

4) “Connie Legs”

There was a break in the tour in mid-December for three weeks. Everyone spread to the wind. Leah and I went first to Kentucky to visit my family, and then to Texas to spend Christmas with Jimmy and Janet and the Butler family. Two days later we flew back to Los Angeles. We were to take possession of the house and property in Topanga Canyon on December 31, 1983.

That year we bought the deer lease for Jimmy. (Leah and I would conceive our first child in the cabin on that property) And I “stole” the Judge’s eight year old Lincoln and slid a new Jaguar XKE into its place in the garage. It was there for two days before dad needed something in the garage and saw it. He was pissed and wanted the Lincoln back. My mother told him she would gladly take the Jag off his hands. He never said another word. (Mom was still in the process of picking out a vehicle. She wanted an American made car. I was trying to talk her into a BMW.) My dad still drives the old Lincoln back and forth to the courthouse. He says it’s “more dignified” for a Judge. But the Jaguar is often seen at the country club when he’s having lunch or playing tennis.

After Leah and I finished at the title office, we went back to the townhouse in Santa Monica to finish packing. Since the Topanga house had been unoccupied for over six months, it was going to take a few days to get all of the utilities turned back on. So we got two suites at the Beverly Hilton (one for us and one for our faithful companion Pee-Tee and his wife Gladys) and stayed three nights. We were incredibly pampered, and basically treated like royalty. We never get to spend any “alone” time with the Browns, and we all had a wonderful “breather” together. Leah and I moved into the front bedroom of the house and started to try to turn the future studio into a quasi home. We would be living there for at least a year. Steph moved in the following day.

Construction had already begun on the studio. Mike had contracts signed and ready to go, so the contractor started taking out walls about two hours after the ownership papers were signed. We wanted, and needed, the studio up and running as soon as possible. We wanted to record our next project “Architect of Light” in The Stitch.

The excavation and dozing in preparation for pouring the foundation for the “Pop-Op Palace” also began the morning we moved in. Mike was on top of this as well. Just a “steel barn” more or less, the walls, roof, and all of the electrical and plumbing would be completed by the time the tour ended.

With all of the new building, and the growing need for help to run the “ZigZag Empire” Mike called another U.K. friend who was also an accountant. His name was Tom Walling, but since junior high he’d been know as “Tiny”. Tom is two years younger than I am, so I didn’t know him very well. Greg’s brother Todd

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knew him better and conveyed the stories. Tom got the nickname “Tiny” because of the size (or lack thereof) of his feet. He wore a boys size 12 shoe. His feet weren’t even as large as Leah’s, and she wears a women’s size 4. Mike remembered that while at U.K. Tiny lived in the used record store and had one of the best collections of vinyl on campus. He was also seriously into computers, and was apparently a legend in his hometown for a place called “The Basement”. According to Todd, “The Basement” was a haven for young people who wanted a safe place to party. It actually was the basement of Dick and Linda Walling’s home. It hadn’t been used for anything but storage in years, and was filthy. The summer after Tom graduated from high school he and a couple of his friends spent a Saturday cleaning one side of the enormous, but unfinished room. It had heat and air conditioning, and a working half bathroom. Tom moved in a couch and a couple of chairs from someone’s lake house, relocated the stereo from his bedroom upstairs, and built a bar. By the following summer he and some friends were playing in a band and practicing in the basement. Numerous “fans” would come by to listen to the music and party in private. Tom’s parents put up with a lot. There was a semi-private entrance to the downstairs off the back of the house, and people were coming and going at all hours of the day and night. It became a popular spot to transact drug deals, and pretty soon the behavior became outrageous as well. People stealing the Walling’s food and cigarettes. Using the gas grill on the back patio right beneath the master bedroom window at 3:00 a.m. to cook steaks. Once Linda Walling came downstairs to fix coffee early in the morning and found a couple having sex on her dining room floor. Like I said, the Wallings tolerated a lot. But they knew where their son was most of the time, and at least he wasn’t out drinking and driving the streets. They probably saved a few folks from being arrested and possibly an accident or two. Kids are going to do what kids do. I think they should be commended for allowing a safe place for Tom and his friends to engage in dangerous behavior. “Tiny” is a talented guy, if just a little crazy. Sounded a bit like the rest of us. He is a hell of a bean counter. If Mike trusted him, then so did I. I’m sure Tiny has saved ZigZag more money than we have paid him over the years.

We (Read: LEAH and the Housing Subcommittee) found and contracted with an architect to design and prepare construction plans for “The Inn”. With feedback from almost everyone we encountered (including a few total strangers), Leah and her mother were making a “Room List” and pulling together décor plans for the different sections of the house. Everyone contributed and it was part of nearly every conversation. I was involved, but not too vocally. As long as I had a bed with soft sheets, a hot shower, and a little bit of space to store my crap, I’d be good. I was going to spend most of my time at either The Stitch or The Palace anyway. Some way to cook a frozen pizza would be good too (a pizza oven was in the plans for one of the kitchens).

Here’s the current (and ever changing) room list:

“The La Vonda Inn”

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Ten Guest Rooms with full bath.
Two kitchens spread between them.
Two have additional sitting rooms and four share a balcony.
Master Bedroom
Master Bath
Mistress Bath/Salon
Master Closet
Two Mistress Closets
Kids Rooms
Baby/Children Bathroom
Twelve car garage
Four Guest Houses.
Huge patio that connects all buildings
With a pool, pool house (with two additional bedrooms a bath and a kitchenette),
hot tub
Entry and Great Room
Formal Dining
Family Dining
Breakfast Room
Master Kitchen
Private Kitchen and dining room
Laundry Facilities
Maid's Quarters
Six Bath Rooms
TV Room
Game Room
A/V Room
ZigZag Room
Smoke Room
Home Studio – “The Needle”
Instrument Vault
Tennis Court

Just a few highlights/thoughts:

If this looks and sounds ostentatious, well that's because it is ostentatious. Nobody needs this much house. But this place had to be more like a five star hotel than a home. We have a “home” actually, but it's a subsection of the overall structure. We were even having a “panic wall” installed so that if needed Leah and I can isolate our space from the rest of the house. We did start to have some conversations privately about the fact that we would probably never be alone in this place, and that we should start looking for a retreat somewhere.

There are no statues or fountains. No plans for oriental rugs or custom wall papers. This place is big, but the design is very simple. Very earthy. We want it

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to FEEL like home to our family, friends, and guests. I hate it when you go someplace and then after taking the tour realize that you don't want to use the bathroom for fear of peeing on some 18th Century tile imported from Italy. We didn't want either a set of rules or operating instructions to live in the place. Light switches turned off the lights, and there was nice, but replaceable carpet on the floors. No gimmicks or gadgets in the primary living areas. Just "livable" space.

I certainly don't need a twelve car garage. I'm not a "car guy". I leased a Mercedes for the first four years we lived in Los Angeles. I like nice cars, but at the end of the day all they really are to me is a transportation device. Get me from point A to point B. Do I like my current "mode of transportation" better than when I cruised around Pasadena, Texas in a beat up blue Pinto squareback ??? What do you think ??? I'm just saying that I'm not in love with automobiles. R.L. on the other hand buys a new Camaro every year. He has several of them now. Has a building just for his cars. Anyway, the garage at The Inn is really more about guests and other stuff.

The entire bottom floor is just one big McDonald's Playplace for adults. From the patio that surrounds the pool are a number of large sliding glass doors that lead into the Game Room. There were plans for a regulation pool table, ping pong, table shuffleboard, pin ball machines, we even joked about putting in a bowling alley. Off to one side was a bar and lounge (with a grill and kitchen setup for sandwiches and burgers) and on the other side was the A/V Room (early on we called it the Movie Room) with a large screen projector and surround sound stereo. Behind that was the ZigZag Room. We wanted this room to be a place to put "things". Mementos and pictures and awards – all behind glass. Just some soft chairs and a couple of tables. A nice place to sit and chat and enjoy a cold beverage. And I'm guessing that I don't have to explain the need for the Smoke Room (with it's state of the art ventilation system).

I was told to budget \$5 million. The Judge said to double that. We were going to build one hell of a house.

The last of the construction related projects was more personal. I sold Pee Tee and Gladys Brown an acre in the front corner of the property, nearest the road. Once electrical and plumbing was pulled, Pee Tee had a double wide trailer installed while he and his wife planned their own dream home.

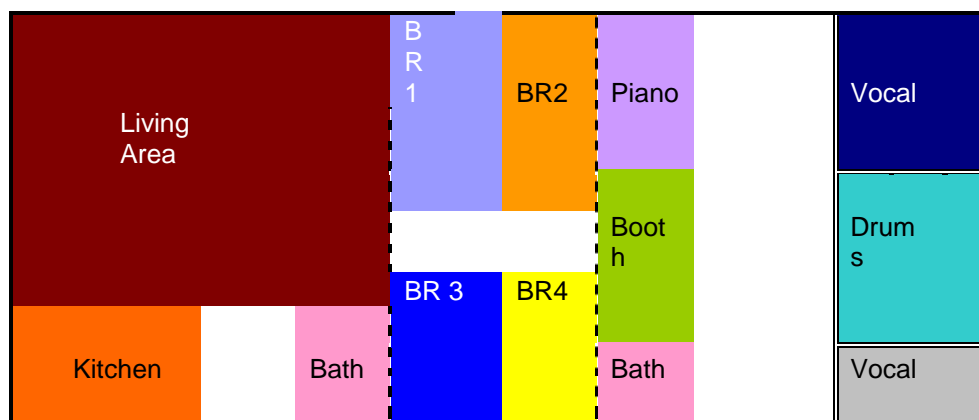
Ace Trucking went well above and beyond all expectation assisting us with all of this movement. To my knowledge, we never received a bill for the move from Santa Monica. And they secured storage for a bunch of equipment at an incredibly reasonable cost. They had to be making some cash somehow with our operation, but if anything illegal or questionable was going on, we sure couldn't catch them at it. One of the movers tried to hit on Leah, who came a little

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unhinged and wanted the guy fired. I did the next best thing and took that opportunity to suggest lunch, and we departed instead.

For that first week, there were multiple furniture deliveries to The Stitch every day. Beds, dressers, tables, lamps, a dining room set, sofas and lounge chairs. My contribution – the biggest television set I could find.

The existing building, which was part home and part construction site, was a ranch style house and basically a big rectangle. It was forty feet wide and right at one hundred feet long. We basically split it up into three sections: Living area, bedrooms, and studio.



When the design phase of the Pop-Op staging was about to get started, Greg made some phone calls, and suddenly we were overwhelmed with offers from all sorts of structural, mechanical, and electrical engineers. A few guys came out and spent a week and we discussed the basic concepts. We were going to need to hire a local firm to create the production drawings and investigate the possibilities of obtaining patents for some of the designs. The intellectual property needed to belong to the corporation.

As we were about to leave to head back out in January to finish the U.S. tour, Greg's friends moved in. They were there primarily to create preliminary construction drawings for the Pop-Op set. One of the fellows, a guy named Marty from Madison, Wisconsin, was a construction engineer with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (and a former classmate of Greg's at Austin Peay). He was there to design the forms and oversee the pouring of several interior concrete "walls" for the drum and vocal booths in the studio. Three large drafting tables and a number of other copying and binding machines were delivered the day before we left. These were a bunch of bright young men and women. In their real lives, they were designing and constructing skyscrapers and nuclear plants. All we had was three big circles that needed to turn in unison (and hopefully not

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fall over and kill one of us). Mere child's play for this group of "brainiacs". One of the engineers, a guy named Kent from Illinois, had brought along his kid brother "Ollie".

Oliver "Ollie" Harrelson was a nineteen year old junior at Rose Hulman Technical Institute in Terre Haute, Indiana majoring in structural engineering. Ollie had a 4.0 GPA, marginal social graces, and an appetite for fried pies and Dr. Pepper. Ollie was a geek with a capital "G". He was also a genius when it came to geometric formulas and their application to the engineering process. Although their junior in age by five or six years, it didn't take long amongst a group of peers to determine that Ollie was the most talented of the bunch. And the most imaginative. In part, he could afford that luxury because he was still in college and his hopes and dreams were very much alive and well. Those who had been in the private sector for a few years now realized that you could still dream about building landmarks and monuments. In the real world, engineers are needed to design energy conservation technology and drainage and sewer systems. Hardly as glamorous as the Washington Monument or the Hoover Dam, but important to society none the less. Ollie was still young and immature enough to make him think he could do anything. He always pushed the limits. Sometimes it didn't work, but usually we discovered something within the failures to enhance the production.

The engineering team was only part of the overall process to be completed while we concluded the last month of the tour, finishing with a performance at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo at the end of February. When we returned the Pop-Op Palace was a free standing structure, ready for habitation. The concrete work in the studio and all of the demolition was finished. They were starting to put walls back up. Interestingly, the house wasn't vacant – Ollie had decided he wanted to stay. This wasn't a shock or completely out of the blue. Pee-Tee's nephew Edwin, who was a sophomore at Pepperdine, was living in the double wide with his aunt and keeping an eye on things for his uncle. During one of his daily "check-in calls" to Edwin, he reported that the engineering team had departed, with one noted exception.

I didn't know anything about the Caribbean sound of reggae until Eric Clapton came on the radio the summer after my senior year in high school singing:

"I shot the sheriff,
But I swear it was in self defense.
I shot the sheriff,
And they say it is a capital offense."¹⁶

With the syncopated rhythms and back beat drumming, the groove was inescapable. A lot of the passing chords they were using were the same as some blues progressions, so I had the chops, but the "backwardness" of the rhythms was a challenge to master. I've played "I Shot the Sheriff" a million times, in

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high school and college jam sessions and a couple of times live with ZigZag. It's just a cool song. Of course, with E.C.'s instigation I immediately became immersed in the art form. Which led me to Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. And a refreshing viewpoint on the world. These two guys (and many others in their native country of Jamaica) were using their art form to advance their political ideals. Freedom for all. Legalized Marijuana. Racial and Social Equality. Maybe not new topics, but certainly a fresh approach. But for the most part, I was into the groove.

"The Inner Voice" is really just me picking at my own scabs. We are all our own worse critics, and I'm as harsh as they get. I want it perfect, the way I hear it in my head or see it with my mind's eye. Whether that is the latest Pop-Op set design, or removing the weeds from our tomato garden. I compete at everything, (even with the children), and I always, always, ALWAYS want to win. I tell the kids it builds character. Nobody wants to lose.

The idea was that I'm having a conversation with my conscious, or I guess better put – my conscious was giving me a lecture. Thinking back, I'm not real clear on where these lyrics came from, or what stimulated the thought process. I'm sure I was in some self loathing cycle, where my ego needed a pummeling and my psyche was enraged. I don't know, maybe it doesn't mean anything to anybody but me.

The Inner Voice

"If I could spare just a moment of your time sir,
It's time for cleanin' out the pantry shelf.
Take a good look don't you see just what you like now,
Hey not bad you're only killing yourself.
Try as you will you just can't run from the affliction,
Don't you know you've got the right to make a choice.
Just for once now won't you hush up while I'm talkin' to ya,
Can't you hear the inner voice.
Hear the inner voice.

No it's not - not time for a vacation,
There's more here for you to lose than your wealth.
If you could manage half my unrestrained attentions,
The doctor's say it might be good for your health.
So come right out and simply say it's an addiction,
By now you should probably own a shiny Rolls-Royce.
Why and how are just beyond all comprehension.
Don't you listen – hear the inner voice.
Hear the inner voice.

Well maybe I'm askin' a bit more than you should want me,

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It's tough to live with this thorn thrust in your side.
Maybe someday when you rise out of your bad dream,
If you're open for suggestion there's a better place to hide.
Don't blame me I'm not lookin' for excuses,
It's only human to find a cause to rejoice.
Still the answer just can't come before you're questioned,
Won't you heed the inner voice.
Heed the inner voice.¹⁷

It's a fan favorite, and always a part of our stadium set. "The Inner Voice" became the launching point for a sound known within the band at ZigZag Reggae.

With Tom back in Topanga watching the construction timelines and expenses, things were moving along quite smoothly. Mike left Betacam video cameras behind with both Tiny and Edwin to record the construction process. On the road any of several people might be behind one of the three personal cameras Mike carried with us. He was building an incredible video library and spending a small fortune on video tape. My father and George had come up with a couple of investment opportunities they were looking into. Buying some land in Florida was one of them. Getting into the stock market (which I still know absolutely nothing about) was another. Dad and I were attempting to get George Bennett to become a full time employee (in house counsel) for ZigZag LLC. He was spending a tremendous amount of time as our "pro bono" counsel already. I caught a bunch of grief from the Judge for what I would say next. I told them to work up a plan based upon what they and the accountants thought best, and I would sign off on it. I also mentioned that Leah and I had some ideas about forming a charitable foundation.

I started having breakfast meetings with Mike at least once a week while we were touring. Neither of us is really available on the road. When we play back to back nights, there's not much time for anything but traveling, sleeping, and playing. So we came up with a plan for Mike to "catch me up" and get my input on any decisions that needed to be made. The CPA firm was moving a young lady from their Indiana office to become part of the Topanga team. Her name was Dru Barnhill, and she was from my hometown (and I'm sure came with a glowing recommendation from the Judge). I grew up playing baseball with Dru's brother Tom, and our families were good friends. Somewhere I have pictures from when we were kids. Dru is wearing a diaper in one of them. I give her a hard time about that, and threaten to find it and use it for the next album cover. Another right answer – more family. Dru's primary function in California was to stay on top of Mike's agenda and keep us posted on tax and investment issues. Believe me, there were a lot of them. I also hoped that she might be able to provide Leah with some personal investment advice. Leah was earning her own keep, and deserved to make her own decisions about her share in the spoils.

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That Wednesday morning in January I think we were in Atlanta. Three more weeks until the rodeo, and then a break from touring for a couple of months. Mike and I started off talking about the Pop-Op Palace and the steel roof and walls that were being installed that week. Somehow we got off target with our conversation, and started talking about Q-Tips of all things. One on the greatest things Michael Bennett has ever shared with me was a knowledge about Q-Tips that is still a habit to this day. And it is so basic – as everyone on the planet except me probably already knew. After you get out of the shower, use a Q-Tip to swab the excess water out of your ears. It doesn't feel as good as sex or getting stoned, but it's definitely in the top ten. I don't know how the conversation got to this topic or what we might have said. I just recollect that it was part of the discussion that day. I remember the stupidest things sometimes. Anyway, we talked about construction, and we talked about tour budgets. We were staying close on costs with all of the building projects (the house being the most difficult to manage), and we were literally “printing money” while on the road. We'd already hit most of our incentives in the latest Capitol contract, and we were starting to edge our way into the MTV playlist. We both knew that the next year, and the next record, needed to be big. The tribunal had nearly completed an investment prospectus for me to look at – like I was going to “invest” any time in that. We now owned some lots in two different development projects near Ocala, Florida, and were about to close a deal on a number of acres of forested land in east Texas that included a lumbering operation. I mentioned George, and our desire to make Mike's brother part of the corporation. As I was about to head back to the room, Mike had one last piece of advice in parting. From a financial standpoint, it was the consensus of opinion that Leah and I should consider getting married.

Scott Silversteen caught up with us in St. Louis. He wanted a bunch of individual and casual group shots in preparation for the twenty-four page full color booklet that would be needed for the Japanese tour in August. He took pictures at the arch, the ballpark, on a riverboat, and at an incredible Italian restaurant called Tony's. The veal there was perhaps the best I had ever tasted. I got the recommendation on Tony's from Tommy LaSorda, the Dodger's manager. I figured an Italian ballplayer who had bounced around the minor leagues as long as Tommy did probably knows how to find every great restaurant in any city you care to name. He sure was right about this place.

Connie came into our ranks almost unnoticed. Once we started headlining in 1983, and especially once we began infusing elements of Pop-Op into the tour set, the size of everything grew. Including the number of trucks and truckers needed to get everything from place to place.

It started out innocently enough, but I suppose the “businessman” in me should have been paying closer attention. We needed a truck to get all of our gear from the studio in Houston to Dallas for the first leg of the Petty tour. Tate found “a guy” who knew his brother-in-law. This “guy” had a trucking firm that managed

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all sorts of cross country loads. And they were cheap. The euphoria of the times could probably be blamed for a lot of it, but that just may be my excuse. I signed the contract with the Ace Trucking Company in 1981 and went into business with organized crime.

Mike reviewed proposals from several transport companies, and we ended up back with Ace Trucking, and now their parent Premier Cart and Cartage – headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio. They were just flat cheaper. The Judge had them checked out through a friend in Washington – with no issues to report. And not only were they about to manage all of the ground transportation. Through an affiliated sky cab company in New Jersey, we got a great deal on a very nice charter airplane as well. This much infrastructure required internal management. As an employee of Premier Cart and Cartage, Connie Leggio became the “Coordinator of Transportation” for all ZigZag tours for the next eleven years.

Constance Elizabeth Leggio was the middle of three children, and only daughter of Giuseppe and Elizabeth Leggio. Giuseppe emigrated from Sicily at the age of five in 1932. He and his mother had departed very quickly after his father Salvatore was murdered in a land dispute. Giuseppe and his family lived modestly in a three bedroom house just off Eighteenth Avenue and Sixty-Eighth Street in the section of Brooklyn known as Bensonhurst. He owned and operated a dry cleaning establishment just six blocks away on Eighteenth Avenue, appropriately called “Eighteenth Avenue Cleaners”. The Leggio’s had lived in the apartment above the store until their third child was born. Now they rented that space. Constance and her brothers attended PS 205 (which was only two blocks from their home) and New Utrecht High School.

The core of this portion of Brooklyn that came to be called “Bensonhurst” was once known as the town of New Utrecht, settled by the Dutch in the 1660’s. The town came into being when an investor from the Dutch West India Company who had been purchasing land from the local Indian tribes (for the grand sum of six shirts, two pairs of shoes, six pairs of stockings, six woodworking tools called “adzes”, six knives, two pairs of scissors, and six hair combs) died, and the property was divided into lots and sold in order to create the town. During the mid 1830’s a gentleman named Arthur Benson, who was the former president of Brooklyn Gas, began buying farmland in and around the New Utrecht area. The farm was later parceled into twenty by one hundred foot lots (considered generously sized at the time) and the suburb of Bensonhurst came into being.

Most of the initial residents were of Dutch heritage, but by the early 1900’s many immigrants of Italian and Jewish descent were moving into the neighborhood. Until World War II, the demographics were about equally Jewish and Italian, but after the War, and into the 1950’s, there was a large influx of immigrants from southern Italy as those oppressed under Mussolini fled their homeland. The Jewish population left, and the neighborhood became predominately Italian, perhaps the primary “Little Italy” in all of Brooklyn. Among the notable

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Bensonhurst natives include my favorite set of brothers, the “Howards” – Moe, Curly, and Shemp. Better known (along with Larry Fine) as “The Three Stooges”. Jackie Gleason’s character Ralph Cramden in “The Honeymooner’s” lived in Bensonhurst, a reflection of the working class environment of the area.

This was the world Connie Leggio was born into in April of 1946 when her older brother was Dominic was three years old. Of course everyone called him “Dom”. Her younger brother by two years was Patrick. Somehow, Patrick had obtained the unfortunate nickname “Pig” or Piggio”. As children they roamed the streets of Bensonhurst West with the children from every other house in the neighborhood. Connie always wanted to be one of the “guys”. She kept her hair cropped short and most of the time was wearing a Brooklyn Dodger’s baseball cap. She could hit and catch a stickball just as good as the rest of the boys, and had the best aim at spearing frogs in the viaduct. And she could run like the wind. When he was little, her brother Patrick called her “Con-man”.

Eighteenth Avenue in Bensonhurst is lined with small, family-owned business, including cafes, pastry shops, and restaurants. On Eighty-Sixth Street, there were many fruit and vegetable markets. Just down the block from the dry cleaners was another nondescript building with a small sign above the front door. “Societa Figli Di Ragusa”. In English that roughly translates to The social clan (or brood) of Ragusa. The half dozen or so members who used this as their home base called it the “So-Club”. It was just a place where gangsters hung out for business and pleasure.

As they became teenagers, Giuseppe expected his children to work in the dry cleaning store. He had acquired the store when the original owner Mr. Torelli keeled over in the store and died of a massive stroke. Mrs. Torelli couldn’t run the store herself, and besides she wanted to move out and live with her sister in Queens. Giuseppe had been working in the store, and living above it, since he was eleven years old. He and his mother had rented a single room from the Torelli’s when Giuseppe came of age to go to school. It was important to his mother that he got a good education. She did the sewing, mending and the ironing, and after a while would manage the store on Saturday so that the Torelli’s could have a long weekend in the country from time to time. Her son made deliveries and pickups in the neighborhood. Giuseppe was there to help Mr. Torelli unload his very first Spencer machine, which had been shipped all the way from England.

The first misconception about dry cleaning is that the clothes don’t stay dry while they are being cleaned. The term “dry” comes from the fact that water isn’t used in the cleaning process. I think part of this mystery stems from the fact that all dry cleaning stores put their press machine out front where all of the customers can see it in action, but the actual equipment that does the cleaning is located in the back and out of sight.

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A dry cleaning machine is pretty much just an oversized combination washer/dryer. The clothes are placed in a perforated “basket” inside the machine and it is filled with solvent. The clothes are agitated and rotated for between eight and fifteen minutes per load, just like a regular washing machine. The difference is the solvent. Throughout history, a number of different chemicals have been used in the clothes cleaning process, including flammable substances like gasoline and kerosene. Since the 1930’s the preferred solvent within the industry has been perchlorethylene, or “Perc” for short. Although non-flammable, and an aggressive cleaning agent, Perc is classified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as an air contaminant and considered to be hazardous waste. Early on, Perc was considered to be no more harmful than steam, and large quantities were expelled into the atmosphere because it was inexpensive to obtain. More modern systems have “capture” processes to keep the chemical from being released into the environment. Perc is where dry cleaned clothing gets that characteristic chemical smell. After all of the solvent is removed during the rinse and spin cycles, the garments are tumbled dry in warm air that circulates the basket and any remaining traces of solvent are evaporated. Final finishing, pressing, and bagging have the clothes ready to be picked up.

None of the children enjoyed working at the dry cleaning store. It was hot in the summer and cold in the winter. The chemicals made their hair and clothes smell. The other kids made fun of the odor. Dom left home and joined the Army when he was seventeen. During his second tour of Vietnam in 1969, he went Missing In Action somewhere near Hanoi. Patrick made an escape of a different type. At his high school graduation party he announced to one and all, as he thanked them for their gifts and kindnesses, that he was a homosexual and would be leaving later that evening to live with friends on Fire Island. Patrick and his father never spoke again after that night. In 1993, Patrick lost his life to the HIV virus.

But there were fun times with their father on Eighteenth Avenue. Afternoon walks to the bank two blocks away that always included a stop at the pizza stand for a slice, or the hot fresh pastries for those who worked a Saturday morning shift. Wandering through the five and dime while they waited for Giuseppe to close down the store and ogling the new toys at Christmas and the fireworks in the summertime.

Connie had a girlfriend that she had met in sixth grade named Lorraine. Lorraine’s dad literally disappeared that summer and her mom moved she and her older sister to an apartment complex in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, on the other side of Prospect Park from Bensonhurst – a less than desirable part of town. Connie would go visit Lorraine and occasionally spend the night. Along with sister Julie, the girls would hang out on the roof of the complex with other neighborhood teenagers and young adults. They smoked cigarettes, gossiped about other girls in school and who had done “what with who”. They “laid out” in shorts and tee shirts or bikini tops on blankets on the roof in hopes of a sun tan. They painted their fingernails and their toenails. Mostly they watched the boys.

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The OLDER boys. Lorraine's sister Julie was a horrible flirt, and had a body that was mature well beyond her seventeen years of age. Of special notice to the girls was a young classically Italian boy named Richie Altobano. Richie was a high school dropout who still lived with his mother and little brother in the same complex as Lorraine. Richie made his living on the street. He always had a group of guys hanging around him, and they were always scheming to make a few bucks. There was an older man, short and plain, dressed nice, and in his mid twenties who would occasionally come up to the roof to talk with Richie. In his presence the man was addressed as either "Anthony" or "Mister Casso". In his absence the gang referred to him as "Gaspipes".

As role models go, the kids in Park Slope couldn't have made a worse choice. Anthony "Gaspipes" Casso was, by 1974, already a made man in the Lucchese crime family. Growing up on the streets surrounding the Brooklyn docks, Casso, though not a large man at five foot six inches tall and roughly one hundred and eighty five pounds, was a tough, violent young man. He was also quite proficient with firearms, practicing on home made shooting ranges on tenement rooftops as a teen. He was a member of the "South Brooklyn Boys", a famous New York street gang in the early 1950's. A high school dropout at sixteen, Anthony Casso worked the docks as a longshoreman and the street as a loanshark for the Lucchese family.

There are several stories about how Casso got the nickname "Gaspipes", but one thing is sure – he detested the moniker. Few would ever say it to his face, but some close friends were permitted to refer to him simply as "Gas". In addition to loansharking, he became involved in drug dealing and gambling. In the 70's he earned his "bones" with the Mafia by killing a drug dealer turned suspected informant. At the age of thirty two he was a full fledged member of the family and assigned to Vincent Foceri's crew which operated from a social club on Fourteenth Avenue in Brooklyn. Casso befriended another young Lucchese soldier, Vic Amuso, and a criminal partnership was formed that would last for years.

Giuseppe Leggio did not have to pay for protection or membership in the civic society, unlike all of the other neighboring businesses in the community. This was understandable, given the current relationship between his daughter and Anthony Casso. But Giuseppe had NEVER paid for protection. Ritchie Altobano (and other soldiers before him) came in every year and put a new sticker in the window, but no money ever changed hands. Mr. Torelli had always paid, but Giuseppe was never asked. The young dry cleaner offered once or twice early on, fearing that his family and his business might be in jeopardy if he did not conform to the regimen of his fellow merchants. He did take care of the dry cleaning needs for a number of the Lucchese families capos and other bosses – all without charge. Although he had no association with his family in Sicily since his mother's death, there were relatives on the other side of the Atlantic whose

influence and power were making life much easier for the Leggio's of Bensonhurst.

Luciano Leggio was born in Corleone, Sicily in January of 1925. His father Francesco was a poor farmer who scraped a living for his wife and ten children from the Sicilian countryside. Francesco Leggio's brother Salvatore had been killed in a land disagreement and his sister-in-law and nephew Giuseppe fled to America. But Francesco had no means to afford that option. Corleone was a community of haves and have nots, and Francesco Leggio was certainly in the latter group. The poverty of farming families in Sicily is difficult to comprehend. Some lived and died without ever eating meat. Corleone, Sicily was a place in the mid 1900's where the days are measured by the number of men killed. On the streets there was a general feeling of hopelessness. In Corleone, you were either part of the current generation that was part of the Mafia, or had been destroyed by it. There was no neutral ground. In Corleone, The cemetery was the most colorful place in town, only a short distance from the center of town and always immaculately kept and filled with flowers, its rows of graves and avenues of headstones testimony to the busiest industry in the area. In America, the Mafia, when they spoke of Corleone, referred to it as 'Tombstone' as though it was like a town out of the Wild West, except of course, it was ten times more deadly in Corleone than life had ever been in the days of the American frontier.

A grade school dropout in order to avoid a life in the priesthood, Luciano did not learn to read or write until he was an adult. But by the age of 12 he was an outstanding marksman, and was comfortable handling nearly any firearm. Not long thereafter, his life of crime began. His first arrest and conviction came eighteen for stealing grain. Shortly after serving a six month jail sentence, he murdered the man who had turned him in to the police. Recruited into the Corleone "cosca", a long established force for political and social action in the region, in 1945 as an enforcer and hitman, later that year he killed a guard who had caught him stealing grain, and then held the land owner at gunpoint while he signed over the property to Leggio. At nineteen years of age he had already gained a reputation in Corleone and the surrounding area as a violent and somewhat psychopathic young man. And he also became the youngest estate manager in all of Sicily.

Luciano got involved in cattle rustling, and became entangled in a vendetta that resulted in the deaths of over sixty men, ending only when a ten year old boy was murdered with a shotgun, along with the lineage and the feud. Arrested and jailed again for stealing wheat, within six months of his release Luciano had hunted down and killed his accuser. Even though this murder was witnessed by the victim's wife and son, and an accomplice later confessed and implicated him, the case against Leggio dragged on for eighteen years, and he was acquitted twice. By his early twenties, he had amassed enough money to buy a farm of his own. His rise from peasant to power force and enforcer in the Mafia had been

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spectacular to say the least, most of it riding on the reputation he built up as a ruthless killer.

Driven by a desire to increase the expanse of his control, Leggio branched out into new rackets like slot machines, trucking and cigarette smuggling. He strong-armed his way into the grain markets and cornered the market on pinball machines in the province of Palermo, a \$1.5 million a year venture alone. After removing the current leader by assassination, Leggio promoted himself as head of the Corleonesi and over the next five years he and his men hunted down and killed nearly fifty more opposition supporters. Called before the senior members of the Sicilian Mafia in Palermo, Luciano simply told the group that the killing was a personal matter, and walked away. He eventually took his place on "The Commission" and became the driving force behind the Sicilian Mafia in the second half of the twentieth century. He spent the 1960s and early 1970s increasing the strength of the Corleonesi, murdering anyone who got in its way. Particularly he wanted control of the heroin market and the income it created.

Between 1944 and 1962 there were 2000 known homicides or disappearances recorded in the four provinces of western Sicily controlled by the Mafia. It was a killing field without parallel in the civilized world. Leggio was the prototype of the new Mafia. He and his followers had nothing in common with the older generation of Mafioso who controlled the secret society across Sicily. He was something quite new to the world of this honored society: the hybrid of a Sicilian born mobster and the American-style gangster. For him, the life was a matter of power and prestige, and being a man of substance and honor. Money was important, but came somewhat low on the list of his desires. He may have been a man apart from his peers in this generation, worshipping two gods: power and the vendetta. The people of Corleone believed he radiated "sciusciare". In the local dialect it meant that a powerful man created such authority that the very air seemed to move in his presence.

Many have described Leggio as being highly volatile and violent, as well as possessing a streak of vanity. According to one inside source, Leggio insisted on correcting grammatical errors made by a mob boss when he tried to speak Italian rather than his native Sicilian. Leggio liked to be called "The Professor", as if he were an intellectual, even though, like many of his fellow Corleonesi, he was poorly educated. He also tended to wear expensively tailored suits at his repeated court appearances, often along with sunglasses, and grandly puffed on a cigar.

As well as setting the Corleonesi on track to become the dominant Mafia clan in Sicily, he became infamous for avoiding convictions for a multitude of crimes. Leggio could make himself invisible, a phenomenon that he would create many times in the years to come. His ability to disappear almost at will, resulted in the media creating a special myth about the man. His success in avoiding prison lay in the prerogative of Italian courts to find a defendant neither guilty nor innocent, rather acquit him for insufficient evidence. Based on the Scottish law of 'Not

Proven' which dates back to 1728, it was not too difficult for people like Luciano Leggio to render the evidence as insufficient by simply having witnesses removed. He was also helped by the lack of law enforcement interest or urgency in dealing with the phenomena of the Mafia. The courts of Palermo were staffed by judiciary who were in turn, fearful, cautious, anxious and lazy. There were also so many of them that investigations and trials turned into legal swamps. The level of corruption that existed within the system was also legendary. Like the Scarlet Pimpernel of literary legend, Leggio moved freely from place to place, as the police searched for him everywhere. At times, he lived with Lia, the former fiancé of a man he had murdered ten years before, which would seem to have been an unusual relationship, but when the police came and arrested Leggio in 1964 in a house only a short walk from the Corleone police headquarters, she wept and combed his hair. Again he was quickly released.

Leggio continued to diversify and expand his business, but he was too big for just Corleone; in fact he was probably too big for all of Sicily. He needed to spread his operation outside the island, linking into the crime families of Naples, and also establishing criminal links in Rome and Milan. Leggio, and other Italian mobsters, formed a gang called "Anonymous Kidnappers". Between 1969 and 1999 there were 672 kidnappings registered by the police in all of Italy, and 158 took place in and around Milan. One of the most famous Leggio helped to architect was the abduction of the young John Paul Getty III in 1973. He was held for months in Calabria, before his tightwad grandfather coughed up the \$3 million ransom after he got an ear in the mail.

In the strange and perverse Italian judicial system, in December 1970, he was convicted-in abstaincia - of murder committed back in 1958. There had been no new evidence introduced to inculpate him, but he was found guilty because no crimes of the Mafia type had been committed in Corleone since his arrest in 1964. He was given a life sentence because "Leggio's sinister personality had been clear in the proceedings, and the fact that he is a Capo beyond any reasonable doubt." In fact, the only tangible evidence that linked him to the killing was a reflector that broke off the Alfa 1900 driven during the shoot-out, and was found at the scene by investigators. And even this was suspect, as there was a strong possibility that the original fragments had been replaced to throw doubt on the court exhibit. Everybody knew he did it, but no one knew how he did it, so they convicted him for being in effect the man who probably did it. It was a pretty shady deal by any legal parameters, and illustrated just how low the law had sunk in its desperation to get its man.

But convicting him and imprisoning him where two very different matters. He entered into some of the best years of his life in the early 1970s, taking a string of bewildering alias's – at one time he held eleven different passports. Luciano roamed Europe, setting up an expanding criminal empire based on theft, embezzlement, gambling, extortion in the construction industry, and kidnapping

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on a grand scale. He traveled widely, without any problems from police or custom authorities.

The kidnapping of a wealthy industrialist in December of 1972 set in motion the chain of events that eventually lead to Luciano Leggio's arrest and imprisonment. He was wearing pajamas and slippers when he answered the door. In the background the police could hear a baby crying. It was Paolo, Leggio's one year old son. The most wanted and perhaps feared man in the whole of Italy surrendered peacefully. The police found a revolver in his bedroom along with books on philosophy and history. Destined to spend the rest of his life in various prisons across Italy, his life of freedom was over. But that did not stop him from running his crime family. Leggio sat in his prison cells across Italy, moving his killers like pawns across the chessboard of Sicily, picking up judges and prosecutors and journalists and politicians. And knocking them down one by one as it suited his agenda.

As described by a fellow Mafia member: "The smallest thing set him off and then a strange light would appear in his eyes that created silence around him." That "strange light" was a look that must have been a family characteristic. His second cousin Connie Leggio possessed it as well.

Once in a while Gaspape would give one of the boys a pointer on their shooting technique, or how to correctly build a home made silencer. One day, as he spoke with one of the teenagers, he pointed over toward the girls sitting in lawnchairs in the shaded corner of the roof and exclaimed that one of "dem little gurls" could probably shoot better than his current mentoree. At that point Lorraine hollered out that Connie could shoot better, and dared them to let Connie show her wares. Gaspape motioned for Connie to come over and he showed her how to hold the small twenty five caliber revolver. He pointed to the target some twenty five feet away that the young man had been attempting to hit. Connie aimed the gun and squeezed the trigger as if she had been practicing all her life. The bullet pierced the target about three inches from the bull's eye. The second shot was even closer, within an inch or so of dead center. She rushed the third shot and pulled it high and to the right, and yet still caught the corner of the target. Gaspape was impressed, but in front of everyone shrugged Connie's success off as "beginner's luck". Privately with Ritchie, he called her "Il nostro piccolo progetto" – "Our Little Project".

Casso let Connie go along when he and the boys drove out into New Jersey and took turns firing a double barrel shotgun. It knocked her down when she tried to pull both barrels at once, but she quickly learned to manage one barrel at a time in succession. On the way back to Brooklyn, Connie thanked Anthony by giving him the first blow job of her young life. She was sixteen. He was nearly twenty-three. Anthony gave his tacit approval to Richie that Connie be allowed to participate in some of their activities. He also suggested that Richie might want to see if he could get some "action" from her as well.

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Connie spent that summer with a cousin in Buffalo and changed from the child that she once was into the woman she was to become. She grew over two inches in height (nearly ALL legs) and she moved out of a training bra and into a 32B. She came back to New Utrecht High School her sophomore year with a new nickname – “Connie Legs”.

For the next year and a half Richie Altobono and his crew, often times including Connie, conducted a number of robberies, kidnappings, burglaries, and other assorted crimes. Even a couple of contract killings. They used their muscle to convince loan clients to pay up, and witnesses to keep quiet. Most of the time Connie stood watch with a sawed off twenty gauge shotgun. She exchanged the opportunity to ride along with the crew for sexual favors. The bigger the risk, the greater the favor. She was after Ritchie to let her be the triggerman the next time they got a contract. Ritchie agreed. The price was her virginity. But she got what she wanted, so she figured Ritchie should as well. Connie spent her senior year in high school finishing up two educations, one in the classroom (where she was a high B student) and the other on the streets of Brooklyn.

No matter what level of involvement Connie was allowed, she always wanted more. She was constantly making suggestions to Richie about how to pull off a certain job, or where to stash the weapons. Although most of the time she was right, and she knew it, her suggestions were often rejected out of hand. Finally, she just could no longer resist the chance to show her wares. The assignment was a local jewelry store owner who was instigating trouble in the neighborhood by refusing to display the “civic association” decal in the window of his store, and was vocal in his opposition to the rules of the street. He paid his association dues, but he was far from respectful about it.

The Don’s hope was that the jeweler would just go away nice and peaceful. It needed to look like an accident, not a mob hit. He wanted to lessen the talk in the streets, not increase it. Richie and the boy’s idea of an “accident” was to use a shotgun instead of a revolver. Make it look like a robbery. Plant a couple of eye witnesses who would say they saw three black men in a late model dark green or black Ford. One had a long coat with something long and metallic partially hidden beneath it. It could have been a shotgun or a rifle.

Connie had a much better plan. They had staked out the jewelry store a few months back, thinking that a robbery might quiet the old man down, but for whatever reason that plan was never carried out. Every day at about 11:30 a.m., the jeweler took a deposit to the bank, and on his way back stopped at the Trattoria for a quick bite and a taste of anisetta. He had a private bottle behind the bar that was kept for sweetening his coffee. This came to be Connie’s private knowledge, which she procured through providing a “favor” to the head waiter at the restaurant. A little research at the Brooklyn College library and she had her drug - aconitine. Derived from a common tree root. Another trip to the Trattoria

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to exchange the jeweler's liqueur with a new bottle. Six days later the poor man keeled over in his store and died, apparently of a massive heart attack. Richie's plan was due to be executed the following day.

By the time she graduated from high school Connie was keeping the books at the "So-Club" and assisting Anthony with the numbers payouts and taking loan payments. She was also enrolled in accounting classes at Brooklyn College. Life at the So-Club was always interesting, to say the least. Lots of action – football, horses, boxing. And lots of cash flying around. Quite a bit of that cash floated straight up hill from Richie to Gaspipe to the Lucchese bosses.

And while we are on the topic of the Mafia, or Cosa Nostra, or whatever you want to call them, here's a theory to try out on you:

The mafia didn't hate John Kennedy. And I don't believe they had anything to do with the President's assassination. Sure, they were unhappy that promises made by his father, Joe Kennedy, had not been kept. But they didn't hate John F. Kennedy. Sam Giancana in Chicago was surely expecting more cooperation from this President, considering what Sam and "The Outfit", with the cooperation of Mayor Richard J. Daley, had accomplished in the 1960 Illinois general election. There are mob connections to the President through Frank Sinatra, his brother-in-law Peter Lawford, and a woman that allegedly was a mistress to both President Kennedy and Giancana. But the biggest issue that both the mob and the labor unions had with Jack Kennedy was his appointment for Attorney General.

They hated Bobby Kennedy.

Ever since his days as an investigating attorney with U.S. Senator McClellan's "Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Field", Robert Kennedy showed a shrewdness and aggression toward organized crime and its links with unionized labor. Inheriting a Justice Department that barely recognized the existence of the Mafia (J. Edgar Hoover refused to allow F.B.I. agents to use the term "mafia" and shortly after the Kennedy Administration came to power in Washington was quoted as saying "no single individual or coalition of racketeers dominates organized crime across the nation"), Kennedy went on the attack almost immediately after taking office in January of 1961. And he started with Jimmy Hoffa's International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

The Teamsters (and other affiliated unions over which Hoffa also held sway) utilized vast amounts of money in their pension funds to underwrite projects where the broker or underwriter was likely mob related. Hoffa had control over billions of dollars, and very little ethic about how it should be invested.

Perhaps the most vocal about his hatred for the Attorney General was Carlos Marcello. Carlos, born Calogero Minacore in Tunisia in 1910, was the undisputed mob boss of New Orleans. Because of his wealth and influence,

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Marcello was one of the most well respected and autonomous godfathers outside of Chicago and New York. Only thirty seven years old when he came to power in the New Orleans underworld, Marcello listed his occupation on government forms as a “tomato salesman and real estate investor.” In reality, he operated illegal gambling, prostitution, and narcotics smuggling all along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

A Senate subcommittee headed by junior Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee held hearings in 1950 and 1951 for the purpose of exposing connections between organized crime and interstate commerce violations. Carlos Marcello was one of the six hundred witnesses called by the Kefauver subcommittee in one of fourteen cities where hearings were convened. The most notable part of these proceedings was that during the nine days of hearings in New York, all three major television networks carried the sessions live via a coast-to-coast broadcast. During his testimony in New Orleans, it was exposed that Marcello had immigration issues, as neither of his parents had ever applied for citizenship. Every three months, he had to report to the immigration office to extend his legal rights to stay in the United States as an alien. For eight years Carlos had shown up faithfully for his quarterly “check ins” and although a nuisance to him, there was never any indication that his immigration status might be in jeopardy.

On April 4, 1961, only three months after Kennedy has assumed his new position as Attorney General, Carlos Marcello reported to the New Orleans office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Immediately, he was handcuffed, accused of holding a Guatemalan passport, and without a hearing placed on a government plane and deported to Guatemala City. Over the next two months, while his lawyers scrambled to get him readmitted to the U.S., Marcello was bounced from Guatemala to El Salvador to Honduras. He finally reappeared in New Orleans, where he was again arrested and charged with tax evasion, illegal reentry, and perjury. In private, Don Marcello vowed that he would get his revenge against the young Kennedy.

So here’s my theory. The mob saw what happened with the assassination of the President (and may have had some inside knowledge – especially with the relationship Santos Trafficanti in Florida shared with the Cubans) and learned from the process. A million different clues point to the Cubans and the Mafia in relationship to the death of John F. Kennedy. Nothing in Sirhan B. Sirhan’s background would indicate any mob connections. That’s why he was the perfect pigeon for the Mafia to use to kill someone they truly despised. And I think they used Jimmy Hoffa’s money to get it accomplished. President Robert F. Kennedy was the last thing guys like Carlos Marcello wanted to see. And they made sure that didn’t happen.

An old Sicilian proverb: “Between the law and the Mafia, the law is not the most to be feared.”

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One nice thing about having some property was that it became much easier to renew my karate regimen. I hired an instructor from Malibu, and attended a class from time to time. I was more into the Hojo Undo exercises. I was learning, by carrying around the “nigiri game” (those ceramic jars filled with sand) by their lips and other rudimentary exercises, that it was more about controlling my mind than my body. I was more effective when I could focus my attention on something other than the physical task I was performing. I could push myself farther and sometimes capture some simulating thoughts as well. I also purchased a new piece of equipment called a “tan”. Really nothing more than a barbell made out of wood and concrete, I started doing a few curls and other upper body exercises with this device. In order to get a belt promotion (not that I was driven in the least by this – my instructor really insisted) I had to participate in a sparring exhibition. Now this was not the “public” showing that would occur in most martial arts schools. This was more selective. All of the folks involved were like me: busy, successful, and very private about their private lives. You would probably recognize a few of the names. Mostly family members of famous and influential people in Hollywood. It wasn’t as big a deal as I had anticipated. Mechanically, my instructor said I was doing very well. I don’t think it was the intention of anyone in the room that day to become some black belt ninja warrior. To most, if not all of us, it was just a form of exercise.

The next time we went on Letterman, it was just Mike and I. When we performed there last in August, I had told Dave backstage before the show that our business manager Mike Bennett had been taking video of our rehearsals, shows, and other activities since the band had been on the college circuit. He asked if one of his editors could contact Mike about looking at some of the footage. It made for great late night television fun.

I guess I should also mention that Connie’s nickname is well earned. I’ve heard it expressed a lot of different ways, but my best attempt is this: Connie had legs that go all the way to the floor. She is toned and tanned and her wardrobe certainly highlights this asset. She moves about gracefully and decisively. Probably only about five foot six inches tall or so, I swear half of that height is legs. She is one of those girls that every guy likes to watch walk across a room.

For some reason Eric became really irrational toward the end of the tour. After the incident in Milwaukee, he was fine for a few days, and then exploded again in Denver, doing more damage to a hotel room than I thought was possible. The next night in Oklahoma City was more of the same. By the time we got to Kansas City, Eric’s reputation had preceded him. Hotel security and the Kansas City Police Department, complete with two K-9 units, were on the ready. As the first glass collided with the full length mirror on the inside of the bathroom door and glass sprayed in all directions, the task force broke through the door. There was nothing we could do. We were all obviously aware of the past several days’ escapades, and Mike was writing checks to cover the damages, but there comes a point when all of the best intervention in the world won’t help. Pee-Tee had one

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of the tour security personnel stationed outside Eric's hotel room door. But he could not deter KCPD. And nobody wanted to argue with the dogs. Eric was going to jail.

Whatever was up with Eric, I just couldn't relate. I don't tear up hotel rooms and while we're on the subject, I don't destroy instruments either. My mother raised me better than that. I understand, on some level I guess, why frustration and pent up energy leads to aggressive behavior. But I've just never taken it out on a wall or a guitar. A few laps in the pool, or thirty minutes of Karate exercises usually does the trick for me. Or sex. Sex always works as well.

During the second half of the North America tour, it became obvious that the backstage area was getting congested. There more staff and more guests all the time. Not only was it getting crowded, but the vantage point from backstage to actually see the show is not very good. With parents and family members, record company executives and local celebrities, we wanted a better way for them to enjoy the experience. It all came to a head when one night a child wandered onto the stage in the middle of the show. That night, we drew up a plan on a napkin to create a stage extension.

R.L. picked up Melanie Curtis somewhere between St. Louis and Houston. A cute girl with a nice rack and shoulder length blonde hair. She couldn't have been more than twenty-one or twenty-two years old. She was perfect for R.L. She was absolutely content to sit on the sidelines and watch the rest of us work and play, while she awaited her turn. Mel (seems I shorten everyone's name) was nice enough. A drama major at Iowa State, and originally from Des Moines, Iowa. In my mind I questioned her current career path, however. Melanie had the personality of wall paper paste. The girls said they just couldn't get her to warm to them at all. It seemed that Mel marched to the beat of a "different drummer". And R.L. only wanted/needed her based upon his crazy "schedule".

Pee-Tee did a little digging, and we soon knew quite a bit more about Miss Melanie Suzanne Curtis. She was the only child of a Methodist minister and a school librarian. Since she graduated from high school, Mel had been in and out of three different colleges, arrested twice for possession of marijuana, placed in a private rehabilitation facility, and was currently being prescribed anti-depressants.

We officially ended the tour with a show in New Orleans in January, but the real end to the tour came in Houston three weeks later when we performed to a sold out crowd of more than 45,000 people at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Seven men having lunch in 1931 couldn't have possibly imagined the success that their idea of having an annual rodeo in Houston would be. It has become the world's largest livestock exhibition and richest regular season rodeo event. In the mid 80's attendance averaged more than a million people per year during the twenty day extravaganza. This simple idea of a rodeo have grown into an

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incredible series of proceedings that require nearly twenty thousand volunteers to manage.

First and foremost, this rodeo creates millions of dollars in scholarship funds which have been awarded to deserving college bound students. Since 1957 when the first two thousand dollar scholarship was awarded, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has steadily increase the number and size of these scholarships to include well over one hundred annual recipients and exceed a million dollars per year in total awards.

Another series of events that precede the rodeo are the trail rides. There are almost a dozen different trail rides, each averaging about one hundred miles, that converge upon downtown Houston from all directions and camp in Memorial Park on Houston's west side on Friday night. The Friday before the beginning of the rodeo is called "Go Texan Day", and all Houston residents are encouraged to wear western attire to school and work that day. Saturday morning there is a parade through downtown Houston that includes all of the trail riders, along with their horses and wagons, as well as college and high school marching bands and commercial floats and stagecoaches. Local government officials and other dignitaries often ride along on horseback as well. After the parade the festivities move to the Astrodome and its adjacent facilities for the World Championship Bar-B-Que Contest (better known as "The Cookoff") and the rest of the livestock and rodeo events. Each rodeo "show" consists of several parts: championship rodeo action, livestock competitions and auctions, concerts, pig racing, calf scrambles, and more.

The calf scramble is an interesting and popular part of the show. A group of grade school students gather in the rodeo arena with a number of calves. The students then attempt to harness these elusive little critters and get them inside the "winner's circle" in an allotted amount of time. Those students who accomplish this task are give certificates to purchase a registered animal that can be shown at the following year's event.

The concerts are fairly brief (about 30-45 minutes) and are held in the middle of the evening's festivities. The concerts have become quite popular, and the list of artists from all genres's who have performed at the rodeo include Elvis, Dylan, ZZ Top, and Bon Jovi. Over the years, country, rock, blues, Tejano and pop musicians, as well as stand-up comedians and even actors have been part rodeo shows.

It is almost impossible to talk about the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo without mentioning the Astrodome. The "Eighth Wonder of the World" has been home to the rodeo since opening in 1966, and host facility for many other sports and entertainment events as well – including being the home field for both the Houston Astros baseball team and the Houston Oilers football team. Micky Mantle hit the first home run there during an exhibition game in 1965, the

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basketball “Game of the Century” between the University of Houston and UCLA (which was also the first regular season college basketball game broadcast via television to the entire country in prime time) was held there in 1968, and the “Battle of the Sexes” tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs occurred in the “Dome” in 1973. Elvis performed there in both 1970 and 1974, Bob Dylan and his Rolling Thunder Revue came through in 1976 and The Rolling Stones gave back to back performances on October 28th and 29th, 1981. I was in attendance at the Stones’ show on the second night.

A couple of personal observations and recommendations: The sound system in the Dome is not suitable for live concerts. The sound bounces off the back wall and most of what you hear is echo. Although a good place to watch a baseball game (and I have seen many), because it was designed for multiple purposes, the seats are a long way from the playing field. The sight lines are better for football, but I like to watch football on television, not live. Don’t go to the rodeo expecting a “concert” in the traditional sense. The rodeo is more about the overall experience and not just the musical performer that night. The rodeo folks need to come up with a better setup for the band platform. Having to traipse across the rodeo arena with instruments to get to the stage is a bit much.

When we finished the rodeo, a few of us stayed in town to conduct some personal business. Primarily, we all wanted to establish that we were still Texas residents. Why, you may ask ??? Well the answer is simple, there is no state income tax in Texas. So Leah and I bought a townhouse in the Galleria. We might spend ten nights a year in that “home”, but it’s where we have declared our legal residence. All of our mail is delivered there (and then picked up once a week and sent to someone – the accountants in Indiana, I think). Scotty just threw some things in the corner of his sister Stacey’s spare bedroom, filled out a change of address form for the post office, and caught the next flight to Cancun, Mexico. Seems he had a previous engagement (or perhaps an entanglement). R.L. bought a house for his mom and step dad and left it in his name. The current plan is that Randy will spend a portion of this summer with his grandparents and a little bit of time with us in Japan. We had already managed all of this business for the band. ZigZag, LLC is a registered Texas company.

On Saturday morning, February 25th, 1984, Leah and I got up and headed toward Seabrook, Texas. The mission was fresh shrimp. Seabrook is a coastal town southeast of Houston, and home to a fleet of shrimpers and fishermen. The plan was to boil them up for dinner, so we weren’t in a great hurry. Actually, our first stop was on the other side of the bridge that connected Seabrook with the town of Kemah, which is directly south of Seabrook on the coast of Galveston Bay. Kemah had several really good restaurants. The Flying Dutchman is among my favorites. They make a crab au gratin that is incredible. We went to a little place called Joe Lee’s. Situated right on the channel that separates Kemah from Seabrook, Leah and I sat at a picnic table right next to the water, ate cold boiled shrimp and oysters on the half shell, and enjoyed a luxurious “spring” day in

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southeast Texas. We took turns tossing shrimp shells into the air for the enjoyment and nourishment of the swooping seagulls – they knew where to find a free meal. We went back over to Seabrook and stopped in a little pink barn with the name painted on the roof – “Maribelle’s”. A really wild and crazy place on the weekends and during spring break, we nearly had the place to ourselves as we sat and had a beer. Either no one recognized me, they didn’t want to bother us, or didn’t care. Usually I get hit up for a picture and an autograph or two. We hadn’t been able to just “sit and chill” in what now seemed a forever ago. I needed a few days of solitude to help me try to remember who I was again. Life on the road is like one long, extended transition. You move from city to city, hotel room to hotel room, concert hall to concert hall, and it all begins to look the same. On more than one occasion, I’ve called the front desk operator to ask two questions: What day is it, and what city is this??? I quit wearing a watch. It served no purpose. The only “time” we had anymore was while we were playing. Everything else was a blur. We finished our beers and headed out of Maribelle’s and across the parking lot to My’s Seafood. Ten pounds of extra large shrimp tails in the cooler, and two packs of shrimp boil in my hand. We were set. All we needed was boiling water.

On the way back toward town, I took the scenic route. Up the coastline on Toddville Road, and back off of Texas State highway 146 as soon as we got to Shore Acres. Originally developed as a resort community, complete with hotels, golf courses and an airport, Shore Acres ended up being something less than that, but there were still a number of nice homes that were built on the shoreline. We drove until we were right at water’s edge, parked the car, and took a little walk. We just strolled down the street holding hands and talking about what we did and didn’t like about each individual house. As we got almost to the south end of the street, Leah pointed to a tall pink structure about two blocks down. I told her it was the clubhouse for the Houston Yacht Club.

Formed in 1897, the Houston Yacht Club is the oldest club of its type in all of Texas. It was originally located in downtown Houston off Buffalo Bayou, and later in the Harrisburg community on the city’s east side (now part of what is known as the Houston Ship Channel). Initially all types of boats and boaters, from steamships to canoes, were part of the club. After World War I there was a movement within the sailors in the club to move to somewhere on Galveston Bay, to make it more convenient to practice their craft. The Houston Yacht Club and its new clubhouse, a three story Spanish stucco affectionately referred to by the membership as the “Pink Palace”, opened in Shore Acres, Texas on July 4th, 1927. The Club has a long standing reputation of hosting quality events, including national and world sailing championships. The clubhouse is also a wonderful place to host an event for a few friends or a few hundred.

I told Leah about the history and the architecture. She asked if we could go inside and look around. I told her I didn’t know, it was a private club. But we could ask. We walked around the corner and across the parking lot. I grabbed her by

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the arm and stopped her just as she was about to open the front door. I told her I needed to know something before we went in. She looked at me with a quizzical expression on her face that said sure, what?

“Will You Marry Me ?”

Leah let go of the door handle and turned to face me. I think she could tell from the look on my face that I was dead serious, and a bit nervous as well.

“Of course, but...”

I stopped her in mid sentence. Then I told her that was a good thing, because I would have hated to pay for nearly fifty people to fly in for the weekend if she was going to turn me down. I opened the door and we went inside the Yacht Club. Descending the spiral staircase to the right was, well...everybody. Her family, my parents and brother, the band family (including Scotty his latest – a Mexican princess named Marisol), friends from Lufkin, Kentucky, and Los Angeles. Leah reached over and punched me on the right bicep. Then she jumped into my arms. She was grinning from ear to ear.

Stephanie and Leah’s mom Janet had things worked out just perfectly. They brought three different dresses for Leah to choose from, and I had a tux ready as well as a more casual look. The toughest part was getting the license without Leah’s knowledge. After Steph and I struggled with the state process, my dad stepped in to save the day yet again. He invited a friend of a friend from law school who was now a circuit judge in Galveston County, to take a sail from around the west end of Galveston island and dock at the Yacht Club to partake in the evening’s festivities. He issued a license the day of the wedding.

The actual ceremony took place about four miles off the Texas coast in Galveston Bay. We were guests on the “Dizzy Miss Lizzy” – a forty six foot cabin cruiser. Apparently, Kelly knew someone who worked for the owner. The Captain that was hired was also a Presbyterian minister. He took us out to sea and then dropped anchor and performed the ceremony. Leah had chosen to dress fairly casually – an off white sundress with a big floppy hat. I wore the tux shirt and pants, but blew off the jacket and the tie. We both had on sunglasses. We smiled and cried and said “I do”. I couldn’t help but think back to that trip up to Lufkin, and the feeling I had when I opened the motel room door to find the love of my life standing on the other side. Not a single thing has really changed since that day. For that I am incredibly grateful, and incredibly lucky. We came back to shore and partied well into the night. There was lobster, broiled and blackened redfish, oysters, crabs, and shrimp any way you wanted them. I was glad that Johnny had the foresight to remove the cooler from my car and have the shrimp that Leah and I had bought earlier that day boiled and chilled. It was a wonderful night.

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We all headed back to Topanga Canyon after the wedding and the mountain of work that was ahead – Leah and I talked about taking a brief honeymoon, but decided to let that wait until after the tours of Europe and Japan set for the summer. There seemed to be more new people every time I stepped into The Palace. And there was something going on all the time. Day and night didn't exist in this building, just Pop-Op. We hired a costume consultant named Lillian Fullbright, and she was very vocal in her opinions on just about any subject that arose. Not just discussions involving dress, but every detail, even once she suggested a lyric change!!! Lillian had a ton of energy and her heart was in the right place. But Lillian's part in this little drama took on a new meaning within just a few days.

My younger brother David, after finishing his second year at Vanderbilt Law School, came out to spend the summer. Dave is the good and faithful son. He got straight "A's". He doesn't smoke pot. He was the president of the Judge's fraternity as an undergrad at U.K. I gave David a bunch of crap about dad sending him west as a spy. But I also knew that my brother loved me and was proud of what I'd accomplished. He was proud as well of the yellow Porsche Boxter we bought him when he arrived in Los Angeles. An early present for law school graduation. He planned to ship it back to Tennessee when the fall term started at Vandy. I started showing Dave around the complex. Production on the house was continuing at a steady pace, and we were almost ready to start installing equipment in the studio. We walked into The Palace and almost immediately encountered Lillian, who just had to tell me about something or another. I introduced her to Dave and looked over at my brother's face as he stumbled through "Hello". The look said it all. The arrow of love had just landed a direct hit into my poor brother's heart. This willowy, opinionated, blonde whirlwind of a girl had ensnared David without even batting an eyelash. He was history. Two years later Lillian would become my sister in law.

We made the video for "Thoroughbred" at Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, California. Hamilton Butler once again was the director. We began very early on a race morning. All of the shots of the track and the band settings were done well before any racing began. About 2000 folks showed up early to be part of the crowd and a shot at being an "extra". I play the part of the track announcer, and call parts of a couple of "make believe races" amidst the lyrics. Nobody wanted to dress in a jockey suit, so we hired a real jockey to play the part of the leading man. Eric is a gambler who keeps having encounters with a hot, hot, hot girl Leah found through her connection with Charlotte Kemp at the Playboy mansion. And wardrobe put her in some incredibly sexy clothing. This girl was smokin'. Greg is the ticket booth operator, and observes Eric's attempts at gaining this bombshell's affections. And his continued pursuit even after getting shot down several times. Of course, the girl leaves with me. She's tempted by Scotty, and writes her number on R.L.'s floor tom head, but she walks out to the limo with me. Ramon wins at the track and has a stack of cash at the end of the day.

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In cartoons, the hero can do anything. Dodge bullets because they move in slow motion during battles, for example. In the real world, this “time warping” can exist in a number of forms. Most notably when people in danger feel as if time slowed down for them.

For me, there are those rare occasions when the speed of life slows for a few seconds so that I feel like I can almost reach out and grasp the moment in my hands as it is passing by. Some athletes have this ability, and those that make the big plays (and the big money as well) in key situations over and over again have learned to focus it when they need to. Personally, most of my experiences have been at one time both surreal and not especially helpful. Driving down the street in the car, or walking through a parking lot to a meeting. Amusing little treasures, but I don’t much think about them except while in the moment. It’s happened a handful of times while on stage. The first time was rather unsettling – it briefly changes the relationship with the four other guys in the band, and took a lot of focus on my part to keep things from falling apart. The more it happens, the better I understand what is happening, but I certainly haven’t the control to dodge bullets, or hit a ninety five mile an hour fastball.

But I guess there is a lot about the “virtual reality machine” that is the human brain that we will never understand. To our brain, time is just a tool. It can be stretched and twisted to fit the needs of the situation.

“Pictures of Juliet” is my response to R.L.’s situation with Alicia and Randy. At least it started out that way – and then I personalized it. Put myself in R.L.’s shoes. We did this video shoot with a new director, and at a new location.

I’d never been to an actual movie set before. Among the tours and trips we had taken exploring the Los Angeles area, somehow we never ended up on a studio tour. Most of the other staff had been at one time or another, but neither Leah nor I had taken the opportunity. It was a new and interesting experience. The big difference between a studio shoot and a location shoot was the amount of flexibility and control they have over almost everything. And we thought this arrangement was going to be a real treat for us all.

One of the members of my little “private” Karate group was a friend of Cheryl Howard. In passing one day, she mentioned to this friend that her husband Ron was a big ZigZag fan. I asked her to return the favor. I was impressed with his direction in “Night Shift”. One thing led to another. Ron and I had lunch one afternoon and then I gave him a tour of the Pop-Op facility. He agreed to direct the video for “Pictures of Juliet”.

We developed this as a concept piece. With “Pictures” in the title of the song, we thought that a lot of still shots would be needed. Then I incorporated the use of the View-Master into the process.

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We'd all played with a View-Master as kids. Originally marketed as a way to have keepsake photos of tourist attractions, it ended up being more or less a child's toy. Seven separate 3-D stereo images (two photographs to each image) on a single disk which slides into the top of the View-Master. Pull the lever on the side and the images rotate and a new one is in the viewer. Since each eye saw a slightly different picture, it simulated three dimensional perception.

Introduced at the New York World's Fair in 1939, they were sold mostly in photography shops, and the first subjects were Carlsbad Caverns and the Grand Canyon. In the 1940's the U.S. military utilized the View-Master system for personnel training. In 1951, with the purchase of their main competitor Tru-View, they also obtained the licensing rights to Walt Disney Studios. A number of disks were created featuring Disney characters, and this purchase really paid off when Disneyland opened in 1955. GAF purchased the company in 1966, with cartoons and classic television series on disk being the primary focus.

We used it as an introduction to the piece, and R.L. became the leading man. I think he got the gig because on the first day of shooting, when everyone met Ron for the first time, he just had to be R.L. "Hey Ope" were the first words out of his mouth. Everyone burst into laughter. Flashing that amazing smile that America had come to know and love, Ron quickly replied "Hey Barn". Another round of laughter. That was pretty much how the day went.

Dressed as a bum, R.L. finds the View-Master in a dumpster. He looks into the device and the video starts. Across the street from where the action is about to begin, Greg and Eric are sitting together on a park bench. Greg is eating a sandwich.

Pictures of Juliet

Juliet never was the kind of girl,
You would likely hit and run.
Place her heart in one man's hands,
And forever find her fun.
When it came to makin' love,
I thought she would never sway.
Then one night she took my hand,
But I let her slip away.

What you are seeing on video is what R.L. is experiencing with the stereo images. As we get to the chorus, two or three pictures are viewed. The frame changes every time the title phrase is sung. Then you see R.L. set the View-Master down and walk away. Greg gets up and looks over. Eric is now petting a stray dog.

Now he's got pictures of Juliet hangin' on the wall.
Right beside the kitchen window and in the bathroom down the hall.

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Pictures of Juliet in golden frames so divine.
Pictures of Juliet keep comin' back into my mind.

In the next scene, R.L. is now part of the sanitation crew that is emptying the dumpster. Ron's brother Lance is driving the truck. In this character R.L. finds the View-Master and the sequence starts again.

Never heard talk of a driving need,
To have to make it on her own.
Always was well equipped for the world,
Most it's methods she could condone.
No one really said for sure,
What it was that made her stray.
Mrs. Watson said she just up and left,
One sunny Saturday.

The sequencing is the same as the first verse and chorus. I play the character of the son, and of course, look very much like my father.

So he's got pictures of Juliet from some summer holiday.
In a two piece at the beach or on some yacht out in the bay.
Pictures of Juliet bound and set on the mantle shelf.
Pictures of Juliet look like visions of myself.

R.L. sets the View-Master on the truck for safe keeping. As the truck turns the corner the View-Master falls off and I appear to "come out" of the device and am standing on the street corner, The Gibson in hand, with the View-Master at my feet. R.L. as himself is playing drums behind me. Scotty is there as well. Eric points from the bench and then he and Greg get up and join us.

I find it hard to see the reasons,
She didn't stick around to say.
The girl had to know I loved her so,
Even though I never let her know,
Still did that give her the right to take my son away.

R.L. picks up the View-Master and as he looks into it you get slides of Scotty's solo. Another set of pictures with each title reference. This continues through the second chorus.

Still he's got pictures of Juliet through the history of her time.
Just like a silly puppeteer concocts his pointless pantomime.
Pictures of Juliet a world of bright and sunny days.
Pictures of Juliet I only wish they'd go away.

Pictures of Juliet on a yacht out in the bay.

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Pictures of Juliet a world of bright and sunny days.
Pictures of Juliet on some summer holiday.
Pictures of Juliet I only wish they'd go away.¹⁸

The video ends with the Bum and the Sanitation Worker talking as they walk down the street. One says, yeah and that drummer is a real handsome guy. About that time R.L. runs up behind them and says “Hey fellas wait for me”. They walk directly into the camera together. The camera pans back out to the View-Master lying on the curb. It advances a slide by itself, and giggles. Eric and Greg are once again back on the bench. Eric turns to Greg and says “Boy I could see that again.”

A time of new beginnings, at a pace that has kept us all very busy. With a mission and a focus, we all felt that our next adventure was just around the corner. And we couldn't wait to jump in. Makes me feel like the character in an old Paul Simon song, “Keep the Customer Satisfied”

“I'm one step ahead of the shoe shine,
Two steps away from the county line,
Just tryin' to keep my customers satisfied,
Satisfied.”¹⁹