

6) Conversations with The Voice

Under contractual arrangements with the folks at Michael Mann Productions and their partners at Universal, we didn't release "Meet Me" as a single until the week after the Miami Vice episode aired. It went straight to number one on Billboard and stayed there for eight weeks. We'd finally thrown a bull's eye. The night of the Grammy's I was nervous and dancing around. Leah couldn't calm me, nor could a couple of bong hits. I was jazzed. Not only were we performing "Meet Me in the Moonlight" which had been nominated for Song of the Year, but we were also nominees in four other categories. We played early in the evening, and then I got to sit on pins and needles the rest of the night. Normally, I don't get hung up about awards. Heck, this wasn't even our first Grammy nomination. We won two years ago for Best New Artist. But this was different. For some reason or another, winning that night MATTERED. And I don't think it was about me or about ZigZag per se. It was more about the people around us who were so bright and so talented and were working their butts off behind the scenes to make the five of us look really good. I shouldn't have been so concerned. We ran the table. When they announced at the end of the evening that "Architect of Light" was Record of the Year, after we had already won for Album of the Year and Song of the Year/Best Rock Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals for "Meet Me" (the fifth was for Best Music Video, Short Form), I broke down and cried. At least for one night, we were the kings of the mountain.

Ferrito's Dolceria sits two blocks off of Mayfield Road on the near east side of Cleveland, Ohio. Dominic Ferrito and his family have been making sweet confections on that corner for over half of a century. With a small kitchen in the back and a room length display case in the front, it looked like untold hundreds of bakeries across the country. The décor was sparse, and much understated. Everything was incredibly clean. The ceiling, the walls, the floor – all spotless and scoured daily at closing time by the newest of the Ferrito's employees. Off to the side of the main business area was a small café section with a half dozen tables and chairs. Professional men from the neighborhood have been coming here to drink their morning espresso and catch the local sports and gossip since the late 1940's.

Joseph "Joey the Pal" Amaritto first set foot in Ferrito's as a small boy and for a couple of years operated a shoe shine stand on the street corner in front of the store. Now he sat at a table near the back of the store, sipped his fresh ground Columbian coffee, and conducted his daily "business". For the past twenty seven years, Don Amaritto had followed the same routine. Each weekday morning, he left his home nine blocks away at precisely eight fifteen, drove himself (currently in a red Cadillac Fleetwood) into the alley behind Ferrito's, parked it in the middle of the street, got out with the car still running, and entered through the employee entrance into the kitchen and then on through to the café area. Rain or shine, regardless of temperature and driving conditions, he faithfully made his

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journey. Once he departed from the vehicle, it was quickly moved by an associate to a nearby garage, where it was vacuumed and washed. At 11:00 a.m. the vehicle returned. A few minutes later, the Don was in his car and on his way back home.

Shortly after the Don's arrival, two or three other men would enter from the front of the store. The greetings are always amorous and elongated. As if these men rarely saw each other, or might never see each other again. Coffee would be served; pastries offered up, and after these pleasantries, the conversations would begin. On the surface, much of the dialog seemed benign and inconsequential. But when the Don paid a complement to a man's wife or his garden, it was understood that he had favor with the old man. A disparaging remark about how a man dressed or ate meant displeasure. Such simple observations, made almost in passing, could determine a man's fate within the organization and the entire Italian community. This was all done while Ferrito's conducted business as usual. There were no weapons present at these meetings, and no obvious presence by the organization. Two of the Don's men were across the street visiting the barber. Three more were at another café half a block away. A half dozen played cards or watched TV at the garage where the car was being cleaned just around the corner.

Murray Hill, as the neighborhood was known to the locals, had been a hot bed for organized crime in Cleveland and the Midwest since the early 1930's. And Joseph Amaritto had been involved from nearly the beginning. The son of a master stone mason, Joey survived on the streets of "The Hill" primarily by being the smartest, most well spoken boy on the block. His mother insisted that he and his sisters take their education seriously, and Joey loved to read about European art and history. His mother also had a tradition that both drove Joey crazy as a young boy and served him well in adulthood. Every evening before dinner Marie Taticante Amaritto would write a word on a small chalk board next to the stove in the kitchen. Before Joey and his sisters, Michelle and Gina said their evening prayers they each had to define the word and use it in two sentences. They also had to be able to spell the word and incorporate it into a brief conversation. Along with excelling in school, Joey was also somewhat of a local sports hero from his pursuits on the baseball field. He was popular, but not overtly so. The girls thought he was cute, but kind of standoffish. As a young adult, Joey was forming his core being as one of a contemplative, precise, articulate and reflective individual. He knew from a early age that he would be successful in life, and worked toward that goal each and every day.

From the beginning, Joey was always more of a manager than an employee. A true entrepreneur. The shoe shine stand in front of Ferrito's made Joey a "public" figure, and he was fairly well know to all of the families in the neighborhood. He was courteous and businesslike to the men and accommodating with the wives. A perfectionist with the shoe buffing cloth, when he wasn't busy at the stand he would carry groceries home for the housewives and mothers who lived and shopped nearby. He became known as "Joey the Pal", well because he was

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everyone's pal. When some of his friends began to talk about running "numbers" for a guy named Vinnie down at the pool hall, Joey convinced them to sell all of their slips to him. He would pay the runners, gather all of the slips for the day, and deliver them to Vinnie each evening. He took a cut of the proceeds without having to actually do any of the work. Over time he organized the routes and responsibilities so that the entire process ran smoother and was more profitable for everyone. He soon outgrew the street corner and Vinnie, and rather than take the next logical step to a small local establishment, he took advantage of his father's relationship with the masons and began to operate his little policy business out of a small back room at the union hall.

The mob and the American union have been joined at the hip since the 1930's. Starting in New York as a way to control the garment industry, the mob has been playing both sides of the management-labor fence and reaping massive financial benefits from both groups. The model is quite simple: Control the work force through infiltration of the union leadership to strong arm the manufacturers and distributors for better pay and benefits on one side, while dictating pricing of goods and services by controlling the transportation infrastructure. Nowhere is this better depicted than through the stranglehold organized crime maintained over the New York City docks for nearly half a century. Rather than being "in" the import/export business (which many of them used as fronts to mask their nefarious operations), they locked down the thoroughfares through which all products were shipped in and out of the country. It cost the manufacturing businesses to get the raw materials from the docks, and it cost the wholesalers and true exporters to get their finished merchandise onto the docks. Through control of the work force, the Mob leveraged the massive amounts of cash that passed in and out of the union offices in dues and retirement plan payments to fund other ventures. They also found this a good method to "launder" funds that came from other illegal operations such as loan sharking, gambling and prostitution. And of course, they had all the muscle they needed to stay in command of the operations through whatever means necessary, including arson, extortion, and even murder.

The final piece in this puzzle was the influence organized crime was able to maintain over local government and law enforcement officials. The unions created a massive block of voting constituents who could be "bought" to swing the outcome of an election, thereby nearly guaranteeing that the candidates they endorsed would not only be elected, but also be in the mob's pocket. Police officials, prosecutors, and members of the judiciary were all on the "pad" – essentially payment to sway court decisions regarding guilt and sentencing for mobsters or to simply look the other way when crimes involved members of an organized crime "family" member. In New York, this meant control of "Tammany Hall" which was the primary stronghold for Democrats in the early part of the 20th century.

We worked our asses off after the beginning of the year. Forty-four dates (nine indoor arena concerts and thirty five Pop-Op performances) in fifty-two days. All

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but three of these shows were held in the state of California. Leah was five months pregnant by the middle of March, and we weren't straying too far from home. She and the baby were both doing fine, and she was starting to feel some movement. We already knew it was going to be a girl. Leah contends to this day that she could tell from the response in her womb that our child was going to be a rebel like her daddy. She was active during "rockers" and passive during the ballads. According to my wife, the baby's favorite song was "Freedom Fighter".

We tried out our new stage extension concept during those first few stadium shows in California. There were still some issues with sightlines, and we knew that this contraption was going to need to be customizable at each and every venue. Ollie was hard at work back in Topanga dealing with these problems. Because the backstage scene at the bigger venues is always both hectic and bazaar, especially when there is more than one band on the bill, in a way we were creating a bit more chaos with the stage extension. The key here was that we were "moving" the scene to an off stage location. The first designs were simple. A couple of rows of chairs on an apron that extended out from one side of the stage or the other (initially we wanted it to always be on the right side of the stage, but again, different configurations in different venues required the flexibility of moving the extension from one side of the stage to the other).

We started moving into "The LaDonna Inn" the third week in January, 1986. The process, mirroring the building schedule, was detailed, drawn out, and a bit convoluted. But it worked. And you will probably be as surprised as I was by the order in which sections of The Inn were completed and inhabited. The first area finished, and the first to move in, were the house staff. Leah was primarily in charge of the hiring process, with input from myself and a few others (of course, Mike had Pee-Tee do background checks on them all). She had contacted a firm in Malibu that specialized in domestic help. Danny, our valet and sometime driver, was basically in charge of the house. He did what Leah and I (and Stephanie) instructed him to do. He was afraid of Pee-Tee, and liked to poke fun at Ollie. He's a self motivated young man who hasn't missed a day of work in over seven years now and I'll swear it's getting to the point where Danny can read my mind. Unless he has to run an errand or transport something or someone, Danny almost never leaves the house. We have two full time housekeepers. Rita and Juanita. Twin sisters. It's like "cloning the maid". One of them is there and ready to resolve any issue at any time, day or night. Rita is a widower and lives in the residence full time. She also manages the vegetable garden. Her sister Juanita, along with her husband and grandson "Chico", live up off the Ventura Freeway just a few miles away. I make them wear different colored uniforms so I can tell them apart. Rita wears red. Juanita wears white. It could be worse; I could make them wear name tags. Rounding out the full time house staff is Stanley our primary cook. I drive Stanley crazy. One night it's veal piccata and the next grilled cheese and tomato soup. Pizza or popcorn that needs to be ready at 2:00 a.m. (which I wasn't averse to preparing, but there are consequences to rummaging around in Stanley's pantry). But he loves to cook, and really only

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complains when he hasn't received a challenge in a while. After the staff, Stephanie moved in. Her rooms (and in fact the entire guest wing) was completed before the quarters for Leah and I.

Once we moved out of The Stitch and into the house, I made Ollie relocate as well. His schedule was such that he was in San Luis Obispo the first three days of the week and then back working at The Palace through the weekend. He moved into the pool house initially, and then into one of the guest houses. I told him he really needed a place of his own, and gave him a deadline of six months after graduation in May. The day after Ollie relocated we started more construction in The Stickery. We added an additional booth for percussion, and also some storage. The volume of video tapes was becoming incredible.

Ollie and Tate had been off on several adventures together, and Ollie was actually starting to show signs of a personality. It made me crazy that at only thirty one years of age I was being embraced as a father figure. But my wife set me straight on that topic. I've been the "father figure" for this entire group since the early days in Pasadena. But Ollie really was a great kid, if a bit of a social outcast.

Ramon needed to go to Blythe, California (which is right on the California – Arizona border) to visit an aunt who was ill. His teenage nephew was also going to be returning with him, and traveling with us on part of the Pop-Op tour that summer. Ramon's eyesight hasn't really worsened over the years, but we still don't ever let him travel alone. So Johnny turned it into a road trip. He and Ollie flew from L.A. to Blythe with Ramon, connected him with his aunt, got both Ramon and his nephew onto the return flight to Los Angeles, and rented a Corvette. They were going to drive back through the desert. We followed their saga through a series of phone calls that Mike Bennett received over the next couple of days. The first was from the rental car company. Tate had gotten a ticket on I-10 somewhere east of Desert Center. Clocked by the California Highway Patrol at over one hundred and five miles per hour. The rental company wanted their car back. The next day Tate and Ollie shared a hit of "window pane" acid (called such because the best way to administer the drug was to place the small square of paper that the drug was adhered to onto one's eye. The fastest and cleanest way to get the magic elixir into the central nervous system), and toured Joshua Tree National Park. Park Ranger's had called Mike at Johnny's request to verify who they were and that they were on official "band" business. Apparently there had been complaints from several other visitors that they were being a nuisance and were driving carelessly. The Ranger's knew something was up, but Tate had passed a breathalyzer test, so they really had no grounds to hold him. The third call was from Ollie, who had a Pop-Op epiphany and wanted to share it immediately. He jabbered at Mike for several minutes. Then the phone went dead. They arrived back safely in Topanga Canyon the next day none the worse for wear. Their little "trip" had only one real consequence. We never rented a car from that company again.

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The second night after Ollie had relocated to the pool house he had a visitor. It was Stephanie. It was one thirty in the morning and Steph had been snorting cocaine since early in the evening. She was horny and had convinced herself that it was time Ollie shed his virginity. She told Leah later that it wasn't so much that she had to talk Ollie into having sex, but that she had to keep him from rationalizing his way out of it. Ollie really handled it very well. I thought he might get all "puppy dog" on us and start espousing great love for Steph. That didn't happen. Fortunately, he's young enough that he might not know who Rod Stewart is. Steph still says it wasn't the worse night of her life, and that her young companion had performed satisfactorily.

One long weekend in late February, 1986 I sat down for what I think today was probably the best interview I ever did. The show was "60 Minutes". The interviewer was Ed Bradley. Ed and I hit it off from the first moment we met. Over the years we have had a few dinners together, watched a Knicks game or two, talked about music and movies and all sorts of trivia. We just enjoy each other's company. And it showed on the interview. We started in The Palace, where we sat in director's chairs and talked about the early days, the guys in the band, and the ZigZag sense of "family". We walked through the backstage area and Ed got the chance to "hit the button" and rotate the Pop-Op stage. After a break, we reconvened in The Stitch where we focused on "Architect of Light", the upcoming Grammy's, and pending fatherhood. He made me laugh, he made me think. When I was on camera with Ed, I truly felt alive. He brought out my very best. We finished with a visit to the garage, and a little ride in my "new" car.

My "new" car is actually a 1956 Astin Martin DB2/4 Mark II Drop Head Coupe. The company only made sixteen of these models in '56 and of those only six have the steering wheel on the left side. Cream with red interior, black convertible top and chrome wheels. This car had been treated for the last thirty years like it was a member of someone's family. It was beautiful. Don't ask me how much it cost.

Now I've said before that I'm not a "car guy" and I'm really not. Pee-Tee picked out the "family" Bentley, and takes care of the maintenance and upkeep. I've told him on more than one occasion that he should just drive the damn thing home, it's more his than it is mine. And I bought a red Ferrari 328 GTB, just because I'm a rock star and can afford a sixty thousand dollar automobile. Tiny LOVES that car. And he takes better care of it than I would. The joke is that as long as Tiny keeps the car (we call it the "Selleck" after the Ferrari that Tom Selleck's character drives in the television show "Magnum P.I.") clean, that "dad" won't take away his keys. Leah has a little red Porsche 911 Turbo Slantnose that she drives way too god damned fast. I've already informed her that we will not be putting a child seat in the Porsche.

I'm the only person, since I've owned the vehicle, who has driven the Astin Martin with the exception of my mechanic Joey. We've done a slight amount of retrofitting (and all without compromising the integrity of the vehicle. Joey has all

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of the parts we've removed in storage and the car can easily be restored to factory specs). First, I needed the seat a bit further back (and while we were at it, more comfortable as well). Second, it HAD to have a stereo. Rick and Tate found and installed a killer Blaupunkt CD system.

I love a manual transmission. Not only is it the best way to manage a car's maneuverability and breaking, I believe that one is a more aware and engaged driver with a stick. Sometimes we have the Astin Martin transported by flatbed truck so that I can enjoy it in a specific locale without having to drive it there. The perfect example is a trip Leah and I took after Heather was born to Napa Valley. I drove it around to the vineyards while we were there and then when we got ready to head back to Topanga Canyon, it was put back on the truck and transported home. If I trusted Premier Cart and Cartage with my new toy, why would I be concerned about anything else they moved for us ???

Leah says I think I'm James Bond out on a heroic adventure when I drive the Astin Martin. There is more truth to that story than she knows – the original owner of the vehicle was a British counter intelligence officer during World War II. I feel like a real Californian when I'm rolling down the Pacific Coast Highway, top down, wind in my hair, with the Beach Boy's "Endless Summer" blasting from the stereo. I am in my own little universe – "My Room" as Brian Wilson would call it, when I'm behind the wheel of that marvelous machine. I never thought I'd feel this way about an automobile.

We took a ride down to Topanga Beach and sat in the vehicle and chatted about topics from my childhood to "what's next". I'm not sure who got more out of the process. As he departed, I invited Ed to join us on stage any time (he would take us up on that the next time we were in New York). Ed showed me the respect and self control that seldom is encountered in the world of media these days. From that day on I considered him my friend. Ed Bradley, gentleman journalist. Or as Heather knows him – "Uncle E".

Early on in the pregnancy it was decided that we wanted to be in Houston when the baby was born. First, Leah insisted that she be a Texas. And the logistics made it easier on Jimmy and especially Janet Butler. Second, and more to the point, was the fact that the Texas Medical Center in Houston is among the best in the world. We weren't expecting any complications, but were convinced that we would rather be safe than sorry. With a two week run at The Music Hall in Houston, we brought Pop-Op back to Texas.

No award, honor, or other such event even comes close. Not sitting in George Harrison's house. Not being on stage with The Boss. Nothing. Heather Rose was born on July 7, 1986. She weighed in at a little over seven pounds and was seventeen and a half inches long. And for the record – she was PERFECT. I thought I was an idiot in front of the baby. Compared to the reaction from The Judge, my behavior was relatively sane. One look at Heather's sweet brown eyes

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and my dad the iron man melted like butter. She's had the old man wrapped around her little finger ever since.

A week later we were still in Houston, and I had the privilege of singing the National Anthem at the 1986 Major League Baseball All Star Game. I had done it a couple of times before, both for the Dodgers and the Astros. I went onto the field wearing my Astro's "rainbow" jersey with the number 34 and the name "Ryan" on the back and received a tremendous ovation from my "hometown" fans. I also got the opportunity to meet several of the players, including Don Mattingly of the Yankees and young Dwight "Doc" Gooden of the Mets. I promised them both seats at Madison Square Garden for an upcoming set of concerts there. Don and I also talked about apartments in Manhattan, as Leah and I had been discussing the possibility of purchasing a home in NYC.

Although when I had met with Greg and Patty's families at Christmas I had only one agenda item, which of course was to keep my bass player with the program. As I walked back to mom and dad's house that evening I knew that I had to do something more. According to what information we could gather, for some reason Greg and Patty couldn't have children. They'd talked about adoption, but so far hadn't committed to that process. Patty was to that point in her life where she needed to be a mama. I think Leah was at the same place when we decided to have our first child. This may have also played a part in Patty's issues as well – she may well have been a bit envious of our impending arrival. At family tribunals and other ZigZag events, Patty was always cordial, but rather distant with most of the adults. She seemed much more at ease and in her element with the youth and the children. While in California, she volunteered to read at the children's library and took a special interest in our housekeeper's grandson Chico, tutoring him in English and math.

I had Dru Barnhill look at the tax records for three or four surrounding counties. When she found a property in neighboring Santa Barbara County, near the little town of Montecito, that was nearly three years behind on their property taxes, we had what we were looking for.

I called Greg when we got back to California just to let them know that we were home and invited him and Patty to come over for dinner and meet baby Heather Marie. They stopped in two days later. After a great dinner of baked Ziti prepared by Stanley and a couple of bottles of a wonderful Napa cabernet sauvignon, I asked Greg and Patty, along with Mike and Joy who were also dining with us, to join my wife and I in my study. I laid out the plan.

ZigZag, LLC was in the process of acquiring a thirty seven acre ranch that until recently had been used as a private school. The school had come upon hard times following an indiscretion a few years back by one of the faculty members and the associated negative press that ensued. They were insolvent, and the school was closed. Because of the tax situation, we were in position to purchase the property,

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including two dormitories, a school house, and several other smaller structures for a very reasonable price. The land value alone made this a good business decision. But the overall plan was much, much bigger. We wanted to open a children's home. Not a place for state child welfare cases, but rather a permanent "residence" for children and teenagers who had no family, had been abandoned, or on whom "the system" had given up. The biggest obstacle we were currently facing was finding a person to direct these efforts on behalf of the corporation. I looked Patty Townsend straight in the eye. She was crying huge crocodile tears. She said "yes" before I ever posed the question, and followed by mouthing "I love you" back to me. THIS is what family does.

In September we attended the MTV Video Music Awards at the Universal Amphitheatre in Los Angeles. We won two awards that night, but it's the first of these for which I'm the proudest. I didn't win. In fact I wasn't even nominated. It was for Best Art Direction in a Video for "Come Tomorrow Morning". The VMA awards went to Hamilton Butler, Simon Crowley, and Leah Butler. My girl had her own piece of hardware and I was so proud. She thanked me in her acceptance for "chasing her down in little ole Lufkin, Texas and sweet talking her mama into letting her date an outlaw and a bad influence." I blew her a kiss on national television.

"New Caney Katie" ended up being quite the surprise. It was written sometime before the second album, but just couldn't ever manage to make the "A" list. We put it on "Architect of Light" as a sort of "balance song" between "Freedom Fighter" and "The End of the Line".

The story of Katie goes back to the Hilborn days in Pasadena. Hilborn Instrumentation had two separate buildings on the same campus (actually three if you counted the house old Mr. Hilborn still lived in – it was right next door). The front building housed the administrative folks and the sales staff. The production facility, which was where Eric and I worked, was in the rear. Orders came over from the sales office to the production office and from there they were prioritized and routed for manufacturing. The production office coordinator was a woman named Ruth. She had been there a million years at least, and ruled with an iron fist. Really she could do whatever she wanted. The senior Mr. Hilborn was retired, and his son Harry was running the day to day business. Harry had known and feared Ruth since he was a child. In reality, her job wasn't all that difficult. The production manager made most of the scheduling decisions. All that was left for Ruth was to make the production folders and track the progress of the orders. Issues with design or materials were almost always managed directly between the production manager and the salesperson.

When Ruth went on vacation, Hilborn always hired a temporary, just to push the paper and make the coffee. That particular Monday morning I didn't even know that Ruth had vacation plans. When I said something in the scheduling meeting about getting a new copy of a print, as the one I was working from was torn and

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smearred with grease, I was directed to go see Catherine, the temp in the office for the next two weeks while Ruth was gone. She might be able to pull the folder and make the copy. I headed for the office, and down the road to quite an eventful two weeks. I should probably “tell the story” while I’m telling the story.

I waked through the door into the office and directly into the presence of a fine young lass named Catherine McKenzie. She sat behind the desk pulling her long blonde hair back over one shoulder and then, not liking the feel of that apparently, pulling it back to the opposite side. She looked up at me and smiled. I stated my business, and she said she knew where the files were and would try to help. She smiled at me again. I introduced myself and told her I wasn’t in any hurry. Another smile. So then I boldly asked where she was from and how she managed to end up with this assignment. She told me that she was going to be a junior at Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas and was working this summer while living with her cousin in Houston near the Rice University campus. Her cousin worked in the computer lab at Rice. An agency had assigned her to this job at Hilborn for the next two weeks. She just needed the money for school and was glad to be living in the big city instead of the sticks. Then I asked the question that led to “the rest of the story” as Paul Harvey would say: “Where did you grow up?” The answer: “New Caney, Texas”.

New Caney is a large unincorporated area of eastern Montgomery County about thirty-five miles north of downtown Houston. Although the area encompasses nearly fifty square miles, there were only around eight thousand people who live there. It’s just a wide spot in the road on U.S. 59 and although I’d been through there and knew the name, I must admit I’d never stopped in New Caney, Texas.

On Tuesday morning I ask Catherine if she would like to grab a sandwich for lunch. She agreed. We went to What-a-burger and chatted. We talked about music and movies. I talked about the band and she talked about being on the swim team and taking modern dance classes in the evenings. I found out she was “pre-engaged” to a guy she had been dating since high school. They were going to get married after they both graduated from college and had agreed that they wouldn’t have sex until they were married. Sex with each other that is. She and Jarrod had decided that they would be together for the rest of their lives, so why not take these two years to explore the world and all of its opportunities while they present themselves in youth. But two years was a long time, and they were apart much of the time as they attended two different colleges that were three hundred miles apart. He lived and worked on the family ranch in west Texas during the summer, and they would only see each other a couple of times before fall. She mentioned that she was planning to go to a film festival that Thursday evening, and would I like to come and meet her cousin. I told her that I had rehearsal, but could come into town about ten.

New Caney Katie

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“Seems like I met her in a movie,
Old John Wayne up on the big screen.
Nineteen years old and silken flowers in her hair,
Where did she come from it could be anywhere,
As to her name well at the time I couldn't care.”

That evening still feels surreal thinking about it all these years later. We met at a small coffee house near the River Oaks Theater on the west side of downtown Houston. As she entered, I finally got a really good chance to look her over. She was a big girl by my normal standards. About five foot eight or nine inches tall and I'm guessing about one hundred and thirty five pounds. Her legs were long, but very solid. Swimmer's legs. She had a nice thin waist and her breasts were big but not huge. She was in very good physical condition. We walked over to the theater and watched the end of a Woody Allen movie – “Annie Hall” I think, and then they showed a classic: John Wayne in “True Grit”.

I love John Wayne. My grandmother started taking me to see his movies when I was seven or eight years old. Growing up a “city boy”, watching the westerns gave me a chance to see a part of the world that I had only read about in books, or seen on television or in magazines. Now I know (or came to know) that Marion Michael Morrison wasn't the greatest actor that ever lived. He won his only Oscar in this role as Rooster Cogburn, which I don't believe is one of his best three or four films. Personally, I'm partial to “War Wagon”, “The Shootist”, and “The Sons of Katie Elder”. But “The Duke” was much more than an actor to me. He was the first person that I had ever come to appreciate as being “larger than life.” Catherine said that she thought she had watched part of this movie sometime before, recalling the man with the scowl and the eye patch. I could tell that she wasn't all that interested. I had seen “True Grit” three or four times at least, and knew that Marshall Cogburn would get along quite nicely without us. I reached over and put my hand on Catherine's arm, she looked over at me, and we got up and left. Right around the corner is a little bar that doesn't advertise and has no exterior signage. The entrance is through a plain steel door under the stairwell on the back of the building. I'm not even sure the place has a name. Not surprisingly, Tate knew about this place and had taken me here a time or two before.

There was a big bar area with loud music playing on the stereo and a number of people gathered around in half dozen or so sets of living room furniture. Sofas, recliners, coffee tables, and lamps. Looked like a used furniture store display room. In the back were a couple of other rooms that were more private and the music and lighting were both softer. These rooms were much smaller. There were a couple of sofas and a number of bean bag chairs. There were also portable partition sections that could be set up to create some semi-private space. I tossed two bean bags into the back corner next to an end table with a lava lamp on it, set up a partition in an “L” shape to create about a six foot by six foot square area

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with a small entry space against the back wall, and ordered a bottle of chardonnay.

We sat on the beanbags and talked about mostly nothing as we waited for the wine. I looked at her pretty smile and pretty hair and wondered where the hell this was all heading. In the midst of my ramblings I expanded on my preferences for the John Wayne movies mentioned previously, and then had an epiphany. I was going to call Catherine “Katie”. I didn’t mention it at that moment; as I thought best to not do anything that could be offensive or misconstrued. It might have been detrimental to the evening’s overall goal. The wine was brought, opened and poured. The waiter disappeared. I clinked my glass into her’s and said “Here’s to whatever this is”. She looked at me and then looked at the wine glass. I could tell she didn’t have the answer. Then she leaned over and kissed my cheek. “This can be whatever we want it to be” was the reply she whispered into my ear. I brushed her cheek with the back of my hand and kissed her on the forehead. We drank the first glass of wine more or less in silence. I got up to pour a second glass, and asked if she minded sharing one beanbag. As I handed her back her glass, I plopped down next to her and put my left arm loosely around her right shoulder. She rose up and moved a little closer, and as she lifted her head I slid my arm behind it, placed my left hand on her left shoulder pulling her close. I thought she was scared. After laying out all of her plans to me, I believed that now she was having second thoughts and needed a way out. For some odd reason, I felt obliged to give it to her. I couldn’t have been more wrong. I polished off my second glass of wine and asked if she was ready to leave – after all, we both had to be at work in the morning. The perpetual smile on Catherine’s face vanished, and was replaced by a look of shock and fear. And then the truth came rushing out. She wanted me. Wanted me in the worst kind of way. But she was concerned and feeling a bit uneasy about the way she was treating me. I knew she had plans, and long term I wasn’t in them. She didn’t want just sex, she needed passion. And she wasn’t sure if we could pull that off, given the circumstances. I figured that I could fake “passion” for one night and give this girl what she wanted. I leaned in and kissed her. Once briefly, and then again with more firmness. Pulling back to stare directly into her eyes, the reality of the situation finally sunk in. I paid the check and we headed for her cousin’s apartment.

She was a smoldering volcano in desperate need of an eruption. We made love that night on her cousin’s living room sofa. Catherine had a bedroom, but for some reason we opted for the sofa instead. It’s a good thing her cousin was in the next room doing the very same thing with her current boyfriend. Catherine was loud, and she was demanding. She wore me out that night. Four solid hours of very physical, high energy sex. I went back to my place and slept for a couple of hours and finally dragged into work about 10:30. She was already there, with her hair pulled back in a pony tail and ever present smile at the ready. I was stiff and sore and had scratches on my back and on my ass. And to think that the girl with the pretty hair and the pretty smile had done all of this damage.

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“She asked if I could play a twelve string,
Some simple sullen Dylanesque things.
Then sitting on the floor she began to sweetly sing,
And the freshness of her voice made me recall the smell of spring,
Never have these brave old words taken on a truer ring.”

Her mother’s family had a fishing cabin up in East Texas. On Thursday she told me that she was going to meet a few friends there for the weekend, and would I like to come along. No gig that weekend, so I could probably leave after Friday night’s practice/party. She picked me up first thing Saturday morning. We drove for about two hours to just outside of Woodville, Texas and stopped for bar-b-que. It took about another hour from there to reach the cabin. We stopped one more time at the liquor store (as we were about to drive into a dry county), and then at the grocery to buy some steaks. The “cabin” wasn’t anything like I had imagined. It was more like a rustic looking four bedroom house in the country. Dishwasher, satellite dish, hot tub - this was really going to be rough. We unloaded the car, put away the groceries and went for a walk. It would be a couple of hours before her friends arrived. We wandered through the woods hand in hand for what seemed like an eternity, with the feeling that we were the only two beings in the entire universe. We got back to the cabin just before dark. I went inside and got a Michelob Light and a wine cooler out of the fridge. Catherine had walked out to check the mail and was just coming through the front door when the phone rang. It was her friend Tisha from college. They’d been trying to call all afternoon she said. Tisha and her boyfriend Ryan where suppose to be come in from Waco, but they had a flat tire in Corsicana, Texas and turned around. We were going to be alone for the weekend. As she was telling me all of this, I was pulling The Gibson out of it’s case and getting situated on a huge leather sofa in the middle of the room. Catherine took her wine cooler from the counter and sat on the floor across from me on a woven rug. She crossed her legs Indian style and leaned back with her palms flat on the floor supporting her weight. The strength in her arms and torso was obvious. Then she smiled that smile. She looked radiant.

“New Caney Katie she’s my earthly delight.
New Caney Katie she can treat me so right.
Out on the beach on in the back of my car,
Sayin’ whoa now Katie don’t you take me too far.
New Caney Katie I like you right where you are.”

I played a few songs – some originals and some oldies. We talked about life and where we wanted to end up. I rolled a joint and we had smoked about half of it when Catherine go up, touched my knee with her hand, and walked toward the back of the cabin. I caught up with her in the master bedroom. We made passionate love with the moon shining in through the window and the cricket’s chirping in the background. I dozed off and when I awoke Catherine wasn’t in

the bed. I walked back into the front of the cabin and was greeted with the smell of sautéed mushrooms and onions. She was about to check on the baked potatoes in the oven when I walked up behind her and kissed her gently on the neck. She asked if I could light the gas grill and pick out a steak. I walked out the back door and onto a small deck. I lit the grill, and then lit a cigarette. I stared out into the dark forest and shook my head as I thought about the events of the last few days. Then I suddenly remembered something. I stuck my head in the back door and calmly asked: “Can I call you Katie?”

“I broke into a quick Django,
And she commenced to do the tango.
Then in my mind I recalled her sweet caress,
As she floated by a hand leading on her flowing dress,
Trapped deep within her spell I truly must confess.”

Katie came out onto the deck with the steaks on a plate and a cold beer for me. She sat down in one of the deck chairs as I pulled the steaks off the plate with a fork and put them on the grill. She said she wanted her steak about medium – red but not pink. Then she gave me another one of those beautiful smiles and said it would be fine for me to call her Katie. In fact, she thought it was sweet. She told me about an uncle that had called her by that name, and how he was her favorite because when she was a child Uncle Max always had candy in his pocket for her. I just told her that it felt right – it fit who she was, at least to me. She went back in and brought out two plates with a loaded baked potato and a pile of the sautéed mushrooms and onions on each. I pulled the steaks off the grill, and we sat on the back deck in silence and enjoyed our meal. Afterwards, we laid on the sofa for a while and watched something on TV. I did my normal “TV thing” and played guitar during commercials. Whatever we were watching ended, and I got up and announced that I thought I was going to take a shower. Katie said she was going to clean up the dishes from dinner, and maybe curl up with a book. I had just gotten into the shower and had shampoo in my hair when I turned around to see that Katie had removed her dress, was removing her panties, and was about to join me. I thought I’d better get that shampoo out of my hair – and fast.

We made love in the shower. We made love in the bedroom. We made love on damn near every flat surface in the cabin that night and well into the next morning. She was insatiable. I awoke sometime around noon, stiff and sore and wondering if I would survive this ordeal. Again, Katie was no longer in the bed. I found her on the back deck with a Danish and a cup of coffee. She had finished a two mile run about thirty minutes earlier. She took a shower while I caught a buzz and had a cigarette. I had The Gibson on the back deck when she returned. She brought me some fruit salad and a piece of toast. I ate and then we took another walk. Somehow it seemed different today. The possibility that seemed to hang in the air the evening before had been replaced with the restlessness of the morning’s reality. We made love one more time, packed the car, and headed back towards Houston.

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“New Caney Katie you’re my earthly delight.
New Caney Katie you can treat me so right.
Out on the beach on in the back of my car,
Sayin’ whoa now Katie don’t you take me too far.
New Caney Katie I like you right where you are.”

I got back to Pasadena in time for part of the ZigZag Sunday evening ritual. It wasn’t a formal practice, but at some point every Sunday evening each of us would wander into the warehouse where we were practicing at the time and hang out. Katie dropped me off and headed back to her cousin’s to do laundry and get ready for another work week. Some nights we played cards or watched television. Drinking was usually light, and soda or water was often the drink of choice. Any playing that was done was primarily acoustic – R.L. never picked up a set of sticks on Sunday night. Regardless of who came when, we stayed until all of us were there. We talked briefly about the week ahead, smoked a joint, and headed for home.

“I tried my best not to depress her,
To treat her like a true contessa.
But then one day she just moved her life away,
Headed for some strange affair on some new sunny day,
For her return now I get on my knees and pray.”

Monday night we had practice. Katie had a dance class. Tuesday morning she asked if she could take me somewhere for lunch. I said sure. I got in her car at noon and asked her where we were headed. “Your place” was her answer in a definitive tone. We barely got through the door of my apartment, and made love on the living room carpet. It was almost 1:30 before we got back to the shop. I don’t think either of us cared. I caught shit from Eric for the next couple of weeks. He had seen Katie drop me off on Sunday, and knew what was going on. “Screwing the hired help”, he’d say. Or “don’t get caught doin’ it on the clock.” The next time Ruth went on vacation, he went as far as to tell the production supervisor that I might be uniquely qualified to interview the candidates for the position. Even Harry Hilborn, the big boss, seemed to know what Katie and I had been up to. He came through one morning early that week and was standing nearby when Katie walked through the shop with a stack of production orders. He gave me a wry little smile and wanted to know if I had been “hittin’ that”. “As often as possible” was my response. Wednesday was another rehearsal night. We had a gig in Lake Charles on Friday and Saturday, and wanted to try out a couple of new songs. Katie and I talked early in the day on Thursday, and she asked if I had plans for the evening. I told her no. She told me not to make any.

“New Caney Katie you’re my earthly delight.
New Caney Katie you can treat me so right.
Out on the beach on in the back of my car,

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Sayin' whoa now Katie don't you take me too far.
New Caney Katie I like you right where you are."

We drove down to Seabrook and bought some fresh shrimp. Probably my favorite part of living on the gulf coast was the cold boiled shrimp. We bought three pounds and some boil seasoning, drove back to my apartment, and I put a pot of water on the stove. Katie had gone to the grocery at lunch and bought fresh vegetables for a salad and a loaf of garlic bread. There was also a bottle of Pinot Blanc in the bag – I put it in the fridge to chill. We ate our salads and shrimp and drank our wine. It almost hurt to look at each other. We talked of where she might go next, and when she might come and see us play. I cleaned the kitchen and Katie slipped into the bedroom and put on a brand new negligee. She looked stunning. We made love that night like a finely tuned machine. Each motion fully in sync with every other motion. It was amazing that in less than two weeks two complete strangers had come to know each other so well. When I woke up on Friday morning, Katie had already gotten up, run, showed, and left for Hilborn. I laid in my bed looking up at the ceiling. And I knew it was over.

"New Caney Katie you are my earthly delight.
You can do it up quick yeah you could do it up right now.
Out on the beach on in the back the back of my car,
Sayin' whoa now Katie don't you take me too far.
New Caney Katie I like you right where you are."²⁶

The following Monday, Ruth was back in her usual place. And I never saw Katie again. But I never quit loving her. "New Caney Katie" spent a five weeks in the Billboard top ten, topping out with a week at number three.

Although Cleveland was not New York, there was a strong community of artisan laborers – brick and stone masons, numerous construction trades, steel workers, and the like in the "Forest City" – a nickname (shared by several other North American cities including Rockford, Illinois, Portland, Maine and London, Ontario) taken from Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America. In fact, Cleveland's first professional baseball team was called "The Forest Citys" in the early 1870's. The model devised to manage the transportation industry in New York could be applied to construction and manufacturing in Cleveland as well, and Don Amaritto eventually took full advantage of this process.

Not a large man at 5' 7" tall and about 180 pounds, the Don never had to "take" a room. He had the uncanny ability of being able to manage the going's on without having to exhibit any outward signs of control. He surrounded himself with long time friends, and was weary of anyone who exuded any sense of distrust or deceit. He NEVER talked on the telephone. Never. In an extraordinarily skillful manner, Don Amaritto was able to convey his wishes to a pair of close personal friends, whom he had breakfast with every morning of the week. These sometimes cryptic, sometimes very specific requests were then written by one of

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the colleagues onto a three by five card with the message on one side and the number to call on the other. No further explanation was ever given. The intended message was almost always clearly understood. These monologue phone conversations, always one sided with no recognition of the party on the other end of the line, were delivered by an associate known only as “The Voice”.

The Don had only killed three men in his life, and there had been no witnesses to any of the murders. The last had been nearly nineteen years ago. He hadn't even held a gun in at least a decade. Yet it is commonly said that all of Don Amaritto's friends live on Murray Hill. His enemies could be found at Lakeside Cemetery a few short miles away. One to rarely attended public functions, when he did so The Don and his associates went to considerable lengths to attract as little attention as possible. The last “major” event was the wedding of New York City crime boss Joseph Bonanno's son Salvatore to the Rosalie Profaci, the niece of Joe Profaci, the head of the Colombo family. Tony Bennett performed at the reception, which was held at the Hotel Astor in New York. That was in 1956. It was soon afterwards that Don “Joey the Pal” Amaritto became somewhat of an invisible man.

The Don's connections ran deep and he had a long history of expanding his power base. When Wilbur Clark ran into money problems while in the process of building the Desert Inn in Las Vegas in 1947, a group of investors headed by Moe Dalitz of Cleveland came in and took a seventy-five percent interest in the project. The financing for Dalitz's group came from the Teamster's Union Central States Pension Fund. Don Amaritto controlled that pension fund. Nearly forty years later we were about to move into business in the same neighborhood. ZigZag, LLC was investing in a hotel in Vegas that would include a theater specifically designed for Pop-Op.

To be honest, I'm not a big fan of live albums. From an artist's perspective, the content is essentially rehashed. Even the best of live recordings are technically inferior to the results that can be achieved in a studio environment, and in some cases lead to the public perception that the artist is out of ideas or has lost their muse. There are exceptions of course, “Frampton Comes Alive” and Bob Seger's “Live Bullet” being among them. And there are bands that I think are actually better live than in the studio. Two cases in point (in my opinion) are Little Feat's “Waiting for Columbus” and Climax Blues Bands “FM Live”. And on top of my misgivings about live recordings, my wife detests them. Won't listen to them. In Leah's mind, concerts are to be experienced and studio recordings were for listening enjoyment. End of discussion.

On the current tour, every concert show was being recorded both for potential live videos for MTV, and also for a live album that we were planning to release sometime before Christmas. The title came from a new song that had not been released on any of our previous projects.

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Be Mine Tonight

It starts with a low driving rhythm, very choppy, very syncopated. After eight bars, we start the first verse

“Darkness is fallin’,
The music’s callin’,
There’s just no need to put up a fight.
No time for explainin’,
Or rearranging,
I need you to be mine tonight.
Be mine tonight.”

The second verse is fuller, with more barre chords and fills.

“Forget your true vocation,
Take a brief vacation,
And leave all of your troubles behind. (Be mine tonight)
Be mine tonight.
Be mine tonight.
Be mine tonight.”

There is an escalating bridge and guitar solo.

- Bridge 1
- Bridge 2
- Bridge 3
- Bridge 4
- Bridge 5
- Bridge 6
- Bridge 7
- Bridge 8

The first verse is repeated, with only keyboard backing. It was amazing that although this was a brand new song, and we hadn’t even played it live until the first night of the tour, by the time we got to second round of concerts in the fall everyone knew all of the words. Most nights I let the crowd sing them without my assistance.

“Darkness is fallin’,
The music’s callin’,
There’s just no need to put up a fight.
No time for explainin’,
Or rearranging,
I need you to be mine tonight.
Be mine tonight.

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Be mine tonight.
Be mine tonight.”

The final refrain is done with an echo of the title line

“No hesitation,
Or reservations, (or premeditation)
You see it happens around here all the time. (Be mine tonight)
Got the fever,
Be a true believer,
I can guarantee you’ll have a good time. (Be mine tonight)
No need for stallin’,
Nor some stonewallin’,
You’ve got to know that it’s right.
Be mine tonight.

The music escalates to nearly a cacophony. The song ends with a single a capella voice.

Be mine tonight”.²⁷

This song did several things for us. First, according to our contract with Capitol, live records did not count against the numbers in the contract. Neither did “Greatest Hits” projects. But, the contract also stipulated that if the album contained a previously unreleased song that reached the top ten, then it did count against the contract. When “Be Mine Tonight” hit number seven on Billboard and stayed there for two weeks, our contractual obligations with Capitol were fulfilled and we were technically “unemployed”. All hell was about to break loose. Everyone wanted to sign us. “Be Mine Tonight” was originally tracked during the “Architect of Light” sessions. The band literally argued about the exclusion of this song from that project. But we knew what we were doing (at least in hindsight). “Be Mine Tonight” is obviously an audience song. I knew it while the hook line was still in my head. But it’s really a love song to my wife. The working title was “Please, Be Mine Tonight”.

Richie Altobono knew that they were all in for a rough time. Killing a made guy was bad enough. When the Gambino’s found out there was a girl in his crew, they were going to cut off his balls. His first thought was to get a message to Gaspape. But that had to wait. He needed to make Connie invisible. Richie drove to a hotel in Newark, New Jersey that was owned by a family friend and put Connie in a room. Then he drove back to Brooklyn in search of Anthony Casso.

Gaspape was sitting in the “19th Hole”, a small and powerful social club that was the home base for the Lucesse consigliere Christy “Tick” Furnami. He knew there was a problem before Richie had made it to Newark. When he arrived back in Bensonhurst, Gaspape was waiting at the So-Club. Richie ran through the blur

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of details, as best he remembered them. At first, Gaspape seemed more concerned about the “cut” from the heist. Once those details were arranged, then the topic moved to Connie. She had killed a made man. According to the code of the Mafia, there was only one outcome that could be achieved. But Anthony Casso had another idea. He went back to the 19th Hole to consult with Christy Tick.

Christopher Furnari was a first generation immigrant who made his living primarily through a lucrative loan sharking business in Brooklyn and Northern New Jersey. He joined the Lucchese crime family at the relatively advanced age of thirty eight, but was a two time convict by the time he was nineteen. By the time he was officially a “made man” he was earning twenty five thousand dollars a day. Furnari had become a caporegime in 1964 and ran his business from a social club in Bensonhurst called “The 19th Hole”. He controlled New York City Council District Nine, which represented the more than six thousand workers who did the painting and decorating for all the finest hotels, city bridges, and subway stations. They would pick up cash payments from the contractors, who would charge a ten to fifteen percent tax on all major commercial painting jobs in the New York metropolitan area. Furnari was also skilled in the art of human dismemberment and would dispose of his murder victims at the 19th Hole.

By 1980 Furnari was elevated to the position of consigliere to the Lucchese family’s new Don Anthony “Ducks” Corallo, from where he enjoyed enormous influence both within his own family, the other New York families, and crime families from other US cities. He continued to oversee his criminal interests from the 19th Hole, but spent much of his time providing advise for family members as well as settling disputes with the other families.

The Gambino family was furious. There could be no negotiation. They had no idea who had actually pulled the trigger, but knew that the crew came from within Gaspape’s ranks. SOMEONE was going to pay for killing a capo. The solution was actually very simple. Other than Casso and Furnami, the only men who knew the shooter’s identity were the members of Richie’s crew. The trick was getting them all in one place at the same time. And although Gaspape was fairly certain of the parties involved, he needed to be positive. Even if one of the crew was missed, the truth of Connie’s involvement would soon be on the street. He needed to move quickly. He went to Newark to visit with Connie.

Upon opening the door for Gaspape, Connie felt the life drain from her body. She knew the consequences of her actions. She knew her life was about to end. But oddly, Gaspape was alone. No driver. No back up car. No sign of anybody else. Surely Anthony hadn’t come to kill her himself. And all of that fear dissipated with his first sentence. “We need to get you out of here”. He then asked her who else had been involved in the heist and knew of her participation. She gave him the list. Gaspape made a phone call from the pay phone out in front of the hotel diner and they left for the Newark Airport. Connie was headed to St. Louis, Missouri.

Consigliore Furnami was hammering out the details when got the call from Casso. Phase one could now commence. He picked up the phone again and dialed the number. When the party on the other end answered, he uttered a single word – “Go.” Twenty minutes later Richie Altobono and his crew were gunned down inside the So-Club. There were no witnesses and no survivors. In an hour the consigliere would be sitting down with his counterpart in the Gambino family to manage the “terms” of reconciliation. It would cost Gaspire his entire piece of the armored car heist. Furnami and Don Carolla would still get there cuts, but it would come to them from Casso. In a previous “conversation” with the Don in Cleveland, these terms had been managed as well. Five hundred thousand dollars invested in a remodeling project at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas. A half a million bucks that would clear the books in Vegas almost as soon as it hit them. They would have a man meet the plane in St. Louis, and escort Connie on to Detroit. “The Project” would need to cool off a bit before any decisions were made about her future. The only comment from Don Amoritta the next morning was “HO fiducia il nostro piccolo progetto è arrivato?” I trust our little project has arrived. He received a single word response from across the table. “Si”.

Eric Anderson and I were buds before we were band mates. We met at Hilborn, used to smoke joints together at lunch and drink beer with the rest of the crew after work. I think the difference between the relationship that Eric and I have and that with everyone else in that band is that with us it’s more “pleasure before business.” I’d known Eric a month or so and had been to the apartment that he shared with a guy called “Skinny” (and wasn’t) a few times. We would sit in the living room, drink a few beers, do a few bong hits and play acoustic guitars. There were several other guys in the apartment complex who liked to play (and party) as well. Sometimes there were so many of us that we moved the party to the apartment complex pool. Occasionally, Eric would break out a melodica or a penny whistle to add some melody. One night he picked up a recorder off the coffee table and began to attempt to play it. No sound was coming out. He blew into it again – still nothing. He looked into the instrument from both ends. Still nothing. Then he made a tactical mistake. He inhaled. Then he coughed. Then a gigantic cockroach crawled out of his mouth and across the side of his face. I fell on the floor and laughed for a good ten minutes. Eric’s response was initially to gag. Then he took a big swig off of a Jim Beam bottle that was sitting on the table. Then he started laughing too. I remind Eric of this little story almost any time he comes to me with a problem. How could anything ever be worse than nearly swallowing a cockroach ???

I must admit, to my surprise, Eric and Birgitt were getting along nicely. While we were in L.A., they lived in a penthouse suite atop a Wilshire Boulevard apartment complex (when the rent is three thousand dollars a month can you really call it an “apartment” ???). Birgitt returned to Oslo on business for a few weeks, but kept in touch with Eric and also with Mike. Smooth sailing, at least for the present.

To appreciate my relationship with R.L. Chambers, there are a couple of things that need to be understood. First, I think our relationship works, and is successful, because we are both crazy, but in different directions. Every person who has ever met me will tell you that I'm borderline excessive-compulsive. And I won't argue against their opinions. On the other hand, R.L. can exhibit signs of manic-depression. When you put our pair of chemistries together, you have a stable being. Second, if it seems like I have been able to make one good decision after the next (and truthfully I almost never make unilateral decisions without first consulting all of the principals), R. L. Chambers is living proof that I'm not as good as some may believe. We wrangle over business and band decisions on a regular basis. It's (and perhaps shamefully so) our "process". Has been from the very beginning. The up side is that when we get to the point where I think it's good, and R.L. thinks it's good, then we know we really have something. R.L. and I also know that there are times when we should stay away from making these decisions. If I'm a bit too "on", or he's a bit too "off" we know each other well enough to say "it's not a good time" and do it some other day.

One of the biggest mistakes I ever made was getting involved in his R.L.'s relationship with Melanie. By his standards, they were happy. Everyone else could tell that Mel was withering on the vine. She rarely left the house, and most days just sat and stared at the television. She didn't eat or sleep well, and although she and R.L. conversed about daily events like dinner and schedules, there were rarely any public displays of affection between the two. They had separate bedrooms, and R.L. would pay Melanie a visit every third night like clockwork. Aside from those brief flashes of passion, Melanie was totally on her own emotionally. We tried really hard to include Mel, and had a bit of success – she seemed to relate to Patty better than anyone else, but R.L. could tell what we were trying to do and one day (probably one where I should have steered clear of him) he came down on me with both barrels blazing. He was pissed. Melanie's fine, leave her alone. Stay the fuck out of my business. Even his sister knew, especially from the previous relationship with Alicia, that this was unhealthy behavior. But there was nothing anyone could do about it.

We have had very few employee issues over the years, and all of the top dozen positions within the corporation have been occupied by the same employees for several years. We've also tried to stay very proactive about asking about their needs instead of reacting to them. Mike and Pee-Tee are out in front of all of this in ways I wouldn't believe, and probably don't want to know about.

According to Michael Bennett, there are three rules to effective hiring:

- 1) Go with your gut. Find qualified people and see if you like them. See if they "fit" within the family.
- 2) Pay people what they are worth, and a little more. It's not always about money either.

- 3) Trust employees to do their jobs. Long term staff believe you have confidence in them. We try to trust people from day one. We've been burned a few times, but I think overall we keep more good people than we lose just by trusting them.

ZigZag, LLC had grown to the point that even with all of the best help in the world Mike and I could no longer manage the operation, especially when we were on the road. At first we discussed Mike not traveling with the band anymore. Although he understood, and I think Mike was OK with the idea, Joy certainly was not. Something that we never figured into any of these "business" conversations was the need to examine the feelings of everyone that was being impacted. I got Joy's side of the story from Leah and Steph. Mike got more than an ear full. The bonds that these women had created touring with the band, and the support they gave each other (read: DUMB MEN) were never considered. Which led us back to the issue at hand. It was becoming clearer and clearer that we needed George Bennett to take over as president of the corporation. It was time to pay more lawyers to change the way the business was structured.

We received two Academy Award nominations that year. The first was for "Freedom Fighter" which was used in a high tech action and adventure film called "All We Need to Be". Big gross at the box office, and great animated fight sequences, but not what I'd call an "Oscar worthy film". The second was for "Gotta Find That Girl", which was the theme song for a small independent release that starred an up and coming actress with a famous last name, Bridget Fonda. We pretty much had to go to the ceremony, although I wasn't keen on the whole tuxedo and red carpet thing. We chatted and posed for pictures. Everyone said we looked "charming" – whatever the hell that means in Hollywoodese.

It was the night of the Oscars that I finally convinced myself that there was a problem. That was also the last time I've done any cocaine. Anticipating the possibility of actually winning an Academy Award, we booked a suite at the Hilton and prepared for a victory party. Catering, live band, open bar, private dancers, the works. That included some premium grade nose candy.

It was almost 2:00 a.m. and I was tired and a bit strung out and about ready to crash. Leah had already gone back home to check on Heather. There were still a couple of dozen people in the room. Mostly what I'd call "Sunset Strip Hanger-On's". Several were still attacking the sugar bowl on the bar that earlier in the evening contained nearly half an ounce of quality cocaine. Scotty and Tate were still actively involved, but Johnny really wasn't a big fan of snorting coke (it made him too edgy – imagine that) and I knew he was mostly just hanging with Scott. The lines he was doing were tiny. Scott on the other hand was in his element. Charming and witty, he owned the room. He caught my eye as I was getting up to tell Pee-Tee it was time to head for the house. Scott immediately rushed over and insisted that I join him at the bar for the final lines of the evening (he probably meant for me, not for him). First of all, he KNOWS better. I don't

participate with strangers, especially when there are this many. You never know who has a camera, or passes information to the gossip columnists, or worse. I don't need, want, or encourage those kinds of risks. There was no reason to do so. I can do anything I want, including some things that are rather unreasonable or unwise (or illegal), just because of who I am and the resources at my disposal. The only true danger is the potential for damaging my reputation. There is an entire corporation in business and specifically designed to make sure that never happens. Pee-Tee took one step toward Scotty. I could tell he was about to make a scene. With no premeditation, the Naughtyman did the unthinkable. He sucker punched Pee-Tee right below his left eye. Remarkably, Pee-Tee kept his cool. In order to defuse the situation I told Scotty that we could go back to one of the bedrooms in the suite and do a final round of blow in private. I called Leah to tell her that I was on the way. I told Pee-Tee to stay with Tate and shut the party down. I climbed into a town car with no entourage and headed for The Inn. About half way home I began to have difficulty breathing. By the time I got back to Topanga Canyon I was laboring to move air in and out of my lungs. My windpipe felt swollen and my head was feeling dizzy as I came through the door. Danny freaked. Leah freaked. Mike called the doctor, and then came right over. Then he gave me a dose of shit. I knew what it was. The lining of my trachea was inflamed from the cocaine, and the blood vessels were also contracting, dramatically reducing the space through which air could pass from my mouth to my lungs. It's called "coke constrictions" – happened once at UK. That time I just drank a lot of water to try to flush my windpipe, sat on the couch, and focused on every breath. Slowly the effects wore off. Scared the hell out of me. This time the doctor arrived and gave me a sedative. I rolled in and out of a stupor for the best part of the next two hours. I awoke fully to Tate screaming in my face. More trouble with Scott.

Apparently, after I left there was another scene and Scott took a second swing at Pee-Tee. This time the move was more anticipated and the result was Scotty being physically removed from the premises, both quickly and forcefully. Johnny had ridden home with him. Pee-Tee closed the bar and shut down the party. Tate was emphatic. Something had to be done about Scott. He was off the hook. I told Tate I needed him to come to me, and that Pee-Tee was certainly the wrong emissary. Johnny needed to do what needed to be done. What a night. The Oscar went to "Take My Breathe Away" from the movie "Top Gun".

Scott McNaughton came into my study two days later, apologized to Pee-Tee, called his sister Stacey on the phone and asked for the three of us to help him with his "problem". We already had everything set up and ready to go. Rehab is such an ugly term. It should be the place you go after knee surgery, not to dry out. Scotty checked himself into the Betty Ford Clinic in Rancho Mirage, California on April 14, 1987 for a thirty day inpatient detoxification and treatment program. He still had a hole in his life and couldn't find the right thing to fill it. At least now he knew that the answer wasn't cocaine.

Long Live Rock And Roll

Not long after we had moved into The Inn, Pee-Tee came across a tiny portable “spy” camera with a radio transmitter attached to one of the trees about a hundred yards from the house. He pulled it down and destroyed it, thinking that it must have been part of a security system from a prior owner. Two days later he found another one. I took a walk the next day and found two more. We decided at that point to leave them alone and see if we could find out who was keeping an eye on our operation.

Stephanie constantly lived precariously close to the line between total control and total insanity. She was truly living the rock and roll lifestyle (probably moreso than most of the rest of us). Although they are the best of friends, there are times when Leah treats Steph like one of the “hired help.” Worse actually. We all realized that ZigZag has pretty much provided for Steph’s existence for nearly five years. The same could be said for Rick, Tate, Ramon, Kelly and Dolly, and several others. Most of those folks were actually on the payroll. Stephanie is not. She “lived” with us. And she was part of the family in several different “roles”. One of the guest suites in The Inn was designed pretty much to her specifications. Perhaps Stephanie’s single greatest attribute is the way she looks in a bikini. She has the perfect body to maximize the impact of those tiny pieces of clothing. And she knows it. Sitting poolside is truly a spectator sport at The Inn, and Steph was queen of that domain.

Leah had left with the baby and was going to Mike and Joy’s. Danny was going to take her and Heather over in the Bentley. The sisters were at the farmer’s market. Just before departing Leah suggested that I might want to check on Stephanie. We both knew what that meant. I had the information Pee-Tee had shared earlier still on my mind, and in that moment of agitation and arousal I made a stupid decision. As I walked across the back patio and toward the pool I saw that Steph was lying in the shallow end with only her head and shoulders above the waterline. I looked to the right, and remembered the location of one of the camera units I had found a couple of days before. It had a perfect vantage point to document the activity on the south end of the pool where there were several deck chairs and a table with an umbrella in the middle. For some reason, a silly Halls and Oates hit started running through my head.

“Private Eyes they’re watching you,
They see your every move.
Private Eyes they’re watching you,
Private Eyes.
They’re watching you, watching you, watching you, watching you.”²⁸

About that time Stephanie got up and began to walk up the steps and out of the water. She looked spectacular in a bronze two piece swim suit that revealed far more than it concealed. The only thing left to the imagination was an appropriate removal technique. As she walked up to where I was standing, I leaned in and whispered into her ear. Then I kissed her neck and removed her bikini bra. We

Long Live Rock And Roll

had sex on one of the deck chairs, and the table, and finally the grass next to the patio. I looked up at where I believed the camera was mounted and smiled and winked. We were putting on quite the show. I looked at Steph and giggled. The Boss started playing in my mind:

“Me and crazy Janie was makin’ love in the dirt,
And singin’ our birthday song.”²⁹

It was the next day that Pee-Tee informed me that upon further review, it was possible we were being watched by more than one party. One of the devices that he discovered was a different (and far superior) model to the other four we had found so far. At first we were sure it was the Feds – probably someone with the Drug Enforcement Administration. They were always looking for high profile trafficking and manufacturing arrests. And there was no doubt there was a considerable amount of substance abuse going on in and around the ZigZag compound. Then I thought back on the Ace Trucking days and the chair and all of the strangeness that surrounded that relationship. Maybe the mob was watching as well. My only hope was that if two sides were keeping an eye on us, hopefully one of them was looking out for us as well.