

8) The Young Broker

Under the management of George Bennett, ZigZag LLC became an established, well funded and financially secure corporation. Not that we had been doing a bad job before, but George, with his insights and interest in the stock market, had us diversified and focused on long term stability. My great, great grandkids weren't going to have to worry about money.

The stock market, with its age old traditions and unique set of standards and rules, is difficult to understand, even for those who have spent the time and effort to study its history and trends. Even I get the basics. Buying a stock is the same as owning a piece of a company. The company sells the stock in order to raise capital for start up costs (known as an IPO or initial public offering) such as facilities, equipment, and employees. It costs them less long term to pay dividends to the investors rather than interest on a bank loan. Those who buy the stock believe that the company, over the long haul, will be profitable and return the initial cash outlay, plus significant profit, to the purchaser. Short term this usually requires the issuance of what are called "growth stocks", which basically means that the purchaser now owns more of the company, and that the total value of the company has increased. If a shareholder retains this growth stock for long enough, eventually he will sell it for a tidy profit.

But that is where you lose me. All of the talk about stock prices and how and why they go up and down, the indexes that indicate the overall health of the market, and the layers of brokers, bankers, analysts, and forecasters that are involved in some mysterious way. Why the quarterly financial report for one company impacts the perception of stability for another unrelated company. I guess I should quit spitting out stupid questions. The truth of the matter is that I just don't care. It's like changing the oil in my car. I have someone that does that too.

George and a few college friends started making small stock purchases while still in school. After graduating, George headed off to law school. His buddy Jeff went to work for Merrill Lynch. Today Jeff is a senior account executive. His biggest client is George Bennett and ZigZag LLC. Financially, we've both benefitted significantly from the relationship.

I came off of my little twelve city solo tour (I mean really solo - just me and a guitar, a piano and a few harmonicas) and we went back to work in The Palace. It was time to update the Pop-Op show. We looked at songs that were slated for our latest project "Perceptual Reception" which was still about a year from release, and also at some older songs and some cover tunes as well. Simon Crowley was back in his glory, Josh Barnett and the carpentry team as good as ever, and Ollie was Ollie. They had a few design modifications, all of which made set changes faster than ever. And we were building more and more sophisticated lighting and

Long Live Rock And Roll

pyrotechnics into the show. We started laying out the new songs, and The Palace became alive with activity. Auditions, rehearsals, consultations and discussions with Lillian about wardrobe, technical sales people with the latest and greatest equipment they would just love us to endorse, and the never ending construction. We were like bees in a hive.

Leah gave birth to our son on May 20th, 1990. We named him William James, after the Judge and Leah's dad. Even before he was born we all called him "Billy". I'm not sure either grandfather was real happy with the name choice, but they can talk to my wife about that. Even I'm not stupid enough to try and make decisions about naming the children. Billy and Leah were both healthy and happy, and Heather cherished the role of big sister. Of course this led to another influx of relatives, and guaranteed a full house at The Inn.

Leah's younger sister Marla moved in with us shortly before Billy was born. She was almost sixteen years old now, and was a real asset to her sister. Marla became the point person for "Team Heather". Now nearly four, Miss H. was a real handful. Every day was dress up day. Every night she wanted the same thing to eat – spaghetti. She was spoiled rotten, and it showed. At least Marla had the sense to tell her "no" to the most ridiculous of requests, and a young set of feet to try and keep up with Heather. The housekeepers and Danny the valet indulged her every whim. She even found a soft spot in Stanley the chef's heart. Heather was more welcome in the kitchen than any of the rest of us. Hollywood made her lemon shakes and "grown up drinks" complete with little umbrellas and maraschino cherries. Heather was, without a doubt, the queen of the castle.

But Marla was there for more than to just babysit. After discussions with Jimmy and Janet, it was decided that Marla would get a better education in a private school in California than she would in a public school in Texas. Her older brother Justin had just graduated from high school, and was headed to (of course) Texas A&M University. Leah and I made sure he arrived in College Station, Texas in style – we bought Justin a brand new Jeep Cherokee. Leah's parents probably spent a couple of months a year with us anyway, and would probably be here more if Jimmy could convince Janet to retire. She just loves teaching too much to stop.

Joy Bauer Bennett had been charmed by our girl Heather. Now she was over the moon about our son Billy. In fact, our dear Billy boy was collecting quite the set of "mamas". Mike and I agreed that we were going to need to make sure there were men around to toughen him up. The Bennett's spent increasingly more and more time at The Inn. It finally got to the point where they were eating dinner with us almost every night. Stanley was certainly more agreeable with cooking dinner for four or six or eight, rather than for just two. Eventually Mike and Joy stopped cooking at their home almost altogether, and assisted their chef in finding a new placement. The process seemed so natural that I don't think anyone ever

questioned why or how. It was there house every bit as much as it was mine and Leah's.

“Perceptual Reception” was our sixth studio project, and the third done in The Stitch. Tom Dowd was again producing and engineering, but Rick Daniels was logging plenty of hours behind the board as well. Tom and I had already talked on the phone prior to his arrival in Topanga Canyon. He wanted Rick to receive co-engineering credit on this project. It was a nice touch, because Tom certainly didn't have to suggest the idea and Rick would have never brought it up. Rick just loved what he was doing, and who he was doing it with. He had a great family and a great life. I was happy that Rick would be receiving “points” on this project. I know I pay him well, but a little more is always better. Besides, he deserved the recognition and the cash.

This project just seemed to roll. We were so comfortable with both the environment and the personalities by this point that verbal communication became almost unnecessary. R.L. and Greg started us down a very “raw” path with the rhythm tracks, and Scotty and Eric just clawed their way around trying this and that until something clicked. Everyone seemed to be in a pretty solid place emotionally, with Eric being both passive and pleasant most of the time. He and Birgitt had a new ritual. She would bring Eric herbal tea and they would sit on the floor of the keyboard booth and chat while drinking her elixir. Scott was managing fairly well in his life without coke, and although still struggling for answers to some of those age old questions of life, Scotty was holding his own. Tate was compelled for some reason to inform me personally of Scott's slips and mood swings. I certainly didn't care if Scott had a manhattan before dinner or a beer at the pool. But I know the Tater's heart was in the right place. I had all of the songs written (including three or four that didn't make the project), and R.L. had signed off nearly three weeks earlier. These sessions seemed natural and unforced, like we were just doing it for fun. Like the junior high days back in Dave Brubaker's basement when one of our friends we called “Curley” would bring his prized cassette recorder to one of our “practices”, set up a couple of little Radio Shack microphones in front of the PA speakers, press the record button and announce “and now the band you've all been waiting to hear...”

“Push Comes to Shove” accurately reflects the approach we were taking to this project. Raw and a bit in your face. This song generated one of our best all time videos and has become a staple in our live set. We've never attempted to create a Pop-Op arrangement for “Push”. The seeds for this lyric undoubtedly grew from all of the violence and unrest I was seeing on the television news, especially in places like Beirut and Belfast. As an American, that sort of destruction is something I had never witnessed firsthand, and hope I never do.

Push Comes to Shove

There's a riot in the street,

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All the people that I meet,
Are bearing arms and holding babies.

It's not enough just to compete,
Can't you hear the chargin' feet?
It's do or die – well now maybe.

You can thank your lucky stars,
And praise the Lord above.
If you can feel your heart still beating,
When push comes to shove.
Push comes to shove.

In the video, we are all dressed in military garb and toting around machine guns (they were actually plastic – the real things are very heavy). There are children and chickens roaming amidst the destruction. We talk on walkie talkies and make signals like we're on a tactical mission. There is an explosion, and we quickly move off the screen and towards the projected source.

They hide out in the alleys,
Try'n to overcome the peaks and valleys,
Of a new revolution.

So go get the O'Malley's,
Tell them Theodore and Sally,
Have come up with a solution.

There'll be no soaring for the eagle,
No chirping from the dove.
All of nature will be silenced,
When push comes to shove.
Push comes to shove.

The video continues and we are in a safe house, with food on the table and fellowship and alcohol flowing in the room. There are also guards peeking out the windows and shouldering their weapons. I am sitting in the corner playing a mandocello and Eric is next to me with a penny whistle. Someone knocks at the door, and the scene becomes tense as the visitor is questioned and the door is opened. It's a courier with news of some sort.

(Push comes to shove)
You didn't think it could happen.
(Shove)
It came down all too fast.
(Oh yeah)
And if you think that it just doesn't matter,

Long Live Rock And Roll

You and your logic ain't never gonna last.

Scotty appears amidst the rubble in his camouflage gear now toting his Les Paul. The guitar solo is a full 32 bars, twice as long as usual. He's got the instrument growling like its spitting gravel. As we get ready to start the final verse, the camera pans out and the entire band is assembled and the ravaged street is now our stage.

Now all the rage has turned to quiet,
And though the old folk's still won't buy it,
Hey we got us a winner.

Ever anxious now to try it,
Put your ego on a diet,
You're no more than a sinner.

Even knowing that it fits so well,
Like a hand within a glove.
Fear what once again may happen,
If push comes to shove.
Push comes to shove.
Push comes to shove.

Push comes to shove.
Push comes to...(Push)
Push comes to...(Push)
Push comes to...(Push)
Push comes to...Shove."³⁵

As we enter the final choruses, we are all setting our instruments down and beginning to fight amongst ourselves. Scotty pushes me in the back. I turn and give him a shove. He falls into R.L. Its ON. Soon others join in the pushing and shoving. Fists start to fly. A knife enters the fray, and then a chain. A very large black man enters the room and fires a machine gun into the ceiling. Everyone freezes as the song ends. "Push Comes To Shove" entered the Billboard charts at number thirty five, and the following week failed to stay in the top forty. Two weeks later the video came out, the song reentered the charts at number twenty seven, and peaked four weeks later at number sixteen. The power of MTV.

After "Perceptual Reception" was released, we started an extended Pop-Op Tour with one week stops in ten different theaters across the country. We also did seven stadium shows during the same stretch. Starting once again at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles the tour concluded nearly three months later at the Beacon Theater in New York City. The stadium set didn't include many surprises, with only three additions from "Perceptual Reception" and a killer cover of Lynard Skynard's "Simple Man". We had also added Petty's "American Girl" to the list

Long Live Rock And Roll

of encores. I dedicate that song to Leah at every show. The lighting and pyrotechnics were also getting more and more complicated and interesting. The work we had done the previous year on the Pop-Op set was expanding the concept as well. There were poetry readings and multimedia shows for opening acts, and we used a lot more graphics and video in the production. Occasionally, someone “special” would show up and open the evening. Tom Petty did it with just a twelve string guitar one night at the Greek. Mister B.B. King and Lucille came out for a few minutes before our shows in Memphis, and Robin Williams brought the house down on two separate nights at the Beacon. One specific song that was reworked and turned out quite fantastic was “Pictures of Juliet”. We performed the entire song in the lower sections of the staging and the top sections were covered with six separate screens. The story is laid out in a series of photographs by Scott Silverstein. Scott’s photo essay really enlightened the audience about the content of the lyric and also the intent behind it.

As I had predicted to Patty Townsend several years earlier, the success of Pop-Op produced far more than just the revenue and positive reviews from the shows. First and foremost, there was less travel. A week or two at a time in one city rather than the normal eleven cities in fourteen days with a stadium tour. This fact alone seems to lower everyone’s anxiety level. Less time in airports and sitting on a chartered plane. The stage crews had more time between shows to get sets from one place to the next. We also enjoyed being part of the “theater” scene. In a lot of ways Pop-Op is just another traveling Broadway production.

We checked into the Waldorf Astoria in Manhattan the Wednesday afternoon before the beginning of our little “Beacon run” that started Friday night. The entire group of us, twenty five or so, were escorted into a private room while the check-in process was finalized and room keys issued. The porters had used a separate entrance to bring in the luggage and personal instruments. For some reason Scotty was feeling uneasy about this process, so he and I went to supervise. I thought a quick stop at the bar might be in order as well. As we neared the elevator banks at the rear of the lobby, we noticed a commotion off to our left. Lots of photographers and bulbs popping. Finally, the congestion cleared and we could see the object of this attention. “Wow” was all I could manage to utter. Scotty responded with his standard line. “I think I’m in love again.” I’d heard him say it a million times about a million different girls. This time he meant it. Scotty made a bee line for the concierge.

Her name was Franchesca Monetti. She was a twenty one year old model and aspiring actress from Turin, Italy. She was in New York for a fashion show on Saturday. Her return flight to Rome was scheduled for 2:05 Sunday afternoon. It’s amazing how much confidential information you can obtain with a warm smile and a hundred dollar bill. The concierge wouldn’t divulge the suite number, but promised to personally take care of any message Scott might want to have delivered. Four days and a tight schedule on our end. Scotty was going to have to work fast.

Long Live Rock And Roll

Mike Bennett had come in search of us (although Pee-Tee was standing only about thirty feet away) and became part of the quest. The Naughtyman peeled off three or four more Benjamins and handed them to the hotel employee. Roses, red. One, no two dozen. Tickets and backstage passes to Friday night's show. A bottle of champagne. And a brief note. "Amore, Scott." Mike made the tickets appear. A member of the hotel staff arrived with the flowers and the bubbly. The concierge was dispatched.

Once we find our way to the "ready room" about fifteen to twenty minutes before show time, we normally don't see another living soul outside of the onstage crew until the lights come up. Scott had no idea if Franchesca and her entourage arrived at the theater. He was as nervous as I had ever seen him. Tate checked once or twice, but Johnny couldn't stray too far from the stage as the beginning of the Pop-Op show was about to start. Escorted to the front row, she took a seat about six feet directly in front of Scotty's mic stand. She stood and waved at him as he walked on stage. Scotty played with a renewed energy beginning that night. Franchesca also started a ZigZag tradition of her own. She tossed a handful of rose petals in Scott's direct just as the show was starting. At the next show five people mimicked her act. At the next, over three dozen. Now that side of the stage has to be swept after our first song. It's too slick otherwise. There are rose petals everywhere. I walked over to Scotty after the first song and asked which part of his anatomy he thought would be the first to "speak Italian". I can be such a smart ass...

Scotty and Franchesca had a late dinner and "conversation" after the show. The interpreter did most of the talking. Scott said afterwards that in some ways this was easier. All of the awkward introductory questions and stories being conveyed through a third party sanitized everything somehow. They agreed that they would meet again in Rome the following weekend. As Scott was about to leave, Franchesca said in broken English, "I like you... a lot." He took her hand and kissed it gently. "Bueno notte" was his reply.

Franchesca was a classic Italian beauty. Every line of her face and body near perfect, as if placed in stone by a gifted sculptor. It was backstage after the show that night before I got a first really good look at this young lady. I made some self serving guttural sound that was immediately translated by my wife and the response was a sharp elbow in the ribs. "Interested in an upgrade?" followed verbally. First of all, no, I love my wife. Without Leah I would be pointless. Second, trying to chase a beautiful woman takes a lot of work. Why would I want to exert that much energy, when all I have to do is go home??? Third, this young philly would probably kill a thirty six year old man. I hoped Scotty was up for the challenge. After thinking all of this through, I responded to Leah with "not dead, not blind...but not crazy." Unspoken but understood by both of us with a simultaneous chuckle – I wonder if there might be interest in a three way???

Long Live Rock And Roll

I thought it was funny that Franchesca spoke literally no English, and I was pretty sure that Scott had utilized his entire Italian vocabulary with the one word note. The first day they used one of the photographers to translate pleasantries. The next morning Scotty had Mike find a contract translator. Scott intended that the woman be put on the payroll so she could teach him Italian as well. He needed to be able to talk to this girl. Franchesca was about to depart on Sunday morning (and Scott was on the first flight out as soon as we finished our second week at the Beacon) when it was discovered that Connie Leggio spoke Italian as she and Franchesca were conversing in the hall. Franchesca was about an inch taller (and twenty years younger) than Connie, but from a distance they looked quite a bit alike. Long legs. Long dark hair. Olive complexion.

While Scotty was jetting off in search of true love, Connie was moving on to her latest target. Shapour Bakhtiar was an Iranian dissident living in the Paris suburb of Suresnes. A former member of the Iranian ministry of labor, Bakhtiar later became Prime Minister of Iran (for a grand total of thirty six days) under soon to be deposed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Denounced as a traitor by the new leader in Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini, Bakhtiar fled to Paris shortly after the Shah was forced to leave Iran. An initial attempt by the Islamic Republic to assassinate Bakhtiar failed in July of 1980, although a neighbor and a police officer died in the attack. On August 7, 1997 three assassins entered Bakhtiar's home and killed both he and his secretary, despite heavy police protection. Two of the killers escaped back to Iran, but a third, Ali Vakili Rad, was captured in Switzerland, convicted of the murder and sentenced to life in prison. The fourth member of their party, and the one who had planned the entire endeavor, was never mentioned by either Rad or the authorities. Known only to the trio as "dessein" (planner in French), Connie Leggio's passport didn't indicate that she had ever left the United States.

While doing the two weeks of Pop-Op shows at the Beacon, we recorded a series of songs acoustically, just sitting on chairs or stools at the front of the Pop-Op set. Some were reworks of ZigZag originals and others covers of our favorite songs. The result was "Pop-Op Unplugged", which aired on MTV right before Christmas in 1991. The CD by the same name was released just after the first of the New Year. I played most of the show on a Gibson J-200 "Super Jumbo" acoustic guitar. Eric played an upright piano, and R.L. brought just a kick drum (which was stuffed with pillows to mute the sound), a snare and a high hat. Scotty and Greg both cheated, they plugged into small amplifiers that were hidden from view. Scott played a beautiful dot neck Gibson ES-335 that I have given him the year before. My favorite portion of this show will always be the three song homage we played to the late Jim Croce. The whole thing started with Eric going off on a tangent that led into the beginning of "You Don't Mess Around with Jim". From there we went to an eerie acoustic version of "Operator" and finished the trilogy with a rousing rendition of "Rapid Roy (The Stock Car Boy)", one of my all time favorite Croce tunes.

Long Live Rock And Roll

“Rapid Roy that stock car boy,
He’s just too much to believe.
You know he always keeps an extra pack of cigarettes,
Rolled up in his t-shirt sleeve.
He’s got a tattoo on his arm that says “Baby”,
And another one that just says “Hey”.
And every Sunday afternoon he is a dirt track demon,
In a fifty seven Chevrolet”³⁶

Had Jim Croce not died at the peak of his popularity, I believe he would now be considered (even more so than he already is) one of the finest songwriters of his generation. Acoustic versions of “Thoroughbred” and “Who Cut’s The Barber’s Hair?” from “Pop-Op Unplugged” both made brief appearances in the Top Forty. I am especially proud of this version of “Barber’s Hair”. It comes off (thanks mostly to Eric’s piano work and Scotty’s slide guitar) sounding a lot like Little Feat.

Back in Topanga Canyon, Ollie Harrelson was on to his latest creation. Having finalized a set of stage extensions that worked flawlessly during the 1991 tour, Ollie set his sights on something bigger, and certainly louder. Confetti Cannons. Ollie introduced the idea at a Super Bowl party at The Inn. We all laughed, but we knew he was serious. And the next tour (and every tour thereafter) we had confetti cannons. Compared to the other two items of note that day (aside from the game, which the New York Giants won 20-19 when Buffalo Bill’s kicker Scott Norwood clanked the potential winning field goal wide of the right upright) the cannons were no big deal. First, Ollie walked into the house from the patio and asked Hollywood for a BEER. When questioned he said he always drank one (and only one) beer on Super Bowl Sunday. Second, and hold on to your hats, he brought a WOMAN with him to the party. Her name was Marcia Tutweiler-Hughes, but forever known within the ZigZag circles by the simple moniker of “Ollie’s Woman”. They were perfect for each other. She was a professor of economics at UCLA and had a Doctorate degree in Applied Mathematics from Stanford University. Between them, Marcia and Ollie had the brain power to solve the world’s problems. But neither could manage the task of making toast.

They met, appropriately enough, at a comic book convention. To this day we still don’t know if Ollie asked Marcia to the party or if she requested to come. They came back over to The Inn for dinner with the family a couple of weeks later. They were young and in love and the world was a wonderful place. At one point during dinner Ollie said something sweet and Leah reached under the table and squeezed my hand. Ten years had passed since the day my heart melted for a sweet Texas girl, and we were more in love than ever. Ollie and Marcia proved that there is someone out there for everyone. I think I got “remembrance sex” that night. Eighteen months later, Ollie and Marcia got married out by our pool. We had the biggest ZigZag Family Tribunal of all time, and officially “christened” The Inn. For a wedding present we sent them to Saint Thomas in the Virgin

Long Live Rock And Roll

Islands for a two week honeymoon. When they came back Leah and I sat the both of them down for a talk.

We thought Ollie should get a real job, like working on the space station or something.

A man can only attend so many five thousand dollar a plate charity dinners in one lifetime. And I'm certain I've exceeded my quota. It seems like we get propositioned by every charitable organization on the planet. On the surface, I don't have a problem with that. But most of the time I leave these functions feeling like everyone would have been better off if I had just cut them a check. I understand that these events are also important for the purposes of exposure and name recognition. Most of the time it seemed that I also left still hungry. It only made me more resolute to make "Love's Labour" different from most non-profit organizations.

My friend Ed Bradley came to visit again, "officially", and we started with a ride in the Astin Martin to Montecito. I told Ed on the way up that I would only agree to be interviewed for "60 Minutes" if the focus was totally on Love's Labour and not on me or ZigZag. I knew my friend the journalist didn't much like interviewees dictating the terms of the conversation. I hoped my "journalistic friend" would see things a little differently. Ed and I had a nice lunch and I left him in the capable hands of Greg and Patty Townsend. And their "family". Ed and his crew spend a week with the Townsends, Sissy, and the children. I seriously doubt Ed even missed me – until he needed a ride back to the city. I did let him become the first, and only, media person to ever film inside our private residence in The Inn (against Leah's wishes). We walked into the nursery and I introduced the world to the two most important and precious members of the ZigZag family. And the reason why we do what we do. The privilege cost "Uncle E" a pony ride from Heather (which the 60 Minutes editor insisted be kept in the piece, despite Ed's protests). Billy just laid there and smiled – already a natural in front of the camera. The interview did exactly as I'd hoped. America fell in love with our Patty and the wonderful work they were doing. Journalist Ed Bradley won an Emmy for that interview. Our friend Ed Bradley had the award shipped to Montecito. We display it proudly in the front hall of the residence, alongside a Scott Silversteen photo of Ed and the kids.

On one of my earlier trips to Montecito to take Sissy to lunch, I stopped at a putt-putt golf course on the outskirts of town. They had a batting cage in the back that took quarters and threw about a dozen baseballs to you. After a couple of recent instances where I felt I had controlled the onset and duration of one of my little "time warp" spells, I put my theory to the test. I put in the first set of quarters and watched the first two pitches go by. I held the bat out in front of the third and just tapped it and the next two or three. Then I took a couple of full swings, connecting solidly on the first, and just getting a piece of the second. I watched two more go by and the machine stopped. Nothing. I put in three more quarters.

Long Live Rock And Roll

I wasn't ready and the first ball hit me on the bicep. As I began to feel the pain of the blow, the ball deflecting off my arm was now traveling at an incredibly slow pace. I would see the rotation. And the little puff of dirt when it touched the ground. The next ball out of the machine came in small slices of time, each moving the sphere about two or three feet towards me. As I prepared to swing my body got into a rhythm with the frames. I pounded the ball right back at the machine. And then another. And another. Like it was sitting on a tee. I stopped swinging and watched one or two more go by. Then I walked back out to the Astin Martin and smoked a cigarette. Everything was normal again. I got in the car and drove the rest of the way to the house to pick up Sissy. I wasn't sure whether I should be scared or amazed.

When Leah and Patty join forces on a project, I know I'm best to just get out of the way and let them do their thing. Their combination of charm and moxie was unstoppable. They had been talking the week before and Patty had mentioned that with seven children now at the house in Montecito, she really needed someone who could be available at any hour of the day or night. Sissy was trying to play that role currently, but along with her other responsibilities, especially with two and sometimes three sick children at any given time, and a child of her own, she was becoming overwhelmed. Patty's idea was to bring in a "house mother". Not necessarily a profession this or a licensed that, just a solid person who would really "care" about these kids. The first person to come into Leah's mind was Alicia (and for no specific reason). I had seen Randy a few times over the past couple of years, but had only bumped into Alicia once since our little rendezvous in Columbus. Patty (with the assistance of Pee-Tee and his never ending list of contacts) had Alicia checked out. She was working as a receptionist in an optometry office in Columbus, but prior to that she had worked in a day care. The owner of the facility gave her glowing reviews. She had loved the work, but needed more income than the day care center could provide. A couple of neighbors shared stories regarding her character. Of course, Kelly was a proponent of the idea. I wasn't sure. But I did what the girls asked. I took the question to R.L. directly. Unsurprisingly, he didn't care. Actually, "rat's ass" was the direct quote. He almost never went to Montecito. But he guessed it would be good to have "the boy" around a bit more. I told Patty that I didn't see any issues, but the decision, as always, was hers. I would support her either way. I told my wife that this could either be really good or really bad. It ended up a non issue. Alicia and Randy moved in a few weeks later. There wasn't even a blip on the radar detecting any problems. Patty reported that R.L. and Kelly had been up once to visit Randy. The interaction with Alicia had been cool but cordial. When I had lunch with Sissy a month or so later, I ask how things were going with Alicia. "It's all good" was the response I received. I didn't need to know anything more.

The brokerage firm was already extremely successful when Kenechi Takahashi joined three years earlier – right out of graduate school in the States. Upon receiving his Masters degree in Business Administration from the Wharton

Long Live Rock And Roll

School at the University of Pennsylvania, Kenechi had hoped to move straight to Wall Street and had fine offers from Shearson-Lehman and Waterhouse. But they paled in comparison to this place, which promised him “big fish in a small pond” status, and almost unlimited resources to chart his own path. He was already being considered for partner based upon his impressive performance thus far. All of that, along with being closer to his aging parents and childhood friends, made this opportunity too good to pass up. What he didn’t know, and would not live long enough to realize, was where the firm of Wei Yang Brokers got their start up capital. Some forty years previously, the founder and namesake of the firm had accepted as one of his very first clients the upstart construction company of R. J. Jones, Inc. The Jones company built staging for festivals, carnivals, rodeos, and of course, music concerts. R.J. Jones was a shell company, owned by another shell company. The initial investment group was from Cleveland, Ohio. Although not listed on any of the incorporation documents, the principal for this little business venture was Don Joseph Amaritto.

Born and raised in the Tokyo suburb of Shibuya, Kenechi’s father was a production manager for Casio Computer, Co. He was the middle child in the family, with an older sister and a younger brother. As a youngster he loved to watch baseball and read. Specifically, he liked to read about America. Kenechi had always dreamed of traveling in the United States and seeing all of the sights he had read about during his youth. When The University of Pennsylvania offered him a special scholarship, his dream became a reality.

Kenechi and his girlfriend first fell in love with ZigZag while dancing to “Daddy’s Girl”, a song off of our debut album that got almost no air time in the States, but (unbeknownst to us at the time) was very popular in Japan. The song seems to be a crowd favorite everywhere. We play it at a lot of our stadium shows, and it has been adapted to the Pop-Op set as well, with staging based on one of the street corner groups from the era. The song is a one hundred percent throw back to the Doo Wap sound of the 1950’s.

Daddy’s Girl

My little girl just turned sweet sixteen.
(Sha-doop shoo-bee do wha doop)
She’s my very own beauty queen.
(Sha-doop shoo-bee do wha doop)
I like to dress her up in diamonds and furs,
‘Cause you know she’s daddy’s girl.
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)
Daddy’s Girl.
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)

Although the term "doo-wop" was first seen in print in 1961, the style that became the Doo Wap sound has roots much deeper in popular music of the

Long Live Rock And Roll

1930's. Songs such as "Blue Moon", "The Way You Look Tonight", and Hoagy Carmichael's "Heart and Soul", although considered "pop" at the time, have become linked with the era primarily because the chord progressions in these songs are typical of those used in the '50's. A pair of vocal groups from Cincinnati, The Ink Spots, and later The Mills Brothers (who I happened to see live at a couple of area fairs during my youth), are critical to the progression of the genre. Rooted in the street corner and subway a cappella groups that were prevalent at the time in many major east coast cities, the arrangements included vocalizations of the instruments, such as "boom-boom-boom" for the bass and "doo-wop-wop" as the horn section. This art of "mimicking" the instrumentation dates to the Mills Brothers in the 1930's.

Yeah that little girl she looks so fine.
(Sha-doop shoo-bee do wha doop)
All the boys think that she is just divine.
(Sha-doop shoo-bee do wha doop)
They'd like to take her out and show her the world,
But they know she's daddy's girl.
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)
Daddy's Girl
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)

Daddy's girl she'll break your heart.
Daddy's girl tear your world apart.
Daddy's girl she might let you stay.
But she will never give her love away.

The first hit record to use the phrase "doo-wap" was "When You Dance" a one hit wonder recorded by a group called The Turbans from Philadelphia. My favorite from the early era might be The Five Satins "In the Still of the Night", which clearly features a "doo-wap, doo-wap" refrain in the bridge.

Lookin' back now on the days gone by.
(Sha-doop shoo-bee do wha doop)
I wonder 'bout them and I start to cry.
(Sha-doop shoo-bee do wha doop)
Thinkin' of a love I'd hoped was true,
Daddy's girl farewell to you.
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)
Daddy's girl.
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)

In 1955 doo-wop also started to appear in the pop charts, with songs like "Earth Angel", and "Only You". When The Platters hit number one with "The Great Pretender" the Doo Wop era was in full stride. There were a number of successful acts in the heyday of the genre, including Frankie Lymon and The

Long Live Rock And Roll

Teenagers (“Why Do Fools Fall in Love?”), The Monotones (“Book of Love”), The Del-Vikings (“Come Go With Me”), and Dion and the Belmonts (“A Teenager in Love”). Doo-wop’s influence continued into the '60s, with groups like The Four Seasons who’s hits included “Sherry”, “Big Girls Don’t Cry”, “Walk Like a Man”, and a cover of Fats Domino’s “Ain’t That a Shame” (allegedly the first song a young John Lennon learned to play on guitar). This street corner sound also had an impact on the surf music of Jan & Dean and The Beach Boys.

Daddy’s girl.
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)
Daddy’s girl.
(Shoo-bee do wha doop)
Daddy’s girl.”³⁷

The firm of Lazard, Frères and Company is not a well known entity to most of the American public. That is by design. Although integrally involved in the business of Wall Street and high finance, they are not a brokerage firm. They are the investment bankers for the market. Primarily they provide advice on mergers and acquisitions, corporate restructuring, and asset management.

Founded initially by a set of Jewish brothers from France as a dry goods store in New Orleans, a timely move to San Francisco at the height of the gold rush in the early 1850’s started the ascension of the company. At first they imported goods for the miners and arranged for the sale and exporting of the gold bullion that was being discovered. By 1870 they had offices in Paris and London as well, and were becoming established in the management of financial transactions among banks and foreign exchanges. Today Lazard Frères and Co. is the most sought after financial advisory firm in the world. And they’ve made billions and billions of dollars giving advice to Fortune 500 companies.

For two summers during college, Kenechi Takahashi was employed as an intern at the Lazard Frères office in New York. He had a pretty good understanding of the intricacies of high dollar financial transactions. And was well connected with several of the Lazard employees. Lazard Frères had made a considerable employment offer to Kenechi as well. But more than anything else the young broker learned during his time at Lazard was that he didn’t want to spend the rest of his life as an investment banker.

What Kenechi “did” wasn’t so much the problem as what he “knew”. He made a couple of deals that made his clients quite a bit of money. What he didn’t know (at the time) was that his moves had negatively impacted the Jones portfolio. When he was informed by one of the partners at Wei Yang that his deals weren’t in the best interest of one of the firm’s long time clients, he was either given too much information or he asked too many questions. Even then it wasn’t so much about Kenechi “knowing”. His response, however, was quite troubling to a

number of people. Using his Ivy League sensibilities and pragmatism, he pleaded with the firm leadership that his market assumptions were proving to be correct and the best path for “all” of their clients, and that the Jones investment was ill advised, perhaps even inappropriate given all of the circumstances. He didn’t say it in so many words, but the entire deal reeked of “insider” information. Kenechi refused to change the investment plans he had already put in place, and would not without a logical, financially based reason to do so. Needless to say, this wasn’t going over too well with the boys in Cleveland.

So a fellow representing Jones made a call to New Jersey to ask for someone to have a “conversation” on his behalf. Next thing you know, the the wheels are put into motion, and a Project is in the works. All from a simple phrase. Always with a sense of respect and reflection, like “it’s been a very good practice of ours...” or “if history can teach us anything...” The point was all that mattered. No misunderstanding or misinterpretation. This time the final word from The Voice was “Progetto.”

I have two trusted companions that have been around for a long time. Both are never more than an arm’s reach away while I’m in my study. The first is a rhyming dictionary. The second is a Bob Dylan song book. The Dylan book dates back to college. Since I can read music (a little bit), I took the piano scores that were available at the local music stores in Lexington and figured out the guitar chords. I found this massive collection (two hundred plus pages) of probably sixty or seventy Dylan songs dating back to the early ‘60’s. I’ve played every song in that book. Most of them multiple times. Some of them I do rather poorly. A few I play real well. For some reason, I tend to gravitate to the long Dylan tunes. “Lily, Rosemary, and the Jack of Hearts”, “Hurricane” and particularly “Tangled Up in Blue.” Without a doubt, my two favorite Bob Dylan albums are “Blood on the Tracks” and “Desire”. I’ve worn both of those records out. “Desire” is well known specifically because of “Hurricane”, the poet’s call for justice in the case of middleweight boxer Rubin Carter. “Blood on the Tracks” is the most popular (according to sales figures) album that Dylan has ever released. Perhaps my favorite song to just “play” is “Buckets of Rain”, one of those innocuous little numbers that that is just plain fun. The genius of Bob Dylan is incredible. He has created, and then relocated, his place in the popular music landscape on numerous occasions. Like a snake shedding its skin, or a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. I don’t think it is a coincidence that ZigZag survives in an ocean of sounds that change with the tide. I’ve watched the master do it for years. There are a few choice lyrics that I can recite with the certainty that they are among the best I have ever heard. Half of them were probably written by Bob Dylan. At or near the top of the list are a few lines from “Tangled Up in Blue”:

“We lived with them on Montague Street,
In a basement down the stairs.
There was music in the cafes at night,

And revolution in the air.”³⁸

I have never met Bob Dylan. I sure would like to some day.

The rhyming dictionary has been a constant companion for years as well (currently it is on the shelf about two feet to my right). Its purpose is exactly stated in its title. The book is a listing of words that rhyme with other words. The approach is unique from a “dictionary” standpoint. Let me give you an example. Let’s say you want to find words that rhyme with the word “love”. In a normal dictionary you would look in the “L’s”, but not in a rhyming dictionary. The words in this book are arranged by the part that rhymes. Usually that starts with the first vowel. In this case we are looking for “-ove”. There are three variants on these letters. The first is what we are looking for. Words ending in “-ove” that are pronounced “oev”. Dove, glove, shove, above. Interested in the second and third variants??? A long “ov”, like clove, grove and stove. And the “uv” of groove, move and prove. Now I don’t normally use this book as the starting point to a line or set of lines within a lyric (although, going back to Songwriting 101 – there are no rules), it comes in the handiest when I have a line or lines that I know I like, and I just can’t seem to pull in the next set of lines or the next rhyme. That’s when I call on the dictionary.

“I’ll Be O.K.” was one of those songs that really put the rhyming dictionary to the test. Three rhymes with each pair of lines, and the last word of the first pair matching with the last word of the second pair. Looking at the first verse, it is “know”, “goes”, and “alone”. Notice that I’m not really matching the ending of the words, but the rhyme is actually the long “o” sound that is at the end of one word and in the middle of another. I don’t think what I did was intentional – just chalk it up to poetic license. The last word in the first pair is “blue.” The second pair rhymes “guns”, “run” and “fun” and ends with “few”, rhyming the first pair. The second set of pairs in each verse matches the first, with one exception. The last word in the third pair has to rhyme with “O.K.” which is the last word in each verse and also of the fourth pair. In this case the word is “day” (in the second and third verses, the word is “way” and “play” respectively).

I’ll Be O.K.

Strange don’t you know, that’s how it goes,
When you’re alone, and feelin’ so blue.
Stick to your guns, try not to run,
Lose all your fun, good times are few.
Meat on a hook, reads like a book,
Queen takes a rook, not been your day.
Wing and a prayer, acts of despair,
No need to care, I’ll be O.K.
I’ll be O.K. I’ll be O.K.

Long Live Rock And Roll

I believe this was the first song I ever introduced to the band that was in three quarter time (three notes to each measure, and a quarter note gets one beat). The chords came before the lyric, and the little bass runs were interesting in that once I had figured everything out on the open A major chord, I had to make it work with the D major chord as well. That took a little ingenuity and some dexterity exercises. I was making up the chord form, and my fingers didn't want to go where I needed them to go.

Go with the flow, don't stub your toe,
Can't let her know, what's on your mind.
Feelin' insane, love on the brain,
Late for your train, some precious find.
Rocks in your head, better off dead,
Get out the lead, and be on your way.
Day turns to night, wrong may be right,
But give up the fight, I'll be O.K.
I'll be O.K. I'll be O.K.

This song had Pop-Op written all over it. And although most of the time the ideas that we use to create the video and the stage production are basically the same, in this case we went two different directions.

For the video shoot, we went back to the studios at Warner Brothers. Basically, the footage chronicles me getting through my day. A few bumps and some quirky behavior along the way, but by the end the message is clear – I'll be O.K. For the Pop-Op set we took the lyrics a little more literally, and act out phrases within each verse, like "don't stub your toe", "take out the trash", and "queen takes a rook". The choreography was quite busy and required a number of actors. Most of the time Scotty and I are just trying to stay out of the way.

I'll be O.K.,
If I can keep my heart out of the way.
Yes I'll be just fine,
When I get that girl off of my mind.
I'll be O.K. I'll be O.K.

I don't even know what relationship (or lack thereof) I used as reference for this song. The lyric was probably started back in the late '70's or early '80's. Sometimes it just takes a while for the kettle to boil. There are parts of the verse lyric that take me all the way back to high school and the first time I ever had sex.

The girl's name was Sheila Miller. I can't really say that we were even "friends". More like actors in a passion play. She asked me for a ride home one night after a journalism event at school. She was a photographer (and not a very good at it). One thing led to the next and pretty soon we were sliding into the back seat of my mom's Volkswagen 412 square back. I hadn't had my license a month, but was

Long Live Rock And Roll

believing in the advantages of having “wheels”. Since my birthday is in early September, I was older than almost everyone else in my class. This also meant I drove sooner. Sheila was never my “girlfriend”, in fact no one really ever knew about our relationship. We were “friends with benefits” long before that term became fashionable. We would disappear while everyone else was at the football game, or cut school and sneak off for some “afternoon delight”. I haven’t seen or heard from her in many, many years. Sheila and I spent a few nights down a “lover’s lane” that was back behind the drive-in theater. We were “workin’ on mysteries without any clues.”³⁹ And having the time of our lives.

Slip of the tongue, bein’ too young,
Songs yet unsung, never to sing.
Squirrel in a cage, unfaithful rage,
Parsley and sage, some pleasant ring.
Nowhere to turn, more fuel to burn,
Opaque concern, a true passion play.
Take out the trash, boy what a bash,
Don’t mind the crash, I’ll be O.K.
I’ll be O.K. I’ll be O.K.
I’ll be O.K. O-key Do-key O.K.”⁴⁰

The band really outdid themselves on this song. Although I knew the style would be right up Eric’s alley musically, and I was correct on that count, I didn’t anticipate that R.L. especially (who first greeted the song with “great – three fucking four time – are we doing a waltz???”) would embrace this tune. But the drums and bass drive this song and Scotty’s little “flittering” in and out makes the melody more interesting. Eric nailed the synth solo. The song only made it to number twenty three on the Billboard charts, but the video got good rotation from MTV.

It doesn’t happen very often, but yes, Leah and I do fight occasionally. Mostly over stupid stuff like scheduling conflicts and making commitments to events without discussion. Let’s face it, most couples fight about one of three things. The first is money, and we have more of that than we can even imagine. The second is time. We were both involved in the productions and equally busy for sure, but even when we were on the road we were together, and I think that eliminates a big part of the battle. We also basically work at home when not touring. The third is fidelity. Although by most definitions we fail this test, our meaning for the word is a little different. Fidelity isn’t tied to sex with us, it’s all about commitment and understanding. It’s about coming home at the end of the day and being “home”. And it’s not like our sex lives are so scandalous. I could probably count on one hand the number of women I’ve had sex with since meeting Leah. And she knows about Stephanie, and even encourages that relationship. I have no idea when and with whom my wife might have had sex, and I don’t care. The love she has for me is unconditional, and she proves it each and every day. The rest is just what we do to get by when we’re not together. It

Long Live Rock And Roll

doesn't mean anything. Every argument, no matter how it starts, almost always ends up back in the same place – Leah questioning what she did to deserve me. Stupid question, I know, but it's the world I live in some days. And I always respond by singing Stephen Still's "Dark Star" off the CSN album. What a great song. And some of the best three part harmony ever.

“Now you've got me dreaming girl,
It's been so long that I thought that I'd forgotten how.
My heart is once again my soul,
We touched we did you know we did,
No more teasing now.”⁴¹

The “makeup sex” is usually terrific.

Crosby, Stills and Nash (and Young) always make me think of home. In high school we had some older friends who we hung out with. I don't remember their names now, but we called them Papa (because the guy worked at Papa's Pizza) and Bird. We used to go over to their house after school, get high, watch The Three Stooges, and listen to almost exclusively derivatives of CSNY. Neil Young's "After the Gold Rush" or Stephen Stills with Manassas. Solo albums and collaborations by some or all of them. The ultimate was the guitar battles between Stills and Young on the live album "Four Way Street". Good times. Very, very good times.

We referred to our home town as "Po-Dunk". Neither a large town nor a small city, it was somehow indescribably in between. There were a lot of negatives about the place, but a few positives as well. Perhaps at the top of that list was the education system. Although I was too close to the situation (and probably more than a bit ambivalent at the time) to be objective, I really did get a good high school education. We had a lot of young energetic teachers, a great music and drama program, and a reasonably open exchange of ideas for backwater Kentucky in the early 1970's.

Of all the teachers I had in high school, without a doubt L.B. Lawrence was my favorite. Mr. Lawrence taught English and was the facility advisor for the newspaper and yearbook. He was one of the first teachers I knew who treated his students like adults. Personally, I think it was the key to his success. We went the extra mile for Mr. Lawrence because we knew he appreciated our efforts. He was, and still is, an outstanding teacher. And one of the few people from that time in my life with whom I still stay in contact.

When Rolling Stone magazine called to ask about another interview and cover photo, this time it was the boss Jann Wenner. He had an idea for a retrospective on the life of John Lennon and wanted to know if I was willing to be involved. I agreed, perhaps too quickly. I should have asked more questions. Jann said that there were about twelve or fourteen of us on their list. All would be asked the

Long Live Rock And Roll

same set of questions. Also, Annie Leibovitz would be arranging the photographs. She was taking all of the shots to be used in a collage. I thought of Scott Silverstein, but didn't say a word. Actually I conjectured that this might be a cool opportunity for Scott. He could take pictures of Annie taking pictures of me. I had no idea if Ms. Leibovitz would go for the idea. I'd never met the lady.

Annie's secretary called, and I was asked to meet them at Capitol Records the following week. When Pee-Tee, Mike, Scott Silverstein and I got there, Ms. Leibovitz and her assistant were already setting up on the Vine Street sidewalk in front of the Capitol building. We were introduced, and Annie and Scott chatted while I went inside to take a leak. I came out and was told that I just needed to sit on the sidewalk. At first I thought this request a little odd. Then I remembered where I was. I sat down Indian style in front of John Lennon's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. I put on my sunglasses and lit a cigarette. After I took a second drag, I put my hands on my knees in an almost meditative position. I blew a smoke ring. Annie and Scott both caught it with their cameras. Annie's shot made the cover of Rolling Stone with the title "Bearer's of The Torch". I wasn't thrilled with the overall approach they took to the article. And Jann Werner understands exactly how I feel on that topic. I think I was very clear with him on the phone when I voiced my concerns. It might be a while before he calls me again. But it is a great picture. I have an 8" by 10" of Scott Silverstein's shot on the wall in my study. He was standing in the street a bit behind Annie and captured the entire event. Mike and Pee-Tee can be seen in the background as well. Pretty well summarized my existence.

With the influx of engineers, a new machine was introduced into our midst: the Personal Computer. Although very much a mystery to all of us non-engineers, I began to see opportunities to utilize this new technology very early on. This wasn't my first experience with computers. Back when the Judge was still practicing law, the firm had an IBM mainframe system that was used to generate client billings and payroll. It was my job to climb up in the ceiling and run cable, unpackage and set up new consoles and printers, and organize the documentation so that the law office staff could find help, if needed. It was a fun and interesting job for a teenager. In high school I worked for a company that manufactured Formica cabinet tops. While I was there, they began converting their inventory system, currently on large index cards, onto a computer database. While at Hilborn, they purchased a pair of the original IBM PC's. About the time I left they were creating an inventory system as well.

For the most part, the engineers were using the machine to calculate formulas in a spreadsheet program called Lotus 1-2-3. Early on, Ollie had created a layout of all the gear rations, depending upon the final size of the Pop-Op stages, and was ready to start creating fabrication specifications as soon as the finished size was determined. This not only affected the structural design, but also the horsepower needed to make the stage turn. Ollie had a spreadsheet for this as well. Currently he was playing with a new database program called dBase III plus, and had

Long Live Rock And Roll

written an input screen and built tables to catalog our record collection. I told him we needed one for the video tapes that were about to consume an entire room in The Stitch. Ollie wrote the application in about a week, and a film studies intern from the University of Southern California now manages this process for us. We store most of the tape these days in an offsite warehouse. Tiny was also an advocate for the technology, first using Lotus to do much of the bookkeeping, especially check registers and payroll calculations. These days he had a custom built accounting application that managed all the financials. There was also a silly little game called “Pong” that Tiny could spend hours playing. Simon got addicted as well and he and Tiny could often be found sitting in Tiny’s office staring at those green monochrome screens.

I found another very valuable use for the computer. I started typing and saving my song lyrics. Compared to the ease of use offered by some of today’s technology advancements, this was a bit of a cumbersome process. The original IBM PC had no internal hard disk. Everything had to be managed from 5 ¼” floppy disks. First, you put in the MS-DOS operating system disk and powered the computer on. Once you got to a “command prompt” (in DOS this was usually A:\>), you had to take out the operating system disk and put in the Word Perfect program disk. Then you launched the program by typing “WP” at the command prompt. The program would load to a blank document screen. Once you had a document ready to save, a data disk was inserted into the second 5 ¼” floppy disk drive. This is where all of your work was recorded. This entire process replaced my manual Smith Corona typewriter, and made it incredibly simple to make revisions and fix mistakes. And wonder of wonders, I could highlight all of the text and change the type size in a flash. Great for the eyes – and made set lists much easier to create. I could also quickly double space the text so that chords symbols could be written in and used when learning new songs. Although I almost never compose at the computer, choosing instead to write things down on whatever paper is handy, I later transcribe everything into the computer. It has a much better memory than I do. Once I got a machine with a ten megabyte internal hard drive, I thought I would use that computer forever. Then of course, along came Windows and everything changed again.

I was standing in the Pop-Op Palace talking with my brother and sister in law, Lillian and David, when Pee-Tee came rushing into the room. He had just gotten off the phone with the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s office. They had received a call from R.L.’s housekeeper Myra. Apparently she had returned to R.L.’s home after a trip to the market this morning and discovered Melanie’s body. Mel had committed suicide. By the time Leah and I got to the house, Mike and Joy were already there, as well as Kelly and Jerry. The body had already been removed. R.L. was sitting on the back deck. I gave my brother a long, hard hug and just shook my head. What a waste. Even I didn’t have any words.

There were ten of us in the party that escorted Melanie Curtis’ body back to Iowa. The Bennetts, the Townsends, Leah and I, R.L. , his sister Kelly and brother in

law Jerry, and the housekeeper Myra. Scott and Eric flew in separately the next day for the service. We weren't very well received by Melanie's family. I don't think her mom and dad knew what to think of the lot of us, and specifically, they couldn't even talk to R.L. Leah and I tried to have a conversation with her father Jack, but it didn't get us very far. Mike made arrangements with the funeral home to cover all of the costs. We found out later that these accommodations were declined as well. The local press had a field day. In the Des Moines Register the next day there was a picture of us that was taken as we are entering the church. And I still had on my sunglasses. I was characterized as "disrespectful". Geez. For the record, I did take the glasses off once we were inside the church and for crying out loud, I was wearing a suit and a tie. Sometimes I forget that I'm an easy target for the press. It still pisses me off.

On the plane ride back to Los Angeles I listened to R.L. share his side of the "good times" he had shared with Melanie and how this would haunt him forever. She will be "dancing in my dreams" was how he put it. I wrote that down, as well as a few other observations I had made during the trip and some reflections upon the entire ordeal. These notes became the basis for the song "Bittersweet" that was part of our next project "Contradiction in Terms". I hoped that in my own way I was absorbing some of R.L.'s pain.

Bittersweet

"Picture us in Key Largo,
Soakin' up the noon day sun.
Out on some garden veranda,
You know the old kinda Spanish fancy ones.
But you never bothered to pay me any mind,
Lookin' for yesterdays that we had left behind.

So if you see me dancin' in your dreams,
Believe it's not as hard as it may seem.
Just starin' at the ground beneath my feet,
And thinkin' of a love so bittersweet."

The news media outlets probably picked up the story from monitoring the police radio dispatches. Remote crews started arriving and parking out in front of the house. Pee-Tee tried to move them away, but was only partially successful. The talking heads were out in force, and as it got closer to time for the evening news at ten o'clock floodlights appeared and cameras began to roll. The strain of the day finally got the best of R.L. He broke down and cried. Like he had probably never cried before. And probably for the first time in a very, very long time. Maybe since the day when he was seven years old and he helped his daddy put boxes in the trunk of the Z28 and then watched him back out of the driveway. R.L. never saw his father alive again. Sixteen months later he drove that Camaro Z28 into a bridge abutment somewhere in Arkansas. It took four days for him to

Long Live Rock And Roll

die from an internal hemorrhage. His blood alcohol level was almost two and a half times the legal limit.

“The Rivera in the moonlight,
Can embrace an enchanting spell.
Salt water breeze in the distance,
Feel it surround you as the waves begin to swell.
Though passion seemed to produce the only cure,
These nasty side effects I seem not to endure.

So if you see me dancin’ in your dreams,
Believe it’s not as hard as it may seem.
Just starin’ at the ground beneath my feet,
And thinkin’ of a love so bittersweet.”

There was no magic potion to make this bizarre scene go away. R.L. was depressed and angry. He moped around and had a very short fuse. His driving became more reckless and irrational. He was going to kill himself or someone else – it was just a matter of time. I had to get his ass back in the saddle. I called Tom Dowd. We needed to start our next studio project.

“Now it’s Texas at sunrise,
Livin’ my reality.
Not sure what it should feel like,
But I know where my heart has always wanted to be.
Once again to throw my heart into a whirl,
A time when I would want to love or find no other girl.

So if you see me dancin’ in your dreams,
Believe it’s not as hard as it may seem.
Just starin’ at the ground beneath my feet,
And thinkin’ of a love so bittersweet.”

At the end I think Mel just couldn’t face the prospects of having to deal with R.L. during another set of project sessions. I think that’s why she was so happy on the last Pop-Op tour and especially why she seemed to actually enjoy herself at Ollie and Marcia’s wedding. She knew the ride was over. It was two days after Christmas in 1991 when she took a length of rope that she found in the kitchen, looped it over the chandelier in the front entry way of the house she had barely shared with R.L. Chambers for the past eight years, walked two thirds of the way back up the stairway to the second floor, tied the other end of the rope around her neck and stepped over the railing. She left a brief note on a three by five card she was holding in her hand:

“Sorry babe. Guess I won’t be available Wednesday night.”

Long Live Rock And Roll

“So if you see me dancin’ in your dreams,
Believe it’s not as hard as it may seem.
Just starin’ at the ground beneath my feet,
And thinkin’ of a love so bittersweet.”⁴²

I wrote this song from as close to the inside of R.L.’s pain as I could get. Of course I had to present it from the male perspective, but I tried to embrace Melanie’s lot in life and her responses to the challenges. In some ways I wondered how R. L. “let” this happen. But I think Mel’s destiny wouldn’t have changed had she never heard of R.L. Chambers and ZigZag. I kept hearing The Eagles in my head:

“Relax said the night man,
We are programmed to receive.
You can check out any time you like,
But you can never leave.”⁴³