

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

May 26, 2020

Carefully Consider Your “Way”

Whenever I talk about what I’m going to talk about today, I worry that it borders on boasting. But that’s not why I talk about it. I talk about it because it illustrates, almost perfectly in my life, the nexus between the highs and lows that life can deal us and the importance of choosing the right “way.”

Early in 1968, I met a young lady named Pat who was friends with a lawyer at Capitol Records. He worked in the famous round building at Hollywood and Vine. The lawyer knew that Herb Hendler, who was a vice president at Capitol Records, was looking for new songwriters and set up a weekly meeting to meet and critique the work of these would-be lyricists. I was accepted into a group of about 9 others and we met every Thursday night on the 6th floor of the famous building.

I didn’t know it at the time, but Herb Hendler was a legend in the music business. I was more impressed with Carson Parks, who was invited to our meetings to help critique our lyrics. Parks had written a song, entitled *“Something Stupid”* that was sung by Frank Sinatra in a duet with his daughter Nancy *“Something Stupid”* hit #1 on the Billboard 100 and has been covered a few times, most recently by Michael Bublé and Reese Witherspoon in 2013. Parks even invited Pat and me to his house in Burbank and introduced us to his wife and child.

But Hendler was far more accomplished than Carson Parks. For you Silent Generation folks, while Hendler with RCA Records, he produced Perry Como’s first hit records and signed Glenn Miller to his final contract. He wrote the lyrics for Rosemary Clooney’s (George’s mother) first hit, and later hits for Tony Bennett, Nat King Cole and songs recorded by some eighty other artists. He helped launch the Everly Bros. and Bob Newhart’s careers. For you fellow Baby Boomers, when he was with Capitol Records, he signed over 200 songwriters, had more than a dozen top 40 hits and discovered and produced The Association (7 Grammy nominations).

I tell you this because, for several months in 1968, I was in the presence of an A&R* superstar, who was actually reading and critiquing lyrics that I wrote and I was not yet 21 years old.

What’s higher than Cloud 9? Whatever that is, I was on it. I just knew I was going to be the next Jimmy Webb, a 21 year old songwriter who was ultra-popular and is still writing songs today.

Meanwhile, I was working as an editor for a magazine in Bel Air, driving a new Firebird, living at 1101 Ocean Front Walk in Venice, right on the ocean. I had all the trappings of success. However, I lacked sufficient income for much of any given month. At the end of the month I’d have to cobble enough cash to drive to my parent’s house so I could eat something other than chili from a can or fried eggs (my two signature dishes). But... hey! I had some bragging rights, probably more than the average 21 year old (other than Jimmy Webb).

Then it happened. I received a letter from an entity called “The United States Government.” It said, *“Greetings...”* followed by a command to report to the Los Angeles Induction Center to begin my two year obligation in the United States Army. This was at the height of the Vietnam war.

I’ll never forget my trek up to the 11th floor of the Capitol Records building to meet up with Mr. Hendler. When I told him what happened, he didn’t break down and cry or anything, but he did tell me, “that’s too bad, Pose; you were coming along like a nice horse.”

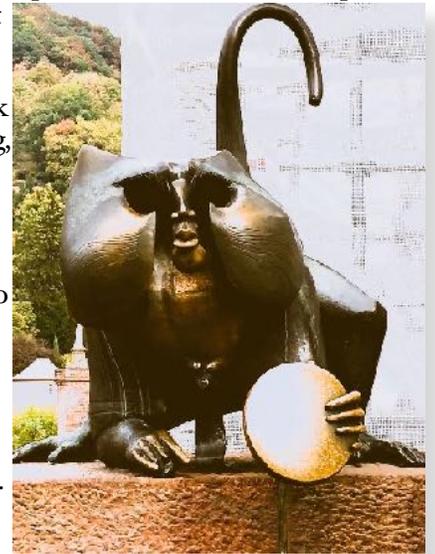
Dreams were turned to dust in one day. I wrote no more lyrics or poetry until I met Christie who inspired me to take it up again, but not for profit.

Dreams are important. I love young people who have big dreams and older folks who still dream. Someone once said, “a child grows up and dies and the corpse is called an *adult*.” That’s cold. But it rings true; dreams die in our adult world of “make a living” and “common sense.”

In reflecting on my “what might have been story” (you probably have one or two also) I thank God that — however it happened — a series of events carried me to where I am today. I can’t imagine a better, more rewarding life than the one I enjoy today. I can’t imagine life without Christie and my kids and grandkids and our friends and the Folsom church. It frightens me to think that I was on the cusp of a life caught up in the dog-eat-dog entertainment world. The writer of Proverbs warns us, twice: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death”* (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

I remember something my dad said when I was bragging to my folks about writing songs for Capitol Records. He said, “did you ever think about writing a hymn?” I just looked at him; I had no answer. But it was his way of reminding me, “There is a way that seems right to a [young] man, but its end is the way to death.”

*A&R means “Artists and Repertoire”



The Vanity Monkey, Heidelberg Bridge. Notice he is holding a mirror and has hollowed out eyes.