

11) Them Low-Down Dirty Blues

Our initial priority in the aftermath of the fateful concert was to honor those who had died at the event. In as low key a manner as possible, ZigZag attempted to pay our respects and share our regrets for each of the three people who had lost their lives that night.

The young woman whose larynx had been crushed during the stampede toward the stage was an American foreign exchange student named Leslie Campisi. Leslie was a junior at Temple University in Philadelphia, and originally from Sarasota, Florida. She was majoring in broadcasting, and attending school at Temple's campus in Tokyo. Founded in 1982, Temple's is the oldest and largest foreign university in Japan. The campus demographics are about an even mix of Japanese students and those from dozens of different countries around the world. Leslie had gone to the show with a group of her classmates, and was a big ZigZag fan. She had seen us on a couple of occasions during her two years in Philly and once in Tampa, Florida. Her parents, Jim and Carol Campisi were flown to Tokyo to claim their daughter's body and to collect her possessions from the on campus dormitory. Leah and Joy Bennett accompanied the family back to Florida for Leslie's funeral. At the service, Leslie's father and her roommate shared stories of Leslie's love for Japan and its culture and art. Leslie was thriving in the international environment of the campus, and was hoping to study entertainment law at Stanford after completing her undergraduate studies. Janet Butler flew into Tokyo from Topanga Canyon to assist Danny in taking care of Heather while her mother was away. Heather slept with me for three straight nights; her still frightened head tucked securely against my side. How could I have ever allowed my young daughter to be placed in such an insane situation? The vapid look Heather carried around on her face truly haunted my soul.

Jiro Suzuki was the sales manager for Tokyo FM radio station JOAU, the flagship station for the Japan FM network. He had been with the station for nearly twenty five years, since near the inception of the station in 1970. Jiro was involved in the tour through the ticket giveaways his station had been providing for the shows. He had seen ZigZag a number of times, and had sat in the VIP section on several occasions, including a few nights previously in Osaka. He had an affinity for American food, and especially enjoyed pepperoni pizza, the very item which he had choked on the night of the concert when hit in the head by the drink cart. The coroner had ascribed that asphyxiation was his official cause of death. Jiro's funeral was a private affair, and although we offered to send a representative (George Bennett was ready and willing to fly in for the services), the family requested that we not participate. Hi wife Yumi did have a private conversation with Mike Bennett (at the request of the general manager of JOAU), and accepted our condolences and a twenty five thousand dollar check to offset Jiro's funeral expenses. Besides his wife, Jiro left three children and seven grandchildren. His great joy in life was spending time with the little ones, who all dearly loved their "Ojisan".

Although Kenechi Takahashi would not have considered himself a religious man, in fact if anything his time spent in the United States had moved him farther away from his Buddhist heritage, it was his parent's wishes that Kenechi be given a traditional Japanese funeral. There was some question at first about whether the medical examiner's office was going to release his body in a timely manner, as there was still a great deal of uncertainty about the young broker's cause of death, but they finally decided to rule Kenechi's demise as accidental – caused by a blunt force trauma. The autopsy barely mentioned the small “bite like” mark on his back where The Project had inflicted her vengeance.

With his family's permission, Mike Bennett and I attended the services. The first order of business was to purchase a black suit – not something that either of us traveled with on a regular basis. Japanese funeral customs are considerably different than those in America and I became intrigued by the process.

The body is prepared by first being washed from head to toe. Although traditionally done by the family, in more modern times the hospital takes care of this detail. All of the body's orifices are then stuffed with gauze or cotton. A cosmetologist from the mortuary applies makeup as needed and the body is dressed in a suit -women typically are displayed in a traditional kimono- and taken to the funeral parlor where it is placed in dry ice as it is not part of the Japanese custom to embalm the body. An elaborately carved altar is selected by the family and placed next to the body. A family member will normally stay in the room with the deceased until time for the funeral. Once a casket is selected, the body is placed inside and more dry ice is added, along with personal items, a white kimono, and paper money which the deceased will need to pay the toll at the “River of Three Crossings”.

We entered the funeral home and were greeted by two young ladies who were managing the registry book and the special envelopes that were used for the “koden” or condolence money. The sweet smell of incense was thick in the air. A number of people entered with us, and many approached the casket, bowed, rang a bell and offered individual prayers. Some lit more incense on the altar as well. We offered our condolences to Kenechi's parents (through an interpreter – Mike had met them the day before), and joined Pee-Tee in chairs near the rear of the room as we waited for the wake service to begin. The Buddhist priest entered, was given a cup of green tea, and spoke briefly with the family. Others, who apparently were elsewhere in the funeral home, entered the room as well. Some sat in chairs, some on cushions on the floor. The priest bowed at the altar, lit more incense, and began to recite a “sutra” (which is a teaching from Gautama Buddha, the person upon whom the faith was established). In turn, the family and then everyone else in the room approached the altar, bowed, offered yet more incense and returned to their seats. There was one final group bow as the sutra concluded and then the chanting of a mantra specific to the Buddhist sect to which the Takahashi family was associated. The priest departed and the service came to

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a conclusion. As we exited the room, the two young ladies handed Mike a small present – a token of thanks from the family. Someone from the family again spent the night in the same room as the deceased.

Although it is customary for distant associates to attend either the wake or the funeral, usually not both, Kenechi's parents specifically asked Mike that we attend both events. The next morning we arrived at the temple where the service was to be held. There was a wooden tablet in front of the body that was inscribed with what we were told was the deceased's "kaimyo" or afterlife name. It is Japanese custom to assign this obsolete and usually esoteric term to the deceased, believing that it will prevent him from returning from the dead if his real name is called out. The service itself was very much like the wake, with the reading of a sutra and more incense. An elaborately decorated hearse carried Kenechi's body from the temple to the crematorium.

Nearly everyone in Japan is cremated. The lack of space, and the exceptionally high cost of burial both factor into this decision. After the remains are processed at the crematorium, the family returns and with chopsticks they remove the bones from the ash and position them into an urn. It is important in Buddhist tradition for the remains to be placed in the urn in a specific order, and the urn is then located in the family grave. There are ongoing remembrance services held at different intervals after the service to memorialize the individual. This varies widely dependent upon the Buddhist sect to which the individual was aligned and local customs. The forty ninth day after death is somehow important in Buddhist belief. I could appreciate the symbolism of this entire process, but many of the details were lost on me.

ZigZag covered the cost for all three funerals and established scholarship funds at each of the victim's alma maters: Temple University, The University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Tokyo.

The young woman who had been hit in the head with a chair was still in the hospital, but the doctor's prognosis for her recovery was quite good. Everyone else who was injured in the melee were treated either on site or in the emergency room and released. It was impossible to glean any positives from this incident. The cost had simply been too great.

Upon returning from Japan, I was emotionally adrift. Bad vibes and bad attitudes were everywhere I looked. Scotty was vocal about not wanting to tour any more. Besides, Franchesca McNaughton had just landed a role in a major Italian motion picture and would be on location in Milan for the next three months. Scott was intent on accompanying his wife. R.L. and Alicia were in a yo-yo relationship, and you never knew whether he was on the upswing or the downslide. Eric and Birgitt went first to Switzerland, and then finally landed in Copenhagen. Eric was now pretty much void of a personality anyway. Things were good at home, but I was looking for something more. Always more.

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Heather was still withdrawn and clingy a month after the tragedy. I think the biggest problem was not so much what had happened, but more so with the environment and adult conversation that she was exposed to after the fact. Leah's mom Janet was a big help and much of the time the only person Heather would open up to. Our daughter was now of the opinion that what mommy and daddy were involved in was somehow dangerous, and she was afraid for our safety. On Patty Neibauer Townsend's recommendation, we consulted with a child psychologist in Santa Barbara. Her name was Mildred Small.

Dr. Small was highly respected by her peers and her credentials were impeccable. She earned her undergraduate degree from the University of San Francisco in biology, where she graduated summa cum laude. Following receiving a Masters in Social Work from Cal State Fullerton, she earned her Doctorate in Psychology from UCLA, where she did her dissertation on children and trauma. Dr. Small had nearly twenty years of practice behind her, and a track record of incredible success. Her disarming smile and willingness to befriend her young patients, insisting that they call her "Millie", created an entrance into Heather's world of doubt and fear that we could not manage at home. Although this work continues, we get more of our girl back with us every single day. Leah and I have shed more tears over what we put our baby girl through than any other event in our lives.

It became obvious after our return from Japan, especially considering Scotty's animosity and Eric's ambivalence, that attempting to begin a new ZigZag recording project as planned in the spring of 1995 was going to be difficult at best, and would likely lead to results similar to the previous project "Contradiction in Terms". Absolutely not what we were hoping for, but also not surprising given the circumstances. R.L., Mike and I had several long conversations, and it became the consensus that we delay this process until fall, hoping that once Eric and Birgitt were settled into their new home in Copenhagen and Franchesca McNaughton's film shoot was complete in Italy that like mindedness among the band members would be more attainable. We had what we thought were several strong tunes ready to go, and I was generating a couple more that were bred from the pain of the Japan concert experience, the aftermath, and its effects on all involved. These were difficult lyrics to face, especially in light of my daughter Heather's ongoing issues.

After Jerry Garcia's query at the Reseda Country Club benefit show, there was some conversation among Tiny, Glenn, Big Bob and I, and then a follow up call to Jerry and another to Deb Sutton. The Dead were in the midst of a tour (when weren't they?), but Jerry had given me a few dates in late February and early March that looked like they might work. Then Jerry dropped another bomb shell; he had talked with legendary mandolin player and Jerry's co-conspirator on the "Old and In The Way" projects, David Grisman, and "The Dawg" - as Jerry called him - said he would be interested in playing with The Beefeaters as well. When I

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told this to Glenn, his quick response was “Hell, we have to do this now”, followed almost immediately with “how soon can we start.”

I called Tom Dowd in Florida to let him know what we had cooking, and ask when his schedule might have some holes. Tom said he was in the middle of a project with Rod Stewart at the time, and it might be the end of the year before he could block out any reasonable amount of time to spend in Topanga Canyon. I think Tom always did this just so he could hear me whine. His secondary response, which IU also expected was “Rick can do this.” My hope was that I could convince Tom to at least fly out for a day or two and provide guidance for the initial setup. After all, we had never set microphones on a banjo or mandolin in The Stitch before. We would work something out, I was just sure of it. This felt too righteous not to happen.

The Beefeaters with Jerry Garcia and David “Dawg” Grisman went into The Stitch in late February of 1995 and recorded seventeen songs in six days. Rick Daniels did most of the engineering, spending several hours on the phone with Tom Dowd discussing the mic placements. Tom arrived for a long weekend in early March and mixed the entire project. Capitol expedited the mastering and production of this project, entitled “With a Twist”. They wanted product in the music stores prior to our tour dates in April and May.

I was sitting in my study, working my way through a Beefeater set list and also trying to determine some priority for the recording process for the ZigZag project that we were planning to embark upon in the fall.

As I was in mid thought, Pee-Tee walked into the study and plopped down on the sofa across from my desk. I could tell from the expression on his face that I wasn’t going to like what he was about to say. I looked at him with eyes that said I’m ready for whatever it is, just lay it on me. I knew it could be anything, from a natural disaster to a domestic issue to a problem with the authorities. When it came out of his mouth, I realized how inadequately I had prepared myself for the reality of his words.

“Eric is dead.”

At first I was sure I had misheard him. There must have been a sonic boom or something that had rearranged the syllables and placed totally different words into my ears than the ones that came out of Pee-Tee’s mouth. The look on my face must have led him to believe that I hadn’t heard what he said – so he repeated the statement.

“Eric is dead.”

I glared at Pee-Tee Brown as if begging him to tell me something, almost anything, else. The questions started racing through my mind. When? Where?

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How? But I knew that answers really didn't matter, and that none of them would change the reality behind the words. I needed to be alone. In fact, I believe that "alone" was all that I was capable of at that very moment. I asked Pee-Tee to talk to Leah, grabbed my keys and the hash pipe, walked out the door, and climbed into the Astin Martin. I made it almost down the hill to the Pacific Coast Highway before the tears started to flow. I turned right and headed in the general direction of Santa Barbara, went maybe half a mile and had to pull off into a vacant parking lot. I closed my eyes and all I could see was the shining face of a twenty two year old kid who had the look of the cat who ate the canary. Then I remembered the point of reference to the time when I had seen that look before.

It was the day I walked into Hilborn Industries and informed Eric that Wendell Fontenot was going to underwrite our first record. He couldn't have been happier if I had told him that he was to be crowned the next King of England. Eric didn't even tell anyone at Hilborn he was leaving. He just calmly turned off the milling machine he was working on, packed up his tool box, and walked out the door. It was left for me to manage the details. I let the shop superintendent know that I was going across the bridge to the administration building, walked into Harry Hilborn's office, informed him of what had transpired, accepted his congratulations and wishes for success, and said goodbye to several of the sales staff. Then I went back to the production facility and informed the super that I was through working – hopefully forever. And by the way, Eric was leaving too - in fact had already left.

I slipped back into reality and pulled the CD of the first album out of its jewel case, turned the volume all the way up, and eased back onto the highway. I was still crying, but a smile was also inching across my face. My good friend Eric Anderson and I had done what we set out to do all those years ago. I drove the rest of the way to Montecito with the top down and the stereo wailing. I was screaming the lyrics at the top of my lungs. And shedding a new set of tears over each and every keyboard solo.

By the time I got to Love's Labour, Leah had already called Patty. She knows me so well – and she knew that was where I would eventually land. She, along with Mike and Pee-Tee, were headed that way in the Bentley. Premier Cart and Cartage had already dispatched a flat bed to pick up the Astin Martin. The rescue party made it to the home in Montecito about thirty minutes after my arrival. Leah found me curled up in a ball on the floor in the corner of Sissy's office, my face buried in both hands and the hash pipe at my feet. I was inconsolable for quite some time. She sat there and held me without saying a word. All I can remember thinking was "what did I do to deserve all of this?"

Eric's family sent his younger brother Pete Copenhagen to escort the body home. There was a private funeral and burial in Eric's home town in Pennsylvania. At the request of Eric Anderson's mother, Brigitt and the members of the ZigZag family did not attend either service. Other than Pete, I had never met any of

Eric's family, and Eric never really talked about them much. It was strange, but at some level I think I understood. From his mother's perspective ZigZag had taken Eric from her. This was her way of reclaiming him. Needing our own closure, we held a wake at the Pop-Op Palace the following weekend. We made toasts and watched footage of Mike Bennett's video tapes from back in the early days. Back where Eric was at his most eccentric, and I believe, when he was the most alive. Birgitt Neuhaus flew back home to Norway the day before the wake. She was invited by Mike to come to California, but declined. Technically, she had done nothing illegal. To my knowledge she also never admitted any responsibility, or apologized either publicly or privately for playing a part in Eric's death. I haven't seen or heard from her since.

It was two days after Birgitt started using the new batch of tea that Eric began to feel ill. They both thought it was just a touch of the flu. Birgitt went out at about 9:30 that morning to run a couple of errands and pick up some ginger ale for Eric's upset stomach. He was sleeping peacefully when she left. By the time she got back to the condo a mere forty five minutes later, Eric was dead. Of course the press had a field day. Speculation of overdose and foul play were mentioned both in print and on local television. People magazine did a cover story and tried to paint the worst case scenario. All we were told initially was that Eric died of heart failure. In the end I guess that's what gets us all. It took nearly two weeks for the coroner's report that would mention high levels of a herbal drug called valerian and evidence of cardiac arrest.

Eric Anderson's death was ruled an accident. From a strictly legal standpoint I guess that was true enough, but Birgitt couldn't be found blameless either. She had been self medicating Eric for over three years. On the surface, the results of her "tea" did provide the short term effect of keeping Eric stable, and who knows, the prescription medications recommended by the doctors might not have garnered the same results, or might have created additional side effects. It also wasn't Birgitt's fault that the last shipment of the concoction didn't contain the normal valerian content. In hindsight, I blame myself as well. I was so pleased with Eric's behavior of late that I guess I just stuck my head in the sand regarding the reasons why this transformation had taken place.

Valerian is a flowering plant that is indigenous primarily to Europe and parts of Asia. As an herbal medicine, it is technically a dietary supplement prepared from the roots of the plant, and had been widely used as an alternate to benzodiazepine drugs to treat any number of physical disorders including hysteria, hypertension, insomnia and stress. Its application as a medicinal herb may date back to ancient Greek times. Commonly utilized in the traditional medicine of India called "ayurveda", typical dosage varies from two to ten a day.

In reality the valerian in Eric's system didn't cause his death, it was the low dosage in the most recent batch of tea that sent him into withdrawal. And it was that symptomatology which caused Eric's cardiac complications.

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Legend ascribes that the Pied Piper of Hamelin used valerian along with his flute to enchant the German rats. Of course this piper was a leggy Norwegian blonde. Which made her that much more irresistible.

There is always a story within the story, and I guess that this is it. I LOVE the blues. How I got there is a journey filled with both passion and great fortune. I wasn't born poor. My father was a very successful attorney, now he's a judge. We belonged to the country club. My brother and I always had pretty much anything we wanted or needed growing up. I got a good, solid education. I'm not a rocket scientist (although I have actually met a couple who worked for NASA while living in Houston and from a common sense standpoint, that idiom may be highly overrated), but my IQ is well above average. I've never wanted for a bed to sleep in or a meal to eat. There were lean years out on my own back in the 70's, but I've always had food and heat and running water. My route to the blues as really more purposefully self inflicted.

Of course, my introduction to the art form known as the blues came from the music we were listening to as teenagers. But it wasn't poor black men playing homemade instruments. It was mostly white, British musicians. Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, Jeff Beck, and Led Zeppelin. And also some southern bands like the Allman Brothers. But I have had a chance over the years to meet up with a few of the legends, both on and off the stage.

Townes Van Zant once said "If you can't catch the blues in Houston, man, you can't catch them anywhere".

Earlier I mentioned the rich musical heritage in Houston. Let me tell you more about it. Back in the 1940's the circuit for black musicians consisted of traveling from Chicago to Memphis to Houston. The primary venues for these artists at the time were located on the east side of downtown in areas known as the Third Ward and the Fifth Ward. A pair of major facilities flourished in the Third Ward. One was the Bronze Peacock Club. In the Fifth Ward, the primary venue was the Eldorado Ball Room. The major performers of the day: B.B. King, Ray Charles, Buddy Guy, Bobby Blue Bland and many, many others made numerous appearances in these and other locations in and around the bursting Houston metropolis. In a time where segregation was still a way of life in the south, the oil town that was exploding into the melting pot that would become the fourth largest city in the United States was more tolerant of color than many other industrialized southern communities. That was and is especially true when it comes to the arts.

The Bronze Peacock was more than just a night club. It was a recording studio, a publishing house, a booking agency and a live performance venue. Don Robey created the Duke Peacock machine, a more sophisticated sound than was being heard in the juke joints and clubs around town. One part entrepreneur and one part scoundrel, Robey was a professional gambler and a taxi stand manager in

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Houston before moving to Los Angeles and taking over the operations of a night club there. He returned to the Bayou City in 1945 and opened the Bronze Peacock Dinner Club on Erastus Street in the eastside Houston neighborhood known as the Third Ward. It began as a dance hall, featuring stars such as Louis Jordan, Lionel Hampton and T-Bone Walker. Two years later Robey took over the management of Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown and started Peacock Records with Brown as his first artist. Success arrived with Big Mama Thornton's recording of the Leiber and Stoller classic "Hound Dog", which spent seven weeks at the number one spot on Billboard's Rhythm and Blues charts (a full four years before Elvis Presley would record the song). Little Richard also began his career on the Peacock label. In 1952 Robey gained control of Memphis based Duke Records and the Duke-Peacock legacy began. The Duke label brought in popular artists including Johnny Ace ("Pledging My Love"), Junior Parker ("Next Time You See Me"), Johnny Otis ("Willie and the Hand Jive"), and Bobby Bland ("Turn on Your Love Light"). As was common practice in those days, Robey - sometimes under the pen name of Deadric Malone - was listed as the co-writer on many of these and other hits songs coming from the Duke-Peacock camp, although the consensus among those involved in the process insist that Robey had no artistic input into most of these hits. A gospel label, Song Bird Records, was also started and featured artists including Five Blind Boys of Mississippi, the Dixie Hummingbirds, and Inez Andrews of The Caravans.

All of this was gone by the time I arrived in Houston in the late 70's. First of all, at the top level, by then the black stars and the white stars pretty much had equal opportunities to play the major venues. Also, the independent recording label wasn't nearly as lucrative as it had been in the past. The major studios were buying up all of the good talent. ABC Dunhill Records bought out Robey and the Duke-Peacock family of labels in 1973.

To quote a source from that era (and this IS a direct quote): "there were uptown niggers and downtown niggers" in Houston during this great cultural awakening. Don Robey and The Bronze Peacock catered primarily to the former, while another man epitomized the circumstances and environment of the latter.

He was an old beaten down man by the time we first laid eyes on Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins. But he had a fire in his eyes that we would never forget. Lightnin' lived down off Dowling Street in the old Third Ward section of Houston. He'd be at the local bar at some point about every weekend. If you were lucky, he might even play a song or two for some drinkin' money. The sound that came from his guitar was an anguish cry, based I believe upon the beating that the old man put on those strings. There has always been a blues element to our songs, sometimes overt like "Who Cuts the Barber's Hair" and "Mainline Barbara", but more often as an undertone, on songs such as "Who Comes and Goes" or "Labor of Love". All of this is a direct result of two or three skinny white kids who would slide into a couple of different Third Ward dives after finishing our sets at a Heights area club in search of Lightnin' and his mojo.

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Sam Hopkins was born in Centerville, Texas (about 100 miles north of Houston right off of Interstate 45) in 1912. As a boy he met, and accompanied, the great Blind Lemon Jefferson at church socials and other informal gatherings. It was from Jefferson that the young Hopkins learned his uninhibited style and casual everyman approach to songwriting. After a stretch in a Houston prison and a time as a farm hand back in Centerville, Hopkins struck out for the big city in 1946, where he played on street corners and in local juke joints. Discovered by a representative of Aladdin Records, Hopkins was paired with pianist Wilson Smith and they recorded their first sessions together later that year in a Los Angeles studio. An executive with Aladdin, hoping to add some spice to the act, nicknamed the duo “Lightnin” and “Thunder”.

Hopkins returned to Houston in the late ‘40’s and rarely performed outside of the Lone Star state for much of the next decade. He began recording for Gold Star Records (also used by Billy Gibbons and his pre ZZ Top band The Moving Sidewalks – Gibbons later purchased the company), and Lightnin’s first hits “T-Model Blues” and “Tim Moore’s Farm” were actually tracked in Sugar Hill Studios – the very same facility where the initial ZigZag album was done. Folklorist Robert “Mack” McCormick introduced Lightnin’ to the integrated world in 1959 and in 1960 he performed at Carnegie Hall in New York alongside Pete Seeger and Joan Baez. During the 60’s and 70’s Hopkins released one and sometimes two records a year. He played at major folk festivals and on college campuses all over the United States and after overcoming his fear of flying joined the American Folk Blues Festival tours of Europe in the mid 60’s. Noted documentarian Les Blank, who has also done homage to Dizzie Gillespie and Ry Cooder among others, captured the essence of Hopkins in his acclaimed 1967 film “The Blues Accordin’ to Lightnin’ Hopkins”. There are over thirty albums worth of material chronicling Hopkins’s life and art as well.

Lightnin’s distinctive style of fingerpicking guitar grew from his need to be the entire band while onstage in a solo setting. He did whatever he needed to do, including walking bass lines, chromatic turnarounds, single note lead lines, and slapping the body of the instrument for rhythmic accompaniment. Primarily following the standard twelve bar blues motif, and relying heavily upon the talking blues idiom, Hopkins’s stories dealt with the standard subjects of life in the south as a black man, but he usually did so with humor and a tongue-in-cheek approach to serious topics. His lyrics were full of double entendre, and he could make up a song on the spot. I saw him do it more than once.

Just like every love in one’s life still exists in our hearts forever, the influences that burden our souls do as well. A piece of Lightnin’ will live in me until the day I die.

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Another of the local haunts that Rick Daniels drug me to on a recent trip back home is a little hole in the wall on the south side of Houston called Mr. Gino's. Now Mr. Gino's is an honest to god juke joint. Located on Cullen Boulevard, a thoroughfare which used to be called "Old Chocolate Bayou Road" before the city incorporated the area and built an interstate loop to manage traffic back in the 1970's. Obviously, I got the title of the song by the same name from this street. It was one of those places my mother would never have wanted a suburban white boy to go. It wasn't pretty, but it was cool. Mr. Gino's serves up cold beer and wine in little bottles. You can get a set up if you bring your own liquor. On Sunday afternoons, Gino himself might whip up a pot of chicken necks with rice and gravy. On Sunday evenings, Mister I. J. Gosey takes the stage.

I.J. Gosey is a throwback to the Duke-Peacock days where he was a session bassist, and played on nearly every session done there during the late 50's and early 60's. Learning his six string craft while touring with Junior Parker, Gosey now plays an Ibanez hollow body through a no name amp, and makes the breeze stand still. A combination of blues and pop with a jazz feel. I.J. sounds like no one else I have ever heard. He and his little quartet can move through a George Benson-esque version of "The Thrill Is Gone" and then break into a rousing rockabilly version of "Round and Round." He does a chilling instrumental cover of "Whiter Shade of Pale", the old Procol Harum tune from the late Sixties. In my estimation, I.J. is one part Wes Montgomery, one part Chuck Berry, and one part B.B. King. I first heard I.J. at a place called C. Davis Bar-B-Q in the south Houston area known as Sunnyside. He can spin a melody like none I'd heard before, and not many I've heard since. As far as I know, I.J. is still at Mr. Gino's every Sunday evening.

I own my Houston blues education to a couple of primary sources. The Houston Blues Society promotes the history and continuance of the art form locally. As a small non-profit, they don't have deep pockets or a high profile, but they are a bunch of good folks who do what they can. My second source is Houston radio station KPFT. They play the blues every Sunday morning, and you can get a taste of everything from Leadbelly to Stevie Ray during their broadcasts. I may be

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crossing the line here and giving some folks a free plug, but these are both wonderful organizations and chock full of wonderful people. They deserve the publicity.

There are few other places where the blues are still played prevalently in and around Houston, including The Big Easy on Kirby Drive, Etta's Lounge on Scott Street near the University of Houston hosted on Sunday nights by saxophonist supreme Grady Gaines, and The Continental Club near downtown.

Like I had stated before, my grandfather's farm was directly adjacent to the Ohio River. In fact, both sets of grandparents lived in the vicinity of small Indiana riverside towns. I spent a great deal of time while visiting with them hanging out in proximity to the river. I marveled at the ferries and barges that traveled this waterway moving goods and people from place to place. It was an existence with which I was totally unfamiliar. The Judge's grandfather had spent some time as a riverboat captain, moving crops and manufactured goods upriver to Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, and machinery and household sundries from the cities back down into the surrounding farming communities. As a boy I listened to my grandfather retell the tales of these adventures. I was entranced by the stories and believed that making a living on the river was both a noble and romantic profession.

### **Mississippi Riverboat Baby**

“Mississippi River won't you be a good friend of mine.  
Take me to my baby and get me there on time.  
And if the river runs dry baby guess that means goodbye.

Floatin' down the river is a mighty fine sight to see.  
Floatin' down the river on my way to New Orleans.  
Well St. Louie was fine but it ain't no home for me.

Sittin' nice and easy in my easy chair.  
Nightly trips to Bourbon Street.  
Tell all the boys they'd better beware,  
'Cause there ain't gonna be no peace when I get there.”

By far the most endearing of these water craft were the old style steamships known as “paddlewheelers”, and more specifically, a ship called the Delta Queen.

Technically, the Delta Queen is a sternwheel steamboat, and is now a U.S. National Historic Landmark. Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, and Jimmy Carter all traveled aboard this majestic vessel. She is two hundred and eight five feet long and weights sixteen hundred and fifty tons. Her cross-compounded steam engines generate two thousand horsepower, which drives the stern mounted paddlewheel. She has the capacity to transport up to one hundred and seventy six passengers.

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In 1924, the Delta Queen and her sister ship the Delta King were purchased by the California Transportation Company and brought in pieces from the shipyard in Scotland to Stockton, California where they were assembled and used to provide ferry service between Sacramento and San Francisco. When a new highway was built in 1940, the ships were taken out of service. During World War II they were requisitioned by the U.S. Navy and utilized as military transports in San Francisco Bay. After the war the Delta Queen was purchased by a steamship company in Cincinnati and towed from California to Pittsburgh via the Panama Canal.

With a home port in Cincinnati, the Delta Queen traveled extensively on both the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and through their tributaries has had regularly scheduled stops from St. Paul, Minnesota to New Orleans.

“You can barely see the shoreline ‘neath the pale moonlight.  
Havin’ visions of my baby and how I’d hold her tight.  
‘Cause if you knew my baby Lord you’d think she’s out of sight.

She’ll fix me breakfast and bring it up to my bed.  
And when I’m worried she’ll ease my achin’ head.  
If this riverboat can’t take me home I might as well be dead.

The paddlewheel keeps movin’ on around and around  
Pushin’ us all along.  
Hope the captain’s goin’ full speed ahead  
So I can get back soon to the place where I belong.”

The concept of this ship conjured all sorts of fantasies in my mind. A time of gentleman gamblers with top hats and pocket watches. Show girls with ruffled dresses and exorbitant makeup. A rough and tumble crew who worked like crazy and played twice as hard. Straight whiskey, five card stud, and two shot Derringer pistols. A day when the west was still untamed and “civilization” was a relative term.

We didn’t see the Delta Queen very often, and when we did everyone stopped what they were doing and watched as she gracefully made her way up or down the river. And a sighting inevitably led to conversation later in the day, over dinner or at the local Farm Bureau.

“Mississippi River you’ve been a good friend of mine.  
You brought me to my baby and got me here on time.  
It’s been a mighty fine trio and I sure had a real good time.

Yes it’s been a real fine trip and I sure had a dog gone good time.”<sup>69</sup>

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As a teenager, I managed to stumble across a couple of the blues greats while attending concerts to see more current acts. Luther Allison played at a free outdoor show I attended when I was about seventeen. He was either the second or third act on a bill that included five bands I think. The headliner was a brand new band – Kansas. Another time, I went to visit my cousin Steve in Indianapolis and he got us tickets to see Eric Clapton at Market Square Arena. EC had Muddy Waters on tour with him and the old man ripped through versions of “Mannish Boy” and “Hoochie Coochie Man”. Clapton joined him on a rendition of “Got My Mojo Workin’”. Every time I see Eric, without fail I mention that show to him and thank him for enlightening the rest of the world to Mister McKinley Morganfield, a.k.a. Muddy Waters, and his part in the legacy of the blues.

I saw a few other living legends during my time in Houston. Buddy Guy, Etta James, Taj Mahal, and B.B. King (a couple of times) just to name a few. I’ve met numerous more since then at blues festivals around the country, or an occasional session, like the one I had the pleasure of doing with John Lee Hooker.

I got a call one day about a year and a half ago from one of John Lee Hooker’s people. John Lee was in Memphis working on a new record, and apparently something was said about bringing in a harp player for the sessions. Now I’m sure there were a dozen or more musicians in the Memphis area that could have done that gig (and probably most better than I – including John Lee himself), but John Lee remembered a session I did with Jimmy Vaughn and Vince Gill at one of the small venues at the Chicago Blues Festival a year or so earlier, and he wanted me. I was more than happy to fly into Memphis for a long weekend and lay down tracks on three or four of his new songs. We did the sessions fairly quickly on the first day I was there -a Thursday as I recall- and spent the rest of the weekend talking about blues history and the musicians that John Lee had known. One thing that is consistent with the musicians of this genre and era – they are almost all very opinionated, and more than willing to share their feelings about certain individuals and influences. I remember that a major portion of our discussion one day was regarding Elmore James, Sonny Boy Williamson II, and whether or not James or Robert Johnson had written the James hit song “Dust My Broom.” I had a blast that weekend, and learned a lot as well. Doing “call and response” with John Lee Hooker on a couple of talking blues tunes was both a challenge and an exhilarating experience. I left hoping he would call again. When that album came out, John Lee sent me a signed and framed copy of the cover. As I sit in my study at The Inn it prominently adorns the wall above my desk, between a picture of my children and an original John Lennon pencil drawing that Leah purchased at an auction in New York and gave to me for Christmas the previous year.

The harmonica is probably my best instrument. Not that I’m a John Popper, Charlie Musselwhite, Magic Dick, or someone of that class. But I do play a pretty mean harp. My first attraction to the harmonica came from the influences of Bob Dylan and Neil Young. I’d hang one around my neck and use it on the folk based

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songs I was writing early on, or cover tunes like “Heart of Gold” and “All Along the Watchtower”. I also thought the sound Robert Plant got on the Zeppelin albums was really cool – lots of balls and reverb. The watershed event was listening to an old Sonny Boy Williamson record while in someone’s room at college. I think it was the song “Good Morning, School Girl” to be specific. Now that guy had it going on. From that point forward, I carried a harp with me and played while walking to class, waiting in line to eat at the dormitory cafeteria, or playing Frisbee in the commons. I must admit that the practice was pretty damn annoying to others, but I didn’t care – I was honing my craft. “Mainline Barbara” from the debut album features the harp. It has been used on a number of songs since then, including “The Pennsylvania Turnpike”, “My Candy”, and “Howlin”.

I want to start here with a confession. Well, a confession of sorts. I have never, ever put a needle in my arm (or any other part of my body for that matter). Not once. Never. The whole idea of intravenous drug use just scares me to death. In fact, within the band, I don’t know that any of us have ever injected drugs. That’s not to say that it’s never happened, but if it has I am not aware. Others in and around the organization, yes absolutely (and I won’t name names). But not within ZigZag proper. We’ve collectively done lots of dumb and crazy things; using a needle was just not among them. In my mind, this is the line you draw between being a drug user and being a junkie.

Barbara Flores was certainly in the latter category. I met Barbara at Hilborn. She was a secretary in the sales department, and good at her job. Cordial and accommodating with clients on the phone, and excellent at keeping the inside sales force focused and organized. But on the weekends, she was a mess.

### **Mainline Barbara**

“Mainline Barbara I’d hate to fill your shoes.  
Mainline Barbara drive away your blues.  
It’s easy to say girl, but everybody pays their dues.

Shakin’ loose from work it really ain’t no sin.  
Flippin’ off the boys with that sly little grin.  
Can’t do it once so you’d have to again and again.”

The strange thing was that most of the folks at Hilborn knew about her addiction. Even the boss, Harry Hilborn, knew what was going on. The first time I became aware of Barbara and her “monkey” was one Friday night when ZigZag wasn’t playing and I was working late. I saw someone in a vehicle in the back of the parking lot next to the manufacturing facility. The car was running, and the woman inside was just sitting there. She was dead still. I watched her for about five minutes and she still hadn’t moved. As I began to approach the car, the shop superintendent yelled and stopped me in my tracks. It was “just Barbara” he said,

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and to leave her alone. I was told that she often got a fix right after work on Friday nights, and would be fine once the initial rush wore off. Apparently, it wasn't a big deal. I asked Eric about Barbara later that weekend, and he confirmed what the super had told me. I saw Barbara early the following Monday morning, and she appeared to be right as rain. I thought the whole thing was weird.

“Crank up the engine she’s getting’ ready to soar.  
Down on her hands and knees lookin’ for the floor.  
Swear you’ll never do it again but keep on beggin’ for more.

Mainline Barbara how you hate to lose.  
Mainline Barbara out on a pleasure cruise.  
Gonna read your name someday girl in the local news.

Shinin’ brighter than a city light.  
Look out honey better hold on tight.  
Guess you think you’ve nothing better to do.  
Child I hear the devil’s been foolin’ with you.”

The next time I encountered Barbara and her addiction was about a month later. I'd been invited by a co-worker named Bobby to a cookout at his apartment. He asked me to bring my guitar and play a few songs. He was smoking a brisket and said there would be plenty of cold beer. Part way through the evening I needed to take a leak. I went into Bobby's apartment, and the bathroom was occupied. I hung out for a few minutes but there was no movement. I went back outside and let Bobby know that something might be going on and perhaps he would want to check. I REALLY needed to go now. We walked inside and he knocked on the bathroom door. No answer. He tried the doorknob. It was unlocked. Bobby opened the door, and there was Barbara, sitting on the stool with the rubber hose still tied around her arm. She was out cold. Her rig and kit were lying on the floor beside her. Bobby just depressed the lock and closed the door. I went in search of some bushes. Thirty minutes later Barbara rejoined the party, as if nothing had happened. I heard from someone that Bobby had read her the riot act Monday morning.

“Don’t know if you’re crazy buy you’re surely from that school.  
Burnin’ and burnin’ and still try’n to be real cool.  
Best take care gal ‘fore you end up somebody’s fool.

Mainline Barbara sure hope you get your fill.  
Mainline Barbara you know you never will.  
No use looking up now ‘cause you’re headin’ straight down hill.”<sup>70</sup>

At some point after Eric and I had left Hilborn, Barbara showed up at one of our gigs at Fitzgerald's. When the show was over she was so out of it that she fell in

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the parking lot, scraped her elbow and knees on the gravel and couldn't get up. She was crying and people were laughing at her. I was pissed and felt sorry for Barbara. She had an addiction and needed help. I doubt she ever got any.

I get a lot of different responses when talking to friends and family, some even knowledgeable insiders, about their perception of the blues and its impact upon popular music. I had one such chat recently with a fella named Jeremy who runs a small diner in Topanga Canyon and makes a mean B.L.T. sandwich. Jeremy knows enough about the blues, and music in general, to know a good guitar solo or a good harp player when he hears one. B.B. King came on the radio station we were listening to, and Jeremy made some comment about how the songs of this ilk always seemed depressing to him, and how could anyone listen to music all day long that made you feel like that. I told Jeremy that he was missing the point. In order to resolve your problems, you first have to recognize them. What you hear in these tunes is the acknowledgement that what you feel is real, and it's not always going to be a pretty sight. But you can't fix what you don't first come to know. That's the true power of the blues. That honesty, bare to the bone and sometimes very painful, is the basis for healing. Don't believe me? Jeremy didn't either at first. Then I thought perhaps I could get Little Milton to convince him.

“Since you left me with the blues,  
It was the last thing I thought I could use.  
But I'm glad that you left me,  
Left me with the blues.  
If you hadn't given me the blues,  
I wouldn't find myself someone sweet as you.”<sup>71</sup>

It's like my grandma use to tell us, when life gives you lemons that's the time to make lemonade. I took Jeremy out to the car and played him this tune. When it finished I could tell from the look on his face that he now understood what I was trying to say.

Let me make a definitive statement here. I am not, nor have I ever been a violent or aggressive man. I've only been involved in two fights in my entire life that I can remember, and both times it was a matter of self-defense. I was not the provoker on either occasion. I have never owned a gun. Now please don't read into this statement the notion that I am a zealous anti-gun advocate either. I am around them all the time. Pee-Tee has a 9 millimeter Beretta in a holster under his jacket at nearly all times, and Rick Daniels and others on the ZigZag payroll have carry permits as well. Jimmy Butler has a number of weapons, all locked in a gun safe at the deer lease in Texas, and the Judge has always had guns in the house and probably in his chambers at the courthouse as well. I've been around guns for most of my life. In fact, while a youth in the Boy Scouts, I was considered an excellent marksman with a twenty two caliber rifle, a fact I attribute primarily to excellent eye sight and a steady hand. But I probably haven't fired a

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weapon in twenty five years. I don't enjoy hunting, and would certainly rather buy what I eat than kill it. When it comes to pistols, I subscribe to Ronnie Van Zant's philosophy:

“Hand guns are made for killin’  
Ain’t no good for nothin’ else.”<sup>72</sup>

With that said, there was one event in my life which could have, given the opportunity, led to my rationalization for using violence.

The date was December 9, 1980. I was working at Hilborn Industries at the time, and arrived to work as usual (late of course). I had no more that walked in the shop door when a very bewildered looking Eric Anderson approached me. “Some asshole murdered John Lennon last night” were his exact words.

As the reality of that statement rattled around in my brain, my first reaction, and indeed still my initial response when reflecting back upon that day right now, was one of sadness and disbelief. Why would anyone want to do such a thing? This was, after all, the Beatle who espoused “All You Need is Love” and “Give Peace a Chance”. Sure, John had a sharp and acerbic wit, had made the unpopular comments about being more popular than Jesus, and it was my impression that he suffered fools lightly, but where was the motive? In general, I find it difficult to rationalize violence as the end to any means, and in this case I was utterly befuddled. What could anyone gain from killing a musician, even one of Mr. Lennon's stature? Earn P.T. Barnum's infamous fifteen minutes of fame? As the day slowly progressed, my thoughts were preoccupied with sadness for Yoko (who I never really liked or respected) and their young son Sean. I wondered how this news had impacted Paul, George, and Ringo – and would they have any public comments. Then I started reflecting on the music. The body of work with both the Fabs and as a solo artist. Then after a self-imposed five year hiatus, a new record “Double Fantasy” and more on the way. Suddenly silenced. And my overriding question was “why”?

Evening came and we gathered at the practice facility. A portable television had been set up in one of the empty spaces in the building and someone brought in a cooler full of beer. There were musicians standing around, as if waiting for the other shoe to drop. We pretty much all had the same questions, and the same look of disbelief. We watched and listened as Dan Rather gave us the still quite unbelievable details. And we finally had a name to put with the crime. Mark David Chapman. The media sketch was painting him as a nobody. A drifter. A disenchanting soul. How was now being detailed in graphic clarity as well. Four hollow point thirty eight slugs in the back at close range. John didn't have a chance – dead before they could even get him to the hospital.

By this point I was on my third beer, and even R.L. had a cold one in his hand. It was obvious we would be making no music that night. One of my nicknames

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back in those days was “Wally”. I had a black Rickenbacker 325S and even sometimes wore round granny sunglasses on stage. I was doing my best to channel the Walrus and that night my heart was in pieces.

The more alcohol I consumed, the angrier I got. How dare that “son-of-a-bitch-Chapman”, which became my only reference to the man from that point forward, take it upon himself to determine the fate of such an inspirational human being. Even to this day some fifteen years later I can still feel the rage that I engineered that night. My muscles tighten, and my teeth clench. And I made a solemn promise to myself and the world in my state of intoxicated mourning. Justice could be served very simply. Give me fifteen minutes locked in a room with that SOB and a baseball bat. I’d show him what “Instant Karma” feels like. Chapman plead guilty to the crime and was given a sentence of twenty years to life. A memo to the New York State Board of Pardons and Parole: don’t you ever let him out of prison, unless you want to see a public lynching.

“With a Twist” was released by Capitol on April 15, 1995 and the Beefeaters toured for five weeks in April and May in support of the project, some nights with Jerry and the Dawg, other nights without one or both of them. R.L. sat in on two different occasions for Big Bob, who was not well for most of the tour but refused to stay on the sidelines except for the days he couldn’t walk.

Our band mate and friend Jerry Garcia checked in and out of rehab a couple of times that summer. He died of a heart attack on August 9, 1995. Glenn, Tiny and I attended the funeral in Belvedere, California three days later. Big Bob was too sick to join us.

On the ride back south to Topanga Canyon, I began reflecting back on the first time I had the pleasure of seeing Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead live - pun intended. It was in October, 1976. My cousin Steve was a freshman at Indiana University at the time, so I drove my mom’s Audi LS 150 (I had crashed her Volkswagen sedan into a snow drift the previous winter) up to the campus in Bloomington. We partied in his dorm for a couple of days and then drove the hour and a half to Indianapolis for the concert. It was a magical night. I don’t remember what combination of substances we used that evening, but they certainly did the job. The drugs were always good in Bloomington. Several of Steve’s friends from IU were also at the show and when we arrived at Market Square Arena seating on the floor was about half full. Not wanting to be stuck in the stands, and also hoping to gain a vantage point as close to the stage as possible, we devised a plan. There were folding chairs set up on the back half of the floor, with a festival style open area right in front of the stage. About a dozen of us gathered by the mixing console and one by one we went to the back of the room and each collected an unoccupied chair. We built our own row to the right of the sound man, who as I remember was a bit unnerved by this process at first, until someone in the party lit up a joint and shared with him. We spent a good

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portion of the concert standing on those chairs, about twenty five feet from the stage.

The band was absolutely on that night. I saw the Dead a couple of other times in the late 70's, and both times they were more "distracted" for lack of a better term. Lots of time between selections spent talking on stage (and I would later find out from Phil Lesh that most of this was wasted arguing about what song to play next), and at a show in Bloomington a year or so later I swear Jerry smoked a joint after every tune. But not this night. The music and the energy just flowed from song to song to song. The second big thing about this show in Indy was the material included in the set list. Perhaps my favorite Dead album is "From the Mars Hotel". They played three tunes from that 1974 release during this show: "Scarlet Begonias", "Ship of Fools", and "U.S. Blues" was the encore. Add to that a couple of other personal favorites, "Friend of the Devil" and "Franklin's Tower", and you have the ingredients for what I would consider a near perfect list of their best material. I really felt I was on the same wavelength as the band that night. Maybe it was just the drugs.

I'll never be accused of being a particularly religious or spiritual man. Emotional, yes. Sensitive and compassionate, absolutely. But not a devotee of organized religion in any formal sense. Even though raised as a Baptist, with a mother and grandmother who both played piano at Sunday morning services, the functional nature of church is absolutely lost on me. From my perspective, church can be a baseball stadium, a mountain trail, or a lonesome stretch of highway. To me, it's all about finding a place that creates a sense of safety and solitude. A place where "oneness" exists. But like Mr. Dylan says:

"You gotta serve somebody."<sup>73</sup>

I first met Scott Bauer at the relief concert in Reseda after the Northridge Earthquake. We chatted backstage before the event, and there were a couple of follow up phone conversations regarding assistance in the community. Never once did Scott mention that he was a pastor. I got that information from Greg Townsend when I commented one day that Scott and I had talked. Not that it mattered in the least – I genuinely liked the man.

Scott Bauer was the assistant minister at The Church On The Way in Van Nuys, California - one of the largest churches in the country. He was also the son in law of the senior pastor and founder of the church, Jack Hayford. Jack was well known in the Los Angeles community, not only as a member of the clergy, but also an accomplished author and songwriter. The Church On The Way is technically a Pentecostal church, which brought back all of my childhood stereotypes of snake handling, speaking in tongues, and public healings. A far cry from the traditional (and boring) Baptist upbringing that I was familiar with. I shared these concerns with Greg and Patty, was assured that this church was none of those things, and that I would be surprised by the environment. Scott Bauer

called again about a week later, and I confronted him about why he hadn't mentioned his vocation previously. There was a brief pause on the other end of the line, and then a simple question – "Would it have mattered?" I was prepared for this tact, and in my heart had already reconciled the answer – "No, not at all." Over the course of the conversation, Scott told me a couple of stories about members of their congregation who had been impacted by the earthquake, and the role Love's Labour had played in returning their lives to some semblance of normalcy. I was humbled by his words, and appreciative that he could help me connect the work we were doing with the impact that it had. He continued this insight by letting me know that they were going to have a special service the following Sunday night, specifically to talk about community impact in the aftermath of the disaster. He thought I might like to hear some more of the stories. I agreed on one condition – that neither I nor ZigZag would be mentioned or recognized. Scott also suggested that he and his wife Rebecca would like to have dinner with Leah and I some time. I said that I thought that would be fine, but that I needed to consult with my wife. Leah was fine with the notion as well.

Scott Bauer and I occasionally attend public events together, like a charity function or a Lakers' game. We are quite the odd couple – the rock and roll superstar and the pastor of a mega church. Truthfully, neither of us care much what people may think about our relationship. I guess one of the common attributes of a preacher and a musician are our thick skins when it comes to criticism. I'm proud to consider Scott Bauer as a friend. Leah and Rebecca have a growing relationship as well. Although far from a "regular" at The Church On The Way, I've been there a few times, mostly sliding in the rear of the sanctuary as the service is just getting started. Sometimes with my wife and daughter, but mostly by myself. It certainly doesn't hurt my opinion of the place that they have a drummer on platform and the music is a far cry from the Baptist hymnal of my youth. It was at one of these services that I had the opportunity to hear a speaker who would have a direct impact on both my career and my life.

Dr. Jeffrey Seif is a most interesting man. Jeff is a Bible professor and a former law enforcement officer. As a Messianic Jew, he has a very unique perspective on biblical history and religious law. With a background steeped in the teachings and culture of Judaism, Dr. Seif refers to the Holy Bible simply as "the literature". I used this reference as the title, and the point of view, for a new solo project. Based upon a set of songs whose collective lyric was drawn from my perception of Christian teaching and interpretation of the written word, these were tunes accumulated over a number of years. Neither a commercial success nor well received by either the mainstream or Christian press, it seemed no one liked this project. But I really didn't care. Using a number of different friends and session musicians, "The Literature" was more about personal healing, and "getting back on the horse." And through the process I came to rely upon the Bible as a resource for great story lines and a unique look inside the human condition. Some of my closest friends have told me in private that these lyrics are among the best I've ever written.

Having previously espoused my love for all things Scottish and for the town of Dunkeld in particular, one of the songs from “The Literature” delves into the history and significance of this little burg. The home of our friends Dougie and Jennifer MacLean, Dunkeld is located about fifteen miles north of the city of Perth in the Scottish Highlands, alongside the River Tay and adjacent to the village of Birnam. Next to the river on the west end of town are the remnants of Dunkeld Cathedral.

### **Dunkeld**

“From a tiny Perthshire village,  
Back in sixteen hundred and eighty nine.  
A stand was made for all that’s holy,  
On a day the sun refused to shine.  
Oh-Oh, in a land born out of revolution.  
Oh-Oh, and a time not fit for make believe.

The lines were drawn in Killiecrackie,  
As homage to both God and king.  
Clansmen poised proud with conviction,  
Not knowing what the morrow brings.  
Oh-Oh, as blood flowed down the Scottish hillside.  
Oh-Oh, from the banks of the River Tay they cried.

Dunkeld, there is a price to pay for freedom.  
Dunkeld, and a cause worth more than life.  
All the differences between us,  
Will never break the bond we share.  
Dunkeld.”

Construction of the cathedral was started in the year 1260 and took nearly two hundred and fifty years to complete, lending the construction to a number of different types of architecture, including Gothic and Norman. Although mostly in ruins, portions of the building are still in use today - church services are held there during the period between Easter and Pentecost, but there is no heat or air conditioning. The entire site is open to the public and you are free to walk the grounds and adjoining cemetery.

“The battle broke beneath the sunrise,  
And lasted through the waking day.  
Before the townsfolk knew what happened,  
The home we’d made was burnt away.  
Oh-Oh, to pillage in the name of reformation.  
Oh-Oh, now just a smoldering memory remains of

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Dunkeld, there is a price to pay for freedom.  
Dunkeld, and a cause worth more than life.  
Even the worst of circumstances,  
Cannot determine who we are.  
Dunkeld.”

The song “Dunkeld” has a unique sound due in part to the tuning I utilized. Technically the guitar is in an open C mode (C-G-C-G-C-E, from low string to high string), I prefer to call this tuning “Dougie C”, as I learned it from Mr. MacLean and he uses it on a number of his songs. Some of the chord structures also come from recordings by Stephen Stills, particularly the CSN song “Love the One You’re With”, which employs a similar string alignment. Because of the open nature of the instrument, there is a droning sound that is prevalent throughout the piece. Glenn Martin does the mandolin parts in the intro and verses and the dobro solo in the middle eight. A brother-sister duo known as “The Kimbroughs” provide the backing vocals.

“Three hundred years have gone now,  
Since that great and awful day.  
The only memory of her heroes,  
Are unmarked stones on narrow graves.  
Oh-Oh, and the songs that will not let them die in vain.  
Oh-Oh, so to the glory of the Lord we sing.

Dunkeld, there is a price to pay for freedom.  
Dunkeld, and a cause worth more than life.  
Dunkeld, fight with the love of Christ that’s in you.  
Dunkeld, we must overcome this strife.  
They can put our bodies six feet under,  
But the faith will ever stand.  
Dunkeld.”<sup>74</sup>

The lyrical idea comes from the point of view of Dunkeld’s citizenry during the Jacobite invasion in the late 1600’s. Although technically a religious uprising, in the Scottish Highlands the fight was more about inter-clan politics and territorial issues. The Cameronian 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment (a Scottish segment of the British Army), positioned itself inside the cathedral as the town had no wall to use in its defense, and held off the Jacobites that day, but much of the town was destroyed. There are still holes visible in the exterior walls of the east tower of the cathedral from the muskets fired during the battle.

No matter where you start your search for the meaning of the blues, we all end up in the same place. The root of the blues and how it is embraced by the rock and roll community always traces back to the same man. Robert Johnson.

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The legacy of Robert Leroy Johnson is actually, I believe, two stories. The first is that of Johnson the musician and recording artist. His body of work consists entirely of two recording sessions, one in a hotel room in San Antonio, Texas in November, 1936 and the second in a makeshift Dallas, Texas studio seven months later. Twenty nine songs, and second takes on about a dozen of these. That's it. Only one, "Terraplane Blues" sold as many as five thousand recordings. He received no acclaim on the national level and even regionally in the blues hotbeds of Chicago and Memphis Robert Johnson was only considered a marginal talent. Dead at twenty seven years of age in 1938, it would be nearly thirty years and an ocean away from his Mississippi home before his genius would be recognized and appreciated. That's when the burgeoning British music scene, which learned the roots of American musical culture primarily from imported recordings, "rediscovered" Robert Johnson. According to Led Zeppelin front man Robert Plant, all of us in the rock and roll business owe our very existence to the work of this wandering blues minstrel. Four of Johnson's tunes: "Sweet Home Chicago", "Cross Road Blues", "Hellhound on My Trail", and "Love in Vain" are recognized as being at the root of the entire genre.

Johnson's live performance career consisted mostly of informal street corner gatherings, jam sessions in backwoods juke joints, and the occasional Saturday night dance or social event. He was a wanderer who moved from town to town, and there is no indication that his life was ever settled, either as a child or into adulthood. He spent parts of his existence in many different locations, staying with a number of various women, and sometimes even changed his name as it suited his purposes. He could pick up tunes many times from a single listening, and performed popular songs of the day as well as blues standards and a few original compositions. Early influences include blues legend Son House and his musical partner Willie Brown, the latter being mentioned in the lyric of Johnson's "Cross Road Blues." House remembered Robert Johnson as a decent harmonica player, but not much of a guitarist. His vocal style is attributed to the works of Kokomo Arnold, a Chicago bootlegger and blues artist who recorded on the Decca label. Johnson's style, although now considered revisionist, wasn't consistent with that of most of his Delta Blues contemporaries. In fact, his impact on the evolution of that genre would be considered minimal.

So what makes this itinerant vagabond bluesman such a focal point of conversations regarding the history of rock and roll? A man who was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as an early influence, and whom my friend Eric Clapton has called "the most important blues singer that ever lived." I believe the answer lies in the second story, that of Robert Johnson the legend.

"Selling your soul to the Devil" is a phrase that has been used in the Mississippi Delta for over a hundred years. All manner of disaster, both natural and man-made, have been attributed to this phenomenon. The most common references revolve around activities that are secular in nature, and not within the "will of

## Long Live Rock And Roll

God.” In the case of Robert Johnson, the legend chronicles that he met the Devil, and traded his soul for the ability to play the guitar.

Johnson’s talent on the guitar stems primarily from a relationship with a musician named Ike Zimmerman, who was known to frequent graveyards during the witching hours of the night, and it is rumored that he and Johnson both achieved their musical talents supernaturally. Son House, when interviewed many years later about Robert Johnson’s transformation from a below average performer into a master still insisted on attributing it to this pact with Satan.

According to the legend, Johnson’s desire to become a great blues musician lead him to a crossroad where he met with a large black man who took Johnson’s guitar, tuned it, played a few songs and returned it to the owner. Mirroring the German legend of Faust, Robert Johnson then exchanged his soul for the ability to create the blues music for which he became famous. It is uncertain if Johnson himself ever propagated this myth, although his song – later recorded by Clapton and Cream as simply “Crossroads” certainly aligns the story with his presence at a similar location.

Even Robert Johnson’s death is encased in mystery. At the time of his demise in August of 1938, he was playing in and around the Greenwood, Mississippi area. There are differing accounts, but the basic story is that he was making advances to the wife of a juke joint owner who became jealous and laced Johnson’s whiskey with strychnine. He died three days later. To compound this saga, there are three different markers for possible burial sites, all in the same general area. One each was placed by Columbia and Sony records respectively, and the third by the cemetery owner.

While on a tour stop in Memphis a few of us took a ride down into the Mississippi Delta and Clarksdale, Mississippi. We cruised around the town, went to a museum, and then in search of Robert Johnson’s graves. We even got out of the car and walked around at the corner of highways 59 and 123 in northeastern Mississippi. So I’ve been down to the Crossroads, but didn’t meet anybody there.

In the long run we all make our deals with the devil. Every single one of us. I can almost hear Duane Allman’s slide guitar screaming from beyond the grave.

“Like I’ve been tied to the whippin’ post,  
Good Lord, I feel like I’m dyin’.”<sup>75</sup>