

Colors of Childhood

written by Matt Durham

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Introduction

For thousands of years, the Chumash lived a humble lifestyle, balanced on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, using natural materials to maintain their existence, including beach tar to caulk their boats. “Carpinteria”, as the Spanish explorers called it after seeing the carpenter skills of the natives, soon witnessed an influx of Europeans, who brought horses and materials and began their ranches, farms, and orchards. Over time, people from every part of the world have traveled to visit or settle the hills and valleys of this idyllic landscape, creating the foundations for local institutions and communities, that in their own time have continued to change.

This collection of memories may be an historical account in some ways, as it reflects upon a particular era. But mostly it’s just my story, of growing up in town and on Cate Mesa. It is inspired by my dad, and the childhood memories of places and people I often reflect upon as I think of him after his passing. Growing up is both a beautiful and painful journey, full of hope and ambition, but also uncertainty and embarrassment. He was there for me, offering support and protection, and I appreciate that now more than ever.

I choose to write these thoughts as a way of taking a journey into those worlds that now mingle with my imagination, a journey I know I will enjoy and hope you will as well.

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Where to begin? How about birth, not an actual birth but the celebration of one. In this case, there was no party, only a quiet, unassuming June 6. I was probably 7 or 8, and I imagine in the 2nd or 3rd grade. I went to school at a public elementary down in town, Main School, about 5 blocks from the beach. My dad taught at Cate School, a private, boarding school for young men at the time. We also lived at the school, which is about 3 miles from town up in the foothills, overlooking the mountains, orchards, and Pacific Ocean.

It was a foggy day, June gloom, as was normal for that time of year, and wetness hung on the trees and darkened the asphalt in the early morning. I woke up at dawn in our two bedroom apartment and quickly raced to the TV room before anyone else was up. I was hoping for what else? packages, presents, a bike, and could hardly contain my excitement. But what I found was only a blank television set, worn carpet, reading chair, bookshelves, and wave couch. I knew I had to wait, and rather than retreat to my bunkbed, I stared beyond the curtains at the mysteriously shrouded Eucalyptus. The window was slightly cracked and I could hear the dripping, and in the distance the call of a dove. I don't know if you believe a child is capable of profound thoughts about life and eternity, but I remember staring into those curtains and then the space of the outside trying to understand the difference.

After half an hour of waiting, my patience grew thin and I went into my parents' room to remind them of the occasion.

Dad was a bear. He slept face down with his mouth tilted, often grumbling or growling in some unintelligible language.

“Come on Dad, get up! It's my birthday!” I whispered .

He grumbled some more, and then a slight smile drowsily crept upon his face. “Happy Birthday Matthew,” he said quietly with his eyes barely cracked. “Pat, can you get him his presents, I’ll be up in a few minutes,” he said to my mom before turning on his side, putting a pillow over his head.

Well, in a few minutes, my mom, younger brother Andrew, and dog Bernie were all out in the living room. Presents had been hauled out of the closet and I was allowed to open them, even though my dad was still in bed. It was probably 7:00. I don’t know what the presents were. My brother always got some presents too, which always annoyed me, but which he was very glad. My mom then served our breakfast treat, hot cinnamon rolls, scrambled eggs, and a glass of milk.

In the dim, morning light, the hundreds of books lining the wall around the fireplace seemed to sleep in the grayness, their stories silent in the minds of the children that knew nothing yet of their greatness. My dad had a good-sized collection of literary classics, which was often a focus of discussion with visitors and students.

He finally got up at 8, and in his pajamas, not yet awake, went to the kitchen to warm up some coffee. His coffee was unique. I’m still not entirely sure how he made it. I know it was Maxwell House or something from a can, and he would use a drip method the night before. He would make it super strong, refrigerate it, and then in the morning he would heat it up and dilute it with some boiling water. It had its own distinct flavor, more strong and bitter than the usual. He drank it black.

The dark brew soon kicked in and he joined us and our festivities, looking over our presents with interest, and asking questions about their use. He then brought out of the closet a long, tall box, the one I was waiting for. He was a theatrical guy; Christmas, birthdays, and holidays were opportunities for performance.

Inside the box was a street hockey kit, complete with sticks, orange rubber ball, and to-be-assembled goal. I don't know where the interest in hockey came from, probably their East Coast experience of a few years back, but I was ecstatic. Our neighbors, the Bowlers, who had moved out from the East Coast also, were Boston Bruins fans. They had given me an old Chicago Blackhawk's puck, and that became my team.

It was officially summer for my dad. The students had taken exams, packed their bags, filled the dumpsters, and gone to awards ceremonies. This left the faculty kids with a giant playground and amusement park in which to cavort. However, there was still a week or two left of school for my brother and I, and summer sunshine beach adventure was still a month away.

Through the haggling and feigned illness that followed, somehow I was allowed to stay home as my brother went to school. Dad agreed to assemble my hockey net and play with me for a little while before he went back to writing his final comments for the year, that would be mailed out to all students.

It was a joyous occasion as he and I rode in the black station wagon, down past the barns, to the tennis court backboard, next to the Theater. The two of us played a full game together, with periods, and penalties, live play-by-play, and time outs, but in the end I beat him, 24 to 22.

Cate School sits about 500 feet above the Carpinteria valley floor. The campus is fairly flat, with a road, walkways, fields, and buildings spread over the rolling foothills, the Los Padres Forest mountains as a backdrop.

Surrounding the prep school setting are steep hillsides of dense, arid chaparral. It is a combination of sage, poison oak, and cactus, as well as stands of Oak and Eucalyptus and is the home of foxes and coyotes, skunks, raccoons, deer, and wood rats. It also happened to be covered with a vast network of trails when I was a kid. For us faculty brats, it was our own world, a wild place where our parents would never venture, with landmarks like the sewer and succulent world. In the summer it was ours to share with the stink bugs and garter snakes. During the school year, we had to submit to the authority of the Cate students who secretly crept off campus to hang out and smoke.

There were several access points to this trail system. One that was widely used on our side of campus was the dirt road firebreak that ran down from our houses and joined up with the main Cate road about halfway up the hill. Off to the side of this dirt road were many trailheads that led to secret hideouts or that connected to the vast path network that covered the hillsides. How these trails came to be is a mystery. Many, I imagine, started out as simple animal trails, and then ended up as main thoroughfares. We often went exploring marginal paths, sometimes to find hidden treasures like dead animal carcasses, but more often, they simply became entangled in dense, impenetrable brush.

The exploration of trails was all about the process. There wasn't much down there beside a few odd, carved out pits, lined with wood seats and table. Mostly we would bring stuff down there to look at: comic books, stickers, or Playboy magazines we found in the dumpster.

It's a wonder we never started a fire. We were always burning something, candles, small campfires. We also used to break off dry reeds and light them like cigarettes. Oh, if our mothers could only see us! I blame all these bad behaviors on the older kids, Paul and Beau and Ned, mostly Ned, but I'm sure my younger brother and his friends would say I was much worse, though in my mind, I see a

child of wondrous innocence, curious by the temptations he encountered, cautious but mischievous.

One widely traveled trail went down to the bottom of the hill. Students would take this trail on weekends and half-day Wednesdays to hitchhike into town or, in later years, to get their mopeds to ride. It went through the brush, past an old water tank, alongside a field of cactus, and through a grove of Eucalyptus. The bottom of the hill was where the old Santa Barbara School had been located, the precursor to Cate. In fact, many of those former buildings had been moved up onto the mesa when the school relocated. There were still bits and pieces of the old school down there, and we felt like archaeologists as we dug up old bottles and stumbled upon remnants of gardens, succulents and yucca trees.

The water tank, we discovered, had a tree limb that went up to a round, capped entry and inside was a ladder that went down inside. It was hot and musty inside, and in the darkness, we watched the dust drift through the sunbeams that entered through the cracks in the ancient wood, and imagined the black widows that crept along the upper edges. I climbed down there with Jeff and sat on box crates, looking at the newest Mad magazine or Wacky Package cards, stickers that were sold like baseball cards with lampoon illustrations of common household products, wrapped up with a piece of gum. There was a Thinkies card after Twinkies, with two brain-filled pastries, or Drowny instead of Downy laundry detergent, with a picture of a kid drowning in bubbles. I had about eight of those. There were also these candies that were shaped like flat disks about the size of a quarter and tasted like flavors of soda pop: cola and root beer, orange and grape. It was the age of artificial ingredients. When I think of being in that tank in the stale, dusty heat with all that 70's candy, I can almost feel the nausea returning.

If you were to take another of those trails, you would find that it traversed the entire side of the mesa and ended up below the campus

sewage plant, where plumbing lines led down from septic ponds above and were sprayed out with sprinklers onto the hillside every fifteen minutes. It was a hideous place, with strange, grotesque plants that grew nowhere else, as the ground was permanently saturated. Later on, I came to find out that a student at Cate had thrown some hemp seeds down there and that they actually grew to become the worst weed ever and probably would have been more functional as sandals in another era.

Below the sewers is Lilington Canyon, with lemon and avocado orchards, and a creek that flows down from the sandstone gorges and purple mountains. My dad would sometimes look off into the distance and tell me of magical worlds up in those canyons with beautiful clear pools and waterfalls running through sandstone walls. He said one day he would take me up there. The imagined image of that place worked its way into my subconscious and became a recurring dream I had, finding my way back up that gorge to a paradisiacal place or state of perfect happiness, a dream that I would have for many years to come.

Most children play with dolls or action figures at some point in their lives. The Cate faculty kids of my generation played with Little Guys.

Little Guys were small, stuffed animals, the size of a mouse. In fact, some were mice. There were lions and bears and turtles and owls as well. There were also monkeys. In fact, some of us were partial to monkeys and believed that monkeys were the rulers of the Little Guy universe.

We could populate our Little Guy kingdoms by making a trip to the toy store in town at Santa Claus Lane, a small group of shops along the highway and adjacent to the beach at Padaro Lane. For many

years, there were large painted statues of Santa Claus and Frosty the Snowman that lived on the lane year-round. The toy store had a collection of Steiff animals from Germany as well as a huge, eclectic array of toys and knickknacks. It was the longing of every child to visit.

Our Little Guys lived in a beautiful, two bedroom house, with a living room, bathroom and elevator. It was built lovingly by our dad from some plywood, leftover from a theater set, down at the barn woodshop. We would spend hours constructing Little Guy furniture, tailoring Little Guy clothing, and developing Little Guy transportation. A few Little Guys lost their lives in the Carpinteria Creek when we sent them down the rapids in homemade rafts, and grieving ensued for days on end.

At some point, we developed Little Guys Olympics, and set-up baseball and soccer games, car racing and hockey on a frozen baking pan. It was hard to tell who ever won these events. It turned out that when it came to competitive sports, Little Guys were a bunch of little cheats.

The beautiful game, that has given me so much in my life, so many friends and memories, that has helped me to identify with so many other people from around the world, all began with my dad's third team. It wasn't the varsity, it wasn't the freshman team, it wasn't the JV team. It was the third team, and for the most part, I imagine, it was kids who had never played soccer before, or who were more inclined to academics than athletics. It was Dad's team for many years, and it was also my team, every day after school and on home game days on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

It was usually sunny in the Southern California early fall. It was warm, and the fields at Cate were some of the best in the county. The players would gather about, taking shots on goal, and then begin

their stretches. He was fond of saying, “Don’t forget your ankles!” I would roll and stretch my ankles too, and take shots on goal, and shag balls in the bushes, and pretty soon I would find something more interesting in the bushes and the team would go on practicing.

On game day, it would be: sitting on the East side of the field, on the green, wooden benches, looking into the blinding sun, watching giant people run about wildly chasing a checkered ball. There were these beautiful, drinking faucets built into the rock wall along the side of the field, under the Eucalyptus trees. The one on the third team field didn’t work as well as the one on the varsity field, incentive for advancement.

He used a lot of metaphor when he coached. “Think of your kick as a scythe cutting wheat.” “Defend your goal as if you were a water buffalo protecting her calf.” I know he also, like many of that era, played a 3-3-4, or three defenders, three midfielders, and four forwards, which made for a lot of offense, and a lot of scoring, very dramatic. Sometimes the score could be like 6 to 4, or when it got bad, 11 to 3. His teams lost a lot of games some years, but he was never really disappointed, he often laughed about it, and I think he just plain and simple enjoyed it.

At the end of every season, he would have a cookout on the patio, and we would eat cheeseburgers and my mom’s potato salad, pickles, soda pop, and Eskimo pies.

Later on, I would go on to my own soccer adventures, which led to much fiercer competition than third team soccer. I know my dad was always very proud of me, especially when I became the first freshman to make the varsity team at Cate. That year, under Terry Eagle, was one of my favorite seasons. I felt a little like a local celebrity. Jeff Smith and Ned were also on the team and I had the fantastic support of a great coach. I loved the thrill of playing with

the big boys, and at times, schooling them. It gave me a lot of confidence, and like I said, soccer is a game I cherish to this day.

By this time, you have had a chance to see how I write. It's ok, non? I tend to use the same kinds of constructions for most of my sentences. My vocabulary is simple, repetitive. But, as my dad would say, it keeps moving forward. In other words, I'm not a bad story teller, which essentially, for me anyway, is what writing is all about.

My dad, would have much to comment, enjoy, and perhaps lament, as he usually did about anyone's writing. He was a perfectionist in that way. He believed in thoughtful, self-reliant editing; but to begin, you must first simply write.

From a very early age, he would edit my words, my brother's words, even my friends' words. Not in a controlling way, he just wanted us to be aware of the correct way of saying things, and that the other was, I guess, a regional dialect. He even told us so much, "Once you learn the correct way, you can say it any way you want and still be right." Personally, I think he was just trying to break us of bad habits, as is a parent's right to do.

I was not big on him editing my writing at an early age, and would usually let my mom look over my work, to get compliments mostly. But once I got to junior high, and the paper grading got tougher, I quickly realized all that scribbled ink would, if followed, translate into better grades, and at that age, grades were important to me. This was my initiation into the editing process that lasted until I was a sophomore in high school, at which point he said I had entered "the tunnel", and that I wouldn't come out for many years. By that point, I was pretty good at it myself; in fact, I have been employed by any number of family, friends, and clients from then on.

He didn't write a lot of literature in his life. I guess that wasn't his fate, but he wrote a lot of other things. I have images of him writing his book, "to write, write: writing". I wonder what he meant by the lowercase? It's poetic. I never asked him. We were on sabbatical in England. I was nine and Andrew was seven. We rented a large Victorian farmhouse from an eccentric man who spent the winters in Ceylon. Dad had a downstairs office that looked out toward the backyard apple trees, the carrot fields and in the distance, the English Channel.

It was so cold in that house, but sometimes cold can be good for writing. You have to keep moving to stay warm. He had a little heater, but tried not to use it because gas and electricity in Europe are so expensive. The main heat was a coal fireplace, which was in the downstairs parlor. We spent a lot of time in that parlor as I recall: doing homework, playing games, watching Dr. Who and Paddington Bear on the tele.

Two hundred pages is a lot to write, essentially a novel, and his pages were bigger. I don't know where he came up with all that stuff about "Immediacy" and the "Although Formula". I guess it was just something that had been itching at him for awhile, a treasure trove of knowledge acquired from a lifetime of reading and writing. He would go into a kind of trance in that room, and the windows would all fog up. We would sneak in there for a peak, and there he was at his electric typewriter, hair all disheveled from running his hands through it, and papers lying all over the floor, exactly as you would imagine it.

Writing for me is an applied art, not science. I write to tell a story, not to get the facts right. You can learn a lifetime of technique and theory and strategy but still not know how to do it. "We learn by doing" said Aristotle. "Imagination is more important than

knowledge” – Albert Einstein. Eventually you will develop your own style, your own patterns, and then you must try to unlearn those.

My first memories of the Theater, are of the land where it now stands, before it was built. I must have been 6 or 7. The tennis courts were there and a tract of brush and dirt and a grove of trees. I have to peel back a lot of layers to recall those early days. They are dreamlike memories. Ned had an old, red bike. I had a newer one, but his was always faster. We would ride around on the dirt trails, make jumps etc. There was a rope swing under a tree. In my mind it is nearly sunset, and the orange light filters through the leaves. The sound of tennis balls being hit echo in the distance.

The year they built the theater, it rained like crazy. One day during a storm, Ned and I put on our old clothes to go running about and jumping in puddles. We went out to the track and just got completely, top to bottom muddy. We went to where the theater was being built and it was completely flooded inside, with a giant, dirty pool in the orchestra pit. We had the idea that we might go home and get our canvas rafts and float about. When we got home, our mothers stripped us down, threw blankets over us, and fed us hot chocolate and toast. That was the year the bridge went out in the creek, and I think a construction worker even died trying to repair it. They built the new bridge, the one that goes over to Ojai, shortly afterward.

Some of my fondest recollections are of Saturday nights, riding our skateboards down to the Theater to watch movies. They were regular film movies, shown on the silver screen, usually two a weekend. My dad ordered the films from a catalog and got students to run the projector. The reels would arrive on the front doorstep in their metal cases. It was always exciting. He was a particular fan of old westerns, Hitchcock, and Gunga Din. A group of kids would sit

in the front row, in our own little world, staring up at the huge screen, eating candy. There would be intermissions to load the next reel or in between movies, and we would run outside and play. Down the hallway there was a drinking fountain with refrigerated water, a new invention. And beyond that, the mysterious darkroom, with the strange, revolving door, eerie red light, and sour smell.

My dad loved movies. He had his own childhood memories that he often shared. He would go with his brothers and sister and friends to several every weekend himself in Cincinnati. I'm sure he replayed many of those features himself at his own Cate Theater, much to the dismay of his hipster 70's students.

We had every corner of that great building explored. There were secret passages and rooms, behind walls and under the stage. For us, it may as well have been Carnegie Hall, it was that majestic. It was all new and plush, and the chairs glided without a sound.

Dad was Director of plays for many years, and that time of year, usually spring, was busy for him. He was constantly going down to the theater to supervise the building of the sets, or having students and faculty over to talk about the script, rehearse lines, or design the costumes. His plays were great events, with live music conducted or performed by Frank Ellis. The acoustics in that theater were fantastic, and every seat in the house was filled on final night, with coffee, cookies, and red #5 fruit punch in the gallery for intermission.

The play I most reminisce was Oliver, as we the faculty kids, played the orphans in the opening scene. We sang, "Food Glorious Food", and danced about in the bright light on the hardwood floor, staring out into the darkness. That year, we got to hang out in the dressing room, see actors and actresses walk on and off stage, and just take in all the details that go into a production. Finishing a play was always a major accomplishment for my dad and the rest of our family. There

would be a big party at our house, and then we could all go back to a normal schedule again, mainly at meal time, and he would read us stories at night and watch tv with us.

Wednesday and Saturday nights were my favorite of the week, as those were when we had buffet dinner at Cate School. The Dining Hall sat on the highest point of campus, and part of it was built with materials from the old school at the bottom of the hill. One end of it had large windows looking out at the Pacific Ocean and, on a clear day, the Channel Islands. Light streamed in reflecting off the waxed, wood floor, round tables, and thick leather chairs.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday were dress up nights. We would often wear ties, jackets, and dress shoes. There would usually be an assembly before dinner for the students that we rarely went to. We waited in the faculty room, ate sugar cubes from the tea tray, made paper airplanes, stapled things together, and looked things up in the large encyclopedia.

When the students arrived and dinner was ready, we would go to our assigned table for the year, to be joined by students who would sit with us for the week. There would be a moment of silence, someone would say grace. If it was my dad, he would say, “Lord, for the food we are about to receive, make us truly grateful.” A student waiter would go gather our food on a large tray. Sometimes, a waiter would spill his tray, smiles would appear on everyone’s face as they listened for the extent of the damage, and then the place would erupt in laughter and mockery. I was terrified that one day I would have to do it.

Dad would dish out the main course, and the side dishes would be passed around. He kind of had a rule, that you had to try everything. Often he would get students that didn’t want something, and he

would scowl as they spooned an ounce of boiled spinach or drop a single brussel sprout onto their plates. The food was never very good, but there was always the hope at the beginning of the year that it would be better, especially if they hired a new cook. The best meal we had was the roast beef that was served on special occasions. That was a treat we all looked forward to.

The best part of the meals, as one would imagine, was the conversation. There was regularly some gregarious student willing to intellectually spar with my dad or tell some fantastic childhood story. Often we would talk about sports and who would win the Pennant, or on Monday night, what team was going to win and which players would lead them to victory. The school athletes were kind of the local heroes, and when they came to sit at our table, I was always a little in awe. Sometimes, we would have foreign students and they would talk about interesting sports and traditions we had never heard of.

On buffet nights, we could dress any way we liked, and come and go as we pleased. We would load up our trays with standard cafeteria food and make our way to the faculty kid table. It was buffet night that we truly looked forward to. Even though the meat loaf wasn't bad, the spinach I learned to like, the desserts were abundant. In fact, you could have as much of anything as you wanted.

Occasionally, there would be a barbeque outside with giant, steel pits on wheels, and we could eat corn on the cob sitting cross-legged on the lawn. After dessert, we would run off somewhere and play a thousand different games

I'm sure every carpenter has a similar tale: of the early, formative years, when they were just beginning to learn the skills that would

develop into a career. For me, it didn't become a career, but a passion for building things and a reverence for wood.

My first forts were a few pieces of fir dragged into the brush, or a couple plywood planks, nailed into an oak tree. They ended up as fully framed rooms with walls and ceiling, windows, and doors.

Back in the day, there was a big pile of old wood, behind the dirt mounds in the rear of the barn, under the Eucalyptus trees. My friends and I would often go down there to search for snakes and lizards, throw dirt clods, and to scout out the newest dumps, and maybe haul something back. Occasionally, my dad would get involved in our fort building, and if we were lucky, he would take us down there in the back of one of the school's battered, old trucks that had been covered by student graffiti. We would load it up with choice two-by-fours and scraps of sun-grayed plywood, and haul it back to the worksite, a tree or a clump of bushes.

He would help us get started. Usually just to make sure the structure was reasonably safe, and then leave us to our own devices with borrowed hand tools: hammers, saws and drills. If there was something we couldn't cut, like a piece of plywood, he would come out, measure it, and rip into it with a circular saw, a Sears Craftsman that I still have to chop firewood, as horrific as that may sound. I need to throw that thing out.

The first thing we would run out of was nails, as there was only a box or two in the shed. One year, I gave him a giant box of 16 penny nails for Christmas, only so I would have a backup stash. He laughed at that and said I would have to get my own, he wasn't sharing.

When we moved into the Gunthers' old house, we inherited Kim's treehouse. It was high up in an oak tree, and at first we were terrified that it would collapse on us when we went inside, it was so

weathered. But it didn't. That treehouse was the most architecturally beautiful dwelling in the world, and inspired me to try my hand at the fine art.

While we lived in that same house, we built two other substantial forts, one on the ground and the other up in a tree. The tree house was built on a giant wooden door. We tied a big water pipe to it so we could slide down it like firemen. One time, I slid down that pole and came straight onto a board with a nail sticking out. I screamed as I went inside to wash my wounded foot and cried in fear over the tetanus shot I would have to get.

Other Cate kids had forts too, and I guess we were always at war with each other. Jeff and I were the Viking club; my brother, David, and Willie were the Wood Chippers. Sean and Michael were our greatest foes. Sean, especially, had no problem with trashing our fort, or pelting us with berries, sticks, and dirt clods, even though he knew he was younger than us and would get a beating. He never gave up, though, and usually had the last laugh.

At one point, I got interested in electricity, and wired up a small light bulb and radio to a camping battery, with a homemade switch made out of a rotating piece of wood and brads. If we had known about solar or windmills, we would have been all over it: appropriate technology.

Our two greatest winter challenges were rain and rats. We never got to the point that we actually had a completely weatherized fort, although we spent hours trying. The wetness completely ruined our rug scraps and magazines, but the rats didn't seem to mind. They got into those forts, and in a matter of weeks had built an entire nesting village out of our soggy materials for their extended rat families to move into. We would be terrified of going in there and getting bit by some guardrat with bubonic plague. We often lit

firecrackers and threw them into the rat nests to try to scare them off. It only worked temporarily.

Often, in the dry months, we went to sleep in our forts, and after all the lights had gone out in the house, we would sneak into the moonlight. Our adventures included nude streaking across the fields, scaring our brothers' by making noises outside their windows, or going onto campus and avoiding the patrolling Master of the Week. Our main goal was to get into the Rec room, which was in School House and had pinball machines, pool and fusbball tables, and snack machines.

One time we were inside that dark room with only the light of the machines, making our food selections, when we heard the MOW walking down the hall. We slipped behind the soda machine just in time as Mr. Gunther came in to make sure it was empty. How we hollered with glee when we had finally made it back to our fort, and lay in our sleeping bags, devouring our candy and soda pop.

Teachers at Cate often moved, and certain houses were given to those with larger families or who had more seniority. When we moved down to our third house, it was large and private and away from the general hubbub of campus. There was a long trail that went clear around to the fields and orchards. We built a treehouse out of the tongue and groove redwood of an old horse shack. It had window covers that folded up and were held open by poles, like in the Bayou cabins of the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland. The door was a sliding piece of plywood that we lubricated with candle wax. It was located out past the dormant grape vines, in a giant oak, with a long rope swing, that swayed out over an embankment of poison oak, toward Sheppard's Mesa.

It was a ways from the house, and when we went to spend the night in it, we felt we had to make it through the evening without coming home, especially with all the sounds of foxes, coyotes, and skunks

that still owned the territory. In the winter, I would run the lawnmower once through the long green grass, creating a beautiful, sculpted trail.

It's funny that it was torn down and a house was built in its place, one that would end up being my parents' last home on campus.

Mr. Cate, the founding patriarch and permanent retiree of Cate School, lived to the ripe old age of about 95 in his Headmaster's house on the west side of campus. We didn't know much about him, other than he often walked along the campus roads with his cane and tweed hat, and that he rested in a little seat built into the rock wall along the road in front of the Dining Hall, where he could look out at the cactus, and valleys of Carpinteria, and the blue ocean, and reminisce about his own teaching days.

We also knew that he had a great pool. Before they built the pool over by the tennis courts, Mr. Cate's was the only pool on campus and a regular refuge from summer's heat. It was where we all learned to swim, starting with the dog paddle and moving up to the crawl. It was small in size, but beautifully constructed, rectangular, and with a five foot, sandstone rock wall and narrow wood deck around the perimeter. There were a variety of fruit trees and ornamental shrubs in the garden pool setting, and a view of the front lawn and adjacent, hacienda-style residence through the wrought iron gate.

The only hardship of going to his pool was walking the length of his long, gravel driveway in our bare feet, pre-flip-flop, which was no fun. That was until we discovered a dirt trail that led around past the oil saturated garage to the backside of his property. We'd bring our towels, and sucking our Otter Pops, leap the wall, wait for our

mothers, and settle in for an afternoon of golden sun and cool, aqua pleasure.

The water of that pool was crystal clear. With the shadows of the surrounding vines and peach trees, one could easily imagine they were in a secret cove on some exotic island. The shallow end was sunny and the deep end was shaded.

One game that we would play was to hang onto the rim and climb completely around the edge to where we had started without letting go. It took patience and endurance. I don't think I ever did the whole thing. I was nervous of the deep end and worried that if I let go, I would be unable to get from a vertical to horizontal swimming position, and that I would sink straight down. When I finally learned to float on my back, I would take deep gulps of air and linger in the lapping water, looking up at the transitory clouds.

Eventually Mr. Cate passed away. A new Olympic-sized pool was built, so we didn't go down there as much to swim. It became the home of the Headmaster, Scott McLeod, and our friends Stephanie and Christina and their dog, Chico.

Soccer came to Cate School every summer in a big way with the Sojai Valley Soccer Camp. I guess it must have started up in Ojai, but then moved to Cate without changing the name. Kids would come from all around to attend one of the weeklong sessions. Most would spend the night in the dorms, eat the school food, swim in the school pool, etc.

The first camp I ever went to, I was on the brown team. I was already familiar with kicking and dribbling, but knew nothing of the

rules or positions. I had never actually played a game. My dad bought us a little English Football Association guide that explained all about the history of the sport and the British professional teams, and some of the theory and positions, but for a kid of about 7 or 8, it really made no sense at all.

I was clueless, and when we played the black team, with some kid from San Diego that could juggle the ball 18 times, and was coached aggressively by Ron Vosper, the former pro English player, I was awestruck, and didn't touch the ball once.

I would, in a subsequent year, be coached by Ron, after I had lived in England, and had many a soccer game under my belt. There were always several international coaches at the camp. One team I was on was coached by a man from Ethiopia, who was a fantastically skilled player, but several obnoxious kids literally frustrated him to tears.

Of course, the Brazilians were kings, and the great Pele, he was the idol of an entire generation. There was one Brazilian coach, a tiny man, with feet smaller than mine, who, on a full sprint, could flick the ball over the back of his head and drive a volley in midair with such force, you would think the net would tear.

Every day we would receive our lessons and demonstrations; in the early evening there were games, and at night there was indoor soccer in the gym. In the afternoon, we would often gather in the squash courts and watch 16mm movies of el rey Pele, the undisputed soccer divinity, who, single-handedly, brought so much interest in the sport to the US when he joined the NY Cosmos.

I went to that camp every summer for many years. The last year that I attended, I got to go to the advanced session and actually was chosen to be among 10 or so campers to be in a promotional film, narrated by Jim McCay of ABC's Wide World of Sports. We got Addidas jerseys and cleats and got to juggle and dribble in front of

the cameras on Cabrillo Boulevard, under the palm trees, looking out at the beach in Santa Barbara.

Another very interesting camp, but one that I never attended, was the Karate Camp. It was similar to the soccer camp but was for adults, or at least older than 16. Every day you could hear them at 6 AM out on the fields doing katas in unison. Mental discipline was required of all participants. Sometimes in the afternoon heat, the entire camp, dressed in white robes, walked down to Carpinteria, a distance of around 2 miles, in their bare feet on the hot asphalt. While driving to the beach, we would pass a group and see someone who had broken down and was sitting on the side of road, grimacing in pain.

We would often mimic their moves and sounds with each other, and sometimes we would try to walk all the way to the pool on the campus road, barefoot.

How many hours did we spend on those lawns outside School House or the High House and Lido Dorms? We were about a third the size of grown people, so those lawns felt to us like a full football or baseball field.

With a tennis ball and plastic bat, we would set-up our baseball games after school or dinner. There used to be a big magnolia tree that was the first base foul pole. In left field, in front of the Admissions Office, was a thick bush where a lot of our balls would get lost. It had these large, red berries that would ripen into soft, sticky-white, milk-filled bombs that we would pelt each other with.

Any hit over the brick walkway to the chapel was pretty good. If you ever got one over the small hill up to School House or past the large Pine Trees in right center, you were sure to have a home run.

We'd play for hours at a time it seemed, usually with only 4 or 5 kids, until someone got bored and pretty soon it would only be me and Jeff.

Another sport we often played, especially in the fall, was nerf football. We'd meet on the School House lawn, in front of the Dining Hall. We'd say you had four downs to get a touchdown, and we'd huddle up, and draw out our pass routes in the grass. The favorite play was, of course, the long bomb, which would occasionally connect and have us feeling like we were ready for the pros.

We played other games: TV tag, kick the can, capture the flag, three flies up, without schedules or scores or time limits, kids joining in and leaving periodically. It was our routine.

The teachers who lived in School House would often open their apartment windows and enjoy the beautiful sound of children playing. Sometimes, a diligent student would bark at us to quiet down when they were studying. Often, we were drowned out by the sounds of Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, or the Rolling Stones, blasting from the balconies. Occasionally, someone would turn up a live ball game on the radio, giving us the noise of the crowd.

The only time we weren't allowed to play was during classes or study hours, which was usually the point when our games ended. Boarding schools have their own, unique schedules and we, as faculty brats, had learned to adapt. Exams were easily the most intense times of the year. Prep school students have always been challenged, and many students chose to attend just for the environment of academic stimulation and competition. Exams were like the playoffs, with students and teachers alike wrestling to come up with their best work.

My dad loved exams, on the one hand, as he got to see the true progress of his students' writing. He hated them on the other, because he really didn't feel any affection for grading, and told us so frequently. He would much rather make his comments, both in writing and in person, and mostly, he just wanted to encourage his students to improve and reach higher.

After exams were completed, and students found out their grades, it was as if the Olympics were over and champions had all been crowned. It was always interesting to find out who these students were, because they were often the most quiet and unassuming people, who gave no suggestion outwardly of their inner brilliance.

For many summers, a good deal of the afternoons were spent down at the public beaches in Carpinteria. My mom would drive us the two miles to town on Foothill Road through the avocado orchards and flower nurseries, then turn left on Linden Avenue, a street that runs alongside several neighborhoods, a school, and a shopping district with palm trees, cafes and restaurants, beach clothing stores, a supermarket, a Mexican mercado, a liquor and hardware store, and then down to the beach.

It's always been a sleepy little town, a great place to stroll around in your shorts and flip flops. The beach itself is touted as "the world's safest." The sand is clean and warm, and the ocean is calm and protected by Point Conception to the North and the Channel islands to the south and west.

Before the condos went in, it was mostly small beach homes and a few apartments. Cate School used to own a beach shack, and that is where we usually went. We'd bring our standard beach gear, along with our canvas, blow-up mats that we'd use for wave riding. If there was a little wind swell pushing through, the waves would be

about 1 to 2 feet, and we'd have a great time standing in the waste deep water, waiting for a set, pushing off onto our rafts and riding the waves straight in to shore. When we'd come in, we'd head for the hottest sand we could find, and roll around in it until we were completely covered and just lay there in absolute ecstasy.

Often, as we got older, we'd head up the beach to the estuary, a mysterious place without development where the ocean would roll in to a small, grassy lagoon, creating a great habitat for cormorants, sand pipers, and pelicans. There's actually a little surf spot out there that we got more interested in when we were older and we'd bring our boogie boards to try and ride the shoulder of the waves for a longer, smoother ride.

Some days, on our way down Linden Avenue, we'd stop at The Spot, an outside hamburger joint, that also had some Mexican food. We'd sit out on the patio under an umbrella, looking across at the Caprinteria State Beach park and campground. Once in a while, we'd be eating our corn dogs and hear a long, droning horn and ding, ding, ding, ding. The train would pass through with cars of passengers or cargoes of gravel and produce.

No summer trip to the beach was complete without a stop afterwards at Thifty's Drug Store. Back in those days, there was an ice cream booth in the front of the store with an assortment of tempting flavors at five cents for a single, ten for a double, and fifteen for a triple of three cylindrical scoops. There were also a couple pinball machines next to it with games at ten cents for one or three for a quarter.

If you got the triple, of Rocky Road and Coconut Pineapple and Concord Grape, it was sure to melt by the time you made it home, and you would have a sticky mess to clean up. It was also common to find tar on your feet as you were washing off the sand and you'd have to get out the turpentine and a rag to clean it. The Santa Barbara Channel is rich with natural tar seeps, and it often washes

onto the beaches. In fact, Carpinteria has acres of oozing, black outcrops with several, decent surf spots out in front.

One of the most memorable Durham family traditions was the Turkey Jam. It all began one Thanksgiving in the early 70's when our Uncle Laird, my dad's older brother, his wife Marilyn, and their three kids, Scooter, Suzie, and Chris all came down in November and stayed the week at some apartments on the end of Linden Avenue, looking out on the beach. Dick Patsy, a college friend of my dad's, his wife Lois, and their kid's Jeff and Shannon, also came down. They all lived in the Bay Area.

Together, as most families do at holidays in California, we frolicked on the beach, ate rich food, and watched football games. We'd work off our gout by hiking the mountains during the day and walking the beach at sunset.

We also got out the instruments in the evening, and played folk tunes, old and new. There were several guitars, harmonica, kazoo, various percussion devices including a washboard, along with the memorable gut bucket, a large, steel washbasin turned upside down and strapped with a rope and a broom handle. By pulling up on the broom handle, the rope would tighten to the wash bucket, and when you plucked on it, you'd get a folksy "buwuuup", like the voice of some giant toad.

My uncle had put together a fine anthology of songs and lyrics in a binder, and made copies so that we could all participate. I probably played kazoo, as my dad, uncle, and cousin Chris played guitars, and everyone tried to sing in harmony the words and stories that were so absurd they made us all laugh.

Joe, Joe, the dog-faced boy
He walks, he talks
He's almost human
He crawls on his belly
Like a reptile

Get 'im boys
He's got shoes on

The adults would stay up late into the night, singing, drinking, and harkening back to their own childhoods or college days while we dozed off in front of the TV, watching some old western.

That first Thanksgiving musical session was so great it had to have a name, and sure enough, "Turkey Jam" stuck and would be the name we used every time we got out those old binders and struck up a tune, November, December or any other month. I recall many Turkey Jams over the years: going up the Sacramento in houseboats, hanging out in my Uncle Laird's home in downtown San Francisco, or more recently staying at the Eagles' home in Carpinteria. The last Turkey Jam we had was in the Cate chapel, celebrating the life of my dad at his memorial by singing two of his favorites, Country Roads and Stewball.

Casitas Plaza was the first shopping center to go into Carpinteria. It is across from the Junior High a few blocks from the freeway. For many years it had a Grocery store, Tyler's Donuts, Thrifty's and TG&Y, at least those were the places that were important to a kid. The store that was most memorable was TG&Y. It had an eclectic assortment of cheap items, along with candy that could be found nowhere else. I still have dreams about the place, and in those dreams, I'm wandering about aimlessly, with cool jazz piping out

of the ceiling speakers, as if I'm in some kind of bizarre museum, finding things that I suddenly feel as if I could use.

TG&Y had no specific order to its merchandise. Often there were items stocked randomly in big baskets, marked \$1 or 2 for a dollar. There was a fabric and clothing section on the left side of the store, hardware and household in the middle, pet supplies in the far right, music in the front, and with two aisles of candy and sweets.

Many hobbies started with a trip to TG&Y. My first skateboard, for example, with plywood deck and super hard plastic wheels. It was the perfect learner board because I could ride it down any hill and never accelerate. It was terrible on blacktop, but did pretty well on the smooth concrete paths around the theater and science building, where we'd rip around on our knees or butts, pushing with our hands.

One of our favorite things to do in TG&Y was look at the records. It was one of the few places in town that carried the black vinyl disks with beautiful, printed cardboard covers. We were mostly into top 40 stuff: the Bee Gees, Cheap Trick, the Jackson Five, ABBA, the Beatles' Red and Blue albums. When eight tracks came out, they had those in a locked shelf along the wall. There was just enough selection to bring in the kids and teens from town, and there was always someone in there looking.

The restrictions on kids in those days were much more lenient than they are now. There wasn't so much traffic, and very little of the violence that you always hear about today. Cate students would constantly hitchhike into town, and we would sometimes walk the full, four-mile round trip. I recall several years when we all collected stamps, and would walk down to Thrifty's Drug and Discount, where we could buy packaged collections of world stamps near the toy section. Of course, they weren't worth anything, but they had great pictures from exotic places like Bhutan and Tonga.

We learned a lot about geography from collecting stamps, and had a lot of fun trading and competing with each other for what we thought were the best ones.

One time, when we were walking on the bridge going over the freeway into town, we were signaling at passing semis to blow their horns, when a big earthquake hit. I thought at first that it was one of the trucks scraping the bridge, it was moving so much. Our mothers drove down quickly to pick us up and I think that we weren't given such a loose rein after that to walk into town.

Most of the teachers at Cate lived on campus, as did the students. It was a boys' private prep high school. There was no daycare, kindergarten, or elementary; therefore, we all had to go to school in Carpinteria or Santa Barbara. Some of us went to private elementary school in Santa Barbara at Laguna Blanca. Others of us went to the public schools down in town: Main School, Canalino, and Aliso.

The school I spent most of my time at was Main School, five or six blocks up from Carpinteria State Beach Park. It was your typical elementary school, with an old, brick building, low budget portables, cafeteria, asphalt blacktop and grass playground. It is so strange to drive by it now and see how small it seems compared to when we were kids, especially the playground. It seemed giant then.

In the morning we would car pool together downtown and be dropped off. Sometimes, Mrs. Gunther would take us down in her VW bug, with coffee mug precariously teetering on the rubber floor mat. For a couple years our mom drove us in a tiny, Honda mini with a motorcycle engine that could barely make it up the hill.

There are certain sensory memories I have of elementary school: the smell of hamburger day at the cafeteria, the sounds of the seagulls hovering over us at lunch, the texture of rubber dodge balls, the darkness of the portables after coming in from the sunlight. Every day after lunch, we would line up behind the cafeteria and wait for the door to open and let us up the ramp to the ice cream room. Everything was a dime: fudgesicles, big sticks, ice cream sandwiches. We would sit on the swings with our government subsidized sweets, dripping frozen sugar and cream, dropping leftover sticks and wrappers all over the playground.

Santa Barbara and Carpinteria have a long history of Spanish influence, with streets and schools and other landmarks carrying Latin names. There is also a healthy, Latino population that lives there, most coming from Mexico, with families going back five or six generations. I had so many friends growing up who were from Mexican families and was so exposed to Mexican food and culture and Spanish language, I almost feel part Mexican, and even though I don't speak or hear the language fluently, Spanish speaking people that I meet today say that my accent is very good and know that I must have heard a lot of Spanish growing up.

My two most memorable years at Main School were fourth grade and sixth grade. In fourth grade I had Miss Kahler. We studied the same curriculum more or less as kids do now: times tables, SRA reading packets, and my first trip to a California mission being a magical step back in time. In sixth grade, I had Mr. Carrillo. What a great time we had that year. On the last day of school, big Mr. Carrillo became quiet and emotional as one of his students, Barbara, handed him a toy tractor as a gift to remember us by when he retired. A lot of us were emotional too as we said good-bye to Main School innocence and entered the big crazy world of adolescence.

My favorite sound at Main School was that electric buzz of the bell, "EEEENNNNNGGGG". It signaled our favorite non-educational

moments, the beginning of recess or end of school. Hushed hallways would burst to life with hundreds of healthy, excited children, eager to run and play and scream into the world, so happy to be alive.

How many of us have stories of our favorite childhood cinematic experiences? Movies are modern story tellers, as revered as any bard in days of yore. We also had many great theaters to go to, and every kid growing up in Carpinteria has memories of the local Carpinteria Theater.

It was located right downtown, on Carpinteria Avenue, a block from Linden. There used to be a barber shop, a bar, and a bank up the block, and across the street, Mills Drugs, with the yellow glow from acetate on the windows, diffusing the glare of the afternoon sun.

The décor in the small Theater was pretty worn out. There was a lot of ripped velvet upholstery and carpet, creaky folding seats, salty popcorn, and a glass case of milk duds, jujufruits, etc. They often showed kid movies like “The Apple Dumpling Gang” with Don Knotts or teenage movies, with titles like “Orca”, giving us the chance to see Bo Derek get her leg chewed off by an angry killer whale.

They didn’t often show films of critical acclaim or popularity. They weren’t trying to compete with the Arlington or Riviera. Occasionally, they would show older classics. We were always keen to scan the paper for a showing of one of the 1950’s Sinbad Collection (7th Voyage / Golden Voyage / Eye of the Tiger). We must have seen each of those films two or three times, completely absorbed by the stories, the costumes, and the fantastic claymation creatures that roamed the screen.

We once went to see a movie called “Food of the Gods”, a cheesy, quasi-horror flick, roughly based on an H.G. Wells novel. A group of people go on a hunting trip to a cabin on a remote, Canadian island. Unfortunately for them, a power plant upstream is releasing a dangerous growth hormone into the creek. All the creatures on the island who drink from the creek have become giants. The hunters soon discover they are being hunted by killer chickens, wasps, caterpillars, and most dangerous of all, packs of giant rats. I was terrified by the images and sounds of the pierced human flesh and animal carnage. When the tension of the stalking rats became overwhelming, I ran into the lobby for my own personal intermission. It was too much! I guess it was a combination of my fear of blood and the rats in my tree house. I missed a lot of that movie, and the rest of my friends giggled as I crept back to my seat and then leapt out again to “go to the bathroom”.

As we grew into adolescents, and became more interested in teenage sex and action, we went to movies like “Corvette Summer” and “Skateboard” with Leif Garrett and Tony Alva. Sitting in those shows with a hundred other teens, I watched and listened as they made out, yelled vulgar comments, threw popcorn, smoked cigarettes, and got kicked out by the manager. No one really cared about the movie.

I’d continue to go to the theater in town through high school, riding a moped down along the lonely foothill road, through the moonlit orchards, to indulge in the art, contemplation, and story telling of films such as Excalibur and Pink Floyd the Wall. The images were different, but the stories were the same: search for truth, adventure, and triumph over greed.

The fall that I would have entered fifth grade and my brother third, our family went on sabbatical leave for a year to Europe.

We lived in Southeastern England, enrolled in public school, and went for road trips in our Yellow Fiat. In the spring, we stayed in Southern France for a month, and then Paris before returning home.

Cate School was, in many ways, modeled after British prep schools, which are essentially privately-funded boarding schools. I was enrolled in the second year of a state-funded middle school and my brother in the third year of primary school. We both wore suits and ties, Clarke's dress shoes, and on warm days, pleated gray shorts.

I was totally unprepared for the first day of school. I had no comprehension of half the language being spoken, kids teased me about being a "yank", they had weird food at lunch like boiled cabbage and battered eggs, and worst off, I had to strip down and shower during PE, with a bunch of boys who stared and commented on my circumcised penis. At the end of the day, I was done, and had to be cajoled and bribed by my parents to go back the next day.

That first initiation into a foreign culture was an experience I'll never forget. Eventually, I was befriended, taught the subtlety of English customs, and to my amazement, British schools were far better than American ones. We rode a large, luxurious bus every day through the countryside, past old castles and ancient farms, through small towns and over stone bridges. We all looked the same so there were fewer pretension. The subjects were challenging, but taught with interest and vigor by an array of teachers. Everyone took music and art and PE, and during recess, all the boys played soccer.

During the fall, we played "concors" by poking a hole in a horse chestnut, tying it to a shoelace and challenging a schoolmate to a bout. We would take turns swinging our chestnut, trying to hit the other's to inflict damage. At break, the whole school would be outside playing.

Over time, the best concors players were given celebrity status, and at some point there was a school championship by house. We were all given a house, I believe there were four. Our school's went by color. On House Day, we'd all gather together by color, rally around our leaders, and compete against the other houses in such events as spelling, football, and concors. There was a big scandal that year when it was discovered the champion had illegally altered his winning concor by soaking and baking it to make it harder.

One of the greatest experiences I had there was being on the school football team. I had never been on a school team, where we were given a uniform and driven to other schools to play matches. I got a pair of new boots on a trip to Scotland, and quickly discovered the magic of organized, skillful soccer. I was enthralled and quickly progressed. By the end of the year, I was one of the better players and was scoring goals and being cheered on by my schoolmates. The local, professional team we all supported was Ipswich Town, about an hour away. They had a good team during those years and made a few historic runs. We all wore the blue and white scarves of Ipswich Town, except for the few that wore the red of fabled Liverpool or Manchester United.

The winters in England were brutal. My brother and I would wake up to a freezing house every morning before school, quickly dress into as much clothing as possible, run down the stairs, collect the bottle of milk on the doorstep, and enter the warm kitchen for biscuits and hot chocolate.

Outside every child's house and school playground was a runway of frozen ice that was tended with pots of water each morning. We would race toward the approach and leap onto the frozen runway, skating on our Clarkes to the very end before jumping off.

That year at Christmas time, we rode a ferry across the English Channel and drove our Fiat to Switzerland, searching for Mom's Eisler roots. The seats of our four-door hatchback were folded down, baggage piled flat, and my brother and I laid on blankets without a worry in the world. We'd drive for hours through towns and French countryside, stopping the night at bed and breakfasts to eat fantastic dinners and continental breakfasts.

We arrived in the picturesque Alps and spent our first night in a small inn that served adults warm brandy and children cheese fondue. None of us knew where we were going except Dad. He translated the signs and maps, conversed crudely in French or German, and had an old friend who had invited us to his family cabin in Klosters.

When we arrived in Klosters in the Swiss Alps, it was snowing and the roads were encased in ten foot walls of ice. My dad navigated without chains, and got the final push up the hill by a group of teens. Once we were parked we were good, because everything was within walking distance.

Peter and Gisela greeted us at the door and invited us into their holiday home, a two-story timber chalet, buried in snow. Inside, were wood burning stoves, a Christmas tree and lots of blankets. My dad and Peter reminisced about their early teaching days at the International School in Geneva while my brother and I made friends with their tiny, long-haired dog.

The next morning turned out to be a clear, sunny day, with jagged mountains surrounding the vacation homes and businesses. We bundled up in our winter gear and set outside in the snow with Peter and Gisela's sleds. Nearby were several good hills to run. It was our first real trip to the snow, and we were excited. However, we soon experienced the pain of frozen extremities, and despite the good weather, were back inside with the dog.

Near the hill where we were sledding, we began to see kids skiing. That was the first time I'd ever seen anyone actually skiing. It looked magical. There was a rope pull nearby and locals were getting a little exercise before setting off for school or work. The snow was deep and fluffy, not good for making snowballs but great for making turns.

On the second day we walked into town with our gear and got on a gondola up to the top of the mountain. Dad had borrowed a pair of skis and agreed to ski down the slopes while we road the trail on our sleds, keeping a watch on us along the way. We began our long, exhilarating run with caution, but after nearly half an hour of continuous sledding we were like luge riders coming down at top notch. Dad tried to keep up with us but gave up after awhile.

Near the bottom of the mountain I had cast all prudence aside and was flying down head first. At one point, going around a tight curve, I lost control and went flying over the snow bank and through the trees. I went crashing through an old farm fence that was luckily rotten or I'd have gotten hurt.

At the end of the run, Mom was waiting. It took Dad another ten minutes to show up. We walked home to the chalet, graciously introduced to winter sports. A group of kids had made their own twenty by thirty foot frozen hockey rink, similar to how we had in England, and were skating around on it, having a blast. Our fingers and toes were frozen and we whimpered like dogs by the time we made it back.

Christmas Eve came, and we were grateful for the Swiss tradition of opening presents the night before. The living room was decorated, soup was eaten, and the Christmas tree candles were lit. I remember getting a toy gun that I had asked for and immediately shooting soft darts around the room. When I shot one at the dog I was scolded by

Peter. I became upset and defensive, saying I was only playing. He said you shouldn't point or shoot guns at people or animals, even if it was just a toy. My dad later explained that Peter had served in the Swiss Army, as every man was required to, and had gone through very specific training on the use of guns, for defense only. I thought about it, but then, when no one was looking, pelted Andrew.

We left Klosters, and along the way stopped in the medieval town of Berne, Switzerland's capital. We walked the cobblestone streets, ate Swiss cheese and chocolate, and went to watch the clock tower performance. At noon every day, a music box melody would play to winding and clicking gears. Carved figures of jesters, somber kings, and dancing bears circled and moved about. Finally the noble farmer drew his hammer and struck the bell. The sky was a pale gray and light wisps of snow began to fall.

In the spring of that memorable year, we left England and spent two months in southern France. We lived most of the time in Castellet, a medieval town high up on a hill, overlooking the fields and orchards, and in the hazy distance, the Mediterranean Sea.

We rented an apartment set inside the wall that surrounded the village. Our window looked right out on the arched entryway to the castle-town, and we could watch the tourists entering the town, or in the evenings, teenagers hanging out and drinking wine.

Most days would start out with a walk up to the grocer to buy a loaf of bread and some fresh produce. Many of the streets were very narrow, cobblestone, and cars didn't fit. A lot of people rode motorbikes and bicycles. Everyone spoke French without exception and we were instructed to do our best.

I would often bring my soccer ball outside and kick it against the 500 year old stone walls of the town. One time, I was scolded by an old man when I accidentally knocked the ball into his horse stable. I retaliated with all the French I knew, which was about 30 assorted words, ending with “chocolate ice cream cone”. He looked at me in total confusion, waved his hand, and laughed.

In the afternoon, my brother and I would ask for a few five franc coins and walk up the streets to the top of the village near the church, to the shop that sold ice cream. We would negotiate the transaction politely in French and continue on our way, exploring the streets and shops of Castellet. There was a restaurant with wood-fired pizza, various cafes, and a tiny little place that sold hand-made marionettes.

For my birthday that year I was given a Polaroid camera, a Swiss army knife, and a marionette. Mom cooked chicken cordon bleu, wild rice, and green beans, which was served with a glass of champagne. In the evening, we went up and had a banana split.

Days in France were mostly spent studying, as we had to make up for all the U.S. History and Social Studies we had missed that year. It was interesting going back to American English. I could hear the accent as I was reading the textbook and it sounded foreign.

In the afternoons, we usually drove down to the beaches in Bandol, about ten minutes away, passing old men playing bocce ball and smoking cigarettes. European tourists wandered the crowded beaches, scantily clad, soaking up enough sun to make up for winter. Our favorite thing to do was rent a paddle boat and take it just outside the harbor. There, we would look out on the western horizon and dream of our home in California, where we would soon be returning.

What time is it? Late morning. I am down at the bottom of Lillingston Canyon. The trees are gigantic and cast extraordinary shadows. I follow someone, a friend, who is in the distance, up the road, around a bend, along a trail.

We go up, up, up the trail. It winds through chaparral, sage brush, oaks, and large outcrops of sandstone. I rest on top a boulder and look up the trail as it leads over a ridge. The mountains are draped in fog. The person is gone, I am by myself. I feel lonely, unsure. I call out in my mind. A feeling comes, assuring me, encouraging me to keep walking.

I walk into the fog and over the ridge. The trail leads down into a canyon. I hear a creek rushing. I walk toward it. The clouds break and beams of bright, warm light surge down. Children are playing in the water, splashing, swinging on ropes.

I strip down to my shorts, enter the water. It is cool and refreshing. It rushes gently around my legs, playful, inquisitive. I lie down in the shallows and look up at the blue sky with passing clouds. The water holds me, caresses, lovingly. I let go, sink down. The water carries me slowly. Everywhere there are bright, rushing bubbles. They laugh and talk to me. I let them lead me. Soon I am a bubble, of laughing, dancing light. I am free.

When I was about 11, my father and I drove to the bottom of the hill, turned right and went a mile up Lillingston Canyon, parked, and walked over to the lemon orchard property of the man that lived at the end of the road, Mr. Pickens.

As we walked along the dirt driveway toward the small farmhouse. We were greeted by howling peacocks, an old grumpy dog, and a man with a two week beard and a shotgun. I stood behind my dad.

“Morning, Mr. Pickens. How do you do? I’m Jim Durham. I spoke to you on the phone the other day. This is my son, Matthew.”

“Howdy,” he mumbled.

“We’re going to start hiking.” my Dad said. “We should be back in a few hours. Any special instructions?”

“Just stay on the road, and don’t stir up the water. It messes up my pumps.”

“Will do, Mr. Pickens. Thank you.”

And with that brief encounter we were off on our highly anticipated first excursion into the sandstone canyons of Carpinteria. After Walking through his orchard, about a half mile on a dirt road, we made it to the creek and began rock hopping. It was running nice and soft, as it was late spring and the rains had come and gone.

A little ways up the creek was a shallow pool with an pipe coming out and heading up the embankment.

“That must be the irrigation system; let’s stay to the side if we can.”

We walked along in the mud, trying not to do any damage. Waterbugs and pollywogs skirted the surface.

Soon we came to a fairly good-sized, earthen dam, stretching two hundred feet across, with a large corrugated pipe coming out the bottom and a trickle of creek water. We hiked the trail over the mound to the other side, a marshy pond filled with cattails. The creek would often get high in the winter, and this was a way to control flooding.

We waded through the water and began hiking up the creek again in our soggy sneakers. The dry chaparral of the embankments started to give way to rounded sandstone rock, and the creek narrowed and moved more quickly. Boulders of all sizes and shapes were seated in storm created patterns, and head-high deep pools tempted us to take a dip.

“Is this it?” I asked.

“No, not yet. We’ll know when we’re there. There’s a big waterfall.”

At this point the canyon walls had steepened and we were now inside a fairly deep sandstone gorge, with sculpted walls fifty feet tall; above them, steep hillsides of brush and cactus. The sounds of the creek echoed off the walls and a gentle breeze caused the leaves of the small trees and shrubs to dance and shimmer in the afternoon light.

We climbed over a group of boulders and looked at a large pool that filled the entire gorge. It was about forty feet in diameter, and at its rear end, there was a thin waterfall cascading twenty feet down a smooth, mossy rock.

“Wow, that’s impressive.” he said softly as he nodded.

I climbed around the rock wall on the left side of the pool to where the waterfall was coming through. Looking down into the deep, clear pool, a large trout darted into the shade.

“Are you going to jump in?” he asked.

“I forgot my swim shorts.”

“You can just go skinny dipping. That’s what we always did. Nobody’s coming up here. Not with Mr. Pickins guarding the trail.”

I stripped down and dove into the cool water, swimming across to the shallow side. I got out and sat for a while on the peach sandstone. Looking into another small pool I noticed a pair of bright orange salamanders, one on top of the other.

“Look at those two salamanders fighting,” I laughed as I looked for a long stick to break them apart.

“I don’t think they’re fighting,” he said. “It’s spring, they’re probably mating.”

“Oh,” I said, suddenly embarrassed by the topic and the fact that I was sitting there butt naked.

Then, as if prompted by some internal instinct to pass a man’s awareness on to his pre-pubescent son, he proceeded to give his version of the birds and the bees, only in this case, it was the frogs and the salamanders, and the hairy human adults of which he was one and I was slowly on my way to becoming.

It shook me out of the dreamy, childlike trance I had been enveloped in since arriving at the falls. I scuttled back over to my clothes awkwardly, and spent the rest of the afternoon pondering the immensity of sex education.

My dad sensed what had happened, and it seemed that our relationship changed from that moment on. He had let me into the man’s cave and given me man’s knowledge. I was no longer a little boy, and expectations were different. For me, it was a profoundly sad moment, when I was suddenly made aware that childhood would soon end and be replaced by social situations I was terrified of. I knew it would come someday, but wasn’t ready.

The first day at Carpinteria Jr. High started as I was dropped off and nervously walked through the front doors. I knew right away I was somewhere different, as the long hallway was covered with lockers, and kids stood around in little groups, whispering and casting glances.

A bell rang and I followed everyone into the gymnasium. I sat and watched as giant, eighth-grade football players projected their masculinity, and well-groomed, teenage girls with fully developing breasts sat behind me.

On stage, a microphone sounded, and the principal, Mr. Wilson welcomed everyone, and began his orientation. He was followed by the Vice Principal, and a couple of Teachers. I noticed that they often referred to various school rules and disciplinary procedures, and that the football players chuckled quietly when certain rules were mentioned.

So began my two year stint at Carp Junior High. I was a good student, probably too good for my own good. I had friends, played on the tennis team, participated in discussions on “who’s hot” and “who’s retarded”, but mostly I just went about my business, did my homework, studied for tests.

Friday nights in the fall were football night, and Carp High played at the Jr. High stadium. There was so much going on at those games, it was like a carnival: behind the bleachers, around the campus, young love, jealousy, low riders, surfers. Football was big in Carpinteria, and they usually always made the playoffs and won it several years running. There is always a sense of excitement and angst on Friday nights for teenagers. Eventually that goes away.

There were some great teachers at that school, entirely memorable personalities. In Art class we were working on our perspective drawings. Mr. Hinton came by mine, blew a rubber cement booger on the table, and suggested I draw a giant egg in the foreground. In Mr. Goldie's Literature class, we passionately discussed stereotyping and prejudice, stimulated by our readings of "To Kill a Mockingbird". In Mr. Carrillo's English Comp class, the brother of my sixth grade teacher, we studied vocabulary my dad said most of his students didn't know, along with the metaphor of Pink Floyd's the Wall.

My reward for being a good student was that I got to go on a California History Trip at the end of my eighth grade year with about 30 other kids and the Vice Principal. We drove around the state in a bus for two weeks, stopping at historical points of interest and sleeping on the floors of school gymnasiums. It was a great trip, though I got violently ill about half-way through and had to deal with the worst strep throat of my life.

I finished at the junior high as Class Valedictorian, was accepted into Cate, and prepared to leave the local public school system behind and enter the world I had grown up with but never really known.

During the summers, as we grew a little older, we were allowed to go up behind the school and walk the two mile trail to what we called The Ridge. We went through a lemon orchard, which was quasi-legal at the time, but we didn't have to deal with Mr. Pickens. From there, it was up the fire road, past the water tower, and on up to the top of the first ridge. There were several other ridges behind that, leading all the way to a 4500 foot peak, a full-day, round trip that we did one Christmas. It was wild country up there, Los Padres forest with hundreds of miles of wilderness.

There were some serious forest fires periodically in the summers and early fall, and I can remember several times staring up at those burning mountains at night, packing everything up in boxes, and wondering if we would lose our home. We never did.

At the top of The Ridge, one could look out on all of Carpinteria in one direction, and in the other, a steep canyon trail down to a tributary of Carpinteria Creek. Inside the canyon, there were a couple places to camp, and one could walk up or down the creek to a few, beautiful swimming holes.

Our first backpacking was done up at The Ridge. We carried in sleeping bags, food, and some pots and utensils. What kid wouldn't delight in being with his friends so far from home, under the oak trees, with nothing but a campfire and rippling creek for company. In the early morning we woke up to loud sounds and thought we were being ambushed by wild animals. It turned out to be a herd of cattle coming down to drink.

There were two fantastic waterfalls at The Ridge. One came down through a stack of boulders, one of which was the size of a small house. You could climb up on a shelf behind the falls and look out through a sheet of water.

The second waterfall ran into a large, deep pool surrounded by rock walls that was impassable except by swimming through. It had a great high spot to dive in from, and a rope to help you get back up. The waterfall disappeared into a dark cave that we were intrigued by but didn't know a way into. After a concentrated investigation, we discovered that there was a narrow passage underwater that went behind the boulders to the pool the waterfall was flowing into. None of us, though, were brave enough to hold our breath and explore. Finally, after a long buildup of several weeks, I think it was Willie who went for it, and discovered the cave pool behind the rock. It was scary but pretty easy, and after that, it became a tradition.

Later on, as we grew into young adults, The Ridge continued to be a destination. We would go there to be in nature, to get away from it all, and to ponder life and death. It could even be an entry to a different world.

Going to Cate School wasn't a lifetime ambition, but I guess I had always assumed I would go there. Once I started classes, it was nothing like growing up there.

First off, it was hard. The class schedule was rigorous, the teachers demanding, and the students were pretty much all gifted. I struggled the first semester to get B's, and knew it would only get harder. But I was up for the challenge, and with a little elbow grease, I participated and learned. In English, we analyzed the poetry of e.e.cummings. In Biology, we dissected a skinned mink. In Geometry we wrote incomprehensible proofs. In French, we watched movies without subtitles. And in art, we drew the negative space.

Figuring out the students was just as difficult. I knew no one. All my friends from public school had gone to Carpinteria High. The only familiar faces were the faculty and the other faculty kids, Jeff and Ned. Everyone else in the freshman class was pretty much in the same boat, and that first year there was a lot of testing and jockeying and proving, like any other school, only in this case, a family of 60 adolescent boys, all living together. Gradually, through the year, I developed friendships that would alter my life.

Sports were a great outlet for me, and I played varsity soccer and tennis that first year. I almost played JV lacrosse, but broke my foot running from a teacher in the dorms. Maybe that's where my trouble started. Actually, it was a very complicated time, and due to a

combination of adolescent curiosity, mixed with mischievous influence, I strayed over the line and into the forbidden forest.

It was beautiful in there, in the forbidden forest, full of strangeness and danger and altered perception. I tried things. I studied the lyrics. I was a shy, sensitive kid trying to cut a little edge, breaking away from what was expected, learning to think for himself.

I was afraid to approach girls. I became completely self-conscious. I went to a freshman dance at another school, but walked away, unable to get over my personality dysfunctions. I didn't go to another dance for a long time after that.

I was also beginning to become more aware of the disparity between rich and poor and middle class. Sometimes students talked about their vacations, wore logos on their clothes, or revealed opinions of seditious intent. I wouldn't say social rank and race were completely new concepts to me, but their impact on how I experienced high school was memorable.

In the spring of that year, I was caught stealing a Polo shirt by a department store undercover and taken downtown to be photographed. I was picked up by my concerned parents and driven home in silence. It was a very embarrassing experience and ushered me inward even further.

My dad tried to talk with me about what I was going through, but I wasn't too receptive. He'd come into my room and sit down and try to connect. I would look the other way, stare out the window in confusion, respond with resentment and defensiveness.

That summer after freshman year, I went to Europe with a soccer team I had played with in Santa Barbara while in junior high, the Gladiators. It was a great trip in many ways. But I also felt like an outsider with them, like I was having some different experience than

they were, and it felt too awkward to talk about. I came back to Cate that sophomore year ready to explode.

Our family traveled up to Lake Tahoe many times, since I was about six or seven. We went in the summer and stayed in one of Uncle Wamp's houses. Uncle Wamp, my dad's brother, lived in some fantastic spots, always in Nevada, and we would spend a week, often with other family, enjoying the dry, mountain breeze; cool, sparkling water, and incredible vistas.

As we grew older, we would go in the winter or early spring to ski. Our uncle has been an avid skier for over fifty years. In fact, I would bet he has skied as many vertical feet as nearly anyone on the planet. We would stay with him and Bird, our aunt, for a week, ski every day at Heavenly, eat spaghetti and listen to Italian opera in the evenings.

My first ski trip was the spring of my freshman year. I went with my dad on the long drive up the central valley, accompanied by hours of homemade cassette tapes. By that time, I was into music he didn't really like: the Police, Rush, Journey. But he'd bear with it, before he got his turn, and put on Emmylou Harris or Vivaldi.

He initially taught me to ski. My uncle didn't have the patience to spend hours with a moody teenager on the beginner slopes. I'd follow Dad down, snow plow, falling falling falling. I didn't have a bunch of fancy clothes, so my jeans and down jacket were completely wet by the end of the day.

On the second day, we went to the top of the mountain and skied down Olympic. I'd charge down the hill, terrible form, and wait for my dad; he'd come gliding in, brown jacket and black pants, like a member of the communist party. He'd light a cigarette and smile.

“Well, how was it?”

“Pretty cool, I like it, but it’s harder than I thought.”

“Yeah...we’ll get Wamp to give us a lesson, tomorrow. You looked pretty good, though, for your second day.”

We skied on our rented Rossignols until dusk, he and I, in our Levis and old, down coats, while the kids raced by, in parallel florescent Atomics, tight fitting polyester. He didn’t care. I did. It was fun. I wanted to be better. He knew he wasn’t going to get any better.

That night, we looked out the plate glass at the moon shimmering off the lake and the white-capped Sierras on the horizon. My dad and Wamp drank red wine and listened to Giulietta Simionato sing Giuseppe Verdi. Bird cooked up some tacos. She enjoyed teasing me. I was easy to annoy.

“Hey, Matthew, I heard you got a girlfriend.”

I shook my head,” Nope.”

“What did you say her name was, Jim, Emily...Elizabeth...?”

“Never heard of her,” I grumbled.

“You could learn a lot from girls, Matthew. You should try hanging out with them more.”

I wish I could have said, “Well, if they were all as beautiful and charming as you, I wouldn’t be able to resist.” That would have made her happy. But I wasn’t there yet. I was still incubating in a very primitive state of adulthood.

“Look at what it’s done for us,” my uncle joked. “We wouldn’t know what to do with ourselves.”

Little did I realize how true those words were.

The next day, we went up to the top of the mountain from Stagecoach. My uncle, the local, saying “hey” to all the other locals. We skied down all the intermediate runs together, me skiing wildly, falling every other minute, my dad going slowly, rarely falling, my uncle slaloming gracefully, never falling.

He’d joke with me on form, “Don’t stick your ass out so much.”

“How do you not catch an edge?” I asked.

“Just do it enough. I haven’t caught an edge in fifteen years. But I ski every day.”

We traversed the mountain, huddled down and got carried up the lifts, drank hot chocolate and beer and ate hamburgers. By the end of that trip, I was a skier. We went for several family ski vacations after that, and I’ve tried to take my own family about once a year ever since.

The year I became a sophomore at Cate was the year the school went coed. It was a turbulent year, not just for me. The faculty had a lot of adjusting to do, and obviously the students did too. It was exciting. The open element of sexuality on campus was a huge transformation.

Sophomore year for anyone is usually difficult. For me, I don’t know what happened. I wasn’t a “good boy” anymore. I was a little wild, definitely rebellious, and hyper sensitive to the hypocrisy of

authority. I broke the rules. I got in trouble, but so did most of my friends.

I was also desperately lonely for freedom and wanted to pursue happiness but wasn't sure exactly what it was or how to find it. All I had were my senses and my imagination, and sometimes my imagination took me down some strange paths.

One night, after an argument with my dad, I considered running away over the mountains with a backpack, and maybe finding some lonely highway to hitchhike up to Canada, looking for Yukon Jack. I almost tried. I packed my bag, my compass, my maps, but I think I realized I'd have the entire Santa Barbara police department looking for me. I'd have to try at a more discreet time.

One of my good friends for much of that year was Steve. We learned guitar. We listened to "old" rock 'n' roll. We smoked cigarettes in the bushes. We let the air out of teachers' tires.

We got caught on a Saturday night, completely drunk, lying in the top of the soccer goal nets, like a hammock. A Discipline Committee meeting found us guilty of rule breaking and we were suspended and placed on probation.

The school year went on. My dad didn't know what to do with me. We had a lot of talks. One time we were in the living room and I sat at the fireplace making a flute by burning holes in a piece of bamboo with a heated fire poker as he tried to counsel me about drugs.

I tried to open up more to girls, show interest, and make attempts at communication. I was incredibly self-conscious, but I was uncomfortable with so many other things going on, it was becoming a routine feeling.

Had it not been for general recklessness, I might have made it through that year and gone on at Cate. I had been branded difficult, but I didn't really care about changing or complying. Several of us were asked to leave, in so many words, and several others barely made it through the year. I ended up leaving Cate School in the early spring.

I finished the year at Carpinteria High, while still living at Cate. I kept to myself a lot, though I did reconnect with friends I had from junior high. I played on the varsity tennis team which took CIF. I went on an overnight, biology field trip to the San Bernardino mountains and froze my ass off, camping in the snow. I took my first ceramics class.

My mom and dad were sad and disappointed, but probably more concerned about what would happen next. They suggested I look at other private schools in the area, and I guess I looked forward to living away from home so I did. I decided on Dunn, over the mountain from Santa Barbara.

That summer, after a year of school chaos, I went to visit my relatives in upstate New York and work a month for the Youth Conservation Corps in Vermont. I stayed in the small town of Cazenovia with Aunt Peggy, Uncle Sal and Grandma Mimi, and visited with relatives in the area, their sons Jimmy, Bobby, Ricky and their families.

It was beautiful there, a lot of trees, old buildings, lakes, country roads and farms. In the summer it was pretty warm and humid. In the winter, my uncle said, you'd rather be in California. I'd walk down through town, stop by a yard sale, get a snack at the grocery, and go take a swim in the lake.

We spent family time together, and I enjoyed listening to my older cousins and their friends converse in their East Coast manner. I was pretty quiet, so mostly I just observed. My grandmother watched over my interactions and tried to engage me as much as possible. She didn't let me get by without at least greeting people and saying good-bye.

Sometimes they would put me to work and I would help out in Bobby's auto shop or Jimmy's sheep ranch or mow the lawns. Jimmy lived on a farm with his family, and tended to livestock mostly, and had a sheepskin business with his wife. He was pretty likeable, funny and down to earth. He didn't question me or worry about me. I was growing my hair out. I was trying out vegetarianism. I was reading philosophy. He knew there wasn't any harm to it. I helped him bale hay, round up the sheep, shoe the horses, and smoked cigarettes with him in the barn, with the afternoon rain coming down. His wife was great too, and one day I went out in the fields to pick strawberries with her. I liked the physical labor and country setting.

Some of my family set me up on a date with a girl who helped out in my cousin Bobby's shop, Dot, and we went to a movie together, Gorp. It had a lot of sexual tension and I think we were both embarrassed as we sat beside each other with our own apprehensions. She gave me a ride home in her Chevy Nova. I think I kissed her good night. If I didn't I should have.

My Aunt and I drove up Long Island in her red Mustang convertible. We went to visit my cousin Jenny and her husband, who lived up on the northern tip, in Montauk. I read most of the way. The evening of our arrival they boiled a couple lobsters for us. We watched Elton John sing on television and listened to Grand Funk Railroad records.

Later, the next day we went down to the beach with Jenny's grandparents, on Sal's side, to pick wild rose hips to make jelly.

They spoke with a strong, Italian accent and when at first I refused the rose hip jelly, mostly out of incomprehension, Grandpa Giardina said, "What, have you no shame?" I tried it. It was good.

We walked down through the tall beach grass to the ocean as the golden sun set over the town. I went body surfing in the green and purple Atlantic. It was surprisingly warm.

Aunt Peggy drove me up to Vermont and dropped me off in Bennington. I spent about a month in the Merck Forest, with a group of twenty other teenagers and two counselors, doing volunteer conservation work. There were miles of trails through woods of maple and birch, fields of blueberries, creeks, meadows, and small, wood cabins. We pruned the trails and split wood to fire the maple syrup boilers and warm the cabins in the winter. We had syrup with everything: pancakes, oatmeal, tea, scrambled eggs. The only thing missing was butter!

I lived out of a canvas tent with a roommate from Illinois, swam daily in a large pond with a rope swing, and helped build an outhouse that I used everyday. Sometimes it would cloud up with a passing thunderstorm and we would get completely drenched while running through the forests and meadows, on our way to the admin house to look for butter. Occasionally at night, we would look up in the sky and see the northern lights dancing in the summer sky.

Dunn School is technically in Los Olivos, but in reality, it is in the middle of nowhere. It is located in the Santa Ynez valley, a wide, flat valley of rolling farmland, with cattle and horse ranches and numerous wineries. In the era I went there, it was a boys' boarding school with girl day-students. It was primitive by Cate standards, with very simple dorm rooms and classrooms, a barn for assemblies, and a corrugated-metal, airplane-hanger gymnasium.

I learned after I got back from Vermont that a friend, John, who had also gotten in trouble at Cate, would be going there also. I arrived at Dunn, was dropped off, and was back in camp pretty much. John and I rekindled our friendship and were inseparable for most of the year. We were quickly initiated into Dunn culture with a bong hit into a pillow, and a few songs of a scratchy Pink Floyd record.

I had a roommate named Chris. He was a Rolling Stones nut. We lived together in a small hermitage with a bunkbed, an old couch, and a broken heater. We hung tapestries on the walls, like in the middle ages, to conserve heat, and had an ancient wooden desk with names carved in it from 1967.

We lived off cafeteria food, which was pretty bad, especially for a vegetarian. I probably lost ten pounds that year. The two redeeming selections were the frosted cakes and Sunday brunches. There was a small store right off campus and we could walk there to get ingredients for our quesadillas that we cooked in toaster ovens.

Sports, as always, remained a passion of mine, and I played soccer and tennis while I was there. We were the Dunn School Earwigs. On game days, I would be playing a soccer game and look over at the grandstand to see Logan shouting out a cheer and shaking his butt at us, with his boxers showing a picture of the fabled insect.

In Dunn School tradition, the school belly flop contest got underway in early December, with contestants doing their best in the unheated pool. John won easily by doing three consecutive, arched, holding-his-feet flops off the high diving board, one of the many moments he went completely insane. He reminded me of some great artist, a genius in many respects, but profoundly complicated.

Out behind the field was a small building where we went to Woody's pottery class in the ceramics shack. It was the most beautiful place I

could imagine. There was a small fenced courtyard with the large, gas-fired kiln and a rectangular room with a chaotic array of wheels, clay and glaze powders. There was a sliding barn door that we opened up in the afternoon and looked out on acres of golden wheat.

Woody, who many of his loving students called “Bill” was the most inspirational teacher I ever had. He was humble, funny, and honest. Woody wore jeans and cowboy boots, and an old levis jacket. He was kind of hunched over, had scraggly hair, glasses, and a bushy mustache. He often smoked a pipe and the aroma of the sweet tobacco would waft through the dusty air. He would let us listen to Oingo Boingo, smoke cigarettes, talk about sex and drugs, and for those that wanted to learn, he would teach ceramics.

I became totally immersed in the fine art and science. I went through bags of clay, making bowls and bottles and jars, mixing up glazes, filling the kiln, and learning to fire. I spent hours and hours in that place, and Woody became a kind of guru, sharing his wisdom and compassion that would come to greatly affect my life. He’d tell stories and he’d give his take on school politics and mythology. He did it all in a way that was both amusing and informative.

That first year at Dunn, believe it or not, I had kind of a spiritual awakening. I am convinced. I was immersed in my own journey, constantly reading eastern philosophy: Bagwan Shree Rajneesh’s “The Way of White Clouds”, Ram Dass’ “Be Here Now”, and Timothy Leary’s “Tibetan Book of the Dead”. My musical tastes included a strong interest in Ravi Shankar and Cat Stevens, especially “Mona Bone Jackon”, with its haunting melodies.

I’d get up really early, in the dark, and walk around, trying to meditate as it became light. I was a young monk in a monastery in the morning before dawn, and a kid trying to grow up during the day. I had some strange experiences I can only describe as metaphysical. It was frightening. I felt so alone. I tried to share, with John and

Woody, a little bit of what I could describe, but for the most part I kept silent, as my psyche went through a transformation.

My social development continued slowly. I was interested in girls and I was interested in love, but I was still unable to communicate. One night, during a weekend dance, I was out at the ceramics shack. Some other guys went out there to smoke a cigarette. They turned a light on, and there I was in the dark, centering a mound of clay on the wheel. They laughed. I felt like crying.

John and I spent a lot of time together. We'd smoke cigarettes between classes. We'd hitchhike into Solvang on the weekends. We'd sit in his room and listen to the Grateful Dead and talk about life and death and girls and running away.

John got in trouble about half-way through the year, and they asked him to leave the school. It's funny how important a friend is in high school you've only really known for a year. It was a really a hard loss, and even harder several years later when I learned he had disappeared.

Many of my first paid jobs were at Cate. My dad hooked me up with the Business Manager, and he gave me work picking up trash, and painting, and blacktopping driveways.

One of the most memorable and longest lasting jobs I had was clearing brush. The campus hills were covered with the stuff, and every winter it would grow back and need to be removed for fire safety. The summer after my first year at Dunn, I cleared the brush on the side of the campus where the dorms overlooked the ocean.

It was a steep embankment, and probably covered about 5 or 6 acres. Using only a scythe, a hoe, and a pair of leather gloves, I would start

at the bottom, hacking as much as I could carry, and then haul it up in a pile on my back, about 200 feet, to the lawns on top, where once a week, Cate groundskeepers would come to haul it off in a truck.

It was incredibly physical work, and every day I'd be exhausted. I worked alone, and by the end of the summer, had made it all the way from one end of the dorms to the other. It was very cathartic. I had a lot of anger and emotion to work out, and there was no one else I had to interact with, the perfect job for me at that moment.

It was also during that summer that I began taking an old beater yellow board down to Bates Beach under my arm on a moped to learn how to surf. After a hard day of labor, I'd steal a beer from the fridge, and make my way down to the beach, covered in sweat, and dirt, and brush debris, to cleanse myself in the saltwater. By the end of the summer, I could ride a wave on my feet all the way to shore. But more importantly, I learned to feel comfortable in the ocean, to paddle and swim through waves, and to enjoy the pure beauty of nature. I was hooked. At the end of the summer, I bought my first board, a 6'2", single-fin, Santa Barbara Designs, turquoise and blue deck.

I got to know many of the groundskeepers and their families at Cate over the years. Many of them were Mexicans who had immigrated to the U.S., some with ties to family and friends in Carpinteria. Sometimes we worked side by side, hauling brush or cutting potatoes in the kitchen. Other times we played together in the men's soccer league, down at La Playa stadium near Cabrillo Boulevard in Santa Barbara. They saw that I was a humble, hardworking kid and visa versa. We communicated in broken English and Spanish about work and futbol and life. Eventually, I became intrigued enough that I decided to take a couple trips down to Mexico.

One time, I was working over the side of the hill, and hauled up a load of brush, and my dad was quietly sitting there smiling, and he

shook his head and said, “That looks damn hard.” From then on, I think we both knew I’d be alright.

It’s been over twenty years, but looking back on my last year in high school, there were so many turning points, so many twists, that it’s like watching a movie.

Working as a laborer and learning how to surf that summer had sparked an interest in activities I wanted to continue pursuing, but was unable to at an inland, boarding school. I became frustrated and like every high school senior, I became restless. I had also become a regular ganja smoker, and a combination of all these influences resulted in a severe drop-off in academic productivity.

I did OK in school. I had some pretty hard classes, Calculus and Physics, and AP English, French 2. I also had Ceramics with Woody again and Varsity Soccer. I had long blond hair and wore a flannel shirt, loose cotton pants, and flip flops. I became friends with a few girls. I would walk with Cindy between classes, and I was beginning to be a little more open and communicative.

A friend that had gone to Cate with me ended up at Dunn that year too; Brian and I ended up spending a lot of time together, just bullshitting around, listening to reggae records, and walking to the store. He had a more lighthearted way of looking at the world than I did and took on problems with a sense of humor instead of getting ominous and depressed.

That Christmas, he invited me to go to Hawaii with him and his Mom. We stayed briefly in Waikiki and then went over to Kauai. I had never been to the tropics before. It was magical. We brought our surfboards over and got our first taste of warm water and coral reefs. Unfortunately, I sprained my ankle right before I left, but I still had a

blast. Santa Barbara has a warm, temperate climate, but it is semi arid, and often very dry. Hawaiian breezes are filled with the scent of afternoon showers and tropical flowers.

Soon after we returned to Dunn that winter, several kids got in trouble for distributing marijuana, and at least one student got kicked out. I was on the administrations' radar, so I got called into the office. Of course, I denied any involvement and gave no incriminating information. The Headmaster was pissed and didn't believe me. The Dean searched my room, top to bottom, and found a joint stashed in the bookshelf.

That evening I met my dad in front of the Headmaster's office. He looked tired and sad. We went inside and sat down on the leather chairs. They had decided to suspend me and let me continue the year through mail correspondence. If I completed all my work, and passed exams, I could graduate and walk with the class.

What? You mean I can skip going to all the classes and still graduate? Wow, I was elated. My dad wasn't. He wasn't convinced.

So began my spring term. Life started in the morning, sleeping in 'till nine. I'd grab a bite to eat and ride down to the beach on a moped for an hour surf. I'd start my homework at 10:30, take a break for lunch, and then go downtown and catch the bus to Santa Barbara to "do some research" at the library. After classes were out in the afternoon at Cate, I'd go up and hang out with my friends Miller, and Willie and Nick. In the late afternoon, sometimes I'd go down to the beach for a sunset surf in the evening glass-off.

My dad just laughed at me. On one hand, he thought I was a complete adolescent idiot, but on the other hand, he saw that I was passing Calculus and AP English, and that I was no different than many of his other students.

Toward the end of that semester, I cashed in on my grandmother's gift of \$500 in savings bonds, and bought a '67 VW Squareback, from an old derelict in Summerland. Now the freedom and adventure could really begin, I thought.

Throughout my adolescence, we lived in a house actually a quarter mile from the Cate campus. It was on a gravel driveway lined with eucalyptus trees that were filled with turkey vultures. We lived next door to the Smiths in a single story house built in the 1940's. It was a great house and had a beautiful backyard with a patio and lawn and olive trees that looked out at the ocean.

Beyond our house were acres of brush and oak. There was a trail that went out past my treehouse and over to the fire road that runs from the school fields down to the avocado orchard in the valley below. I don't know who owned the orchard, but the school had access to a one-room cabin down at the edge of the property.

For an adolescent, it was the perfect place to go. It was surrounded by several huge boulders, a grove of large sycamore trees, and bordered Carpinteria Creek, which ran between Cate Mesa and Shepherd's Mesa. In the quiet evening, we could make a camp fire, watch the wind rustle the sycamore leaves as it passed through the valley. There, we would listen to the rippling creek and ponder the musty aroma of decaying avocados.

It was the site where I first kissed a girl, where I had my first romantic conversation. In that magical setting, I could let down my guard, break up the hard-packed earth, and begin to plow it into receptive, fertile pasture. I can laugh about it now, but I knew nothing of what the future would hold, and the possibility of failure frightened me. However, something about the intimacy of that cabin

allowed me to feel comfortable and confident, and I grew wiser because of it.

My dad had a classical guitar that he had purchased in Spain as a bachelor teacher. It was the guitar I first learned on, and the more I practiced, the more I seemed to inherit it. He would often come in to listen to me practice, and I would ask him to tune it for me. He would stand in the hallway and listen to me play “Blackbird” or “Greensleeves” and then he would walk back to the living room to sit in his chair, read, and listen to classical music on the radio. Playing that rich, Spanish guitar made me sound like Segovia, and I would love to see my friends, in the dancing light of the camp fire, staring off into space and imagining a beautiful world within. Eventually, we would head back up the hill to sneak into our rooms and dorms, or climb into sleeping bags in my Squareback.

The spring of my final semester in high school, I got to ride my first real waves, winter waves, and to be honest, they scared me shitless. But I was determined, and resolve will get you far in this world, my friend. I had a “secret spot.” There was a dirt road that led through a vacant field to an area now called The Bluffs. I’d park my VW next to the railroad tracks and walk over to what is now the Seal Reserve, near the pier.

There’s a rocky reef out there, and on a Northwest swell direction and medium-low tide, a nice right. No one ever surfed out there, but I did, almost every day, sometimes with a friend, but usually by myself. Sometimes, I would drive down at night and sleep in my bag on the cliffs, lulled by the crashing of waves on the rocks, hiding in the shadows away from the eerie, orange light of the pier. I can still recall my first ride on a true ocean swell and how it picked me up in its powerful arms and flung me out onto the wide open wall of water. I’d head back to my car, full of adrenaline and stoke, and drive back home to finish my exams.

Late that spring, Willie and I went to a Jerry Garcia Band show at the Arlington Theatre in Santa Barbara. I'd been going to that theater since I was a little boy, to watch Disney movies under the ceiling stars, but that show was a brand new experience. It was my first rock concert, and of all the live shows I have been to over the years, that one was truly unique.

We were both out of our minds. I don't know what we were thinking. There were people in tie-dyes and long hair everywhere. As the show started, I had the feeling I wasn't going to make it. Overwhelming dread and despair had me believing I was going to die. I sat in the lobby on the stairs leading to the balcony, looking hopelessly at the concessions stand. Suddenly, miraculously, out of the red carpet appeared Jessica. She led me by the hand back into the theater, and I spent the next three hours in a transcendental time warp of love, music, and existential introspection.

Somehow, Willie and I ended up back on the beach in the morning, our hair full of sand and flies, our clothes imbued with the fragrance of Dead Heads.

I remember my dad handing me my grades in a mailed envelope with a smile and a shake of the head. There was a short letter of congratulations from the Headmaster. I had passed exams, completed all requirements, and was invited to graduate with my class. I finished that chapter of my life by driving the Squareback up to Dunn, with long blond hair and tanned skin, to walk in the graduation ceremony, with Cindy at my arm, underneath the huge, ancient oak.

The summer after graduation was different than I imagined it would be. I was done with school. I didn't want to go to college. I had been accepted at UC Santa Cruz as well as Dharma

Realm Buddhist University in Ukiah. I didn't choose either, though I was interested in the Buddhist idea. No one was telling me what to do. The decisions about my life were now mine to make, and I wasn't sure which way to go.

I got a job with a temp agency working as a construction laborer in Goleta. I drove every day, through Santa Barbara traffic, spending a lot of my paycheck just to have a car and to buy gas. After about five months of owning that car, it started to have problems. I took it in to the VW shop on Santa Claus Lane. Bob, the shop owner, looked at the dipstick. It was two quarts low and completely black. He just shook his head. There went another paycheck.

I was an introverted, high school graduate without a clue. My friends at Cate were all gone, and I was living at home. I was determined to make my own way, but was completely idealistic. So began the next phase of my life. It was pretty lonely. I lived at home, went to work, while all my friends were off at college. And I wasn't really confident about going and meeting people my age.

Working as a construction laborer, though, I got to meet a lot of people, and they had an incredibly powerful impact on my life. I can still recall many of them today, even though I may have only worked with them for a few weeks. People like Earl, who drove from New Jersey in his truck and lived in it for several months while he worked to get back on his feet. Or the woman who ran the catering truck that came by at breaks and told stories of Jamaica and her child's father who was a singer in a famous reggae trio, but who always went back to his farm in the island hills.

It was rough work, and I only made five dollars an hour, but in eight months I saved enough to buy a one-way plane ticket. I worked for a short time with a contractor who told me he had traveled the world when he was young, working from country to country, and his stories had me believing I could do the same thing. And so with that

ticket in my hand, and a backpack of clothes and sleeping bag, I boarded the bus and began my solitary voyage to the Caribbean island of Jamaica.

I arrived in Kingston in the afternoon. It was very hot and humid, and on the breeze, I could smell the faint traces of fruit and something burning. Kingston is not Honolulu Airport. It's a tropical city, but it's third world and industrial. The cab drivers out front haggled aggressively with the mostly business travelers. I ended up in a yellow Cadillac with a slick dressed man in sunglasses, Irish Flat Cap, and several gold teeth.

My contacts in Jamaica were the grandparents of one of my school mates at Cate, Andrew. I had the address and phone number, and gave it to the diver.

“Me know dat one mon. No problem. Bwai, me gwon take yu der bamba yay”

“You know it? OK” I said hesitantly, not really understanding what he had just said. I was by myself, a vulnerable eighteen year old off on the journey of a lifetime.

We drove through busy, potholed streets. School girls in their uniforms walked together. Wild looking youths disappeared behind corrugated metal, shanty structures, and into empty lots with giant trees and groups of people. Along the street, there were no sidewalks, but occasional piles of garbage, often smoking, with stray dogs wandering about.

“Wow, this is different,” I thought.

The cab driver pulled into a gas station.

“Me a go get Craven A right now, ya na wan?”

“What’s that?” I asked

“You a smoke cigarette?”

“Sure,” I said.

“Yeah mon, me a soon come, hear?”

And with that, he walked over to a group of men that were hanging out. “Ay Delroy, bumbo clot...” and his conversation trailed off into the totally undecipherable. He spent fifteen minutes talking and laughing and when he came back he had two small red and white boxes with the words “Craven A” printed on the front. He handed me one.

I opened the unwrapped box. Inside were a set of about six cigarettes and four small, tightly wrapped cylinders of brown paper.

“What are these?” I questioned of the unknown parcels.

“Ya na smoke skliff, mon?” and he belted out a deep laugh.

“Dat a good sensi. Na worry yurself. Jamaica grow nuf good herb, ras clot, ond you a big mon so you cyan refuse dat. Di healing a di nation, me a tell you.”

“Hm,” I nodded, “Thanks”.

We lit up our cigarettes and proceeded through a residential area with suburban homes surrounded by walls and ornate, metal fences.

He let me off in Kingston 7 and I shouted “hello?” through the locked gate. A young woman came striding out slowly without emotion and greeted me. It turned out she was the housekeeper and that I was at the right “yard”. I paid the driver, and walked up through the front garden, past the mango tree, and into the single story, cement block house.

So began my adventures in Jamaica. I stayed for two and a half months, living enough memories to fill a thousand pages. I made my way home, penniless. Actually I had about fifty cents, and I had to first hitchhike up the entire Florida peninsula.

For many summers, on breezy, weekend afternoons, my dad would take my brother and I sailing in the school’s sailboat, a 25 foot fiberglass sloop. He was a good sailor, and knew how to put us to work, and captain a ship.

The first time I sailed to the islands with him, he and I headed out of the Santa Barbara Harbor in the late afternoon with a strong, gusty breeze filling the two sails, and moved quickly out into deep water. It was great sailing, and we made excellent time.

As we began to head further into the channel, the swell picked up and the wind became gustier. By the time we were nearing Santa Cruz Island, we were in some strong seas. The boat was pushing through solid ocean conditions, and because we still had both sails up, we were tilting way over on the leeward side, with part of the deck dipping into the ocean. My dad yelled at me, “Take the wheel, and steer her into the wind!”

He let out the main sail and, holding on to the wire stays, he made his way up to the front of the boat. I was seriously shitting my pants. I thought for sure either the boat was going to capsize or he was

going to go over and I would have to rescue him. He hastily pulled down the racing jib, with the waves pounding over the bow. He then rigged up a much smaller storm jib, and made his way back to the stern. We pulled the boom back around and set our course toward the island, in a much more secure state. He sat down, soaking wet, and gave a nervous laugh. We cracked open a couple Miller Lights and continued on our way. Out on the western reach, a large, three masted clipper, delighted in the lively conditions.

Pulling in to the shadow of the island as it was nearing dusk, my dad decided we had better get out of the wind and set anchor in Prisoner's Harbor instead of continuing around to the leeward side. Unfortunately, it turned out that it wasn't much of a harbor and there were already several boats there. We set anchor near the cliffs, out of the wind, ate a quick dinner, and went to bed.

The wind continued to blow. It rattled the sails and main stays. We didn't sleep. My dad got up frequently to check the anchor. It was dark.

"We're drifting," he said.

"Is that OK?" I asked, knowing already the answer.

"Not really."

"Why don't we reset the anchor," I said.

He nodded, "You pull it up and I'll get the engine started."

Although I was tired, it felt good to do real work and use my construction-callused hands and youthful muscles in a helpful way. He pulled the boat back around and I dropped the anchor. He motored it off a little to tighten the line, but it wouldn't catch.

“Damn,” he said, “it’s not working.”

We tried several times to get a good setting. My hands became sore and cold from pulling up the rope and chain. At some point the motor flooded with all the stopping and starting. I started feeling seasick.

At last he said, “That’s good enough, I think it’ll hold until tomorrow.” We went back to our sleeping bags.

Several hours later, we were awakened by a loud bump. The boat had struck something. Then we heard someone yelling, “Hey you’re hitting my boat!”

It turned out the anchor had drifted, and we were a hundred feet from where we started. My dad apologized, and we positioned ourselves out a little deeper, away from the rest of the boats. We attempted to set anchor again in the dark, but it was rougher out there, and the boat kept drifting.

Dad decided we should motor over to the leeward side of the island, and find a safe place to make port. After several attempts, he got the motor started and we began to make our way along the coast. Almost as soon we started, the motor conked out. He tried it again, nothing. He worked on that motor for about fifteen minutes before we both realize we were getting too close to the rocky shore.

“Ok,” he said, “enough of this bullshit. We’re sailing”

We hoisted the mainsail quickly and made our way downwind. It was a nervous but uneventful evening sail. The wind calmed as we made our way around San Pedro Point. As we were entering the large open harbor, my dad pulled the crank cord, and the engine started right up. We glided into Smuggler’s Cove under a full moon,

calm seas, and a warm, starry night, looking south toward Anacapa Island and Antarctica.

We stayed a couple days out there, puttering around, swimming, and when we returned to Santa Barbara, it was absolutely flat and we had to motor almost half-way home before a little wind picked up. It took us most of the day.

Several years passed, and both my brother and I moved off to go to college, both in Northern California. Mom and Dad moved into where the Gunthers had lived, a smaller house that was built next door, and we returned for holidays and vacations.

The school grew and developed and over time we became strangers. It's kind of sad, like so many things that change. Sometimes, when I'm visiting, I'll go up to show my sons where I grew up, kick a few balls around or walk the campus. There are still many familiar faces, and like my own, they have weathered and wrinkled. It's still a beautiful place, and I envision it always will be.

Carpinteria valley, where my parents eventually moved to, has grown and changed also, but not much, and I'm very glad for that. You can still head down Linden Avenue, across the railroad tracks, and get a hamburger or a taco at The Spot. You can walk down on the beach and get your feet mucked up with tar, and on a clear day, when the ocean glistens, you can look out to the Channel Islands and dream about the people who used to sail there.