

## INTRODUCTION

On November 19, 1997 I underwent the surgery which adds years to one's life; but unfortunately those years come at the end of the age spectrum. Like many of my life episodes, this too had extra memories: On that same date, only a hospital floor below me, the McCaughey septuplets were born in the midst of hundreds of television journalists and operatives with attendant cameras transmitters, cables and trucks. More importantly it absorbed a substantial squadron of the best nurses and their spectator associates. At times I justifiably feared for my health.

Afterward, I began to consider myself at the dawn of an uncertain autumn and developed a nostalgia for those irretrievable years I once lived. I embarked on what for me is the enjoyable task of writing those stories ostensibly for my grandchildren. This was an effort that neither my parents (with a few exceptions by my mother who, among other careers, was a journalist) nor my grandparents (of whom I have little memory) chose to make which I regret as perhaps they did as well.

When our first grandchild and only granddaughter was born I remarked, "...and I never thought I could fall in love again!" We loved naming her but my real thrill came when SHE named ME , spoke my name: "Pipa Bill," and added to my emotional prosperity.

My stories began to draw a modest readership from among friends (what are friends for?) especially those who shared the experience of the "first depression", WWII and the aftermath but also by those who sought to learn more about those icons of the 20th century with whom my life was surprisingly linked: Louis Armstrong, Marlon Brando, Robert Frost, the Leachman ladies, Robert Ray, Ronald "Dutch" Reagan, Wilbur Shaw, Dylan Thomas, "Bud" Wilkinson.

Amherst College, and especially Ellie Ballard-Director Alumni Programs, have done a remarkable job of digitizing, entering and cataloguing my writings and attached exhibits. Hopefully, these will serve as a prototype for others to do similarly. I am sure those who do so will experience that the very struggle of getting your words down on paper results in unexpected discoveries including about one's self.

These quotes may have informed me:

"Man finally comes to himself as a rich raw material of creation. Not just the public notables whom Plutarch celebrated among the Greeks and Romans, but the idiosyncratic everyday person. Everyone is a subject, no act or feeling too intimate, too trivial, to be shaped into biography --or autobiography. Not only the soul, which has engaged saints and priests and prophets but the self in all its vagrancy. The wilderness within is not only a jungle of hopes and frustrations, but a place of mystery and beauty, of epic memories, bitter struggles and exhilaration, where the whole history of the human race is reenacted. From this vantage point are vistas never seen or revealed before."

-Daniel J. Boorstin

"The Creators"

...I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.  
-Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken"

(But see my discussion of this poem and the time I spent with Frost in my story "Amherst College-The Road Taken")

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it."  
-Winston Churchill

"Take Me Home, Country Road"  
-John Denver

"It ain't the 'eavy 'aulin' that 'urts the 'orses 'oooves  
It's the 'ammer,'ammer,'ammer on the 'ard 'i-way!"  
-Anonymous poet--according to George La Mair

"Nobody ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American public."  
-H.L.Mencken

"One wants to tell a story,  
like Scheherazade, in order not to die,  
It's one of the oldest urges of mankind.  
It's a way of stalling death."  
-Carlos Fuentes

"If you hear of my being stood up against the Mexican stonewall  
and shot to rags, please note that I think that a pretty good  
way to depart this life. It beats old age, disease or falling  
down the cellar stairs.. To be a Gringo in Mexico--AH!  
That is euthanasia"  
-Ambrose Bierce (entering Mexico at age 71 during the Mexican Revolution)

"How can a president not be an actor?"  
-Ronald "Dutch" Reagan

"You see now we have all come to the part of our lives when we start to lose people of our own  
age.... Very few people ever really are alive and those that are never die no matter if they are  
gone. No one you love is ever dead."  
-Ernest Hemingway to Sara and Gerald Murphy (March 14, 1935)  
The Fabulous Couple Who Made Living Well The Best Revenge

"To laugh often and much,  
to win the respect of intelligent people  
and the affection of children...  
To earn the appreciation of honest critics  
and endure the betrayal of false friends,  
to appreciate beauty,  
to find the best in others,  
to leave the world a bit better,  
whether by a healthy child, a garden patch,  
or a redeemed social condition....  
To know even one life has breathed easier  
because you have lived.  
This is to have succeeded.  
-Ralph Waldo Emerson