and nights in the apartment as a computer programmer, at first applying statistics to picking horses for Bob and later creating a system for managing the world's entire steel supply.

Coyotero won some races but our biggest score came when Gary got a horse to train named Major Bill (which is what everybody called my father!) who was really a secret weapon. This time when we had a table full of cash there was no hint of the hostility I had observed at the winning of a gamecock derby in Phoenix. We later sold Coyotero and I went back into the World of Science.

The backstretch is a self-contained universe in which almost all conversation is about horses. The real caretakers are the grooms, each of whom rubs as many as four horses. A licensed trainer has a stable of from 1 to 20 horses and tolerates his owners on the backside only on race days - occasionally at other times if they aren't too intrusive.

The exercise riders and jockeys (usually referred to as "pinheads") take out several horses a day for a morning exercise period after which the horse is walked either by a

hot walker or at the lesser tracks on a machine that is like a carousel. They are washed down, rubbed and returned to a small stall (a "box" in England) where they spend over 20 hours a day.

When horses are too ill or injured for the track's resident veterinarians to certify them fit to race they are "turned out" to horse farms where they eat and frolic outdoors until recovered sufficiently to return to the track.

Some of the handlers think that training involves beatings and many of the trainers are sort of butchers to the carriage trade. The racing life of a thoroughbred averages about 3 years during which it will run about fifty races. Only a few of the thousands foaled each year show enough promise to get to the track and of those, very few ever win a race. The stakes are high, the percentages miniscule, yet every person back there holds the constant dream that this one is the longed-for champion.

In this culture there is complete indifference to certain status symbols. The most financially successful trainer of all time was not beloved on the backstretch while I was there. He had an undefeated filly that died when he ignored her fever and kept her in training. When he appeared on TV his mourning was over the "hours we put in on her." The backside conversation was "Two things are for sure, it'll never rain in July at Santa Anita and D. Wayne Lucas will never have a live four-year old." The reply: "That's not true, it might rain in July."

That trainer was full of his own importance, a frequent accompanist to people who violate third form of truth statements with lies. Marguerite, who took the name

Maya Angelou when she married Tosh Angelos, has become so convinced of her superiority that, like Wayne, unlike Charlie Whittingham, qualifies for an old put down: "She thinks her shit don't stink but her farts give her away." I love her anyway!

# ODDSMAKER

*...in a risky world*

*My mother taught me the rules of poker when I was about 7 years old. I loved the game. Playing cards was one of the few activities I enjoyed with her. She ran the kitchen at a summer camp for rich boys in the Texas Hill Country; part of her compensation was free "tuition" for me.*

*For chips in the daily games of draw poker we used spent .22 caliber shell casings gleaned from the rifle range. My late father had been a world-class marksman and I was a good shot and very aggressive about collecting "chips."*

**I**n the sixties I discovered California card rooms, which were the only legal form of gambling in the state - made so by a court ruling that decreed draw poker to be a game of skill rather than chance. This was proven by the fact that good players win rather consistently without cheating. I found out how to win with some regularity by studying books, talking to successful players, and participating in public games in California and Nevada. Chubby Crank had private games, which frequently became such high stakes affairs that I could actually make a living playing. I was fairly good at it but got bored because the main requirement was almost unbelievable patience: waiting

for good hands in the company of dull people in smoke-filled rooms while essentially chained to a table.

The most common misunderstanding most people have about gambling is that there is pre facto knowledge of an outcome, a hunch or correct intuition. The technical names for this delusion are "coulda, shoulda, woulda" and "if only I'da."

People who succeed at playing poker or betting on horse races often pretend to believe in luck and sometimes feign superstition; this is usually contrived to lure losers into continuing self-defeating behavior, such as drawing to inside straights or selecting horses by program number rather than speed and stamina.

To a winning player the clients are "live ones", "producers", or "attractions", never "suckers": valued clients best handled by agreeing with their delusions concerning the law of averages and the nature of statistics.

At the chicken fights, horse races, and poker tables there is one element that seems universal: there is an association between betting and "manhood." When the cockfighter says, "ain't a chicken in the world can kill this rooster" he is considered less than a man if he won't back his feelings with money. Poker players try to "run over" women players with bluffs that are transparent to good players. Many horsemen let pride of ownership cloud their evaluation of their horses' capabilities.

This machismo can be expensive but it is characteristic of

many of the groups I have encountered. You can get a lot of good bets by locating the delusion that because it's "my team" I will ignore the odds to demonstrate my support with money!



# HIP

*...in a square world*

*From the '40s through the '60s I was heavily involved in the jazz world so my remarks about it are not those of an outsider permitted to observe this life - I lived it. I was a musician, composer and broadcaster. I never expected to be outside that world, as I in fact am.*

*I first became involved because my high school library had a subscription to Down Beat magazine and its competitor, Metronome. These journals celebrate a little understood world peopled by musicians, fans and critics who were privy to musical experiences that would never be shared by people under the spell of other forms of sonic art. Now they teach it in school.*

*Hipness is an element I discovered through my love affair with Jazz Music but it is a component of all groups. Old people are hip to certain experiences that cannot be had until the right time; gamecock fanciers are hip to what real courage consists of; backstretch people have intimate knowledge of class; we are all hip to something. They never quite get it. If you haven't walked in my shoes... It's a Black Thing, you wouldn't understand. Maybe not but I believe I understand your feeling of understanding.*

To be hip and tolerant is similar to experiencing the joys of privilege without the sociopathy of exclusivity. Having shared the joy of being moved by the music of Santeria, I get an extra boot from seeing your wonder in the discovery that certain drumming affects you, as deeply as it did me, and when I avoid the jealousy that accompanies possessiveness, I feel better.

Sure, the Grand Canyon is diminished by the presence of a hundred thousand tourists but that's life. I can choose not to trample the fragile ecosystem of the Galapagos and though I might dream of standing at the South Pole, I have learned to accept others' vivid descriptions of the feeling without contributing to the pollution there.

One thing I have noticed is that the shoulder standing phenomenon is very apparent in music and athletics: "unbreakable" records fall and the Ives Piano Concerto that was almost unplayable becomes the entrance exam to Julliard - and Super Sax plays transcribed Charlie Parker solos more cleanly than the originals. There was a traditional clarinet solo on "High Society" that was supposed to be difficult, later Lee Collins said, "shit, now they can play it on trombone."

# HIGH

*...in a down world*

*The drug culture is one I didn't just visit. I was a heavy user of cannabis products for 50 years and from the experience, I know that the attitudes, laws and proscriptions concerning what people ingest, inhale or inject produce the most misguided social reactions of any of the subjects under discussion.*

*I was introduced to marijuana in 1946 in Chicago. The first couple of experiences were unremarkable: I had to learn to get high. On my third try I was alone, listening to a familiar bit of music - which was no longer familiar; in fact it was as if I heard it correctly for the first time.*

*As a child I had been indoctrinated with the "weed from hell" delusion and was only persuaded to try smoking "tea" because the people who offered it to me were quite obviously living proof that the anti-marijuana propaganda was false. Perhaps the residual fears helped account for the lack of affect.*

**I** have seen the marijuana pendulum swing from "Weed with Roots in Hell" propaganda to "vegetable of Inspiration" and back more than once. My attitude has moved from fear to advocacy to a sort

of indifference but my experiences in the culture are among the most moving of my several "lives."

I once had a full-blown opium habit when a friend gave me a substantial quantity of that "queen of drugs" and the withdrawal was a bit painful but not as important as it often is to people who have trouble kicking habits.

I used cocaine as a stimulant to enable me to play marathon sessions of poker, sometimes going four or more days without sleep. I never thought of it as "recreational." I stopped using any "hard drugs" years ago and have felt neither ill effects nor any desire to reestablish the practice.

There must be a place in the mind that knows how to get high. There are instances in double blind tests (the name comes from the procedure in which neither experimenter nor subject knows whether he has been given the drug under test, or a placebo) during which some of the subjects report hallucinations from the sugar pill and some report no effect from taking an ordinarily effective dose of LSD.

This placebo effect might account for the problems we have with each other's different reactions to apparently identical events. An assassin who was spoken to by God and a book burner are convinced they serve truth. We who imprison, execute, or defy their intent are equally convinced that their behavior is sociopathic and our repression of them is for the greater good.

# SCIENTIFIC

*...in a superstitious world*

*I got into medical research because it seemed to be an activity I would feel useful for having done. It is a job that when you give it as an answer to "What do you do for a living?" gets a "That's wonderful!" It has had its moments; but it raises ethics questions with even fewer answers than the work produces.*

*As a culture the world of science probably gets more signs of respect than the others in my experience. Partly because it is an occupation concerned with posing questions, it has always made me question its pursuit as vocation.*

*My first job in science was at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco where I got a full dose of emergency room and operating room theatrics as well as cutting edge (pun intended) research on animals as well as human volunteers, many of whom were other experimenters. I underwent some of the same procedures after I had some heart attacks but when I was working at the Research Institute I thought I'd choose to die before I'd let them do that to me. I even have a pacemaker now, so I'm a "transhuman" at last!*

**Carter** Collins brought me into the field and after a couple years at UCSF we got our own grant through the most important backer of my career, Arthur Jampolsky. It was during the years at Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute that I had all the experiences that followed my Hip/High era.

Science is our attempt to codify the first kind of truth - what is true whether declared so or not. Scientists are not like umpires, decreeing what is and what is not. Instead they presume that there is in fact a first kind of truth.

Although a purpose is to explain what has been observed, the main use we make of it is to predict. The ability to use a "truth" to correctly identify what comes next is the criterion for scientific truth.

Descriptions of science are mostly just stories. Often what is said about a field has little relation to the experience. The philosophical definitions are idealizations of historical figures in which clay feet and warts vanish under a patina of idealism, much like previous presidents escape the barbs they endured in their own time. Real world "science" as opposed to the "search for truth" model is as linked to fashion as any endeavor. Who gets the backing is often based on being qualified in completely inappropriate ways by having certain letters after one's name, etc. People not particularly qualified, and not at all objective decide the funding of projects. Waste is frequently the order of the day. Pride of authorship is very prevalent; the jealousies and rages usually associated with prima donnas abound in the laboratory.

A typical scenario is that one gets a grant for work already mostly finished. One's students or lab assistants complete the project as the principal investigator proceeds to seek other grants. When the time period nears its end there is a flurry of purchases so as not to appear to have asked for too much money. Most of the grants go to established institutions, although people outside these places do much innovative research.

Science is taught in the way history is - a linear sequence involving famous personalities. Frequently the true pioneers are discovered long after their ridicule and death. The myth of the disappearance of individual innovation and the emergence of teams of scientists who will henceforth handle discovery institutionalizes science; but just as jazz is the product of outcasts bitten by the muse, so science emerges from special minds, often working alone outside the halls of academia.

With the emergence of many-to-many communication, we have the opportunity for networks of scientists without the burden of a bureaucracy hung up on degrees and certification. "Publish or Perish" will take on new meaning and "Peer Review" will be an open event, not the province of people whose privilege is based on exclusivity, instead on the merit of their ideas.

In duels, hostilities, and war there are rules that make clear what is impermissible. This is frequently considered a "mystery" in some supernatural sense. In the view of many scientists there is no supernatural any more than there is a

"subnatural" and whatever IS is natural - and there is nothing that is not.

# STRAIGHT

*...in a gay world*

*My first experience with the gay subculture came about because I love steam baths. The bathhouses of San Francisco in the 1960s were major gathering places for male homosexuals. I came to know their world but never really joined it.*

*My first awareness of gay men as something besides snickeringly referred to "queers" came when my mother went into the florist business. Floral design was an occupation associated with the "pink underworld."*

*My peers had hostile attitudes towards these men and towards homosexuality, although I know that most of us had experienced sex with each other in some form before we even reached high school. Statistics in these matters are so skewed by society's prejudice that even today I feel that there are very few males who have not experienced some form of homosexual contact.*

*My relationship with Lesbians is even closer as some of my daughters live the life. I never had any trouble with that since I can't understand why anyone would prefer males as sexual partners.*

**A**S I write this the popular media and some genetic research are in heated debate with self-styled moralists over whether homosexuals are born that way or make a choice, often steered by proselytizing gay or bisexual men.

In the first place homosexuality is largely a verbal figment and the gay lifestyle is probably a separate issue from sexual preference. The shadings of these behaviors are far too complex to be capsulized in a word so cross-dressers, transsexuals, and homophobes are but signified (and in some cases stigmatized) humans.

I have little to say about being gay, but some observations about the absurdity of the straight world's reactions to people who live another way. I don't know if most or all of the people who prefer sexual partners of their own gender got "that way" from choice or because their friendly priest recruited them into the behavior, but I don't think it matters much. If it's a choice it's a tough one to have made; if it's genetic then the verdict on whether it's blessing or curse is cultural and the tendency to accept "bashing" in much of our culture is at best regrettable.

When I was a child it was regarded as appropriate behavior to giggle over the idea of heating a penny and admiring the effect of a burnt hand on a "retard." Some "Christians" actively encouraged attacking Jehovah's Witnesses and if gay men hadn't been deeply closeted they'd probably have suffered even more really violent shit.

The list of people who are gay and have contributed mightily

to the development of what we have come to think of as admirable is very extensive and as the closets crumble, more misconceptions about the "condition" are shown to be absurd.

A Walker Percy character says something like "pity is the first step to the gas chamber" and I think that another first step is the bigots' conviction that "faggots" are fair game for anything from ridicule to a little bash here and there.

If you "can't stand faggots" I would urge you to get to know a few who share your nonsexual interests; you will be surprised and, I hope, get over your prejudice.



# RICH

*...in a world of poverty*

*I first became aware of economics in a high school course and was fascinated by its pretense at being a science. One interesting economic study I read was a paper about the basis for pricing petroleum. The conclusion was that the cost of the product had almost no bearing on the price. Price is determined by what the market will bear. This is probably true of just about everything that gets sold.*

*None of us is really important, only self-important. Most horses are worth a few hundred dollars as dog food, but the shares in Seattle Slew put his value at a hundred million dollars. They used to tell me the chemicals that make us up could be bought for a few bucks, but other prices are used in deciding how much it is OK to spend to save a life.*

**Bean** counting dictates many social decisions. I am convinced that the notion of cost/benefit analyses is akin to the idea that tea leaves or chicken entrails can reveal the future.

My favorite economic principles came from an international banker and Buckminster Fuller. The former explained the function of money: you have a

thousand dollars and put it in a bank; now you have a thousand and the bank has a thousand; the bank lends a thousand to a manufacturer; now you have a thousand, the bank has a thousand, and the manufacturer has a thousand; the manufacturer pays his workers and suppliers most of the thousand; now you have... That thousand soon becomes several and that's a good picture of how this great invention, money, works.

Bucky Fuller sought the true source of our wealth and since we are all variations of starlight our most significant natural resource is sunlight. Our creative activity consists entirely of making order of the chaotic bombardment by photons that is our sole continuance.

Our ancestors were occupied with carrying water from the stream to the village. None of us any longer carries water up the hill except the bottled water delivery person. The invention of the pump made water carriers obsolete.

We all live off pump royalties. That is why we are able to sit around reading these words, or in my case writing them on a \$2500 laptop computer that I got for \$99 because fashions have changed. We are so inundated with idle time that we contrive exclusivities to seek privilege when we are surrounded by a surplus of plenty.

There is a compulsive concern about "work" and "jobs" among people who neither till nor toil. We utilize less than one trillionth of the energy reaching us from the sun and bicker about somebody else not pulling his share, which now seems to mean having a "job" such as calling people on the

telephone urging them to change the letterhead on the invoice they get for their use of the communication system.

The processing of sunlight is like the rituals of the Potlatch tribe who regularly burned blankets and canoes because they were too rich. Many of the fruits harvested in our ritual shopping wind up in yard sales, on the "as-is" table in the basement of the Good Will Store, or being gleaned from the flow of garbage destined for the land fills that will become archaeology digs for our great-grandchildren' great-grandchildren.

The shopping cart ladies on the street have tools and artifacts that would have been prized by kings of a few centuries past, yet we speak of abject poverty in the case of people who can't afford a new television set. We are in fact almost all idle rich.



# ETHNIC

*...in a white bread world.*

*My first memory of there being "others" in a cultural sense was in my relationship with Arabelle Brown. One night I drove her to church and sat outside in the car listening to the music from within.*

*A few of our maids were Mexicans and I spent some time on a large ranch in Mexico when I was 4 and 5 years old. I spoke much better Spanish then than I have since. The ranch hands convinced me that the prevailing view of Mexicans as lazy incompetents is as peculiar as the notion that girls are dumb.*

**In** 1960 I had the opportunity to record the first visit by the Armenian Church prelate to the Western Hemisphere. Vasken I, the Catolicos of the religion that is an older version of Christianity than Roman Catholicism, was singing mass at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. He was a tenor and one of his aides sang baritone and in that great hall it was an astounding musical experience for me and an unforgettable religious event for the hundreds of Armenian-Americans who filled the cathedral

When I say, "some of my best friends are Jews" I expect you to understand that I don't mean that in its

usual sense as an apology for bigotry. I find Jews to be far more thoughtful and aware on the whole than the Goyim I grew up around.

Since then I have experienced that captivation among Cockfighters, Gamblers, and Performers - all the groups I have written about. One of the things they have in common is me. That is probably of no importance to them but the effect on me has been the stuff of my life.

If I had never experienced a Roman Catholic mass or sung the National Anthem before a ball game I would be hollow. I like to think that the idea that there is a meta-experience here is what impassioned me to write all this down.

We ask "what are we here for?", presuming some purpose to living; our multiple ethnicities have similarities that provide an answer. Even if our goal is to move the planet in such a way as to cause it to move the solar system and in turn the galaxy and the universe, it starts with recognizing the sameness we get from mutual laughters, animosities, and griefs.

Although I never particularly identified with my WASP roots, I have moved from embarrassment, shame, and pity to respect for the culture. As Bill Shea was wont to say, "it's great for what it is." He was talking about forms of music that I really hated but I guess it applies to a lot of things. My belief in The Jazz Truth can coexist with others' "there's only two kinds of music - country and western (or rock and roll, or rhythm and blues, etc.)."

How can we reconcile our love for life with the idea of "ethnic cleansing" or the Turk/Armenian, Nazi/Jew, Us/Them problem when it becomes murderous? Although I won't call it "The Final Solution," I hope that Aretha Franklin's R-E-S-P-E-C-T or perhaps UNESCO, or the Internet will bridge these troubled gulfs. If Crips, Bloods, Skinheads can dance to the same drummer from time to time we may yet be cool.

Umpires are booed, ridiculed, and heavily dissed. In terms of the game, they also have life and death power over the other participants. They know how it feels to be an outsider but they can also "pass" during most of their lives in the "real world" because they go largely unrecognized when not working.

The reverse of "passing" is the closet. When I was about 10 I began to follow the fortunes of a Texas League team, the San Antonio Missions, a farm team of the major leagues' perennial cellar dwellers, the St. Louis Browns. Following their fortunes meant listening to radio broadcasts of the games. The announcer was a colorful gentleman using the name of Bolivar Dougag. His name was Sam Goldfarb and in that part of the country in that part of the century his real name would have made the announcer's job unobtainable.

I got to know him and occasionally hung out in the broadcast booth at games and had dinner with him and his wife. I didn't know that Jews were supposed to be on my shit list. Umpires couldn't fraternize with team members so they often socialized with announcers and sports writers.

My first acquaintance with an umpire was to caddy for Sam and umpire Coe one day and I got to hear grown men use all the curses and obscenities that were hidden from use around women.

This sort of exposure to Jew, umpire, and “foul language” was formative in about the same sense I later learned about music and dope: the power of these forbidden fruits and the humanity of these people were being denied by most of society and that is everybody's loss. Jews, cockfighters, umpires, women: they all qualify and to behave otherwise robs us even more than them.

Passing is sometimes done for the sake of safety but it is not always possible or convenient. Recently it has become a sign of cowardice, earning the contempt of fellow outcasts.

"I'm Black and I'm Proud," says a song typical of this attitude. There is a movement in the gay community to force people out of the closet, even against their wishes; liberated women profess pity for those still confined barefoot to the kitchen; kids don't trust anyone over thirty and horsemen echo the carny anthem, "fuck everything but the circus."

"Uncle Tom" has his counterparts in many of these cultures. Chicken fighters on the whole prefer to stay secretive about their passion but "grey panthers" are becoming politically militant although the effort to look ever young is the foundation of huge industries.

People in wheel chairs chain their vehicles to cable cars and picket Jerry Lewis, who seems astonished that they think of

his "help" as insulting.

As "backlash" is used as an excuse for not making waves it also serves to stiffen resolve among people who feel oppressed. The remedies for making changes in "second-classism" are often political or legal. The backlashers resort to demagoguery, pretending that discrimination doesn't really exist; previous generations blamed "outside agitators" riling up "our nigras."

What might be the best thing to learn from these put-downs is that we are all perpetrators as well as victims: Black Muslims who are doubly outcast vilify Jews; born again "Christians" organize to deny homosexuals relief from discrimination; women who were once children pose protectionism for youths who don't know what's best for themselves; Catholics try to impose their vision of morality on society; the list is endless.

Blind peoples' solutions teach that our preconceptions of reality and importance contain flaws just as the presence of testicles can mislead us into converting differences into superiorities. The teachings of Mohammed, Jesus, Buddha, and Hensley have threads that indicate common ground for us all. Perhaps we are creatures in service to our selfish genes, but maybe those genes have an enlightened self-interest that insists on "live and let live" as well as "do unto others..."

The fastest growing segment of the world's population is the leisure class. TVs and cars are emblematic of people living off pump royalties. In the flower generation's heyday it was

hard to take seriously the Mustang Maoists' preachings about the redistribution of wealth but a visit to the Goodwill store tells a lot about the disposability of fashion. To many young people, goods displayed on the racks of salvage shops are more "in" than those in the boutiques on Rodeo Drive.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and William Blake's "...Believe a Lie when you see with, not thro, the Eye" sum it up pretty well. We presume a reality independent of our senses - the tree falling in the unpopulated forest most likely makes about the same sound even if unheard by any ear.

# ETHICAL

*... in an amoral world*

*My exposure to ethics predates my consciousness. When my mother said, "you've got to consider the other fella" it didn't seem foreign to me.*

*Many times I feel that ethics is a delusion; business ethics and legal ethics are oxymorons. "What's mine is mine."; "The government can't tell me what to do on my own land." How can the dream of absolute liberty and the reality of absolute interdependence be resolved while our genes survive?*

**Many** of the answers to the "eternal questions" are Biblical or Talmudic or perhaps Koranish. I read the King James "translation" when I was about 11 and went to various sessions of Protestant Sundays for a while. In navy boot camp, one had to attend some service on Sunday so I went to a different one each week.

Like most of you I have been proselytized by Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons at my front door and I know devout Roman, Anglican and Armenian Catholics, Jews, and Seventh Day Adventists in addition to Pentecostals, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. I believe almost all organized religions talk the talk and almost none of them walk the walk.

Lately my favorite moral code is the hacker ethic. The term "hacker" is associated with the practice of computer vandalism/piracy. I prefer the meaning of its originators: one who makes computers work. The ethic led to the invention of shareware, a form of software distribution that allows one to try a computer program and then pay for it only if it is kept and used. Hackers also tend to think that software should be free and that "intellectual property" is almost theft.

Ethics are a mainstay of all my groups. You don't smoke marijuana without offering it around; if others are waiting to sit in with the band you don't take an unseemly number of solo choruses; if a player demeans the contest by defying the umpire's authority you eject him from the game. A bunch of violations occur but yours distance you from your fellows.

Some ethical positions are part of our organized religions. Governments are often guided by these same dicta. We suppose that in our form of government the decision as to what constitutes a religion is left in the hands of the members of those organizations. In fact they don't even have to be organized!

Kirby Hensley understands the distinction between religion and government. As governments begin to fall to pieces, being replaced by business, it has become clear that ethics are fundamental to survival. We must work towards making "business ethics" something other than an oxymoron.

If you are a member of ADAPT then you are also automatically a minister in the specific order of "The Holy Rollers" and qualified for and entitled to all the privileges

accorded to any religious order including but not limited to the right to get grants to distribute in accordance with the tenets of your faith. I have so decreed this on the 30th of January, 2001 by the authority of God.

Universal Life Church has ordained more ministers than any previous religious organization. There are millions of us who are officials in Universal Life. In fact by reading this sentence you are hereby ordained a minister of the Universal Life Church. You may officiate at weddings, baptisms, funerals, or whatever you feel appropriate. I can't unfrock you but if you no longer want to be a minister that's entirely in your hands.

Just as you can take whatever title suits your fancy, be it imam, priest, guru, or rabbi, so I have become pope - not THE pope, just pope. There may be other popes than me and the one in Rome, but I am likely the most ecumenical of all. In my flock are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Shintos, and anybody who qualifies as having respect for Life - that's what Universal means.

Like the Supreme Court justice who can't define pornography but knows it when he sees it, I can only rule on which behaviors qualify and which are inappropriate as I encounter them. Who are excluded are those who are for Universal Death.

Just as the first uninteresting number one examines becomes interesting because of its discovery, so something found not to be, becomes. If you would rather experience death before dishonor, you will never be dishonored. We all have different

guidelines as to what constitutes dishonor but the implication of that notion is that life matters.

I have been dancing among groups that I urge you to move from abhorring through tolerating to respecting; so, is it that any group has my blessing? Do I think we should behave more kindly towards the Nazis, KKK, or underground terrorists? Is there a way to tell objectively which ones qualify? I leave that as an exercise for the reader.

Urban gangsters have ethics that seem pretty warped: you can be blamelessly killed for wearing the wrong colors in the right place. Even those who kill lightly seem aware that murder is distinctive behavior. If we are our genes' vehicles for survival then our conscience is a recognition that we're all in this together.

As promised at the beginning of this opus: I told you what I was going to tell you; I told you; now I'm telling you what I told you.

Religion proclaims it.  
Science proves it.  
Experience verifies it.

**We are all members of one another.**





