



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

College Days and Fraternity Times

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Preface

This collection of stories is about my times in the early 1960s at the University of New Mexico and my college fraternity, the Beta Xi chapter of Sigma Chi. Some brief diversions are made to Mexico, but the focus is on my experiences while attending undergraduate college at UNM and my membership in Sigma Chi.

I wrote most of these narratives 15 to 17 years ago and sent them mainly to my fraternity brothers, who were intended to be my primary audience. Since that time, I have had a few requests to resend some of the essays from brothers who had lost or misplaced them.

I made the mistake of placing this correspondence in a faulty in-basket: my aging memory.

My apologies for this procrastination and especially for my losing the correspondence from you.

Our Beta Xi chapter is having a reunion this month (October, 2022). Now is a good time to resend these reminiscences to friends I have known for almost all my adult life.

Most of my fraternity brothers read these musings a long time ago, as I sent them to a distribution list of Beta Xi alums. If they sound too familiar, just ignore them. I promise not to quiz you at our reunion.

I hope a re-reading will re-kindle past, pleasant memories for you. I wrote the stuff and found I had forgotten about many events of those times. I have enjoyed a re-read.

Speaking of the reunion, I have not been able to attend the last two we had, so I have not seen any of you for a long time. It will be a fine experience to witness how none of us has aged.

For the Brothers, currently undergraduates at UNM, thank you for being gracious guests to Holly and me on Saturday, October 22.

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Post script: The reunion (October 21-22, 2022) has passed, and during this time, none of us aging Sigs passed away...or even passed-out. We remained steadfast and relatively upright...thanks to our canes.

A final essay has been added to this collection, describing our latest reunion.

Please pass this to other brothers who did not attend the reunion, or whom you know have not received these pieces. They are also being sent our undergraduate brothers whom Holly and I visited during this reunion.

My email address is in the header of this Preface. I hope to hear from you.

The Zoot Finster Drum and Violin Corps

This is a story of my college fraternity, the Beta Xi chapter of Sigma Chi, making musical history at the University of New Mexico (UNM), located in Albuquerque. The main character in the story is not a person, but a group of people who were my fraternity brothers. We were members of the Zoot Finster Drum and Violin Corps.

Drums and violins? Nothing else? Pretty much. On occasion, a horn blower or two showed up to contribute to the cacophony. Also, a raspa was sometimes put in the mix when the band director, introduced shortly, wished to add percussion sounds to the music. The raspa consists of two sticks. One stick is rubbed back and forth onto another; the latter stick is serrated with small cuts in the wood. About 30 milliseconds are required to learn to play this sophisticated instrument. The band produced unpleasant sounds. That was one of the reasons for its existence.

With minor exceptions, the Corps was an assemblage of non-musicians. One member knew how to play a single piece on a coronet. He could have been a model for Jack Nicholson in the movie *Five Easy Pieces*, with a title alteration of *One Easy Piece*.

The other members of the Corps were assigned a musical instrument in the reverse order of their ability to play it. My musical appliance was the raspa. I started my Corps membership without knowing how to play this complex instrument, but after those 30 milliseconds of intense training and practice, I had it mastered. I graduated to Raspa, First Chair in the Zoot Finster ensemble.

The Corps founder and leader was Jack Norris, a California lad and a saxophone player. When Jack recruited me, I thought he formed the Zoot Finster group with one purpose in mind: nothing. (Jack read a lot of Sartre). However, after our first Corps meeting, which included my raspa lesson, I discovered the reason the band was being formed and why I was one of the chosen few.

According to Jack, the Corps was to perform during halftime at the next UNM football game---a time set aside for the University's homecoming ceremonies. Jack's band had not been selected for the homecoming festivities. At the time, he had no band. I am certain the homecoming committee did not know Jack existed. He displayed the behavior of a low-key, west coast beatnik and was off the radar screen to UNM's aristocracy and committee chair people.

Grand Events. Year-after-year, the half time homecoming ceremonies at my college followed the same script. Standing in front of the student section, the student body president welcomed everyone to the grand event. He then introduced the UNM marching band. The band marched onto the field, executed several grand formations, then played a tribute to the alumni, who were seated on the opposite side of the stadium.

Next, the president announced the arrival of the grand homecoming queen. She came onto the field, accompanied by a thunderous and grand tribute from the band. The climax was the crowning of the queen, again in a grand fashion. Ceremony complete, the band and the queen left the field and the second half of the football game began.

By our senior year, Jack had decided he did not like UNM's homecoming half time activities. What better way to show his contempt than to disrupt the ceremonies? I do not know why Jack decided he did not like homecoming ceremonies or why he decided to organize and lead a peculiar band. I suspect none of the other members of the band knew either. I recall Jack walking into the living room of our Sigma Chi fraternity house a few days before the

homecoming football game and announced he was forming a band that would be dedicated to...well, nothing. Since his vision for the band made little sense, he had an abundance of fraternity brothers who signed-up for Zoot Finster.

But Jack was a discerning leader. The members of the Corps were selected based on three criteria: (a) They could not play a musical instrument, or could play one song or so, (b) They showed disdain for, or indifference to half time homecoming ceremonies, and (c) They did not fear the wrath of UNM's Dean of Men, Howard Mathany.

Regarding these members, the lead (and only) violinist was important because "violin" was part of the Corps name. Jack selected Tom Becker for this assignment. It was a fine choice. Not only did Tom play a phlegmatic tune on the violin, he also behaved phlegmatic-like. His countenance fit his musical ability.

Due to our name, the lead (and only) drummer was also important. Cruz Alderette was selected as the drum player because he liked to bang on things; people for instance. He could also act as our bodyguard. Anyone trying to stop our performance would have to deal with Cruz. On more than one occasion, this good man stood in front of me at political demonstration marches and I knew he was always behind my back.

It was important our Corps display musical and marching ineptitude. Therefore, our first (and only) practice session took place the morning of the homecoming football game. (Later, we had other practices to hone our non-existent skills and add more inept musicians.) Our venue was the yard of the Sigma Chi house, shown in Figure 1. After we were assigned an instrument, Jack lined us up in a marching band formation. The ten members formed two columns and five rows. Because of Jack's leadership skills, in less than one hour we succeeded in nailing-down our marching routine, a tribute to the alumni, and the associated music.

In addition, Jack told us where we would assemble in the stadium, just before halftime. Equally important, Jack provided guidance and advice on how to disassemble after our performance in order to avoid musical critiques from the campus police.



Figure 1. Birthplace and practice yard for the Zoot group.

The selection of music for the performance was based on the repertoire of tunes known to Jack and the coronet player, one of the Sig brothers. Our brother knew only one piece, but he played it well, even stayed on key. Thus, his *one easy piece* was selected for our marching music.

The song was "Guadalajara," a fortunate selection for my raspa accompaniment. Tom's violin? Well, he could not play anyway, so

it made no difference. Jack's saxophone? Being a semi-skilled musician, he claimed "Guadalajara" would sound fine when played on a sax. The other Corps members were neutral about the music for our performance.

Uniforms are important to a band. They contribute to the group's personality and solidarity. Jack rummaged through the fraternity costume locker and selected a yellow, long-sleeved pull-over shirt. What made this uniform distinctive was its red cape. The cape was not one of those impressive cloaks worn by kings, Batman, and Elton John. No more than one or two feet in length, it came to the top of our buttocks.

One other character is added to our plot, Joe Taggart. He was a member of the football team but on the injury list. Joe was assigned the job of relieving the student body president of his duties so Joe could act as our master of ceremonies. The president's responsibility was to stand at the bottom of the student stands, looking up to the crowd and talking about homecoming things.

Because the president was a politician, we thought he would probably put up a feeble physical defense, but if he resisted, Joe was to push him out of the way and take over his job. Joe was well-qualified for his assignment. He could have been the model for one of the *Animal House* animals.

We were ready for the debut of the Zoot Finster Drum and Violin Corps.

Our Grand Performance. Transporting our uniforms and musical instruments *into* the stadium was easy. We tucked the caped shirts under our jackets. The assorted musical pieces were carried into the stadium, but taking no chances, I hid the raspa in my coat pocket. Our main concern was getting the uniforms, instruments, and especially ourselves *out of* the stadium.

As shown in Figure 2, a few minutes before halftime, the Zoot Finster conspirators left their seats in the student section and made their way to the rendezvous spot, behind the track surrounding the field, and near the end of the football field (shown as "Start" in the figure). In those days, barriers and cops were absent from the sidelines of the football field.

To the right of our group, at the end of the field, we saw the UNM Lobo Marching Band, labeled "Band" in Figure 2. Festooned in regal uniforms of silver and cherry, the band stood at

parade rest---but clearly ready for its upcoming parade before the large homecoming crowd.

As the clock ticked-down to the halftime intermission, the student body president walked to the front of the student section, located on the east side of the stadium, shown as "Students" on the right side of Figure 2. With microphone in hand, **His Imminence** was ready to announce the beginning of the **Grand Half Time Ceremonies**.

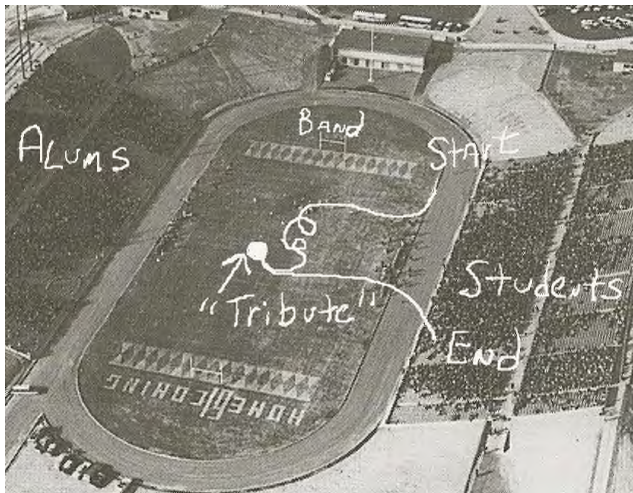


Figure 2. The UNM stadium topology and Zoots' march.

Time! The first half was over. The student body president began the upcoming ceremonies: "Ladies and Gentlemen, respected alumni, fellow students, for your entertainment, the University of...Uh!...Hey!...."

Joe, the proxy president, took over as master of ceremonies. He snatched the microphone from the hands of the startled man, pushed him aside, and announced to the students, “We have a big treat for you today. By special invitation, an acclaimed corps will honor our homecoming ceremonies with their music and marching talent. Let’s all welcome The Zoot Finster Drum and Violin Corps!”

Joe vanished into the crowd, taking the microphone with him.

Before the Lobo band could strike up a chord, we marched onto the field, taking the following route, and executing the following routines (the ill-defined line on the playing field in Figure 2 is a rough trace of our meandering, from the “Start” to the “End”):

- We paraded across the 30-yard line to the middle of the field. The coronet player did his rendition of “Guadalajara,” while the rest of the group created musical bars of unmusicality.
- We executed a pitiable turn to our left and proceeded toward the 50-yard line.
- None of us were in step but our music made up for our marching: It was the ugliest noise I had heard until I attended a Chinese opera.
- Reaching the 50-yard line, we executed a couple of confusing formation stunts, then stopped in front of the alumni section.
- At mid-field, Jack played a tribute to the Alums: initially, a saxophone solo of “Guadalajara.” The solo was then accompanied by Tom on the violin and shown in Figure 2 as “Tribute.”
- It was a pathetic, wonderful scene: thousands of confused people, trying to make out the faint sounds of non-amplified musical instruments, designed to render tunes that were completely contradictory to the song’s famous harmony.

The initial reaction of the crowd in both stands was silence. As we made our way to mid-field and played the short tribute to the alums and non-students, their area on the west side of the stands grew restive. Their mummings steadily increased to a confused volume of low resonance noise. This side of the stadium was flummoxed. In contrast, the students in the east side stands began to catch-on to the joke and soon erupted into applause, whistles, and cheers.

I glanced around the field, looking for the 1961 version of a SWAT squad that would put an end to our farce, but no one lifted a finger. Dean Mathany informed me later that we had fooled everyone. The cops thought we were part of the program. The bandleader would not march the Lobo band onto the field while another band, even though inept, was performing. The homecoming committee was dispersed throughout the stadium. The only person who could have stopped our prank was the student body president, and Joe had taken care of him.

But we were pushing our luck. Jack had us execute our practiced exit from the field: running like hell back to the student section, where we shucked our Captain Marvel capes, and melded into the security of the crowd.

The debut of the Zoot Finster Drum and Violin Corps was a success. Our peers acclaimed us. We had disrupted the halftime ceremonies. Jack had successfully executed his protest against nothing.

Aftermath. In fairness to Jack, I should modify my description of him. He was a rebel but not an anarchist. Today’s anarchist would have blown up the stadium. The prank did no harm. Most people, even many of the alums, later agreed that our stunt was funny. Of course, some individuals were upset: the student body president, the queen, the band, the Campus Police, and--to my chagrin--- the Dean of Men.

Dean Mathany singled me out for grilling because he knew my brothers Ross and Jim, former star athletes at the university. He also knew me and had recognized my stellar performance in the halftime activities. The Monday following our debut, I was called to the Dean's office.

The Dean asked, "What was the point of your stunt? You made a farce of the halftime ceremonies and irritated our alumni."

The defiant but cautious rebel replied, "Dean, I think you just characterized the point of our stunt. It had no point, other than creating a farce."

I had an advantage over the Dean. He taught mathematics and was not disposed to engage in philosophical discussions. I was a psychology major, thus well-equipped for discourses in bullshit.

Dean Mathany placed the halftime situation and our college careers in perspective, "Put it anyway you wish. If your Zoot whatever makes a presence on this campus again, its members will become absent from same."

Point taken. I informed my fellow corps members of my talk with the Dean. We agreed to lie low for a while. Perhaps for the remainder of our college careers? No, heeding Dean Mathaney's warning would have been an intelligent response. We felt compelled to exercise our natural, college student right of poor judgment.

Los Mariachis Farcantes de Zoot Finstero

Our Corps remained dormant for the remainder of the fall and winter. After the Dean's lecture, we had little motive to play "Guadalajara" on the campus. We were not surprised that our debut at homecoming did not bring in invitations to appear in concerts. But as spring came around, we decided one final campus tour of our band would provide a fitting farewell to Zoot Finster. Several of the Corps members (including myself) were due to graduate in June.

UNM reserved a week in the spring for its Fiesta. In theory, Fiesta was meant to celebrate and strengthen UNM's Latin America influence. In reality, Fiesta at UNM meant celebrate, Latin American style.

Fortunately, two members of Zoot Finster were co-chairman for the Fiesta week: our Violin player, Tom, and our drummer, Cruz. The editor of the student newspaper, Mark Acuff, was also a member of Zoot Finster. He could help us in advertising our second performance.

Band leader Jack, the two co-chairmen, and editor Mark devised a plan for our Corps to lead the Fiesta parade, which featured floats and the exalted Fiesta King and Queen. The problem was Dean Mathany's ban of the Corps' presence on the campus. To solve this problem, we decided to alter our name and wear disguises.

We became "Los Mariachis Farcantes de Zoot Finstero." We kept the Captain Marvel capes. After all, we wanted to maintain continuity to our roots. But we added Mexican sombreros to complete our disguise. In our view, Dean Mathany could not accuse us of defying his order. We had assumed a different name and with our sombreros, we had changed our identity.

Fortunately, our music was perfect for the occasion. What could be more fitting to a Latin American fiesta than the song "Guadalajara?"

The week before Fiesta and the parade, Mark wrote a bogus article for the campus paper. His column stated that a famous mariachi band had been hired to lead the Fiesta parade. Mark said the Los Mariachis Farcantes de Zoot Finstero were traveling from Mexico to help UNM celebrate the Fiesta week.

Once again, our Corps was ready for a performance.

On the day of the parade, we enlisted two friends from a sorority to march in front of us with a twenty-feet wide cloth banner. The banner had our name on it---that is, our Mexican name. Decked out in capes, sombreros, violin, raspa, saxophone, drum, and a few other musical instruments, we lined up in front of the floats and the royalty. A respectable crowd had gathered at our assembly area, waiting for the parade to begin.

It was time for the parade to start its trek through the campus. The parade marshal was not only one of the Fiesta chairmen, he was also our violin player. Tom stepped out of our marching formation and announced to the audience, “As you know, we are honored to have Los Mariachis Farcantes de Zoot Finstero come all the way from Mexico to lead the Fiesta parade.”

Talk about obtuse. Tom was not a Mexican. He was not from Mexico. He had just stepped out of the ranks of the supposedly foreign musicians. Come to think of it, the other members of the band did not look much like Mexicans either---except for the drummer, Cruz. A man from the audience shouted to Tom, “You guys aren’t from Mexico. I saw you at homecoming last fall.”

Our disguises had failed us. Jack, once again demonstrating his keen leadership skills, spoke to Tom, “Let’s get this show on the road!”

Without further delay, Tom rejoined our ranks. One of the Sig brothers fired up “Guadalajara” on his coronet; Jack fired up his sax; Tom fired up his violin; Cruz fired up his drum; I fired up my raspa; the others fired up their instruments and off we went.

The scene was as pathetic as the homecoming debacle. Our march through the main part of the campus lasted about 30 minutes. Thankfully, we moved through the streets and encountered different people along the way. Thus, we band members were the only humans subjected to our noise for a sustained period.

I think most of the students and teachers watching our parade meander through the streets knew it was a joke. But not all. One comment we heard from a bystander made the effort even more fun. He stood next to his girlfriend, hand-in-hand, watching us attempt to turn a corner and play music at the same time. Turning to his companion, he said, “God, the band is awful. Our student fees are wasted on those guys.”

That was the end of our Zoot Finster adventure. Interestingly, we never heard from Dean Mathany. Because we did no harm to anyone (especially rich alumni), he probably ignored our performance. The corps made no more appearances and its members drifted off to other walks in life. Most of us matured and came to understand that “social responsibility” meant more than cleaning up after a TGIF party. Jack went on to a successful career in civil engineering, moving back to his homeland in California. He and I lost track of each other for over thirty years.

One more note on the Zoot Finster escapades: The only photograph of the Fiesta parade appearing in the campus newspaper was not the Fiesta King or the Queen. It was the Mexican Zoot Finsters, leading the parade through the campus. Figure 3 shows our motley band, followed by the remainder of the parade. Note that our alias had been exposed. The caption under the photo reveals our true name.



MASS EVACUATION OF CLASSROOMS appears to be occurring as students, via horses, carts, and automobiles of ancient vintage, follow the "pied piper" tune of Zoot Finster's Drum and Violin Corps in Wednesday's Fiesta parade. In other Fiesta activities the finale of the Waterlous' Fiesta presentation, "Big City Splash" is set for 8 p.m. tonight at Johnson gym. (Photo by Marty Eckmann.)

Figure 3. The Zoots on Parade.

Jack's Back

During our college friendship, Jack taught me about jazz music. Before I migrated from Lea County to the sophisticated environment of college, my exposure to jazz was confined to swing orchestras. My brother David introduced me to Broadway musicals and Duke Ellington, but most of my interest was focused on country and western fare. After conversations with Jack, and after listening to his jazz albums, I moved aside some of my Hank Williams records to make room for Monk and Brubeck.

One other aspect of Jack's makeup might be of interest. Jack had a very large nose. It was a good-looking, big nose---not a W.C. Fields, bulbous nose---but a big nose nonetheless. Jack's nose made a significant contribution to his distinctive silhouette.¹ Figure 4 provides an example of Jack's profile, albeit at a skewed angle, taken when Jack was an actor in a skit at one of UNM's fund raising events. His nose was much more pronounced than suggested in this picture.

¹ Jack disagrees with my opinion regarding his "big" nose. He says he just has a little face.



Figure 4. Jack's Profile.

In 1987, my wife and I attended a Wynton Marsalis concert in Orange County, California. We were seated toward the back of the large concert hall of the Orange County Performing Arts Center. During intermission, I glanced around the semi-lit theater. As I moved my eyes toward the curtained stage, I noticed the outline of a man standing in a front row. His profile could have belonged to only one man: the Zoot Finster Drum and Violin Corps leader, Jack Norris.

Without a word to my wife, I hurriedly walked down to the man and asked, "Excuse me, are you *the* Jack Norris?"

Jack responded, "I am *a* Jack Norris. Maybe not *the*, but *a*." Jack was being his usual Sartre self.

I queried, "But are you *the* Jack Norris of the Zoot Finster Drum and Violin Corps? If so, I am your humble raspa player, U.D. Black."

Jack was astonished by my sudden appearance, but true to his nature, nonplussed, "U.D.! Fantastic! By the way, I'm thinking of starting Zoot Finster again---west coast style. How are you on the tambourines?"

The Yearbook¹

Let's pretend you are an alumnus of a respected state university. You also are a parent. In pursuing your vocation, you produce a lot of money. In pursuing your avocation, you produce a lot of children. You contribute a lot of your money to your college alma mater. You are considering enrolling your children to the same institution.

It is time for one of your daughters to select the educational institution where she will spend her next few years. The choice for her college will have a profound effect on her future and your pocketbook.

Before you make your final choice on your daughter's college, you decide to catch-up on what is going on at your old school. So, you pick-up some recent yearbooks to reminisce about your collegiate days. As you thumb-through one of these books, you glance at its front pages, and see attractive, appealing images, such as the ocean and sun scene, shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Front part of the yearbook.

¹ To protect the privacy of individuals who appear in this story, I have substituted their names with my own inventions and changed the name of the university involved. I have retained the names of the fraternities and sororities in order to preserve the flavor of some of the key parts of the yearbook's descriptions. I have blocked out the faces of students who appear in the pictures in the yearbook and in this story. I suspect some of these people do not care if they are known and associated with incidents that happened over sixty years ago. Of course, some readers will know the name of the school, and the associated people in the story. For this case, it matters not if I use pseudo-IDs. The people and the university are already known.

I wish also to emphasize at the onset of this story that many students at this institution consumed alcohol sparingly or not at all. This story is set around college partying and drinking, so it may appear that I lump all the students into the category of drinkers. Of course, like society in general, this school had drinkers, heavy-drinkers, non-drinkers, and those in between.

This picture is accompanied with the following verse:

Orange mass of flames introducing night
you humble me in silent recognition of
all you take away.

In bold descendance you leave your usurer
a shroud of dusk, with which to
mourn your absence.

Cool and impressive words and images. The first part of this yearbook is replete with beautiful photography and thoughtful, inspirational ideas. You continue looking at the front matter and another image catches your attention. It is shown in Figure 2 and is accompanied with the verse beneath the figure.



Figure 2. Another image in the front part of the yearbook.

Poised like a golden stallion out upon
The brink of space, proud master of the dawn,
Our Sun is god-fire to his planets---Earth
And all the rest. Yet his must seem small worth
Among the myriad million suns and stars
Racing infinity beyond unmeasured bars
Of time and space. From atom back to spear,
So must it be with man: on his small sphere
Creation's lord, creation's boast and pride---
Yet but a bubble on the cosmic tide.

So far, your alma mater appears to be a place worthy of your daughter's presence. You then glance at other parts of the yearbook and come across the athletic section. You are

introduced to the year's football season with the picture in Figure 3 depicting the student section of the football stadium, taken after the conclusion of the game.



Figure 3. Opening page in the football section.

I leave it to you how you would react to the booze bottles scene. You might think it funny, or you might be shocked. You might not care one way or the other. Whatever your reaction might be, let's carry through with our pretending game and your intention to send your daughter to your former school. You continue the examination of the yearbook. As you peruse it, you encounter the photograph in Figure 4. It is the cover page for the honorary section of the yearbook. This section is devoted to student organizations committed to academic excellence, community service, and other noble endeavors.



Figure 4. Introduction to yearbook Honorary Section.

This figure is accompanied with the following dialogue between the boy and girl.

He: "You can't wear a letter sweater unless you've made the team."

She: "Well!"

Leaving our pretending game for a moment, as a student at this university in the early 1960s, which I call OLD U in this story, I thought the photos were funny. They were also iconoclastic, an attitude exhibited by many young college kids during those times.

However, the OLD U officials and many of other grownups (alumni and parents) did not see any humor in the photos shown in Figures 3 and 4. Some were upset with this yearbook and

the people responsible for its creation and publication. In fact, OLD U administrators attempted to stop the mailing of the yearbook to those who had not yet received it. I do not know how successful they were in their attempts. My friends and I received the book via the U.S. Mail during the summer of 1961, and spent many days laughing at its off-beat jokes and pictures.

Later, we learned this yearbook was altered by its editor after it had been approved by the university officials. She then mailed her revised master copy to the printers, who printed and mailed it directly to all people on a mailing list. Thus, students, alumni, and OLD U officials received the yearbook at approximately the same time.

Let's return to our pretending game and show another illustration from this yearbook---to test the hypothetical father's loyalty to his alma mater. Figure 5 shows one of several cartoons in the book. This pictorial commentary is an editorial on the drinking habits of the alumni of the school.

As an alum, I might take umbrage with this cartoon, but as a student who observes the behavior of the alums (and others) at football games, I might laugh along with it. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to say that this cartoon would not pass muster in any conventional yearbook representing a school that relies on alumni donations.



Figure 5. A comment on alums' drinking habits.

Other Yearbook Gems

As stated, this yearbook caused a furor to many OLD U administrators and teachers, as well as alumni and parents. One of my classmates, with whom I spoke for the first time in many years as I worked on this essay, told me he and his friends still talk about the book. He added his opinion: It was a masterpiece!

As mentioned, a number of pages in the yearbook contained pictures and text on the subjects of sex, heavy drinking, and associated college parties. Listed below are a few more examples of the theme of many parts of the book.

- A full page contains four pictures of a popular female student. All photos show her involved in some hard partying. In one of the photos, she is laying a passionate kiss on her date. The text for the page is, "Jane Doe gets around---no wonder she got Who's Who."
- Another full page contains five pictures of a popular male student, who is also doing some hard partying. The caption for the page is, "All John Doe made was Pi Phi's. ...actually, I think one of the five was a Kappa."
- A picture of a couple at a party with the notation, "Judy Doe got what she wanted---a husband."

- A picture of three drunk students in tuxes and evening gowns titled with, “The matured students.”
- Another party picture with the caption, “John, please stop popping my bra.”
- Yet another party photo with, “I dreamed I attended a Pike party in my MAIDENFORM bra.”
- A scene of a large party group of (mostly) SAEs. One male (a Sigma Chi) has his arms around another male (an SAE). The accompanying caption reads, “Find the queer Sig.”²

We know how the yearbook make it through OLD U’s censor scissors, recounted earlier, but this knowledge does not answer the question of why the editor changed the material after it was reviewed and approved? I am not certain anyone other than the yearbook editor knows the entire story. I know parts of it and to write this story, I have talked with others who know other parts. I have not been able to locate the editor, whom I call Mary in this story. I do not attempt to fill-in gaps in the factual story with suppositions, although I will offer some opinions.

In order to tell you more about the yearbook, we need to reconstruct the social setting at the OLD U college campus in the 1960s. To that end, let’s revisit several events that took place in 1961 at this school, a state supported institution located in the southwestern United States.

The Klondike

The Klondike party at the Sigma Chi fraternity house, located on the campus of OLD U, was one of the best parties of the school year. It was so popular that even the wimpy, ugly Sigs could easily get a date for the affair. Equally impressive, the chaperones, usually faculty members, were pleased to be designated (invited) to oversee the party. They knew it was a fun event and the decorations of the Sig house, as well as the costumes of the Sigs and our dates, made for an entertaining evening.

The girls wore old-time saloon girl dresses. We boys dressed up as miners, sometimes as gamblers, and occasionally as bartenders. Many of us put on Levis, a western hat, and cowboy boots to complete our Klondike apparel. Figure 6 shows a typical Klondike party crowd.

The Sigma Chi House basement was the venue for the party. It was decorated to resemble mine shafts and chambers. The main room of about 70 by 40 feet (with a stage for a (county) band) underwent two major alterations: (1) The floor was covered with sawdust, which is evident in Figure 6, and (2) the wall and ceilings were covered with brown burlap bags and crepe paper. After we added diffused, indirect lighting to this setting, the room took-on the look of a dimly-lit subterranean antechamber...one emitting odors of flaxen sacks and sawdust---and later in the evening: sweat, smoke, perfume, and booze.

This room was connected to a hall leading to other parts of the basement. The part that is of interest to this story is the library. It was located at the opposite end of the fraternity house from the party room. These two rooms were connected by a hallway spanning about 80 feet between them. The hallway was also decorated with sawdust, burlap bags, and indirect lighting. An entrance to this hallway from stairs at the back of the house provided the entryway to the mine and the Klondike party.

² No one was immune to the jokes in this yearbook, including your writer. I was the (gay) Sig in that picture, involved in a *manly* hug with one of my SAE friends. In my macho defense, I am a gay person but I am not gay.



Figure 6. Klondike party revelers.

College Partying

I suspect that many of the college parties of the 1960s were no different than they are today. I cannot speak with authority on this subject because, as a member of the senior citizen generation, I am far removed from the college scene. But the reports I read in news magazines, and the stories I hear from younger men and women lead me to conclude that many of these parties are focused on heavy drinking.

Regarding my era, I have several pictures of parties I attended while a college student, such as Figure 6. The scenes in the photos depict fun affairs and are populated with a substantial number of people who appear to have been imbibing. With few exceptions, the atmosphere was one of harmless fun. Also, I should point out that I am not writing about college drinking from a righteous soapbox. I was as bacchanalian as any of my class mates.

Anyway, if college students, fraternity and sorority members, and faculty adhered to OLD U rules, no alcohol would have been served in a dormitory or a fraternity/sorority house. Open drinking was rare because a student could get into trouble if caught consuming alcoholic beverages on the campus. But surreptitious drinking in college dorms and fraternity houses was as common as skipping Friday afternoon classes.

However, the secret consumption of alcohol presented one problem for some of the students: The operation took too long to get drunk. Oh sure, a sip here, a sip there was sufficient for short-hitters (those who became inebriated with small amounts of alcohol). But for the long-hitters---those students who had hollow legs, stomachs, and livers---covert drinking was too confining to a boy's goal of getting himself and his date high before his date's curfew forced the couple to part ways for the evening.

For some of the male students, the goal was *not* to drink away the entire evening. Rather, the goal was to leave enough time in the evening---before the female curfew deadline expired---for the male student to vent his stored-up testosterone and test his emerging sexual skills.

A caveat to assuage the politically correct: Cutting some slack to the subjects of this story, sex may not have been the primary goal for the evening. But I wager most students of those times will confirm that a little foreplay, perhaps sex, was on a list of desirable possibilities. This claim includes males *and* females. After all, human nature is indeed human and interest in sex is a two-way street.

As mentioned, the rule against on-campus drinking handicapped those students who wished to handicap themselves with alcohol for most of the evening. The rule also handicapped

the moderate drinkers, who wished to have a drink or two without fear of being kicked out of school.

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. Therefore, the long-hitter and short-hitter party populations joined forces and invented the *Off-Campus Cocktail Party*. Great! No secret sipping behind doors or in dark corners of a party room on campus. Instead, open drinking was the protocol.

The off-campus parties took place at rented hotel banquet rooms or fraternal order lodges---usually located close to the campus. During the brief visit to these imbibing sanctuaries, gulps, guzzles, and swigs of alcohol ruled the day---well, actually the early evening---before the students returned to campus fraternity houses, and for this story, the location of the Klondike party.

Getting Ready for the Party. Our pre-party party was held at an often-used fraternal order lodge, located about a mile or so from the Sigma Chi house. I am certain the beverage choice for this party led to the events I am about to recount to you. The Klondike party chairman selected an innocuous fruit punch, *but* it was spiked with grain alcohol. Grain alcohol is approximately 140 proof (a 70 percent content of alcohol), making it almost twice as strong as conventional liquor.³ In addition, it is almost tasteless and is devoid of any bitterness---which makes it dangerous to drink. I have not touched this stuff since my college days but I recall the alcohol in the mixture was very difficult to detect when mixed with fruit punch. An unwary short-hitter could get into a lot of trouble by drinking a small portion of this perilous concoction.

So, the pre-party party set the stage for the main event of the evening: the Klondike party. We Klondikers took in the festivities at the fraternal order lodge---well named, as we were being quite fraternal---then headed for the Sig house for more Faustian revelry and hedonistic experiences.

Discovery. In trying to recollect the events of that evening, I remember that the trouble began toward the end of the party, but the atmosphere that night was more raucous than most Klondike affairs. For example, one of the chaperones was knocked-down by an inebriated fraternity brother who resented the chaperon's intrusion into an argument between his wife and him. Apparently, the brother thought the marital spat should remain marital.

Fraternity parties had to end by midnight, so time was nearing for closing the festivities, and taking our dates to their dorms or sororities. My date and I were clear-headed. Any booze we consumed earlier had been dissipated by two or three hours of dancing through piles of sawdust. It so happened that we were Texas Two-Stepping near the hallway entrance leading to the back of the basement---the library---when all hell broke loose.

A pledge (a potential member of the fraternity) staggered into the room from the hallway. He was crying and moaning, because he had been physically assaulted. Blood was streaming from the top of his head, flowing down his face onto his chest. He muttered between sobs that he had been attacked by someone in the library.

Several of us took the injured pledge aside, trying to help him, and at the same time asking, "What happened? What's going on?"

His response was, *He was walking through the library (which was pitch black) and he tripped on someone who was lying on the floor. He fell to the floor and was slugged by this person. He tried to get away, but fell once more, and was hit again.*

³ My research into grain alcohol reveals that the amount of alcohol in the drink varies, depending on who makes it.

He finally made it out of the library, through the hallway to the main party room, where we discovered him as he made his dramatic entrance.

Shortly thereafter, that “someone” emerged from the darkened hallway. The assailant was another pledge, a boy who played on the OLD U football team but was sidelined with an injury. He was almost comatose from drunkenness and appeared to be very confused.

My date (her name is Jane for this story) recognized the assailant was the date of one of her sorority sisters, Mary (the editor of the yearbook). She immediately sensed what had happened and started running back to the library. I had no clue why she was headed toward that part of the basement, but I followed her down the dark hallway to the even darker library. There, we turned-on the lights and found Mary, lying on the floor, eyes closed, seemingly unconscious, and partially clothed. I saw her for only a few seconds but I knew she was, to use the phrase of those times, “out of it.” It was clear, even at my brief glance, that she had been assaulted.

Jane ordered me out of the room, as well as a few others who had followed us back through the hallway. We left and I shut the door to the library, thus providing a brief sanctuary for Mary.

After a few minutes, Jane and Mary emerged from the library. Walking through a stunned party crowd Jane, Mary, and I headed for the exit, and drove Mary back to her sorority house. Amid confusion, the Klondike party came to a quiet and sudden halt.

Aftermath

Mary: the unwary victim of grain alcohol, spiked drinks, and a drunk escort. A girl who became a sexual victim to her hapless date.

Her assailant: perhaps also unwary of the alcohol, yet abetted by a prodigious infusion of it. A boy who became a sexual predator to his helpless date.

Do not mistake my sentiments. I am not handing out sympathy chits to this boy. But I think it important to acknowledge that getting girls drunk and then trying to seduce them was an accepted mode of behavior among some college males in the 1960s. This behavior has begun to see changes recently, but the female continues to be on the brunt end of male sexual predation.

To keep a balance to this story, much of the college drinking in those days (and I think today, as well) was for fun, with no intention of exploiting another person for sexual favors. In addition, many of the college students of the early 1960s were experimenting with liquor for the first time in their lives. Without question, a lot of kids drank too much, but without any overt sexual motivations.

I recall the discussions about the assaults around our fraternity house (and the campus, as news of the attacks leaked out). There were comments of surprise and regret, as well as jokes and scorns. The opinion and sentiment toward Mary and the two pledges were mixed. Some people expressed concern for Mary. Others said that she got what she wanted---she was just too drunk to enjoy it. Inherent in some of those comments was the opinion that Mary was a willing party to the act.

The assaulting pledge was asked to give up his pledge pin and leave the fraternity. The assaulted pledge who stumbled onto the scene was a figure of sympathy to some of the fraternity brothers. He was mocked by others. They joked that he was probably trying to get in on some action himself. Other brothers uttered words to the effect of, “There but for the grace of dumb good luck, go I.”

I remember that an overriding concern around the fraternity living room the next day was the possibility of our fraternity being subject to litigation, and/or being put on social probation: What was Mary going to do? What was the Dean of Men going to do?

It was not a proud time for some college kids at OLD U. A girl had likely been raped at one of our parties, marched through our fraternity house in a drunken, disheveled condition, humiliated by the inference (among both males and females) that she was equally culpable in the affair---and we were worried about our ability to have a party next week.

But it is important to this story to avoid revisionism and to stay away from retrospective blame. No one with an intact synapse in their minds would have wished for this event to take place and the harm it did to Mary. And in retrospect, I believe no fraternity brother would have wished further misery to be placed on Mary. I recall our fraternity wanted to try to “make things right” for Mary.

Notwithstanding this noble sentiment, who was responsible for the debacle? Who was indeed culpable? Was it the fraternity and all its members? Or was it the pledge alone? Was it also Mary? As I said, some people thought Mary should be part of the blame game.

Based on what I saw that night, I disagree with the latter presumption. If any reader who was part of this affair in 1961 disagrees with me, I hope you challenge me on this part of the story. Until I learn otherwise, my opinion is that Mary was an innocent victim.

In hindsight, I think the fraternity itself had to assume the responsibility for the fiasco. Granted, we could not control the sexual urges and behavior of the pledge, but our party’s punch led to Mary and her date becoming incoherently drunk---which led to the attack on Mary and the assault of the other pledge. And granted again, we did not hold a cup to Mary’s lips. She voluntarily drank the punch.

I admit that I have trouble placing the blame on my fraternity because this stand is contrary to my own values. I believe each of us is responsible for our own behavior. In the final analysis, the buck stops at our door, not the door of someone else. Nonetheless, I do not know if this pledge knew the nature of the punch he was drinking---nor did Mary.

But this I have come to know. Male sexual predation on a female is still so common and prevalent that it takes several decades for woman to muster the courage to go public against an authoritative male sexual predator.⁴

Facing the Music and Mary. Following the weekend of the Klondike party disaster, chapter officers were called before the Dean of Men to discuss the events of that evening. The fraternity president and I also went to Mary’s residence at her sorority house to talk with her. I don’t remember why I was selected for this trek. I suspect it was because of my peripheral participation in the events of that night.

But I do recall the conversation Bob (a pseudonym for our “president”) and I had as we walked over to Mary’s residence. I also recall our conversation with Mary.

Bob and I were somewhat at a loss as to how we would approach Mary. I say somewhat. We knew what we were to do, we just did not know how to do it. The charter from our chapter was clear: (a) offer our apologies for the behavior of one of our (ex) pledges, and (b) exercise

⁴ I wrote this essay in 2007. This paragraph was added in 2017. Even the most nonchalant of us males cannot ignore the sexual, hubristic arrogance of Harvey Weinstein, Roger Ailes, Bill O’Reilly, Bill Crosby, and others. I read that some of these men are counter-suing for the injustices that have placed upon them. I read about false female claims of sexual exploitation. All that said, I cannot dismiss the corroborated claims of hundreds of women.

damage control---try to assuage Mary in the hopes that she would let the sad matter pass, without taking legal action.

I remember one of Bob's questions to me as we made our way to Mary, "U.D., what can we say?"

I replied, "Bob, I just don't know."

But Bob, who was an empathetic and intelligent boy, responded, "Well, let's start by saying we are very sorry."

Yep, a good start, to be sure.

Mary was quiet during the first part of our meeting. Bob and I did most of the talking, spouting forth the chapter's contrition and explaining we had purged the pledge from our ranks.

Mary then responded with a question, *What was in the punch?*

A perceptive question. Our approach to Mary at this point was: While our chapter was regretful about the calamitous events of the evening, we had de-pledged the pledge---the source of Mary's misery.

Mary had turned the cards.

She proceeded to tell us she had little to drink that night. She said the punch's taste seemed to indicate that it contained little alcohol, and that she was not much for alcohol anyway. She stated that, prior to the Klondike Party, she had never been drunk.

Wonderful. A fine night for our fraternity. Mary had been christened that evening in more ways than one.

We told her about the grain alcohol mixture and her response was that she had little recollection of the events later in the evening. Shortly after leaving the fraternal lodge and arriving at the party, she came to understand that she was very drunk, but was too drunk to do anything about it. Thereafter, she said she, "blacked out."

Bob and I asked Mary about her plans. She replied that she had none. She informed us she wanted to put the matter behind her and move on.

With both of us in a deep state of funk about our meeting with Mary, coupled with a feeling of relief, we returned to our fraternity house.

"Getting into Her Pants"⁵ I, like most males on this earth, have been culturally and genetically commissioned to procreate. That is a part of our DNA that remains intact from centuries of evolution. For modern times, for college parties, it cannot be accomplished if the boy does not get into the pants of the girl.

"How'd you do last night?"

"Got into her pants!"

"Any more?"

"Not this time. Some more booze the next time, and I'll get a score."

It turned out that Mary took no actions against her attacker or our fraternity. The Sig chapter was put on probation by the Dean of Men. It was a four-week restriction which forbade our having any chapter-sponsored parties.⁶ The social sentence meant little, because the serious party animals in our fraternity could easily find other entertainment outlets around the campus and city.

⁵ This section is also an addition to my original 2007 essay.

⁶ I had forgotten about this punishment until one of my fraternity brothers recently refreshed my memory. One of our brothers, who happened to answer the phone at the fraternity house, received this news from the Dean of Men.

As the spring began its turn to summer, and as the school year began to wind-down, the Klondike Party and Mary story receded into low resonance hearsay and innuendo. Most of the students on campus did not know what happened that night, so if knowledge is lacking about an event...make something up. Before long, the rumor mill had created fantastic scenarios for that evening, many of them at the expense of Mary. Again, in fairness, Mary had also become a figure of sympathy, but it was almost axiomatic in those days that a rape victim was viewed not just as a victim, but as a participant.

Mary was in her sophomore year at OLD U in 1961. She did not return the next year. The rumor mill had her (a) banned from her sorority, (b) banned from OLD U, (c) attending college somewhere in the Midwest, (e) banned from neither her sorority or school, but choosing to dropout of academia, (f) living in Venice, California with the emerging hippies...on and on.

My investigative skills leave a lot to be desired. I have not found Mary, Bob, or Mary's yearbook colleagues. I spoke with some of Mary's sorority sisters but none would or could recall what actions, if any, this institution took. I could not find any record of Mary in the OLD U alumni data bases or any for her yearbook staff.

I was told by several OLD U alums that they recall Mary being treated harshly by her sorority, to the point where she decided to resign her active membership. As I said before, OLD U's rumor mill made Mary a famous and infamous person on campus. I suspect she did not want to deal with this aspect of college life and chose not to complete her degree at this university.

All conjecture of course. As to my opinion (and many others) about why Mary altered the yearbook after it was approved by the OLD U administration. I believe she did it for revenge.

If so, I hope that someday, somewhere, Mary will read this story. I hope she reads this sentence: If revenge was your motive, you were very successful. Your revenge was brilliant and justified.

More Pictures and Captions from the Yearbook

We conclude this story with a few more specimens from the yearbook. As you will see, these cartoons, pictures, and captions offer satire as well as political and social comment. They are shown in this section with a short explanation of each illustration, and a few more comments from this writer.

Figure 7 illustrates the yearbook editor's opinion on the OLD U students' intellectual grit.

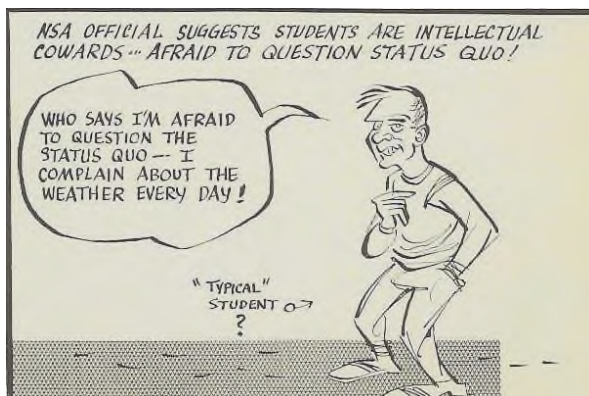


Figure 7. Student lethargy.

Figure 8 is a picture in the law section of the yearbook.



Figure 8. Here comes d' judge!

Figure 9 depicts left-handed salutes from an ROTC unit.



Figure 9. To the left....salute!

Figure 10 is a picture from the pre-med section of the yearbook. Is it funny? It depends on the nature of your funny bone. I find it irreverent and humorous, but I am not certain if AMA members would share my view.

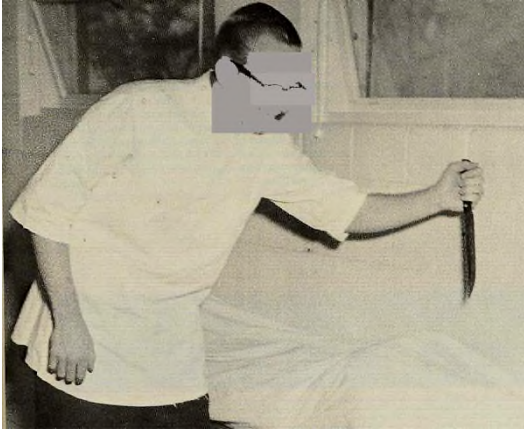


Figure 10. It will only hurt for a little while.

Figure 11 is picture from the nursing section. I am told by one of my OLD U classmates that this pose was based on a closing scene of a British film made around the same time that the yearbook was published. My friend said, "...and it was on the edge for its time!" I guess so. I am not certain what the nurse is up to. Perhaps Mary wanted to leave its interpretation to our imagination.



Figure 11. Medical treatment?

To finish this story, we return to our pretending game, with you as the hypothetical alumnus and parent. Based on the episodes recounted in this essay, would you send your child to OLD U? Would you continue your alumnus' ties to this institution? Of great importance to OLD U, would you continue sending in your annual alumnus contribution check?

My thanks to those who shared their information and opinions with me about this story. I look forward to other thoughts you may have about these events.

One Hell of a Week

Night One¹

The first indication the upcoming days and nights were going to be something he had never experienced was the cloth wrapped around his head and eyes. Thus blind-folded, he was led into an unknown area of the building he had just entered. Walking through it in the blind had a disorienting effect and one of dizziness. He had not walked blind-folded since he was a child, playing blind man's bluff. He had trouble keeping his balance and stumbled more than once as he was led to his unknown destination.

Of course, disorientation and loss of motor skill confidence was one of the reasons he was blind-folded. As well, his tormentors did not want him to know about his surroundings. He was to be kept in the dark physically and mentally.

After a while, he began to detect coughs, belches, farts, and sighs around him. He sensed he was with some of his comrades, men he had come to know and respect over the past few months. Like him they were also blind-folded. None of them was not allowed to talk, unless spoken to. They were instructed to make no voluntary sounds. To do so would result in severe penalties.

He was not allowed to ask questions of his tormentors, nor request water, food, or a smoke. He was given permission to relieve himself at a nearby toilet. Logically enough, his tormentors did not wish to contend with their subjects' bodily offals. Only inside the toilet stall could he remove the blind-fold and gain a sense of visual relief...but only of the gray sidings that surrounded his momentary sanctuary---nothing else.

After his toilet was completed, he was blind-folded once again and led back to a wood chair.

The chair. He came to hate the chair as much as he hated the blind-fold. On that first night, the chair became his vertical bed. But a peaceful sleep, horizontal dreaming, was out of the question. He spent most of the night sitting on the edge of the chair with his hands placed on his knees. Increasingly, as lactic acid built-up in his muscles, his back, chest, neck, and arm began to cramp. Once, he leaned back momentarily to discover the chair had a back! For a few seconds, he was in ecstasy. His aching muscles had gained a brief respite from the accelerating exhaustion of his mind and body. But a tormentor quickly discovered his languid pose and shouted at him to move back to his former upright posture.

Thus positioned, he found himself living a vertical nightmare. But a nightmare without sleep. In his youth, he had dreaded occasional nightmares---those excursions into life's irrational riddles. But on this night, and the nights that followed, he would welcome one of those earlier journeys with open arms.

Any slight hint he was napping---the relaxing of this back and arms, the nodding of his head---brought forth a shattering noise a few inches from one of his ears, as a tormentor struck two pieces of wood or metal together. The sudden cacophony startled him back into the miserable world of fatigue and sleep-deprivation. With the terse command of, "Stay awake!" he drifted into and out of a netherworld of semiconsciousness.

The night was not confined to painful sleep-deprivation. After he had been blind-folded and sitting on the chair for several hours, a tormentor tapped his shoulder and told him to stand. He was then led into a room of interrogators. Their job was to question him, to test him, perhaps

¹ For the purpose of keeping this story brief, certain events, spanning over almost a week, have been encapsulated into fewer days and nights.

to break his will. Their job was also to convince him he was less than worthy than his interrogators.

His brief walk from the chair to the interrogation room was a promenade of rapture. No more pain! His upper body relaxed as the lactic acid receded from the muscle tissue. He was starting to feel like his “old self,” but the recess was short-lived. In less than one minute, his venue had changed but his woe remained the same.

After being seated on the edge of another wood chair, his face was forced into one end of a black box. A black cloth was placed over his head and the small opening in the box, which prevented him from casting a side-glance into the room. Next, the blind-fold was removed.

The sudden sensation of a bright, white light at the end of the box sent a flash of pain into his eyes. He closed them for a few seconds until one of the interrogators informed him that closed eyes was not an option. Thus thwarted, he opened his eyes and awaited the interrogators’ harangues and other intimidations.

The assaults began in the form of smoke. Thick effusions of noxious clouds were blown into the closed box---all without ventilation. In a few seconds, he was choking and his eyes were watering. Gasping for air, he once again tried to close his eyes, but to no avail. A small opening in the box allowed the interrogators to watch his face. They shouted, “Keep your eyes open!”

He had no idea of time. It could have been midnight; it might have been dawn. He was not allowed to check for the sun, or for that matter, the moon. Now, all he could see was a blinding white light. All he could smell was painted wood and smoke. All he could hear was the interrogators’ questions and diatribes:

“Who are you?”

” I am...”

“Bullshit! We know who you are.”

What are you?

“I am...”

“Bull shit! We know what you are.”

Smoke, white light, more lactic acid. Endless stupid questions with two goals: to torment him; to break him. ...Okay, three: to piss him off.

After the interrogation, he was led back to a room where he was given the luxury of a short nap. Heaven on Earth!...at least for a short period.

Day One

Considering his condition, morning came much earlier than morning had a right to. Aroused by his tormentors before dawn, he spent the entire day performing physical tasks inside the building (painting, mopping, cleaning bathrooms), or maintaining his composure as he was insulted, questioned, and humiliated by his tormentors.

During this day he could see some of his comrades going about their chores and enduring the rituals of harassment from the tormentors. He could not talk to them; he was not supposed to look at them. Any violation of the rules brought forth curses and shouts and the soon-to-be despised sit-ups.

Sit-ups. A seemingly harmless way to exercise. But vast gaps of time were spent on the floor of the building doing sit-ups. In the tormentor’s mind, and soon in the mind of the tormented, nothing succeeds like excessive use of...well, almost anything. It could have been running, chin-ups, squats, or whatever. The tormentors chose sit-ups. Hundreds of them and extending into days, thousands. His stomach and pelvic area began to rebel as each pull of the

head and shoulders brought forth sensations of muscular torment he had never experienced in his athletic days.

The tormentors wanted nothing from him except to make his life miserable.

During his waking moments, the subject was always watched. Apart from his trips to the toilet, he had no free time. Nonetheless, the day had been a vacation. He sensed his second night was going to be more of the same of the first night. And it was, but only worse.

Night Two

Suffering from lack of sleep, operating with an abdomen that had scores of muscle tears, he was sometimes puzzled by the mockeries of his tormentors. But just as often, he was amused by their hackneyed Sophomoric stunts.

He prepared himself for another night on the chair and the interrogation room.

More of the same---with two exceptions. The first, a soft-voiced query from a tormentor, "Are you ok?"

"Yes, I am." He had a friend in the mist of his tormentors, someone keeping an eye out for him. His morale was boosted. A friend among the enemy!

The second exception pertained to the proceedings in the interrogation room. They focused on the tormentors' spiritual and religious credos and the questioning of his own. He was taken aback by these questions. He had not expected them from his tormentors, as they seemed out of place.

Day Two

More of the same: work, degradation, and sit-ups. With one exception. Until now, he and his fellow mates of these misfortunes had been given sufficient food to keep them going. The tormentors were smart at their jobs and they knew their subjects needed a lot of calories for their rigorous schedules.

Not today. For all the meals, they were not allowed to finish their eating. On the supposed occasions of breakfast, lunch, and dinner some were required to smash their faces into their food. The only food they were allowed to consume was the debris of gook that had clung to their faces as they lifted their heads from their plates.

He approached night three with customary dread and the new sensation of hunger. His physical strength was sapping a bit. Sleep deprivation, sit-ups, and the lack of food were taking away his stamina.

Night Three

The first part of the evening was spent blind-folded on the chair, followed by interrogations---more of the same until later in the evening. At some unknown time, the subjects were taken into another part of the building---a general assembly room. Here, their blind-folds were removed. Sitting and standing before them were their tormentors; as before, shouting obscenities and mocking them.

Suddenly, one of the tormentors ordered all subjects to strip-off their outer clothes, leaving some of his comrades in underwear and some---who preferred an *au natural* approach to undergarments---naked. The garments were taken from him, and he and his comrades were led into a small room in the building

The door was closed behind them. A dim light in the room revealed they were in a boiler room, with the boiler going at full-speed. Shortly, the room became hotter and more humid.

Compounding their discomfort was the growing odor of foul-smelling bodies, now soaked in sweat and turning red from the heat of the boiler.

The room was not large enough to hold the subjects comfortably and they had to tolerate each other's physical appendages. He became dizzy from the heat and humidity, and one of his comrades collapsed---dead tired and used-up. The fainting of their comrade brought forth shouts and the pounding of the door by the subjects. Two tormentors appeared and removed the comatose comrade.

Finally, the door was opened, bringing in a rush of cool air. Fantastic! He felt as if an invisible cloud of chilled vapor had enveloped his wet, hot body. The new air was not cool, but relative to his body temperature, it felt like an ethereal iceberg.

He and his comrades made their way back to the room where they had shed their clothes and where the tormentors awaited them. As soon as they entered the room, they found themselves being splashed with a sweet smelling, sticky liquid. It could have been syrup, it might have been oil, or it may have been a combination of both.

This sudden shower of goo was followed by the dousing of the subjects with feathers! They had been tarred-and-feathered with the syrup/oil standing-in as the proxy for hot tar...apparently, timid tormentors at work.

He looked at his comrades. Pitiful. They looked at him. Pitiful. Even his penis was covered with feathers, giving the appearance of his carrying around a woefully short, feathered third leg.

Despite the situation, despite his fatigue, his hunger, his damaged stomach muscles---despite it all, he let out a howl of laughter. It was absurdly funny.

The final humiliation for night three now took place. All subjects were required to pile on to each other in the middle of the room. One huge mass of bodies, almost denuded---except for feathers. Once in this position, several of the tormentors came forth, cracked open raw eggs, and forced the subjects to swallow them whole.

He welcomed this last act, it compensated for his abbreviated meals. Others in the pile did not take to the menu. They gagged and in one instance a subject threw-up---depositing over-easy eggs and other bile offerings onto his piled-on comrades.

Finally, the show was over. He and the other subjects cleaned-up the room and themselves. After their only shower of the three days, and fully-clothed, they were led back to the general assembly room to face their tormentors again.

Aftermath

But upon arriving in the room, he discovered the tormentors were not there. Except for one antagonist, all were absent. Where had they gone?

Without further ado, the sole tormentor directed the subjects to exit the room and walk up the stairs to the next floor. He thought, "They await us there. Who knows what they will do next?"

He and his comrades did as they were told. They opened the door of the room and turned to head up the stairs to an uncertain future.

The stairs were not empty. Each step was occupied by one of the tormentors---and of all things, candles. Just enough room was left for the subjects to walk up to the next floor, bushing past the tormentors as they passed-by. Another mode for harassment? More tricks? More mockery? Not this time.

He and his comrades ascended the stairs. At each step, he was stopped briefly by a person who had been a nemesis to him and his mates over the past days and nights. The former tormentor placed his left hand on the left shoulder of the ex-tormented, and firmly took his right hand in his.

The former tormentor said, "Well done. You went the distance. Congratulations."

And added, "We look forward to having you as our fraternity brother."

The man had learned a lot during the past days and nights. He had learned a lot about himself as well as his soon-to-be fraternity brothers. He was proud of making it through the ordeal. And now, as he walked-up the stairs, he was also proud of the other men who had shared his days and nights of misery.

But he was glad it was over. All he wanted was sleep...horizontally, of course.

Afterword

The events in this story are true. I was the story teller. The “tormentor” who asked about my welfare during the second night was a fraternity brother whose job was to look-out for anyone who might be in trouble. He walked by all of us, asking if we were holding-up okay.

Because of the nature of this story, I would like to offer a few thoughts about the Geneva Conventions.

First. I stand behind them---no exceptions.

Second. I believe America will prevail over the current reign of terror but it will take many years. Let’s not forget what we stand for as we engage an enemy who routinely violates the most sacrosanct moral law of our race: Killing innocent, harmless fellow humans---male and female, children, and adult noncombatants. No legal decree, declaration, or code; no religious rule, commandment, or mandate can excuse the slaughter of innocent civilians.

Third. No civilized society can afford to shed its moral foundations for the sake of expediency to gain information about the enemy. To do so is accept the premise that America’s behavior on this vital matter is no better than its enemies. If you accept my proposition about the sanctity of the lives of nonparticipating, noncombatants, then I trust you will also accept that we are better than the terrorists. We are on higher moral and ethical grounds.

We may lose some *battles* because we might not have extracted information from a terrorist. But if we stay grounded to our principles and exhibit them toward the world, I am certain we will not lose the *war*. And in so doing, we will hold onto our moral ground---without which we cannot survive as a democratic republic.

Well, enough pontification. Whether I fooled you or not, it would be ridiculous to consider my fraternity hell week in the same light as prisoners’ life at, say, Abu Ghraib or any other prison. I knew I was safe from harm or death. Prisoners often do not. I could leave at any time. Prisoners cannot. My tormentors (my future fraternity brothers) showed considerable wisdom and restraint in how they handled us.

The Rum-runner

rum·run·ner

n.

1. One who illegally transports liquor across a border.
2. A boat used to transport liquor illegally across a border.

boot·leg

v. boot·legged, boot·leg·ging, boot·legs

v.tr.

1. To make, sell, or transport (alcoholic liquor) for sale illegally.
2. To produce, distribute, or sell without permission or illegally.

What comes to your mind when you think of a bootlegger, also known as a rum-runner? I think of the mountains of Appalachia, populated with whisky stills operated by the bootlegger. I imagine an outlaw, fitting the Robert Mitchem mold, who drives a souped-up car, equipped with hidden tanks that are full of booze. I picture the bootlegger eluding the revenuers, as he careens around sharp curves---making his way to a local city and its thirsty inhabitants. I envision dangerous and exciting scenes.

During my last year in college, I was a rum-runner. I use this term instead of bootlegger, because I did not make liquor. I had no still. I transported liquor across a border to sell it illegally. I did not fit the Mitchem image, nor was my car souped-up. I was not a dangerous or exciting Mr. Mitchem.

Nonetheless, I still sold booze illegally, which made my venture risky: jail time, fines, loss of my car, loss of my liquor, loss of my business and associated college tuition money. Notwithstanding these risks, for a while, I made a good deal of money, at least in the context of my modest idea about how much “a good deal of money” meant to a college lad.

I confined my sales to rum and vodka, taking advantage of the rock-bottom prices of these liquors in the country of Mexico vs. their high prices in the US. Another description of the situation: I set up a liquor import business.

I can tell you the story now, at a later age in my life, because the statute of limitations has long expired on this crime.

My liquor import business was limited in scope. For a while, I was the only employee. The imports took place from Juarez, Mexico into El Paso, Texas. The transactions of selling the rum and vodka were confined to my fellow students (including my Sigma Chi fraternity brothers) at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in Albuquerque. I had my best sales on Friday afternoons. My customers were gearing up for TGIF.

Before I was a seller of illegal booze, I was an occasional buyer. This earlier experience led me to appreciate the attractive economics of selling black market booze: huge markups on the merchandise, yielding profits well beyond my needs. It was the first time in my life I had discretionary income.

I was a buyer of illegal beer when living in my hometown of Lovington, New Mexico. On Sundays, or late at night, when the local bars were closed, my carousing friends and I would venture to a part of town known as “across the tracks.” There, we could buy liquor, beer, and even that foreign substance called wine (which we never consumed). The bootleggers across the tracks were known to the citizens of Lovington and were part of the town’s culture. Little harm was done by their presence. Their business was small, and the police ignored their practice.

A Funding Problem

My entry into rum-running came at the end of a summer when I was to return to UNM for my final year of college. Between my junior and senior years, I worked as a lifeguard and swimming instructor, conducting private lessons and charging what the market would bear---which was exorbitant, because I was the only person in town who was trained for this line of work. I had saved several hundred dollars beyond what I needed for tuition and room-and-board.

Thanks to the generosity of my Sig brothers, they had allowed me to accumulate a bill of rent, so I planned for the rum-runner funds to pay-off this debt, as well as to take me through my senior year in fine style.

But I had a problem. Despite my monopolistic rates at the swimming pool, my savings were not sufficient to carry me through the entire college year. I had worked at part-time jobs each semester during my college years. Consequently, I was determined to spend my final year pursuing pleasurable bad habits, and some academic activity---if the book pursuits did not interfere with more important matters. None of my plans for my last year in college included the word *study*. Still, I needed more money to see me through my last year in college.

A Rat Enters the Picture

Before I explain my life as a rum-runner, a character is added to our story: a white rat. His name was Fang. During my junior year at UNM, I rescued Fang from executioner's row. He had been sentenced to rodents' cloud nine by my animal psychology professor, Dr. Peterson, who was in the process of reducing his rat inventory. I took a liking to Fang, as much as one can take a liking to a rat. Dr. Peterson gave me a rat cage, outfitted with a water bottle and an exercise wheel, and I took Fang as my pet. Fang spent his summer languishing at the Lovington Country Club, while his owner toiled in the New Mexico sun teaching the American Crawl, the breaststroke, and (for beginners) the float.

The Import Operation

My first foray into the rum-runner trade occurred during the return to college from Lovington, via Juarez. The trip to Albuquerque through Juarez added well over 100 miles to my journey but the addition to my itinerary was worth the effort. To help orient you to the terrain of my bootlegging trade, see Figure 1. The bold line (dark blue, if you are viewing a colored image) from Lovington to Juarez represents the route to the booze. The other bold line (dark red for a colored image) from Juarez to Albuquerque represents the route to my profits---my rum-runner highway, so to speak.

At that time, the Mexican and American governments allowed a US citizen to purchase one gallon of liquor daily in Juarez and transport it across the US/Mexico border. My plan was to purchase as many bottles of "fifths" as possible, without being arrested. Possible penalties for illegal transport of liquor across the border were (a) confiscation of the liquor, (b) arrest, (c) a fine, and (d) confiscation of the vehicle used to transport the alcohol. Was it worth it? No. But I was naïve and young, oblivious to the risks of bootlegging.

One border crossing (port) was traversed with vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The other was used only for pedestrian traffic. These two check points afforded three options for crossing the border: two walks and one ride. Because the customs personnel were different at each check point and changed shifts often, I could traverse all ports on an ongoing basis for a full day and evening and assure myself of a big supply of contraband.

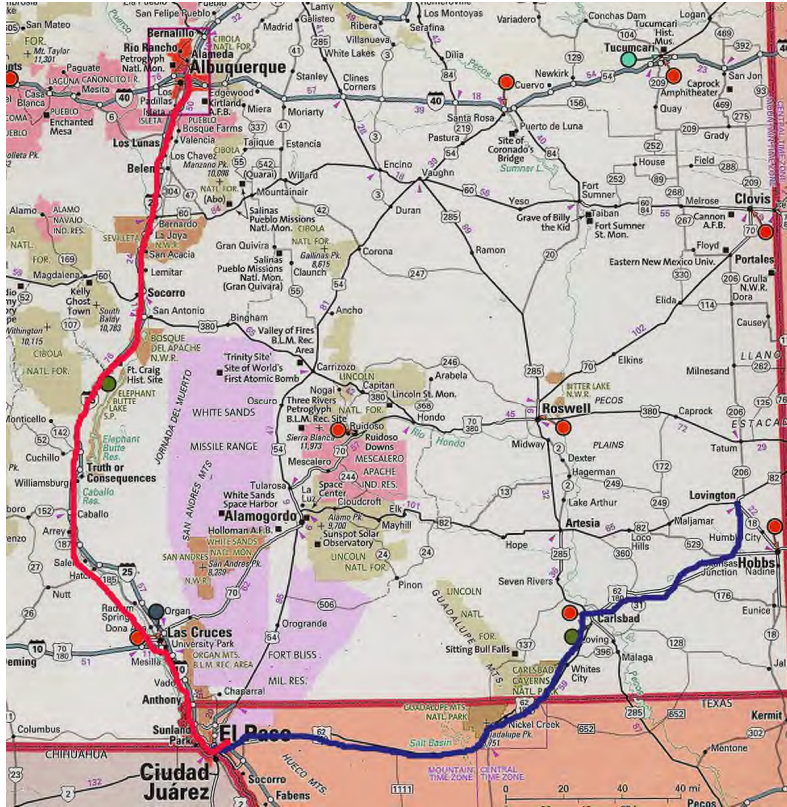


Figure 1. The rum-runner's highways.

So, I used three customs check points into and out of Juarez. Figure 2 shows two of the check points.¹ The photos reflect changes made since my times there, but they are close to what I experienced in 1962.



Figure 2. Border crossings.

One problem presented itself with this strategy. Because I was using my car for some of the assaults on the Juarez liquor inventory, where was I to store the bottles I had successfully brought across the border? I could not risk the use of my car as the booze ferry, passing the bottles back and forth between the two countries. Even my rookie rum-runner mind knew this approach was not a good idea.

My solution was to rent lockers at a local Greyhound bus station in El Paso. I thought of renting a motel room but I wanted to keep my overhead as low as possible. In those financially-lean days, the concept of profit margin was foremost in my mind.

¹ Courtesy of Wikipedia.

Earlier, I introduced my pet rat, Fang. We bring him back into the story. I suspected the customs authorities would not look kindly on my transporting a rat across international borders. Intuition told me an immigrant rat would not pass a customs checkpoint muster. To solve this problem, I stashed Fang and his cage in the trunk of the car, kept the five fifths of booze in the front seat, and breezed by the vehicle check point throughout the day and evening.

As the time neared to depart for Albuquerque, I had accumulated about 200 bottles of rum and vodka. Some crossings were in my car where I hid several gallons in the trunk. I recall that each bottle cost approximately \$1.00 in a typical Juarez liquor store. Given my wholesale cost, I knew I could sell each bottle at a \$1.00 to \$1.50 markup over my price.

In one day and evening, and a lot of border crossings, I had sufficient inventory for a potential profit of over \$400, a lot of money to a struggling college student in 1962. Plus, the price of gas was such that I could make ongoing trips between Albuquerque and Juarez without this overhead doing much damage to my gross income.

My Harvard school business plan assumed I could sell the rum and vodka to my college classmates at a fine profit. In those days, selling liquor at a discount price on a Friday afternoon to a large population of college students was a seller's market, a seller's dream-come-true. I suspect the same situation holds true today.

A Sidebar.

My business plan also some concerns: I was selling to some underage students. I had a rationale: I was recently underage myself. Later, my rationale was: Some of my customers and I were going to be shipped off to Vietnam in a few months (I was in Vietnam a year later). If we could fight for America, we should have been able to have a drink in America. (I came back with an Agent Orange disability rating, accompanied with a monthly check to assuage the fact that our government sprayed these poisons on our own troops).

A Customs Check Almost Spoils My Day

On the last run of the day, I made a mistake. Greed clouded my judgment. This run was through a customs checkpoint for vehicular traffic. I carried across three gallons of vodka, two gallons over the legal limit. I hid ten fifths in the car trunk underneath books and other college items. The remaining five bottles were positioned in the front seat of the car.

I was selected for a trunk search on this one passage. It was the first and only time I was checked in several runs during my senior year. Damn! If I had stayed with my plan and restricted the purchase to the permitted one-gallon limit, I would have made it through the trunk search. No, I became overconfident, thinking I could squeeze-out a few more dollars of profit.

The customs officer ordered me to open the trunk of my car, or as I feared, the soon-be-car of the US Government. I was dumbfounded, not only from fear of the search, but also from self-loathing at my greed and stupidity. I had no choice in the matter, so I exited the car, went to its rear, and unlocked the trunk.

In so many words, a white rat saved my white booze, not to mention my white ass. The customs officer immediately focused on the cage and Fang. In so doing, he seemed to lose interest in the other items in the trunk. I recall our conversation:

He asked me, "Sir, what are you doing with a rat in your trunk?"

I responded in my most academic manner, "Officer, the rat is my pet and he is also my research subject. I am a psychology major and use many rats for my laboratory work. This pet is one of them."

“Where are the other rats. ... Where do you get them?”

Uh oh, I thought, why does a lawman care about my source of rats? Does he think I'm importing rats into America from Mexico!?

I replied, “They're in the animal lab at the Psychology Department at the University of New Mexico. I can give you the phone number of my professor, Dr. Peterson. He will vouch for my rat and me.”

The officer responded, “No, it's okay. Hiding rats in a car just seems a bit weird---but then you would not believe the things people bring across the border. ... Wait a minute, why are you storing your pet in the trunk of a car? That rat could suffocate in there.”

Great. It was my bad luck to run across a US Customs Officer with a PETA disposition. I had beaten an imagined crime for white rat slave trafficking. Now I was in danger of being charged with cruelty to a rat, and a white one at that. Not the gray critters, those that no one likes. No, the endearing white cuddly ones, those sold in pet shops---the future Stuart Littles of the rat world.

More subterfuge followed, “Officer, I put my pet in the trunk of the car in order to pass through customs. I wasn't sure if I would be allowed to take a rat across the border. I had no place to store it during my visit to Mexico. As you can see, I was not going to leave the rat in Juarez, as it is with me now.” In hindsight, I suppose I was trying to convince the customs official that Fang was a US citizen but did not have a passport to prove it.

My statement about ferrying Fang in the trunk was not entirely true because I could have stowed the rat in the Grey Hound bus locker. But I concluded the officer did not need to know about this aspect of my visit to Juarez.

He let me off the hook, “Very well.”

With this last statement, he slammed down the trunk of my car! Fang had diverted him. My rat had saved another rat: me.

Still, I was not robbing old ladies or stealing from the blind. I was engaging in a bit of victimless crime, eventually to the ultimate benefit of mankind. Thanks to my rum-running income, I could stay in school, receive my degree in psychology and made the world a better place. My pangs of conscience were never engaged. If they were, they were short-lived, as I cannot remember feeling remorse or regret about being a rum-runner.

Anyway, I returned to the bus station, emptied the lockers, loaded up the car with the liquor, and departed for Albuquerque. I transferred my guardian and savior from the trunk of the car to the front seat.

The Business in Operation

After moving into my Sigma Chi fraternity diggings in Albuquerque, shown in Figure 3, the good-young-boy network kicked in and I found myself with a TGIF afternoon financial windfall. I upped the price a bit. Business was so good I took on partners (my brother and one of my fraternity brothers). Continuing our profitable enterprise, we made additional runs to Juarez to replenish our inventory. The bold line in Figure 1 (the red line) represents our on-going sojourns between Juarez and Albuquerque---our rum-runner's highway.

Each Friday afternoon, Fang and I would make certain we were in my fraternity dormitory room, at this time, a bar and package store. For two or three hours, I would sell my merchandise at outrageous markups. Isn't capitalism grand? My profit margin would have put an investment banker to shame.

But the novelty of the rum and vodka import business began to wear-off. The money was fine but two aspects of the business began to bother me. First, I discovered I did not have the mental makeup for pursuing habitual criminal behavior. An occasional parry with law establishment authorities is one thing. But an ongoing illegal enterprise is another matter. I wondered if the risks were worth the rewards. A bit of angst crept into my psyche. As business improved, I developed steady clients, thus making my illegal activities more visible.

Second, and more vexing, my lark had become a business. I had to keep steady "store hours." Any utterance with the word "steady" had the connotation of "work." At this stage of my life, work was a four-letter word, in more ways than one.



Figure 3. My TGIF bar and package store.

The Rat vs. the Bird

Before explaining how my liquor import business became a former business, let's return to the hero in this story, Fang. A fraternity friend, named Frank, also kept a pet in his company, a small bird. Upon learning I owned a pet rat, Frank approached me with this challenge, "Fang. Sounds pretty mean. But no matter, let's put our pets in the same cage. I'll wager my bird will whip your rat."

Who knows how thoughts permeate into our brains? Who can understand a mind whose owner thinks about a white rat doing battle with a bird? Not I. But then, I did not understand Frank's mind (who was a jokester most of the time). Anyway, my response to Frank was, "Not a chance. Fang is a pacifist."

Frank gave my response what appeared to be little thought and replied, "Yeah, but my bird's got maneuverability."

No question, in a pitched battle between a white rat and its arch nemesis, a small bird, balancing maneuverability against pacifism is an important tactical consideration. (I am not joking about Frank's response. He was a humorous guy.)

Closing the Liquor Import Business

My liquor import business came to an abrupt close. I was not raided by the revenuers. I made the simple mistake of allowing my place of business to evolve from a cash-and-carry package store to a sit-down bar. My customers began sticking around my room to imbibe in the rum or vodka they purchased. I didn't mind. Most of my patrons were my fraternity brothers or other friends and acquaintances from around the campus.

Fang seemed to enjoy the camaraderie as well. I had never met a friendlier rat. He preferred my company, but he was quite friendly with my customers--- often walking around on their arms and shoulders. In hindsight, I like to think of Fang as the forerunner to former athletes

who greet us when we enter some fancy nightclub or restaurant. My patrons came to like my buddy and I think Fang added a bit of class to the place.

About the demise of my import business. Let me describe it this way: Consider this scene---and while you are concentrating, think about the movie, *Animal House*...think of TGIF on a college campus...think about several John Belushis in one room, drinking cheap booze and plenty of it...think about the rum-runner engaging in the repartee...raking in wads of money... happy with the whole affair.

Next, think about the rum-runner leaving the room...depositing the key to the booze locker with his fraternity brother partner... going off into the TGIF night, away from his now tedious work, to pursue more entertaining non-work-related activities.

Next, think of the rum-runner returning to the room later in the night...think of a room full of stale smoke, spilled drinks, and soiled furniture, but no people. Think of an open booze locker---the rum-runner's clothes closet...think of a room full of empty rum and vodka bottles...think of the end of the rum-runner's rum and vodka import business.

My unreliable partner in crime had abandoned the room when it was still populated with wild and drunken *Animal House* animals. Later, I discovered he had decided to follow my path of non-work-related activities (women). His only transgression is that he forgot to lock-up the closet containing my precious bottles of booze.

You can now understand how my liquor import business became a defunct enterprise. If you have attended a college TGIF party, I am sure you can picture the scene that contributed to its demise.

Two animals were in the room at the time of the discovery of my failed business, Fang and me. But one of the animals was in bad shape. My customers had put vodka in Fang's water bottle! Fang obviously liked the alcohol and as a result, was lying on the floor of his cage. He was either passed-out or dead. I was not sure which.

If anyone can be upset about a sick or dead rat, I would fit into that category. Fang had been my companion for almost a year. He and I had been through considerable adversity together. Granted, Fang was a low maintenance pet. He required no petting. Not once did he roll-over for a belly rub. He never responded to my tickling his neck. But in his own rodent way, Fang was demonstrative, at least enough for me to form a bond with a rat.

I opened the cage, picked Fang up, and gathered his tiny body into my hand. Holding the limp countenance of my friend in my palm was troubling. I carried my buddy to the bathroom and dosed him with cold water. I gave my white rat a sobering-up cold shower, so to speak. I was relieved as Fang started to come around. He was fine, just hung over.

The next morning, Fang, my rum-running partner, and I were moving a bit slowly. The only response from my fraternity brother to my complaint about his lack of business acumen was that he was hungry. I felt like force-feeding him the dregs from bottles still lying about in the room, but I did not have the energy.

As I related to him the story of my reviving Fang, walking the small rat around, giving him a shower, the absurdity of the situation hit home. We spent the next half-hour laughing about the ridiculous events and Fang's initiation into the TGIF club. We considered putting black coffee in Fang's water bottle but agreed the rat had consumed enough human-made liquids.

As I said, the TGIF party marked the end of my bootlegging days and my booze import business. I had lost my enthusiasm for being a businessman---too much structure.

In hindsight, I think the risks of what I did were not worth the rewards. And I jeopardized my fraternity's standing on campus because of my trade's location in one of the fraternity dormitory rooms. But youthfulness often has no frame of reference to logic.

Later in life, part of my professional success rested on gaining a high security clearance for US Navy intelligence work. I can imagine the results of this security investigation if the clearance officers had found a court record of my being jailed for rum-running. Lacking alternatives to making a living, I might still be rum-running today. Or I might be in jail, unless Fang's off-spring kept me out of trouble.

A Guaymas Wedding¹

In the early 1960s, Jim Sanderson, my college roommate, a friend, and fraternity brother (Sigma Chi) at the University of New Mexico (UNM), announced the trip by informing me, “Tina and I have decided to get married and we want you to be our best man.”

I was happy to hear this news about my two friends. I had known Jim and Tina for a couple years and was honored they wanted me to be part of the ceremony. I replied to the two of them, “Great, when is the wedding?”

Jim responded, “Maybe you should ask where first.”

“OK, where and when?”

“Guaymas, Mexico, during the spring break. We’re taking you and some other friends on a trip down south for the wedding. What do you think?”

I had heard of Guaymas. It was a small city on the coast of western Mexico, in Sonora Province, and was a popular place for fisherman. I later learned Tina had suggested the place for their wedding because it was not on the map for run-of-the-mill tourists. She was a student of Mexican culture and was not fond of the Ugly American image most Americans carried with them when they visited Mexico. She did not want a lot of American gringos milling around and spoiling the atmosphere of her wedding day.

Jim explained his rationale for a wedding in Mexico. The venue was chosen to keep their marriage a secret. They could not afford to have it recorded or published because Tina was living in the Chi Omega sorority house and Jim was living in the Sigma Chi fraternity house. The idea was to marry secretly and continue to live in their respective social organizations’ dormitories because their parents had paid housing and dining fees through the semester. In addition, Chi Omega did not allow married girls to live in the sorority house.



Figure 1. Albuquerque and Guaymas.

I was not a pillar of wisdom in those days (I am still lacking wisdom, and I am not a pillar) but even I could see holes in their scheme. Jim was not known for his social awareness, but Tina---well, this scheme did not sound like her. If Chi Omega discovered Tina was married and living in the sorority house, she would be kicked-out of her sorority. Deception was not part of her makeup. Their surreptitious plans also presented parental problems. I knew Jim’s parents well and I knew a little about Tina’s folks. I was of the opinion their parents were steeped in the goodness of conventional marriages. They would not be happy about their children’s quaint wedding.

¹ I have taken the Mark Twain approach of making up dialogue in this story. The subjects in the story, including me, did not utter the exact words that are within quotes. But the dialogue is accurate in conveying the facts and spirit of what happened on this fanciful trip to Mexico.

And why choose Guaymas, why not Juarez? Guaymas was over 600 miles from Albuquerque. The trip to Juarez was a full-day's drive. Figure 1 illustrates these geographical relationships. Hoping for a consultant's fee, I brought these issues up to Jim and Tina

Jim responded, "We only need to keep the marriage a secret to the end of the semester. At that time, we make a wedding announcement and rent an apartment. We can't disrupt our lives in the middle of the school semester. Tina won't marry me in Juarez. She says she wants something more romantic and our parents will understand our situation. It's no big deal."

I considered asking Jim if he classified marriage as (a) disruptive or (b) non-disruptive to his collegiate career. But knowing my roommate, I knew he would have selected option (b)---most likely equating his marriage and wedding to an extended TGIF party.

After listening to Jim, Tina responded, "Jim thinks we must keep our marriage a secret until the end of the semester. I don't like the situation, but it's important to him. I prefer moving out of the sorority house now. And I won't marry in Juarez. The border towns are unattractive, with too many tourists. I don't know about Jim, but I am telling my parents about our marriage the day we leave for Mexico."

Fine by me. My job was to be the best man, not a marriage counselor. They asked for my opinion and I gave it to them. Anyway, I was ready for a spring break and the fishing resort of Guaymas, with its warm beaches, seemed like a fine way to recover from a northern New Mexico winter.

During the next few days, Jim and Tina invited other members of the wedding party to accompany them to Guaymas. Joining us were Gale, a fraternity brother, and Beth and Ginny, two friends of Tina (other names have been substituted for Tina's friends' actual names...to protect the guilty).

Tina and Gale were majoring in Latin American Affairs. They spoke Spanish beautifully, as well as passable Portuguese, and they knew and appreciated Mexico and its people. I studied Spanish in high school and had completed four semesters of Spanish grammar and literature in college, so I was well-versed in the language, but not fluent. Ginny was in about the same category as I regarding the Spanish language. Beth was also a major in Latin American affairs and spoke Spanish well.

Jim's Spanish language skills? Jim knew two words in Spanish: fiesta and siesta. My roommate was a prince of a man, as good-natured a person I have ever met, but he did not have a serious (or mean) bone in his body. He was a party animal, interspersing his drinking bouts with bouts of eating and sleeping. He and Tina were like night and day, but they loved each other. Figure 2 shows them at a Country and Western dance held at the Sigma Chi fraternity house. As always, in this photo Jim had a smile on his face. When Jim was happy, so was Tina, and vice versa.²

The Trip to Guaymas

On the first day of spring break the six of us piled into Jim's ancient Ford. Guaymas, Mexico was our destination. We would have been in a better position to reach Mexico if we had chosen another form of transportation, say walking. True to Jim's nature of not paying attention to anything in his life besides sleeping, eating, drinking, and Tina, Jim's car---charitably speaking---showed signs of neglect. Other than Jim's driving his car to the local college pub,

² I make Jim a bit of a heavy in this story, but my ploy is for fun. Truth is, my roommate was as a fine fellow. His demeanor was a good counterbalance to my sometimes much-too-serious approach to a problem. Tina was one of my best friends---one for whom I had great respect. Jim has passed away, and Tina has moved on to another life.

Okie Joe's, the Ford received little attention from its owner. The car preferred being coaxed into action. It would not start on the driver's first, second, or maybe third attempts. Second, when its engine eventually fired-up, there was no assurance the transmission would engage to propel us down the road to Guaymas. Our start was... "start" is the wrong word. Stated another way, our *attempted* start to Mexico was delayed because of Jim's choice for the wedding limo.



Figure 2. Jim and Tina.

After a long while, we finally found ourselves outside the Albuquerque city limits, headed south, for Mexico. Beth was quantitatively-inclined (an anomaly among linguists), and made a rough calculation: If we continued with our present progress, we would reach Guaymas shortly after the beginning of the next decade (We were in the year 1961). No matter, we had stocked-up on beer in Albuquerque, and except for Tina, the wedding party was in no hurry to reach its destination.

The trip to Guaymas was uneventful. We took turns driving and drinking while practicing our Spanish. The only notable event during the trip was encountering a stop sign on a nearly-deserted highway somewhere near a town called Tepache.

An ordinary stop sign is not noteworthy but this sign was not ordinary. It was installed on the side of the highway yet *no* intersection could be found within miles of the sign. Jim was driving when we came to the sign. He braked to a stop, looked to his right and his left, and beheld a flat, dry desert, but nothing else. We looked around for an intersecting road of any kind--a cow trail, a centipede cross-walk, some other critter path. Again, nothing, just one solitary sign, in the middle of nowhere, with ALTO painted on it. The sign's placement was so absurd, so out of place, we thought it was a trick. Maybe a Candid Camera crew was hiding behind cacti, filming our bewilderment. Tina took a picture of the sign, just to prove it existed in case our friends back at UNM did not believe our story.

Lucky for us, the Ford behaved for the entire trip and we arrived at our wedding town late at night. Our hotel was an ancient, mildewed, wonderful two-floor building. A large courtyard was surrounded on four sides by the rooms, which offered views to the outside of plants, flowers, and a large fountain. As we walked to our room, we could see Tina smiling ear-to-ear. Romantic? Yes indeed. The hotel was a whimsical, motley treasure.

Because we were on a tight budget, for our first night in town the six of us slept in one room. Nonetheless, the wedding party informed the bride and groom we were buying them the privacy of a separate room for their upcoming wedding night. Our announcement brought forth an ear-to-ear grin from the groom. Super, the two key players of the wedding were both grinning; Tina, from the romance of the hotel; Jim, from the thought of a private wedding bed.

The Birth, Youth, Marriage, Old Age, and Death Bureau

The next day, the morning of their wedding, Jim and Tina visited a government office to take care of legal papers. On the afternoon of the wedding, we left our hotel and walked a few

blocks to the Birth, Youth, Marriage, Old Age, and Death Bureau. This name is my identification for the bureau. I don't recall the actual name but it was responsible for cataloging the lifelong paths of the citizens of Guaymas.

On our way to the Bureau, we passed by the local public library. We were in no hurry to arrive at the government building. After all, Jim and Tina had all afternoon to marry. Given idle time and our natural curiosity, we entered the library to browse the stacks. Except for Jim, the other wedding party members were interested in Spanish culture and literature.

My browsing efforts resulted in pulling Doestoevsky's *The Brothers Karamozov* from a shelf. I have no idea why I selected this book. I had trouble understanding the English translation, so the Spanish version was beyond my comprehension. Nonetheless, I read for a while, as best I could.

After a few moments at the library, and my successful translation of one or two verbs in the first sentence of the book, we decided to proceed to the Bureau. Like any semi-dissolute college group on a spring break, we wanted our friends to be married in order to move to the heart of the day: celebrating the affair! We had already reconnoitered a nearby beach for our six-person wedding reception.

The Bureau's quarters consisted of one solitary room measuring about 15 x 30 feet. A small counter was placed in the middle of the room to separate the citizens from the government workers. On the citizens' side of the room was arrayed a collection of: women with newborn babies, children, old people, brides and grooms, expectant mothers, and one goat.

The goat was standing next to an elderly man, who was waiting his turn with one of the bureaucrats behind the counter. Our wedding party discussed the possible reasons for the goat paying a visit to the Birth, Youth, Marriage, Old Age, and Death Bureau. The animal did not look young, old, or dead. The goat had no goat companion with it, so it was not there for a marriage license. We asked the goat's owner why the goat was with him...or why he was with the goat. Gale posed the question to him in Spanish.

Gale replied that the goat considered the old man to be the goat's inseparable partner. The man said he had been with the animal since its birth. He had reared the goat and fed it from a bottle when it was a baby goat. In effect, the old man became the goat's mother and father. At the time of the goat's birth the old man said his wife had recently died. He took the baby goat into his home to compensate for the loss of his wife and for companionship. From the day the goat was born, it did not see another goat for many months. The goat's only social relationship was with the man.

As Gale translated the story to us, Tina observed that the goat thought it was a human. She offered this idea to the man and he agreed. He said the goat would have nothing to do with other goats. Ok, but why was the goat in attendance at this government agency?

Tina asked, "Can't you just leave the goat at your home when you have business to attend to?"

The old man replied, "I tried, but my goat will not stay at home. It always follows me."

Again, all in our party except Jim could make out the fundamentals of a Spanish conversation. But Ginny and I still needed help. Gale and Tina continued to act as go-betweens, providing the translations of our encounter with the old man, "Have you tried tying it up before you leave?"

"Of course not. Do you tie-up your child when you leave your home? No, you just say to your child, 'Stay here, I have work to do.' My child cannot speak. It does not understand if I must go somewhere without him. If your child could not speak, would you tie your baby up to a

fence, and take off for your work? My goat is my child. It stays with me each hour of the day. I will not tie up my child.”

A ton of wisdom and ten tons of compassion---all in the heart and soul of an old Mexican we met in a Guaymas government bureau.

Oh yes, the wedding ceremony. Sorry, I became distracted about the incident of the old man and his goat. But it was worth the distraction, don't you agree?

The Wedding Ceremony

The six of us continued to wait our turn for Mexico's version of a Justice of the Peace to become available. We waited for over an hour. We were not certain which person behind the counter served this function and the bureaucrats were, well, bureaucrats. They did not seem interested in giving us a status report. Gale took it upon himself to enquire if Jim and Tina had an outside chance of getting married that afternoon. It was then we learned the Justice of the Peace had left the office for an errand. No one was certain when he would return. We had to wait it out.

We agreed to take a short break and reassemble at the Bureau in 30 minutes. Off we went, some searching for a *quarto de bano* (bathroom)---for me, *la bibliotheca* (library). I still wanted to try my hand reading *The Brothers Karamozov* book. I returned to the library, pulled the book off the shelf, and began efforts to translate and read a famous Russian author's Spanish rendition of a classic tale. As before, it was hard going...I became immersed in the project...time passed...I missed the wedding.

The best man was a no-show for the event. At least it was not the groom---and no one minded that I was a best man failure. I learned the Justice of the Peace (we called him *padre*) returned to his duties shortly after the wedding party (minus one) had reassembled. Fearful of the *padre* leaving again, thus consigning the bride and groom to another night of sin, Jim and Tina appointed Gale to be their new best man. That done, Jim and Tina were married. I arrived at the Bureau from my unsuccessful bout with *Senor Doestoevsky* to witness Jim and Tina's marriage kiss. I was instantly forgiven my transgression.

For the remainder of the afternoon, we installed ourselves on the beach and celebrated our friends' wedding. We had also reconnoitered the town and discovered the existence of a beer factory. We were unemployed college students and funds were tight, but we managed to buy an impressive inventory of beer for a few pesos.

After we had settled down on the beach and hoisted a few toasts to Jim and Tina, I asked the newlyweds about the ceremony. Tears came to Tina's eyes. Jim's eyes glazed over.

Tina responded, “It was a beautiful ceremony, all in Spanish. The setting was so romantic. And Jim said the right things at the right time.”

Jim responded, “Beautiful? Romantic? I had a goat pissing on my foot as I said ‘I do.’ You could not understand the *padre*'s words because of the crying babies, and I had no idea if he was marrying you and me, or the goat and you, or the goat and me---maybe it was a three-ring ceremony. I said the right things because Gale told me when to say them. But what the hell, we're married now.”

Gale interjected, “It was an interesting ceremony. Tina was crying. Jim was oblivious to it all. It appeared they married each other at different weddings.”

What is beautiful to one person is caricature to another. Some people rise above situations and make the best of them, and some people do not even know how to identify a situation. I said earlier that Jim and Tina were like night and day. Jim was a happy-go-lucky,

person. Tina was more serious and introspective. Nonetheless, with our bride and groom having their own way of looking at weddings, they were now married.

The Honeymoon Evening

Our afternoon hours on the beach attracted a crowd. We were the only white skins there, and I suspect our color was part of the attraction. But the main draw was our facility with the Spanish language...and our generosity with the beer. As the day wore-on, several of our new Mexican friends told us they had never heard gringos speak Spanish as well as we did (Especially Gale and Tina. Nonetheless, except for Jim, none of us used much English that day and evening).

At dusk, we abandoned the beach to return to the hotel. Our plans were to clean-up, find a restaurant, and buy the newlyweds their wedding feast. Our beach friends gave us the name of a café in town and recommended it for the dinner. After a quick shower at the hotel, we departed for the café.

Our foray into Mexico for few days was not as Ugly Americans. In fact, we were sterling ambassadors and learned of our popularity when, upon entering the café, we discovered our friends at the beach had preceded us, some with their families. Two women had brought sweets for our dessert. Our six-person wedding party had turned into a celebration of some 30 people.

Generosity and good will permeated the night. We were bought immense amounts of beer and tequila. In turn, we bought right back---solidifying the Yankee/Mexican Good Neighbor Policy with toasts, songs, food, and drink. Tina, Beth, and Ginny must have danced with every man and boy there. Gale, Jim, and I took our turns around the dance floor with the senoras and señoritas.

Before long, the café was a wonderful party of happy Mexicans and Americans. On that day and evening, six American gringos contributed significantly to Mexican/American relations...and to the local economy.

Late in the evening, the wedding party bade farewell to the Mexicans and returned to their hotel. Jim and Tina stayed in the bridal suite (an identical room to all others) and the remaining four revelers again bunked-up together.

Going Home

It was time to return to the semi-reality of college life. The day after the wedding we piled into Jim's Ford to return to Albuquerque. As if we had not consumed enough beer during the wedding celebration, we carried several cases in the trunk. After all, the next TGIF party would surely find us in need of libation. We also carried an unstated concern about the wedding limo. It continued to exhibit resentment toward Jim's neglect.

Sure enough, as we drove north through Chihuahua Province and entered the city of Casas Grandes, the car expelled several coughs, sputtered to express its last protest to Jim's negligence, then silently rolled to a stop.

There we sat, marooned in Mexico, with a trunk full of beer as well as several bottles of the liquid in our stomachs. We tried to decide on our next action. Rational people would have said, "Well, let's get this thing fixed, we need to get back home to school." But we were not classified as rational people. We were college students. Our thoughts were, "Great. We cannot travel for a while. We have another opportunity to miss more classes!"

All except for Tina. She was an incongruity among her species: a sensible college student. She put a guilt trip on the group and reminded us of our parents' investment in our

education. Properly chastised (but primarily not wanting to displease the new bride), we spotted a service station several blocks away. Beth steered as we pushed the car to the garage.

Tina and Gale spoke with the mechanic about the state of our limo. After a lengthy discussion, they informed us, “The car’s bomba is broken.”

Bomba? The car had a defective bomb in it? Jim responded, “What the hell is a bomba?”

Tina and Gale, “A bomba is a pump. Looks like we need to replace the fuel pump.”

We were in a bind. None of us knew much about cars. We were situated in a foreign country and our Mexican friends of the previous night were far away. To the mechanic, we were probably a bunch of Ugly American tourists, without merit, but with pocketbooks and wallets. I also speak from considerable experience to offer my suspicion that the car mechanic---Mexican, American, Welsh, German, Canadian, whomever---intended to take us to the cleaners. In those days, customer fleecing seemed to be part of the job description of car repair shops and I am not sure this part of their resume has changed much today.

To compound the problem, we were almost out of cash. After paying the hotel bill, our last act in Guaymas was another visit to the beer factory to restock our inventory. This final financial transaction left us with enough money for some food and gas on our return trip, but not much else.

After further deliberations with the mechanic, we finally concluded that the bomba was something the mechanic could replace. Luckily, Jim’s Ford was a common model and make, thus allowing the repair shop to acquire another bomba from a like vehicle. The mechanic was able to make the repairs, and after a couple hours, we were ready to resume our trip. But the price to put us back on the road to New Mexico cost us most of our remaining cash, all but one case of our beer, and one fraternity ring. I suspect the mechanic was Catholic as he liked the cross on my Sigma Chi ring, as seen in Figure 3. I was not happy about giving up my ring, and all of us lamented the loss of our beer.



Figure 3. Part of our payment for the bomba.

But we got out of Casas Grandes, as well as Mexico and late that night, we finally made it back to the University of New Mexico campus, tired, happy, broke---and for two persons in our party, married.

Unfortunately, I lost contact with Jim and Tina. I visited them on several occasions after we graduated. They split up. I heard Tina settled in Albuquerque and re-married. Rumor has it that Jim is somewhere in the Carolinas. I hope I can reconnect with my old friends. I suspect they are like fine red wine: the older the better.

Aftermath

Later in my life, I was engaged in a game of Trivial Pursuit with some of my wife’s relatives, whom I had recently met. These people were serious Trivial Pursuit players---perhaps a

contradiction in words. Anyway, I suspect they were judging me partially on my performance with the game that evening. Luckily, I drew a question making a reference to a Russian writer's book about brothers. I immediately said, "*The Brothers Karamozov*, by Doestoevsky!"

Ah, a moment of intellectual glory. For an instant, I had fantasies of performing before a game show host, basking in the glow of my genius. My relatives told me they were impressed and asked if I had read the book. I could not let this moment go by. I replied, "Yes, in Spanish." Fat chance.

I confessed to my joke and proceeded to tell them the story of my friends' wedding in Guaymas as well as my unsuccessful encounter with the book at the local library. They laughed along with me, and as the evening wore-on, they discovered my answer about Doestoevsky was my only astute response of the night. I should have left the party early or excused myself from the game while I was ahead.

One more thought about my attempt to read Spanish. To illustrate the magnitude of my lingual masochism, several years ago, I began to read a Spanish version of *Don Quixote*. After spending a week in Spain, my enthusiasm for Spanish was rejuvenated and I wanted to relearn the language. Forget tapes and classes, I cut to the chase. I bought the book at a local book fair in Madrid with the intention of doing a direct translation. For a few nanoseconds at the vendor's bookstall, I was a born-again linguist, ready to absorb the genius of Cervantes in his native tongue.

After a few feeble attempts, I confess that I am not making much progress in my quest to understand Don Quixote's quests. I have not spoken or read Spanish since the early 1960s and I must resort to the Spanish-English Dictionary for consultation on most of the verbs I read in this book. Thus far, I am on page two of *Don Quixote* and have forgotten what was on page one. At the present rate of progress (term used loosely), I estimate I will complete the first chapter of *Don Quixote* just before its pages turn yellow with age. Truth be known, I doubt I will finish this translation, but I have no concern about the process---a sentence here, a paragraph there---before long, I may read a few pages.

Those with wisdom say, "The pleasure is in the process." Those with more wisdom add, "If the process is not pleasurable, find another process." Currently, my English version of *Don Quixote* is looking increasingly attractive.

And during this time, it has given me pleasure to re-read this story about Tina and Jim. I hope you also found pleasure in reading it.

Memories Are Made of This, Part One

May 25, 2012

For the past week, I have been spending time in New Mexico, visiting relatives and friends from my college days. Today, I toured a Billy the Kid exhibit at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History. For this evening, I decided to pay a visit to my college campus, the University of New Mexico (UNM), and my fraternity chapter house (the Beta Xi chapter of Sigma Chi). In the hopes of reliving past memories, I also decided to stay overnight at the Sig house.

This house on the UNM campus is no longer for Sigma Chis. It has been converted to a long-term-rental motel. We Sigs own the property, but the chapter was banned from campus for some pranks that were disturbing, even to Animal House groupies.

For better or for worse, I was a so-called frat brat. I joined Sigma Chi because it was not a scholastic fraternity, a service fraternity, or a professional fraternity. It was a social fraternity. Belonging to a social fraternity gave me more opportunities to explore the world of the opposite sex and to explore the creatures who inhabited that world. It was fantasy no different from most young men.

Primal makeup was the starter. But for both sexes, our instincts for having sex are helped along with on-the-job-experience. It is a line item in a resume that is usually difficult to come by for naive youngsters. Thus, in my adolescent days, sexual pleasure with girls was just that: a fantasy. The girls were equally adrift. A grope here, a grope there, with neither boy nor girl knowing exactly how to grope properly, but having fun learning the ropes of the gropes.

For the next few years, I had the blind luck to meet and have close relationships with some extraordinary females. As a teen-ager back then, and ignorant of life's requirement for males to sometimes mask our hormonal dispositions, I can say with confidence that these girls treated me with far more compassion and wisdom than I treated them. Almost all of them were wisely...a term I have coined for this article: "distantly passionate." (For some reminiscences, I add "somewhat distantly passionate.")

Boy or girl, man or woman, most humans have treasured memories of their intimate times with others of their past. Dean Martin captures it beautifully in his song, "Memories are Made of This."

In the background, this refrain can be heard throughout the song:

♪♪♪♪

*The sweet, sweet memories you've given me.
You can't beat the memories you've given me.*

Then, the first verse:

*Take one fresh and tender kiss.
Add one stolen night of bliss.
One girl, one boy, some grief, some joy:*

Memories are made of this.

Female or male, I'll wager you are reading this narrative and thinking of your own special memories of those past days of exploration and discovery. I hope so. It is having a full

past that helps us to live a fuller life in our older years. Memories of past pleasant times prolong our lives.

Reservations Required

On the way to the museum, I drove through the UNM campus and spotted a sign on the lawn of my fraternity house. It advertised rooms for rent (Figure 1). What luck! I could stay in my old home for an evening. I could go back, if only briefly, to some golden times.



The Sigma Chi chapter house was my residence for three years. It was also the place where, as a naive youngster in my late teens, I was indoctrinated into a world of fraternal secrets and the rites of brotherhood. It was heady stuff for a country bumpkin. Of equal importance, it was a place where I could practice pleasure-seeking

acts. Which I did, and which, at this stage of my life, I am happy I did. Now as an old man, if only for a short time, I was going to visit my fraternity house to capture and re-live memories of that time.

Friendship and Fraternity

I sometimes wonder why fraternal orders exist. Why not bond with your next-door neighbor, whom you have begun to like? Or the cashier at the grocery store, whom you have begun to know? Or perhaps an actual member of your family, say your mother-in-law? Why attempt bonding with a complete stranger? Why pay dues to a lodge? After all, isn't it akin to purchasing friendships?

Perhaps we join an organization, say a fraternal order, because its members bolster our beliefs and allow us to practice them among like-minded people. I joined Sigma Chi because the organization reinforced and solidified my predisposition to having a good time. Sure, we did a few good deeds. We ran a stunt night of sophomoreic plays, which raised money for charity. That act was noble, but even more, our stunts attracted girls.

We humans are joiners. Since ancient times, we have been joiners. In the old days, joining into groups fostered physical survival and growth. In these modern times, I like to think it is for the reward and pleasure of mental gratification and growth. But enough philosophy. To matters at hand:

First Impressions

The first stage for my visit to my old fraternity digs was set as I dialed the phone number displayed on the sign. I wanted to make a room reservation for the night. The conversation went along these lines:

- Person at Sig House, "Hello."
- Reporter, "Hello. Any rooms available?"
- "Sorry. Booked up."
- "Too bad. I'm a Sigma Chi alum and was hoping to visit my old home."
- "I see. Well, we've a room, but it's not ready for rental. I'd need a few hours."
- "No problem. I'm spending the day at a museum. I can come by later today."
- "Okay. I'll fix something up."
- "What's the rental fee?"
- "For a Sig, don't worry about it."
- "Really? Thanks. I'll give the bellman a tip."
- "Whatever. See you later."

Off I went to visit the museum and write a Billy the Kid report. Upon my return to the UNM campus:

Memories Are Made of This

I left my car in the parking lot and walked toward the house. As I approached the front entrance, I thought of my past times there: joking with fraternity brothers and dancing with sorority sisters. I was day dreaming about those past times.

While growing up, we humans unconsciously store experiences from which we later conjure up memories. As I approached the Sig house, I harkened back to those past times. One is shown in Figure 2 of the front entrance to the Sig house.



We Sigma Chi brothers had decorated the front of the house with a Hawaiian luau theme for our annual Black and White party, the only affair of the year in which we tried to act with a modicum of class. Black and White meant all of us---guys and gals---wore black and white clothes: tuxes, gowns, dinner jackets. The atmosphere was one of subdued, yet stilted refinement, at least for the early hours of the evening.

Toward midnight, we youngsters---again, boys and girls alike---resorted to the ancient human ritual of adolescent exploration of the mysterious bodies of the opposite sex. At least we attempted to play-out our instincts, usually clueless to what made the other sexually tick. But what fine memories we have of those rites of passage. Dean Martin captured the idea well in his song:

*Don't forget a small moonbeam.
Fold it lightly with a dream.
Your lips and mine.
Two sips of wine:*

Memories are made of this.

The Sigma Chi House, a former house of camaraderie

As I approached the Sig house, I noticed the Sigma Chi icon and lettering had been removed from the entrance. (See Figure 2, compared to Figure 3). The proclamation of SIGMA CHI above the door had been replaced with COME CHECK US OUT!! Another sign assured renters of alternative Tuesday evenings of entertainment that awaited them. What was I expecting: a time warp back to the 1960s, with secret handshakes as I entered the building? I did not expect any of this camaraderie. I was coming to this place to rekindle memories of past friendship.



I entered the house and found the person who had agreed to provide me lodging for the night:

- “You the old Sig?”
- *Watch your mouth.* “Yep. I called about the room.”
- “I had trouble freeing a room, but I've got you fixed up.”
- “Thanks. “I’m looking forward to prowling around.”
- “Sure. Make yourself at home. You’re in room 4, down the hallway here.”
- “I remember this hall. We had a bulletin board right here, where we put up notices. Ah! It’s still here.”
- “Yeah, we use it to keep everyone informed about anything going on.”
- “Really? Are the occupants in a fraternity?”
- “No, things like no hot water. Keeping the sleeping rooms locked. Stuff like that.”
- “Just like the old days. I had to keep my room locked because I sold bootleg Tijuana booze on Friday afternoons. Once, I forgot to lock my door when I left for the evening. I came back and my booze locker was empty.”
- “That so? Your own fraternity brothers swiped your liquor?”
- “We were a social fraternity, not Rotarians.”
- “Anyway, here's your room,” shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Room to let.

I thought back to his statement, “Well, we've a room, but it's not ready for rental. I'd need a few hours.” Maybe I should have given him a few more hours.

- Reporter, “Pretty Spartan. Actually this was my room my junior year in college. I recall it had a desk.”
- Slum landlord, “You get what you pay for.”
- “Which is?”
- “As I said, room's free. And I'm looking around for a pillow.”
- “Good idea. How about a towel?”
- “Hm. Not sure about that.”
- “Okay, any chance of a chair?”
- “Just pull one in from the living room.”

Those of my readers who know me personally are aware that I am not a snob. My origins are about as blue collar as they come. My dad was a cattle rancher, a horse breeder, and a sod buster. I have stayed in low-rent places in my travels around the globe. That stated, I wish to make a minor point that with the exception of my stays in Japan, all the motels and hotels in which I slept had bed frames for their mattresses. As best I can recall, all had at least one towel and a pillow as part of their inventory. With the exception of the cells in a couple jails I stayed-in during my care-free days, all rooms came with a blanket (and donuts). I recall one of those cells even had a chair. It was bolted to the floor, but it was still a chair.

Anon once said, “The more things change, the more things change,” an observation sufficiently obtuse to make sense to poets and philosophers. Anyway, I had changed. Once, as a wannabe Roger Miller vagabond, I would have tossed my bag on this bed, headed-out for the next adventure, and later in the evening, returned to this mattress without a care in the world, and definitely not a care about furnishings.

- Reporter, “Do the other rooms have towels and pillows?”
- “I suppose so. The renters furnish their own stuff.”
- “Okay. I understand. I'm not here for four-star lodging. I'm going to look around now.”
- “Help yourself. You're not our typical renter---just trying to help out.”

- “No big deal. Here's something for your effort.”
- “Thanks! Eh, I’ll find a chair for you.”

What happens to us as we grow older? Sure, we become softer, but it seems we also want a softer life. Somewhere along life's highway, I adapted the philosophy of *living well is the best revenge*. Revenge against what? Infirmity? Loss of memory? Parkinson's? Alzheimer's? Reliance on pills? Loss of physical prowess? Death? Yes, all of the fun-filled items on this list.

And for all of us, perhaps life's pleasures can somehow be heightened if we say to ourselves, *living well is the best revenge* while we sometimes engage in self-indulgent pamperings. Perhaps our statement serves as a defiant proclamation against the inevitable on-rush of old age.

I've come to learn that I do not know much about anything. The more I think about "anything" the more I understand I have no answers. I have opinions but no real answers. And that's what makes life interesting. With all our wisdom, we cannot even come up with why gravity works---other than to keep us from drifting-off to Mars or losing a coin when we flip it up in the air. That's fine by me. I like the mystery of our existence.

For this night, I spent a few hours walking through the Beta Xi chapter house of Sigma Chi. I relived hundreds of moments. They were past times that might be more appropriately recounted to my old fraternity brothers, but maybe these recollections will also bring back memories to you. Not necessarily about a fraternity or sorority, but about anything that gives you pleasure.

As I walked around my old college hang-out, as I thought about the many dances, parties, laughs, and experiences I shared with like-minded comrades, the final verses of Dean's song came to my mind. Yes, things change. Peter Pan notwithstanding, we cannot stay at our fraternity house forever. But we can go back, if only in our memories.

*Then add the wedding bell,
one house where lovers dwell.
Three little kids for the flavor.
Stir carefully through the days,
see how the flavor stays.
These are the times you will savor.*

*With his blessings from above,
serve it generously with love.
One man, one wife, one love through life.*

*Memories are made of this.
Memories are made of this.*

Adequately stocked with memories, I headed for the nearest hotel for the night.

Memories Are Made of This, Part Two

October 21-22, 2022

I was determined to visit my Sigma Chi fraternity brothers at least one more time before I stated pushing up daisies...okay, white roses, our fraternity flower. I had begged off the last two reunions. Back troubles and hearing problems.

Just get on with it. Afterall, my Sig brothers were laboring under the same old-age and age-old problems. By getting together, we could commiserate in mutual misery.

Friday Reception

I wish Doug McCleod, the organizer of our fraternity reunions, had required all of us to wear name tags. I could not recognize most of the men at the Friday night reception. Most of my fraternity brothers walked up to me with, "U.D., good to see you!" I did not remember this brother unless he gave me his name and even then, my recollection was hit-and-miss.

Someone said, "Time heals." Maybe so. My take, taken from the Friday reception of my fraternity reunion is, "Time ages." But for a while, being with these men held back time, if only for a couple hours.



I had intended to take many photos of my brothers and their mates at this reception. But I became involved in talking with them and forgot to pull out my camera. Nonetheless, here are a few pictures I hope will help you reconstruct our past.

Time tends to thin-out once crowded rooms. A few years ago, at earlier Friday night receptions, this room (in the picture to the left) would have been full of people. Nonetheless, many of us still above ground showed-up.

I asked one of my brothers, Bob Botts, "Who are you, really? You don't look like Bob Botts." Bob did not respond. I shortly found out why. He's nearly deaf. ...Join the crowd, Bob. You are in good company.



Speaking of Bob, also known as Eagle, here is Bob with my wife, Holly, and our deadly three-pound attack dog, Bitzi.

I have kept in touch with some of my brothers since the times of our Sigma Chi (Beta Xi chapter)-UNM friendships. They became my dearest friends. The Eagle is one. Tom Keleher is another. Tom and I were stationed at the same time in Subic Bay, Philippines in the mid-1960s. We were joined by Greta, Tom's wife, and Lynda, my former wife. Tom and I spent a lot of our time on the beaches of Vietnam during those days, but being in different branches of the Navy, we never came in contact with each other, only at Subic Bay war recesses.



I did not get a photo of Tom at the reception, but I did of Greta, shown here with other Sig mates.

Tom and Greta treated Holly, me, and other Sigma Chi brothers and sisters to a Mexican lunch on Saturday. The restaurant was the High Noon, located in Old Town.

We had considerable discussions on which restaurant would grace our esteemed presence. The High Noon was selected; perhaps for its cool name; perhaps for its hot chili; most likely for Tom saying to me: “We can talk about Gary Cooper, Grace Kelly, and that High Noon song.” Damned straight!

When selecting a Mexican-food place to eat, focus on its musical fame. ...Forget the chili relleños it serves.

I sent Tom a musical ditty about the High Noon Cafe and its famous hot chili. Here it is for your mental consumption. ...Digestive consumption is at your discretion:

Sang to the tune and rhythm of Frankie Lane’s “High Noon.”



Do not forsake me oh, my brothers,
on this our chili day.
Do not forsake me, oh my brothers,
Let’s eat...eat along.

I fear I know what fate awaits me,
I only know I must be brave.
Green chili will stalk my lower colon,
my stomach growling for a grave.

You Sigs will watch this Idahoan,
a potato man in later life.
You’ll wonder why he’s grown so wimpy?
What makes him fear jalapeno spice?

Just look at that big hand moving,
getting close to high noon time.
Now I must face that dreaded pepper.
Or be banned: A Beta Xi leper!

So, eat along...and get along,
for you can’t ignore that chili song.
You know what fates await you:
Passing wind among your throng.



Song-writing awards aside, I did manage to snap a few pictures. The man in the left-most photo is Doug McLeod, who put together this reunion, and over the years, many more. Doug is amazing. His patience and organizational skill...all done with grace...is extraordinary.



The middle picture is of Bill and Maggie Fanning. In my undergraduate years, I admired Bill's architectural artistry, but we were distant friends in those days. Lately, we have formed a bond of camaraderie and friendship. The right-most photo shows some of my Sig brothers exchanging wisdoms with one another.

A Visit to the Sig House and Active Sig Brothers

During this weekend, Holly and I paid a call on the Sigma Chi house located on the UNM campus. As told in this series of stories, I visited the house in May, 2012 ("Memories are Made of This") when the Beta Xi chapter had been banned from UNM and the building was occupied by renters---but still owned by the Sigs.

On this day, 21 October 2022, the Sig house was occupied by Sigs, as our chapter had been readmitted to UNM's fraternity register. The brothers let Holly and me in the secured doors and treated us with the utmost graciousness.

The building was in far better shape than the times I remember. During those past days, the common areas---living room, library, etc.---often resembled Animal House habitats. The front of the house looked the same as it did in the early 1960s; the brothers had done a great job of keeping the place intact.



The leftmost picture above shows the living quarters' part of the house, including the room where I setup a TGIF rum/vodka liquor store each week and peddled illegal booze to the brothers and their friends. (Recounted in "The Rum-runner" in this series.) The middle photo shows the entrance to the house. The only difference is that it has a lock on the door. The former apartment for the house mother, the window on the right, no longer has a chaperon living in it.

I'll never understand how or why these women took on this job. They had to have tons of patience and greatly selective hearing. Anyway, the white cross on the lawn looks no worse for

wear. In fact, it looks different from my recollection; more angular. Maybe it's a replacement for the original cross. I recall that a time capsule was said to be buried underneath the cross.

Several of the brothers greeted Holly and me at the door and walked with us while we did a house-tour. I told them about a few of the old times, including some semi-gory stories of hell week (in "One Hell of a Week" of this series). They responded that initiation rites were quite different now, which I think was very much needed.

The kitchen has been dismantled. The chapter no longer employs a cook and the brothers fend on their own for their meals. The living room looks the same. As seen in the photos below, so does the vestibule, which still has trophies on display in a case. The photo on the right shows

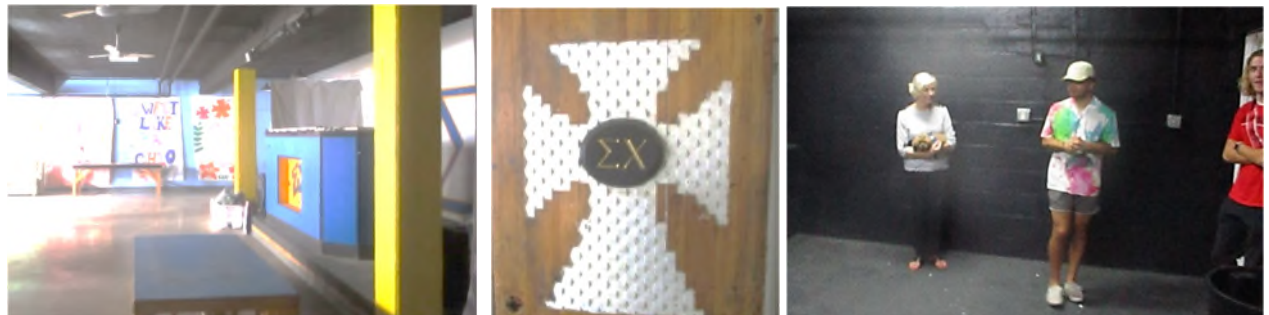


the walls of the vestibule. The ladies' room is still there. The payphone booths---I did not look at them, but I am sure they have no payphones in them. Those booths bring back a lot of memories, many revolving around my unsuccessful attempts to snare a weekend date.

My memories had me believe the staircase to the basement was gracefully curved, as mentioned in "One Hell of a Week." It is angular, but still impressive to a person who lived in a part of New Mexico where multi-story buildings were as rare as a New Mexico rainstorm.

The large basement room where we held many functions has had the stage and stage closets removed, as shown in the leftmost picture below. The doors to the room are the same: imposing renditions of the Sigma Chi cross, as seen in the middle photo.

One of the most noticeable changes was the conversion of the library to an exercise room, as depicted in the rightmost picture below. At first, I was taken aback by this change, but it made sense. I can count on one finger the times I have visited a library the past year. The Internet is my library. An all-black room? Yep, my kind of color.



During the times the brothers and I walked around in the basement, I told them a couple stories about the Klondike and hell week. They listened respectfully to this very senior citizen recounting experiences that are most likely non-existent in their lives. And likely, they are the

better for not having them in their inventory of memories---although I must admit I thought the hell week antic of being covered with sticky feathers from head-to-toe while naked was hilarious.

I told my brothers why I was in town: to attend a Sig reunion of the local Beta Xi chapter. They thanked me for coming to the house to visit. I thanked them for the tour and especially for listening to old stories about Beta Xi and Sigma Chi. Holly snapped a farewell picture of two brothers and me in the vestibule. As we left the Sig house, Holly said, "Meeting these young men restores my faith in America." I seconded her thought, "Let's hope more like them are taking the reins of our country. For now, this fraternity is in good hands."



Saturday Night Dinner

The last get-together for this reunion was a dinner on Saturday. Once again, I forgot to take more pictures because of talking with the brothers and their mates. But I did snap these two later in the evening of Jim, Holly, and Doug.

Memories were made this weekend. Times were recalled which seemed to hold-back, if only a little bit, time itself. That's my joy of attending these reunions, and I hope for you as well. By the way, thanks again, Doug.

