

Ramon Sender Oral History

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives
50 Oak Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Interview conducted April 14, 16 and 21, 2014
Mary Clare Bryztwa and Tessa Updike, Interviewers

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives

Oral History Project

The Conservatory's Oral History Project has the goal of seeking out and collecting memories of historical significance to the Conservatory through recorded interviews with members of the Conservatory's community, which will then be preserved, transcribed, and made available to the public.

Among the narrators will be former administrators, faculty members, trustees, alumni, and family of former Conservatory luminaries. Through this diverse group, we will explore the growth and expansion of the Conservatory, including its departments, organization, finances and curriculum. We will capture personal memories before they are lost, fill in gaps in our understanding of the Conservatory's history, and will uncover how the Conservatory helped to shape San Francisco's musical culture throughout the past century.

Ramon Sender Interview

This interview was conducted at Ramon Sender's home in San Francisco on April 14, 16 and 21, 2014 by Mary Clare Brzytwa and Tessa Updike.

Mary Clare Brzytwa

Mary Clare Brzytwa is Assistant Dean for Professional Development and Academic Technology at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Specializing in electronic music with a background in classical flute and improvisation, she has played festivals internationally and at home including Festival des Musiques Innovatrices, Gilles Peterson's World Wide Festival, La Siestes Electroniques Festival, Unlimited 21, and The San Francisco Electronic Music Festival. Formerly Director of Professional Development at Oberlin Conservatory and Producer at Radio Village Nomade, Mary Clare has worked on countless projects ranging from appearances on records by bands such as the Boredoms to creating sound design for award winning films. Mary Clare earned a BA in composition with an emphasis in electronic media from Mills College and an MFA as a Performer/Composer at California Institute of the Arts.

Tessa Updike

Tessa Updike is the archivist for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Tessa holds a B.A. in visual arts and has her Masters in Library and Information Science with a concentration in Archives Management from Simmons College in Boston. Previously she has worked for the Harvard University Botany Libraries and Archives and the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley.

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Ramon Sender and Riqui, 2014

Ramon Sender was born in Madrid, Spain in October of 1934 to Ramon and Amparo Sender. Among his music teachers were George Copeland, Elliott Carter, Henry Cowell and Robert Erickson. Ramon studied at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome, received his Bachelors of Music in Composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and his Masters from Mills College.

As a student at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Ramon built an electronic music studio in the attic of the school's previous location at 1201 Ortega Street. Upon graduating from the Conservatory in 1962, he co-founded with Morton Subotnick the San Francisco Tape Music Center, which was later renamed the Mills Center for Contemporary Music, and is still in existence today. Through the years, Ramon has collaborated with a number of composers and visual artists, including Anthony Martin, Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley and William Maginnis.

In 1966, he co-produced the Trips Festival with Ken Kesey and Stewart Brand; a large psychedelic event in San Francisco that featured, among others, the Grateful Dead and Big Brother and the Holding Company.

Aside from his music, Ramon is the author of a number of novels, novels, short stories and essays. Samples of his writings can be found on his website (www.raysender.com).

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Monday, April 14, 2014

UPDIKE This is Tessa Updike and Mary Clare Brzytwa. We are with Ramon Sender at his home in San Francisco doing an interview for the Oral History Project at the Conservatory. Ramon, could you start by telling us where and when you were born?

SENDER October 29th, 1934, at a woman's lying-in clinic in Madrid, Spain. It was the month known historically as Red October because it was the month that the miners were striking in Asturias, and there was a sympathy strike in all the main cities. My father was not there, he was up north as a journalist covering the miners' strike. So he doesn't know the exact time I was born (so I've never been able to get a horoscope done). But he said probably the first sound I heard upon being born was machine gun fire, because there was a machine gun encampment outside the hospital. So I was born to the sound of machine gun fire, and probably thought, "What planet have I landed on?" This was also the first time the Moors had been back to Spain since Queen Isabella had kicked out the Muslims in 1492 because a young general named Francisco Franco had been brought in from Spanish Morocco to put down the strike. He brought in Moorish mercenaries, who were very, very cruel. They raped the women, killed the children, shot everybody, and basically reignited a hatred for the Moors that had been brewing for quite a while. So there – in a short paragraph, I was born.

UPDIKE Could you tell us about your parents?

SENDER My mother was trained as a concert pianist and grew up in a northwest part of old Castile, near the Portuguese border in a historic town called Zamora. My father was from a small village in the Pyrenees, in Aragón. He ran away from home as a seventeen-year-old to Madrid. And then was sent home, and came back again, older. He started writing for the newspapers. I'm not sure about the history of his time, but by the time he met my mother he was a journalist with a good reputation because he had written a novel that had won a prize. My mother had moved to Madrid because she was working for the phone company in Zamora – signing people up for phones (phones were sort of new). They moved her to Madrid where they had the big skyscraper called La Telefonica. She rented a little apartment on a small street near there. Then they went out on strike, and my father went to the strike meeting and met her. He asked her what she was doing for money, and so forth. She let it somehow be known that they were all pretty hard up because they didn't have salaries. He said, "Well, I need a typist, would you type for me?" So they started meeting outside his little rented room where there was a plaza. They would meet there and transfer typed pages back and forth, and got to know each other. One day there was a knock on her door, and he was there and said, "Quick, let me come in, the cops

are after me.” It turned out he had written an article the government didn’t like, and they were out looking to arrest him. So he went underground ... I guess at her place. That’s when their relationship started. All of this, by the way, is in my book, *Death in Zamora*. Have you got a copy yet? I can give you one.

Anyway, so that’s how they met. You know ... I’m not sure if they met at the strike or at this club ... there was a club called el Ateneo, where all the artists hung out. She used to play piano recitals there with a violinist. He may have known her from there, also.

So then they started living together. Just as an aside – this is really strange. When Judy and I got married we went on our honeymoon to Spain, which was my first time back since I’d left as a two-year-old. The hotel we went to Judy’s parents recommended, because they had stayed there. It turned out this hotel was one and a half blocks from my father’s old rented room on one side and two blocks on the other side from an apartment he had rented with his brother, later. And it was about a ten minute walk to my mother’s apartment downtown. So we were just exactly in the area that made looking things up easier. It was just by pure coincidence, it was amazing.

Anyway, so they started living together, and I came along. My aunt Conchita kept pushing them to get married – she was more conservative, and all the hip young couples were not getting married. After my sister Andrea was born, she convinced my mother to sneak us off and get us baptized. At some point there was a civil ceremony, but I don’t think he knew about the baptism. My mother stopped going to church ... she was quite devout but because of my dad’s views, she gave up Catholicism. I guess it was after our second trip, or even our third trip to Spain, we got word that the woman who lived above my father in this rented room, Concepción, she had my mother’s rosary. When my mother gave up going to mass, she gave this woman her rosary. So we got the rosary back – my sister’s an Episcopal nun, so of course she was delighted to get this memento of her mom. There are a lot of odd little stories floating around from these times. But going back, after my sister was born we moved from the apartment we were in to an apartment across from the big zoological garden. There’s a big main garden, like where Central Park would be in New York, and we could hear the elephants and the peacocks would sit on our windowsills. The peacock’s cry sounded like the word in Spanish *meón*, which means bed-wetter. I don’t think that went over very well with me. Another funny story from that era – my dad said his father came to visit (grandpa) who was a gruff old guy who my father didn’t really like (there were a lot of reasons for that) and I guess he must have left his hat on the floor, because I proceeded to pee in it, which delighted my father no end. Also, I had a habit of – when strange men came visiting, I would look them over, take their hand, and lead them to the front door – as if to say, “Time to leave, guys.”

My mother would stay up all night typing my father's materials so he would have a fresh copy in the morning. She was very, very devoted to him. A lot of the background on her you'll find going through the book [*Death in Zamora*]. The book is mainly focused on her, because her story was not well known. My dad's story was very well known. Anyway, next question.

UPDIKE You left Spain when you were two years old ... to come to the United States?

SENDER Well, when the war started we were spending the summer in a little village north of Spain, where we'd spent time before with my father's older sister Conchita, her husband, and their kids. He always rented the flat under someone else's name because it was kind of a conservative place. He was a radical journalist, and didn't want any trouble. We were there in July of '36 when the first news of the army rebellion came through on the radio. Shortly after that he got word that there was a busload of armed rightwing militia looking for him. So he decided it was time to leave. He told my mother, "Look, nobody knows who we are. You're safe here. Stay here with the kids and the cook." A friend of his, who was director of the mountain stuff – they were looking for him also. So these two men decided they would walk out. The kids were too young to walk that kind of a journey so the idea was his children and wife and my mother and kids – they would all stay. But my father said to her, "If things get bad, go home to Zamora. Nothing ever happens in Zamora." That was the last advice he had, and off they went, cross-country. An hour and a half after they left, a column of rebel soldiers came in from the north, led by General [Emilio] Mola, and occupied the town. Immediately they were bombed by Republican planes. They didn't have much of an air force, but they had a few. The whole town became a front line. We were evacuated by the army – first to a sanitarium overnight behind the lines. After spending a night there, we were moved into a house in the next town back, which it turned out belonged to a well-known right-wing family who for some reason weren't there. It was a pretty bad time, there were shootings back and forth. At the sanitarium, in a garage next to us an operating theater had been set up and they were doing surgery on people without anesthetic, and there was a lot of howling and yelling. The adults with us were pretty freaked out. Then they moved us into this other place, and depending on which side was winning there would be shootings ... the plaza was right outside our house. There would be shootings of left-wingers, and then there would be shootings of right-wingers. Things just got worse. My aunt Conchita's husband worked for the post office. He was on vacation, and there was a general calling up of everyone, so he had to report – not to Madrid but to a little town near us. My mother, according to Conchita, was very, very stressed out. But they had to split – Conchita decided she had to go with her husband.

My mother decided it was time to go home to Zamora. On trains that were running at night (not to be bombed) we went back to her hometown. On the way there she stopped at a station and tried to call my father, but she was calling across enemy lines and the call was intercepted. She was arrested and interviewed. A family member in Zamora, who was a right-winger, vouched for her and got us out of that and to Zamora, where she discovered both her brothers were in prison, and that the family café had been closed because it had been a progressive radical gathering place, and the town was under right-wing control with a military governor. That came as a big blow. We're now talking early August. She had her radio with her, and kept tuning into Madrid to get the news. This was a big no-no, listening to the other side, so she wasn't being very cautious. Friends kept telling her, "Be careful!" She also really didn't hold her tongue. This was her hometown, she knew all these people. By the end of August she decided she would try to get out through Portugal, but would have to apply for an exit visa and a passport. So she went to the military governor and applied, and was told that the frontier had been closed. One alternate plan my father and her had was to go out through Portugal to France, where his brother Manolo's wife, who was French, had contacts. Manolo was mayor of the biggest town near their hometown – a town called Huesca. So that plan failed, and shortly after that she learned that her favorite brother, who was her full brother, Antonio – his body had been found in a meadow. What had happened is something they called "the right of escape." The guards would be pretending to move you to another prison. On the way they'd stop and let the prisoners out for a cigarette. They'd say, "If you want to leave you can." If they started running, they'd get shot in the back, and then the guards would say, "They tried to escape!" But it was a way to murder people.

When she heard Antonio had been shot, she really got angry and went down and confronted the military governor, and blew her top, which was not very smart. Shortly after that – one story said she was arrested running down the street from that meeting – but whatever happened, she was put in jail. She was in a cell with about twelve or fourteen other women – some with babies, or children. She was with my sister, Andrea, who was a nursing baby. She was there from September until mid-October when her – quote – 'release paper' was signed. She was released at night into the hands of the assassination squad. They took her out to the cemetery with two other women and shot them.

When my mother was arrested, I obviously became very upset. I was not quite two yet, and they couldn't calm me down. One cousin said, "We took you to a psychiatrist." I didn't even know there was a psychiatrist in Zamora. Anyway, this old deaf aunty took me to her farm, got me out of town. I was with her for three months or so. Meanwhile, my father was fighting at the front. By December of that year he had been promoted to Chief of Staff for the Communist General

[Enrique] Lister, who had the most efficient fighting force for the republic. They were really well organized. He was involved in a battle where everything went wrong. The artillery pounded this village, and they sent their troops out, but they sent them to this other village which had not been softened up. So they were really getting creamed, and then there was a counter-attack by tanks. According to Lister's memoir, the Russian consultant was firing artillery point-blank down the street to stop the advance. Meanwhile, he said Sender disappeared from the scene – he decided to take his leave to Madrid in his super-groovy officer's outfit (he was very insulting about my dad in his memoir). I think my dad at that point had just received word that my mother Amparo had been shot. There was a note from her that had somehow gotten to him – I guess through whoever gave him the news – a friend legislator from Zamora whose wife had been in jail with my mother. They had a prisoner exchange, so she got out on that, which actually my father could have done if he had known my mother was in jail.

Once he heard we were there, he went immediately to France and petitioned the French Red Cross to evacuate us. I have a feeling that's how he left the battle so quickly, and probably without permission. Lister accuses him of desertion. Shortly after that, he was in France at the border and the French Red Cross sent an ambulance all the way across Spain to Zamora and picked us up and brought us out. My sister had been put in the care of some Spanish nuns in a convent, and was not doing too well – she had some skin problems. But we got out, and while my father was waiting for us in this hotel, he met the mayor of Guernica and his wife, and their daughter (who was really more a niece I think, but they were taking care of her). Elizabeta was this gorgeous eighteen-year-old who had been brought up in a convent, and my father fell madly in love with her. He decided that once my sister and me arrived, he would take us to Barcelona. He promised her parents – “Oh yes, of course we'll have a church wedding,” which of course he never would have done in a million years. So they got us to Barcelona, and here we get various tales. Our stepmother Elizabeta told us they did have a civil marriage, so guess that's one thing there's no doubt about. He tried to get a command in Barcelona, but he had been so blackballed by what happened with Lister that no one wanted to touch him. He took us back to the French Pyrenees, a little town called Pau, then to a little village, Louvie-Juzon, where we lived in a cottage. There Elizabeta gave birth to my half-brother. Meanwhile my father was sent to the U.S. with two other writers by the Spanish government to promote the Republican cause, to speak and so forth. He came into this country in '38 on a diplomatic passport and talked in various places. Years later, Judy's mother Miriam (we had already been married five years) said to me, “Did your dad have a habit of hanging his suit jacket on one shoulder like a matador's cape?” I said, “Yeah, he did.” She said, “I heard him speak in St. Paul.” Talk about strange connections! Her family was great friends with the Ericksons' [Robert Erickson] too. That was a whole other connection too, because Miriam also remembered meeting me at their home.

Anyway, my father came back from that tour... and here there really is a question of what happened. According to one source he found Elizabeta (his wife) doing something he did not approve of, and immediately took me and my sister and left her. I don't know what that was. A nineteen-year-old or twenty-year-old mother with a newborn and two kids under three must have been going crazy! She had help in Pau, where there were two young sisters who babysat us, so she must have had some help in Louvie-Juzon also. But whatever it was, he deserted her. He packed us up and went to Paris, and put us in a communist-run children's home in Calais (which the Allies severely bombed later to divert the Germans from the planned D-Day landings in Normandy). The home was near the beach ... anyway, it's in the book. My sister and I spent the winter there while our father was in Paris working on various journalistic projects – we were probably the youngest children there. I do not have a good memory of it. The boys were bullying, and my sister became very ill. She contracted pneumonia, and almost didn't make it. My father had a new girlfriend, a German journalist in Paris. He was editing some propaganda booklets and working on a new book (*Contrattaque*). He borrowed enough money from her mother to pay for our boat passage, and brought us in March of '39 to New York. I think I've gone beyond what you wanted to know.

BRYZTWA So you're two at that point?

SENDER No, by then I was four. I turned two the same month my mother was shot ... October of '36.

UPDIKE Did you take a boat to New York City?

SENDER That's the only way, in those days.

UPDIKE Do you remember the boat ride?

SENDER I remember the horse, in the nursery. They had a merry-go-round horse, with his teeth bared like this [gestures]. My father was always telling me, "Don't be afraid, be brave, don't be afraid!" Which of course made me more afraid. Later, I thought he was projecting his own fears on me. He was very fucked up, by then. He'd lost his wife, Spain was in flames, and to make matters worse his favorite brother, who had been Mayor of Huesca, had been taken out and shot. The Sender family was pretty much split down the middle – there were some on the right and some on the left. So here we were in New York. Do you want me to go on with New York?

BRYZTWA

Yeah.

SENDER

Okay, so he had one contact in New York, who was the Chicago Tribune's war correspondent in Spain, Jay Allan. The Allans had a house on Washington Square. We ended up there, and my father applied to the Spanish Refugee Aid office for help. He learned that there was money for exiles in Mexico. So he decided, "I'll go to Mexico, get some money, get settled, start a publishing house of some sort, and have the children come down. In the meantime, maybe they can be taken care of up here." So off he went, and the Spanish refugee lady came and visited us. We were not very healthy. She said, "You know, I think these kids would do better in the country." She had a friend, Julia Davis, who lived outside the city and didn't have any children of her own. She worked for an adoption agency, and was very interested in kids. Julia came and met us, and said, "Well, I don't speak Spanish but I'll take them for six weeks if you can provide a Spanish-speaking nanny." So off we went with her, and the six weeks turned out to be the rest of our growing-up, basically. She wrote a novel – a reality fiction book – called *The Sun Climbs Slow*, which basically tells the story of us coming to her. She fictionalizes one part where she has her then-husband dying with the Lincoln Brigade in Spain and my father visiting from Mexico and saying "You've stolen my children" which he actually did say. By then we'd forgotten our Spanish, so we couldn't talk to him. He didn't have any English, and they'd been writing to each other in French. But when they met, between his Spanish/French and her English/French, they couldn't understand each other, so they ended up communicating in Latin. I think they did have a little fling. Julia's husband Paul was working for TIME's Henry Luce at that time, a sort of special assistant. He was in North Africa covering the Nazis' General Rommel's North African blitz, and having a wonderful time, a great adventure. She wrote him a 'Dear John' letter saying "I've fallen in love with the father of my children." He came racing home and chased my father out of the state, putting the FBI on his track saying, "He's probably a communist." When my father died we got the Freedom of Information Act FBI files (most everything blacked out) saying he was receiving letters at his hotel in Florida from a married woman in New York, who was Julia. In his files, he never kept any correspondence except for love letters from various women. One of them was from Julia, and I could tell immediately from reading the letter that they'd been intimate and in love. She never owned up to this. All she'd say was, "If I'd married your father, you could have sold tickets to the fights we would have had." She was very strong-willed, and he was impossible – it would have been really bad.

So, in March, 1939, we came to the States. A month later Franco won the war and canceled all the diplomatic passports. At that point my father was without papers in Mexico, and Mexico very kindly offered him a guest visa, but he couldn't put us on it because we weren't there. So as of

that moment we were undocumented aliens in the United States. Julia's father's law firm tried to straighten this out for at least six years. Actually at one point we left the country and re-entered from Montreal, and had to stand in front of an immigration judge. He looked at us and said, "How do I know these children are real?" I always thought that was great. We were basically undocumented aliens until my father married an American woman. By then I was twelve. He applied for American citizenship, got it, and then we derived citizenship from him.

UPDIKE How long was it from when you started living with Julia to when you saw your father again?

SENDER It was about a year and a half. I remember driving to LaGuardia to meet his plane. She describes the whole journey back from LaGuardia in her book. I decided to say "Si" to everything my father said, even though I didn't understand what he was saying. So he would say, "Are you mad at Papá for being away so long?" "Si." My little sister would say, "Blah, blah, blah, blah – what is this funny man saying?" He wanted me to sleep in his bed that night, but I had just been upgraded to my own room, so I wasn't about to be demoted again. I made a big scene about that. But Papá settled in. He was very good – he had written us all of these cute letters from Mexico with drawings. I'm sure we were happy to see him, but then he got chased away. As the war became more serious and as America entered the war, Julia decided – partially no doubt for financial reasons, but also because there was all this worry about German invasion on the East Coast – submarines and all that – she decided, "I don't want the children to go through any more war stuff, so I'll take them back to the old family home in West Virginia." So off we went to the old Davis home (her maiden name was Davis) in Clarksburg for a couple of years. Again, my father came to visit, and again her husband Paul (who by then had gone through paratrooper training and joined the OSS and was being parachuted behind Nazi lines in Greece to blow up troop trains ... he was having a good time) – he showed up unexpectedly when my father was there and chased him away again. I think at this point Paul and Julia sat down and he said, "Look, you can have the children as long as you never see their father again." That's what happened. The rest of our growing up, these two families never intermingled. But we would spend occasional weeks with him here and there during our vacations when he lived in New York, and later when he moved to New Mexico we had one summer vacation out there. I regarded him as less of a father than a distant but famous uncle who I couldn't communicate with at all. When I did communicate with him, he was a little strange. He was always testing me ... if I was interested in music he would get a piece of music and say, "Well, can you sing that?" I was ten years old, or something. And he would say, "Well, I wrote a mass when I was eight years old that's still being sung in this little church in Spain." He was always one-upping me in this odd way. So I was much more comfortable with Julia – she was very dear and loving. My

sister, on the other hand, never bonded with her and wished that she had grown up with my father. My theory is that being snatched out of her mother's arms as a nursing babe the day before her mother was executed remained somewhere in her psyche. She never really forgave my dad for not wanting her more in his life. He really put the icing on the cake later, because on his second trip back to Spain in the '70s, he invited her to come along. Andrea got all ready – got her passport – and he never showed up to pick her up. He went without her, which was really mean. He took his girlfriend instead, who was a real ... well, I won't say what. She was a real story all on her own, and promoted it via a book that she wrote in Spanish: "My Twenty-One Days In Spain With Sender." She was really an opportunistic type.

So then we were in Clarksburg. I would have been eight or nine, going to school. Clarksburg was just the right size town for someone my age, because I could bike everywhere. The house was amazing, I have some photos of it somewhere. It was a classic Victorian – a huge Victorian in the center of a city block of elms – huge trees. It was like a playground for us, we had a wonderful time. The family member holding the house was old Aunt Emma, Julia's father's sister. She had lost her right arm in a car accident where she had her arm out the window, and Julia was driving, and a telephone pole knocked it off. At least that's what we were told as kids – it may have been just to terrify us into keeping our hands in the car. But that's the story she always told us – she had to rush her to the hospital and go back and find the arm. So Aunt Emma was this gray-haired old lady with one arm who would sit and do fancy needlework on a frame. She liked to go down to the jail (it was about two blocks away) and read the Bible to the prisoners. They must have really enjoyed that. She was into saving people, and had an alcoholic doctor who had been in trouble living on the top floor of the house. So we were there for a couple of years, and it was nice. I liked it. The public school was not very exciting, but it was easy and I made friends. Then after two years, the way Julia tells the story, "Your sister started talking like this – [in an exaggerated Southern accent] 'I cay-yan't hold it in my hay-yand.'" And she decided it was time to move back to New York. So back to New York we went, and she signed me up for Harvey School, this pre-prep boarding school where her husband Paul's boy, Paul Jr., who had joined us from blitz'd-out London, had attended. Paul Jr. showed up when we were living in the country outside New York. When I was six, he was probably twelve. Very strange boy. He had gone to Harvey, and I don't think he had been kicked out, but he left a bit of an aroma behind him, let's say. One of the cute stories about him was when Julia gave up the farm outside of New York (it was like a gentleman's farm) she had to give up all of the animals. Paul's bloodhound Danny went to the White Plains state troopers – they had a bloodhound troop. Paul visited Danny in White Plains, it was about a half-hour drive from his school. He was sitting in class some days later, and there was Danny, staring at him through the window. He had tracked Paul all the way back to the school. Later Danny joined the Canine Corps and was killed

guarding a POW camp in the Dakotas and received a medal. Poor Paul, he went on to Andover prep school, was kicked out and joined us in Clarksburg, where he finished high school. We had a good relationship – sort of an older brother/younger brother teasing sort of thing. It was cute. But he went on to make a true disaster of himself later ... I don't think that's necessary to include at this point, but I have to be grateful to Paul because his disasters in contrast put mine more in the category of 'minor foibles.'

UPDIKE Was Julia musical?

SENDER She played piano. She played a couple of pieces – *Rustles of Spring* and a couple of other old favorites. We had a piano in Bedford Village, in New York, which I started playing on. Of course she knew my mother had been a pianist, so it was kind of, "Let's encourage Ramon." When we left the farm, we had a winter in New York before we went to Clarksburg, and that winter in New York I had piano lessons. Also, there was a kid in my first grade class in Bedford – a little fat kid – who played accordion. I wanted to be just like him, because he was getting all this attention. Ever since then I kept bugging Julia to get me an accordion, and when I was ten, for a combined birthday and Christmas present, I received a Hohner 24-button piano accordion and brought it back with me to school after vacation. We would listen to the Arthur Godfrey Hour at seven in the morning while getting up, and I started picking out the tunes from the show. It really taught me harmony, doing that. You learn the chords, the buttons, the circle of fifths. You learn which chord goes with which note. I was playing the *Too Fat Polka* and *I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover* and other insightful tunes like these. I was beginning to be known as being involved in music. I was having piano lessons there, and my room that first year was right under the piano studio on the top floor. One morning, early, I woke up and heard piano being played. I couldn't believe it. I went up and looked, and there was nobody at the piano upstairs. I always felt it was my mother communicating with me in a strange way. My sister (back at the Bedford farm when she was five) a couple of times said, "This woman in white visited me in my bed last night." She was having ghostly apparitions of my mother appearing, it was really amazing. I'll add something more about this later too, actually it's in an addendum to the paperback edition of the book about my mother.

UPDIKE Do you remember some of your earliest piano teachers?

SENDER Yeah, Mrs. Clark was at Harvey – my pre-prep school. A nice lady with dyed blue hair that I liked. The one before her in New York – I only remember if my fingers weren't curved while I was playing I got a rap on the knuckles. I wanted to learn *Malagueña*, by

Lecuona. I could tell I'd be very popular if I could play *Malagueña*, so I learned *Malagueña*. I was playing Mozart, Chopin, the usual stuff. They had a little event every year where they did Haydn's *Toy Symphony* with toy instruments and piano accompaniment. The big deal was to be elected conductor, so I was conductor of the *Toy Symphony* one year.

Also the earliest concert that I attended was when I was at Harvey, a duo-pianist concert with José and Amparo Iturbi in White Plains. My mother's name was Amparo ... I'm not sure I even knew her name, and I'm not sure I made the conscious connection at that point, but I might have. I remember being very impressed.

UPDIKE How old were you?

SENDER I was twelve. I loved Harvey – this was that pre-prep school. It was run by a very, very dear man and his wife – the headmaster. It was along the English boarding school lines, and you started Latin early. The class was divided into clubs. I became president of one, and my dear friend became the president of the other and we competed both scholastically ... in fact, I just reconnected with him after fifty years through their alumni [association]. He keeps going on and on about this club debate we had on how Israel and Palestine should be split up. My faculty advisor got me all of these great magazine articles about it, and I used those in the debate. He never forgot it, he keeps muttering, "Oh, you were so good at that debate!" I said, "It wasn't me, I had all this information." Then we had to vote on senior class president, and we were a class of maybe sixteen. I thought it was bad form to vote for yourself, so I voted for him, and he won by one vote. He beat me by one vote. This became a family joke because Julia's dad, John W. Davis, had been the democratic nominee for President against Coolidge in his second term, and got totally skunked. It was the year that La Follette split the democratic vote with the progressive party, and also Uncle John – he had been elected on the 103rd ballot. He said, "I'm the sacrificial goat." Because he was not the right candidate. He was a Wall Street lawyer with connections to these big robber barons. Nobody was going to elect him. Coolidge won in a landslide. So it was funny – I lost to Coolidge, he lost to Coolidge. Big deal.

All my friends were going on to Hotchkiss, and I made the serious mistake of deciding I wanted to go there also. I never liked that school, but Coolidge went, and three or four others of my friends went there.

UPDIKE Hotchkiss was a prep school?

SENDER It's a prep school a feeder school for Yale – almost everybody went to Yale. It's academically among the top two or three schools. I was very political at Harvey. I wanted to get the prize voted on by the students of who had done the most at the school. I kind of politicked for it, and won of course. Years later, when I went back to visit, I checked all the cups and plaques, and the engraver had made a mistake and put me up on the Latin prize, and I was terrible at Latin. He put the guy from the Latin prize on the plaque that I had politicked for. I thought, "Oh boy, that shows vanity of vanities." It's really funny. But then at Hotchkiss I had started out very political, and got elected vice president of the freshmen for the first term. The job of the vice president was to go around checking that everyone on Sunday was out of their pajamas by a certain time and had their beds made. I thought, "I'm playing cop, this is not going to make me popular." So I immediately got out of that and decided I would become the class cut-up. I would be the guy who pried your bed, or took all the bolts out of your bed so when you sat on it, it collapsed. Who would put Limburger cheese on your radiator, so when your radiator turned on it stunk up the whole place. So that was my new identity. That was the first year at Hotchkiss.

Second year, I decided I was not only going to become the class cut-up, I was going to become the class alcoholic. There was a friend in my class who – in those days a legal New York driver's license was your application with a stamp. He had had a stamp made up, and for fifty cents he would stamp your application. So I had one that proved I was of the legal drinking age. Which wasn't too old, I don't think – I think it was sixteen then – maybe it was eighteen. I only had to fudge a few years. I would get peculiar looks at the liquor store, but I had an ID. First it was beer. On the train coming back at Christmas, I was loaded on beer and made a long speech to everyone and had a wonderful time. Easter I made a deal with two friends coming up from Florida that I'd buy each of us a pint of Schenley's and we'd drink it on the train. It turned out they hadn't eaten all day, and one of them threw up all over an old lady next to me and the other attempted to pee and the pee trickled down the aisle ... so we were ratted on by the seniors. I guess the Headmaster was getting irritated letters. So we were put on sequestration – it was nicknamed "seekwhy," and you lived on a special corridor away from your usual room and you couldn't go out for sports. You had to run a five-mile triangle in the afternoon. I knew the Headmaster liked me, he was always very nice to me. He always had a kind of twinkle in his eye, and he was thought to be very smart – he had this big, high forehead that made him look very smart. I remember the day after I was seekwhy'd, one master sought me in the hall and said, "You'll be all right." And then another came along and said, "Why are you so cheerful?"

Both years at Hotchkiss I was taking piano lessons with Mr. Demarest, a funny little guy with bulging muscles in his hands, thick lenses in his glasses and a sort of gnome-like appearance.

There also was a young Yale music school student – either graduate or undergraduate – named Collins, who was giving us (those who wanted it) lessons in harmony. The seniors had an octet (barbershop octet) and I decided I'd form one too for the sophomores. We would sing some of the Whiffenpoof songs. I wanted to sing *Ain't She Sweet* but I couldn't find a setting for octet use, so I made a setting of it and that was my first venture into writing notes on paper in any sort of meaningful way. I also continued playing accordion. The one good thing about Hotchkiss was, if it was a really beautiful autumn day, the Headmaster would get up at chapel in the morning and would say "Welllllll..." And everyone would say "Yes, yes!" "Welllllll..." "Yes, yes!" "I think we'll have a holiday today." "Yay!" No classes, the kitchen would pack picnic lunch bags for you, and you could go ramble in the woods. That night there would be a movie, and your homework would carry over – no homework. It was so gorgeous, I always thought this was something the nation should do. Every once and a while the President should just get up and say, "Well, the weather looks good all across the country, let's have a holiday tomorrow." Wouldn't that be great? So the evening before the movies, I'd get up and play accordion for the crowd while the reel was being changed, or God knows what.

By the second year, I had started studying piano in the summers with concert pianist George Copeland. We were summering by then in this little fishing village on the Connecticut/Rhode Island border called Stonington. Stonington had started as a whaling village, and then some Portuguese fishermen from the Azores moved in, and had a fishing fleet. Gradually the New York intellectuals and artists had discovered it and were moving and buying out the fishermen. Julia and Paul had visited friends up there and liked it, and saw a house for sale by a Portuguese fisherman – his wife was homesick. So they bought this little cottage that was right on the beach, on an inlet. It was never really 'beachy' – the waves were not very big. But we could walk from our backyard onto the beach – that was great, and the cottage became our summer spot. Up 'til then we had been summering with her father 'Uncle John' on Long Island, which was all right, but there were no kids to play with. The Locust Valley home boasted a number of beautiful gardens, but this was much better. George Copeland was a pianist who was beginning to summer in Stonington, and in the same social circles that Julia and Paul were in. She at one point asked him, "Would you be willing to listen to Ramon play?" And he did. Some years later he said, "You know, I wasn't all that impressed with some of the things you performed (he hated *Malagueña*, it turned out), but the way you played that Chopin C minor prelude – that's why I took you on."

So anyway, I started studying with George. He was – do you know what the German pianist Giesecking looked like? He looked like Giesecking, a big portly guy with a big bald elephant-like head. Also gay, although this wasn't discussed for some years. His partner, Horst, was a German

in the import/export business. A whole other character – they were both characters in very different ways. George liked perfumes and used a little powder. He had a monocle that he had hung around his neck. He was very elegant, from an old Boston family. His father had married a Spanish woman, so he had this whole thing about Spain and Spanish music. He had been sent to study in Italy when he very young – twelve – he went with a tutor. He spent a lot of time in Italy. Somebody anonymously later in his life sent him some of Debussy’s piano music, and he liked it and started performing it – went to meet Debussy in Paris, and formed a relationship with him. He had a number of lessons with him, and was the first person to play Debussy in America. That became his identity – playing French and Spanish music mainly.

George used to tour as a young pianist for Mason & Hamlin in the days when a piano company would engage a pianist and send him on the road with two pianos and a tuner. So he toured for them, but then there came a point, in the mid to late ‘20s, when just on a whim he got on a boat and went to Europe and broke his contract. He lived in Mallorca for eight years, until the Spanish Civil War started, and then came back to find that no agent would touch him, because he had broken his contract. So he was living a semi-impooverished existence in Manhattan, relying on Horst mostly to pay the bills. He took me on as a student, and after that summer, when I went back to Hotchkiss and got in trouble ... at that point Copeland said to Julia, “You shouldn’t have him at Hotchkiss. He really has enough talent to be able to concentrate on his music.” By this time I was also going to the listening room at Hotchkiss and listening to classical music, giving up on the Golden Oldies a little bit. Although I liked Morton Gould, I liked the massed string sounds, those were nice. And I had a bunch of 78s of different pop tunes. But it was that summer, when I started studying with Copeland, that Hi Fi had come along and we convinced Julia to let us go out and buy a Hi Fi set, with LP records. I remember the first record I bought was the Bach organ trio sonatas, with Helmut Walcha, the famous blind Swiss organist who learned everything by having his wife play the pieces, line by line. It was unbelievable. My sister, for her first record, bought Shostakovich’s *Ninth Symphony* – a very Haydn-esque symphony, one of his lighter works. But this got us going, a little bit. I started listening to classical music at Hotchkiss, and Julia decided that George Copeland was right about leaving prep school, and suggested that I transfer to a school in Manhattan called the Professional Children’s School, which happened to be run by a woman who summered at Stonington, and whom she had met socially.

So I transferred – I started my next year at the Professional Children’s School, studying with George twice a week, and finding myself the second boy in a class of thirty, in which all the girls were either Conover models, or ballet dancers. My prep school friends would visit me at school and their jaws would drop. “My God! How did you manage this?” I didn’t tell them, the girls

were only focused on snapping their gum and talking about things that I wasn't at all interested in. The school finally got the idea and bumped me up a class, because scholastically, Hotchkiss was ... well, they trained you so well that by the time you reached Yale you'd done all the freshman work. A lot of the Hotchkiss boys got in trouble their freshman year, because there was no challenge for them. The senior class at my new school was eight boys, eight girls. Much, much better. I had a really nice year. A couple of the teachers I really liked. One of them had a class called 'Science and Man.' We used to meet in Central Park ... the school was on Columbus Circle. I used to get to school by walking diagonally through the park to Columbus Circle. Sometimes the class would meet under a tree. Very Athenian, somehow. I liked Mr. Preble, my teacher, a lot. He was an ex-vet living in New Jersey with his kids, his family. He was really a very nice guy.

UPDIKE The Professional Children's School – that was a performing arts school?

SENDER It was for kids in the performing arts, yeah. It was sort of like the more well known New York City High School for The Performing Arts, although not as big and not as organized. But they had students, and ex-students, who were famous. Julie Harris had gone there, I remember going to see her in *His Eye on the Sparrow* ... she was playing a little girl with a black nanny. We went backstage afterwards. George insisted that I get a fully rounded artistic education. He said, "He should not only study piano, he should be educated in the arts. He should have a ticket to the Philharmonic, he should have a decent Steinway to practice on, he should go to all the art shows, ballets, museums..." And he made sure I did. Sometimes he took me, sometimes I went with Julia. My biggest epiphany at the Philharmonic was hearing Myra Hess play the Brahms *Second Concerto* with Bruno Walter conducting. She played with the notes on the piano in front of her, and she just knocked me out. I went into an expanded state of consciousness for at least several days. Actually I can remember a number of these expanded states triggered by various events, films, concerts, ballets – and books. Even sunsets!

UPDIKE So at this point, did you want to be a concert pianist?

SENDER Yeah, that was my goal at that point, and stayed my goal for a couple of years, continuing through George. The Professional Children's School day was short, because the assumption was, "These kids have better things to do." So we started at 10 AM and got out at 2, and then I'd go for a lesson at George's. I could walk crosstown from Columbus Circle to his 63rd Street apartment near Second Avenue. Once I graduated, my lessons at George's would start at ten and go until about four. We'd sit there and George would reminisce as he sat in his big armchair with his pipe. He would talk about the good old days ... smuggling jewels out of

Germany for the Hohenzollern family of the Kaiser who were starving to death after WWI ... accompanying soprano Lucrezia Bori singing Puccini arias on a barge floating down the canal in Venice ... being given a key to a castle by a mysterious stranger on a boat going to Europe, and God knows what. I'd say, "I'm studying with George Copeland," and people would say, "Oh, you mean the composer?" I'd say, "That's Aaron Copland, this is George Copeland." They spell their names differently. Years later (I discovered this quite recently) Aaron Copland was not allowed into Brazil one year because they thought he was George Copeland, and George was a well-known gay. Actually, Aaron was gay too, but whatever it was, he did not benefit from sharing a last name with George.

George did begin to give concerts. He began recording for MGM Records, and he had a couple of places where he played ... in a summer music festival in Massachusetts, he had a friend there who always put him on the program. He talked about performing at night under the bright lights. He was playing, and a luna moth came and landed on the piano keyboard, and he had to play through the moth, smearing moth up and down the keyboard, which he used as a lesson in determination.

At the school, these TV people came and said, "We're looking for young men who have a talent, who will perform on this show called *Blind Date*." I don't know if you know this show ... you do know? Okay. So the girl listens behind the screen, and my competition was this guy singing in a kind of Frank Sinatra style. I prepared the *Harp Etude* of Chopin, and they said, "Don't you have anything shorter?" The *Harp Etude* isn't very long, but I had had played the Carl Philipp Emanuel thing that everybody plays, the *Solfeggietto*. I hadn't practiced it in a couple of years, but I said, "I guess I can bang this out." I really did play it without a mistake. George was listening, and said, "When you started that *Solfeggietto*, my heart sank because I knew you hadn't practiced it." But I made it through, and of course the girl picked Frankie, and I got a wristwatch. But when she met both of us, I could tell that she kind of liked me better, I got that vibe. The wristwatch I wore until the hands fell off a year later. All that practicing I was doing, it must have been the vibration. I never wore a wristwatch again.

UPDIKE How long did you study with George? How many years?

SENDER I graduated one year early, in '51, from the Professional Children's School, and then I had a year of just music, '51 and '52 in New York ... I'll get to that, that was really a great year. At the end of '52 I went to Rome for the Conservatory. George got me turned onto reading, I was reading [Maurice] Maeterlinck's plays ... the year after I graduated we had a subscription library across the street from our house. I used to just wander the stacks and pull a

book out and it would be exactly the book I wanted. I got more out of my own self-educating than I had ever gotten out of school. I also became very rarified. I picked up some of George's mannerisms ... I began speaking with a haughty accent. I didn't go into his dress mode, but the cab drivers would say, "Hey, are you from England?" I became a bit of a snob. I remember at a dinner party Julia held somebody was going on about the Philharmonic and what a wonderful conductor they had. It was a guy with a Greek name ... George didn't like him and so I picked up that and started putting the conductor down very rudely. Julia ordered me from the table. I was really pretty obnoxious at that time.

BRZYTWA How old were you?

SENDER Sixteen. Anyway, skipping ahead, George also said, "To become a finished musician you have to go to Italy." Of course that's very old-fashioned. It turned out the Italian conservatories were free if you were admitted. It would certainly be much cheaper for Julia, who was paying George \$25 a lesson, which was a lot of money in those days. So she decided that I would go to Rome. I practiced a program for my entrance exam, and I was going to go on the Italian Lines ship, the *Saturnia* – no airlines in those days!

A couple of years earlier ... Julia's husband Paul had never settled down after the war ended. Talk about a classic case of post-traumatic stress! After all those wonderful adventures he had behind enemy lines ... (he was my hero by the way – as a pre-teen I just thought Paul was end-all terrific). At Clarksburg I begged and begged to have him come and address my class. Finally Julia pushed him and he came and talked to the class. Of course I was proud as punch. He was nice to me in a somewhat distant way, but later a little strange, too ... he kept telling me the damndest stories about the war. He began drinking very heavily (I think another reason I was off to boarding school was to avoid him, although Julia she and her dad were both big Anglophiles. Uncle John had been appointed by Wilson as Ambassador to the UK around the time of the First World War. He'd borrowed the money to afford this, because at that time he didn't have all that much money. In those days, you couldn't be an ambassador unless you had money because you had to pay for the lifestyle. He had been Solicitor General before that. Julia joined him over there as a nineteen-year-old, and had this terrific year going to all the balls and the parties ... the castles and the "thisses and the thatses" ... she wrote a book about it, *Embassy Girls*, a cute book. When he came back, he brought his whole ambassadorial staff of people with him and bought this estate in Locust Valley, Long Island ... it wasn't super-super, but it was pretty impressive. Now, why did I get on this? He made a nice grandpa. He was very conservative, but I remember him as the guy who poked his finger in my ribs and chuckled and played backgammon with me. You asked a question, and now I've forgotten.

BRYZTWA

I think you were saying Paul and Julia were not getting along....

SENDER

Oh yeah, Paul and Julia were not getting along. Paul was drinking very heavily, he could not get a job, he began sleeping around. I remember one summer at Stonington, they were friends with this couple – he was a commander in the Navy and an instructor at the submarine base. He invited me to come along on a day of dives, which I loved, so off we went. I'm up on the conning tower admiring the view and I hear this horn going off [mimics horn], and I said, "That's a funny sound." Suddenly this big burly hand grabs me and shoves me down the hatch as they go under water. It was the dive signal. The commander's wife was also a heavy drinker at our parties. I would be asked to play accordion for the adults 'at a distance,' usually from the rumpus room on the first floor while they congregated in the all-white living room on the second, and she would come sashaying down to wrap an arm around my neck and breathe a song request in my ear. One day the submarine commander came home early, and Paul was in bed with the commander's wife. He went out the window stark naked and ran all the way home down Main Street, leaping people's back hedges. I always wondered how his genitalia survived before he reached our house on a little side street. But he was the talk of the town, the gossip of the season of 1950. He also was sleeping with some of Julia's other friends and it must have been in the summer of 1951 he finally ran off with someone wife – they eloped to Italy. A year later, the first day or second day I was in Rome, I was standing at the bottom of the Spanish steps, and I looked up and there was Peggy, Paul's new girlfriend, walking up the steps. That was the last I ever caught sight of either of them. I never knew what happened to him ... well, I did hear that he was managing a hotel somewhere outside Rome. I figured that probably the CIA set him up to run a safe house, at least in my fevered imaginations of his heroic lifestyle, that's what I figured he must have done. He ended his days over there, just completely disappeared. Even through his son Paul Jr. I never found out anything. Paul Jr. married, divorced, remarried, had a child, but I never figured out what happened to his dad. Sort of sad in a way, but Paul Sr. was not a comfortable person to be around. Both of my father figures made me uncomfortable to be around in their own unique ways.

During my year at The Professional Children School, George said, "You should study composition, and you should study counterpoint." So he got me a counterpoint teacher, who was teaching music at a girl's college in New York. His name was Ferdinand Davis, and all his friends called him Twitch, because he was sort of twitchy. He gave me a couple lessons and then got bored and passed me on to one of his graduate students. It was Palestrina counterpoint, which I put on the same level as doing crossword puzzles. It had absolutely no earthly use that I could imagine. It was developed by studying Palestrina's scores – "This must be what Palestrina did."

It was sort of back-engineered. Anyway, I did them. George always said, “I don’t teach piano technique – I’m going to send you to this specialist, Lillian Paige.” After some months with Lillian, whom I liked, she became quite ill and I had to work with her disciplinary sidekick, whom I did not like. But then, I was never good at practicing scales anyway. I just could never get into Czerny, or playing scales.

George also made arrangements with an up-and-coming composer Elliott Carter to teach me harmony. Elliott lived with his wife and young son down in the Village on Tenth Street. He was somewhat impoverished and was commuting to Philadelphia to teach at The Curtis Conservatory. I also had made a perfunctory effort to join a harmony class before at the Manhattan school. But I was such a snot, and the teacher really didn’t like me, so I stopped attending. So here I was going to Elliot Carter, and he had had some success with his first string quartet, and was writing a second one. Also he had just had his piano sonata published and showed me a part where you hold down certain lower keys silently, and bang these others, so it makes a ringing harmonic ... something I had never seen – kind of cute. I was still copying George’s attitude, that music stopped with Debussy and the Impressionists, all the modern avant-garde stuff was junk, but Elliott kept trying to convince me ... “You should really listen to the Berg *Violin Concerto*...” I’d say, “No,” and we’d play two-hand versions of various symphonies. Classical symphonies. We were working through the Piston harmony book. I liked Elliott, although he was a little odd. He kept saying, “If I had to do it all over again, I wouldn’t have taken up composition. I would have become a painter.” His wife was a sculptor. He was sort of discouraged at that point I think, in his career. Either that or he was trying to discourage me. I studied with him for two years and then, off I went to Rome.

During my year at the Professional Children’s School, Julia was single, and drinking a lot. She never did well on her own, the few years she was in-between husbands. She had successful surgery for ovarian cancer, and that next summer she started dating Chip, Paul’s best friend from the OSS, who was divorced.

As for my own romantic life, I should mention that. George’s house for the summers of 1951-52 in Stonington was a shared Victorian on the edge of town. Another family from another part of Connecticut took the back part. They had a couple of kids, all very hospitable. The girl, Alfreda, was my age ... we called her ‘Elfie,’ and she had an especially sweet personality and freckled face and bobbed brown hair. That was the summer that my father and his American wife visited us for the first time. Going back to Julia – as I mentioned she started dating Chip. Chip took me out for lunch one day, just as sweet as pie. He said, “I think Julia and I are going to get hitched.” I said, “Wonderful, great!” He was a nice guy, a little plodding, not terribly bright or intellectual. He had some health issues, he was an attorney, recovering from a heart attack. He had a couple

of kids, younger than we were. His daughter Erin started showing up in Stonington – we're still friends to this day. But as I said, George was sharing this large Victorian, and I went up every day to practice because we didn't have a piano. I'd practice on his piano and sit around on the porch with him while he smoked his pipe and his Burmese cat Isis would crawl onto my lap – never in the city, but I seemed to be her summer boyfriend. So that was the year that Chip and Julia married and went off on their honeymoon to Ireland, and my father and his American wife came to babysit us. There was this one unusually historic moment when both families merged briefly, because with Paul no longer on the scene, there wasn't any issue. Chip's daughter Erin took a family photo that included my father, my stepmother, Julia, her new husband, my sister Andrea and me, all together. That's the one photo that has all of us in one frame. Anyway, off the newlyweds went to Ireland, and Papá babysat us. I had been watching his relationship with his wife, which consisted mostly of his putting her down. We'd be talking at the table, and he would say to her, "Woman, you have lost the perfect opportunity to be quiet." It's better in Spanish, I'm sure. She sort of door-matted quite well for years. He divorced her twice. He divorced her, got back together, divorced her again, and even in the later years ... they only lived two blocks apart, divorced, but she came over to do his laundry and clean up his house. But she did start standing up for herself. She didn't let him walk totally over her anymore. It was kind of interesting to see her finally put her foot down. She was a little tiny woman, too.

Anyway, I sort of studied their relationship. She had been a Spanish professor at a Colorado university and he'd walked off the pages of her major interests into her life, and she just adored him. She did all his translations into English. When they moved to New Mexico they both taught at the university. He taught in Spanish, Spanish literature. The first day of class he would make some sort of long introduction in Spanish, and then he would say, "Is there anyone here who didn't understand me? Please raise your hand." To whomever raised their hand, he would say, "You do not belong in this class." I decided I needed some young girl who was equally adoring and that was it going to be Elfie, because Elfie lived right behind George and listened to me practice daily. So I decided I'd date her. We used to bicycle to the nearest movie house, it was five miles away, and back. That upcoming winter she also came to New York and stayed with a friend, and we went out. But by then I had met someone else and I broke it off with her. I was seventeen.

Then I started a really classic *folie a deux*. A best friend said, "I'm going with this girl who's going to Emma Willard, the girls' prep school, and I think you'd like her roommate. Why don't we double date in New Haven?" So we made this arrangement, and I went up and met this girl, Sibyl, who just happened to be the prettiest, greenest-eyed, gorgeous creature. We shared all the same interests, and she was very bright. She said she was writing letters to the Bulletin of

Atomic Scientists, and she probably was. She'd grown up in the remnants of the Oneida Community, which had been an intentional community in the 1860s or '70s in upstate New York that practiced free love. Nobody married. The young men were all trained by the older women in what I guess would be called "coitus reservatus," so you never impregnated anyone unless the committee on genetics paired you up. For some odd reason, the founder (minister) was selected more than anyone else. She was one of the many great-granddaughters of the founder, with this amazing background in the remnants of this crazy community. By then they no longer existed, dissolved under the thunderings of local Christian preachers, although it had been very popular, with excursion trains running from New York City up to the community, so that people could go up for the weekend to watch all these crazy hippies ... well, hippies of that time, I guess. Sibyl and I talked so long and so endlessly (I think we irritated my friends, because we paid no attention to them) that she missed the last train back to school. She came in after hours and was grounded, which included not being allowed to phone out. So she used to have to phone me hiding in the booth, crouched way down. Of course she came down to New York over Thanksgiving and George let me have his apartment the weekend she came down. That was the first time I'd ended up in bed with a girl ... with anyone, for that matter.

UPDIKE What was her name?

SENDER Sibyl Inslee. I have a photo of her somewhere in my files. I visited her home over Christmas, and toured the original 300-room Mansion House that dated from the time of the Oneida Community. Her grandparents lived there amongst other retirees, and he was one of the original 'sterpiculture' children whose parents were matched by the community's genetics committee. That summer Sibyl planned to visit me in Stonington. She visited her roommate Kathy first, and called me and said, "While I was staying with Kathy, I did go to bed with her brother." I said, "What?!" We had sworn eternal love!

BRYZTWA How could she do that to you?

SENDER How could she do that to me? I was fit to be tied! So we broke up over the phone, and I started going out with another local girl, Sally, who was very nice but not as overwhelming. She had a grandmother whom I liked, and at her house we talked about spiritual things, mostly. We had medium sessions, table-tipping, but it wasn't serious. And that fall I went off to Italy. Julia was with Chip, and things were going well. Chip was more of a Mr. Fixit around the house, and I learned how to be the kind of guy who fixes things from him. Anyway, Julia fell and cracked her head and needed some rest, so she decided to accompany me, to my disappointment, on the boat to Rome. Before we left she had had the local Stonington GP give

me a physical and also chat with me about birth control, just to make sure I knew about it. I remember when the boat passed by Gibraltar, I stared at Spain and thought, “Wow, Spain!” The Bay of Lions gleamed blood-red from the sunset, and it seemed appropriate. We went ashore at Cannes and had dinner with a male friend of hers and then disembarked in Naples, where we took the train to Rome. On the boat I had played my entrance exam concert for practice: Schumann’s *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*, which is kind of like *Carnaval*, but not played as much. A couple of Chopin etudes, a Handel *Gigue*. A couple of Bach inventions – nothing requiring a hell of a lot of technique.

We arrived in Rome and visited the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia downtown in an impressively ancient building. Nobody had heard of us! Julia had written all of these letters, but “No, we don’t know anything about it, but anyway, let him play for us.” So I did, and then, “Okay, sure, you’re in.” We were directed to the ‘Foro Italico’ section of the city where Mussolini had covered over the swamps with marble forums and stadiums. One building had been turned into a branch of the Conservatory with teaching studios, soundproof practice cubicles and dormitories for students. The music students shared it with a bunch of young athletes for some reason.

Julia bade me a fond farewell. I was put in a room with three other young men. Two were twins and were duo pianists from Malta – cute as could be, maybe a few years younger than me. The third was this Italian kid who was my age, Bruno Zambrini, who wanted to be a love-song composer. He was always sort of mooning about, sighing deep sighs. The rooms had twenty-foot ceilings, and at night all the mosquitos would rise up from the swamp through God knows what trap door. Our evening exercise was throwing two pairs of balled-up socks against the ceiling to squash mosquitos. It was mostly for my friend Bruno’s benefit, because for some reason the mosquitos loved his nose. His nose just kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger, just like Pinocchio. There were some other English-speaking students living there, an Australian tenor in his twenties and a thirty-something conductor from New Zealand, so I was having a pretty good time. We three were taking Italian conversation with Signorina Respighi, who I think was a granddaughter of the composer, a very pretty young lady. We were all very happy reading Italian newspapers for Signorina Respighi. Also I made friends with Livio Patrizi, who was my age from Naples and Mario Bertoncini who lived with his parents not far away. Attempting to talk philosophy with them helped my Italian a lot!

For piano I was assigned to Professoressa Belcredi, a greying, sharp-featured teacher who really expected results, of a type that perhaps might be termed ‘a battle axe.’ Also I was required to take solfeggio classes with all these ten and eleven-year-olds. There were various age levels at the school – boarding school for these young, young kids and for foreign students of all ages – and we were all in the same building. For solfeggio, it was *parlato*, spoken. No singing. I just couldn’t do that machine-gun style “do re mi.” Unless you’ve learned how to do it early ... I

could sight-read it on a piano or sing it, but damn, the spoken I just couldn't do the way these ten-year-olds were rattling it out. That was funny. And it turned out the composition course was twelve years. My teacher, Maestro di Donato, was a very sweet gentleman. I would bring him something (I was writing a flute and piano piece in a somewhat Scriabine-esque style) and he would pat me on the head and say "My dear boy, the composition course is twelve years long! You shouldn't be writing like this for another five." I think his attitude helped push me forward towards more modern composers.

I began listening to contemporary music in Rome. The RAI Symphony Orchestra rehearsed and performed in the same building where we were living. All their Vespas were parked outside our bedroom window, when they were leaving, they would all start up together with this huge roar. We found that we could go down for rehearsals and sneak in, and even get into the concerts, because they rarely sold out. VIPs got tickets but almost never used them. So we would wait until the last moment, and then the guard would let us in. We heard a lot of good music. We heard von Karajan conduct a series of six Brahms concerts with his eyes closed, which impressed me. We heard pieces that were really quite rare, like Berg's short little pieces on postcards ... vignettes. We heard a lot of contemporary Italian ... Petrassi ... I didn't like him very much. But we heard a lot of rare music. When I was living in the dorm I was hanging out with the Fulbright students in town, and with my Australian and New Zealand friends, and not practicing Italian. I met Michael Steinberg who was dating another Fulbright student and went out a few times with the young secretary from the Fulbright office, Letizia Ciotti, who spoke English. I suddenly realized, "Here I am living in Rome, speaking English all the time! This is ridiculous." Well, suddenly one day carpets and lamps and armchairs appeared in our rooms. We thought, "Oh, wonderful!" That weekend there was a conference of conservatory directors from all over Italy, and they marched through our rooms ... "Oh, very nice, very nice," they commented. The next day, all of the stuff disappeared back into storage. That was sort of irritating. Then the meals were coming in colder and colder, and also the damn toilets never worked. The toilets were beyond disgusting, really. So the three of us – my New Zealand friend, my Australian friend, and I complained to the director. We said, "This is abominable! The food's cold, the toilets don't work, and what's with this damn furniture appearing and disappearing?" He was very apologetic, and suddenly we could order anything we wanted for meals. But I thought, "The hell with this, I'm moving out. I'm not going to ever learn Italian or experience Rome unless I live get out of here."

So I found a room near the Vatican with a little old lady, Mrs. Padoanni, and her daughter who was going to college. She leased out her carpentry shop, which belonged to her dead husband, and found me a bicycle. So I found I could make the switch for about the same money (it wasn't costing much more) and made an arrangement with a local restaurant to feed me ... one meal a

day. I would hop on the bike and if it was a piano lesson day and cold, I would buy hot chestnuts from a street vendor and put them in my pockets. I would bike and when I got to the Conservatory, I would stuff my hands in my warm pockets before playing. I got to be friends with the daughter going to college, Adriana, and she arranged for me to play at some student event. By then I was playing the Webern *Short Pieces* and the Schoenberg ... one of his sets. And also Blacher. Boris Blacher was into writing for the piano with additive rhythms, the meter changing measure by measure. My real stepmother (Florence, married to my father) had a nephew with the Vienna Kammerchor. He came through Rome and said, "You should come and visit." So I put that on the agenda.

Meanwhile I began to get a little burnt out with the Conservatory. My dear Maestro Di Donato, my composition teacher, just kept patting me on the head repeating, "Son, this is a twelve-year composition class. You shouldn't be writing in this style yet, you should be just chugging along." The composer in residence that year at the American Academy was Alexei Haieff. I didn't know anything about him, just knew his name. So I looked him up, and he was very friendly, he invited me to bring up some scores. I had just written a bunch of piano pieces along the lines of Schoenberg's easy pieces. I'd been doing the Krenek twelve-tone counterpoint exercises and had written a couple of duos for two clarinets. So I brought them up to him, and he was very encouraging. He said, "Yes, yes, yes! You should really go study with Nadia Boulanger." He was one of the Boulanger crowd. I said, "I don't think she likes twelve -tone stuff. I've heard she's very much set against it." He said, "Oh no, no, no, she'll like these. Take them!" So when I was in Paris I did visit her.

In the meantime I had heard from my friend who had set me up on the blind date with Sibyl, saying, "I don't know if you know, but Sibyl went to Radcliffe, donated blood, was gotten with a dirty needle, misdiagnosed, and almost died before they got her to the hospital. She was in the hospital for months with a very, very bad case of serum hepatitis." Oh my God! I ran downtown and put through an international call to her. In those days you had to go to a special booth and push a button on your phone, some sort of radio phone or something. It was all very romantic, we re-professed our love over international wires and ... excitement, excitement! In June, I was scheduled to meet my sister Andrea and Julia in Paris, first to Vienna, and then from Vienna to Paris. That's what happened. I went to Vienna via Venice. Venice is not the place to go by yourself. It rained all three days I was there. I spent them in a harpsichord shop playing the damn harpsichord because there was nothing else to do. Years later I wrote a poem about it:

Ma Che - But What?

The futile pursuit led to rain-drenched Venice
Where Orpheus whetted his profession
On a dusty-keyed harpsichord.
The surly shopkeeper stood aside
Under a panoply of shields and maces.
Bored, he knew nothing of the search
But lived in a cluttered bypass
Of the destitute piazza.

She for whose presence Orpheus yearned
Lay staring through wet windowpanes,
Lashes turned against the burden
Of her fantasies, thoughts
That circled with the clouds of birds
Upon the tolling of the bells.
From the lower floor she heard
Sonatas of Scarlatti played with quills.

Tiring of the tumultuous storm,
On the third day he left for Vienna,
Imagining Eurydice beclouded,
Lost, invisible. As the train
Uncoiled and stretched, the sun emerged,
Sparking rooftops, mirrored in canals.
Like a flower she awoke at last.
"Who was the tireless harpsichordist?" she asked.

Then I got to Vienna ... it was still an occupied town. The Russians, the English and the Americans split the town in three. I came in the wrong entrance, through the Russian zone entrance. My first Russian soldier I saw was standing on a platform smelling a flower, and I thought, "These are our enemies? My God." When I arrived where my cousin was staying, it turned out to be an old palace in the Russian sector, full of Fulbright students again. Among them was a guy named Allan Rich, with whom I became friends. I had a really good time because it was the May music festival, and I went to something like twenty-three concerts in the twenty-one days I was there. I heard *Fidelio* in the original hall it was first performed in. They

were rebuilding the old opera house, which had been bombed. It turned out you could rent a room in this palace for ten dollars a month, with one meal and a piano. It was run by this very eccentric old princess. I really seriously thought of staying on, but I kept hearing the siren song of this lovely lady in the USA. Universal Editions was selling out a store, and I spent all my money on scores. I had a special box built ... you could unhinge the lid and it would become a bookcase. I filled two of these crates with scores that accompanied me first to Paris and then to London, with Julia paying extra weight on those damn boxes. She got kind of tired of it. So I had this great time in Vienna going to lots and lots of concerts, and then arriving broke in Paris, having to live with my sister and Julia in an 'appropriate' pension, instead of hanging out on the East Bank, which is what I felt I should be doing.

While in Paris I looked up Nadia Boulanger as my mentor Alexei Haieff had suggested. I went by her flat, and she was seated at the piano with a little chubby one-and-a-half-year-old on her lap banging on the keys, getting started early. She had a classroom in her house, and in the classroom these college kids were all taking some kind of music exam. I had my briefcase, and I said, "You know, I've been writing along the lines of the twelve tone system." "Twelve tone!" she exclaimed, and gave me her, "What's wrong with the twelve tone system" lecture. I thanked her very politely, and didn't even open my briefcase. I just shook her hand and left. It was funny, because either that night or the next we went to a performance of the *Rake's Progress* at the opera house with André Cluytens conducting, and she was sitting right behind him whispering in his ear throughout the performance. She must have driven him nuts. So anyway, I was spared being "Boulanjayed," which is all to the good.

I continued with Julia and my sister to England, where we stayed with longtime friends from Julia's days there at Hare Hatch, Twyford. I took the train to London to meet a friend of mine from the Professional Children's School who was going to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. We had a big argument, because he had become very radicalized. He considered my European tour very bourgeois. When I got on the train to go back, I fell asleep and didn't awaken until they put it in the siding and turned out the lights. I got up, jumped down on the track, and this other train wooshed right past me. I rolled under our train while this damn thing went by ... I could see the highway, so I went up on the road. I knew the name of the town we were staying in, Twyford, but didn't know the address or the phone. But this truck guy stopped and said, "Yeah, I'm going right by." So I got in, and I kept staring out the window ... Finally I did recognize the inn that was on the corner of the road we were living on, and that's the way I got home. I just got out and walked up that street and I was home.

That and the Henley Regatta were the only things that I recall about the England visit. We were not scheduled to spend any time in London and do the museums, etc. What was nice about the Henley Regatta was that it was a very social “up” thing and all the big universities had rowing teams. But the team that won that year was from the Paris Metro, a bunch of dark, barrel-chested young man who certainly did not look like the Old School Tie crowd. I thought, “That’s neat!” Then I had to go back to Rome to pack things up, while Julia and my sister went home by themselves. I shared my decision to return to the USA with Alexei Haieff, as well as my abortive attempt to match trajectories with Boulanger. He was very disappointed. “Oh, you should have shown her your work. She would have really liked it,” he insisted. “Who are you going to study with when you get back?” I said, “I don’t know, it’s kind of late to apply.”

Through Elliot Carter I knew Milton Babbitt via some of the Composer’s Forum events, and I thought he might help get me into Princeton. Alexei said, “Well, there’s also Brandeis. There’s a very good composition faculty there – Irving Fine, Harold Shapiro” – these were all Boulanger-ites. And Arthur Berger. Anyway, inasmuch as Brandeis was a half-hour bus ride from Radcliffe, where a certain young lady was going back to school, I opted for Brandeis. My family were ... Julia and her father ... well, I would not say they had a whole lot of Jewish friends, let’s put it that way. Julia had once made an unkind comment about one of my friends at the Professional Children’s School who was Jewish. So they were kind of bemused about my selecting this ‘new Jewish college,’ but went along with it. I think my grandfather must have written to somebody on the trustees to find out what the school was like, inasmuch as he was probably going to be paying the tuition. All I know is that I was treated very respectfully when I arrived. It sort of irritated me.

I came home on this big liner The United States, feeling very sad about leaving Europe and going home with all of these ‘tourists.’ By then I was speaking fluent Italian ... my goal had been to speak it well enough so the cab drivers wouldn’t spot me, and I managed it. The trip home was uneventful. There was this guy who was on it, Burr Tillstrom, who had a TV show called *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* about two puppets, and he had a woman friend who would stand and talk to the puppets. He was really sweet to all the younger people, I remember. I got home, went to Long Island to join the family at my American granddad’s. They of course wanted me to play so I played the Schoenberg pieces, the Webern pieces, the Blacher. They were all looking at me – “What?!”

I spent a weekend with the family and then said, “Well, I’ve got to go check out Brandeis!” What I was really doing was going to do was join Sibyl and her family on Cape Cod, which I proceeded to do. We went out sailing together and stayed out so late that we couldn’t find our

way back. In the early dawn, out of the mists appeared a motor lodge with her father next to the steersman. Considering everything, I think he was pretty decent about it. He said, “You know, she’s still not completely recovered, you have to be very careful with her.” So anyway, that was that. I went on from there to Brandeis and rented a room in a house with a little old lady and her daughter, who just loved watching Liberace on the TV. “He must be like Liberace,” they said, because I moved in my Steinway piano that took up my whole room. I started classes – they put me in graduate music classes. I was taking invertible counterpoint canon and fugue with Harold Shapiro, composition with him, freshman general survey courses in the humanities, and French literature with a very nice French poet, Claude Vigée. I liked his class, and I was getting a lot out of my music, but those freshman general survey classes drove me nuts. All the kids were just fresh out of high school in their baseball jackets. The upshot was that I cut a lot of those classes and spent a lot of time at Radcliffe – and I started sneaking Sibyl into my room. My window faced the front porch, so she could climb in, and I made up a story for my landladies saying we had been secretly married in Rome and even our families didn’t know. Oh, how romantic! Just like Liberace, they decided. They really loved that, and were very nice to us.

But Sibyl started getting into trouble for being out so much from the dorm. Also, she was getting very tired. The infirmary from Harvard prescribed her this bottle of green liquid that turned out to be pure Dexedrine. They said, “Whenever you feel tired, just take a teaspoon of that.” She would take a teaspoon and would go off like a rocket! I tried it, and I went off like a rocket! You become briefly this intellectual genius – it was Gestapo fuel, designed by the Germans. We both would get high on it, and then decide that the only solution to all of our problems was to create an intentional community of all our smartest friends. I wrote all my papers on it ... I remember writing a paper on T.S. Elliot’s quartets, *The Theory of Incarnation As It Appears In T.S. Elliot’s Four Quartets*. Sibyl was taking a course on Joyce from Harry Levin, the great Joyce expert; I’d go sit in with her. We considered ourselves much too intellectual and smart and brilliant for anybody, real snobs! As I neared final exams for the semester, I wrote all my papers on Dexedrine. One of the children of the great anthropologist, Franz Boaz, was giving the Social Science course, and on the exam asked, “Give three reasons for the downfall of Rome.” I had just finished reading a book by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, the one who wrote the book on laughter. He also had a theory about how cause and effect wasn’t true ... you just can’t figure out what caused what. So I wrote three exam books on Bergson and how you cannot figure out the reasons for the downfall of the Roman Empire. So I got a big fat flunk on that. She knew I hadn’t done the reading, I guess. But I did okay on my French, and some other things – I limped along.

At Brandeis I was working on a string trio in a twelve-tone row. I was still in a sort of self-conscious composition state, where every note had to be checked with Stravinsky and

Schoenberg in my head. Irving Fine told someone that the work I was doing was very advanced, but I had a feeling that my dear Uncle John had something to do with that. Word must have trickled down to the music department, and they decided to be very, very nice to me. This irritated me, because I wanted to make it on my own, and not because I had a prestigious relative. But I think I was the only person there working with the twelve-tone system, except perhaps Arthur Berger. Everyone else was pretty Boulanger-oriented. The string trio was more like a chunk of a string trio in a very tight canonic form. A few years later I did get a reading up at Juilliard from some string players with Walter Trampler on viola. Trampler was always eager to help young composers. That got me all excited, because I hadn't actually heard my music performed.

Sibyl continued not in good health; she would get really, really tired. I decided the only solution was for us to get married. We announced to the family – we were both nineteen so we didn't really need permission. Oh no, actually, I did need permission ... so I forged my father's signature on a permission note. When we announced it, the family freaked out on both sides, of course. Her parents dragged her home and sent her to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist said, "Well, I don't see what's so wrong. If she wants to get married, let her get married!" So I was in my room one morning and there was a tap on the window. And it was Sibyl, back! She said, "I've come back, I'm going to be with you! The psychiatrist said it's okay!" So then we really did get married. We could get married in the Harvard chapel for free, so we did that. I had a friend from Brandeis, Daniel Lourie, very bright, and we had long intellectual discussions about things. He was my best man, and my sister came from Wellesley. She was in her first year at that college. Julia was very upset – we were really on the outs, but Sibyl's parents came. We didn't have any money ... neither of us had ever held a paying job. But we said, "That's no problem, we're in love. Love is all we need." I decided, "I'll sell the piano and that will give us some money for the move into Boston, and we'll get jobs." So that's what I did. It freaked Julia out even more because I got very little of what the piano was worth. We got a job selling magazines door to door. That rapidly paled. Then we got jobs selling dry cleaning coupon books door-to-door. Sibyl was very good at it, because she could walk into a bar looking gorgeous and sell a coupon book to every man in that bar. I tried it on the ladies at their front doors – these frumpy housewives, and blam! – they'd slam the door in my face. We decided it was just too crude ... so we quit the same day, giving a big lecture to the man who ran the teams. I got a job as a counter-boy at the Italian restaurant in the Boston Globe building, the big daily paper. Sibyl got a part-time job at an aptitude testing lab called Human Engineering, new at the time. They would test you to see what your aptitudes were and then they would say, "Oh yes, you'd be very good as a stockbroker, or something." So Sibyl got a job there and we became friends with the young man who was her boss.

We found an apartment on Myrtle Street, where we got a cheap rent by sweeping the stairs. Myrtle Street had the fattest, largest cats I've ever seen, they were like small panthers. This was on old Beacon Hill. We chugged along until one day, after making love ... I don't think we were protected ... she immediately started running a slight temperature, went and got checked, and found out she was pregnant! It was funny, her temperature went up just at conception. "Oh my gosh!" We talked about it, we searched for other kinds of work. We decided we'd be very good as lighthouse keepers. I thought "Yes, an isolated lighthouse where I can write my music and she can write her great book ." We applied to the Coast Guard, but it turned out that lighthouses were getting more and more automated all the time. Then we decided, "Well, we'll move back to New York. More opportunities." So we counted our pennies ... Sibyl remembered that we spent our last five dollars on a Monopoly set, but I don't think so. Clueless we were, but not crazy. I remember that we had just enough money so that I could go down on the train, and if I could find a job and an apartment in three days, then she would come down on the train and join me. So off I went, and I stopped in Stonington and visited George. I think George looked at me somewhat sorrowfully. But he didn't say anything ... he was glad to see me. He was always very warm with me, and very affectionate. He would always embrace me when I came for lessons. He never came on to me, but he would give me a hug. He would say things like, "In Italy, two young men can be in love, and as they get older they get married. It's okay to have a fling." He was kind of letting me know the gay thing was not a big no-no. But in one of my fights with Julia, she had said, "You know George is gay!" I reported that to George, and he said, "Oh, very interesting..." I don't know ... whatever. Little adult things going around.

Anyway, he was very nice to me and I went on to New York, where I applied to a rental bureau and got an apartment – cheap – by offering to sweep the stairs and manage the small building, our old ploy from Beacon Hill. Then I went to a job bureau. For a month's salary that I could pay off on time, they got me a job wrapping repaired pens at a Parker Pen repair depot. So Sibyl came down we and moved in on East 33rd Street, between Second and Third Avenue. The problem with the Parker Pen job ... there were a number of problems. Number one, I was reading Ezra Pound on my lunch breaks, about what was wrong with our culture. Then, if I was wrapping a pen and it became five o'clock and I still had a little extra to do on it, I'd continue. But I'd get all these dirty looks from the other guys, because they quit right at five no matter what. Or if I finished five minutes of five, I wouldn't start another pen, and I'd get dirty looks. I thought, "To hell with this!" So I went out and applied for another job. The job finders really didn't know what to do with me, but since my name, Ramón, was latino, they sent me to the Biltmore Hotel kitchen as vegetable boy. The Biltmore Hotel, where Sibyl and I had met under the Biltmore clock that first Thanksgiving together, in the most romantic of traditions! So I

started learning how to be a vegetable boy. All went well until one day I put two crates worth of asparagus in this big steam chest. Nobody told me to put bicarbonate of soda on the asparagus so they wouldn't whiten, so they stayed green. So we had a whole steam chest of white asparagus. They were nice about it, they didn't fire me, but I was embarrassed, so I quit.

Then I thought, "We're a block and a half away from the NYU medical school, maybe I'll go over there and apply for a job." So I did, and they were looking for someone for their pharmacology department. So they signed me up for Assistant Bottle Washer at forty dollars a week. By then we had moved across the street in what was called a cold water flat, which meant it had hot water, but it didn't have AC – only DC wiring. The owners were two very stocky Polish ladies who ran a plumbing supply business on the first floor. They said, "Oh, you don't want the apartment. It's DC." We said, "No, no, no, we'll take it! Forty dollars a week, it's ours." Forty wasn't too bad, considering. My first day at the department was awful. My job that day was to take dogs from the kennel to surgery, where they were testing anesthetics on these poor animals. I did it just this one time ... there was another guy who was working for them, slightly senior than me, and I said, "I just can't do this." He said, "You won't have to do it again, you just had to do it this one time. This whole department is changing. There's this whole crew coming in from Bethesda, Maryland, from the federal medical thing down there. They're biochemists, and they're going to do a whole different number." So sure enough, in comes this guy, Bernard Davis and his crowd, and they're working with bugs that don't scream when you do things to them. At least not so that you can hear them. They were really bright people. Biochemists in those days were an elite bunch. Today a similar kind of person would probably be drawn toward

BRYZTWA Or genetics.

SENDER Yeah. So Bernie was very smart, and all his people were very smart. They had a tame Noble Prize winner, Otto Loewi, who discovered that electricity would trigger muscle reflexes in a frog. A very sweet old man who liked to tell how the solution came to him in a dream. They had a woman working there, Betsabe Rothschild, from the famous Rothschilds. She was a biochemist but supporting Martha Graham. She set up a whole Martha Graham foundation, and a building for them. We used to talk art, and music. They had a young biochemist, Mike Yarmolinsky, whose mother was Babette Deutsch, the poet, and his father, Avram, the big Russian expert at the New York Public Library. So these were all interesting people, and my job consisted of washing the glassware and sterilizing it, ordering lunch from the local Italian deli; making sure there were ice cream sandwiches in the freezer where they kept their samples, and putting on a tea in the afternoon with a two-liter beaker full of tea. They would have all these

famous people come through, and it was really an interesting job. At our protracted afternoon teas we entertained such European luminaries as Jacques Monod, the famous French biochemist, and the Guerrinis, a husband-wife team of politically radical Italian scientists who had set up a rescue camp for Jewish refugee children after World War II.

Everyone was very nice to me, and so we chugged along while Sibyl got more pregnant. She took a secretarial job and decided she was going to have her baby “au-natural” which was quite unusual at the time. At Radcliffe she had been going with another guy while I was in Rome, the editor of the Harvard Literary Review, and his father was a gynecologist in Brooklyn. So the latter became her doctor, and helped her deliver without anesthetic. But he made one mistake – he wouldn’t let me stay for the delivery. He said, “Oh, go home, go home, this will take a while.” So I wasn’t allowed to be there, which was typical of the era. In a sense it was good, because I hadn’t finished painting the baby’s room. So I frantically continued fixing up the baby’s room, and Sibyl came with a cute little baby girl. But she kept bleeding. It took several weeks to figure it out, but a piece of the placenta had remained embedded in her uterus, and she had to have a D&C – a dilation & curettage. All that time she was in bed, and I was caring for the baby, mostly. I remember we decided we’d wash all the diapers at home, we had a big old laundry sink in the kitchen. Well, that lasted a week! And after the surgery, she got better.

In 1956 during the time I was working at the NYU medical center, I got to be friends with Bethsabée Rothschild, the patron of the Martha Graham Foundation. I heard through her that the Composer’s Forum was going to give a concert at the Foundation that would include electronic music by Stockhausen, and a lecture by a couple – Louis and Bebe Barron. So I went, and was impressed by both. Impressed is not really a strong enough word. The Stockhausen *Gesang der Jünglinge* really knocked me out; I just thought it was a terrific piece of music. It made me all more excited to learn about electronic music, or tape music, as we called it later, and that really was my introduction to it. Louis and Bebe gave a demonstration of how they produced electronic music by building little circuits that would interact with each other. A lot of the language they used was sort of suggestive sexually, and they started getting titters out of the straight-laced audience.

I felt irritated because I felt that Carter and Babbitt and their following weren’t taking the Barrons seriously. I didn’t realize then that the Barrons were actually living in Greenwich Village at the time, and had friends among the Bohemian poets and painters of that era. I tied them into LA and the West Coast, but many years later I found out by reading Bebe Barron’s memoir that they were in New York during that whole era. Also, I found out that they were related to my wife Judy. There were a number of composers in Judy’s family, and Louis was one

of them but considered the family eccentric, although with their production of the music for “Forbidden Planet” – that was the first all-electronic music score for a film – he’s going to go down in history. We saw Bebe last at our San Francisco Tape Center retrospective at the LA County Museum. She showed up, and it was really nice to see her. She didn’t live many more years after that, but was really a lovely person.

Also, in New York around that time (probably the winter of 1957), I took Henry Cowell’s composition class at Columbia General Studies. I didn’t realize then that he had probably just gotten out of prison on a pederasty rap. Poor man, there was something about him – you could tell he was really beaten down, but he was very sweet. I would bring stuff in, and he would say, “Wonderful, keep going.” It was not with the kind of instruction that I received later from Bob Erickson, which was much more detailed and note-by-note, but it was good for me to study with Cowell and get a feel for where he was coming from. Another historical figure in American music.

I also went to a concert of John Cage’s *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* for 12 radios. It turned out to be a night when the President was giving a weekly address, so all the stations were carrying the same message, and the result that John wanted, of different stations interacting with different programs, just didn’t happen. So that was funny. Also later, while working at the Record Hunter, probably in late 1956, I found the LP of Cage’s “Sonatas for Prepared Piano,” an early work of his that I really liked. Little gems, really, and they got me all excited about preparing my piano. I met a dancer who wanted some music, and I quickly rounded up a bunch of bolts and erasers to put in my piano and rented a wire recorder – I don’t know why I didn’t get a tape recorder – the only thing I could rent was a wire, so I recorded a dance piece for her and then had a record pressed so she could rehearse to it. I had fun doing that. Long gone ... I don’t remember her name.

UPDIKE Did you go to the performance?

SENDER No, I didn’t.

I came home from work one day in May, 1955, and there was a note on the table saying, “My old boyfriend Bob came by, and we’ve decided we’re still in love. I’m leaving you – I’ll call.” Oh, God! She did phone that evening, and they were living outside Boston. This wasn’t the boyfriend from Harvard, this was an earlier ‘before me’ boyfriend. He was stationed at an army base near Boston. She was staying with the parents of the guy she had worked for at Human Engineering, who lived near there. So she called, and I said, “I’m coming up, we’ve got to talk about this.” I got permission to take my vacation early, took the train up, and they met me at the station. It was

so strange. We drove out to the house where she was staying, and started a week of arguments, with me arguing with her all day long, and then her out on dates with Bob in the evening when he was off-duty. It was so crazy! I was in a really frantic state. I decided she was insane and had to go to a psychiatrist. My sister was seeing a psychiatrist in Boston, so I got his name and we went in to see him. He took one look at me, jittering up and down, and said, "I think you need help!" So we made an arrangement where Sibyl would come back if I would go into therapy. Before that, one night she and Bob stayed out all night and I really freaked out. I called the hospitals, I phoned the police, I finally called the base and said, "Has he come back yet?" The sergeant said, "Well, if I check and he's not home, he's AWOL. Are you sure you want me to check?" I said, "Check." So Bob was confined to base. Yay! Sibyl and I went to the psychiatrist – and she was going to come back with me now because she couldn't see Bob.

We drove to Manhattan in Bob's convertible, looking like this lovely typical family with their baby. People kept giving us these smiling looks as they whizzed past us. 'Little do they know,' I thought grimly. When we got back, I drove the car up to New Haven and left it for Bob to pick up. The army finally reassigned him to Alaska, but he kept writing to her. I'd come home from work ... "Has he written another letter? ... Has he written another letter?"

I did go to a shrink, who had been recommended. He must have been a Freudian because he was really bad news. The second session he asked me, "What gay bars do you go to?" I said, "What? What are you talking about?" He said, "I know you're gay." I said, "You're crazy!" So I quit. I had been having these nightmares about Sibyl. One morning I woke up with my hands around her throat ... really heavy stuff. I dreamt about cutting her up ... some part of me was really, really angry with her.

I realized that Sibyl was really bored staying at home. So we decided we'd try my staying at home with the baby, and her working. She got a job with a stocking manufacturing company that she didn't like with a company, quit and came home. I said, "Well look, what would your dream job be?" She said, "Working for Scientific American magazine." I said, "Apply." She did, she went down and applied, got hired, and started working as a secretary for the math expert there, James R. Newman, *The World of Mathematics* guy. Perfect job for her. I was so delighted! I was so proud of her, that she could walk in without a bachelor's degree and get hired. That seemed like a big plus.

We had a poet friend who was seeing a Reichian therapist, so I tried out his therapist. It was very interesting, he would massage my forehead, and encourage very deep breathing. One day I experienced this amazing energetic release, it started with my toes tingling, and then went right

up my whole body. I reported it to Sibyl, and she said, “Oh, I’ve got to try that!” Of course she did, and did it ten times better right away. We had this competitive thing going. I kept saying to the therapist, “I’ve got to leave her, I’ve got to leave her.” He kept saying, “Don’t leave her, don’t leave her.” But I really had to break up. I don’t think we were even sleeping together. I went out one night to a movie, *The Bicycle Thief*, and checked the audience for single women. I saw this one, nice looking – I could see her in the light from the screen, sitting by herself. I walked up to her afterwards ... I really had never done this sort of thing before, but I was desperate. She didn’t push me away, but smiled and gave me her phone number. I called her up the very next day, and two days later I was living with her. She was an artist, teaching at the Museum of Modern Art, some years older, who had just broken up with her boyfriend. And so we had a fling. I tried continuing as my little girl’s caregiver, but interacting with Sibyl was just too painful, so I found a grandmotherly woman in the neighborhood who could care for her.

Being with my new woman friend was very good for me therapeutically. I started going to her shrink, a Danish musician, a very, warm, fatherly guy, and he did help me a lot. He got me all excited about the Danish composer Carl Nielson, and I thought Nielson a good antidote to the rarefied music coming out of New York circles. Nielson felt very healthy and outdoorsy and manly, and I liked all that stuff. Over time, we sort of drifted apart – or she became interested in her previous lover. So I rented my own place in the East Village. By then I was working for the Record Hunter, the record store in New York, a good place for me, actually. I stayed with them for quite a while. I also took a course in IBM accounting machines – I figured I needed one practical skill. I liked wiring the machines, you could set them up in different ways. When the Record Hunter laid me off, I got a job with an insurance company. Of course when I got the job, there was no wiring needed, it just required feeding IBM punch cards through sorting machines. I looked for another job, and started working for G. Schirmer, the music publishers, just around the corner from the Record Hunter, in their instrumental sheet music department. That was a good place for me, and I stayed a while.

Somewhere about that time, Sibyl and I decided to try again. By then she was living in Jackson Heights in Queens, and her parents had moved nearby. Her mother was taking care of the baby. Having Grandma around was just great, because Grandma just absolutely adored our little girl. But Sibyl and I just weren’t making it, we were drifting apart again. I think she was already sleeping with someone else. She didn’t come home one night, and I finally got out of her who it was – it was a married guy at the magazine. That’s the short version, but actually it involved an attempt at what’s called ‘an open marriage,’ that was really another disaster.

So when this last blow-up occurred, I said, “I’ve really got to get out of here. I’ve got to go someplace.” I gave notice at G. Schirmer, decided I was going to San Francisco, got one of those “drive somebody else’s car for them,” – you just pay the gas and they pay you back. One of the salesmen at G. Schirmer decided that he wanted to go to Mexico, so he helped me drive as far as Texas. I put an ad in the *Voice*, and this studio musician, a violinist, needed a ride. He was an older guy, he couldn’t drive, but he’d pay. So the three of us started off in this Chrysler Imperial. I’m running it on seventeen-cents a gallon gas ... gas in Texas was something like seventeen-cents a gallon. Drove it all the way to Albuquerque. My dad was visiting friends in Santa Fe, so I drove up to Santa Fe, dropped my violinist for the day, went up there and visited him. He was very critical, he said, “What do you think you’re doing? Who do you think you are?” I said, “Just think of me as an itinerant laborer.” That freaked him out. I got in the car with my violinist friend. We drove straight through from Albuquerque to LA, it was like a sixteen-hour drive, all night. At 5:30 in the morning, listening to the Brahms *F Minor Quintet* on the radio in the Mojave Desert, the whole east horizon flashed and then glowed purple. It was still dark, dawn was just breaking. I looked again and a mushroom cloud was arising on the horizon. The Nevada test site – I learned later this shot was a 37-kiloton code-named Priscilla suspended from a balloon 700 feet above the ground, 200 miles to the northeast. That was my initiation into California. Luckily for me, the prevailing wind was blowing towards the east that day, although not so lucky for folks in the fallout zones.

UPDIKE What made you decide to go to California? Had you ever been there before?

SENDER No, let me back up a bit. Julia, through her adoption agency had informally adopted two other children, who were much older than me and my sister. Bill came to her when he was fourteen. She couldn’t place him because he was too old and too small, so she took him. She put him through school, and then he joined the Army during WWII. He became an engineer, and worked for the same company his whole life, a big engineering firm. A very sweet guy who had some problems, but very sweet. At one point he escaped to San Francisco, so I decided that was obviously the place to go. So I gave notice at G. Schirmer, and found an ad in the *Voice*, someone looking to have his Chrysler Imperial driven to L.A. One of the G. Schirmer salesmen wanted a ride as far as El Paso, and also I found an older guy, a studio violinist, who wanted a ride West. So the three of us started off. I won’t get into the details of the drive, but I did stop brief and visit my father in New Mexico, not the most pleasant of encounters, and then drove 16 hours straight through from Albuquerque to L.A., with just me behind the wheel.

I was traveling through the Mojave Desert at four in the morning, with this funny old studio violinist in the back seat. Occasionally one wheel would drift off the road and I'd jerk awake. I was listening to the Brahms Piano Quintet in f minor, a ravishing piece of music, and suddenly the whole eastern sky lit up, purple. Big flash! And thought, "My God, some power lines have gone." I looked over toward the dawn horizon and there's this mushroom cloud coming up off the Nevada test site. I thought, "Well, that's quite a baptism by fire into California!" Anyway, I delivered the car early that morning, and the guy was very happy because I crossed the continent so quickly. I didn't tell him that I'd run it on white gas at 17 cents a gallon, but it seemed none the worse for wear.

Coming out of L.A., I hitched up Route 1. I tried walking with all my books in my knapsack, but my arches fell around Santa Barbara. I camped on the beach for two days until my feet felt better, then I boxed up all my books and took them to the nearest post office and mailed them to Julia's young cousin Anne in Tiburon. I had grown up around Anne who had married a guy from Yale, now a banker in San Francisco. They had a place in Tiburon, so I had a landing spot. Much lighter, I continued on my way. A couple of hitches brought me to San Francisco. The guy dropped me at Market and New Montgomery. Walking up New Montgomery with my knapsack, I see a woman coming towards me ... she got closer ... closer ... oh my God! It's Sibyl's best friend from her hometown. I just put three thousand miles between me and that whole scene, and here's this girl I knew because she was Sibyl's best friend! It turned out that she had married and her husband was in the Navy and had been posted to the Bay Area. So I staggered on towards City Lights, I go in and there's Ferlinghetti talking to Michael McClure. I introduced myself, and say, "Who are the young composers I should be meeting?" They said, "Well there's a guy, Morton Subotnick, who's been doing a piece based on the tarot cards." I said, "That's interesting, I'll have to look him up." Well, I didn't look him up during that visit, but six years later we became friends and partners in an electronic music studio.

I called cousin Anne's cousin Ed at work and they were expecting me. So I met him at the bank and we drove out together. I started commuting in with him every day from Tiburon, looking for a job and getting settled. Ed was so staid, oh my God! Anne always was very dear, and very sweet. They had a couple of babies.

I really had to get out of Tiburon. I rented two rooms in a wino hotel on Jackson Street in what's now this upscale interior design block. But back then it was an old shabby hotel. For forty a month I had a two-room suite. I rented a piano from Kline Piano for seven dollars a month and I could play anytime, day or night, because everybody else was drunk! It was wonderful. My windows faced east and very tall, so the sun came barreling in every morning. I got a job at the

Bank of America processing travelers' checks on the swing-shift with a bunch of guys from the Presidio Army base who were picking up more money. I'd get out around midnight and go to a little wine café and have a glass of wine, look around for interesting young women, who I never seemed able to find ... it was just as well. But I met a young composer, Richard Striker I think, who had a crowd that gathered at his place. I think they thought I was kind of square. I have a hunch they were smoking pot, and didn't think I was ... which I wasn't. We had a kind of distant but friendly relationship. I did meet some of the poets. One of them, Jack Spicer, was interested in the Spanish Civil War and had translated Lorca. I went to some readings.

There were three men that I wanted to meet in the Bay Area: Alan Watts, Kenneth Rexroth, and the composer Leon Kirchner who was teaching at Mills. I had heard his second string quartet on an LP at the Record Hunter and it just had knocked me out, in a post-Bartok style, but very passionate, very emotional.

SENDER First I went to look up Alan Watts. The old Zen center was on Broadway. I knock on the door, Alan comes to the door, totally sloshed. As a twenty-one year old ... you are so judgmental of your heroes. They can't have feet of clay! I said, "Oh, he's drunk! How disgusting." I went and phoned Rexroth. The reason I was interested in Rexroth – at the Record Hunter I'd found a recording of Japanese classical music played by Shinichi Yuize, a virtuoso koto player. I loved the music, and one of them was a piece set to the *Tales of Genji*, so I read the *Tales of Genji*. Then I began to read Japanese literature in translation, and Rexroth had done a lot of the translating. That also got me interested in Zen, but at that time there wasn't much out on Zen except one book by Alan Watts. Anyway, I called up Rexroth. I had read his autobiography and had listened to his radio show – he and Watts both had shows on KPFA-FM that I had been listening to. He said, "Oh yes, I have at-homes Thursday." He spoke in a very pompous sort of way. He said, "Do come by, do come by." I had lost my 'Copeland accent' in Europe – it had been burnt right out, but could recognize a snotty tone when I heard it. So I went over to Rexroth's on Webster Street, and he spent the evening pontificating. Again, I sized him up and down, and thought, "He just doesn't match up, sorry!" What a twerp I was!

Then I went over to Mills College to meet Kirchner. He was very nice, very welcoming, but he's busy packing up. He said, "I'm moving to Harvard, I'm teaching there next year." Well, that blows that out of the water. I did listen to some of his later music. It was good, but it just wasn't the knockout that the *Second Quartet* had been for me. I should listen to it again sometime to see if it still does that to me. So those were my first three heroes, all lying in the dust. The only person left that I wanted to see was Alan Rich, because Alan had been at the Vienna palazzo, and we'd become friends. He currently was the music director at KPFA. What I wanted to do was quit the Bank of America punch-card-sorting machines and walk up to Mount Tamalpais on a

Zen retreat by myself for two weeks. I had saved up money and figured had just enough to do that, buy a ticket and go back east. So I stopped by KPFA to see Alan. Alan said, “You really should meet my composer friend Loren Rush. I’ll drive you Samuel P. Taylor Park on the edge of Mt. Tam and we’ll stop at Loren’s on the way.” Loren lived in Point Richmond, and we stopped, and immediately liked each other. I said, “By the way, who’s the best composition teacher out here?” He said, “Bob Erickson, by far.” So I stowed that little piece of info away.

Alan then dropped me off at Samuel P. Taylor Park. I had a knapsack full of potatoes and carrots – I don’t know why I’d decided this was camping food. I had a little white gas-burning stove for boiling tea, and my four books of R. H. Blyth’s translations of Haiku – summer, winter – they were divided by seasons. And I had Watts’ book. I climbed, climbed, climbed up in what I learned later was Marin watershed land. I found little remnants of a cabin, and when I went down the hill from the cabin, there was a little spring. So I camped there and tried to meditate and read my books. It was gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous ... the birds, the wildlife, the trees, the air. The fog rolled in every night ... One night the fog rolled in and made this huge Baroque altarpiece with beams of light streaming through it. I went into an epiphany. I decided that I had achieved Zen Satori that evening, that I was going to move out to California and live as a hermit in the redwoods. But before I could do that I had to go east ... I had an apartment, and a little daughter.

Wednesday, April 16, 2014

UPDIKE When we left off the last time, you were in California for the first time, and you were on a Zen retreat in Marin. I think we had left off ... you were just starting to describe the fog rolling in....

SENDER Oh, yes, the Rococo altarpiece with the beams of light coming through the fog. I think I also said that I decided at that point I was going to move to California and become a hermit in the redwoods. So I went east and my dear friend Daniel, who had been my friend at Brandeis was subletting my apartment while I was away. He told me, “I just came back from visiting this community in Georgia, which is based on Mahatma Gandhi’s principles, and it’s an intentional community.” My ears perked up, because of my long-held interest in intentional communities. After he described it I said, “Well, that sounds very interesting. Maybe before I turn my back on the world I should go visit them.” He said, “Don’t bother, they’re about to join this other group called the Bruderhof. They have a place about an hour north of New York.” I said, “If I’m interested in them, and they’re interested in the Bruderhof, maybe I should visit the Bruderhof.” He said, “A friend is dropping by tomorrow on his way north to drive there.” His older brother had been part of the group in Macedonia. The Macedonia group split in half – half

joined the Bruderhof, and half stayed. He said, “He’s driving up there because his older brother is joining and he wants to check it out. Maybe you can get a ride.” So I did get a ride, and went up for the weekend. It was all very bucolic. My first views were of mothers playing with their children on the swings, dressed in a somewhat archaic Quaker fashion, but it was charming. We were put on a work assignment digging a ditch for a fire hydrant. We attended the meals, stayed overnight, and I asked a lot of questions.

The closest I had come to Christianity was through the writings of Meister Eckhart, the famous mystic, and whose work I was reading while I was there. But they didn’t seem too eager to talk about Christianity. They said, “We don’t talk about it, we just live it. We don’t believe in private property, and we don’t pay our workers. We try to live the way the earliest Christians lived in Jerusalem.” I said, “That’s all very interesting. In fact it’s so interesting, I think I’ll come back up for a longer visit.” In the back of my mind I was thinking, “This would be a great place if I could convince Sibyl and the baby to come up ... this might be an environment in which the relationship might work ... within a structured kind of situation.” So I went back down to the city and had a drink with Sibyl at her lunch hour. She wasn’t at all interested in anything I said – nothing. It was all very boring ... “Another of your crazy ideas,” she said. “And by the way, I’m living with Herb.” Herb, who reviewed concerts for various publications, was one of my best friends. In fact it was my fault they were together. Before leaving town I had a meal with him, and he mentioned how attractive he thought Sibyl was. I said, “Well, if you want to call her up and date her, go ahead.” I thought, “Better that someone I know be in ‘loco parentis’ than somebody I don’t know.” So I wasn’t terribly surprised ... but surprised nevertheless.

So I returned north to the community, somewhat crestfallen, but moving in for an extended stay. I ended up staying there for a year and two-thirds. I talked to one of the women there, Flori, the wife of one of the people – she was an ex-Quaker. I liked her a lot, she had that kind of Quaker feeling about her. I told her a lot about my situation, and she said, “Well, you know we don’t believe in divorce, so if you’re interested in the community and don’t want to be a celibate bachelor for the rest of your life, you should deal with this. I’d be happy to help you.” So over the next couple of months I visited my daughter on Long Island. And I think Flori went down to talk with Sibyl. The upshot was that she and Herb came up for a visit. Everyone always remembered her first visit because she was wearing a very flashy red dress and heels, way out of context. They shuttled Herb off to another community, split them up. After lunch, the leader who was one of the three sons of the founder – a stooped six-footer with a charismatic aura – went up to Sibyl and said in his German accent, “Well, how are you doing, Sibyl?” Sibyl burst into tears, and he took her up to the office for a little chat. Later I drove her back to the city in one of the community cars and could tell she had been touched by the life there. Before two or three months

passed, she had quit her Scientific American job and come up to stay – but made it clear that it was not for our relationship – she was interested in the life there.

As you can imagine, she was quite an unusual character for the place, but she really had charmed the leader. He could tell she was very bright, and immediately was put to work in the office, answering phones and what-have-you. She had a kind of a jokey way about her that he enjoyed. I think she shocked some of the women because she was so different. But the leader kept saying, “Oh no, that’s Sibyl, just put up with her.” I was working in the shop and there was a wedding and so I wrote a piece for their small choir. I was trying to figure out ways that my musical training could be of use. On the other hand, they had a funny attitude – if you had any kind of special talent, they frequently made sure you did not use it because you had to be humble. The kids put on a skit for some people leaving for their Paraguay community and I set a little tune with variations. One, the butterfly variation, I played with knives on the strings – that got the kids all excited. There were many large families in community, which was very nice.

When Sibyl came to stay, I was of course in bliss. Here was my little daughter – she was two, two-and-a-half. I could see her every day – just look out the window and see her playing happily with the other kids. It was like a dream come true. That spring we were asked to join what was called a “preparation group,” something you go through before being baptized into membership. They rented a farmhouse and you spent two weeks off the premises. The name of the leader was Heinrich – he was called ‘Heini,’ which was kind of cute – and he and his wife Annamarie took the group. It involved a lot of readings and meditations, and then finally you came to confession – I had to confess all my sins, and every time I came up with an excuse for something I’d done, Heini pulled the excuse out from under me until finally I realized I was a total effing sinner. I went and sat in my room, completely emptied out. Inside of me there was nothing but a howling emptiness, but out of that I heard a voice that I knew was God’s voice, saying, “Ramon I love you.” I completely collapsed and must have cried for two days. Heini kept looking at me carefully and saying, “Now, don’t get too emotional, it’s all right. You will always be a sinner, it’s okay.” We then had to report back to the full brotherhood circle. People smiled very lovingly at us, but I did not get baptized. What they really wanted was for me and Sibyl to get baptized together as a unit and Sibyl was still gradually moving into the whole experience there. The brotherhood’s idea was, “Let’s wait, and give her more time.”

They did change things around. I was allowed to have snack times with Sibyl and my little girl, Xavie. I was given a job in the office as the office manager, because the guy doing it was being put on fundraising. They had this educational toy business that was doing very well, with big orders coming in from government programs for kids. This one big company out there, American

Seating that made desks, was selling our product and it was selling very, very well. So the community was making money hand over fist. Not having to pay salaries helped, and they were expanding. They had a new community in Connecticut, they had one in Pennsylvania already, and the communities in Paraguay ... well, let me give you a quick history. They started in pre-Hitler Germany. Hitler came into power and gave them forty-eight hours to leave, "Or else." They emigrated to England and added English members. When WWII started, the English foreign office said, "We'll have to intern your German citizens or otherwise you can all leave as a group." The only country that would accept them as a group was Paraguay. This was set up through the Mennonite Central Committee – the Mennonites already had communities in Paraguay. So over a period of months on various boats, they all travelled to South America. Despite the German submarines, none of the ships were sunk. There they started building three villages on a twenty-thousand acre ranch.

UPDIKE Do you know how many people there were?

SENDER There were about three hundred people. They built a hospital, also made available to the local natives. They started cattle ranching. They lived a kind of a rough-and-ready backwoods life. The kids who grew up there tell wonderful stories about the flora and fauna. Anyway, Sibyl and I both were moving into this new way of living. I actually have a manuscript about this period that I've never published, for reasons that become obvious later. And at one point I took all my scores – the student work I'd done in Europe and the States – and buried them. Then I felt I could still hear their little squeaky voices so I un-buried them and burned them, all except for one score which I still have somewhere – I guess it's at Mills – of that little chunk of a string trio that I'd done at Brandeis.

In 1958 we went through a very odd year because the elder, Heini, was fascinated by the concept of demonic possession. One of the girls decided to be demonically possessed in order to get his attention, so we had this whole scene – it went on for months – where we had to sit with her at night and in the daytime. She finally hurt herself – put her hands through a window. About that time Heini very reluctantly decided, "Maybe she's also mentally disturbed." Electroshock was very fashionable in those days, and a number of members had become depressed to the point where they had been sent off, had electroshock, and come back in a very subdued version of themselves. Meanwhile, it became more and more obvious that our elder Heini was the top dog in the whole group of communities, of which by now they had six or seven –two in England, a tentative one in Germany, they had the three in Paraguay, and so forth. The ones in Paraguay were not very self-sufficient, a lot of money was going towards supporting them. Different attempts to make them self-supporting occurred, such as growing rice. Heini finally went down

there, and he had a very devoted following of mostly the new American members, some of them from the Macedonia group, others from other places. Everyone thought he was just the greatest, and they supported him in everything he did. He went down to Paraguay and basically started kicking everybody out and the remaining members decided they would close the communities.

It was very traumatic because I'd estimate about one-third of the people were kicked out. The total membership for all the communities was about nine hundred. The remaining ones were flown to England, to Europe, or came up to the States, and the Paraguayan properties were sold. It was a time of great upheaval, and in the midst of all this, another baptism preparation group was started and we were included. This time I couldn't figure out what I was supposed to do. I felt I'd broken through during the other one, and I thought, "Am I supposed to confess all my sins again? I don't think I've been very sinful this past year. I've been totally celibate." I got the message early on that even masturbation was a no-no, and the urge actually went away, finally. In this second group, Sibyl caught fire and was challenging me to get more involved. I just couldn't figure out how I was supposed to be involved.

One day we were driving off the place together ... she was seated in front with Heini and I was in back, and she turned to me and said, "Ramon, your problem is that you love me more than you love Jesus." It was like a knife went through me. At that point I thought, "Jesus? Fuck Jesus – she really love Heini more than she loves me." I thought, "Oh my God, here it comes again – her falling in love with other men!" And at that point I lost trust in the whole setup. I really went off the deep end. I got very stressed out and this terrific urge to masturbate overcame me. I would go and masturbate very quickly, with no pleasure at all, and go report myself. I did this about three times. One of the sub-leaders said, "Ramon, you need some time away." Which always was the next step, to be sent off the place. So I found a job as a camp counselor at a local boys' camp. I was there for the rest of summer. It wasn't a bad job, basically setting up the dining room for meals, and then I was asked to take over a shop program when a counselor quit. I enjoyed that, actually.

After some weeks Heini showed up with all of his "witness brothers" – these were his sub-lieutenants. They were on their way to one of the other communities and decided to stop by and see how I was doing. I said, "Well, I feel like I'm in a cage and there's only one door and I'm not going to walk through." They all shook their heads very sorrowfully and left. At the end of the camp I went back to New York – I realized I was never going to go back to the community – and thought, "Well, at least my little girl is going to grow up in a very safe environment. It's a perfect place for little kids." When you hit adolescence it wasn't so good, but up to adolescence it's really a wonderful place for kids despite of some big no-no's on physical stuff.

So I went back to New York, and found a ride to San Francisco. A guy who had a 'drive with me' ad in the Voice turned out to be a graduate from Juilliard in composition, so we had a lot in common and became good friends. We drove out, and I got settled in an apartment on Castro and 19th Street, which then was more of a low-rent student and family area. I bought an old Vespa for fifty bucks and drove out to the Conservatory and had a meeting with Bob Erickson. Bob and I got along really well, and he said, "Well, why don't you sign up for a full course?" I said, "Maybe I will." I called Julia and she said, "I'll help you with the tuition." I got a couple little jobs copying music and teaching accordion, and I started full time classes out there, with Sol Joseph in Harmony and also his Form and Analysis class, a wonderful class. With Bob I was taking Improvisation and Ear Training – maybe they were the same class, I don't remember. And then piano with Claire James.

UPDIKE What year was this?

SENDER '59, '60. And I was taking a class in Beethoven's *Ninth* with Dr. Elkus. Good old Albert Elkus, sweet old guy. That was about it.

UPDIKE What was the Conservatory like at that time?

SENDER It was very small. If I was in a class, the class probably consisted of ten or twelve kids, maybe a few more. Occasionally I can remember a name such as John Pendleton, I don't know whatever happened to him. The sisters Theo and Connie Caras ... very sweet girls. I tried dating Theo, but all I could talk about was the community and my crazy experiences, and I think she thought I was a nutcase – I sort of was, I think. There was another girl who was a pianist – I dated her a couple times. There was Roger Torry, majoring in trumpet, and Alan Johnson, clarinet. Milton Williams and Janet Green became a couple – I can't think of too many others. The guy I was renting from on Castro Street was an English teacher, and his girlfriend was in charge of finding extras for the summer opera. There was a performance coming up of *Boris Godunov* with Cesare Siepi singing the main role. I loved Siepi, and I thought, "What an opportunity!" So I volunteered, and they gave me a mustache, a helmet, and a spear. I stood on stage and listened to the opera from the stage. One woman dressed as a peasant I found her quite charming. I got to know her, and it turned out she was actually Russian, somewhat older than me by eight years. We started dating, and that turned into a relationship – we moved in together. Her mother ran a custom dress business in the marina – and her name was Marina, actually. And her stepfather was a retired Russian ballet dancer who taught ballet classes next door to their

apartment. Marina herself danced in some of his productions, and painted – she was in the arts in various ways. We were very compatible.

I moved into her place at Washington and Fillmore and then, good old Ramon, his sperm count must have been really great after two years of celibacy because she got pregnant. We weren't really interested in a marriage, per se, but she said, "It would make my mama happy." So we decided we would jump on my scooter (by now I had a slightly better scooter than the first one – but still a used one). We'd ride the scooter to Mexico and get a Mexican divorce, and she wanted a marriage in front of a cigar-smoking justice of the peace. The scooter, as I discovered as we camped our way down Route 1, would only do about thirty miles an hour, so I drove most of the distance on the shoulder to stay out of the traffic. We got down to Ensenada to discover, "No, you cannot get a quickie divorce in Baja, California, you'd have to go to the mainland.

UPDIKE A divorce from Sibyl?

SENDER Yes. I had a brief note from the Bruderhof saying Sibyl had been baptized into full membership. I knew what that meant, so I wrote her and said I wanted a divorce. I'd been writing letters, but none of them were answered. Meanwhile, through the Conservatory I got a job doing music for a play, a woman director who came looking for a composer. She was going to do *Wuthering Heights*. I said, "Oh God ... alright." She wanted lots of music. I decided I would take the Borodin's two string quartets and splice them together in various ways that would go with the action. When she heard it, she said, "Wonderful! I want music throughout!" So I spliced more Borodin. I was at one of the rehearsals downtown and happened to look up, and there in the back of the empty hall stood Sibyl and Heini, which made me drop my teeth. We had a couple of meetings, which were very strange because she kept saying things like, "You have sold yourself to the devil." They were not remarks that made me feel like there was any hope in the relationship. I took Heini aside and said, "Look, I'm in this relationship. She's pregnant. We're going to make a thing of it." He was sorrowful and not very fierce. They stayed a couple of days, we had a few more meetings, and then they left. I think it was at that point that we drove to Ensenada and found out we couldn't get a quickie divorce, but got married anyway so we could tell her mother. We came home, and then I took the bus to Texas and got the real quickie divorce. So we did it backwards. And then we settled in. By now I'd met Pauline Oliveros, and I re-met Loren Rush, because they would drop by Erickson's classes.

UPDIKE Can we go back to when you first started at the Conservatory? Could you describe Bob Erickson – his character and appearance?

SENDER Well Bob was a very affable guy, easy to get along with. We quickly became good friends – he’d invite me to his house in Berkeley. I met his wife Lenore at various gatherings, and at one point at his home with Judy’s parents, which I remember vaguely. I guess Judy was there too as a young fifteen-year-old. Bob was a very good teacher. By then I’d studied with a number of big names. I’d taken Henry Cowell’s composition class at Columbia one year. I’d been at Brandeis with those other people, and with Alexei Haieff and Elliot Carter. Of all those people, Bob was the best, because he could look at your score and say, “That low E flat ... do you really hear that low E flat there?” And I’d listen again and say “Well, maybe not.” He’d always point you to specific things and have you listen harder. All this semester he didn’t show me any of his music so I didn’t know what style his own compositions were. But he was very enthused by improvisation, so we were always improvising in his class. In his Ear Training class he’d play a line and then you would have to write it down. We moved up to two-voice dictation I think, and maybe three. He was very encouraging. By the second year (I was there three years) I had been working on a violin sonata and a string trio (I did a chamber cantata piece more for Sol Joseph, in a style that Sol could appreciate – sort of Vaughan Williams – I showed it to Bob too, but it was still a student piece.)

The second year I really branched out. I didn’t go back into the twelve-tone style. I was trying to listen hard to what I wanted and it was a much more dissonant style than Vaughan Williams. I also became interested in adding pre-recorded tape to a new piece. I searched really hard for a text, and ended up at the library, where I became interested in the most ancient Hindu texts. I decided I would take two or three hymns out of the *Rigveda*, one to the sunrise, one to rain ... I forget what the other two were. I set the texts for four cellos, four sopranos, a large percussion set, piano (but it was going to be used more like a percussion instrument) and three tape recorders. I was using Bob’s classroom as my recording studio. I think it must have been over vacation, because when Bob came in one day I had stuff all over the floor. He said, “I’ve got to get a photo of this,” and he took a photo, which I’ve lost. I was using any noisemaker I could find and recording it. All I had to work with was the Conservatory’s reel-to-reel, which was a home Ampex that would only record on one track, but you could flip it over and record on the other side. I had all sorts of weird ways I was trying to get sound onto it, but not successfully. The director Robin Laufer was very friendly to me. At one point he loaned me a refrigerator. What happened was Pauline had a little cottage on Presidio and Sutter – it was behind the main house. She decided she was going to go back to Texas with her girlfriend and be totally open to her mother about her relationship that she was a lesbian.

She was giving up her cottage and I said, “Well, I’ll take it, this is great!” It was cheaper than what we had and kind of charming in an odd sort of way. When the Japanese couple in the front

house on the second floor took a bath, all their bath water came down our front wall. I figured, they must be splashing it around the way the Japanese like to do. My sister came out to visit, and we put her up for a couple of weeks. We had a rat that would help himself to whatever was available. Underneath the sink there was an open trap where the food particles fell. The rat would get in there and eat whatever he found. I came home late one night and the rat was sitting in the middle of the kitchen floor. “What are you doing there?” I asked. He looked at me as if to say, “I’ve lived here longer than you have.” So I took a broom and pushed him – I figured he was coming in from the bathroom and finally I figured out there was a hole under the claw-foot tub. So I pushed him in there and he must have finally gone down the hole. Pauline had a couple of accordion students that I had taken on from her. And I was doing copy-work for people she had connected me to. What else?

UPDIKE Could you describe your class with Albert Elkus?

SENDER Albert Elkus, a very dear old gent. He just loved Beethoven. I guess Beethoven’s *Ninth* was his favorite, because he could lecture on and on about it. There were about five of us in the class. What he talked about today I could not tell you, except that it was Beethoven’s *Ninth*. I was also taking a class from another teacher ... in psychology, maybe. I was interested in de-stressing myself ... what do you do to somebody who has been in a cult?

UPDIKE De-cultify?

SENDER To de-cultify myself. I first found a Russian philosopher called Nikolai Berdyaev who was Christian but believed in the creative act, and that the creative act was a way to approach God. So this worked for me. It was enough Christian to make me feel like I wasn’t totally abandoning Christianity, and yet it was pushing me into this feeling that creativity was my path. So I read a lot of Berdyaev, and then got into Jung. By the time I took this Psychology class I was reading a lot of Jung, so I did a paper, which I wish I still had. It was forty pages long. I realized that at that time that there was nothing on Jung that was chronological. So what I started putting his life and work in a chronological order. It got very intense, and I finally hired one of Marina’s friends who was a good typist to get it together. Finally I had this ... well, it would have been a good master’s thesis paper, really. I received a good mark in the class and then, damn it, the paper disappeared. I don’t know if I ever got it back, and I’ve forgotten the name of the teacher. Anyway, I got a lot out of the Conservatory from all the classes I was taking. Sol Joseph the second year had me as his TA, because I’d had enough Palestrina counterpoint to be able to correct counterpoint exercises, and harmony too – I could watch for those parallel fifths! I always tease Alan (my friend Alan Johnson) because I used to correct his exercises.

UPDIKE Did your spiritual studies influence your composing at that time?

SENDER Yeah, in the sense ... this pocket Easter cantata I wrote for Sol was a way of getting standard Christianity out of my head. I used a medieval mystery play, the discovery that Jesus' tomb was empty ... the three Marys go to the garden, and all that. I added choral interludes based on Bach texts, but it was a good way of getting the Bruderhof out of my system. Jung got me into dreams and archetypes. The next year, when I started working on the Sanskrit hymns, I felt I was reaching spiritually as far back as anything had been written down to try to see what was there. But by then I was not as intensely into spiritual stuff. I was still on the rebound from having gone head-over-heels for something that had turned out to be too strange. I didn't attend any spiritual groups.

UPDIKE At this time were you going to other performances in the Bay Area?

SENDER Sure. Through Bob's class I had met Pauline Oliveros, I met Terry Riley, I met Loren. Terry was living about three blocks away from me. Julia had said to me and my sister Andrea, "You know, I was going to leave you the house in Stonington, but since the house no longer serves a purpose in the family, would you like me to sell it and give you the money?" I said, "I sure would!" So she sold it. From the half I received we bought a house on Potrero Hill. This must have been the second year – I was on a ASCAP fellowship that was paying my tuition. I got that fellowship two years in a row.

UPDIKE Is that the one that was in memory of Ernest Bloch?

SENDER Ernest Bloch, yeah. So that was kind of a financially easier year or two. That same summer I started building the studio in the Conservatory attic. The first thing I had to do was build a wall. Did I tell you this story?

UPDIKE Go ahead.

SENDER I got to be friends with Jimmy the Japanese janitor who lived in an apartment in the building. He gave me a set of keys, so I could come in anytime, day or night. There were no alarms in the building. One night I took a cold chisel and a hammer, and I just started hammering holes in the floor (the whole building was concrete) so I could lay down that first two-by-four, the floor plate for the wall. I could fill those holes with a wooden plug, and then screw into that plug through the plate, and so forth. The next day my hand that had held the

chisel – I had to force it open it finger by finger. But I did get the wall done, and a circuit breaker installed. Then I started collecting equipment. A friend I had met, Richard Walberg, was a recording engineer who specialized in recording piano. He had some tape recorders he was willing to sell me. So I got an old Ampex 403, a single channel – it had the capstan drive on the left side of the heads and a big tension arm. If you bypassed the capstan, you could have the tension arm pull the tape and you could vary the speed by pushing the tension arm back and forth. It was a very handy little machine for a couple of pieces I did.

I also bought from him a 601-2, the one that Ampex made in the Samsonite suitcase as the first portable high-end machine. It was two-track, but set up only to record stereo. You could not record on one track and then on the other, which was unfortunate. We learned of a way to change that, but I don't know if we ever did fool with it. At least I didn't fool with it but later, when I got together with Mort, he had one also. I remember we talked about having some adjustments made to one of them, but I again don't know if we ever did. So I had two recorders and also an old Viking desk. I had a friend (an audio engineer at KPFA) who built me a little mixer.

I began to collect sound-making devices – there was an old section of a bedframe and I could put a magnetic contact mic on that. If I rubbed a drumstick up and down it very slowly, I would get a wonderful, gorgeous gong-like sound – like all the bells in a European city going off. By September I had the beginnings of a little studio. The Conservatory corridor had doors in the hall ceiling. They were hinged – I could drop all the doors and run my audio cables to the small performance hall. I had a friend whom I met when I did that *Wuthering Heights* performance. He was the director's audio engineer, Ellis. Ellis and I became friends, and he helped me with the technical stuff. He helped me with the speaker cables, and we ran mic cables all the way down to the auditorium. Pauline by now had come back from Texas, totally depressed because it had been a disaster. It could have been predicted, but anyway. I invited her and Terry, and Phil Winsor – another of Bob's students – all to do pieces for the grand opening of the concert series, which was going to be called 'Sonics,' I decided. It was a bit of a hassle getting it together because the studio wasn't really ready to be worked in, but Pauline was willing to work around the contingencies, and Terry too. Terry came in with a loop – the longest loop I'd ever seen, it ran all the way around this room – which he had made of the laughing lady out at the old carnival out at the beach – the famous laughing lady, she's still around somewhere. He was going to call it *M-Mix*. I had a feeling 'M' stood for mescaline, but I wasn't quite sure. Anyway, he did his piece, and Pauline did hers.

The grand opening was a "bring your own speaker" concert. Ellis had taken this practice keyboard from a closet and put micro-switches under certain keys so he could wire a different

speaker to a different key. The composer could play his piece around the room ... it was totally acoustically mismatched, but we had about eight speakers show up, and the composer could sit at the keyboard and play the room, so to speak. And then of course we had to have an improvisation on the program, being devout Ericksonian-ites. Loren got involved, and of course Pauline. That first concert I think the improvisation was just me, Pauline and Loren. Then afterwards, Mort had come to the concert. He came up and said, "I want to play too!" I said, "Sure, in fact, we're planning a series of five concerts and I'm out of tapes! I don't have any tape pieces – I don't know what I was thinking of." He said, "Well, Luciano Berio just arrived. He's going to teach at Mills, and he's got a suitcase full of tapes from the RAI studios and the French studios. So let's have lunch with Luciano." So we did, and asked him. He said, "Sure, play any of them you want." So suddenly we had a program – enough for the rest of the season. We had Pousser, and Berio's own things, and God knows who else – people I'd never heard of. By that second concert, we started adding other performers.

I knew the dancer Anna Halpern through my wife because my wife was friends with Joe Landor who did some of Anna's sets. We'd gone out and visited Anna once or twice and had been to some of her performances. So I invited a couple of her dancers to perform with us in a couple of our improvisations, which they were very happy to do. Suddenly we had two male dancers and a woman dancer – Lyn Palmer, John Graham and A. A. Leath, all working with us on these improvisations. They were wonderful! They were so funny, they were really hilarious! We did a 'smell opera' where various scents were squirted into the audience, and then we started using loops – looping things. Terry showed me (later, he said it was Lamont Young's idea) a way of creating a delay by putting two Wollensak tape recorders apart from each other – you record on one, the same tape travels over here and plays back on the other. So you can get any length of delay you wanted. In fact, I did a piece ... I performed it in one event ... using that delay and putting the microphone right into the piano and masking it so it wouldn't pick up too much of the playback. It really worked for me, in an odd sort of way.

UPDIKE How were the performances received by the audience and critics in the area?

SENDER Oh, we had pretty good audiences! The critics in those days would come to these events. Frankenstein came to the Composer's Workshop when my *Sanskrit Hymns* was performed and got a great review from him, it was wonderful. I'm trying to remember if there were reviews ... I know there were announcements of our Sonics pieces, and one had a photo in the afternoon paper. I can't remember if there were any real reviews of those. If they were, they were kind of sniggery. I'm not sure if Frankenstein came to those, but later he did. Anyway, we

went on through that year with our concerts, more and more unusual and fun. One of them – I’d taken my suitcase Ampex when I first got it down to the Chinese New Year parade and set it up on a balcony on Grant Avenue and recorded the parade. I brought it back and decided I would use it in the concert and put speakers in the hall entering the auditorium and have the sound come into the auditorium as if it was a real parade. But to do that, I had to in mid-concert re-plug everything. That was the time I found out that you do not touch wires in the middle of a concert! When we had our final event, it was more like a “happening.” I found a big cast-aluminum old-fashioned dishwasher that we filled with rocks. We could turn it on and it would go, “Clunk, clunk, clunk!” We put it on a long extension cord and rolled it up and down the main corridor of the Conservatory. One of the dancers, John, crawled into one of the grand pianos and closed the lid almost all the way, and was “yipping” inside of it as if he was caught. We had a film projecting on the courtyard from the second floor and the dancers moving in the film, which was very nice. That became something we did a lot more later.

UPDIKE So in these performances the audience members could kind of walk around the building?

SENDER Yeah, they could walk around and enjoy various things in various places. That was our last event of the season. I must say, I thought the Conservatory was very tolerant of us. We never got any bad vibes from anybody – maybe behind our backs, but not to our face. I thought Laufer was very supportive, and at one point he did say, “Oh yes, after you graduate we’ll hire you.” So I thought, “I’m really going to settle in here.” So ... ’59, ’60, ’61, ’62, ’63 ... that was the end of the winter, ’63.

Also I was asked to give a lecture to the students on John Cage. Or maybe I decided to do a lecture and invited the choral group to come up to the attic. I pre-recorded two parts of his book *Silence* on two tape recorders, which I played simultaneously while I also read from the book aloud. On the floor I put old window shades laid out with hard pastels, and I painted with my feet on the window shades while I lectured on Cage. Later I was very happy with the results, I took all the window shades and hung them in the main corridor – I was very proud of them. I hung them all the way up and down the main corridor for a couple of days.

UPDIKE What did Bob Erickson think of all the performances that you were doing?

SENDER He was interested in electronic music and basically very supportive. I continued that winter to do two more tape pieces. I did a piece for the opening concert called *Traversals*, which was mostly accordion sounds. Also I had fallen in love with the delay unit I

had bought. It wasn't the Echoplex that most people had, but it was 'Echo'-something. I just got into the "whoop-whoop-whoop-whoop-whoop" sounds – there were a lot of those in it. By then Marina and my little boy had been born, and I included some of his little cries and sounds. It was a four-track piece that had to be played on two tape recorders. As I mentioned, of course the *Sanskrit Hymns* used three tape recorders – each with a single track, one speaker placed in the back of the hall, one right, and one left. Then I did a second piece called *Kronos*. It starts with white noise that I made by dragging a pair of scissors over a sheet of hard aluminum. I used the men's bathroom as an echo chamber – it had a nice echo. I had the choral group come up and improvise in the attic, and I recorded them. There was a stripped-down upright piano and I jammed a speaker against the soundboard and a microphone at the other end. I held the sustaining pedal down so I could put a local sound through it and all the strings would resonate. I would take a vocal sound – "Ahh" and it would become "Ahhhhhhhhhhhh." It was very ghostly and beautiful. I used those sounds in *Kronos*.

The first thing I did when the studio was coming together was to take some Conservatory letterhead and write every major company I could think of – I sent out about twenty donation requests. Out of them, the only Hewlett Packard replied positively. They sent us two sine wave oscillators and a square wave oscillator. In fact, just the other day Bill Maginnis was saying, "I wonder if the Conservatory still has those oscillators." They were very nice test units, probably worth a couple hundred bucks each. So for that piece I played the oscillator as an instrument. [Sings] It had a big dial on it that I could move quickly so as not to make a glissando every time. I don't think Bob liked that piece very much, it was very slow, not much happening in it, really. I made fake tabla sounds by recording water running out of the faucet in the men's rooms and slowing it way down. It sounded a lot like tablas, it was interesting. So that was the second piece, and I forged ahead and did another piece called *Kore*, another name for the earth goddess Persephone. Again I recorded improvisations by my friends in the choir. This time instead of echoing it through the piano, I could change speeds on the Ampex 403 bypassing the capstan and riding the tension-take-up arm. It was hard because I had to get rid of the slowdown sounds – too slow-downy sounding. But if you were careful, you could get some slower stuff that was distorted, but not in that way. I don't remember what else I used in it – I think that was it, mostly.

UPDIKE Would you go out into the city and scavenge pieces to use as instruments?

SENDER Oh, definitely. I signed the Conservatory up also for what was called the 'Penny A Pound' program. The federal government was getting rid of used electronic equipment and if you were a school, you could sign up and go on certain days, and pick stuff up by the

pound for a penny. The high school science teachers were all over this for their kids. They would get a big cabinet with a computer in it for like ten bucks. About that time we also found was a GE yard with used equipment that they were junking out. We got a patch-board there ... we got another patch-board later, a bigger one. We got a lot of little stuff too. And we went around the city too. I got an automobile front bumper that was really great, and just suspended it. Coiled springs from trucks, and brake drums, of course. Anything we could find that would make noise.

Those were all the pieces I did at the Conservatory. I also had some tapes of short sound samples that I spliced together through with leader in-between. I don't know if those ever were transferred to CD, but there were a lot of odd little sounds ... I put together a library of sounds, basically.

So at the end of that year, '63, I went to Dr. Laufer and said, "Well, we've had a pretty good season. We actually made money on our audience admissions. How about a budget for next year?" He said, "Money? Budget? Arrgh! No!" Now, from the talk I had with Loren Rush last weekend, he said, "The thing about Laufer was, you had to barter with him. He was of the European tradition, where if you say 'I want a two-hundred dollar raise' and he screams and says 'No! No! Maybe fifty dollars.' So then you settle at a hundred." I suppose maybe he wanted me to barter for a budget, but I didn't take it that way at all. I said, "No money? To hell with it." So by now Mort and I had become really friendly, and I knew Mort had a setup in his garage that was very similar to what I had in the attic. So I said to Mort, "Look, you have a garage of stuff, I have an attic of stuff, let's combine and go it on our own." At that point we had met a young eighteen-year-old nerdy guy ... Elis, my tech guy, had left town (he had inherited some money from his mother's estate and was touring the world). But Chuck Shafer had come along, and was a young, tekky guy who wanted to help. He was working for a construction company in the daytime. He said, "Look, we have this house up on Russian Hill that we're going to demolish, but it could be available until we demolish it. I'll ask my boss." The boss said, "Sure, as long as they pay the insurance." It was a minimal amount, and a great old house. I hated to think they were going to tear it down. So we moved into Jones Street, near the corner of Pacific. At the corner of Pacific was a piano-tuner shop who used to tune for the Conservatory – his name I've forgotten – Peter Something? He also played bagpipes, and every lunch hour he would come out his front door, bagpipes going, and march up and down the street. I guess you really have to walk while you're playing bagpipes. He was a very nice guy, a good friend.

The Jones Street house had a paneled library and a big living room. It had sliding doors between the two. We set up our studio in the paneled library, and the audience sat in the living room. If we crammed them in, we could probably seat fifty people. Mort and I decided that this year we

would invite local artists to collaborate, a different one on every program. I think for our first program we had the poet Robert Duncan, who was very well known, and his partner Jess, who did marvelous collages – beautiful, intricate work. So Jess hung his collages on the walls, and Robert got his friends to come in and perform his Halloween Mask, which he had written for a group like that. Around that we played our own tapes of various types. For another program we invited the Mime Troupe director Ron Davis. We were friends and said, “Come and do something experimental, something more unusual maybe than what you’re doing with the Mime Troupe..” So he came in with a couple of actors, one of them Judy Goldhaft who later partnered with Peter Berg and founded Planet Drum, the ecology center. By then we also had approached the Ampex Foundation for a possible grant. Mort twisted the arm of their guy over the phone and he finally said reluctantly that he’d come by. He dropped by the Ronnie Davis show – and it turned out to be **really** experimental. The audience sat under a large tarp with just their heads sticking out through holes. Behind them an actor was giving a soliloquy about taking a crap while two other actors sat on toilets in front. A third of a way into the program, a fourth actor walked through the room wearing a striped shirt and striped hip-high stockings, but nothing between his stockings and his shirt. At that point the Ampex guy walked out. Mort followed him out wringing his hands and saying, “But most of our concerts aren’t like this!” We never heard from Ampex again.

I’m trying to think of what other invited guests we had. It all culminated in the city piece – *City Scale*. By then I had made friends with Anthony Martin, who was going with the daughter of the woman who did the sets for Anna Halprin. Tony had a studio down on the Embarcadero – a warehouse-y kind of place. He built himself his own South Indian Veena out of two gourds, but his main interest was in large non-objective canvases. There also was a young director in town named Ken Dewey. Ken was working with Anne and also did a play of his own called *The Gift*, using two of Anne’s performers – the same performers who worked with us – Lyn Palmer and A.A. Leaf. The evening also included Jean Genet’s *The Maids* and then his *The Gift*. I was knocked out by *The Gift*, I thought it was a great, great piece. I got to be friends with Ken, I really liked him a lot. He came to all of our shows and we decided we should do a happening – he was getting into happenings because Anne also was into happenings – she had a show called the *Three-Legged Stool* that Mort got involved with that was really a great show. It ran for quite a few weeks down near Fisherman’s Wharf. So Ken also knew Tony (or maybe I met Ken through Tony) but the three of us decided we’d collaborate on a city-wide happening. The audience would first come to Jones Street, and they’d go into a closet and answer the question, “How do you get along?” and record it. Then they’d be ushered into the main room where there were crayons and butcher paper on the wall, and they would draw. We then all walked up the hill on Jones Street to the top of the Broadway Tunnel. While we stood there, a ‘car ballet’ started in

North Beach. You couldn't really tell right off what was going on, but it was dark and suddenly you realized that some of the cars had colored gels over their headlights. Finally the cars all drove up to Coit Tower parking lot and faced us with their colored gels, and blinked their high and low beams a couple of times. We also had the trombonist Stu Dempster in the Broadway tunnel, playing his trombone. You could hear him from where we were standing.

Fire crackers were set off in the bushes and Tony was doing liquid projections from the North Beach roof of some friends of ours. They were two physicists from Stanford – one of them was my piano student, and they attended our concerts very faithfully. Tony was projecting with an overhead on the blank wall of the Wells Fargo building downtown. It was really big, it was good. In the piano tuner's shop on the corner of Pacific Avenue we had a soprano in a bathrobe singing Debussy songs to the piano accompaniment of a man in tails. And then John Graham and Lyn Palmer showed up in a convertible. John pretended he was teaching Lyn how to drive, but the car was bucking and he was shouting at her, "No! That's second! Put it into third!" Very loud argument. They kept showing up throughout the evening. After the car ballet, we walked back to the house and put everybody into two trucks and drove them down to North Beach where we had asked the owner of a movie house to show a bull-fighting film. He put it on slow-motion through a Cinemascope lens, but it was not a Cinemascope film, so the bulls were very elongated and everybody looked very strange. After we watched the film, we had a book-returning ceremony at City Lights. We said that people had stolen so many books over the years that this was going to be a book-returning ceremony. We had Pauline's girlfriend sitting on a toilet at the corner of Broadway and Grant. The Bank of America entrance had a little alcove where the front door was, and she sat in the Alcove. Not bare, but strange. She kept saying "I want to, but I can't."

Then we piled everybody back into the trucks and this one drunk came weaving up and said, "Where are you going? What's going on?" I said, "Oh, this is an underground bus service. You want to come along?" He said, "Sure!" He got more and more nervous as we got on the freeway on our way to The Mime Troupe's abandoned church in the Mission for a liquid light show by Lee Romero, my first experience with this medium and one I did not forget. From there we drove to Potrero Hill's Vermont Street park for our next event. I had gone on ahead to inflate two weather balloons by running a vacuum cleaner backwards. I noticed some youth action going on. It looked like two groups were beginning to kind of circle each other warily upon the edge of the park. I thought they were just about to get into something when the trucks arrived with all our audience. I had the weather balloons ready to release into the park, and the people all came running, screaming, to play with the balloons. These kids were kind of ... "What?! Look at these nutzy grown-ups!"

Our whole idea was to merge what were the real things going on with designed events in order to make people more aware of their surroundings and try to have them sink deeper into what was around them. I think that was the final event of the evening. By the time it was all over it was about 12:30. The music critic Al Frankenstein had attended earlier and stayed up through the tunnel. He made it all the way to when he had to get in the truck – I think at that point he excused himself. But the event did go on until about 12:30. It was fun. We had that score we made ... it was published in an issue of “The Tulane Drama Review.” Shortly after all this, Ken took off, but perhaps not so soon. I think we had moved to Divisadero Street by the time he left the area.

UPDIKE What prompted the move to Divisadero?

SENDER Well, after that final concert of the season we had a talk with Ronnie Davis. Jones Street was only a temporary thing because they were going to demolish the building. Ron was also looking for a rehearsal venue for the Mime Troupe. “I’ve found this place at 321 Divisadero Street,” he told us. “It’s really nice, we could share it.” We went and looked at it, and it was exactly what we needed. We talked about sharing with the Mime Troupe and thought, “It’s just too much action. They’re so radical, there would be so much in-and-out going on around our somewhat valuable gear. I don’t think it would work.” So we went ahead and rented it on our own, and I don’t think Ronnie minded. By then, or shortly thereafter, he had found an abandoned church in the Mission. I rented the Divisadero place for \$175 a month and then sublet to Anna Halprin the side studio, which was big with forty-foot ceilings, for \$75 a month. I went to the music director at KPFA, Will Ogden, one of Bob Erickson’s friends from the Twin Cities that he had imported – Bob was then on the Board of KPFA. I said to Will, “Why don’t you sublet the hall from us for \$100 a month, and then you can have concerts in the city?” They liked the place. The hall was across the back of the building, away from street noise, Anna’s studio was at right angles, and in that corner there was a recording booth with windows out to both, and sound-proof. Somebody must have had a recording studio there at some point. Originally the building had been rented by the California Labor School, which ended up on Joe McCarthy’s list of subversive communist organizations, so it was kind of famous among progressives. Upstairs from that, the third floor had a front room overlooking the street that was ideal for our studio. And two bathrooms. So in we went. We didn’t have to pay any rent because of the subleases, so all we had to do was make enough money from the concerts to pay the utilities, which worked out very well. Our landlord was bedridden, and his agent came to collect the money and would deliver a pound of raw hamburger to him every day, which he probably ate raw! He was like a character out of a Beckett play. We were very impressed. The emergency exit out the back hall went down a flight of stairs to this house in the center of the block not accessible from the street, but from a passageway on Oak Street. It turned out it was the first real

frame house to come to San Francisco. It had been brought in pieces around South America and reassembled. Later it became a historic site – they moved it out to where it's now visible from Oak Street. I think someone connected with us rented part of it for a while. Anyway, we started our first season at 321 Divisadero.

UPDIKE At this point were you incorporated as the San Francisco Tape Music Center?

SENDER We incorporated at Jones Street because we had approached Agnes Albert for a donation, one of the great Symphony patrons. And she said, "Well, if you're incorporated I will give you a donation." So we went to a young attorney, the husband of one of Mort's students at Mills. He said, "Yeah, for twenty-five bucks I'll incorporate you." So he incorporated us for twenty-five dollars and then we went back to Agnes and she gave us a check for twenty-five dollars. So we broke even.

UPDIKE Well, it's better than nothing.

SENDER Yes, yes. But it became the theme of our attempts to raise money from San Francisco's musical patrons. It was not an easy group to get money from unless you were the Symphony or the Conservatory, or very well-established. So here we were, the San Francisco Tape Music Center Incorporated. We never filed any tax statements that I can remember, although a young woman composer showed up who used to do our books. It was very sweet of her, she just volunteered to do them, and I don't remember her name. I think maybe she moved north to Oregon, finally ... maybe Mort would remember. Or maybe she's in the book.

Back to Jones Street, we had moved all our major stuff out. We had been subletting rooms on the second floor and the attic to some artists. I think we had one person on the second floor, and then Chuck was in the front bedroom on the second floor. We had an artist up in the attic, but we couldn't find the lights, so we put them up on an extension cord that went all the way up the stairs. I went around to collect the final rents before we gave up the house and got into another discussion with the artist about his lights. I said, "Well, let's take one more look," and this time I found a subpanel in one of the bedrooms on the second floor with one empty socket. There were some unused fuses below the panel, so I screwed one in the empty socket, looked up the stairs, and sure enough – light! We congratulated ourselves, he walked me down outside the front door, and we looked up. There was a flashing glow coming out of the attic window that did not look good. So he went running up the stairs and broke the glass in the front window – cut his hand doing it, actually. By then it was time to run down the street and call the fire department. They

came, it was getting dark, and some of our regulars (we had joked that for our last show we'd demolish the building) who lived nearby said, "You're really doing it!" Flames were shooting thirty feet up in the air. Luckily, we got everything out, except some of our bang-on stuff. You can't really ruin a car bumper ... but we did get that out too. It was a very soaked building by the time this was over. So we got out just in time. The contractor was on TV that night with a very long face saying, "Oh yes, there was at least \$50,000 worth of damage." Of course he didn't mention they were about to tear the place down! He probably made out very well on the insurance.

Somewhere around that time, Chuck drifted off. It wasn't so long after we got to Divisadero that other young tekky showed up – Michael Callahan, a senior at Lowell High School, living with his sister and mother and aunt in Noe Valley, and feeling very under-fathered and over-female. He was very happy to have a place where he could hang out and have fun with transistors and things. He was heavy into the electronic stuff. So we set him up – we built a workbench for him in one corner and told him to build us a ring modulator, and whatever else he could dream up. Occasionally he did a little work for us, but we weren't paying him, so it was sort of by guess and by golly. Although he did build a couple things because Bill Maginnis has them. Mike hung around – a very sweet guy and we're still good friends. Also that year into town came Gerd Stern from the East Coast, a well-known poet-happening kind of guy. Also another light show guy showed up with a grant and set himself up on Sacramento Street in his own space. We used to go over and improvise for his shows. He had a geodesic dome set up. So Gerd came along, bushy-bearded, nice guy, and siphoned off Mike to work for him mainly by turning him on to marijuana. I was not into marijuana, and Mort definitely wasn't. We didn't have any psychedelic things happening around the place. Terry Riley was into psychedelics, but he had gone off to Europe for a year on a Hertz Fellowship from U.C. He received one, and Lamont Young had been given one. I think Lamont had been given one to just "Go somewhere else and don't come back!" Lamont had really freaked the music department out with shows up on the roof. So Gerd took Michael away, and it left a bit of a vacuum. We kept trying to find a technician, an engineer. We needed a good mixing board, which we didn't have. I don't think we had one before we found Bill. Bill wandered in one day – and the way he tells the story, he had come to see if he could copy a schematic of Mike's to build a ring modulator and I was there. I said, "Do you know anything about electronics?" He said, "Oh yeah, I can build stuff." He said that I pulled out my keychain and said, "Here is the key to the front door, here is the key the studio, you're hired!"

UPDIKE

Very trusting.

SENDER We began to pay him a very minimal salary to be “our guy.” We were really desperate for somebody. We also made contact with a guy at Ampex, Eldon Corl, in their international sales department. I don’t know why he liked us because he was very conservative, but I think he kind of got a kick out of us. First of all, he loaned us his own really good 351-2, top of the line at that time for Ampex. So we had a good mastering machine. Then somebody called us up and said, “There’s a sale of odd bits of equipment you might be interested in.” We went down and bid on a bin full of stuff that included ten Viking cartridge decks – the kind that they used on displays to play rotating messages. But we had to buy the whole bin, so we did. According to Mort, paid with a rubber check and tried to sell off enough of what we didn’t want. In the meantime, the rubber check to the people that we had bought it from kept getting stretched longer and longer. We kept the deck, mounted them perpendicular so you could hang a loop across the heads, and then Bill built us a little keyboard so you could play each the deck one at a time or all together. It was a neat – I used it for a series of drone pieces I called “World Food.”

Then Eldon, our friend at Ampex, called us up one day and said, “This unit fell off a truck and it has a dented corner, but you can have it for pennies on the dollar.” It was an Ampex tape duplicator with one master playback, and three recording slaves. The slaves didn’t have any playback heads – so you could put blank tapes on three, put on your master, punch a button and make three copies. We put them on racks together, and I kept looking at them and thinking, “What can we do with these?” Finally, I pre-recorded the opening of Wagner’s *Siegfried’s Idyll*. I made a loop of it, and put the one loop through all four tape recorders, punched a button and recorded the results off on the master Ampex. What happened of course was that it started over-recording the original in three separate places, and then over-recording and over-recording, so within twenty minutes it began to sound like a train disappearing into the distance. Finally it just became white noise. I was fascinated, I loved it – so that became a piece. I told Stewart Brand about it when I met him a year or two later, and he said, “Why don’t you do it backwards? Start with white noise and have the music gradually emerge?” This stayed in my mind. I thought it was a great idea, but I didn’t do anything about it for almost thirty years. So anyway, we had our ongoing concert series, and there the U. C. Press book can tell you more than I can because I don’t remember all the ups and downs. But we had good crowds including some well-known names like Mrs. Cowell related to Henry, an older woman who enjoyed the arts. I don’t think she’s around anymore.

UPDIKE I recognize the name. Where were your concerts held when you were on Divisadero? At Divisadero?

SENDER Yes, we shared that back hall with KPFA. Once KPFA came on board, they brought in a bunch of volunteers one weekend and built sound-absorbing baffles on the wall to get the echo down, expanded the stage with moveable sections and put a relatively decent grand piano on it. So we really lucked out, it was a nice arrangement with the radio station. Occasionally KPFA goes through these contortions ... there's a rebellion in the ranks, or some cabal forms. Anyway, I think it was in our second year that a crisis occurred at KPFA and suddenly they became all uptight about the concert hall. They elected a volunteer to be in charge of the concert hall – locked the piano and locked the hall, so if we wanted to use it we had to call him up, have him come over, unlock the hall, unlock the piano and all of that. It was really a drag. And he was really uptight. He came in one time when we were rehearsing and projecting on the wall and on the piano – we had the top up and projecting on the piano – he started screaming, “You’re painting the piano!” He got up all upset. But then things quieted down. We had a meeting with KPFA staff and issues got straightened out. Whatever the inner problems were got resolved, and everything went back to normal.

The pieces I did at Divisadero included *Desert Ambulance* ... that came about because we read an ad in the Chronicle, something like: “For sale: strange recording keyboard with pre-recorded sounds.” It was listed by old Dr. Frank Gerbode, one of the old Pacific Heights families. We ran out to his place to look at this thing, and it was great! It had a organ keyboard with pre-recorded instruments and a slider switch with which you could select one of three tracks with different instruments. It also had a section with various pre-recorded rhythms. I got all excited and said, “Can I come back and record some samples?” He said, “Sure.” So I came back with the portable Ampex and recorded a number of source tapes. I think Mort did also. We were all excited, and he wanted \$250. So we went to the Pacific Heights home of the arts patron Madeleine Haas Russell. She was very nice and listened to us, asked why we needed the money, and then I think politely refused. But was nicer to us than anybody else from that crowd that we went to, except Agnes Albert. But then Mort had been doing music for the actor’s workshop shows, and he decided he would talk to their managing director, Alan Mandel. Alan said, “Well look, maybe we can work out a deal. If you guys will contract with us to do music for three shows, I will introduce you to one of our major donors, Liz Heller, and I think Liz could help.” So he did, and we went to Liz, and Liz gave us \$250, so we got the Chamberlin. Subsequently, Alan married Liz, and they moved to L.A. She did not live that long, she contracted some dread form of cancer. But anyway, Alan’s still down there, and we had the Chamberlin.

My dream with the Chamberlin was to record our own tapes and load them, but it turned out this was complicated. The tapes in the Chamberlin were not quarter-inch, and they weren’t half-inch but three-eighths-inch, and there was no record head anywhere in sight. I thought maybe we

could record through the playback heads, but all dreams of doing anything with the Chamberlin never came to fruition. We were fooling around with other ideas. Some organs use a glass disk with recorded wave forms on it. We thought, "Well, that's interesting. Maybe we can record our own wave forms on a glass disk and play them." Then I thought, "Maybe we can draw them on see-through three-by-five cards and somehow play these via optical scanning." We were looking into anything we could think of to do these things, but we still needed a mixing board. At this point we put an ad in the paper, and out of nowhere came this guy. He said, "Oh yeah, I can build you a mixing board. I work down at the Stanford telescope. Not only will I build you a mixing board, I will put balanced 600-ohm lines in your whole studio and fix your hum problems." I said, "Here's a key to the studio, here's the one to the front door..." We came in a day or two later to find that he had cut every wire in the place. By then we had a six-foot-high patchboard – many, many holes and things. He had cut every wire in the place and disappeared – and we had a concert two days later on Monday! We were totally wrecked. It turned out later he had a little issue with methamphetamine, and it also he was briefly Janis Joplin's boyfriend. I haven't mentioned the whole connection with the rock 'n roll scene, but we did connect in various ways. Bill Maginnis could probably fill in more of that than I could.

So anyway, our new audio engineer had cut all our wires, and had a whole nutty scheme for building us a mixing board which I don't think would have worked even if we gone for it. So we spent the weekend re-soldering enough of wires back into the patchboard so at least we could have a performance, and we did. This was now getting to be 1964, I guess. I started working with those Chamberlin tapes. I wanted to do a piece for Pauline, and I decided one track would have the sounds the audience would hear, the other track would be me dictating to Pauline what I wanted her to do on the accordion. That way we could have her in total darkness and project a film projected on her. I wanted slides and liquid projections on the back wall. By then we'd been working with a number of liquid-projection people. We worked with Lee who was working out of the Mime Troupe, and had done a show for us on our *City Scale* evening.

Then we worked with Bill Ham for one show, and Bill was hard to work with because he was focused on his own thing. He finally went off to Europe for a year or so, and was very successful in Europe. What he liked to do was seat live musicians behind the screen, looking at and playing along with the projections from the back, a nice way to do it. He finally returned and rented a small movie house on California near Polk for a year or longer and had his shows there.

One of the things we discovered with our electronic music concerts is how important the visual element is in a regular concert. People liked watching the pianist's hands on the piano, or the other instrumentalists. So our choice would have been to either go with complete darkness like

our friend Stan Shaff with his very successful shows that he's still doing in the city, or find some visuals. Of course liquid projections were perfect. So I went to Tony and said, "Tony! How'd you like to do some liquid projections?" He said, "I wouldn't." I said, "Come on...." I kept urging him. He said, "I'm an abstract expressionist painter, that's what I like to do." I said, "No, you like doing liquid projections!" Finally I said, "You're going to be the visual director at the Tape Center, and you'll do visual compositions. He gradually began to catch fire, and he did slides and projections, and a movie on Pauline for *Desert Ambulance*. For the movie I didn't want any spill, so he carved a special aperture that projected the film just on her with no spill on the back wall. She wore a white lab coat, played the accordion and wore earphones so she could hear my instructions. Off we went with *Desert Ambulance*. It was fun, it was a great piece!

We received another call from Eldon, our Ampex guy – I'm backtracking a little. He said, "There's a kid who built his own three-track tape recorder as a summer project in the lab at Ampex and he wants to sell it now because he's building a second version that uses transistors and fits into an attaché case. The first one was six feet high, but he said, "He'll sell it to you for cheap." I think it was \$500, or perhaps less. Maybe that's what Liz Heller bought for us, and maybe the Chamberlain was bought for us by Madeline Haas – it could be. But down we went to meet this guy, see his machine, buy it and bring it back. There were no schematics, which drove Bill Maginnis crazy, but the thing did have a number of unusual aspects. One was adjustable tension on the take-up reel, and you could bypass the capstan and just use the tension on the take-up reel to move the tape at various steady speeds. I once recorded all of a Wagner opera on a piece of tape about three feet long. It went by as an extended burp. I thought, "Gosh, I could record the whole *Ring* as multiple burps and sell it to music students. They could come to class on Monday and say, 'Yeah, I heard the whole *Ring* over the weekend!'" Of course it would go by in less than five minutes. The three-track had plugable heads – you could unplug the erase head – it was a very cranky machine but it had its uses. I know I mastered *Desert Ambulance* on it to synchronize my instructions with the tape. I had to do some fooling around with it, and my voice ended up sounding like a countertenor.

Anyway, back to where we were. So we had the three-track machine, loop decks I was using for a series of pieces – on one of them I took a phrase from that Vaughn Williams-ish student cantata where she sings, "To see him with my eyes." I put it on all ten loop decks so the thing just goes over and over itself in various ways. I liked that a lot, and I realized that as a kid in the New York apartment we had a Magnavox Hi Fi radio set in the living room, and I found I could set the tuner between stations, and there was one place where I must have picked up all the stations simultaneously, because it was a very rich sound and out of it I could hallucinate any sound I wanted. I could say, "Here's a symphony orchestra – oh yeah, there it is! Now here comes the

oboe !” – and I would hear the oboe. I loved that, it was amazing! Sometimes I think my whole composing career was an attempt to rediscover that lost cord, that sound. A lot of my rich, textured pieces were attempts to evoke that feeling in listeners where they can hallucinate their own melody. So I did about eight drone pieces – one with bells evoking Edgar Allan Poe’s mad poem of, “Bells, bells, bells!” Again Eldon from Ampex showed up with a gadget. He said, “This is an FM computer amplifier test unit, but it makes some funny noises, and you might get some use out of it.” So I plugged it into the Hewlett Packard Conservatory square wave generator, which we were borrowing, and it began warbling in a very interesting way. I thought, “If I drop that about three octaves, it might be interesting.” I dropped it to three octaves, it was fantastic! I loved it. That became my favorite drone piece to this day: *World Food XII*. It sounds like an electronic forest full of birds all going off together. Some of the others were not that hot.

In 1962-63 I went to Mills College for my first year towards a graduate degree. Steve Reich also was going to Mills, so we used to share rides back and forth. We attended seminars at the Milhauds’ cottage twice a week, and although I admired the great man greatly, I learned absolutely nothing. Frankly, I might just as well have paid the college their money and received my piece of paper. Whether it was because of the pain that kept him in a wheelchair or other issues, Milhaud had absolutely no idea of how to teach composition. I’m really sorry to have to say this because I really liked him as a person, and of course many of his students are celebrities with nothing but good words for the master, but for example his idea of an analysis class was to have someone bang out a piano reduction of “Boris Godunov” while he translated the libretto into English.

Of course, after Bob Erickson, everyone else was bound to be a disappointment. Also, the head of the department did not like me. The first semester I came, she was on sabbatical. When she came back, I was rolling their one tape recorder up and down the hallways, recording odd things. She took a dim view of my using the tape recorder without permission. That kind of sour attitude lingered through to another event. As a graduate student, I was supposed to team up with a graduate student in one of the other departments and do something. There was a dancer who needed music for her very avant-garde show, which consisted of a pile of mattresses that she would leap on from above. At the rehearsal night in the hall in the music building, it was raining and the glass panes in the ceiling leaked. I put cans under the leaks and I was getting these great little “Ping! Pong!” sounds, and I thought, “Oh, I really want to use those, but what if it doesn’t rain?” So I devised a method to crawl up in the eaves above the false ceiling and attach water balloons. Each water balloon had a pin on a string, and I tested it – if I yanked on the string it would start dripping.

I thought, "Great!" I had the balloons all spotted, so the evening of the event I handed out tin cans in the audience, and I thought I had it all under control. I yanked, and they all started dripping, and I was very pleased with myself. The next day I came to Mills for my seminar with Milhaud – always up at his cottage – and I stopped by the music department office and I got all these strange looks from everybody. I couldn't understand why. Then I went up to the Milhauds', and he looked at me and burst out laughing. I said, "What's so funny?" He said, "You don't know what happened?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, one of your drips was over a member of the board of trustees who was wearing a white cashmere coat, and the drips picked up a lot of dirt from the dirty glass and it all came down and ruined her coat. The college is paying to have it dry-cleaned." He thought it was hilarious, but it did not help my reputation at the music department. I began to be viewed as an *infant terrible*, their toned-down version of UC's Lamont Young but without the equivalent of a Hertz Fellowship to send me on my way elsewhere. Mills did give me some help, financially. I don't think I took out a student loan, but they gave me some piano students.

When it came time to take my writtens (the written exam) you first had to take your language exam – that wasn't hard because I still had enough Italian to manage it. The written exam was a bunch of center pages from unidentified scores, and you were supposed to be able to write intelligently about them. "You don't have to identify the composer," I was told. "Just identify the style and write about what's going on." Well, luckily for me, I knew all the composers because I knew most of the pieces. I thought I wrote quite 'intelligently' about them, with a tip of my head to Sol Joseph's interest in Schenkerian analysis. The department chair called me in afterwards and said, "You know, Ramon, I think you could do better. Give it another year and take it over again." I was so pissed off! I really could not imagine having ace'd the exam better than I had, so I just supposed she hated Schenker as much as she hated me.

I think it must have been February or March of '63 when Steve came to my house with a paper bag full of brown little buttons and said, "Where is your blender? We're going to cap up sixteen double-O caps each of this stuff and take it." It turned out to be dried peyote, and so we took it and spent the rest of the evening fooling around at the piano. I was having a great old time, but at some point he looked at me and said, "I think I'm going home now." I said, "What?! We're having so much fun!" He said, "Go lie down, close your eyes, you'll be amazed." So I went and lay down, closed my eyes, and proceeded to live my life backwards all the way to the moment of conception and out into the universe. A vision of my birth mother also occurred, whom I lost when I was two years old.

In the morning I called up Steve and said, “What are you going to do with the rest of those buttons? I want to buy them.” So I bought them and called up Pauline and said, “Pauline, you don’t know what you’re going to experience, but this stuff is amazing!” So she came over with her girlfriend, and then I called Tony’s future girlfriend – I don’t think they were going together yet, but she was an artist and I thought she’d be interested. She was interested, and came over. I ground up a whole lot of peyote, and everybody took it. My wife was not interested – she was watching all of us with some skepticism. Pauline’s partner had brought a joint with her, and we puffed on it (the first time I’d ever smoked pot) while we were waiting for the peyote to hit. Then when the peyote came on, Pauline’s friend decided she was dying and that we needed to call the rescue squad. I kept trying to climb back down to check on her, to see if this was real or not. I’d turn on the lights and everything would go into comic book colors, and then I’d turn them off and everything would go gloomy and shadowy. I’d go out and look at the stars and think, “Wow! Heaven’s out here, but the devil’s in there!” Pauline was the one who kept it all together – the steers-person at the helm – right on track. We managed to get through the night without further mishap, but I realized there was a whole lot more to psychedelics than I knew about. To learn more about getting high, I thought “I think I’ll just smoke pot for about six months, and see what it’s like.” So I began to smoke regularly, and I think that’s also when I got more involved with wanting more visuals in my work.

We were having so little luck raising money that Mort and I thought, “Maybe we should move to L.A. and open a small sound-effects studio and make enough money to pay for our concerts and other stuff.” So we talked to Alan at the Actor’s Workshop and he said, “I can set you up with Betty Freeman who’s on the Board at the Pasadena Fine Arts Museum. She’s a big patron of the arts and maybe she could help.” So we phoned Betty Freeman and she said, “Oh, yes! I will have a party at my house. You can give a concert and I’ll pay you and introduce you to everyone you should meet.” We said, “That’s so sweet of you, that’s wonderful!” So off we went. Mort and I went – Pauline didn’t go for some reason – and Tony went. We got to her house, a beautiful mansion in Beverly Hills. The sunken living room had a grand piano, and the overlooking balcony was where the audience could sit and have supper. We’d perform below – Tony could project and everything looked very good. “We think we can work very well here. We’ll come back later,” we said. She said, “Please do and, by the way, you won’t be eating with the guests. There’ll be supper for you in the kitchen.”

At this point, I decided I knew just what Mozart felt like when treated as a lackey by Archbishop Colloredo. The whole event collapsed – the idea that she was going to do this to introduce us. I don’t know what had happened in her hot little brain but sure enough, when we came back around suppertime, we came in the servants entrance. She did not introduce us – we just started

our performance and – the guests never once stopped talking! They talked right through everything we did. I think each one was waiting for someone else to say, “Oh, that’s interesting!” or something, but nobody did. It was the damndest strangest experience. Afterwards she gave us our check, we ate our cold dinner in the kitchen, thanked her and shuffled out the kitchen door, tipping our wigs. Other musician friends have also had odd experiences with her, including the composer Joseph Bird whom I met for the first time on that trip. We liked a piece that we saw there so much that we did it on our series. When he formed a band called USA that recorded one LP for RCA Victor, he composed a song about Betty Freeman that I don’t think was very positive. But in her favor, she did become the major patron of Harry Partch. She made sure that his instrument collection was well-cared for, that it went to UC San Diego, and that he had money to live on. She basically took care of him, which was great. But she was an odd character.

While we were In L.A. we toured a number of small studios, everybody very welcoming – very busy but eager to show us what they were doing. We got the feeling that we would be competing part-time and un-wholeheartedly in a field where everyone else had their hearts in it and were doing great stuff. So Mort and I both decided that we’d be better off going for a large grant if we could find it somewhere.

While I was in L.A. I looked up my dad who was living there and teaching at USC. I invited him to hang out with us at Joe’s and later had a drink with him in a bar where I asked him for the first time, “What happened to my mother? Can you finally tell me about it?” He started telling me in his broken English, in a very noisy bar and in a very emotional way. I only understood about five percent of what he was saying. I was so frustrated, but I didn’t want to stop him. I knew if I stopped him he probably would just say something mean and go on his way. But he did come to meet our friends and kept saying, “Oh, I’m so happy for you, you have all these wonderful artist friends, and I’m so lonely.” He wasn’t very healthy, he had emphysema, very bad asthma, and the air in L.A. was not doing him any good. His wife Florence, whom he divorced, finally came out and later said, “I saved his life. I got him out of L.A. and down to San Diego.” I did visit him a number of times in L.A. before he moved to San Diego. He was living in Watts, in mostly students housing that he must have liked – it was full of attractive young women students.

Anyway, we came back, and nobody we’d made friends with in the commercial world called us. I felt, “L.A. is the exact opposite of New York – in L.A. everybody’s very cheerful, very warm, and forgets you the minute you disappear. In New York everybody forgets about you to your face.” In New York everybody’s quite insulting to you, but warm in their heads. In L.A. everybody’s warm emotionally, but quite insulting in their heads. Anyway. I guess we went to L.A. because we had one commercial job that paid well. We’d gone to the husband of the woman who did the designing work for Anna Halprin. His name was Walter Landor, and he had a

company called Landor & Associates, famous as a marketing research and graphic design company. They had installed their offices on a ferryboat parked on the Embarcadero, all very outré and unusual. Walter was a very affable guy whom I had met him a couple of times. Mort and I went in and said, “Walter, what can we do for you that would pay us money?” He said, “Well, I’m just setting up a film department, and the first film project we’re going to do is an animated film for Falstaff Beer to introduce our tweaks to their logo at their annual gathering of distributors.” He said, “I’ll introduce you to the director, and tell him to hire you to do the music.” And he did.

The director was a young, gung-ho guy, whose name of course I don’t remember. For an animated film, you do the sound track first, and then they animate to the track. It was going to be a film about drinking beer, of course, and actually there were a lot of potentially cheery beer-drinking sounds on the Chamberlin, such as one track of voices that went “Oooohhh, oooohhh, aahhhh.” I had used that a lot in the piece for Pauline. So with the help of the Chamberlin, we banged out the first draft for him – part of which he liked, most of which he didn’t like. We kept coming back with retakes, kept coming back, kept coming back ... our hours were getting longer and longer. I said, “Does that guy know what he’s doing? We’re charging him by the hour!” We finally presented him with a bill for three thousand dollars, and he hit the ceiling. His total budget was two hundred thousand dollars, so we thought three thousand wasn’t all that bad. He paid it, but we knew that we’d never got another job from him. But then I don’t think he lasted too long at Walter’s place, but the film did win some kind of prize. The animation was cute. I think it was on the basis of that little experience that we thought maybe we could do commercial work. Also we had a call from KCBS radio asking, “Could you do some funny sounds for us to use –intro sounds – “Ding dong!” or “Da-da-de-do!” So we gave them a bunch of sound samples. They paid us, but I don’t think they ever used them. So that was what sent us to LA and back.

When we returned from L.A., Mort made a contact with the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. At first he did not get a very good response, something like, “Why do you need to develop a studio for electronic music? It’s such a rare bird – we only need Columbia and Princeton ... do we really need more than one in the country?” Something like that. But they sent a guy out to interview various art groups, and he came by and liked what we were doing. He got really enthused and said, “Look, I can write you a check on my own for up to fifteen thousand. If you want more money, you’re going to have to affiliate with an institution.” We took the fifteen thousand very gratefully, and said, “This will give us time to think about it.” So the last year we were at Divisadero, the 1964-65 season, we had some money. Mort wanted to design a season of more conservative concerts – union musicians playing avant-garde music, more of the type you

would hear at the Chamber Music Society or similar places, but still with our own stuff, too. That was the general thrust. I wasn't too happy with the idea, but I could see why he wanted it. He wanted to have us looking more like something that Rockefeller would fund with a large grant.

In 1964-65 I took a year off from Mills to earn some money. A friend I bumped into described how he was home-delivering *The New York Times* in Berkeley. The *Times* wanted to start home delivery, and they were subsidizing the startup to the point where a person could make a pretty decent sum throwing papers. He got me in touch with the distributor in the city, and I was told that you had to set yourself up as an independent contractor, so I called myself "RNS Distributors" or something. I was given a section of the city – they had about five different people working various routes. I'd get up at 2 AM, pick up my papers downtown at 3:00, roll them up, put them on my scooter, and throw papers for two or three hours, rain or shine. I'd come home, fall in bed, sleep for a couple of hours, and then go to the Tape Center. The money was good for that era – ten cents a paper. Gradually the other delivery guys were dropping out and I was taking over their routes. Suddenly I saw myself building an empire – I had the whole city! One of my customers was my future-wife Judy's parents, and I remember getting an occasional call from a very grumpy man saying, "My paper fell in a mud puddle!" And I'd say, "Well, put it in your oven!" and fall back asleep.

The year I was away from Mills was Luciano Berio's second year there. So when I came back I was with Darius Milhaud again, which was okay. Madame Milhaud took a shine to me because I spoke Italian. "Always stay for lunch," she said, "and we'll sit in the garden for Italian conversation. I'll pay you for your time." It turned out their grandchildren were growing up in Italy and she wanted to keep up her Italian for their sakes. A truly great lady, with a successful career as a monologist, a *disease*, that went on into her nineties. And I was treated to some great French lunches also!

So the year went by, the second year with Milhaud. By then I was smoking pot, and was into all this other stuff. When time came to take the test again, I said, "I'm going to roll myself a big fat doobie and take that fucking test. However it comes out, they're going to have to graduate me no matter what." So I rolled myself a big fat doobie, and I was given three hours for the test. At the end of three hours I was about halfway through, and I think Mort must have whispered to Margaret, "Give him more time." So I was given more time, and I did work my way through it. I don't think I did anyway as a good a job as the first time, but I didn't care. I think Margaret was glad to see the last of me anyway. I never turned up for graduation or anything – they mailed me my certificate, and by then I don't know where I was. So we had that '64, '65 season.

UPDIKE Was there much of a “scene” in the area for what you were doing with electronic music and tape music?

SENDER Not really, no. There were people doing their things – working out of their houses. Steve was mostly working out of his house – he was driving a cab and he had a microphone in the light socket over the passenger’s side – it was recording conversations that he could then work with in weird ways. He had two machines that ran at slightly different speeds, and that’s where he came up with his overdubbed, out-of-phase, style. He was also working with Ronnie Davis. But he’d come in every once in a while and dub tapes or something. Pauline and I were great friends, and she did a couple of good concerts at Divisadero Street, some of her really fun pieces. From Sweden came three composers on Swedish government grants to work at the Tape Center. We were so impressed that a government would actually pay a composer to come and have fun with us! Yon Bark was a real character, he and Pauline became great pals. Pauline frequently house-sat for Dr. John Peal, a pediatrician, one of her accordion students up in Pacific Heights. We had a party up there punctuated by explosions from the kitchen because Yon had fallen in love with Japanese sake. He kept trying to heat it up, but he forget to uncork it. So the pressure would build up and finally the bottom would blow out. He made a trumpet out of one of them, and did some very funny pieces. Another Swedish composer, Arne Mellnäs, showed up. And also a third, Folke Rabe. Those composers also then connected with my friend the happening guy, Ken Dewey. When Ken went to Europe doing events, he visited Sweden to work with them. Later Ken also became art commissioner for the city of New York. Just how he pulled that string I don’t know, but he came from a well-known Chicago family. I think he must have had influential relatives who helped get him that job. Once installed, he poured a lot of money into the pockets of all his favorite avant-garde artists, people doing interesting work. During his tenure there, a lot of money went to good stuff. Unfortunately he died piloting a private plane in bad weather. He crashed in New Jersey while still in his thirties, I think. Some dear friends are putting together a documentary about his life, which he deserves.

The Tape Music was beginning to be on the cultural map. Whatever composers came through who were on the city’s map would be sent to us. So we had another visit from Mario Davidovsky and Vladimir Ussachevsky on their way back from Tokyo or somewhere. We had done a big Tudor-Cage festival with KPFA. Cage came for the last concert on his way to Hawaii. He was very sweet and warm, and wanted to hear all our pieces. Tudor and Pauline became big buddies – actually, we all were getting along really well with each other. Karlheinz Stockhausen came to San Francisco and the city sent him over. Also, the summer of ’64 we went on a tour that included Will Ogden’s connections in St. Paul. He got us a concert at the Unitarian Church, and we also got one at All State Teachers’ College in Michigan, and at the Conservatory in

Philadelphia, and at a summer music festival in Maine where Pauline had been invited. So we piled into two cars – speakers and projectors, tape recorder, Pauline, accordion, Mort and his wife, me and Marina ... Tony must have been on it too – and off we went! It was fun, we had a good time, but nobody really understood what we were doing. The concert in Philadelphia was in the daytime, which made the projections hard to do. Also it was beastly hot. The one at All State – God, they had a huge stage with all this equipment. We had a pretty good time, except I think the students kind of “tee-hee’d” their way through it. The Unitarian Church concert in Saint Paul went well – nice people. The one at the Maine music festival started with a thunderstorm. I was on the phone in the house we were in, and suddenly there was this big ‘BANG!’ like a shot, and smoke started coming out of the receiver I was holding. I put it down very gently and said, “Maybe we should go sit in the cellar for a while.” We had a nice concert there, including Pauline playing her French horn in rowboat in the middle of the lake. She hung on because she had been invited to be the guest for that season.

I went to New York, set up two weeks at the Columbia-Princeton studio with Mario Davidovsky as my tech. I spent a week in their old studio and then a week in their new studio. Their old studio was a lot like ours, you really had to be shown the eccentricities, hard to work in. The new one, not so bad. It was right next door to where Milton Babbitt was playing with the RCA synthesizer. He had talked about getting his hands on it for years. At parties I used to hear him go on and on about, “Oh, if I could only get that synthesizer!” He finally got it, and was sitting there working on one note ... it would go, “Burp! Burp!” I could hear it next door. “Burp!” It all had to be keyed in on punch tape. The whole Columbia-Princeton crowd spliced. We were anti-splicing. “I’m not going to spend the rest of my life splicing damn notes together!” I said to Maginnis. Although with *Desert Ambulance*, it turned out every time I had put a key down on the Chamberlin, it put a “pop!” – a transient – before the sound. It drove me crazy during the first performance, so I stayed up one night with a thermos of coffee and a razorblade, de-popping *Desert Ambulance* – taking these little tiny slices out.

At Columbia-Princeton’s new lab I kept looking for a way to work without splicing, so I tried ‘the Terry Riley loop.’ I made a large loop that went all the way around the room and through two tape machines. I’d listen to it on one machine and then gauge where I wanted the new sound to record from the second machine. The heads on the Ampex’s have lids, so I could slam the lid shut and record the sound, then open it up before the erase head erased anything. I was able to get some stuff done that way, but I wasn’t happy with the setup. I was working on a piano piece wanted filtered piano to accompany it. I did a lot of filtered piano stuff, and I was never very happy with that piece. But it was fun, it was interesting. I met Edgard Varèse, an elderly gent working with Mario. After visiting my American mother in Princeton, I returned home.

In the fall of '64, the New Yorker had published a Profile on John Cage and suddenly was discovered by a wider audience. We received a call from the 'ladies auxiliary' of the Museum of Modern Art asking, "Could somebody please come down and talk to us about John Cage, because we're going to have a concert." So I went down and talked to them about Chance Music, and it turned out they were going to have a party at John Bransten's, then still married to Rena Bransten. I went to the party, and I met their cousin Joan Bransten, who expressed in interest in electronic music. I thought, "Maybe she's a potential patron," so I invited her to the Tape Center and played her various samples. Actually I recorded some things with her voice, and we began to get interested in each other. I must confess I had been drifting away from Marina, although I hadn't been with anyone else. My interest in pot and psychedelics was not anything that interested her. So I absconded, rat that I was, and not a shining moment in my career.

Joan and I got together and moved to Berkeley in '65 – she was teaching high school in the East Bay. Her parents were very upset because she was going with 'a married man.' Legally I wasn't married, but that was neither here nor there. Their family attorney called me in to tell me if I was expected to get any money, I would not see it. "I'm not interested in it for the money," I said. I'm in love with Joan." And then LSD hit. We took LSD together in our Cedar Street apartment, and both of us were fascinated by where it took us. I had become less interested in the concert format. I wanted to do Sunday morning church services, but to perform all the ancient mysteries. I wanted to celebrate the Mythraic rites and sacrifice a steer on stage so people would know where their hamburgers came from. I talked to Tony about it, and he said, "There's this guy, Stewart Brand, who's got a multimedia show called *America Needs Indians*. Maybe you should talk with him about it." So I got together with Stewart, and we liked each other and we chatted. I said, "I want to do this Sunday morning thing, but I need somebody to do the sermon for the first one." He said, "Maybe Fritz Perls would do the sermon. Let's go down to Big Sur and talk to Fritz."

Stewart had this VW bus painted army camouflage – a really professional-looking army camouflage job with a big white star on the door, the sort of thing that might keep him from being hauled over by the cops. Also, he could park it in the forest and it would disappear. So off to Big Sur we went, Joan and I and Stewart, and approached Fritz. I explained to Fritz what I was doing, and would he give the first sermon? He said, "Church? Sermon? Are you crrrrrazy?!" He was a gruff old walrus. I thought, "Well, I guess not." So Joan and I decided instead that we'd drop acid and go up into the forest, which we did, and came back down later to sit in the dining room with Stewart and Eselen co-founder Michael Murphy. Michael was saying, "All these people keep showing up down here and dropping acid – I'm getting so tired of it!" And we're

sitting there, half stoned out of our minds, nodding our heads and saying, “So true! So true!” And of course we took a soak in the hot tub, and spent the night, as I recall, on somebody’s floor. The next day we drove back with Stewart and went on about our lives, with my church service idea put on hold.

A month later, Stewart called me and said, “Kese’y’s in town with the Merry Pranksters, and they’re doing the Acid Test.” I kind of knew what the Acid Test was, and I’d heard of the Grateful Dead early on when they were called The Warlocks because Phil Lesh, whom I had met as a Mills graduate, was their bass player. As I mentioned earlier, we were on the edge of the circle of the new rock ‘n roll bands. The first rock ‘n roll band in the city, The Charlatans, was using our hall to rehearse in because their lead singer was in Anna Halprin’s dance classes. The Charlatans even did a show there through a combined KPFA-Halprin connection, and put her on a swing attached to the ceiling. A big chunk of plaster fell, which did not make us terribly happy.

A house on Page Street around the corner had become a kind of rock ‘n roll house. Bill has told me that Janis Joplin came by a few times – I don’t remember meeting her. Then we somehow connected into Big Brother before Janis joined them. I met with them when they were trying to pick a name and suggested some Tibetan names and they kept saying, “Ehhh, maybe.” They offered me a job as their manager, which I politely declined. Anyway, when an Acid Test was held at the Fillmore that December, I went with Joan, but neither of us were into getting stoned recreationally – dropping acid in crowds. I thought along with Tim Leary that set and setting were important, but we enjoyed it. The comedy group The Committee was in town and performing at their own theater on Broadway up towards the tunnel. The Charlatans played there that summer, as well as The Mime Troupe. I remember going to one of their shows – this must have been around that same time... I remember looking around at all the people in the audience – we were kind of eyeing each other, thinking, “Is he turned on? Is he taking acid?” It was the first checking-out of who was where in their heads.

So Kese’y was in town, The Warlocks had changed their name to The Grateful Dead and together were doing Acid Tests around the Bay Area. Stewart called me up and said, “Kese’y wants to do something he calls a Trips Festival. It would be a three-nighter somewhere in town, and we’d bring together all the best, most interesting trips happening in one place. Do you have any ideas, and do you want in?” I said, “Sure. I can’t speak for the other people in the Tape Center, but I’d certainly like to get involved.” Since I moved to Berkeley, I’d met some artists over there including a group called Open Theater run by Ben and Rain Jacopetti. They were working with other actors including a group called The Congress of Wonders, a stand-up comic group. I said, “We should get Open Theater involved.” Stewart said, “Each group could take part of an evening

and bring in a band. The band would play, and people would dance.” I said, “Okay, I’ll bring Big Brother, and Kesey obviously The Grateful Dead.” Open Theater found a band they liked called The Loading Zone. So the first night was going to be Stewart’s *America Needs Indians* multi-media slide show, and Open Theater with The Congress of Wonders. They included an actress, Amanda Foulger, who’d perform an Aimee Semple McPherson sermon, and then move into The Loading Zone coming on stage. The second night was going to be the Tape Center with Big Brother, and then Kesey and The Grateful Dead. The final night, Sunday, was going to be everything all at once – or aspects of it. Stewart’s original idea was that we would wire a pinball machine for Sunday night, and wherever the pinball hit, it would open a line to one of the bands playing, and they would go up on the big speakers. That never quite happened. By then we also had the Buchla Box and I wanted to run Big Brother through the Buchla box, and just very slowly crank up the ring modulator so the band would slowly distort out, out, out, out, out ... But there was one thing missing on the Buchla box: a device like a timer that would change a setting in very, very small degrees, so I would have to do it by hand.

I ended up co-producing the thing with Stewart, although only Tom Wolfe’s *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* credits me (I do tend towards invisibility), and Buchla got involved in designing the main speakers for the hall. Longshoreman’s Hall was an interesting space, but it didn’t have any PA, so we had to haul it in. Don got so involved with The Grateful Dead that he ended up designing their own speakers also. In December, Kesey and Mountain Girl were visiting Stewart, who had a little apartment in North Beach. Kesey and Mountain Girl decided to go up on the roof to smoke pot. While they up there they started throwing pebbles at a window across the alley that they thought belonged to a friend. Whoever it was phoned the heat, and the cops came up on the roof. One cop got into a wrestling match with Kesey over the baggy of dope, which Kesey grabbed back and threw off the roof. They both were arrested, and Kesey already was awaiting sentencing on a pot bust at his home in La Honda – Yeow!

The whole thing hit the Chronicle, front page news. “Kesey this, Kesey that.” Front page every day. We couldn’t have had better publicity. One day the Kesey bus “Further” met us in Union Square. Of course the Merry Pranksters were there. I had created a sign that read, “NOW” in big cloth letters, and filled a weather balloon with helium. We sent the thing up into the sky where it hung up briefly on a big TWA sign on the Macy’s side, and then drifted off. Then we all got on the bus and drove through the financial district handing out fliers for the Trips Festival. Shortly after that, the Chronicle sent a reporter to interview me and Stewart at Stewart’s apartment. The reporter turned out to be Lou Gottlieb, the bass player with the Limelites singing group. They had almost been killed in a private airplane crash in Colorado going to a gig. Lou felt stressed and needed time out, so he went to a friend at the Chronicle who said, “I’ll give you a job reviewing concerts.” So Lou would review a Beethoven recital and compare it to the Tibetan

Book of the Dead. “The rewrites were killing me,” he told me later, but he came to interview us, got out a nice briar pipe full of pot, and passed it around. I was very impressed, getting turned on by a reporter. We got talking about intentional communities and my interest in them. He said, “You know, I have a thirty-acre place in Sonoma I bought as an investment, and it’s just sitting there. If you ever think about doing something more, let me know.” So I stored that information in the back of my head.

Lou wrote a nice article for us titled ‘Glorious Electricity’ in “the World of Music Column” that started, “If I were to tell you that an event of major significance in the history or religion is going to take place in the City of Saint Francis this weekend, you would say, “You stayed out of work too long.” And if I were to tell you that an event of major significance in the history of the arts is going to take place simultaneously, you would pat my hand and say, “Drink this glass of warm milk slowly, then try to get some rest.

“Like all other events of major significance in the history of religion, this will be great fun. Like other ‘qualitative leaps’ (ha!) in the history of beauty (for example, the first performance of *Ubu Roi* and *The Rite of Spring*) the events of this coming weekend will be discussed at length in the academies of the future, so I have assigned myself the role of the critic who thought he knew what was happening at the time.

I think what’s happened is this: in His infinite wisdom, the Almighty is vouchsafing visions on certain people in our midst alongside which the rapturous transports of sweet old Saint Theresa are but early Milton Berle Shows on a ten-inch screen...” These people are not “word people,” or perhaps as Huston Smith says, “the highest modes of experience transcend the breach of words entirely.”

Towards mid-December, Stewart and I looked at each other and said, “You know, the energies are really building (that was an understatement!). We need tickets, we need fliers, we need advance sales, we can’t do this all by ourselves.” I said, “Well there’s a guy named Bill Graham who just did a very successful concert benefit for the Mime Troupe. Maybe we should phone him up.” We called Bill and Bill said, “Sure, I’ll do it.” I said, “How much do you want? Stewart’s taking two hundred, I’m taking two hundred; we can offer you two hundred dollars.” He said, “Pay me what you think I’m worth when it’s over.” So Bill came on board, thank God! He did the posters, he did the tickets, he did all the advance stuff, he did the door on the weekend. Stewart had a friend, Gerry Mander, who was a PR guy (and later wrote the book *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*) who got involved and some other of Stewart’s friends were peripherally involved, but they weren’t really handling the energy, so Graham really did us a huge favor.

The weekend started, and people came pouring in. Mort had felt uncomfortable about having the Tape Center’s name involved, and said, “We’re trying to look very straight -arrow for our big

grant.” By then we had decided that we were going to move to Mills. Back some months earlier we had had a meeting – Pauline was there, Tony was there, Bill Maginnis, Mort, and I said, “Look, I think we have two choices: one is, we can sell our houses. Mort you can sell your house in the Haight, I can sell ours, we can buy a huge warehouse and all live together and have our concerts there. Or we could go to Mills.” Mort said, “Listen, my wife would never go for it.” He was right – and Marina would never go for it. So Mills was our only real option, but I certainly wasn’t returning to Mills with that dragon lady as the chair of the music department there. Plus I was feeling more and more like doing something else.

It turned out Mort had just received a juicy offer from NYU – they were offering him his own well-equipped studio along with a very minimal teaching schedule. The Actor’s Workshop was moving into the Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center and he would be able to do continue doing music for their productions. So we both had other things in mind. I was thinking of moving up into the redwoods – my long lost ideal from 1957. But Pauline wanted to go to Mills, and Tony wanted to go to Mills, and Bill wanted to go to Mills. So that was it. We had a great place to park the equipment and we had a grant of \$130,000 that included the Mills Performing Group. So it was an obvious next step. Milhaud had gotten behind the idea also, and the plans started coalescing.

Meanwhile, we had the Trips Festival. Most of the people at the Tape Center ultimately got involved and the Tape Center name appeared on the publicity. Bill got involved, Tony got involved with projections, Anna Halprin’s dancers put up a big cargo net over the hall and climbed through it. We had three or four avant-garde film people including Bruce Bailey and Bruce Connor come and show their films. It was a blast. I never got to put Big Brother through the Buchla on the second night – I just got too hung up on other details. But we had a center scaffold with all the equipment on it, and we put the Buchla there. We could play the Buchla along with other music that was happening, but we never really got it going the way I wanted, at least I never did. Perhaps Don did, and I found a photo of Ken Babbs standing next to it, so perhaps he fooled around. Also, Big Brother sounded so lame that finally The Grateful Dead just swept them off the stage and took over. Then the party really started. There was acid in the ice cream on the bus, which I did not sample. I was probably the only straight person there, because I felt responsible for keeping an eye on things. I thought, “I can’t get stoned here. And I don’t get stoned recreationally anyway, so forget it.”

Kesey was awaiting sentencing on the Laguna Honda bust, he also did not show up for a court date on the North Beach bust. So he was sort of went underground. But he had a twin brother, Bud, who came the first night of the Trips Festival in a complete spaceman outfit and got his ID

checked – “Okay, you’re not Ken,” the cops decided. From then on, Ken came as Bud for the rest of the weekend and sat up on the balcony scrawling strange messages on an overhead projector that projected on a large screen. The Anonymous Artists of America were there as a part of Ken’s band. They were all so stoned, they just sat on stage with their instruments not making a sound. Then we had all of these little side things going on. We had decided we’d have ‘side trips’. As a side trip, Pauline did something at the Encore Theater Sunday afternoon. She had started working with dancer/designer, Elizabeth Harris, but I don’t think they did their main piece that weekend. She had developed a piece with Elizabeth’s help, a duet with David Tudor on bandoneón on one end of a rotating seesaw, and she on accordion on the other end. The seesaw not only went up and down, but it also turned.

UPDIKE Oh yeah, I heard about that. Is that the mynah bird piece?

SENDER Oh yes, I guess the mynah bird might have been part of it. Anyway, the Monday after the weekend, we all met with Bill at a little coffee café across from the Fillmore auditorium. It turned out he had just signed a contract to hold concerts there. He saw the writing on the wall that read, “This was going to be big – rock ‘n roll, projections. I’m bankrolling it.” He had been putting the Trips Festival money in paper bags and throwing them in the trunk of his car. We counted it all up, it was \$14,000. None of us had ever seen this much money in our life. I took my \$200, Stewart took his \$200, Bill took his \$200, and we said, “What are we going to do with the rest of it?” Well, if we had been nice people, we probably would have paid all the bands, but we didn’t. We said, “Okay, the people who did all the grunt work were the Merry Pranksters, we’re going to give the rest of the money to them.” Which is what we did.

At that point, the energies had built to such a point that my head was going around in circles. I said, “I’m going to go on retreat in the desert and think about all this.” So I packed my little Fiat along with my terrier Katy (who was sort of like our Riqui today) and figured a way to take out the passenger seat so I could sleep in it. I bought about 60 tabs of acid, and started off. I got as far as Monterey, and started thinking, “This car isn’t really right for a camping expedition.” So I went into a used car place and traded the guy straight across for a Chevy van with windows all the way around – a big blue Carryall. I drove it down Route 1 and, right at the entrance of Eselen, the engine froze. I had to coast it down the hill into the parking lot. After an investigation, I discovered there was no oil in the crankcase and that the beast was burning oil like crazy. I don’t think it was an oil leak, but maybe it was. So I decided I’d buy the heaviest weight oil I could find by the gallon, and continue my adventure. I’d stop every thirty miles or so, top off the oil, and keep going, no doubt leaving a trail of ooze behind me.

I wanted to meet a couple, John W. and Louisa Aiken, who were giving a talk in Phoenix and ran the psychedelic Church of the Awakening in Socorro, New Mexico. They were an elderly couple, straight-looking as could be (as I discovered when I met them). They would prepare an applicant for a psychedelic trip for perhaps a year, and then give them mushrooms or peyote. But before I went to Phoenix I stopped at a bunch of caves I discovered just south of Needles. I curled up in one of the caves with my *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, one of the Tibetan yogi Milarepa's ecstatic songs, and started dropping acid, straightening my head out. The second time I took it, I was just coming down when I looked out at the highway and I saw an endless stream of headlights coming towards me from the south as far as I could see. I thought, "Oh my God, L.A.'s being evacuated. There must have been a horrible earthquake or something." Then I thought, "Well, that's all right, I'll survive." It turned out it was a Marine Corps exercise, and they were moving troops around.

On a third LSD trip I was able somehow to recoup the experience I'd had at the Bruderhof, the big "No, No, No." There are basically these two spiritual paths, the big 'no' and the big 'yes.' The big 'yes' is the one the hippies always took, like my Mt. Tamalpais sunset. The big 'no' was like Christianity, where you dissolved yourself into a kind of self-hatred. "No, no, no, no, I'm not this, I'm not this." In Hinduism, it's called "neti neti." Well, I had enough guilt stored up for abandoning Marina and my baby boy to have quite a bit to think about. So I was in the cave with my head bowed way down – the avenging angel hovering over me with a sword, I thought. Suddenly I heard this voice say the same thing it had said before, "I love you, Ramon." A beam of sunlight had slanted over the lip of the cave, all the way back to me. I remembered how when I heard God's voice at the Bruderhof there also had been sunlight beaming into the window. I thought, "The sun is God! All of this added-on stuff means nothing! The sun is a conscious being and our creator. Our creator star! We should worship the sun as God!" This was a huge moment for me, and inasmuch as I had dissolved my identity, I imprinted the sun. Of course I fell madly in love with the sun and went into this sort of bhakti I-Thou worship state. I phoned Joan, all excited, and she took the bus down. We camped at the Colorado River, and I shared all these experiences with her. She still had to teach the last few weeks of her semester so she went back, and I drove on to Phoenix, wiggled out of my mind.

I attended the Aiken church couple's event in Phoenix and at I recall was some sort of A.R.E.-Edgar Cayce center. They were in their seventies, tall and thin, very nice, but I think they looked at me as someone from another planet when I rolled in wild-eyed. I think I was a little over the top, blathering non-stop about the sun, but they kindly invited me to visit their place. I drove on to their place in Socorro, south of Albuquerque, where I had my engine rebuilt by a friend of

theirs. I had to do it if I was to make it back to the Bay Area. I also painted on my back bumper the slogan, “We’re All Doing The Best That We Can.”

After bidding the Aikens a fond farewell, I went north to the only hippie commune I knew of, Drop City in southern Colorado. I drove through Taos and that whole area was beautiful, beautiful country. I had been sending newsletters back to Stewart and Tony, as well as friends of Stewart’s I had met – Steve and Barbara Durkee. On the way out of town to the desert I’d stopped in Palo Alto because I had met the Durkees who lived in an extended family with Gerd Stern and his wife and Michael Callahan, our genial young tech he had stolen. They lived together back east near Millbrook, NY, and had a traveling multi-media show called USCO, which they took around to psychedelic conferences. Steve and Barbara had come out for the Trips Festival and were staying with Richard Alpert, later known as Ram Dass. I stayed overnight with them, and Richard was so stoned that he couldn’t even talk. I drew the newsletters on a hectograph, a gelatin duplicator where you write on a master with a special pencil and put it on a gelatin tray. When you peel it off, the ink remains on the gel and you can pull maybe five or six copies before it fades out. So I was sending these funny newsletters.

Anyway, I had them on my mailing list, and Steve and Barbara had a friend, Jonathan Altman, who was sort of their patron. I had sent this newsletter saying how terrific northern New Mexico was and next thing I knew, Steve and Barbara and Jonathan came out and bought land, which became known as the Lama Foundation. After the Sufi master Sam Lewis died (Sufi Sam), he was buried there, and wherever a Sufi master is buried becomes a shrine and a pilgrimage for Sufis. I doubt my enthusiastic newsletter was the main cause of all this, but it may have contributed.

I dropped by Drop City, a somewhat strange group of people, or perhaps they thought I was a nark. They were slightly friendly, but eyeing me up and down. I looked pretty straight, I guess. I kept saying, “Why do you call it Drop City?” I really hadn’t heard the phrase “drop acid.” They kind of stared at me. So after visiting them, I drove straight back to the Bay Area. Joan and I went up on Mount Tamalpais – I wanted to share with her the site of my oceanic “Yes!” experience. We also wanted to get naked, play Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and run around. Hardly had we taken off our clothes when a forest ranger appeared saying (in a nice way) “Put your clothes back on.” Joan said to me, “Remember that guy Lou Gottlieb? He said he had a place up in the country. Maybe that’s where we can play Adam and Eve.” I said, “Let’s call him.” So I called Lou. He, Stewart and Stewart’s then -wife Lois, and the two of us all drove up together. Lou had a friend in Sausalito named Buck Wheat, a jazz bass player who supplied

hashish cookies for all his friends. Lou had a big pocketful of these cookies that we all were munching.

When we got to Morning Star, we found the apple trees in blossom. The place was just paradise. Stewart went off on an expedition and discovered a brook while we sat on the porch looking at everything. I said, "This is it, Lou. This is it!" Very shortly after, I did move up. We gave up our apartment and Joan finished the teaching year living at the Jacopetti's, those Open Theater friends. She finished her last two months and then joined me. Lou kept saying, "I want to move up too. I'll bring my piano and practice for my Carnegie Hall debut when I'm sixty." He had this great Bosendorfer piano, and sure enough around June he had his builder friend Pete Peterson come up. The place had been run as an egg farm – a chicken farm. It had a funny little egg shed where they stored the eggs. It was at the center of the property, just big enough for the Bosendorfer and a mattress. Lou moved into the upper house, and while Pete was working on the shed they had their steak and potato meals up there. In the meantime we were eating strictly macrobiotic in the lower house, because the Jacopetti's also had moved up, and Rain was a magnificent macro cook and cooking amazing feasts. Then my friend the filmmaker Bruce Bailey moved up with his German shepherd, Mama. We began to be a little bunch of people. When builder Pete left, Lou joined us for meals, got turned onto macrobiotics and became a great enthusiast. He was suffering weird stress-related skin problems on his feet and legs and later claimed that macrobiotics cured him ... it may have. But anyway, that's the way our whole communal scene started. For a complete 24-chapter history I put together the book titled "Home Free Home," which is currently available only on the San Francisco Diggers website here: http://www.diggers.org/home_free.htm

UPDIKE How long were you there?

SENDER I was there as long as the police would let me be there, which was until 1968, with a few breaks. By then the health and building people were on our backs. The Sonoma County health department said, "You have to build leech fields for your septic tanks." So we dug leech lines by hand in the runoff from the lower house septic tank and all got hepatitis. I came down to the city to get well at the Maginnis home, who kindly took me in. Joan stayed (we were sort of separated at that point) and then she came down towards the end of my getting better and said, "I just came back from this wonderful commune in eastern Washington called Tolstoy Farm. We should go and visit." So we drove up to Tolstoy and stayed three months– very nice people. They were an open-door commune before we existed, so we considered them our mother commune, in a way. In September we returned to Morning Star in September just as Lou was being forced to arrest twelve people (all volunteered to be arrested) for trespass. We called them

“The Morning Star Twelve.” The judge had placed a temporary injunction on the ranch that only allowed Lou to live there – or his immediate family. So we were already in hot water with the County, and this continued through a permanent injunction, through various arrests, through three bulldozings for illegal structures. They found Lou in Contempt of Court every time someone was arrested and fined him \$500 each time. His fines finally totaled over \$14,000, and then he was sentenced to two weeks in jail.

At a birthday party in June of 1968, one of the girls asked a friendly neighbor, Bill Wheeler, “Bill, why don’t you open your ranch?” He owned property over towards Bodega Bay that was ten times larger and much more isolated. “I never closed it,” he replied. An electric silence fell over the gathering and within a week, Morning Star refugees were living there. A whole new community started at ‘Wheeler’s,’ as it was called, and again the county closed in. When Joan and I moved there around April, 1969, there already were about 20 people living. By a year later there were over 100. We incorporated as a church, which slowed the County down slightly, but not for long. They finally brought in bulldozers during the winter of 1972. All sixty cabins were burned by the community in one night. It was crazy! I watched the inferno from the next ridge to the west, and it looked like something out of Dante! But it was rainy weather, and we could burn them safely. Otherwise the bulldozers would have taken out redwoods to get to the cabins, so this was the only way to save the trees. Afterwards there was a rear-guard action by some diehards who still continued to live there, but it was a rough hike down to the west canyon and a sheer climb up to ridge.

The front property belonged to a very straight retired couple. Wheeler had a right-of-way, an easement, through their land to the ranch, which irritated the hell out of them. The man used to get so angry. Of course a lot of hippies would come up and not know whose land was what, would end up sleeping on his land. This all came to a head after the bulldozing. Bill had to go back east for a few weeks, and he needed a house for his wife and baby. So he bought a trailer, and towed the trailer to come in the front gate, which belonged to this couple. She was there and refused him entrance, so he called the police. The police said, “We can’t do anything about it, but we can observe.” So he opened the gate and started driving through. She slammed the gate, it bounced off his bumper, ricocheted against her and knocked her down. She was like a sixty-five-year-old lady who ended up with what turned out to be a hairline fracture of the hip. Bill was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon – his truck – and spent the weekend in jail. I went in Monday with \$10,000 cash in my pocket and bailed him out.

Bill decided that maybe he would go live somewhere else for a while, so he moved to Bolinas for a year or two. During that time he found out that the couple had put the front land up for sale,

and got a friend of his who owned a fancy house in Tiburon to sell his house and buy their land – without their knowing he was Bill’s friend. So suddenly this twelve-hundred-acre parcel of gorgeous, gorgeous land (on a clear day you can see Mount Tam seventy miles to the south) was friendly territory. This kept happening – another friend of ours from Berkeley moved up and bought land in Bodega – another twelve-hundred-acre ranch – and turned it into an intentional community. Not the kind of community we had – it wasn’t open door. She settled people in by invitation. But she hadn’t owned the ranch very long before the county officials came out with photographs of human feces on the soil of Wheeler Ranch, saying, “Do you want this here?” But she was a good friend, and I think her being there buffered some negative stuff.

Bill also had quietly bought the ranch due west just in case he ever lost the right of way, and then sold it to a friend of Lou’s, a very dear man named Alan Ribback. Alan used to own the folksinging club the Gate of Horn in Chicago, then dropped out and moved onto the land. So we ended up with about a square mile of ranches, all open to people living on them in some fashion or other. I tell people that we lost the battle but won the war because Sebastopol, which used to be the most uptight little town on the map, was now the greenest little town in the nation. Bill now had become a grand old elder, on various county boards – ecology boards and so forth. He certainly deserves any honors he receives!

UPDIKE Were you doing any composing at this time?

SENDER At Morning Star I said to myself, “I feel like Johann Sebastian Bach! I’m in the midst of a group of people that are tribalizing, but they don’t have thousands of years of tradition to evolve their own ceremonies and songs.” So I started putting together chants and songs that could be learned quickly around the campfire. Also I composed some sacred songs, one of which went to New Mexico with what I call “the 1967 graduates,” folks who had been busted and given the choice by the scowling judge to leave the county or go to jail. They founded another property named Morning Star in New Mexico and one of my chants with them. It started being sung at the Native American church peyote ceremonies, which pleased me enormously. I also composed a song cycle on a Native American corn-planting ceremony that I hoped some day a grade school class might perform. At Morning Star somebody gave me an autoharp, which I then opened-tuned and removed the chord rack. Then a couple more came around until I had four. Anybody could play them with a stick, because they were just an open-chord drone. They got to be known as “Ramon-a-phones.” Anybody could play them, from two years up! You got these going, then the guitars would start up and somebody chanting *Hare Krishna* in one corner and somebody singing the psalms over there. It sort of harmonized everything and worked really well.

By the time I moved to Wheelers, an accordion had come along, and I started jamming on accordion with guitarists – learning how to play blues and other types of easy three or four-chord riffs. I really enjoyed playing blues. It was a constant music feast at Wheelers, it really was. It was just amazing. Later, when the Occidental Community Choir formed, I joined the choir and wrote some choral pieces for them. When I co-authored the book, *Being of the Sun* in 1973, I was able to buy land up on the ridge east of Wheeler’s. I used to say, “I can walk naked off the back of this land (it was two acres) all the way through a square mile of friendly land, if I want to.” Well, there was one county road I would have had to run across really fast but otherwise, it was all connected – cute! The funny thing is that I never really fell in love with that piece of land. I think something strange had happened there to some Native American a long time ago, because I sensed a restless spirit on that land. I spent four years there, and that’s when I began writing fulltime. I first started writing “Home Free Home,” a history of the two communes during the summer of 1971 because I felt somebody should tell what was happening to us. Later I moved on to novels and other things. I just holed up and wrote when I wasn’t gardening or building. I continued with music there too, I was playing a North Indian instrument called a dalruba, but I never had heard it played by someone who knew how to play it, so I made up my own style. I had a friend who was a tabla drummer, and a woman friend who played South Indian veena, so we used to have little jam sessions up there.

UPDIKE Were you writing compositions down?

SENDER No, not really. I wrote down some of the Morning Star chants and songs. There’s one I really like called *Morning Star Express*. [It modulates from C to F sharp minor very suddenly. And the SATB choral pieces for the choir. I have a bunch of others scored out too. There’s another one that came out of a group LSD trip – we did a week of brown rice in June, ’66, and then all took LSD. The song “Oh Friends” came from that.

Monday, April 21, 2014

SENDER Moving back to early 1969. I had returned from visiting The Banana Patch on Maui and was basically homeless. Lou had imported his hash-smoking guru, Chiranjiva, from Bangladesh who moved in at Morning Star, although it had been basically closed by the county. He lasted about a week, telling Lou, “I did not come all the way from India to shit in the woods! I could do that there!” So he moved to San Francisco with a flock of devotees. I was very much at loose ends, living on the Russian River in a cabin in the redwoods that was not designed for the rainy weather. Mushrooms were growing out of my ears. My friend Shoshanna who

accompanied me on the New Mexico junket, came to visit. She was playing music for a group called the Floating Lotus Magic Opera Company that was Berkeley's version of the San Francisco Mime Troup. They were developing their own dance dramas in a Tibetan style, written for them by their director and poet, Daniel Moore. The main dancer I'd known for years because she lived with a composer friend of mine, Charles McDermott, who's still in Berkeley. Zilla (don't ask me her last name), was a very early free soul in and about the streets of Berkeley, usually dancing about in diaphanous clothing and looking far out. She was the lead dancer for the company. Anyway, Shoshanna was playing cello in their orchestra came up and said, "Look, we really need somebody to pull the orchestra together. People keep drifting in and out. Come on down." So I went down, and they were using a place referred to as "the UFO College" on Arlington. It belonged to two brothers who were into psychic stuff and so forth, and I guess they held classes there. The Floating Lotus people were renting parts of it for rehearsals. So I would sleep on the floor in front of the altar – they had a kind of altar room. There were two cottages, one rented by the new age MD Eugene Schonfeld who had a column under the name "Dr. Hippocrates." He still practices in Sausalito. The other cottage was being rented by a standup comic, Darryl Henriques. One of his acts was very cute where he transformed himself into a rat. He went on to L.A. and made somewhat of a name for himself. He's still around somewhere too – both warm-hearted people.

The problem with the Floating Lotus orchestra was that people floated in and out of it. You never knew what musician was going to show up to play. There was no score, and they were supposed to improvise to what the dancers were doing. This sometimes worked and sometimes didn't. The first thing the director said to me was, "You need to fire the gong player." I said, "Why?" He said, "Because he doesn't follow instructions. He just trips out. He has this rack of Indonesian gongs that belongs to Don Buchla and he just gets all excited, starts playing and doesn't pay any attention." I thought, "Alright, if this is my first job, I'm not sure I'm going to like it." So I talked to the gong player, Henry, and said, "I'm supposed to fire you." Then Henry gave me all the reasons he didn't want to be fired, and we argued for some time. I finally said, "I fire thee!" and he was fired. He still hung around, he didn't leave, and finally I was the one who went back up north. I should add here that this was '68, and in '72 or so my American mother Julia, who had been widowed and on her own for some years, heard of the death of her first husband Colonel Adams' second wife and wrote him a condolence note. He sent her flowers on what would have been their anniversary and they started dating. Boom, before you knew it, they were remarried! Forty-three years of divorce and they were remarried! When people asked her, "Why did you get divorced in the first place?" she would get a sort of distant look on her face and say, "I really can't recall." Which was very diplomatic of her. I knew why, and it really wasn't their fault, in a sense. She had had a miscarriage in Denmark and the doctor told her that she could

have children, but told the Colonel privately that she would never be able to bear children. This put them on two opposite reality tracks where he was always urging that they should adopt, and she would always take it as an insult and get angry. Between this and other things, they did finally divorce.

The Colonel was an interesting man. He had been on the Lusitania with his father when it was torpedoed by the Germans in 1916. His father died, but he survived as a nineteen-year-old with a broken arm and made it to shore. The Lusitania's sinking was a major reason of why the US entered WWI. There are theories that the British admiralty, of whom Churchill was top dog at that time, knew there was a submarine in the area but decided not to let the captain know. They knew that if an event occurred with the Lusitania, it would bring the US into the war. That's one of the theories, but they didn't realize there would be such a tragic loss of life. A lot of people died – in the hundreds. The Lusitania went down very quickly with a series of explosions that could not have been just the torpedo, so some suspected it was carrying munitions, strictly verboten from a neutral country. Anyway, I have the Colonel's whole Lusitania talk on tape, and it's really fascinating. He also served in WWI as an artillery observer – they would send him up in a balloon to direct artillery fire and the Germans would shoot the balloon down and he would parachute. After parachuting three times in one day, he was ordered to go up again and told the commanding officer, "Sir, begging your pardon, but I really don't feel I need to go up again." He went on to work for Sprague Semiconductor, and lived in the Berkshires in what used to be an area of Shaker farms. In fact his house was an old Shaker house that he redid. So Julia and he spent their summers up there, and then wintered in Julia's house. She had by then moved to Princeton and it was a pleasant life. I was very happy the Colonel was in her life because she tended to drink too much when living alone. When I came east to meet him and his two sons after they married, one son looked somewhat familiar and I started going back in my mind ... Oh my God! He was Henry, whom I had fired at the Floating Lotus Magic Opera Company! What was the universe telling me? "Never fire anybody, because he'll turn out to be your new brother." Henry had a little difficulty accepting me at first, but a year or two later I stayed with him in LA. Departing early, I left a sign on his kitchen table saying, "Henry, you're rehired!" But he was living an interesting life, doing low-budget films on saving the whales, and cutting off the bottoms of oxygen tanks to turn them into bells, which different rock groups were buying. What else did he do? Later on he got into manufacturing solar batteries for cell phones and other interesting things. Anyway, he's a dear friend and a brother, and we see him frequently.

Back to the Floating Lotus: this was their second dance drama. I decided the only help I could be would be to create some sort of a score so that musicians drifting in could have something to relate to. I rigged up a kind of a score for them that gave rough outlines of the kind of the music

required for the different sections of the piece sat in on their first performances. These were always done free in one of the local parks. At the end of the performance a large loaf of bread baked in the shape of a human body was broken up and everyone took communion. KQED sent a video guy out to interview the director Daniel and I, and we decided we would “Om.” We ended up “Ommming” for about half-an-hour, and at the end of the “Om” I was doing a snore in and out and motorboating my lips, what horse people call a ‘bluster.’ We both were actually, because that long OM had naturally led us to that sound. That was my first experience with what we could perhaps call “the awakened snore.” Daniel went on to become a serious Sufi. He took a Sufi name, joined a Sufi group in Philadelphia, and is now married with a couple of kids. He continues to write amazing poetry also.

Around 1977 I re-met Camilla who had been with the Floating Lotus Opera Company. I admired her because she was one of the real karma yoginis who could really get things done. She was very practical, always on top of things. She was also studying South Indian classical dance – Bharatnatyam – and living with Don Buchla. At that point she and Don had just broken up, and she was feeling really down. I thought, “What can we do to cheer her up? Well, she wants to do to India to study dance – we’ll do a benefit.” So I got Lou Gottlieb involved, he was going to impersonate Fidel Castro (whom he resembled a lot) and give a speech in Spanish. Rosie, the tap dancer who set a record by tap-dancing across Golden Gate Bridge with her students, agreed to do a performance, and I was going to do one of composer David Rosenblum’s cabaret songs as my alter ego, Zero the Clown. While teaching at Mills, David wrote a bunch of cabaret songs for his wife, a vocalist. One of them I really liked, I’ve forgotten the title of it now. I put a Styrofoam head and wig on my accordion and a long dress so I could waltz with it as if I was holding a woman, playing the song at the same time. I dressed, obviously, as my clown persona. So we had this evening at which we made a couple hundred dollars to help Camilla get to South India. That was one of the few performances I did at that time which were not just dancing up and down on the street below Ghirardelli playing accordion for the tourists.

In the late 1990s or early 2000s, a young composer looked me up named Stevan Key. He’s a mysterious guy, and now has disappeared from the face of this earth. I don’t know what he’s doing ... and he was even mysterious then. He seemed to hang out in Santa Cruz as a kind of a manager of a rock band, as I recall. Anyway, he wanted to interview me, and the interview transcript I gave you is courtesy of Stevan’s recording me. We also decided to do a performance art piece together, with a friend of his who was a poet. We discussed what we wanted to do. Stevan wanted to get permission from the city’s civil guard to be the finger on the button that set off the sirens – every Tuesday at twelve-noon the sirens used to be tested, although, I must say, I haven’t heard them recently. Anyway, every Tuesday at twelve noon the sirens went off. Stevan

wanted to be the finger on the sirens and use it to announce that the whole city was going to experience a psychic event of some sort. So he contacted the old retired general who was the head of the city's civil defense and managed to talk him into letting his finger push the button. But it had to be exactly at twelve noon, and we had to go down to the main fire department office to do this. The office was kind of interesting, a combination of the old technology that ran the old red fire boxes – they work on punch tape. When somebody pulls that lever, a little tape starts chattering down there, punching holes. The office staff read the holes and can tell where the box is located. Overlaid on that system is a whole new technology where they have a big wall map of the city with lights that show where every fire engine is at any given moment. So it was interesting.

For six weeks, the three of us went down and took turns pushing the button at twelve noon, which we decided was a way of announcing to the city's nature spirits that something unusual was occurring. We first thought we would make a map of nature spirits, but after consulting a psychic who had a column in one of the little free papers, she said, "There are hundreds of thousands of nature spirits. This would be a lifetime's work." So I said, "Look, Stevan, you contacted the head of the civil defense to get permission. Why don't we (using my douser – my little pendulum and an alphabet wheel) ask, 'Who is the guardian spirit of San Francisco?'" So we sat down and I did my little ceremonial douse, and I got what looked like were two words. The first word was 'Hapu,' and the second word was 'Nekneki.' They sounded Native American, so I went over to U.C. Berkeley where they have vocabulary lists of the local tribes, and in Coastal Miwok, 'hapu' was "grandmother" and 'nekneki,' with one letter off, was "little people under three feet tall who live in caves and come out at night." Well, by now my nape hair was standing straight up. I got all excited and bought a big, big aerial map of the city and laid it on the floor, and started dousing for hapu's location. I also doused for her real name, and I got 'Xulyub,' which I decided was pronounced 'Zuleeyub.'

I doused for areas where Xulyub hung out and got a reading on a lake in Golden Gate Park in the 40th Avenue area. It turned out on the oldest survey map of the city that it was an original lake, not a manmade one, and that was interesting. So we went out there and the lake had a little island, no bigger than our living room, clustered in the reeds off one of the shores. We got a big reading on the island and I thought, "We're not going to mount an undignified and insulting amphibious assault, but come back with musical instruments, incense, and serenade her." So we came back and played music, and as I was playing my Ramonophone and whatever else, we sensed some movement on the island. I looked again, and it was two little adolescent raccoons wrestling. I thought, "Little people under three foot tall who come out at night – this is Great-Grandma Raccoon spirit we're talking about!" Which made sense, because there are raccoons all

over the city. Then I decided to chant her name to see what came out. So I went, “Xulyub, Xulyub, Xulyub, Xulyub, blah, blah, blah....” It became a licking movement. When the mother raccoon gives birth, licking is the way the mother raccoon stimulates the baby to breathe because they come in a caul, a little skin envelope.

UPDIKE An embryotic pouch.

SENDER Yeah, a pouch, and the mother licks it off and stimulates the baby. So I decided this was “Great Grandma Lick” we were accessing! This tied in with some other stuff I’d done with *I Ching* where some of the three-line trigram yin-yang signs I equated with primordial sounds, like the sneeze, the snort, the grunt. So here we were with all of this fascinating information. I said, “Let’s invite the spirits to communicate with us. I’m going to designate a spot on the sidewalk near my house where they can leave messages. On my daily walks with my dog I’ll check to see what’s there.” So I designated a little spot, and sure enough, things would turn up, like a matchbook cover with an interesting word on it, or a chunk of paper or something. I started logging all this stuff. Stevan decided he would ask them to communicate with him through pennies. Whenever he spotted a penny he would photograph it, and write down the date, and so forth. We went on like this for a while. Then I decided to turn our double post No Parking signs into aura-clearing gates. I would pick ones tall enough to walk through – in fact there was a day honoring Herb Caen down on the Embarcadero and I decided this was a good enough cover for any police interest, so we went down there with my signs. On one side of the No Parking sign I made a little label that said, “Enter here.” And I plugged the end of a stiff wire into a little hole on the edge of the sign, then pulled it up and had something like an antenna. The other side said, “Your karma has been cleared. You’ve been forgiven, go in peace. This gate clears when the siren sound on Tuesdays.” Signed by somebody. We put up five or six of these, and photographed my youngest son going through them and emerging with a smile. They lasted for quite a while. In fact I talked to some guys who tag around the city and a couple of them had seen them. They said, “Oh yeah, those were cool!” So I felt I’d done something, and they lasted for whatever moments they lasted. These were the ‘Forgiveness Gates.’

Dousing for the guardian spirit’s name had been so successful that I wanted to do another project. All the big trees in Dolores Park have a little tag with a number nailed into the trunk. I thought, “That’s so irritating, and reminds me of concentration camps where they put numbers on people.” So I thought, “I should interview them, and find out what their real names are.” So I did a practice session with our pear tree in back yard. I hung the pendulum on one of her branches and said, “What’s your name?” and moved the alphabet wheel. Whenever the pendulum wiggled, I wrote down the letter. I got a name, “Beghyg.” It sounded Welsh, and I

thought, “Well ... pear trees ... Wales, maybe so.” Somebody wrote an article on the interesting trees in Noe Valley, and I thought, “I should really take that list and go around and interview all those trees. It would make a great class project for the kids.” But then I kind of stalled, I didn’t go any further with it. It’s on the back burner somewhere, but I did get very good results with that little alphabet wheel and dousing.

Another thing I did up in the country in the early ‘70s was to cut up a dictionary into fortune-cookie-sized slices and used it to write a set of poems – ‘scatter poems,’ I guess you’d call them. It turned out Judy had a friend who’s a poet who had been doing the same thing, which was interesting. I finally decided to invite a friendly spirit to communicate to me through these cut-up bits. So I did a little ceremony and asked, “What’s your name?” By now I kept all the pieces in a bag, and I reached in and pulled out a slip. It read, “Shady.” So Shady was the name of the spirit with whom I was communicating. Shady did some interesting readings for people, actually. A couple of my friends got all excited and wanted their own, so I took four pocket dictionaries into Santa Rosa to a printer who I knew had a big pneumatic cutter. I lined up the dictionaries, pressed two buttons, and it went “Chop! Chop!” The place was operated by a group of fundamentalist Christians. I didn’t really want to tell them what I was doing, because I thought they’d kick me out the door. But they watched me with some puzzlement. One of the sets I activated for a friend. We asked, “What is your name?” The slip read “Mumu.” I looked it up in a dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, and “Mumu” was the name of the god of prophecy in ancient Egypt. Things like this kept happening. She still has her Mumu in a lovely little gourd. When I joined the Well (Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link), I put Shady up as the first online oracle. People would ask Shady questions, and I would dip into the bag and type the replies. Frequently people were pretty mind-blown by their responses. The virtual community/social media author Howard Rheingold became all excited at one point and said, “You ought to interview Shady and find out who he is.” So I did.

I finally came out with a manuscript called, “Conversations with Shady.” I asked, “Who are you, where do you come from, blah, blah, blah.” Actually at that point I had an agent in New York and he got quite excited by the book and tried to sell it. But I think it was too tongue-and-cheek-sounding for the new agers – it had kind of a quirky, funny quality to it. And it was too strange for the straight-line publishers. So again I kind of fell between the cracks, but I put it up on my website. I don’t think anybody ever finds it – it’s hard to find but it’s another one of those things that I might POD someday.

This dousing and oracle stuff all started with my interest in the *I Ching*. I wrote a story about how the *I Ching* was invented, which is in my book of collected articles and stories, *Planetary*

Sojourn. It's about a village in ancient China with the enemy at the gates. The chief doesn't know what to do – he runs to the shaman – the shaman doesn't know what to do, so she throws some bones in the air and decides if they land crossed, it means 'fight,' and if they land separate it means 'surrender.' So that was the first Yang – closed line – and the open line – Yin, surrender. Other lines then developed from these two. The two-liners included one that instead of just 'surrender' meant, "Go hide in the bushes and sleep it off." Another meant, "Meet them with laughing maidens." There were others. There were seed syllables for the yang lines – the seed yang sound is the primordial consonant "grrrrr" – the growl. The seed yin is a vowel, "ahhhhhh." The trigram – you have a three-line thing before it became six, and if the broken line is at the bottom, that's for the belly, so it's an "ahhhh" in the belly. If it's in the middle, it's an "ahhhhh" in the chest, and if it's in the top it's an "ahhhhhh" in the head. The "ahhhhhh" in the belly is the grunt of parturition or sex, and if it's in the chest it's the sigh, "ahhhh" and if it's in the head it's the laugh, "haaaaa-ha-ha." That would be the laughing maidens. The three R's – if it's the rumble in the belly it's a warning, it's like when our terrier Riqui goes "rrrrrrrr." If it's in the chest, it's a little more serious, and if it's up here it's "rrrrrr" with the teeth you'd better stand back. If you get the full thing, three yang lines, it's the attack roar, the gorilla "arrrrrrr!" and you'd better run like hell. So these insights were working pretty well, and when I started reading up on the *I Ching*, they seemed to match. So of course I got all excited again. That little story in my book does develop that theory. Also the *I Ching* stars again in my article on how to evolve a song out of an *I Ching* throw. And of course I have John Cage to thank for my finding the *I Ching*, because that's where I first ran into it.

My first appearance as Zero the Clown was in Coddington, the shopping center in Santa Rosa. I just danced around playing accordion and made silly faces and stuff. People seemed to enjoy it, so I decided that we should have a Clown Day in Occidental, a parade through town, and I printed little tickets that looked like parking tickets, but which I called "silly tickets." I had Keystone Kop hats – they looked like British cop hats – and I put those on the kids and gave them the tickets. I said, "Now, if you find someone talking serious, they get a ticket, or if you tell them a joke and they don't laugh," and similar stuff. The kids would walk around, give out tickets and send them to the judge. The judge sat on a very high stepladder in front of the bakery with a mop for a wig. You had three chances to tell a joke to make the judge laugh. If you made the judge laugh, you got off half – the fine was a dollar, or two dollars – which was supposed to go to the PTA, but I don't think anybody ever paid. I have one group photo from those early clown parades, really cute, of everybody all together on the steps of the bakery.

Then I thought, "Well, maybe I can make money clowning in the city." I was pretty broke at the time. By then Lou had joined the Chiranjiva crowd in San Francisco, so I'd come down and

change into costume at Lou's and go down to Ghirardelli with my accordion and my donations pot "Puffy" that would jump up and down when somebody put a quarter in the basket and puff smoke. The challenge was to see if I could get somebody to smile, somebody to stop, somebody to let go of some money. Mostly it was tourists taking my picture, so then I put a sign on my back that said, "Clone the clown, two dollars," and whenever anybody pointed a camera, I'd keep playing but turn around so they could see the sign. I stood next to The Human Jukebox, a guy who had a PhD in Philosophy but sat inside a refrigerator carton with a trumpet. I don't know if you ever saw him.

UPDIKE I don't think so.

SENDER He's long gone now, but he cut a slot in the carton for a dollar to go in, and then a flap would open and there he was with his trumpet. He'd play a little tune on the trumpet with a top hat on, and he had a slide whistle would go "peeewwwww" and he close the flap. Somebody in the neighborhood kept turning him in as a nuisance, but the trumpet wasn't that loud. I interviewed him some years later for an article on busking and he said that somewhere in one of their basements the police department had something like eight of his cardboard boxes all lined up that they'd confiscated. He'd just go out and get another refrigerator box. When I went and clowned at the Haight Street Fair, I met the Cosmic Cowgirl who did rope tricks. She turned out later to be living with the Human Jukebox. I interviewed them both for the article I wrote for the *Whole Earth Quarterly*, or maybe it was the one before they changed their name from *The Coevolution Quarterly*. I wrote several articles for them over the years.

While I was clowning at the Haight Street Fair, this guy came up to me and invited me to clown at his private party in Pacific Heights, so I went up there. It was a house full of crazy antiques, and the guy was obviously gay. The place was full of people. I put all my clowning adventures in *Zero Summer*, my sequel to *Zero Weather*. In *Zero Summer* Zero finds his clown identity – all of the events I experienced I put in that book. Maybe it was also at the Haight Street Fair that somebody asked me to help open their new restaurant in Menlo Park, so I went down there and clowned for three days at what was then a good rate, I think twenty dollars an hour. While I was clowning for him, somebody came up to me and said, "We have an Italian restaurant, and our guitarist is sick, would you do lunchtime today?" It wasn't until I was standing under the lights on stage that I realized I didn't have a stage act – and all these people watching me were growing deeper and deeper frowns. Well, I guess that in itself was funny! I'm great on the sidewalk, but I don't have a stage presence at all because I haven't developed one, but I had lots of fun. And I did make money

A couple times when Pauline did various shows I got involved. She did one at Mills where she just lay flat on a piano, meditating, and invited people to do things to see if they could break her concentration. So I came in and I read a rant that I had written about why weren't people living in the tops of trees – that's in my *Planetary Sojourn* book. Many years later, around 2004, she did a concert with the Mills Performing Group that included Cage's *Four Minutes and Thirty Seconds*. I got Bill Maginnis to come with me and dressed backstage as Zero the Clown. The upper wall behind the stage slides open, so in the midst of the *Four Minutes and Thirty Seconds* silence, with twelve musicians on stage, the wall parted and there was Zero the Clown with his accordion, dancing up and down, playing and singing "Mairzy Doats." I finished, the wall closed, and the silence continued. Afterwards I received a lot of weird looks in the lobby from true-believer Cage fans, as if they were thinking "How dare he?!" Nobody said anything – Pauline didn't, but she's always been a dear friend and done her own bit of rascality at times. But I think it probably harmonized with my reputation at Mills as a troublemaker. Years had gone by, but still a troublemaker.

UPDIKE Was the 2004 performance, was that during – you had said there was a Mills retrospective?

SENDER When I first moved back to the city in 1979, Mills offered me a retrospective concert. I thought, "This is my opportunity to do the piece that Stewart Brand had suggested when I first described my Wagner piece, where the music gradually decays into white noise, and he had said, "Well, why don't you do it backwards and start with white noise?" So I decided that I was finally going to do that. First I tried to create it at Mills on their big 24-channel recorder – just stacking the phrase over and over itself. I tried to get that feeling of something decaying, and I just couldn't get it. I really couldn't get it. Then I decided to search the city and see if anyone still had an Ampex PD10 tape duplication system, because Mills had gotten rid of our original one. Finally I phoned a little school downtown that trained people to be radio announcers. Sure enough, they had a PD10 on a rack. It may well have been the one from Mills, because Mills must have sold it to somebody. So I went to Bill Maginnis and said, "Bill, your Dixieland band has got to record an eight-measure riff for me in F#." Which they did, a normal blues riff. I looped it, took it down to the little school, put it through the four machines backwards and recorded it, played the recorded tape backwards, and I had it. I had something that started with white noise, with the Dixieland riff gradually emerging.

"What we're going to do, Bill," I told him "is I'm going to sing *Great Grandpa Lemuel's Death Rattle Reincarnation Blues*" which is in my essay called *Why Nature Created Humans* (also included in *Planetary Sojourn*). At the end of that essay it explains how our universe came into being when that song was sung. Also in the novel *Zero Weather*, each chapter has a little

entrance quote, and towards the end of the novel these quotes tell the same story of how the universe came into being.

It's about how once upon a time, Great Grandpa Lemuel, or Ooom, or El, was sitting down by the old fishing hole, the Pool of all Possibilities, and he looked down in the water and saw his face, and there were wrinkles in it. He howled, "I'm getting old!" and he picked up his psaltery, or oud, or whatever instrument he was playing, and he sang what I originally called the *Death Rattle Shit-Fart Blues in F sharp* – but I changed the 'Shit-Fart' to 'Reincarnation' because I could tell it again freaked people out at Mills. Again, the bad boy. And I liked 'reincarnation' too – it worked better in the long run because then I could do a little refrain at the end – after 'reincarnation,' I'd sing 'what in tarnation', 'take a vacation' blues. The tape starts in darkness and gradually the room brightens. It's on the DVD from our Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute retrospective....

UDPIKE The San Francisco Tape Music Center book?

SENDER Yeah. And just as the tune becomes recognizable, a live Dixieland band comes in behind me on accordion singing the words. I think I dressed as a clown for it too, but I don't remember. The words go [sings]

Well, I went on down to the fishing hole, all tranquil without a care.

My face stared back all wrinkled and old, the marks of death were there.

Oh ahhhhhhh [snore], pthhhbbb [razzberry],

It's the death rattle reincarnation blues.

Let me go, let me go, to the ocean sublime, and ease my cares away.

Let me seed myself through the ages of time, so death's dues I don't have to pay.

Oh ahhhhhhh [snore], pthhhbbb [razzberry],

It's the death rattle reincarnation blues.

Well it's just plain hard, to live alone, and keep yourself in tune.

Much better to find yourself a friend to howl with at the moon.

Oh ahhhhhhh [snore], pthhhbbb [razzberry],

It's the death rattle reincarnation, what-in-tarnation, take-a-vacation blues."

While Great Grandpa¹⁰ Lemuel was singing this, his lovely goddess wife, Great Grandma¹⁰ Hattie, or 'Aditi' as she's known in Sanskrit, the mother of the gods (the gods are the Adityas, and Aditi is their mother) was busy spinning clouds of hydrogen and giving birth to new stars.

She's sighing to herself, "Oh, that no-good husband of mine, what's he up to? He's always going down to that fishing hole and sitting around not doing anything." She's muttering to herself. She's one of my favorite characters and comes back again in the third volume of the Zero series, called *Zero Gravity*, where my hero, Zero, realizes Great Grandma Hattie is hiding out on Planet Earth. Not only that, she's hiding out just down the road. He finds her, and her pseudonym on the planet is Hattie Elmore, who actually was a real person whom I found in real life. The Elmore's were a fascinating family who lived near Sebastopol. Her son taught science at a local high school and was an inventor. So it all kind of sync'd in a nice way. In the book, Zero goes to meet her and knocks on the door. Grandma comes to the door – "Hello, what's your name?" "Zero." "Oh, are you that nice man from the vacuum cleaning company?" They get into this whole thing, and Zero has this whole theory about her Great Cosmic Vacuum Cleaner, so it all works, and he's getting more and more excited all the time. In real life, I did visit Grandma Hattie, and she gave me a quilt patch she had made in the shape of the morning star symbol that we used. Very synchronistic! A lot of really interesting coincidences happened around her. In the book he tracks her down – she doesn't for a minute say who she is, but a series of incidents occur and by the very end of the novel she's had to come out of the closet as the creator of the galaxy. Suddenly all these angels arrive singing Hosannas, and all sorts of amazing things start to occur. The book ends on an up note where you know there's got to be another volume about what really happens next. It's titled *Zero Gravity*, because anti-gravity starts happening towards the end of the book. So that was fun.

Moving into the 2000's, as I started researching well-being body states through purring, and tracheal resonance, I thought also that we needed a one-note harmonica for people who were too shy to "ommm" on the inhale and the exhale – a little reed instrument that they could play. So I found a source of reeds from a company in Canada that was importing them from China and started putting these little things together. I have very few of the originals left, but I've figured out a way to make more.

While in the process of researching reeds, I discovered there are deer and duck-hunting calls that use reeds, but this is the one I ended up with [blows into it]. A little hee-haw reed. In the meantime, I did find a mule deer 'grunter' call. I used the word 'gruntler' for mine, which is not quite the same [blows into it], because it 'gruntles' disgruntled people. These here are all mule deer grunters. One of them is a duck call [blows into it]. These only sound one-way out instead of in and out. But one of them was adjustable – it had a very long reed. You could actually play tunes on the reed by touching it in different places. I wanted the in-out, because I realized, whenever I played harmonica, I got a little buzz in my chest from the inhale [blows into a reed]. Anyway, my composer friend Luciano Chessa took four of them and composed a quartet for

Donkey Gruntlers. He was able to get an amazing variety of sounds out of them [blows into a reed]. I don't know how he did it, but it was great. I'm only down to two of them, or I would give you one. The company I was getting them from lost their Chinese manufacturer. I was desperate, I went everywhere looking and finally found another company that made a larger type.

For the democratic convention, whatever year it was, I put a democratic donkey label on it [blows into reed]. I wasn't quite as happy with the larger reeds, but I actually sold thirty of these to my friend Dan Goode – a composer friend in New York. He was leading a protest of people circling the republican convention center. They were all going to honk on these hee-haw things. I actually got paid too. I finally found a way to peel down the new ones and almost make a duplicate of my early ones. This is the only one of these I have. It's cute.

That led in turn to the next 'enlightenment toy' called The Thwizzler. At this point I had realized that the human body has very sensitive nerves around all its facial orifices, because it doesn't want little bugs and things crawling in. So we have what are called unmyelinated nerves. They don't have a myelin sheath. Wherever you have hair on your body, you also have these special nerves that are extremely sensitive to crawling insects. I decided if I could figure out a way to stimulate them, I could send these lovely shivers up and down my spine. Also I found, if I wiggled my toes, it would keep me from what I call the "shoo-fly syndrome," a shudder that makes you want to tweak your nose. If you can ride the sensation by wiggling your toes, you can enjoy these wonderful little buzzes up and down your spine as much as you want. It's really quite lovely – do you want to try?

UPDIKE Yes. Would you pass these out to audiences?

SENDER I would pass them out to everybody. Now, people vary in their sensitivities. Were you ever tickled as a child?

UPDIKE Yes.

SENDER To the point where you desensitized yourself to tickling?

UPDIKE No.

SENDER I had an older brother who tortured me, tickling me, and I finally desensitized myself to it. I think people who do that lose that sensitivity.

UPDIKE No, I can feel it.

SENDER The other way to do it, is not with the feathers, but with this blunted wire end. I'm going to come over, and see if I can do this. Another place that's very sensitive is around the eyes – the inner part of the eyelid area, and of course the mouth, the corners of the mouth. It's hard to do it to someone else, but you get the idea. Anyway, I got very involved in that and I still love it. If nothing else, it lets people turn their body on in a non-genital sort of way. So that was the Thwizzler, and then the next toy was the Thwisher. I think I had this one out the other day, didn't I?

UPDIKE No.

SENDER It's a rattle made of two plastic champagne glasses.

UPDIKE I love that.

SENDER This one is cracked. I must have played it long and hard at the clown parade. It's filled with BBs. I had a more organic version made with mung beans and two paper cups, but I like the sharper sound of this. Actually it's very close to the sound of my nervous system that I frequently heard via tinnitus, but I don't seem to be hearing it anymore. I think it cured my tinnitus, because I don't hear it anymore. Seriously! Anyway, I love it.

UPDIKE I love the sound.

SENDER Yeah, it's a good sound.

UPDIKE I like the heaviness too.

SENDER I experimented with it. I once had four all mounted on a central socket, and I could hold four in each hand – oh, my God! I did then a performance at the Noe Valley Ministry of audience-participation pieces – somewhere I've got some material about it. One of them was called "The Seashore Snake Sizzle." I handed rattles out to the audience and we played a tape of ocean waves – to go with it. I had another piece that I had a four-year-old conduct. I've forgotten all of them now – I'd have to look them up. But it was an evening of three audience participation pieces that were fun.

The purring and tracheal resonance as I said grew out of that Floating Lotus Magic Opera

lengthy oming session, and moving to the country and living with cats. I decided wanted to be one too, more or less [snores]. It turns out there are eight species that purr – among them, ring-tailed lemurs, guinea pigs, foxes, gorillas, elephants, raccoons, rabbits, squirrels and bats.

UDDIKE I had no idea elephants....

SENDER I guess they make kind of a rumbling purr sound. Because of purring, tracheal resonance, I just posted another video on YouTube. Instead of the [snores] the next thing I added was motor-boating lips, which on a horse is called a bluster [demonstrates]. Here's a link that demonstrates: <http://www.horsepresence.com/shop/media/Sounds/BlusterB22.aif>

Just recently I added a tongue vibration, which is more of a “th th th th” with an “rrrrrrr” – so all together there's a dry gargle, a tongue, and a bluster [demonstrates]. And then you can add a specific pitch [demonstrates]. It's pretty good, isn't it? It's a nice sound. But when I do it, it makes me dizzy, it really takes me out, but a couple of days ago I decided to do an update to my original YouTube video demonstrating this. So now I have “Purring to Nirvana Two” up. It's longer, ten minutes. It uses, unfortunately my new camera on iMac that's not as close up as the camera I used before. I may redo it, but I maybe not because this one at least captures Riqui sitting next to me.

NOTE: And even more recently I uploaded “Resonating to Nirvana” where I demonstrate the series of exercises with a voice-over: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpc6uyyz7bw> and a companion article: <http://raysender.com/resonating.html>

Let's see. [Reads from list of interview questions.] “Technological advancements that altered my composition style, or my interests.” Well, as you know, the Buchla was designed for us, and delivered. I did absolutely nothing with it before I departed for northern climes and communes. One day at Morning Star, Don showed up with his box on a battery, and set up the speakers in the orchard, quite wide apart, and started beeping and booping through the orchard. All these hippies started crawling out of the bushes with their eyes like saucers, convinced the UFOs had landed. So that was fun. But when the rains came that winter of '67, there were so many people that the houses were just wall-to wall hippies, and I can't take that much of a crowd. I have to have a place where I can get away. Without the great outdoors available because of the rain, I came back to the city. I looked up Don and said, “Can you give me a job?” So he gave me a job stuffing circuit boards in his warehouse in the old naval yard. He also had a room rigged up as a studio with lots of pillows. I started sleeping there, and in my off-hours playing with the system. I did a number of sessions ... sometimes I couldn't tell if it was a piece or a session when I got through. One of them did turn into a piece, called *Christmas Me*. That's up on my website somewhere.

I also recorded one or two LSD sessions using Don's four-track recorder. What I did was record one track, and then I would rewind and record a second track. Ultimately I had a tape with four tracks of mostly silence – hardly anything on them. But when I listened to them, I got higher than a kite. I thought, “My God, maybe the vibrations you give off when you're stoned get recorded on tape!” I never followed that up, and I've lost the damn tape – I don't know where it is. But Don was getting all this great LSD from the Grateful Dead – Owsley White Lightning, really good stuff. He sat one trip for me doing the sound, mostly just beating two oscillators – “whir whir whir whir whir whir” for quite a while. Afterwards I staggered out, got in my van, and drove to Palo Alto. I would never, ever in my life want to drive that stoned again, but I made it there, and started a whole bunch of visits to people. But I had a nice winter working for Don and hanging out with him – and very grateful for the paying job!

In Redwood City, I started visiting a woman whom I met at the Trips Festival and who was part of the whole New Age/Eselen crowd. Meanwhile earlier at Morning Star, Thanksgiving '67, we had discovered MDA, now known as ecstasy, or double MDA. MDMA is a little different, but more or less the same sort of buffered speed. After I tried it, I decided that finally something had come along you could put in your grandmother's teacup absolutely certain she would be weeping her gratitude. I did find enough of it so that for Thanksgiving we could get almost everybody off. The ones not taking MDA took LSD. It was very interesting because MDA is a heart-chakra love vibration, and it swept all the LSD people along too. You couldn't have a bad trip on LSD if anybody in the crowd is on MDA. Everybody just stood around in little huddles with their arms around each other for hours on end. The cops came and we all said, “Oh please, please, take our picture!” We all lined up for a group photo, which is in our scrapbook. When I put the Morning Star Scrapbook together, I went to the police station – the sheriff's office – and said, “You must have some photos from the old days.” The captain looked me up and down, and then reached into his main drawer of his desk, pulled out that group photo and handed it to me. He still had it, right there – and this was ten years later!

So I did do some work on the Buchla when I was working for Don the winter of 1967-68. Those were the only really extended sessions on the Buchla I experienced. I remember trying to duplicate the sound of my breathing, and my heartbeat and my nervous system on the Buchla. I thought, if I get that going, maybe I could just leave my body and have it continue operating on these Buchla sounds. I did a lot of chanting on it, and recorded some of my chants. As I said, it was hard for me to differentiate between a “piece” or a “session.” Sometimes it was hard to know where one ended and another began, but I had a lot of fun. Then in early '68, I moved back to Morning Star. My Redwood City friend came to visit, but we were gradually going in different

directions. The police were visiting daily, warning people to leave or they would be arrested. I started sleeping in this little grove of quaking aspen, which was quite hidden. Then one day I went down to a commune in Marin called Olompali, which is now a state park. It was like a weekend hippy resort basically, and we'd become friends with the people there. We had philosophical differences, because they kind of vetted who could stay and who couldn't, which we open-door types did not like. I was there the night the main building burned down, a short circuit somewhere in the old main wiring. I remember the Novato fire chief died of a heart attack on the way to the fire. That was a weird night on many levels. Nobody was hurt, but the little Chihuahua, who had been there forever, he died in the blaze.

Oh, I remember why I've mentioned it. On another overnight visit to Olompali hitching to San Francisco, I met a guy who said he was a psychologist, running a halfway house in Philadelphia along the lines of J. D. Laing's Blowout Center concept that he developed in England. Basically he created a very supportive, permissive environment, letting people really go out on their whatever ... but keeping an eye on them. I told my new friend, "Well, we're running a kind of a blowout center up at Morning Star, you want to come visit?" So he said, "Sure." I hopped in his VW bus and we drove up. Lou wasn't there, but I took him on a walk around the property. It was a weird time, the cops had pretty much cleared the place out except for the real diehards who had no place to go – hard-drinking types, and some weird types. Anyway, we ended up walking out to the orchard, and three guys were camped there. I knew two of them, and we always had been friendly, but when we started walking up to them, they started shouting. One of them was called Tarzan, and had casts on both arms from a knife fight. I forget the name of the other guy. One of them had a revolver, and the other had a linoleum knife, and they had a woman with them named Mama. They came toward us, shouting and screaming. We started backing away – I didn't want to run because I thought the guy with the gun would shoot us in the back. I said, "Take it easy! Take it easy! You know who I am."

Mama got between us, took her blouse off so she was bare-breasted, probably thinking this would calm them down. The guy with the casts, Tarzan, clubbed her with one cast – I found out later he broke her jaw. In the meantime, we started up the trail as fast as we could go. When we reached the center of the land, one of the more stable people on the place – John, who was black, was standing there holding an African spear and looking quite concerned. My friend, the psychiatrist from Philadelphia, jumped in his VW and just lit out of there. I went into the quaking aspen hideout I had – otherwise I had been sleeping in my Chevy van that I was using to block the road into the orchard so we could keep cars out. I slept there all night while Tarzan wandered around shooting off that damn revolver. I decided the Morning Star spirit was telling me to leave, so in the morning I pumped up my tires – I kept the front two tires flatter to level the

van for sleeping. I got out my bicycle pump and, puff-puff-puff, pumped up my tires, got in the van, which hadn't moved for weeks, and coasted down the front drive trying to start the damn thing. It wouldn't start, but when I turned the radio knob off, it fired up.

I drove down to Berkeley to my long-time friend, Shoshanna, with whom I had just spent some time. She had a job with our editor friend of "The Modern Utopian" magazine. He said, "Why don't you two go to New Mexico and write an article on the New Mexico communes? So we did, we took the van and drove to New Mexico. A lot of our Morning Star graduates from 1967 were there after having been arrested and told to leave the county. So we visited a couple of established communes, visited some Morningstarians and then drove back. Actually, I wanted to winter there but Shoshanna didn't. So I returned as far as L.A. with her, sold the van and went to Maui to visit an open commune that I'd heard of called The Banana Patch, which was being run very much along the same lines as Morning Star. It also was in trouble with the building authorities and in trouble with the cops, the whole ball of wax. But it was beautiful – there was a little canyon, and people had built their simple shacks on the canyon sides. There were lots of banana plants and of course that lovely tropical climate. I thought that I was on my way to India. I was thinking, "After hanging out here, I'm going to go to Honolulu and get a job as a cab driver, then make enough money to get to India." I had friends in Honolulu with whom I could stay. So while I'm preparing to do all this, Lou was already in India touring with a group. He went on a junket set up by an East Indian musician, Asok Fakir. He wrote to me and said, "Don't bother coming, I've found our guru, and I'm bringing him to Morning Star!" I said, "Fine, great, wonderful!" I couldn't get it together money-wise anyway.

I came back, and visited Lou. He described how he had met this man at a conference of all religions in Calcutta. He said, "The minute I saw him, we locked gazes and I knew this was he!" His name was Chiranjiva, and Lou sent him a plane ticket to come to the States. Chiranjiva cashed the ticket to pay for some things his family needed – they were pretty impoverished, so Lou sent him another ticket, and finally he did arrive and hitchhiked up from the airport to the commune. We all were really impressed that he hitchhiked. Lou's dream was that Chiranjiva would sit at Morning Star chanting the *Bhagavad Gita* in impeccable Sanskrit, and raise the vibrations above that of the winos and the crazies and police. Well, Chiranjiva lasted about a week. He said, "I didn't come all the way to America to shit in the woods. I can do that in India." He moved to the city with some other followers and established himself in an area of town near the lower Haight. His devotees all found apartments nearby, and Lou finally moved into that scene.

We had held a big party for Chiranjiva at Wheelers, the second ranch, which was really beautiful. Some women had made a wreath out of those Pink Lady lilies for him, but frankly he really was a figment of Lou's somewhat fevered imagination. 'Chee-Chee,' as some called him, did act like a guru, and initiated people into his group. Gradually he married, one by one, about eight of his female disciples, and had babies by about four of them. Plus he had his Bangladeshi wife with him too, so he was a bit of a character. And he talked, and he talked, and he talked. Everybody would get together, get stoned, and listen to him talk, but after four years or so, he suddenly fell silent. He said, "I'm not going to talk anymore." And then another year later, he died. The group he founded was called the Foundation of Revelation and mostly went on without him – centering now on his East Indian wife. The followers gradually moved north, and most now are living up around Sebastopol. But the Morning Star and the Open Land people never got onto Lou's guru trip, and took a dim view of Chee-Chee. I didn't either, for various reasons, one of them being when he got angry at Lou and started referring to him as "that Jewish ape" – and calling Lou's woman partner a very nasty name also. I went with Joan to one of his meetings and we got into a confrontation with him. He ordered us out, and we went out shouting, "God bless Morning Star!" So that was a little side show that occurred but out of that, ultimately, my novel *Zero Weather* evolved, with a psychic terrorist dressed as Santa Claus as the main villain.

Getting back to music, technological advancements over the years altered my compositional style, and even my interests. Curiously enough, the easier it became to make electronic sounds, the less interest I had in them. I don't know why – I really can't explain it. I'm delighted at how easy it's now for young composers to have their own studio at home, a set-up we literally would have killed for in the good old days. The original practical reason for the Tape Center was that Mort and I could not individually afford the kind of equipment necessary then – professional tape recorders and other things – a good mixing board. The same went for Pauline and other composers that used the place. We really had to share to have access, and of course that sharing created the group, and the group then became an entity, and so forth. But I'm delighted that the technology has advanced. It's wonderful what's at the fingertips of young people, but I have no interest in it. I went to one of the Other Minds concerts this year – the first time I've been to an Other Minds in years, I'm embarrassed to say, because Charles Amirkhonian has done avant garde music such a huge favor with that series – and with his many years as music director at KPFA. I went because my old dear friend Joseph Bird (who also dropped out of the music scene many years ago) had a piece on that program. He now is teaching up north at Humboldt State, he told me. It was fun to hear his music, and see him again.

Don Buchla also had a piece on the program, and I wanted to hear that, so I'm glad we went, but in terms of going to concerts a lot, I just don't go. In terms of listening to music, this is terrible to

confess, but I don't really listen to music, and I don't know why. I constantly have tunes in my head, most of them very banal, and I guess I listen to those. When I do listen to music, it's when Judy says, "Oh, such-and-such is on the radio," and I do listen, enjoy it, and I enjoy that she's listening. I don't know what it is, but I guess I've drifted into some sort of happy decrepitude.

What is the electronic music scene today in the Bay Area, compared to the '60s? Well, again, I don't know that much about it. There's the Other Minds group, there's an ongoing series at Taylor and Market, there's a group of concerts starting at Fort Mason next week. Mort Subotnick has something on at 10 PM one night but I'm not going. I don't go to concerts at 10 PM, no matter how much I love someone, but he'll stop by the next day. There's lots of music happening, lots of good stuff. Occasionally I've been hauled out and put on a program – Pamela Z had me on a program some years ago where we did the last piece I did at the Tape Center. I did two pieces called "In the Garden" – one was *In the Garden with Gayatri*, a South Indian singer and performer on what's called a Gotuvadyam, a veena played with a wooden slide cylinder, and then she sings along with it, just gorgeous. I put a little tape behind her of peepers and frogs and stuff, I thought it sounded nice. Then I did a second *In the Garden*, supposedly based on the ejection of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. For that, I had been thinking a lot about Stockhausen saying that rhythm and timbre are the same thing. If you take a rhythm, "bom bo bo bom bo bo bo" and you repeat it over and over and then speed it up, it becomes a timbre. I thought, "Wow I'll play some of my source tapes fast forward, and then I'll key little bursts of them, and it will make interesting, complex sounds." I did that a whole bunch of times, and used those sounds in the beginning of the piece. I called them my 'dinosaur sounds' because they're very shrieky and harsh. Then it all dies down and there's a simple rhythm, "bomp bomp bomp bomp," and two performers come out, backs to the audience with masks on the back of their heads, one playing clarinet (so I could use Mort) and one playing viola (because I used his then-wife Lyn). For the first part, the performers are behind screens synchronizing their playing to the sounds on the tape. I actually made scores by attaching a pen to an audio signal that was being run through a high voltage amplifier that opens and closes a solenoid. The pen would make a little notch as a rhythm score. I gave the rhythm scores to the performers to help them synchronize.

We did it again for Pamela Z. For that performance, we had a friend who just had adopted a little Russian Roma boy who loved to sing, and I said to him, "Would you just improvise in the middle of my piece?" And he did – he came out and sang in the middle of the piece. I loved it – they videotaped it, but I've never been able to get a copy – it must be in their archives somewhere. So that I really liked.

For a third performance some 25+ years later, I couldn't find the original scores – God knows where they went, and I didn't have them for that second performance either. Bill Maginnis helped me duplicate the old set-up, using cash register tape run through an electrocardiograph machine to pull the tape. We recovered the rhythm scores that way, but when it came to

rehearsals, I realized the scores really were not necessary. The performers could just key audibly to the sounds they heard. So that's what they did. But anyway, there's a central section where they come out on stage and improvise in what I call a Middle Eastern mode, and then lie down flat and the piece continues again with many loud, bursting sounds, and then fades away. I liked that piece – a little strange but I liked it. And this last time I wanted visuals for the piece, projecting on both sides of a see-through screen.

With Tony on the telephone, he said, "Break up the square with your hands in front of the projector so it's not just a big square." I had backlit projections that I developed from somewhere. And I had front-lit projections from using Visualizer in iTunes on the Mac. I used that, and I think I irritated everybody because I had to put the whole thing together on site, and they were trying to have rehearsals of other pieces at the same time, but it was okay. What I've realized over time is that I think I'm creating evanescent music focused on one crazy performance and then forget it. It's just too much effort to put it together more than once. So every once and a while I get hauled out to be performed.

The string quartet (violin, viola, cello and string bass) did had two performances, but the instruments had to have contact mics, and I had a special mixer built so that the sounds could go into different parts of a four-speaker system. The score also has a score for the mixing board for moving the sounds. For the middle movement, the instruments have little prepared clips to go on the strings. It's like prepared violin/viola sounds, and little gong-like sounds come out of the instruments. The instrumentalists weren't too happy, they were afraid to hurt their strings. I had to pad them with rubber. I have recordings of both. Charles Boone Moon conducted both – it really needed conducting without rehearsals, but you can hear him counting. A some point I think we could redo those recordings, filter out the frequency of the human voice and get a better result.

The master's thesis piece I did at Mills College was called *What a Wonderful Mother You'll Be*, and it's for six instruments, including harp. The instruments start in different corners of the auditorium, and they gradually come down onto the stage, and then the center door of the stage opens and the harpist is wheeled out in a gorgeous gown. She plays the song, an old tune called *What a Wonderful Mother You'll Be*, but I turned the sheet music and she's reading it upside-down. It also has projections, but I didn't want to get into developing projections for the piece, so I told Tony, "Just give me some outtakes that you don't want, and we'll submit those as the film." So the thing's in the archives at Mills. It had that one reading, unrehearsed, never recorded. I also did another piece, I guess my last year at the Conservatory, for six instruments. For that, I laid heavy paper on the whole floor of my studio with 1-by-3-foot sections and I stood on a ladder and dropped blobs of ink, let them dry, then took them up and with a ruler began transcribing them into music with great accuracy – measuring everything and transcribing in a beautiful hand, if I do say so myself – it looked really gorgeous. There were tempo changes from sheet to sheet. I think I wanted to duplicate what it sounded like walking down the corridor at the Conservatory, hearing all the different people playing. You probably find it now too. I wanted all

the instruments separated, and the tempo modulation from card to card was derived from the new quarter note being some percentage of the older note. If it was played correctly, everybody should finish at the same time. I did one realization of the piece – the piece could be started anywhere in the series of cards. I realized one version of it and scored it out, submitted it to the KPFA Pacifica award that year and won the award, supposedly a free performance and a hundred dollars. I never got the performance! Not only that, the scores were all in a nice leatherette case and the whole package disappeared somewhere in my dropping out. I have the original transparencies for the printouts, and probably the transparencies for the realization too. But again, it would be such a job to put it together. I have really nothing where I can say, “Here’s the score, play it.” Everything I have requires preparation, rehearsals, realization, effort, and I just think, “No, they had their day, bye-bye.”

UPDIKE How do you feel about tape pieces being played for performances?

SENDER I don’t mind my tape pieces being done, especially if they have projections to go with them. I really think tape-only pieces need some visual element, or they’re boring. So I’m out of the scene, I would say, except when I’m resurrected occasionally for some sort of retrospective or something. Then I can happily disappear back to anonymity, my lovely, quiet existence.

[Reading from list of interview questions.] “Thoughts on the future of electronic music?” I answered some of these in an email to you, which I don’t think your new director would want to hear, because I think the future of classical pedagogy and competition is very, very, very different from what it used to be. It’s not going to require the arduous harmony exercises, the arduous counterpoint exercises, training of that sort. More it’s going to be encouraging people to let their imaginations roam. I have a young friend – I have a small group of male friends who now have been meeting Tuesdays at lunch down at the corner here, I call it the Boulange Group. One of them, Sam, is in his twenties, and has done some really interesting electronic stuff. He just got accepted at Mills for the graduate department two days ago, so he’s all excited.

Mort also is ruining traditional pedagogies by producing his “Making Music” DVD series, which just lets a child advance in easy steps through creating his own pieces. My advice for composers today is to just take your discipline in another field, in your chosen instrument. Take a painting, or life-drawing class, something – but not music composition. Let your mind roam freely, your creative juices flow in your chosen media. Of course instrumentalists require years and years of practice and acquiring finger memory to where it all becomes second nature. But even instrumentalists should be encouraged to step out of their traditional performance techniques and improvise freely. As for composers, I don’t think traditional training is required, because for

every year you are trained, you'll have to spend at least a year un-training yourself at some point. I think composition is just a whole other animal.

UPDIKE Do you think it's important for composers to learn the piano...?

SENDER Oh, of course. And I think they should go to museums, go to the ballet, go to art shows, listen to poetry readings like old George Copeland made me do... become educated as an artist but try to keep their minds open at the musical end. So that you can go somewhere like a party that I went to at Yerba Buena Arts Center some years back. There was a reception in the front area, a room that's very long with maybe forty-foot ceilings. A couple hundred people were there all chatting at the same time, and it was a wonderfully rich sound. I wished I had a recording device, because it was just a great sound. You run into sounds like that, and you want to grab them somehow. Poor Riqui dog's moaning at me – that's a great sound.

UPDIKE That is a great sound.

SENDER Pauline is the original, “grab a great sound and run with it” person. She's done such marvelous work with her Deep Listening thing. RPI – Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute recently had the good sense to create a whole Deep Listening Institute. It's such a great entry into meditation. Looking back, I see how each my friends has carved out an area of interest. Mort's done these children DVDs, now a series of three or four. It starts early where the kids are able to paint melodies on their display. Then they can push a button and hear it in pentatonic, and hit the button again and see how it would sound in an Indian raga, or Middle Eastern. In the first DVD you arrange birds on telephone wires instead of notes, and you can start a four-year-old on it. Gradually it becomes a little more complicated, so by the third or fourth DVD you're into sonata form. He makes it all fun – it's going to ruin traditional composition pedagogy because it's all going to be there from the get -go. Thank God – I think it's a great project. Pauline is doing her deep listening workshops and programs. Terry Riley's being Terry – every time he touches that keyboard he takes you out to another dimension. He recently was sponsored to perform on a new massive organ in LA, I don't know if it's a Disney Center, or where it is, but they were inaugurating a new pipe organ and he went down for that. And then Loren, whom I suggest you contact as an retired SFCM faculty member, we had supper with him a week ago – and Monday, his wife called and said he had heart pains, Tuesday he went in for a bypass. Wednesday he sent us a video of himself sitting up in bed. Thursday and Friday ... yesterday, I guess, he was up and cheery. No discomfort, no pain. He's going home.

UPDIKE That's great.

SENDER We're delighted. Out of the blue ... well, not out of the blue, I guess. The fact that he had nitroglycerin tablets in the house must have meant something wasn't right. But these are all my old buddies. Loren got me to Bob Erickson, Bob got me to Pauline and Terry and Loren. That's sort of the way things went. Steve Reich I met by car-pooling with him to our Milhaud seminars as graduate students. We became close friends and frequently interacted as neighbors. I visited him in NYC in 1966 and he turned me onto hatha yoga and pranayama, one of several reasons I have to be very grateful for his friendship. When I went east to New York at the end of '66 to visit mother Julia and my sister, I stayed with Steve. Jon Gibson, the saxophonist, was also staying with him. Steve said, "You should look into hatha yoga and pranayama, so I got on the phone, called Lou at Morning Star and said, "Get into yoga and pranayama!" By the time I got back they were all doing it. So Steve was a big influence – at least, early Steve. Latter Steve, I don't know, I think he got caught up in other things, but he's become a huge name, that's for sure, I wish him all the happiness there is. May all of their dreams come to fruition, and I think that they are. Them's were those days. Also I knew Alden Jenks at that time, because he came to the Tape Center when we started giving workshops on how to use the studio. A person really needed a workshop to figure it out because everything was so lumped together in so many different ways. I liked Alden's work very much, and was so pleased that he went on to join the faculty at SFCM.

Also, this interview would not be complete without a mention of my adorable wife, Judith, with whom I've partnered now for some 30-plus years of what I can only describe as heaven-on-earth. She took my mother Julia's advice and dances around all my eccentricities and, speaking of family, not only did I find a perfect mate but also her loving and warm father, mother and two brothers, all of whom took me to their hearts as family. How did I get so lucky? I think it has to do with my dear sister, Sister Benedicta, praying that I don't go off the deep end four times a day in the Order of St. Helena's chapel. Anyway, I think we've caught up.

UPDIKE Thank you so much, Ramon.

SENDER Oh, you're very welcome. Thank you for sitting through all this.

UPDIKE It's been fascinating, I'm just so glad that you were willing to share your stories and memories for us, it's wonderful.