

The
Chasm
Crossed

Kit Cain

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THE CHASM CROSSED

There was a time
when I was lost;
It seemed no pathway
could be found.

No sign...
No marking on the tree...
No safe or hallowed ground.

The trees obscured my vision;
I had left my world behind;
The old familiar patterns gone...
...that road so well defined.

The chasm crossed,
The bridge removed,
And on the other side....

.....my mind!

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CHAPTER 1.

My Father, Victor Cain, and his father before him, George Cain, were educators first, and teachers and school headmasters by trade. Prior to that for as far back as the four or five generations I can trace, my forbears on my Father's side were sea captains and men of the sea. On my Mother's side were traveling salesmen, newspaper owners and editors, and more sea captains. All without exception were born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada, ventured outward into the world from there and were either buried at sea, lost at sea, buried in some far corner of the earth, or returned to Nova Scotia to live out their final years.

At about the turn of the last century (1898), George Cain founded a summer wilderness camp for boys far back in the forests and lakes of Nova Scotia at Lake Annis. Victor Cain and his brother Carroll Cain operated the camp after George Cain died, bringing boys from Boston and from the Canadian Maritimes for three months of experiences in tents, canoes, and discipline that their lives had never had before and which most would never forget.

The only connection Lake Annis had with the outside world was 16 miles of dusty dirt road which led to the town of Yarmouth, and a tiny little flag-stop station on the Dominion Atlantic Railway which ran a steam engine and some baggage cars through hamlets like Lake Annis for passenger travel to Halifax or Yarmouth, and for milk pickup from the farms along its right-of-way. There was also a daily mail delivery by the train, and perhaps an occasional package mail-ordered from Sear's and Roebuck's nearest Catalogue store six hours away in Halifax. The only other public transportation to Yarmouth was by farm truck on Fridays and Saturdays. Being packed in like sardines on wooden benches set against high boarded sides with a tightly stretched canvas for a roof was just part of that way of life. The discomfort of bouncing over corduroy dirt roads filled with potholes, and breathing dust for the half-hour ride were a welcome relief from the long hours of work in the kitchens, garden, oxen and cow barns, and woodlots of any small country farm.

There were all of eighteen or twenty summer cottages which made up the village of Lake Annis, most of them sitting side by side just off the maple-tree-lined dirt road known as the Lake Annis Loop, but a few hugged the shore along the lake's edge. The brisk early-morning mist off the lake often intermingled with the smell of smoke from the woodstoves, and the quietness of it all made an impression on some part of me that was always there as a reference point in some hidden part of my being ... an unforgettable memory of the peaceful, unhurried days of country living that would contrast so sharply with my hurried

later life. It also had a permanence like the deep, low rumble of the Cape Forchu foghorn to the fishermen: a fixed point that told the way home on a constantly moving world of tidal currents that brought 22-foot tides, thick, dense fogs, wild storms, and never-ending change.

The low-frequency, thundering rumble of the foghorn easily carried the 16 miles from Yarmouth to Lake Annis when the fog lay still on the harbor or the wind blew out of the South. The memory of its sounds coupled with the smells of wood smoke, the spruce tree forest, and the mist rising quietly off the lake were subtly imbued lifelong reminders of a stable portion of life that stayed very much the same from year to year.....a portion of life that wasn't constantly in some kind of motion or tumultuous change requiring endless responses, reactions, thoughts, and adaptations. It was as though my world in the woods of Nova Scotia was an indelible part of my soul, and everything else some kind of rude intrusion.

At Camp "Mooswa", a Micmac Indian word meaning "protector of the child", my greatest joy was to forsake the organized activities and youthful competitions to wander alone for miles through the forest, exploring. The narrow logging roads, swampy areas, changes from evergreen to deciduous tree cover, creeks, shorelines, cattle fences, and lonely farmhouses were familiar landmarks to me and served to guide me unerringly home. I was never lost, and most of the time I imagined that no-one knew I was gone or where I was. If my Father ever noticed my conspicuous absence from a ball game or a tennis match, he never said anything to me. Having grown up in that same summer camp as a boy himself he must have understood the free spirit of an adventurous, eternally-restless traveler.

Not for many years did I realize that in my own life I had forsaken all he considered to be his "responsibilities" and "sacrifices", and chosen to live out the dreams he had put aside for the sake of his own children and the children of others. Only by recalling his collection of World War II plastic airplanes and his favorite painting of a P-51 fighter could I realize that he, too, had dreamed of being the military pilot I later became.

Only by inheriting what was left of the perfect scale model of the famous Nova Scotia schooner, Bluenose, which Dad had made, piece by laboriously-whittled piece, over the two years he was immobilized from a childhood sledding back-injury, did I realize that his dreams of life at sea had been set aside for some higher purpose his generation and values could not permit him to forsake.

Shortly after Dad passed away, and the summer camp had long since been closed down, I moved back to Nova Scotia from the US to begin construction on a 51-foot

sailboat which would take me four and a half years of hard labor to build, using the hand tools and power tools of my Father's workshop. I had done this because I was lost on a sea of my own making: the sea of all unknown things which is a landmark in the journey of all spiritual seekers. I had forsaken the life of a very busy and reasonably successful business executive to pursue my childhood affinity for the journeyings of my soul. Wealth, position, and "responsibility" were like an Albatross about the neck of the Ancient Mariner who was still very much alive within me. The only dream left for me was the boat dream, the dream which is inextricably intertwined in all men's minds with the journey into the unknown and uncharted waters of the soul. But that is another story for another time.

The "other" part of my youthful life—the part from September to June—I spent being educated in the best of schools and amongst those persons of some social position. It was Dad's strong conviction that life was not only a matter of *what* you knew, but, equally importantly, a matter of *whom* you knew. I could never quite buy this equation. There was no-one I knew with whom I shared any close kinship, and no business I wanted to spend a boring life within. I don't know who in Hell I thought I was, but I did know I seemed to myself to be different than all the rest. Mechanical things and distant places were more important to me than book learning or any association I could imagine with the "good old boys" of school and social activity. But Dad was a stern taskmaster. He was, perhaps, too stern, but then, who is to say? Perhaps these words would never have been written had he not been so eloquent himself with Latin and French as well as English, and insisted on the best *from* his children as well as *for* them. Only with the perspective of increasing age do I realize that no small part of me can see so far because I am standing on my Father's powerful shoulders, looking out through the eyes of my Mother's gentle heart.

It is only from the perspective of advancing time when the unfolding of inescapable events have taken their toll on the ego, the vanity, the self-importance, and the apparent indestructibility of youthful energy, that the true patterns begin to emerge. These are the patterns of soul; the parts of us that go on.....and on.....and on through lifetime after lifetime. In early life we are too busy being challenged, having fun, proving something to ourselves or the world, or carrying responsibility. The overview of the patterns and cycles of time are obscured from our vision. That is.....that's the case for most of us! With myself.....well.....I was sixteen years old when I realized that I could never reconcile myself with the way the "Butler" of life—my "responsibility"—had laid out the choices before me. I didn't know it at the time, but that was the soul of Kit Cain speaking to itself.....and to its Source..... and I was heard!

There were other events in my younger years that portended my future interest in the mystical and esoteric things of life, but one in particular stands out above all the others.

Each year, during my summers as a camper at Camp Mooswa, there would be an unannounced morning when we all came into the dining room with our breakfast dishes of oatmeal or Red River cereal, eggs any way we wanted them, oatmeal-brownbread toast, and cows milk fresh from the cow's udder, to discover to our surprise a scarecrow of lifelike proportions, stuffed with straw and sporting a head made of a carefully carved coconut with small seashells for eyes hanging by a noose around the neck from the dining hall rafters. This, we learned later, was "Coconut Joe", when grandfather George Cain—affectionately known as "Pater"—stood up and announced that the pirate Bloody Pete had once again visited the camp grounds in search of his hidden treasure which he had lost a hundred years before. As usual, Bloody Pete had left Coconut Joe hanging from the rafter as he'd been hung from the "yardarm"this as a warning that the specter of Death is always before those who venture upon the sea of life without sufficient light and knowledge. According to Pater, the treasure Bloody Pete had lost was the "Key to Knowledge", and it was contained within and upon a candlestick.....the candlestick, of course, being the physical symbol of Light.....and whoever found the candlestick would be forever-after filled with light and knowledge.

Pater then announced that promptly at ten that morning, the first of seven clues would be pinned to a post outside the counselor's headquarters cabin—known as the "Gull's Nest"—with a marlin spike, and may the Gods of Good Fortune smile upon all those diligent, perceptive, and discerning enough to decipher from the cleverly-worded verse the location of the second clue..... which led to the third and so forth to the treasure itself. All twenty-five of us, aged seven to 12 could hardly hold back our excitement and when Pater came out of the Gull's Nest, he held in his hand a large piece of parchment with burn marks around the edges which he affixed to the post with an ordinary spike.... marlin spikes being a little large and cumbersome for the task. The older, taller campers, by dint of their size alone, muscled their way to get the first readings of the verse and inevitably headed off in directions either deliberately misleading or directly to what they had deciphered to be the clue's location. The younger boys, some of whom could hardly make out the verse, just followed the most charismatic or excited senior. Oftentimes one of the clues would stump everyone for two or three years and, through Pater's constant encouragement and affirmation that the clue was still hidden exactly where the previous clue had said it was, the diligent were constrained to continue.

So it was, in my twelfth year, a few years after Pater's death and the assumption of his duties by my Father, that the third clue had not been discovered for two years. Most of that summer, even before the Treasure Hunt had officially been announced, I searched the area of the main swim dock which I was certain was the clue's general location, turning over every rock, looking under every plank. I did this off and on throughout the summer,

but the effort proved fruitless. Finally one sunny day, weeks after the season's Treasure Hunt had been resumed, I was sitting on a huge boulder next to the dock contemplating what other possibilities I might have missed. I was staring absentmindedly at the butt end of one of the huge foundation logs beneath the dock platform when I suddenly became aware that there was something unusual about the grain on the sawn-off end of the log. Upon closer inspection I could see one small spot about a half-inch in diameter where the concentric rings of the logs ran the wrong way.....yet the weathered color of the log end was uniform throughout, having been exposed to the elements for two full years. There was no-one else about, even the most diligent treasure hunters having lost interest weeks before, when I dug out the plug and pulled out the clue. How clever Dad had been. He had pounded in the plug and then sawn off a small slab of the log's end so it would look uniform, then removed every trace of sawdust. He then did the same to each end of the dock's four main support logs to be further misleading.

The rules of the hunt stipulated that anyone finding a clue was allowed a 24-hour head start before the clue was posted and made public. It was from that point on that I could not be stopped, finding each of the seven clues within the 24-hour grace period, and finally the candlestick itself, hidden shortly before the discovery of the seventh clue in an old hollow stump. I quickly took it to Dad to claim it as mine.

" Well now, Kit, good enough for you!" he said to me. "A little harder than the chocolate marshmallow men your Grandfather used to hide for your pleasure and fun, eh? Now let me see you interpret the symbols engraved on the candlestick!"

Up to that point I hadn't noticed any symbols at all. The candlestick itself had been carefully made by a jeweler from a highly polished brass 12-gauge shotgun shell—a rarity in itself—with a polished silver handle silver-soldered to each side. A short white candle complete with burnt wick and wax drippings protruded from the shell's top. Engraved on the face in a semi-circular pattern was the name Camp Mooswa, and beneath that the year: 1948. Below that there were engraved several symbols: the number 4; below that a horseshoe with the prongs facing upward; and below that the capital letter B nestled into the inner angle of a carpenter's square.

I could not, for the life of me, figure out what the symbols meant, and so Dad interpreted the symbols, replacing them with easily understood words:

4 good luck B on the square

Here was the real beginning of my journey into further light and knowledge. The message was about the absolute importance of honesty and integrity in a world filled with multitudinous perversions of both qualities. Not for many years did I come to realize that



the major key to inner peace and fulfillment lay in the discovery of the inner self through being absolutely and brutally honest with one's-self, and the production of outer success through the implementation of impeccable integrity in all agreements, relationships, and dealings with the world at large. The ultimate result of always "Being on the square" is Respect ... self-respect first, and next the respect accorded by others. The hard-earned quality of respect is an absolutely essential cornerstone for the expression and reception of true friendship and the abiding feelings of love.

I was twelve years old at the time, and I did not realize until much older how powerful the symbology of the number twelve—my chronological age at the time—really was. It was the hidden symbol to me that in the finding of this treasure I was to later uncover many of the hidden treasures of life, and finally discover the greatest treasure of all: the key to understanding life itself.

CHAPTER 2.

I have often said that if there is such a thing as reincarnation and I have to start all over again from infancy, and thence to youth, to adolescence, to young adulthood, maturity, and old age, the part I want to skip is adolescence. In childhood, a child can dwell with some measure of spontaneity and carefree enthusiasm for life by dwelling in an active imagination—given caring parents who provide conditions for such behavior.

But adolescence has no escape mechanism. In the male in particular, dragons emerge as hormones from some unknown part of the physical realm and trigger a physical confusion of self-awareness the child has no choice but to confront head-on. The animal instincts seem to creep unseen and unnoticed from their lair, and urges hitherto unknown direct attention to the mating game—a game which seems to have rigid surface rules, but which, below the surface in the dark and unseen recesses of personal behavior, are subject only to the excesses of the imagination and physical/emotional titillation.

Couple that with the newly emerged importance of self image—the hair, the clothes, the walk, the talk, and the search for love and acceptance—and suddenly the world is an all-consuming whirlpool requiring total focus of attention on outward appearances. The imagination becomes less of a friend and more of an enemy—fear and self-consciousness trigger feelings of unworthiness, lack of self-esteem, and rejection. Or the opposite can manifest just as easily, according to the dictates of external circumstances, leading to conceit, vanity, and the ruthless manipulation of others for selfish ends.

Is it this way with everyone? Certainly I have no way of knowing, but I would hope not. I know that in my own case all the feelings and thoughts of human form and psyche seemed amplified as though to produce an experiential fervor. Was there some part of my being that knew that such intensity was an essential adjunct to the poet and writer I was later to become? ... or was the effect of eloquence caused by the anguish and unrest of personal experience? From where I stand at present I can see both cause and effect as being of equal possibility and probability ... and issuing forth from the same Source. During adolescence, however, I had no thoughts of cause, effect, or control ... only reaction to the events that unfolded before me.

I remember how important it was to comb my hair so that there was a little curl on one side ... and how important it seemed for that curl to stay there undisturbed throughout the

day. I remember studying the walk and body movements of the “tough guys”, changing my own style so I would appear more threatening, for I was always small in stature for my age.

But the biggest problem I had—and it was a problem for many years—was shyness, my lack of capacity to carry on an intelligent conversation with the opposite sex. Having been raised in a family situation with one brother and zero sisters; having attended private elementary school where girls were on one side of the building in their own classrooms; and having spent every summer of my life in a boy’s summer camp in the wilderness, I had no idea what to say to a girl or how to carry on an intelligent conversation without my face turning beet red with self-conscious nervous uncertainty. I remember struggling with all kinds of thoughts like what to do with my hands ... whether to put them in my pockets ... or behind my back ... or one hand on my hip ... or maybe just one hand in my pocket. I wondered how to stand so it looked casual and cool. And what the hell was there to talk about? Women were just totally different animals, with totally different interests. I had no idea where to even begin to communicate.

That, at least, was the state of my social development in 1950—the year I told my father that I wanted to go to public high school because the Gilman Country Day School didn’t seem to have anything at all that I wanted ... or the type of learning I could handle. The fact that I failed mathematics totally, could not in any way fathom the intricacies of metric measurement, and could hardly have cared less about History, English Classics, or Chemistry, simply added further discouragement to my feelings of self-worth. And though I was very well coordinated and quite fleet afoot, I was extremely sensitive to pain and not one to enjoy with any relish being bashed about in the game of football, which, at that time, was all there was.

I often wondered later in my life how my poor father, who was the Assistant Headmaster and a teacher at the Calvert School not far away, and of which a great many of the Gilman students were comprised, felt about the lack of performance of his eldest son. He used to say to me that automobile mechanics’ cars were the worst maintained in the world; chef’s families the poorest fed; and social workers’ children the poorest behaved. I suppose he felt it was quite normal that a schoolteacher’s child might naturally have a severe learning deficit! The term “attention deficit syndrome” had not been coined in that day and age, but the minute I heard the term spoken I knew it referred to me and those like me. I distinctly remember telling my father about the problem I had with school learning when we were driving to school early one morning in the 1940 Woody station wagon Dad had purchased to supplement his meager teacher’s income by using it as a



sort of small school bus. I'm sure he didn't realize how important the words of his reply were, but they stayed with me for years as the most important words I had ever heard him say to me. He said:

"Kit, your mind does not work like other peoples' minds. It is unique in and of itself, and you will find ways to use it and express with it as you grow older. I have great faith in you; and you're no different than I was at your age. Just do the best you can with your schooling, for the fact that you have been to school is more important than what you have learned there."

Little did I know at the time how important and meaningful my father's words would become to me in later life. And so, after the humiliation of largely failing grades at the Gilman Country Day School, off I went at age 14 to the brand new Milford Mill High School in Pikesville, Maryland. Was I ever in for a different kind of education! It was really first-degree culture shock! Never in my life had I been so close to so many girls in one place ... girls in tight T-shirts with two bumps in them, and skin-tight jeans that left no room for imagination. With that kind of distraction, there was still no way my attention could be drawn to English, American History, Science, Chemistry, or any other course in rote memorization. At Milford Mill High, however, there was some salvation.

We had a very droll science teacher who found it impossible to control his class activities, try as he might, so he very intelligently stopped even trying to give us information we either didn't want or couldn't handle. I don't recall all the various creative yet totally unorthodox activities he employed to maintain order in his Science classroom, but I do remember that one corner of the classroom was reserved for guitar lessons as taught by one of the more talented students. I borrowed my father's cheap classical guitar which he had purchased some years before in the hopes that he'd find time to learn to how to use, but never did, took it to Science class and struggled with chords and fingerings until I could make sounds emanate from it that actually had rhythm and harmony resembling a song. That training was the beginning of my constant companionship with guitars, a companionship that has entertained me every year of my life, providing me with endless hours of enjoyment... and perhaps was even the beginning of my poetic sense.

Then there was Mechanical Drafting, and Carpentry, and Metalworking shop ... all of which were of far greater interest to me because I was just naturally talented at all of them. Additionally, the classes were for males only and I didn't have to try to look like I wasn't staring at that little nipple poking through that tight white t-shirt on that dark-haired little angel at the desk two rows—and a whole world—away from where I sat. Had the classes been co-ed I'm certain I'd have lost a few fingers—if not a whole hand—to a table saw for the distraction of attention.

There were no satin high school jackets at private school, just white shirts and pleated trousers ... anything but satin! But the “In” crowd at Milford Mill High School all wore satin jackets ... horrid, pukey-green, the color of green mold ... and some other non-nondescript color like silver that I don’t even want to remember. Sewn on the back, giant letters announced Milford Mill High as though it were the local Harvard or Yale.

I desperately wanted one of those jackets, but Dad would have none of it. He talked me out of that the same way he did when he wouldn’t settle for his eldest son’s having a tattoo, long hair with a “D.A.” in back, pegged pants, or a wallet with a long chain. In 1950, the guys to be envied all had “chopped” 1940 Ford or Mercury coupes with fender skirts, loud dual exhausts, dual carburetors ... and lots of tales about liquor and loose women. “Forget it!” Dad would say. “Don’t shrink yourself to that size! You don’t come from that class, so don’t advertise the fact that you do.”

As for me, I had my bike—a six-speed, which was pretty advanced for 1950—and I’d ride it 7 miles to visit Maryanne who lived near the High School ... but on the “other side of the tracks”... a factor which it occurred to me to never mention to Mom or Dad! She was sweet and nice and full of fun and we’d mutter a few words about the weather or school or something equally as trivial and then I’d feel so uneasy I’d get back on my bike and ride the 7 miles back home. One day when I arrived at Maryanne’s, she greeted me at the door wearing a leopard-skin bikini—what there was of it looked like leopard skin anyway—and she invited me in the house. She said her parents were away for the day and then lay down on the couch ... and right away I started to sweat and get real nervous. She started to giggle, and not until many years later did I realize how ridiculous I must have looked. She got up, offered me a Coke, which I downed in a gulp or two, and then climbed on my bike and went home. I never went back to Maryanne’s House. She’d scared the hell out of me!

Back then there were no foolproof contraceptives and as a result, every month or so, someone else in high school would have to get married and start a family. At least that was the part of life everyone saw. What went on behind the scenes of respectability no-one ever heard about. My father’s instructions to me regarding my desire for promiscuity were quite explicit: “Don’t sleep with any girl you wouldn’t marry”. As a result I had few girlfriends, and the two or three I had through adolescence were chosen very carefully.

There were still other factors limiting my desire for promiscuity. Family life was the last thing on earth I wanted to experience in my adolescent years. The distant horizon was always too far away for me, and in my imagination I journeyed to the far corners of the Earth, worked on oil rigs, and sailed on world-traveling sailboats while my schoolwork

bored me to sleep. I was no student of rote memorization. Practical mechanics magnetized my attention. If a thing was mechanical I had to know how it worked, and if it was broken I had to fix it. I was—and still am—controlled by these inner compulsions ... characteristics of my personality which are my talents together with those imbalances which require constant vigilance until re-trained or trained to remain under control.

Being of very high Aries energy, physically quite strong, and very active athletically, the procreational urge seemed to create constant conflict with my desire and need for freedom. I had to deal with this paradoxical nature of my being—as do more than a few of us—and the polar nature of this desire mechanism seems to me to be one of the biggest challenges for males from adolescence onward. It seems also to be particularly true with the more sensitive souls—those who are as conscious of how their actions impact on others as they are of their own desires. Sexually I was as desirous as any other healthy young man, but also as aware that the feminine gender sought considerably more than physical stimulation. At least that was true amongst the more attractive women who had more than a small measure of choice, and those seemed to be the only ones who were attractive to me.

So it was with great difficulty, inner dissatisfaction, and turmoil that I went off to a co-educational college—Middlebury College—in the rolling hills of Vermont. How I ended up being accepted into college was a mystery to me as I was certainly not college material academically. I later discovered that it was due almost entirely to the efforts of Walden Pell, Headmaster at the time of Saint Andrew's School in Middletown, Delaware, which I had attended for my final three years of high school.

Nor could I afford to go to college ... but there seemed nothing else to do more interesting than that, so, with a little financial help from my family and Buck Stewart, father of my closest friend, Van Stewart, I had enough for my first year of college.

“After your first year”, Dad told me, “You’re on your own. I’m tired of being a teacher and headmaster. It’s time for a major change in my life, and so I’ve changed professions. That’s going to mean a few hungry years ahead for the whole family”.

Hungry years they were for Mom, Dad, Brother Scott, and me as Dad was not nearly as successful at selling life insurance as he had been as a school teacher and school administrator.

Not for many years did I realize how valuable my summer experiences of forced manual labor in preparing Camp Mooswa for summer use would later be. Ever since I had turned ten years old, Dad required that I help with the myriad labors of sanding and painting



rowboats, canoes, oars, paddles, sailboats, rigging sailboats, building docks, putting docks in the water and taking them out, maintaining generators, outboard motors, maintaining vehicles, building cabins, fixing roofs, cleaning out septic tanks and sink drains, pulling grass and weeds from clay tennis courts, cutting up blown-down trees with an axe and a chain saw, installing and climbing power poles to hang electric lines, and mowing the huge ball-field and many pathways with a big, old-fashioned, hand scythe.

Hours of hard work and sweat were not new to me by the time I reached college and so it was easy for me to apply for jobs in my fraternity residence in exchange for room and board ... jobs like stoking the coal furnace during winter and hauling its ashes; or washing pots and pans after each meal. On weekends I pumped gas at the local gas station, and in return had the use of the car hoist and mechanic's tools to maintain my old Ford—otherwise I couldn't have afforded to own or maintain a car while at college. Between classes and on weekends I managed the ice rink maintenance crew and together we scraped the ice three times a day on skates using snow shovels for scrapers. On holidays I contracted myself out with my chainsaw to remove trees, do silviculture work for the college tree plantations, and any other maintenance work resulting from ads on the Student Union bulletin board.

Still I had to borrow money from the College Loan Board to pay my tuition—I was never smart enough for a scholarship. In fact, I barely graduated. I'll never know where that final, single credit came from, but I didn't have time for another semester. The draft in 1958 was very real; we all served our time in the service without exception. Having seen that requirement looming large on the horizon, and not wishing to be a part of the Army ROTC training, I signed up with the U.S. Marines in my junior year, and went from college graduation into the U.S. Navy flight training program as a Marine Second Lieutenant.

But there was another event that happened at Middlebury College that turned my world upside down, shook it to its foundations, and began the process of introspection that would compel me inwardly as well as outwardly for the next 40 years. I fell in love--and it was at least a 2-story fall because there were times I didn't think I'd survive the repercussions that falling into love produced inside me. Like all the other ingeniously contrived traps of Planet Earth life, this kind of love crept up on me like a boa constrictor in the jungle, wrapped me in its clutches, and almost squeezed the life out of me both then and for several years afterwards.

I was a very active member of the Middlebury Mountain Club and one of the club's major functions was to maintain a section of the Long Trail through the Green Mountains. Quite often there were organized hikes and backpacking trips to various Long Trail huts and

log cabins, and on one of these trips I met a girl from Colorado who love the outdoors and the mountains as much as I did. She had bright blue eyes, long blond hair that she braided into single or double braids, and the strong, firm of body of an athlete.

Over a period of six months we grew closer until finally our feelings for each other began to express themselves physically—a dangerous state of affairs considering my naiveté—until finally one month she missed her menstrual period. I don't know exactly what happened from there, but the Dean of Women does—as would any good Dean of Women at a co-educational college—and the final conclusion came down to the fact that the affair had to end abruptly because neither of us were capable of ending it partially. The grip of physical/emotional indulgence being as powerful and binding as it can be at age 18 and 19, it was difficult for both of us, but she handled it far better than I.

I, of course, being Aries/Taurus by nature, was not inclined to listen to reason or exercise the essential level of detachment and self-control, so finally she whacked me over the head with some observations I had no choice but to confront.

“I want to go on to nursing school,” she said, thinking she might like a career similar to her father's (that of a Medical Doctor in the field of Public Health administration). “And furthermore, you have no idea what you want to do—or be—and it doesn't appear that you would make a very good provider for me or any family we might have.”

Bingo! She had sent a fiery arrow to the very core of my being--or I should say of my non-being. There it was: I was unworthy! Rejected! Not good enough! ... issues I'd successfully avoided since childhood, but hurdles I could no longer avoid. What a confused mess I became after those statements had time to sink in. I began feeling so sorry for myself, tormenting myself with so many unanswerable questions about myself that my friends began avoiding me. The end of the world loomed just a few feet away constantly.

Fortunately, however, the net result was a firm resolve to abandon my free-spirited, devil-may-care spontaneity, and buckle down to the serious job of “responsibility”. It was a drastic measure, but an essential effort for me at that point in time and space. It was this level of resolve and effort that finally earned my graduation, and this level of resolve and focused attention that took me through my pilot's flight training successfully. In fact, my battle with “responsibility” lasted about 12 years before I realized that financial success carries a heavy price in lack of consideration for others and family. Just as quickly did I learn that wealth breeds the need and desire for “more”, and with that “more” comes greater and greater responsibility ... not such a bad thing if one is built to carry heavy mental and emotional loads, but I was not so constituted. Fortunately for many or most

of the souls of Planet Earth, the rewards of effort appear to be worth the price paid. Not so with me! It would be many years before I could reasonably explain that part of my being.

Another event of profound importance that occurred to me during adolescence happened in my seventeenth year while attending St. Andrew's School. The school had arranged for a battery of aptitude and psychological tests for students approaching their final year of high school training so they would have some idea of what careers they were best suited to pursue. The tests lasted for several days, during which time classes for those being tested were suspended. Finally, the results came back several weeks later after we had all but forgotten about the tests. We were each called in for private consultation and the test results explained along with career recommendations. Everyone was quite excited about their potential in fields such as law, medicine, science, politics, public-service, business, or education. The more I heard, the more self-conscious I felt, and the more I avoided questions about my own tests by saying I had not been interviewed yet or that my test results had not yet arrived, but that was a straight-faced lie. My tests showed that I would make a very good maintenance man, janitor, carpenter, or tradesman!

I don't know who wrote those tests, but I can assure you they'd had no experience with anything but the academic life. It has been my unfortunate experience to discover that the Halls of Learningdom, though overflowing with theory and volumes of information, have something considerably less than practical theories of how life really works, and little or no real wisdom at all. Fortunately for me, the mental setback was only temporary and I quickly forgot about my condemnation to blue-collar status. Not until 20 years later did I begin to appreciate my true mechanical nature. It took 20 years of the pressures and pettiness of corporate and business life before I graduated from it and began to appreciate the freedoms and continuous challenges of new learning as I became the self-employed tradesman.

I still don't know how to define the difference between a trade and a profession; the words seem to have been coined to define more of a class distinction than anything else. Class distinction, however, was never a state of consciousness I allowed to interfere with my interests or inner motivations ... as a list of my various trades/professions would indicate. At various times since leaving college I have earned a living as an itinerant salesman, licensed real-estate broker in five states and Canada, real estate appraiser, commercial pilot, bush pilot, photographer/cinematographer, part-time actor, Nutrition Consultant and Naturopathic Physician, Contractor, Maintenance Supervisor, Victorian house renovator, Landlord, traveling lecturer, carpenter, and house painter, to name the major categories. In addition, each of these vocations carried with it numerous applications essential to

vocational success. Not the least of these avocations were the designing and building of boats, wiring and plumbing houses, installing and repairing furnaces, being a locksmith, a computer builder, a bookkeeper, a woodsman, a house builder, cabinet maker, musician, writer, poet, and philosopher ... while also raising two families.

Though a “Jack of many trades”, I was most assuredly not a master of any one of them. It was almost as though I chose each field for the experiencing of it rather than the perfecting of it. From my personal perspective, perfection is simply the carrot hung before the donkey’s nose to get him moving and keep him moving. It only works for a little while. Perfection is what humans may strive for, but we never quite achieve it ... and it seems to be purposefully planned that way. It seems to me as though once perfection is achieved, there is no further room for growth and improvement. That would be contrary to the primary, instructional nature of experience here on this Planet.

I had often heard that learning really begins only after formal schooling. Little did I know how true that saying was...and it was thus that my true education really began.

CHAPTER 3.

That understanding did not come with any full-blown revelation or voice from the Heavens. It came one single building block at a time—each building block being a string of experiences with a lesson attached, and the lessons were not the school classroom type! They were lessons in bad judgment, wrong choices, naive impulses lacking careful thought, and traps organized around my every weakness.

St. Andrew's School in Middletown, Delaware, is a group of classical, old-English style buildings with ivy-covered stone walls, slate roofs, slate-tiled hallways, and oak floors. Small wonder that the movie *The Dead Poet Society* was filmed there. It is a classical learning "Institution" originally funded and still maintained through trusts established by the DuPont family. I'm not sure whether I learned anything in the classrooms during my three years there or not, but I'm sure I learned more than my mind retained. I think the Headmaster at the time, Dr. Walden Pell, who was an Episcopal minister and our teacher in Religion, managed to sneak a few lines of Chaucer and Shakespeare into my dull mind, but when he tried to explain the significance of C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, I found my head nodding itself to sleep. I couldn't have been less interested. And though I did sing in the choir and enjoyed the musical participation, the religious dogma didn't make sense to me at all. We were, however, required to attend chapel service daily and there didn't seem to be any doubt in my mind that there was a God somewhere who could hear my prayers. Besides, I needed all the help I could get in order to make the "Right" things happen in my life.

I was much more interested in sneaking down the silent, dark corridors of the main school building at two or three o'clock in the morning to Dr. Pell's office storeroom, opening the locked door using a piece of stiff plastic, and "borrowing" keys from the main key box inside. Next afternoon, I would ride into town on my bike, have the key copied as though it were a key to my room, and return the original to the key box the next night. The reason for doing this in the first place was because the classrooms were all kept locked at night and I had a very good reason for wanting to get into the classroom that lay immediately below the room I shared with another classmate off the second floor corridor. Lights went out and power went off to all rooms on each corridor promptly at 10:00PM by means of a master power switch in the corridor master's apartment. I didn't particularly agree with that rule, and since I hadn't voted on it, I made a slight adjustment to the rule without having to create a disciplinary infraction for myself. I strung a long brown extension cord out my window, concealed it in the ivy of the outside wall, and would then sneak quietly out of my room and down the hall late at night, let myself into the classroom immediately

below with my key, fish the cord in through the slightly ajar window, and plug it into one of the classroom electrical outlets. I thus had power to my room for late night studying, or for my radio which I listened to with earphones. I would, of course, have to hide both ends of the extension cord when I was through and prior to classes the next day.

That worked so well that I made a few more trips to Dr. Pell's storeroom and finally ended up with a copy of every master key to the entire school. I was particularly interested in a key to the kitchen pantry where the cookies were kept, but it meant that I would have to sneak past the cook's quarters and that was a little too scary to do more than once or twice. I thought I was being very clever until I discovered that a friend of mine had figured out how to get into the main telephone exchange terminal room and plug in an Army surplus phone repairman's telephone into the main school line late at night to call his girlfriend in Philadelphia. It wasn't that we were really bad kids, it's just that we were a little bored and enjoyed thinking we had put something over on the established system. One day, however, it backfired.

At the end of my next-to-last year at St. Andrew's, I had accumulated a number of honorable positions such as Vice President of the class, a "Praefect" member of the student governing board, co-captain of the soccer team, and captain of the rowing team. Another adventurous member of the class and I decided to bring in a six-pack of beer to celebrate the end of the year—alcoholic beverages of any kind were strictly forbidden on the campus—so we talked the assistant cook into leaving a six-pack of beer on the seat of his car, giving him the necessary funds to make it happen. We planned to have a secret little party with four of our mutual friends and have a single can of beer apiece. We picked the beer up just after dark and were waiting until after midnight when everyone would be in bed before having our little party down in the lakeside shed (which I also had a key to) where the rowing shells and motor launch were kept. It was off by itself and hidden among the trees at the lake's edge so what little noise we would make would not be noticed.

My friend took the beer to his room and hid it under his bed. Somehow his stupid idiot of a roommate found the beer and decided to drink all six cans himself before we could get to it. In a drunken stupor he loaded all six empty cans into an overnight bag, stumbled out into the hall and promptly fell on the floor in front of the corridor master's door. The master promptly came out to see what all the racket was about ... and that was the end of the show for us.

The next morning Dad arrived to pick me up and take me home from school for the summer vacation only to discover that I had been hauled up before the Disciplinary Committee behind closed doors to decide my fate. I was stripped of all my class honors

positions, allowed to keep my athletic titles, and suspended from school for six days at the end of summer and the beginning of the next school year. The funny thing was that Dad didn't seem angry at all. I told him the whole story as we drove the two-hour ride home, and I think I caught him trying hard not to smile several times. It wasn't until many years later that he let on that he had flunked out of his first year at Harvard because he was having too much fun drinking, carousing with women, and roaring around Cambridge on his Indian motorcycle. Judging from the stories he told me, women are no more promiscuous today with birth control than they were back in 1924. Back then the girls just had to be little more clever in order to get away with it.

That was my first lesson in learning to keep my mouth shut when I was going to do something not quite legal; to go it completely alone; and stay away from the idiots of the world who are legion in number. There were two other events which occurred during my years at St. Andrew's which had much greater effect on me than the incident mentioned above. The first event was the series of aptitude tests described in detail in the previous chapter.

The second event actually occurred at my home, and may even have occurred before I went off to school at St. Andrew's. I can only recall the powerful impact of the experience rather than the time or the surrounding circumstances. Adolescence was an extremely difficult time for me, the hidden inner social pressures being almost greater than I could reconcile. There was the family situation where for two generations the male members of the Cain family had sacrificed any personal desires to serve as teachers, educators, headmasters, and camp owners and directors. Though no one ever suggested that they expected me to move in a similar family direction, I felt a strong inner pressure to follow the family dedication to duty and responsibility. I didn't really know how to get out of it. All I knew is that I wanted to choose my own direction.

The biggest problem of all was that I could find no direction that interested me by examining the social group which I had grown up with in the Baltimore area. The expectation of "Responsibility" was that a young man would choose a respectable occupation, marry one of the well-educated, socially acceptable girls he had grown up with, attended dancing classes with, and eventually came to know better at the Country Club and the formal debutante cotillion parties. There would naturally be children, their education, and the same repeated patterns year after year after year. I had one of my two feet in this camp, but I had my other foot in an entirely different camp ... the back woods and the small towns of southern Nova Scotia. It seemed that my whole genetic pattern, my deepest pleasures and joys, lay in freer and less boring directions. The magical world of sailing ships and distant horizons had not only been a part of my early childhood

stories and dreams , but there were at least four generations of seagoing sea captains in my genetic past, and there was no denying the pull of that type of adventure from the innermost parts of my being.

Whenever there seemed to be a choice between responsibility, wealth, fame, power or freedom in my life, I have always opted for freedom ... with one exception: my first and only child. The first eight years of her life were the best that I could give her. After that, the overwhelming pull of my journey to spiritual understanding had become the primary motivating force in my life. That journey really began in my sixteenth year in Stevenson, Maryland late one clear starry night. As I mentioned briefly in the first chapter, for the hundredth time I had run through my mind the various choices of occupation which seem respectable to me, and, one by one, rejected each one. With tears streaming down my face from the indecision and the bleak future I felt lay before me, I looked up at the stars and said matter-of-factly to a God I wasn't really sure was there:

“Look, if You're there, I can't do this thing by myself. I can't be any of the things anyone else knows they're going to be. The options are all too boring. I can't see the path before me, and so I guess I'll have to leave it up to you”.

So saying, I wiped the tears from eyes, went to bed, and left the matter open to whatever might come my way. I need not have worried. The path that lay before me was far more interesting, challenging and different than any path I could have imagined. There were times when I tried to force my circumstances into the mold of respectability and responsibility, but I could never seem to stay there. I was always drawn like a moth to the flame into the world of the unknown and unseen ... the far horizons of the Earth at first, and then the more distant horizons of worlds and realms beyond this one.

It's interesting to look back on my experiences at St. Andrew's School from the vantage point of older age and a considerably expanded perspective. I suddenly recall an event, or rather series of events, which I never realized would have the effect on my future that they did. My father insisted that I write home weekly on Sunday nights as a sort of “Log” of my daily events and thoughts, and to do this on a disciplined and regular basis ... if I ever expected to receive any money from home! Naturally, that motivation was considerable as I had no other way to earn pocket money for the weekend trips Bill Barnett and I would make to Philadelphia to visit our girlfriends ... another illicit activity which we covered with the help of Bill's grandmother in Wilmington who ostensibly invited us up for the weekend and loaned us her brand new Buick for the trip to Philadelphia.

Dad, in his infinite wisdom, must have known what sort of effect the enforced discipline of writing home would have on my ability to communicate ... particularly in writing. In order to write a halfway intelligent two-page letter, I had to go over all of the events of

the previous week, censor some, embellish others, and even learn to ask for worldly advice at points in time when I needed that kind of guidance. Either Mom or Dad would, of course, write back so that there was always mail in my school mailbox or some of Mom's chocolate chip cookies which I would readily have died for, plus their constructive comments or trivial details from their own lives. Neither Mom nor Dad ever discussed their personal issues or problems with me by letter or in person, and I realized later in life that was a characteristic of their generation and prior generations. It was as though they didn't want to burden their children with their own personal problems. I later felt that was a serious mistake because it led a child to believe that his parents had no problems, and lived in a perfect world. As a consequence, I made every effort to explain to daughter Bambi many issues that I was confronted with in the family's daily life, and I did this from the time she was able to stand up until I left home when she was eight years old.

I'm certain now that this three years of weekly effort to explain my life and communicate properly to my parents played a much greater role than I ever realized in my ability to communicate well in my future writings. I've come to realize that efforts made in any direction have long-lasting effects not only on the personality, but on the soul as well.

After graduating from St. Andrew's School and going off to Middlebury College in Vermont, my education took a radically different turn. Being coeducational, Middlebury had a prodigious supply of very intelligent, nice looking, and very capable young women to help me get over my shyness and embarrassing red face whenever I tried to carry on a conversation with one of them. In retrospect, I have a very difficult time trying to reconcile my purposes in going to college. I had sort of been talked into it by my father and my friends and it seemed to be the only option that was placed before me when everyone else at St. Andrews was applying for entrance to colleges. If I have to be very honest with myself, I have to say that my major at Middlebury was in extracurricular activities, and looking back on my four years in college I would also say that a liberal arts education is probably just as well served by extracurricular activities as by lectures on social science, economics, biology, chemistry, and the myriad other choices of courses which either laid the foundation for a future professional pursuit, or else seemed to have no practical purpose other than to train the mind's capacity for rote memorization.

Having been burdened as well as blessed with a mind whose attention span was extremely limited, whose memory was limited to the observation of physical acts performed (like memorizing in precise detail the manner in which an engine was disassembled), and whose interests lay almost entirely in the practical application of information, it was natural that I would choose simple courses that had visual applications. Since it was the Earth and the great outdoors that interested me most, I chose Geography as a major and

Geology as a minor. But what I loved was tramping through the Green Mountains with a chainsaw and pack on my back to clear trails and maintain the chain of log cabins built for backpackers and hikers. Middlebury was my introduction to downhill and cross-country skiing, which became an integral part of my life for the next seventeen years. It was my introduction to supporting myself with hard physical work, and it was my introduction to borrowing money to pay for future benefits. It was also a way to put off being drafted into the Army.

The draft was a very real requirement that loomed on the horizon for every young man who reached the age of eighteen. It meant at least six months on active duty as an enlisted man, plus a number of years in the Army Reserve. One could put off the draft in favor of a college education, but the Piper had to be paid upon graduation. With this specter looming on the horizon, several of my friends were joining the U.S. Marines, an act which made them a commissioned officer upon graduation from college and the fulfillment of twelve weeks of summer camp training. I joined up too, and later decided to apply for flight training.