PAUL GAMBACCINI

Radio Boy

AN ADOLESCENT DJ'S STORY

Since his first appearance on the BBC in 1973, Paul Gambaccini has become a fixture in British broadcasting, particularly with his long-running American hits show. Highlights of his career have included three seasons of *The Other Side of the Tracks* on Channel 4, film reviews on TVAM, numerous appearances on Radio 4's *Kaleidoscope* and *Today,* and co-hosting *Live Aid.* Notable on Radio 1 have been *The Elton John Story, The Bee Gees Story, All-American Heroes,* the *Marathon Music Quiz* and a series of appreciations. Paul is the co-author of the biennial best-seller *The Guinness Book of British Hit Singles* and related titles. He is captain of the Regent's Park Softball Club and feels that though his squash is improving, his golf is getting worse.

Elm Tree publishes his *Track Records,* profiles of 22 rock stars taken from his Radio 1 series of appreciations.

'To claim that *Track Records* was "unputdownable" would be untrue as the temptation to unearth some long forgotten records en route will prove quite irresistible.' *The Spectator*

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Paul Gambaccini has been a pop music fanatic and radio nut ever since he can remember. As a child he ate his mother's spaghetti to Peter Tripp, shot baskets in the backyard to Dan Daniel and did his homework to Bruce Bradley. When he went to Dartmouth College it seemed inevitable he would join the campus radio station WDCR.

WDCR was an excellent training ground. At first he was a newsman and one of his early assignments was covering Nixon's 1968 New Hampshire State Primary campaign. The young reporter was able to get very close to the Presidential candidate, so close he couldn't help noticing his bad breath. Paul also learnt to cope with guests who played the William Tell Overture on their heads, as well as one of the basic rules of his trade: when one is uncertain whether one is on the air, or when one should be on the air but is not for some reason beyond one's control, *keep going*. Service will be restored at an unpredictable moment.

A chance encounter in the college record library led to a switch to deejaying. Later, in Oxford, on a scholarship, Paul was unable to get a job in British radio because he was

Continued on back flap

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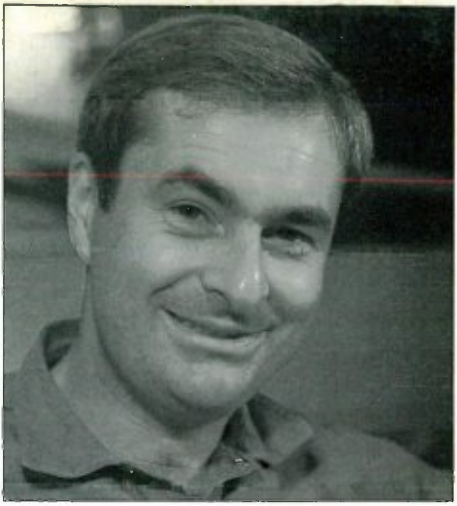

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Continued from front flap

American. After fighting this for a year, and having despaired of ever succeeding for a further two, another chance encounter in 1973 led to a slot on Radio 1.

This engaging and frank slice of autobiography, written with a freshness reminiscent of Edmund White, recounts how Paul Gambaccini overcame the angst of his adolescence to become a respected disc jockey.

Radio Boy

An Adolescent DJ's Story

Paul Gambaccini

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Note

The names of some persons have been changed in the interests of their privacy

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Radio Boy

To the DCR boys

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1

'We don't have to do *everything* together!'

It wasn't until Dwight Timbers snapped at me like an overwrought turtle that I realized I may have overdone the togetherness bit. He had been the student government President of Darien High, while I had led the student organization at Staples High in Westport. Both were suburban schools in Connecticut. Darien and Staples were mortal foes, and when a *New York Times* article revealed that Darien hostesses had served alcoholic beverages to their children's under-age friends my classmates chanted 'Sin City! Sin City!' at the showdown basketball game.

I still hadn't broken free from the Catholic Church, and Sin was Serious Business to me. Disgusted by the Stapleites' behaviour, I wrote a letter of apology to President Timbers. He replied with thanks. Our conciliatory gesture thawed our schools' frozen relations, and Dwight and I became friends. When we each decided to go to Dartmouth College it was automatic that we asked to be roommates.

Dwight was considerably shorter than I. This meant it was even more surprising that his whiskers grew darker and thicker than my own. Had he rather than Richard Nixon been debating John Kennedy he, too, would have suffered from five o'clock shadow. Since he never had to face television lights the only thing that did give him anxiety was the pressure to follow his father, a judge, into the legal profession.

Timbers and I had many good laughs during our first week at Dartmouth. We sat with the other freshmen in

the upper level of the gymnasium to take a lengthy written personality test. This consisted of approximately six hundred questions answerable by a simple 'yes' or 'no'. The first fifty or so seemed straightforward enough, but when one wag yelled 'Number three hundred and twelve' or some such number all decorum ceased. A rustling of pages was heard, followed by a rising tidal wave of laughter. Number three hundred and twelve asked 'Do you like mannish women?'

There was no keeping us quiet after that. 'Number five hundred and three!' was greeted with a growing groan. 'Do you have black tarry bowel movements?' it enquired.

The incoming class at Dartmouth was divided into groups of five or six looked after by a member of an elective upperclass elite, the Interdormitory Council, and a faculty advisor. The student supervisor was called an IDC man, so it made sense for us to be his IDC boys. Timbers and I had three fellow IDC boys, Mike Bruell of Ohio, inexplicably nicknamed 'Tiny' despite his large size, Robert Groves of Louisiana, whose gentle nature and literary interests suggested a potential poet, and Massachusetts man Brian Sweeney.

Just as Dwight Timbers knew he must become a lawyer, Sweeney was destined to be a doctor. But it wasn't his medical knowledge that made him a hit in Gile Hall. Brian had an incredible one-minute pantomime in which he imitated the hardening and ejaculation of the human phallus. He would begin hunched over, arms dangling at his side. Slowly he began to tremble; gradually his limbs stiffened; in time he stood firmly erect. Finally, in a spasm of excitement, he shot spittle all over the room. It was a performance that demanded encores throughout freshman year, particularly during exam periods when friends felt low. 'Biggest prick in the world, Sweeney!' they would implore him, and his sixty-second cabaret would leave them fresh for further revision.

Dartmouth students were like that in 1966: boldly, crassly masculine, so full of sexual bravado that anyone who was merely macho was a wimp. The school had a

name for breeding what would in time be called male chauvinist pigs but then were known as Dartmouth animals. The isolation of the institution, over thirty miles from the nearest women's junior college and a hundred from the closest quality all-female university, engendered a sense of insecurity that had to be covered up by overt displays of virility.

The boorish attitude was contagious. During Freshman Week Dwight and I attended our class' first 'mixer', a social evening where girls were bused in from surrounding schools to mingle with boys from the Big Green. The young ladies were ushered into the top floor of the college arts complex, the Hopkins Center, while the lads were made to wait on the ground floor. The two sexes were separated by a single staircase. Whenever a woman walked by the top of the stairs, revealing a leg to the milling throng below, the crowd worked itself into a frenzy. Barnyard noises were heard emanating from my fellow '70s. They may have been the brightest brains resident in Northern New England, but they seemed determined to show their ancestors were animals. When the restraining cord was drawn away and freshmen allowed to go upstairs, the surge forward was so great I was lifted off my feet and carried several yards by the sheer force of the crowd. If this had been another part of our personality test, we had passed with flying colours: we were Dartmouth animals of the finest stock, and we had been there for only five days.

It was after going to functions like these, briefings from professors and debriefings from upperclassmen that my Darien buddy emitted his outburst: 'We don't have to do *everything* together!' I wandered alone around campus on Activities Night, the evening set aside for student organizations to show their stuff to the new boys. I decided for lack of anything more exciting to do to call on the campus radio station, Dartmouth College Radio, or WDCR.

DCR, as it was commonly known by its unpaid student staff, had been one of the three reasons I had come to Hanover. The first was the sheer physical beauty of the

Upper Connecticut River Valley. Attending an Ivy League campus in the middle of an undeveloped natural paradise was the nearest to aping Thoreau any middle-class American white boy was likely to get at the age of seventeen. Having grown up in Westport and watched its population nearly quadruple after the construction of Interstate 95, I was fascinated by the prospect of once again living in a small town (never mind that Interstate 91 was about to go through Norwich, Vermont, just across the river from Hanover). And, being a snow freak, I had been excited to see patches of white stuff – not soot-covered slush, but real snow – from the train window on my inspection of Dartmouth *the third week of April.* Snow was usually gone for good in Westport by the end of March; that there was a place where it lay even longer filled me with a sense of illicit discovery.

My tour of Harvard was hardly as auspicious. As I sat down to lunch in Harvard Yard, where freshmen dined, I asked a neighbour if he liked the university. Assured he did, I sought a reason. 'Because,' the haughty youth responded, 'Harvard is the one place I know where I can go to the banks of the Charles with a book and not need another person in the world.'

This anti-social attitude did not appeal, nor did the Charles itself. On a previous visit my brother Peter and I had been appalled to see a dead fish floating face upwards on the Cambridge side of the river. We New England boys were not accustomed to such pollution.

There was also another strike against Harvard. The alumni interviewers – old members of the university who spoke with potential students and filed recommendations with their alma mater – were insufferably arrogant. When acceptances were mailed out the dreadful duo phoned each of the Westport applicants in a manner implying we would automatically opt for Harvard regardless of what other institutions might have taken us. Those of us who had won admission agreed that this attitude was unacceptable and that *none* of us would go. While I chose Dartmouth others selected MIT, Brown and West Point, whilst another dissenter rubbed salt in

the wound by going to Yale, Harvard's rival. This shutout proved scandalous, and Staples guidance counsellor Winifred Calhoun had to reassure parents through the pages of *The Westport Town Crier* that there was no conspiracy on our part to humiliate Harvard. It just happened that no one had felt inclined to accept an offer that hardly anyone had ever before refused. Only now, nearly two decades later, can I inform dear Mrs Calhoun that there *was* a conspiracy, and if she had been interviewed by those Harvard horrors, she wouldn't have wanted to join the Cantabs either.

The second reason I chose Dartmouth was that it was an all-male college. It wasn't so much that I wanted to be with members of my own sex as I wanted to be free of the unwanted attentions of women. As President of the Staples Student Organization I had been considered quite a catch by the type of girl who wanted to bag a sure-fire success. Teenage husband-hunters were not to my liking, and I found girls publicly sitting in my lap or putting their hand between my legs acutely embarrassing, though I was aware that in a similar situation some of my friends might have thought they had died and gone to heaven.

And then there was WDCR. I was a radio nut and a pop music fanatic, listening at home about three hours a day and even taking my tiny transistor out in the backyard to play while I shot baskets after school. (The phrase 'shooting baskets' refers to playing solo basketball, not indulging in hostility towards handicrafts.) While walking down Lebanon Road beyond Hanover High School on my inspection tour, admiring the rapids in a stream swollen by melting snows, I heard WDCR deejay Scott McQueen play 'I Am a Rock' by Simon and Garfunkel and 'Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind' by the Lovin' Spoonful. I nearly quaked with excitement. I tuned daily to leading Top 40 stations in New York, Boston, Detroit and Pittsburgh, the last three at night when reception was best, and had not yet heard these new singles by major artists. If WDCR was early

on the records that matter, I thought, that clinched it: I had to be near it.

Just near it, not necessarily on it. I had been listening to pop radio since I was seven without ever having been on the air myself, and it did not follow that just because the station was run by Dartmouth students that I had to be one of them. But that Activities Night in September, 1966, without Dwight Timbers to keep me company, I answered the clarion call to voice auditions on the second floor of Robinson Hall, and my life changed, for better or worse, for good.

2

WDCR conducted DJ and News Trainee courses. If you passed the voice test at the beginning of the term you went through one of the two courses and, if you passed your trial broadcast at the end of the course, you went on the air.

The very idea of a 'voice test' sounds elitist, alleging that everyone is not born with an equal right to go on the radio. It became apparent hearing would-be Edward R. Murrows reading a sample piece of news copy that many people genuinely aren't meant to speak through space. Some people have speech impediments, such as lisps or stammers, which disqualify them unless they are patient enough to overcome their handicaps. A heavy regional accent is considered even worse. Hardly anyone in Northern New England can bear to hear someone with a strong Bronx or Brooklyn tongue, for example. As I watched upperclassmen Bob Buck and Scott McQueen dismiss one applicant and then reject another, all the while kindly suggesting they consider a position in sales or engineering, I realized that I was relieved rather than outraged that some voices are judged unsuitable for radio. Though I was born in the Bronx I had lived in Connecticut since I was six, and my accent had softened. I passed my audition.

'What course do you want to be in, News or DJ?' McQueen asked from his lofty perch behind the console on the other side of the glass. It seemed an interrogation in outer space.

'Doesn't matter to me,' I replied honestly though perhaps unambitiously. 'Where do you need people?'

'News,' Scott replied.

'OK,' I said. It was official: I was to be a newsman. I took the news course, practising copy reading and learning, among other things, not to drop my voice at the end of sentences but to leave it up in level, suggesting a natural lead to the next line. I was taught how to cart up UPI reports, to take an individual story from the several-times-daily audio feed and put it on a tape cartridge. And I practised re-writing, a WDCR requirement. If reading a story which had previously been aired one should at least change the wording. Nothing was sacred about United Press copywriting style, and news stories should sound fresh even if their basic content was the same.

UPI copy certainly *wasn't* holy writ. I would be a rich man if I had a dime for every time the wire service carried its revolting Vietnam-era line, 'The war goes on'. News Director Jeff Kelley would have needed a dollar a time but would still be wealthy for all the occasions he had to reprimand readers for not altering the UPI phrase 'beat off' as in 'One hundred US Marines today beat off one thousand Viet Cong attackers'. And who but the UPI editor could fail to take exception to 'Violence at a Glance,' a variation on 'News at a Glance' used during the civil rights rioting of 1968?

The trainees who passed their courses that autumn were assigned their first shifts at the end of term when most students had already left campus. I drew a midnight newscast immediately after the first disc jockey programme of fellow freshman Bill Moyes. A tall, slim bespectacled redhead with the kind of vivid freckles one imagines normally fade before manhood, Moyes had his chance to be nervous on a show called *Music Till Midnight*, a forty-five minute shift that was the envy of deejays because of the free choice of rock music it offered them. 'Wild' Bill, as he referred to himself on air, showed no sign of the wildness that usually affects baseball pitchers in their debut appearances. His controlled performance served notice he would be an important contributor to WDCR in future.

Bill's vocal work was impressive. Unfortunately, his technical expertise was lacking. One thing that training cannot give is on the air experience with the actual equipment used in transmissions. When it came time to hand over to me for the midnight news, Moyes simply did not know what switch to throw. He played the news jingle and I started talking, but nothing came out over the air. I knew this at once because the red light in my rather rudely named Studio 4Q did not go on, and because I heard no air product in my headphones. Fortunately I remembered advice I had received from my elders in ether. When one is uncertain whether one is on the air or not, or when one should be on the air but is not for some technical reason beyond one's control, *keep going*. Service will be restored at an unpredictable moment. Better to make the problem sound like a technical fault than one's own nervous breakdown.

It took thirty of the longest seconds in my life for Moyes to find the proper switch. All broadcasters sometimes wonder if anybody is listening. This time I *knew* nobody was hearing me.

Bill finally threw the single necessary switch, the one next to his own microphone lever, and I was on the air. That future master of precision displayed immaculate timing even on his first night: my mike was 'hot' [turned on] just in time for the start of my second item. Bemused listeners would merely have thought that the news had for some reason started thirty seconds late, little realizing they had missed the entire lead story.

A far more menacing episode involving broadcasting confusion occurred on 3 May 1967, when George Wallace, former Governor of Alabama, came to the Dartmouth campus for the second time in the decade. Four years earlier in 1963 he had won a polite reception in an address to four thousand students in Leverone Field House. This time things were different. His speech in Webster Hall, a smaller venue, was frequently interrupted by a shouting and chanting faction of the audience. Even the barracking was no preparation for what was to come, an invasion of the hall by an angry group

of protesters who forced their way in and surged towards the podium.

I had no reason to love George Wallace. I had always disliked his racist policies and had not been ingratiated when, at the pre-speech dinner where he ate only an eclair and a pickle, he introduced himself to me twice in the course of half an hour. I obviously hadn't made much of an impression. When those intruders forced their way forward, however, duty called. There were only about a dozen of them, but because they entered in an approximation of a line they seemed to number many more. Regional and national reporters swarmed around our WDCR broadcast table and asked Jeff Kelley and myself the identity of the ferocious-looking fiend leading the charge. We hadn't a clue, so I rose and approached the man myself. Not since I threw my brother Peter to the ground when I was five years old and awaited my father's punishment had I felt such danger. I walked up to the burly beast, who was shaking his fist, his face contorted in hatred, and politely asked 'Excuse me, but who are you?'

He turned to me, suddenly showing the smile of an angel, and replied 'My name is Joe Topping. I teach at Colby.'

I thanked him and returned to the DCR desk. He resumed his energetic protest.

'Who is he, who is he?' the press corps chorused.

'His name is Joe Topping,' I said smugly, having earned my first scoop. 'He teaches at Colby.'

The Dartmouth, the student newspaper, did not mention my professional heroism the next morning. 'Cheers, jeers greet Wallace speech,' the headline screamed. 'Police chief terms riot worst seen in 22 years,' read the sub-head.

The incessant interruptions eventually forced Wallace to leave the stage, but he could not make his expected rapid getaway. Students listening in dormitories who had heard Jeff Kelley's description of the demonstration had flocked to the scene. Crowds had swarmed around Wallace's car, banging on the roof and even climbing

atop the vehicle. A bodyguard reached for his concealed weapon and alsations snarled menacingly.

It was in the midst of this turmoil that Owen Leach, the senior newsman, walked through the Webster door and took the microphone from Kelley.

'George Wallace's car is outside,' he said calmly, 'but he isn't going anywhere.' This seemed almost unbearably droll for the circumstances, and Owen's coolness under pressure left an indelible mark on me.

Ex-Governor Wallace escaped unhurt in what was probably a personal public relations triumph. He had been denied freedom of speech in an Ivy League college and forced to flee. Hypocritical liberals had shown their intolerance. The incident was one of the headline stories in UPI's late night national news.

But the Wallace riot, as it came to be known in Hanover history, had more long-term significance for the college than for the future presidential candidate, to whom a hostile reception on a northern campus could not have been too surprising. It was the first time the proud and pampered pupils of Dartmouth had their consciences pricked by radicals in their midst. Over the next two years left-leaning students would convert their peers on many issues of concern beyond the Hanover plain, culminating in large-scale Vietnam protests in 1969.

The caricature of students of the late sixties as long-haired hippies was always crude and misleading. Not everyone who objected to the war in Vietnam and racism at home wore long hair or smoked marijuana. Some students' lives were barely affected by the fever for social change. My Darien friend Dwight still had his preoccupations with grades and girls. One winter evening, seeking a recommendation as to how he and his date could amuse themselves, he went next door to the senior year in 2 Gile Hall. I shared his shock when the upperclassman casually picked his Bible off the bookshelf, opened it and removed a condom, which he flicked across the floor to Dwight's foot. I don't know how the young woman avoided seeing it. I should also add I don't know

if it was used. Having at least a sense of timing, I excused myself and retired to the radio station.

My affection for Dwight was insufficient to keep us together as roommates. His intensity and my easygoingness were incompatible at close quarters, and for the final term of freshman year we arranged a roommate trade, Dwight going upstairs to 101 in exchange for Brian Sweeney. It sounds like a baseball swap, but I don't recall either of them playing the sport.

Sweeney was always an affable companion, even when one had tired of his Biggest Prick in the World routine. He loved rakish humour and fondly told the tale of his pal Charlie who had an oversexed girlfriend named Bubbles. Charlie wasn't forever blowing bubbles; Bubbles was forever blowing him. When it came to his own love life, Brian was dedicated to one girl, the one he ultimately married. It was the first time I had seen romantic love close hand. It was also the first time I had slept in the same bed as a girl, though I should hasten to add that we had bunks. One night I returned to the room and retired to my bed, the lower bunk. As I was drifting off I was startled by a female voice.

'Brian, move over, you're hurting me,' it cried. I knew who it was immediately, but how was I to respond?

Seconds later, with added anguish, it howled 'Brian, move over, you're *still* hurting me.'

I decided my reaction should be to pretend I wasn't noticing anything. In the morning, I completely lost my cool. When the alarm went off on the other side of the room I bounded out of bed and announced 'Time to get up, gang'.

That spring term was my least happy at Dartmouth. The best way to measure my moods has always been to look at the times I get up and go to bed. Do I sleep in, avoiding early direct contact with the world? Do I stay up late, frittering away time in socially acceptable ways but showing a disregard for the best interests of my body? I was far enough away from Staples to feel the void left by leaving Westport and nothing had filled it emotionally. I had no sex life to divert me, only plenty

of wet dreams, and for all my new friends I still felt an undeniable loneliness. Years ago I had been promoted from third to fifth grade, skipping fourth, and I was literally or just about the youngest person in my class. I missed the company of peers and juniors.

I wasn't rising till about ten that term. I would lethargically shuffle off to my first class, uninspired by the hesitant arrival of spring, the North Country's least satisfying season. The mud that makes The Green a mire for a fortnight and the occasional late snow flurries that remind you that winter is not giving up easily all make it difficult to get excited. I thought my chronically late arrival at Math 6, attended by well over a hundred students, went unnoticed. I was wrong. Years later, Professor William Slesnick told me he could always spot me by my yellow slicker, a variety of windcheater. Having informed me well after the fact, he continued to remind me of his tactical victory every alternate year. If he had only let me know once that spring of 1967 I would have changed my jacket and been spared biennial embarrassment.

It wasn't Sweeney, it wasn't Slesnick. None of the kind people around me were responsible for my untypical indifference. I needed something to inspire me. That something became available when I heard that WDCR was going to broadcast through the summer for the first time. Six students were needed to man the fort, receiving in return room, board and two summer term courses. The sextet would then have lighter loads in the regular school year.

When my request to be one of the six was granted I and my five fellows were taught to be all-rounders, learning whatever basic radio skills we didn't yet possess. In one brief crash course I was taught the rudiments of being a disc jockey. Jeff Kelley and I were given trial runs when it was considered least likely anyone was listening, on the Saturday evening jazz show. I took the first hour and spotlighted Lou Rawls, who at the time was still considered a jazz vocalist. It was a minor programme

and a minor performance, but when it was over I felt a major change in my life. I was a deejay.

3

I owe my career to sex. That sounds more exciting than it is. I owe my career to sex I wouldn't have rather than something I did.

Dartmouth in the late sixties was still all-male. No one considered that it might be a breeding ground for gays, and indeed the environment seemed vigorously monosexual rather than homosexual. I participated in all the great he-man rituals, including riding on a flatbed truck into the New Hampshire mountains to gather railroad ties from a derelict line for a class of '70 bonfire.

The experience was incredibly cold, dangerous, and astonishingly exciting. When we got back to town we piled the railroad ties into seventy tiers, slinking up and down the structure like spidermen. We were filled with such pride we felt we were participating in the most important task on the planet, let alone the campus. I ran to WDCR to broadcast an appeal for more freshman volunteers. It didn't occur to me that I was barging in on a classical music programme and that the disc jockey was loathe to lower the tone of his classy show. My enthusiasm melted his reserve and in between the Beethoven and the Brahms came the Bonfire.

I naively thought that all Dartmouth men loved to carry railroad ties and climb seventy tiers of rotting wood. I soon learned that they were a minority, but I still had no idea that some of those who did could be gay. I had not learned of the diversity of the homosexual population, and so was completely unprepared for my first Dartmouth seduction scene.

I was not merely ignorant about gay life. I was in the dark about sex, period.

Religious inhibitions helped keep me from any early sexual experimentation. My father's parents had been Italian immigrants, both Catholics, and my mother's father was also of the Roman church. My maternal grandmother assumed a vague Protestantism my brothers and I considered mildly eccentric but in hindsight appears heroic in view of the number of Catholics around her. Catholic statues were placed in some rooms of our house and holy water at the bottom of a staircase.

As a youngster I was deeply religious. I took seriously the warnings of nuns in Sunday school, who told us a young person they knew had died suddenly while asleep and it could happen to any of us. I feared hellfire and considered their suggestions I become a priest. When I first heard a fellow pupil swear on a school bus, I came home crying. I had to be pure, to avoid what one Catholic prayer called 'the near occasions of sin', so I could escape damnation or a hopelessly long term in limbo. To the latter end I noted the number of days, months and years remission from limbo each prayer in my missal offered, and made sure I frequently recited those that gave most days off per word. The retention skills I later showed for aspects of popular music were applied by my seven-year-old self to the Catholic catechism. I memorized the commandments and admonitions of the church, the stations of the cross, portions of the Mass, and lists of venial and mortal sins.

The first dent in my complete confidence in the clergy came when I was ten. A friend came over to me in class and showed me a page from a book of geometrical designs. I could not avert my eyes quickly enough. The mathematical figures resembled human buttocks.

I yearned for the opportunity to go to Confession to be pardoned for this terrible sin. I had witnessed a vile vulgarity. Alas, it was Monday, and Confessions were heard on Saturday afternoons. I spent the week dreading the moment I would have to tell the priest of my wickedness.

When the time came I snuck into the confessional and began the sacrament. 'Bless me Father, I confess to Almighty God and to you, Father, that I have sinned. My last Confession was two weeks ago. These are my sins.'

I proceeded to throw in a few venial offences. I wanted to get the priest bored so he wouldn't notice the big one floating by.

'Answering back to my parents twice . . . arguing with my brothers . . . fighting . . . looking at – '

I had so feared this moment I hadn't considered how I would phrase it. Looking at a book of mathematical designs, one of which resembled someone's back side? Looking at concentric circles drawn with a compass?

'Looking at – pictures.'

'My son,' the priest intervened, sensing my distress. 'We all get the temptation to look at lewd pictures of women.' What? Who said anything about women? 'But there will come a time when you will meet the girl who is right for you, and you will settle down together . . .' No! *No!* I was more sinful than I thought. I was making a priest wrong! 'For your penance say five Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys . . .'

While reciting the paean to the Virgin I surmised that the reason the priest had misinterpreted my sin was because he couldn't read my mind. If he didn't know what I was thinking, he couldn't be the direct representative on earth of an all-knowing God.

This was my first doubt about the Catholic church. My confidence and interest in the faith gradually ebbed away. During my first term at Dartmouth, away from home, I stopped going to church every Sunday. The college's Catholic chaplain, Father Bill Nolan, expressed dismay, saying this was the first step down a road which ended with doubts about the very divinity of Christ. I assured him I would not go that far but stopped going to church nonetheless.

The complete break occurred unpredictably. It was dinner time in Thayer one Friday. I didn't like the fish dish on offer and wanted the meat. I knew well the

prohibition against eating meat on Fridays. To do so was to purchase a one way ticket to hell.

I bought the meat meal. For moments I stared at it, wondering if I dare take a bite. I took a nibble tentatively. It tasted as good as it did the other six days of the week, so I took another. I waited for lightning to smash through a window and strike me down, but none was forthcoming.

I finished the meal and walked back to my room very carefully, hoping to avoid catastrophic accident. When after a couple of hours nothing detrimental to my health had occurred, I ceased worrying. I had seen through the sham of the Catholic church and lived. I went through a period of anger at the restrictions the faith had led me to impose on my life and then gradually became more flippant about it.

My Catholicism didn't stop me from having normal childish emotions. In second grade I had a crush on Mary Bess Walker. I had a competitor, a classmate named George. We seven-year-olds would vie for Mary Bess' attention during recess. Greens Farms School was overcrowded, so the second grade had been farmed out to a nearby church with a large lawn, or at least what was a lawn until we kids got through trampling all over it every weekday for nine months. Our year at the church ended with George and I having wooed to a draw.

For third grade we moved back to Greens Farms School itself, an imposing two-level brick building built on a hill with a single-story extension not too convincingly matched to the original style. This year was one of the most crucial in my education. My teacher was Miss Ruth Charlton, one of those inspiring schoolteachers every President of the United States claims to have had but few of the rest of us are ever fortunate enough to run into. Miss Charlton (even now it would seem disrespectful to call her Ruth) was both a strict taskmaster and a great humanist. Perhaps because she was unmarried she shared with us some of the things she enjoyed, like the wonderful E. B. White children's book *Charlotte's Web*.

It was in Miss Charlton's class that I met the best

friend of my childhood, Eric Tomassi. Several things bound me to Eric, the most obvious being that we both had Italian names. We also each had brothers a year younger than ourselves, which made for a natural foursome on trips to the movies and bowling alley.

Eric was brilliant. It was not fair to Eric to be isolated in class simply because he was the best reader, so Miss Charlton gave him me. In the last third of the school year we were moved into fourth grade math and social studies classes and that September we 'skipped' fourth and went to the fifth grade together.

Eric and I inevitably became competitors in certain ways. When I became infatuated with Betsy Paget I encouraged the speculation that Eric was besotted with Christine Cook and actually linked them romantically in a ludicrous humorous poem I delivered to the class. One day I took this precocious sexuality too far. I kissed Betsy on the cheek in the hallway outside Miss Charlton's room.

It was a brazen act, comparable to streaking in adulthood. There was no way it could go unnoticed. Our teacher told me I shouldn't have done it and must not do it again. I was mortified. I had been caught kissing a girl at the age of eight. I vowed then and there to retire from such acts, at least in public, and for many years I feared that my friend Jack, Betsy's athletic brother, would get nasty with me. I need not have worried. Besides being well-built, Jack was an altar boy at St Luke's Church and would never resort to fisticuffs.

After Eric and I 'skipped' fourth grade together we became closer than ever, partly because of the mere fact that we knew nobody else in our new surroundings. Our greatest triumph came when we were inducted in Denis O'Neill's secret fraternity, where we each had nicknames given to us. Denis called himself 'Frenchie', a rather cosmopolitan choice for such a young lad, and Eric got labelled 'Motts' in honour of a popular brand of apple sauce. O'Neill christened me 'Gambo', the first person to call me by that monicker. Wherever I have gone in life people have started calling me Gambo. When I first got

involved in the London music business and Linda McCartney unexpectedly called me Gambo I just thought, can't stop it, might as well enjoy it.

I was delighted to receive any sign of acceptance from our new fifth grade classmates, so an invitation to Lynne Betts' party was a summons. Lynne was a tall girl for a fifth grader, and my feelings towards her were ones of appreciation rather than attachment. The night of her party I got a chance to show my feelings for another Greens Farms girl in a direct way.

The party was held in the basement, a site more practical than romantic. Children could have their own self-contained world down there without interference from parents. That Lynne did not expect her elders to interrupt became obvious when she acquiesced to a game of Spin the Bottle.

I don't recall who suggested this childish contest, in which guests sat on the floor in a circle. The person who spun the bottle had to kiss the member of the opposite sex it pointed to when it came to rest. If the bottle pointed at someone of the same sex, it got a quick re-spin.

There was certainly a great number of closet Casanovas in class, because at the mere mention of the game many of my mates started leering with lust. Mindful of my illicit Paget peck of the previous year, I was at first terrified at the prospect of having to kiss someone in public, but I soon warmed to the game.

Some of my friends got bored with Spin the Bottle and decided to take things farther. Trey and Joyce briefly retired to a closet, too briefly to do anything with lasting consequences but long enough to share something more than a kiss. Of course, they may have been doing nothing more than examining the Betts family linens, but my imagination, kindled by Spin the Bottle, was now aflame. It appeared to me this innocent gathering had degenerated into a Makeout Party with couples pairing as the lights were switched on and off for seconds-long intervals.

It is American cultural legend that at such affairs in the late fifties and early sixties the obligatory makeout

music was *Johnny's Greatest Hits* by Johnny Mathis. I can confirm that it was indeed Mathis who cooed 'It's Not For Me to Say' and 'Wonderful! Wonderful!' as Trey and Joyce hid in the closet and other couples retired to the couch.

Ma and Pa Betts may not have worried too much about what their charges were up to but they certainly were upset when the basement lights flashed on and off for five minutes. Was there an electrical fault? Was a child injured? Mr Betts stuck his head around the door at the top of the stairs and urgently enquired 'What's going on here?'

He was reassured we energetic kids were just fooling around but ruled we could only continue the party if we left the lights on. This put a bit of a damper on the proceedings because no matter how precociously passionate we were we didn't want to let anybody see us at it.

Except me. I felt slightly left out of things, rather ashamed that I hadn't been flailing my limbs around with the rest of the guests. I decided that, in the interests of being liked and respected by my new classmates, I should demonstrate my boyhood before I went home. There was no one in my eyes more suitable for demonstrating boyhood with than Cynthia Carey, a winsome girl with the promise of a fine figure and a face like an angel. No matter what she might do, no girl who looked that pure could ever be debased.

Again, except by me. In a moment of theatrical bravado I put my right arm around her waist and leaned over her until the top half of her body was almost parallel to the ground. I started caressing her feverishly like Rudolph Valentino on speed. This posture invited collapse so I carried her over to the couch and lay on top of her, continuing my uninterrupted kissing.

I thought I was merely mimicking a Hollywood romance. From her lack of resistance I suspect Cynthia realized this. When I looked to the right over my pretend paramour's head to see who had arrived at the basement door, however, I saw to my horror her older brother,

come to drive her home. It was apparent he had not entered the basement of the Betts house expecting to find his twelve-year-old sister lying on a settee with an eleven-year-old boy on top of her making fully clothed love like a rapist in training.

Cynthia got up and joined her brother. We did not share a good night kiss. We never kissed again. She soon left the Westport school system. Six years later, when she entered Westfair Pharmacy, where I was working part-time during the summer, she showed no sign of recognition. It was just as well. I wouldn't have wanted her to think of me as part of the hired help.

I was mortified by the Betts party and vowed to live it down. For several years I neither touched nor pursued pubescent girls. I thought I had lost my lustful image until one afternoon three years after the fateful party Denis O'Neill's mother gave me a lift home from school.

'By the way, Paul,' she remarked as she neared our driveway, 'I hear you're really a ladies' man. Denis told me about the party at Lynne Betts' . . .'

I could have shrivelled into a raisin. It seemed the Statute of Limitations on that party would never run out. Though I resumed kissing girls in high school I did nothing that might embarrass me, and if I ever was asked what kind of girl I would marry I religiously replied it would be a good Catholic girl.

There was another reason why I avoided girls for a few years. Lynn Easton had turned me off. This may come as a surprise, particularly to Lynn Easton, but my first sight of a naked female body was not only shocking but disgusting. The Eastons lived across the street from us at the end of a long drive. Their backyard was a veritable woodland, with a tiny spot of water with land in it that served as my personal Treasure Island. This forest was dark and deep, as nature had let all of that part of Westport be before the developers came to town, and my brother Peter and I frequently forayed into it with his classmate Dale and a neighbour of the same age, Paul.

One day Dale's younger sister Lynn gestured to us to

come back into the woods. She had something to show us. I think it was because we always left her out of our games that she felt she had to make a bid for attention, but armchair psychology twenty-odd years later doesn't convey the impact of what she did next. Lynn dropped her trousers and stood before us amongst the trees stark naked, cackling like some Wicked Witch of the West.

Sex education wasn't so good in Westport schools. As a matter of fact, it didn't exist. Even when you got to a compulsory course called Health in junior high it consisted mostly of tips like washing under your arms to prevent body odour. Never having had a sister and never having been a peeper, it had never occurred to me that girls didn't have all the same appendages boys did.

'Castration anxiety' was hardly the description of my reaction. Try 'panic'. Fixed to the spot for what seemed like an eternity, I finally got sufficient adrenalin flowing to flee. But this forest was no flat stretch. I got about five yards and tripped over a large half-buried root, falling head first to the earth. I had the presence of mind to put my hands out to break my fall. I did not have the vision to see I was putting my hands squarely into a pile of fresh dog faeces and pushing into it with all my body weight.

The end of the world could not be much more horrific than this half-minute of my childhood. I sped home to wash off the foul-smelling sludge. My mother helped me clean my hands, performing a disgusting chore that only maternal love could bring a person to do.

Freudians in the audience may frolic, speculating on how for the rest of my life I have associated the vagina with dogshit. I did not seek nor look at another female's nude frame for years. Consequently I was in for another shock when the summer before I went to Dartmouth I met Judy and John at Compo Beach. Judy was wearing a bathing suit so tight in the crotch that her pubic hairs spilled out on either side. Neither Judy nor John seemed aware of this indiscretion and smiled and chatted amiably while I blithered outwardly and went into deep shock inwardly. They say the Lord giveth and the Lord

taketh away. He had taken away Lynn Easton's penis; now he had given Judy pubic hair. This new jolt put me off women for a good few more months.

My Catholicism discouraged contact with girls, and so did the Undue Affection clause of our high school Offences Code. 'Undue Affection' was an offence punished by detention after school. One spinster Latin teacher seemed to delight in busting young teens for this, and I always dreaded it when an amorous girl sat in my lap, fearing that this diminutive enforcer would leap from behind a bush and yell 'Hehhehhehhehheh-hehhehhehheh, *undue affection!*'

I personally far preferred putting an affectionate arm around a friend's shoulders to considering serious sex play. When the first opportunity to have sex with a male friend came I was genuinely shocked. It occurred in the period between the Commencement of departing seniors and the beginning of the summer term, a fortnight in June traditionally reserved at Dartmouth for Alumni Reunions. Some students lingered on campus after the end of the academic year for 'dorm clerking', serving as receptionist-cum-concierges at dormitories housing returning graduates. This was an easy source of good money, particularly if one was given generous gratuities.

The college made interim room assignments for dorm clerks. It didn't really matter where or with whom you were because you were hardly ever there. The period was so short you wouldn't make new friends anyway.

I happened to be put in a room with one of the newsmen from the radio station and a taciturn third whose name never really registered. One morning the newsman and I returned from WDCR having done *Daybreak* together and napped before our next assignment. Doing the disc jockey side of the show was new to me and I was still in my mind fundamentally a newsman. I was just beginning to relish the opportunity for expression and the feeling of power that came with this kind of work.

My alarm went off at around 10.30, indicating I had about half an hour before I had to prepare the noon news.

I was about to slip back into my reporter's clothes like the quick change artist we summer staffers had all become. Suddenly, from the bunk below, I heard the voice of my friend, Carl. (This wasn't his real name and there wasn't anybody called Carl in the news department at the time. He may have changed my life then, but I am in no mind to change his now.)

'Do you think our roommate gives blow jobs?' he asked.

'I don't know, why don't you ask him?' I replied, treating the enquiry as facetiously as I thought it was intended.

'Will *you* blow me?' Carl rejoined.

This was not the answer I had expected. I was at the age of eighteen still unaware of the tenderness that can exist between men, and though I had once blurted out in a high school discussion about homosexuality in ancient Greece 'Hey, don't knock homosexuals, I *love* homosexuals,' that was more my playing the class clown than the liberal lover.

Carl had with four simple words introduced me to a world where men who loved each other did something more than sitting around thinking nice thoughts about themselves. I was terrified. I first asked him if he was really serious. When he assured me he was I refused his request. He then offered to service me. I coined an instant statement of policy: 'I will neither blow nor be blown.'

For forty-five minutes Carl tried to convert me while I determinedly stayed in my bed, ludicrously believing that if I lay face down I was protecting myself from sexual assault.

'Don't you wish you had a human body up there next to you?'

No, I replied.

'Haven't you ever had one next to you?'

No, I replied.

'Haven't you ever masturbated?'

No, I replied.

'You haven't?' His enquiry turned to incredulity.

No . . .

'*That's* weird.'

The last thing I wanted to do was to come out of this encounter thinking *I* was strange, but I had no time to ponder the matter, for Carl's questions kept flying like an all-out sexual first strike.

'Did you know you have a feminine ass?' he asked. I didn't have a ready retort. I hadn't contemplated my backside, and there was the terrible prospect he might be right.

Fortunately I had a polite out: I had to do the twelve. But this escape didn't end my new-found suitor's overtures. Crossing The Green later that day our paths happened to intersect, and as he passed Carl muttered into my ear 'I still want to be blown.'

This time I felt more annoyed than threatened. I had sought the solace of my mentor Scott McQueen and poured out the whole lurid tale. To my slight disappointment his initial reaction was not 'I'll take care of you' but rather 'Pervert! What a pervert!' He finally did promise to protect me if things somehow came to the crunch, and armed with that reassurance I felt I could face Carl in any alleyway.

I now confess for the first time that in giving McQueen an impression of my pursuer's plans I gave Carl a worse reputation than he deserved. One evening while Scott was out of the dorm room we shared that summer in Ripley Hall I grew particularly troubled over one of Carl's remarks. '*That's* weird,' he had said when I revealed I had never masturbated. I never wanted to give anybody a chance to say that about me, so I decided to masturbate on the spot.

Unfortunately I had no idea of how to do it. For the past couple of years I had found regular relief in wet dreams, but the images of which they consisted were hardly enough to stimulate an erection when conscious. I wasn't even aware one was supposed to fantasize. I just stood in the bathroom and knocked myself about for a minute or two until I thought the procedure so ridiculous I lay down on the living room couch for a nap.

This was a big mistake. When I awoke about fifteen minutes later I discovered to my horror that while asleep

I had ejaculated all over the sofa. (I never again napped without my trousers on.) I was panicked that Scott would return to the room, find evidence of my wayward sexuality, and throw what we used to call a 'shit fit', a temper tantrum.

I cleaned the settee as best I could and went to bed, hoping against hope that my roommate would upon his return go straight to the bedroom without turning the light on in the living room. I hoped in vain. Immediately after Scott opened the door he turned on the light. Within seconds I heard a shriek of disgust.

'Yucccccccccck!' he screamed. 'Carl's been here!'

Carl? What did he have to do with it?

'He's come in here and beat off over the couch thinking about you! Disgusting!'

Disgusting? Delightful! Scott had proved a true friend in the most difficult circumstances by providing me with an alibi I hadn't even considered. Relieved to be blameless in the 204 Ripley Sex Stain Affair, I have never corrected him – until now. This was one visit to our room Carl never made.

He did make others, though, asking me to massage his chest or inveighing against me because I hadn't gone to a party he was at and had seen Scott's rock group The Ham Sandwich instead. I never knew that summer when the next outburst or advance would be nor what form it would take. It could verge on emotional blackmail, as when he solemnly intoned 'I stared at razor blades this afternoon thinking of you', or it could be laughably melodramatic, as in The Great Shower Showdown.

As Local News Director it was my responsibility to be first in the Tri-Town with the big area stories. One day the UPI wire announced the appointment of Hanover's first Town Manager, Neil Berlin. Carl confronted me with this fact as I dried myself in the Ripley shower room.

'You missed the Town Manager story!' he screamed.

'I did not!' I insisted. 'The Selectmen promised they'd give me the story first. It's not my fault if they went back on their word.'

'Yes it is!' he howled. 'You're supposed to get the story first and it doesn't matter how you get it, whether the Selectmen keep their word or not.'

I was provoked beyond the threshold of my tolerance. In those days I only got mad in public about once a year, but when I did mine was the wrath of The Furies. This was my outburst for 1967.

'Shut up!' the normally sweet me bellowed. 'I've had enough from you! I'm working just as hard as you this summer, maybe harder! I get up first to turn on the station, I do *Daybreak*, I go to my courses, I do the noon, I do *Sounds*, I do my half of the six, what else do you want? I can't do any more. I might feel guilty if I was to blame but I'm not. I'm doing my job, so just shut up and leave me alone!'

I had never yelled at anybody that way, and I feared the reprisal that seemed inevitable but never came.

'You know what?' Carl said softly, in complete contrast to my high decibel count. 'You're beautiful when you're mad.'

What sounded like a bad Hollywood script had been played out in real life. I could not handle the pressure of not knowing when I would next be propositioned, of feeling I was somehow responsible for whether Carl slit his wrists or not. I resigned my position as Local News Director to get away from him. Scott McQueen gave me a regular disc jockey assignment that autumn, and I became in time the Tri-Town area's top-rated deejay. It was completely unintended, but I had been steered out of news into jocking by the sex I wouldn't have.

4

I recently dedicated a book 'To Scott, Andrew and Walters', the kind of opaque reference writers love. This group were not, in fact, the Three Stooges nor the Kingston Trio, but rather the three men responsible for the biggest breaks of my career. Andrew Bailey, the London editor of *Rolling Stone* in the early seventies, asked me to write features for that international rock bible, and John Walters, a BBC producer whom I met while representing *Stone* at London music business receptions, invited me on to his Radio 1 magazine programme.

Scott McQueen was the Chief Announcer of WDCR when I arrived. He also compiled the Tri-Town Top 25, the station's weekly list of the most popular singles, which he presented on the Monday edition of his daily 3–5pm show *Sounds for the Tri-Town*. For some inexplicable reason he considered the task of enumerating the hits ('doing the survey') a chore.

One Sunday afternoon in the autumn of 1966 he plodded into the Record Library. Gloom hung around his head like Hanover morning mist. This star deejay looked the role as much as a supposedly intellectual Ivy League student could: short, blond, with a white toothy smile and radiant blue eyes, he could be a charismatic figure when in a good mood. When he trundled into the Library and saw me reading *Cashbox*, one of the two record business trade papers, his funk fell away and he glowed with enthusiasm.

'Do you read that every week?' he asked me.

'Yes, and I subscribe to *Billboard*,' I replied, trying

to conceal my awe that Scott McQueen, who talked to thousands daily, was speaking to *me*.

'Would you like to compile the Tri-Town Top 25?' he posed.

How straightforward. How blunt. In this life you spend months, years, struggling to achieve a goal, and half the things you treasure most are handed to you on a platter in ten seconds. It happened with Andrew Bailey. It happened with John Walters. It happened first with Scott McQueen.

Would I like to compile the Tri-Town Top 25? Would I like to have lasagne and connolli for dinner? Would I like to see the unedited version of *The Magnificent Ambersons* with a personal commentary by Orson Welles? Would I like to be king of the world?

I had been a chart freak ever since I discovered popularity tables existed. Every Monday as a boy I used to sit at my desk eating dinner and listening to Peter Tripp count down Your Hits of the Week on WMGM, 1050 on the New York City AM band. In the early sixties the first thing I did after I got home from school was listen to Dan Ingram reveal the new numbers on the WABC Silver Dollar Survey, and on Wednesdays it was the new WMCA Good Guy Survey from 4 to 7 with 'Dandy Dan' Daniel. 'Juicy Brucie' Bradley did the honours for the WBZ, Boston list, broadcast every Monday night at 8, when spread of darkness allowed the 50,000-watt signal to reach Westport. Under particularly favourable reception conditions I could also catch the record ratings from KDKA-Pittsburgh and CKLW, which broadcast to Detroit from across the Canadian border in Windsor. I even listened to Johnny Holiday play the ten most requested records of the afternoon daily on 1010 WINS New York.

It sounds as if I never did anythinq as a kid but play the numbers. At least the never-ending countdown was a backdrop to something else: I ate my mother's spaghetti to Peter Tripp, shot baskets in the backyard to Dan Daniel, did my homework to Bruce Bradley. My mother was incredibly tolerant of my endless playing of the

radio, though she herself preferred the easy-listening hits like Jane Morgan's 'Fascination'.

When I reached high school I subscribed to a magazine I had discovered on one of my occasional visits to Manhattan, *Billboard*, and feasted weekly. In one sitting I could devour a greater number of charts than my disc jockey heroes had to offer put together. *Billboard* carried the national Hot 100, the album chart, a rhythm & blues list, a country & western table, a Hits of the World section, and, for a time, the top forties of leading stations across America. The magazine would arrive in Monday's mail. I would arrive at Staples High Tuesday with the magazine. I surreptitiously read it in Psychology, English and World History. When I finished other students scanned it. Larry Shay read it in English quite openly, even though he sat next to the teacher.

There is no neat explanation as to why such an apparently trivial subject held such importance to me. Certainly because I loved the music I was drawn to the idea of having it rated, but there was never a question of my accepting the charts as an accurate assessment of a single's worth. For example, though 'Cry Baby' by Garnett Mimms and the Enchanters only peaked at three on WMCA and four in *Billboard*, there was never any doubt in my mind that it was the outstanding record of 1963. Anyone who achieves vicarious emotional release through an artist's performance should treasure that work. Mimms' soulful chanting and full-of-feeling narration offered me a catharsis of my adolescent angst. Indeed, I even agreed with Dan Daniel's assessment. While my mother was driving past the Grand Union supermarket on US 1 we were astonished to hear Dan introduce the week's WMCA Good Guy Sure Shot with the words 'This is the best record I've heard in the last five years'. Considering the last five years had been mid-1958 to the summer of 1963 and included many rock & roll and rhythm & blues classics, this claim seemed like it had to be fatuous hyperbole. It wasn't. Daniel, to my ear, was right: 'Cry Baby' was the masterpiece of 1958–63.

So it didn't get to number one; that didn't invalidate the charts. A countdown puts order into chaos, and in a field where there are over a hundred new releases every week the idea that they can be systematized is appealing. Sales tables reflect how the public has voted with its spending money, and since there is almost always a conflict between individual and general taste there is a never-ending desire on the part of the fan to see the charts change the next week, and then the following week when his own fancies have altered a bit, and again the week after when a few new releases have thrown his own list of favourites in further disarray.

When Scott McQueen asked me if I wanted to tabulate the Tri-Town Top 25, I was beside myself with happiness. I had in an instant crossed the line between being a consumer and a creator. 'Creator' may sound a bit strong to apply to the mere task of compiling a numbered list of 45 rpm records, but just as there is a pattern one tries to follow while compiling a chart, so there is an element of imagination which goes into making a list in a geographical area where sales are so low they cannot be an accurate guide to mass opinion. Of the three shops WDCR consulted in the Tri-Town area only one, Modern Records 'under the big red and black sign in Lebanon', regularly reported sales on individual titles in greater than single figures.

A knowledge of what was happening around the country, particularly in so-called 'barometer' markets like Detroit, where hits happened first, was therefore indispensable in compiling a good chart. Also useful was my freakish ability to pick a future hit. By adding records to our playlist long before more cautious stations went on them, I was able to see results in sales and requests that justified charting them an average four-to-six weeks before the national trades. In addition, Scott urged me to make sure I always had one record surge into the top five each week, to give listeners a sense of excitement. When I moved 'Good Vibrations' by the Beach Boys from twelve to five in my first list, certain it would become a number one, he credited me with

having met his criterion. I recall with affection that my first three number ones, 'Poor Side of Town' by Johnny Rivers, the Four Tops' 'Reach Out I'll Be There', and 'Good Vibrations', all became *Billboard* toppers.

There is nothing that satisfies a disc joçkey more than being right about a record, of 'hearing a hit' before anyone else, except for being seen to have been right. To take singles like 'Love Is Blue', 'Light My Fire' by the Doors and Mason Williams' 'Classical Gas' to number one before most stations in the country had even started playing them was a tremendous thrill. My reputation for musical clairvoyance spread through the station, and while it was flattering for friends to boast about it as one of our virtues, it increased the opportunity for sly criticism when I was wrong.

'I see you dropped "Love Is Blue" too soon,' Arthur 'Friendly' Fergenson whispered the week I put the Paul Mauriat instrumental back up to two after having dropped it from one to four.

'Oh, it started selling well again,' I fibbed. It had never stopped leaving the shops like discount dollar bills. I was offering a pathetic on-the-spot excuse that Arthur and I both knew wouldn't do.

My two worst gaffes, proof positive that I was a human being and not a prophet of plastic, involved one record I put at number one on insufficient evidence and another I refused to take to the top. The overcharted disc was Wilson Pickett's version of 'Stag-O-Lee', a 1967 update of Lloyd Price's 1959 number one 'Stagger Lee'. Pickett was hot, coming off a top ten cover of Dyke and the Blazers' 'Funky Broadway'. A smash artist with a smash song suggested a huge hit, and indeed 'Stag-O-Lee' made a high entry in the *Billboard* Hot 100 the week of its release. What convinced me to vault it to number one was the mad enthusiasm for it amongst the Gile Hall boys. Ludicrous though it now seems, I interpreted the intoxication of a dormful of disinterested parties as an indication of widespread public acceptance.

This was not an accurate gauge. The Big Greeners may have gone for Pickett's macho posturings but the

general population did not, at least in this case. The B-side, 'I'm In Love', charted nationally almost immediately, a sure sign that 'Stag-O-Lee' would not go all the way. I dropped the record as fast as I could without looking completely ridiculous. Pickett had the dubious distinction of the quickest fall from number one of any record ever to reach the top of the Tri-Town Top 25. Nationally 'Stag-O-Lee' peaked at twenty-two; 'I'm In Love' got to four on the rhythm & blues chart and ironically became one of my favourite soul ballads.

The other single whose very title gives me pangs of guilt is 'I Take It Back' by Sandy Posey. The young songstress had done well in late 1966 and early '67 with her hits 'Born a Woman' and 'Single Girl'. In the summer of peace and love she released a most unpsychedelic country-pop platter, a half-sung, half-spoken apology for hurtful words used in haste. I knew if only because Posey's previous charters had peaked at twelve that this inferior effort would never be a top five national hit, and I also was well aware that this kind of effort had no appeal to the sophisticated Dartmouth community. Despite massive sales in the Tri-Town, I held the record to number four.

'I Take It Back' did stop at twelve in *Billboard*, and our student audience never requested it, but I later felt I had betrayed the locals. They had made the Posey platter a clear winner, and I had denied them their natural choice of number one. This is hardly an earth-shaking tragedy, probably not even as consequential as putting too much mozzarella into an overly sticky macaroni cheese I once made for friends, but it still serves to remind that I not only can make but have made mistakes. It is because I have felt so passionately for pop music and its charts that I regret this slight of which, thank the gods of vinyl, Ms Posey has surely remained unaware.

Compiling the Tri-Town Top 25 for three and a half years meant spending late Sunday afternoons in the Record Library, listening to seven days' worth of new releases with an ear towards a Pick Hit of the Week and

a Sleeper of the Week, consolidating information from the national trades and local sales reports, and compiling and then stencilling a new list. On Monday mornings our beloved receptionist Mrs Evelyn Hutchins, 'Mrs H', would mail stacks of it to area record dealers and individual copies to the regional disc distributors who supplied us with our free samples.

Though a 1000-watt AM station in a small town is not in itself big news, acting like you matter can make people think you matter. Our picks were printed in *Billboard* and a couple of tip sheets. Occasionally we were flattered by special recognition, a phone call from the New England Liberty distributor informing us we were the first station to make the Fifth Dimension's 'Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In' number one (it subsequently topped the Hot 100 for six weeks), and an ad in *Billboard* acknowledging a similar treatment of Steam's 'Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye'.

Again, these were cases of not only being right but being seen to be right. They would not have mattered had one not felt the importance of exposing the records to the broad public. To hear a song for the first time and feel its full power, knowing that in a mere few weeks millions would share the enthusiasm, has always been for me one of life's greatest thrills. There have always been good examples. In the late sixties they were plentiful.

Take a single that arrived from United Artists. The Spencer Davis Group's previous British hits 'Somebody Help Me' and 'Keep On Running' had done nothing in the States. But the moment I put the needle down on 'Gimme Some Lovin'' I knew this one would enjoy a different reception. The simple bass riff which opened the song – five repeated notes, then a lower note – was arresting. The wailing organ solo which entered on top of that restated riff seemed to throw open a door to a room full of banshees. After a few seconds of *that*, the teenage Stevie Winwood began singing in a high blues voice that blew away any banshee that ever lived. It was one of the most vital soul performances I had heard

and, incredibly, it was by a white Englishman. I was overwhelmed, and played the single twelve consecutive times in the Record Library. Someone who had entered at the beginning of the sequence to borrow an album came back towards the end to return it.

'Guess you like it,' he observed. *Like* it? I was crazy about it. I made it the WDCR Pick Hit of the Week even though the act was unproven in America. In this case my enthusiasm was contagious. Garwood Erickson, who used the name Gary on the air, raved about 'Gimme Some Lovin" and played it twice on *Music Till Midnight.* It was against policy to repeat a record, but this once I was not about to complain.

On another occasion we received a 'white label' pressing from Atco Records. 'White labels' are the initial copies of a disc's printing, distributed even before proper labels are attached. Title and artist information is stencilled or hand-written, giving the record a look of urgency and creating an instant collector's item in the process. WDCR received first class service from the Atlantic and Atco group of labels as a consequence of a plea I had made to their New York headquarters, pointing out that our station was the only one in the area playing rhythm & blues and jazz. To serve our black student population adequately, we required good treatment from the Atlantic family, which in the late sixties carried such great stars as Aretha Franklin and Wilson Pickett on Atlantic, Arthur Conley and King Curtis on Atco, Carla Thomas and the double dynamite duo Sam and Dave on Stax, Otis Redding on Volt, and Joe Tex on Dial. Whenever a packet from New York arrived with the Atlantic return address in the upper left-hand corner I excitedly ripped it open, risking major paper cuts in my recklessness.

The day in question did not bring a rhythm & blues classic. It instead delivered a white label with the simple legend ' "Mr Bojangles", Jerry Jeff Walker, Atco 6594'. I had never heard of Jerry Jeff Walker, though I was aware of the legendary black dancer 'Bojangles' Robinson.

I wondered how a single by an unknown artist could qualify for white label treatment. Since no one was expecting product from this person, it could not possibly rate a separate mailing. It could wait for the end of the week and be posted with a couple of other promotional copies.

As soon as I placed the needle on the record I realized it was still possible for a performer to overwhelm a listener with his very first release. Jerry Jeff Walker's melancholy voice and simple acoustic guitar accompaniment tore open my heart as he told the sad story of an encounter with an imprisoned vagrant, an itinerant dancer named Mr Bojangles. In his heyday he had danced across the American South at 'minstrel shows and county fairs for drinks and tips,' but the bottle had proved his better. His pet dog 'up and died,' and 'after twenty years he still grieves,' drowning his sorrows and winding up in jail for his troubles. The denouement of the disc came when the narrator, tremendously moved, 'heard someone ask "Please, Mr Bojangles, dance".'

That voice clearly came from the narrator himself and, vicariously, from the listener, who had come to identify with the observer. 'Mr Bojangles' sucked in many who heard it; I instantly decided to make it one of our station picks. More than that, I wrote superlatives in all the white space left on the label. 'Great!', 'Fantastic!', 'Tremendous!' and 'Moving!' were only some of the superlatives I penned. Later in the week a stunned deejay wrote in his own ink in a remaining half-inch of space 'at least good'. To this day our original copy of 'Mr Bojangles' remains in the WDCR Record Library, a testament to my enthusiasm.

That excitement was shared by David Walden, a member of the 1968 Directorate. A proud Southerner, 'Davey' was curious about this legend of his land. He borrowed it one afternoon while I was doing *Sounds for the Tri-Town*. I saw him go to the other side of Studio One, put the single on the Record Library turntable, and play it ten times, brought to the verge of tears. Good art can do that, whether it be high or popular art. 'Mr

Bojangles' charted for Jerry Jeff Walker and cover artist Bobby Cole before becoming an important part of Sammy Davis Jr's stage show and a top ten hit for the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

Many other songs from 1966–70 are indelibly etched on my mind. I recall receiving Otis Redding's posthumous release '(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay' and being stunned: Otis, the soul singer who had been my favourite vocalist for the two years before his death in a plane crash in December, 1967, was going to have his first top ten pop hit. Was this strictly my own highly subjective reaction or was 'Dock of the Bay' a genuine giant? I was so touched by both the lyric and performance that I bit my tongue, crossed my fingers and made the Volt disc Pick Hit of the Week. The sensitively sung story of a man with nothing left to live for but 'sittin' on the dock of the bay, wastin' time' impressed an audience far wider than the Tri-Town area, racking up four weeks as the nation's number one.

Then there was 'Honey' by Bobby Goldsboro. I first heard this masterpiece of misery while on a bus in downtown Detroit touring with the Dartmouth Glee Club. Flabbergasted, I rang the station in Hanover and instructed my deputy Lyle Nyberg to get the record immediately, play it and chart it. It was going to be a smash.

Upon my return to campus I discovered to my horror that the ever-dutiful Lyle had slightly misunderstood my instructions and placed the record at number nineteen in our survey before even getting a copy (United Artists was not as quick with its service as Atlantic). That the Tri-Town Top 25 could be counted down with a record missing was humiliating, but at least I was spared the embarrassment of presenting the chart personally.

Still, it was good to be early on 'Honey'. Unlike Goldsboro's many other country-pop ballads, which often made the top forty but never the top five, this one zoomed to number one and lodged a five-week run there. America loved the sad song of a loving wife taken by angels in the prime of her life, and so did Britain. Years later it

was voted the saddest record of all-time on the David Hamilton radio show, and it climbed to number two again on re-issue.

Often a chart compiler misses a hit on first listen and is then jolted into recognition by another source. While on Interstate 91 in Massachusetts I heard a Springfield station introduce its new number one, 'Dizzy' by Tommy Roe. The artist had not had a top ten hit in over two years, and after its *Billboard* Hot 100 entry I had cautiously listed it at the anchor position of the Tri-Town Top 25. Even though many small markets have unlikely chart toppers, the hearing on the highway convinced me 'Dizzy' was going to be a smash. I vaulted the record from twenty-five to eight, then to one. *Billboard* and Britain later followed; WHYN had led the way.

After presenting *Sounds for the Tri-Town* during the summers of 1967 and 1968 I began regular work on the programme in the 1968/69 academic year. WDCR's deejay studio had never been large. This limited the room for observers and allowed the announcer to feel intimacy with his listeners rather than co-workers. My freshman year the studio was located on the west side of the central corridor, next to the technical office but yards away from Master Control. This meant that switching air product from one studio to another had to be done blind. One just had to assume that at the right second the next programme was ready to go.

The west side studio had a window overlooking the college dining hall, not an overly romantic sight, but it did allow sunlight to come into the studio during the afternoon hours of *Sounds for the Tri-Town*. After my first year the studio went to the east side overlooking the Green and in the line of sight of the engineer manning Master Control.

In either case the disc jockey sat in the middle of a U-shaped equipment system. A turntable was on either side of him. Directly behind those, requiring an extension of the arm to reach, were the two cartridge machines, which played jingles and advertisements on tape. The running order of commercials and programme timings, 'the log',

were kept by the disc jockey on a small writing surface in front of 'the board', the controls which regulated what sound source was on air and how loudly. On top of this was the copy book, which included scripts of spoken commercials, and the Community Bulletin Board of public service announcements, amongst them the Pet Parade of lost and found animals.

Though disc jockeys could sit on either a chair or a stool, I always preferred the latter. If there could be no physical slouching, there would be no lapse of concentration. To the disc jockey's rear righthand side stood the massive transmitter monolith which proved a heat source even on the hottest days. Federal regulations required we read the tranny meters every quarter-hour. Barring technical disaster we would reach a twenty-five mile radius during the day with a 1000-watt signal and a ten-mile diameter at night on 250 watts. Although we covered several towns in the Upper Connecticut River Valley we often referred to our broadcast zone as 'the Tri-Town area', alluding to the three most significant centres of Hanover and Lebanon, New Hampshire and White River Junction, Vermont.

I feel fortunate that my greatest day-to-day contact with new releases occurred in the period 1966–70. The last half of the sixties was a peak for pop with the Beatles and Rolling Stones leading the way on the rock front and the Atlantic acts and Motown family pacing the r&b field. The second string of that era – Simon and Garfunkel, Creedence Clearwater Revival, the Lovin' Spoonful, the Mamas and Papas – would be stand-outs any other time.

What is most mind-boggling now is that these artists usually had a new release every three months. Nowadays singles are timed to coincide with the sale of new albums, which are more profitable for record companies. Consequently, few American stars have more than three singles per year. In those days the flow of material was steady, and the excitement on the airwaves was palpable.

The Beatles did more than anyone else to make disc jockeying a thrill in the sixties. Thank heaven we were

on Capitol Records' Air Mail service from Los Angeles. To have to wait a few days for a new Fab Four release would have made us dreadfully behind our competitors in the eyes of Beatlemaniacs who wanted to hear and, in many cases, buy new product immediately. Capitol got the records out so quickly I once received a new Beatle single without being aware one was due. I held the disc, 'All You Need Is Love', and wondered if it was some sort of jest. Playing it and discovering it was for real was one of the most pleasant surprises of the decade.

When a new Beatles 45 came in everyone wanted to hear it. What may have seemed like just another excellent pop record to a jaded jockey in Britain was for Americans the latest memo from cultural Mission Control. The Beatles shaped the fashions and social attitudes of the sixties, sometimes because they themselves were innovators and other occasions because they were the first to publicize and popularize esoteric habits they themselves tried out. Bob Dylan may have turned them on to marijuana, but it was their 'A Day in the Life' from *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* that did more to tempt Dartmouth students to smoke pot than any other influence. 'I'd love to turn you on,' John Lennon sang, and the Big Greeners let him do just that. The change in campus consumption from booze to weed in 1967 was not just definite, it was dramatic. It was as if over half the meat-eating population had become vegetarian overnight.

The visual influence of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* image was also apparent. As the Liverpudlians sported facial hair, so did students who would never previously have considered growing a moustache. The colourful bandleader costumes also caught on, and John 'Straight Nait' Naitove's Sgt. Pepper suit was the envy of his Gamma Delta Chi fraternity brothers.

None of this would have happened had the music not been of vital importance to our everyday lives. I and countless others have speculated elsewhere as to why the Beatles not only entertained but mattered. Suffice it to say here that they did. When a Claremont radio

station somehow got a copy of *Abbey Road* before we did we sent someone down the interstate to hustle a taped copy to Hanover for immediate broadcast. When we received pirate tapes of the *Get Back* sessions, ultimately issued as *Let It Be*, we gave several airings to the song 'Let It Be', even though our copy was not of normal broadcast quality. We simply had to share the excitement of new Beatle material with our listeners, who agreed that in the extraordinary case of this act hearing something was better than hearing nothing.

Langdon Winner wrote in 1968 that 'The closest Western civilization has come to unity since the Congress of Vienna in 1815 was the week the *Sgt. Pepper* album was released. In every city in Europe and America the stereo systems and the radio played [it] . . .'

I cannot speak for Austria or Alabama but I can talk about Dartmouth. The week that record came out the Dartmouth Bookstore, Modern Records and every other conceivable outlet were under siege. Walking across the college campus was like living inside a tape loop of *Sgt. Pepper* tracks mixed at random. No sooner would 'With a Little Help From My Friends' fade out as you walked by South Mass than 'She's Leaving Home' would fade in from Mass Hall. Wait a minute, there's 'Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds' coming from North Mass and now, yes, someone else is playing it in Gile and I do wish they'd either play it in synchronization or take the speakers out of the windows and *Good Lord* does that guy in Hitchcock have 'A Day in the Life' on loud. Now he's on the orchestral bit and he's turned it up full blast and *it sounds as if the world is ending.*

Playing records loudly in dormitories was not an innovation of the late sixties. Irritated neighbours were probably complaining about overly audible wind-up grammophones between World Wars. But there may have been a new brazenness in placing them in open windows on sunny days. Turning a record all the way up for the whole world to hear was a statement of rebellion that dovetailed perfectly with the political and social mood of the times. This is what I want to hear, the noise polluter

was saying, and it is what you should want to hear, too. If you don't, tough.

Oh for the time when it was not technologically possible to make a record so loud! Unless the disc was something most people were genuinely interested in, such as a new Beatle album, this over-amplification was an anti-social act. In the psychedelic era, with electric guitars blaring away noisily, it could be downright offensive. Spring weekends, when loud music got adrenalin pumping as sure as the sap was running through the trees, could be cacophonous.

The only time I can recall a speaker in a window actually enhancing the effect of a record was when I returned to Gile after my afternoon show in time to hear the end of Isaac Hayes' eighteen-minute version of 'By the Time I Get to Phoenix' screaming out of North Mass. The writer-turned-monologist Hayes' extended version of Jim Webb's classic had a lengthy instrumental passage at its conclusion, complete with a repeated brass riff and drum roll that seemed to be dramatically announcing 'And now, *sunset*'.

5

The fundamental relationship in pop, as in any musical form, is between the artist and the listener. Naturally enough, while at Dartmouth, I was most often moved by music when alone in Gile Hall. There, my emotional defences down, and the pressures associated with broadcasting them removed, records could hit me hard.

My sophomore year I decorated the walls of 406 Gile with slick advertisements from *Billboard* and stood my favourite r&b LPs on the wooden rim that went around the room at a height of about three feet. But it wasn't just the giants who regularly wafted their way out of my speakers. I also gave heavy home play to one-shot favourites like 'Come to Me Softly' by Jimmy James and the Vagabonds, a beautiful ballad that began with a descending gossamer instrumental line that seemed to be a welcome to heaven and moved into a vocal plea for romantic devotion. Only years later did I learn that James was based in Britain, not America, that much of his work was up-tempo, not moody, and that 'Come to Me Softly' had not been a hit in the UK. When I did meet him *he* was excited about seeing *me*, a circumstance I found odd and somehow unfair. He couldn't have listened to my shows as often as I had turned out the lights and been inspired by 'Come to Me Softly'.

Toussaint McCall's 'Nothing Takes the Place of You' was a real simmerer, a near-narration that unwound over the barest of organ accompaniments. I was nuts about this soul smash and took delight in charting it in the Tri-Town Top 25. When Scott McQueen's deputy deejay asked me how on earth I had found this worthy

of programming I told him it was a hit across the country. He mentioned this fact while playing the platter on the air as if to excuse himself and then added 'Well, *they* don't know what they're doing.'

I was furious. Here was whitey, I thought, spoiled upper-middleclass whitey, cosseted and closeted from pain and discrimination, dismissing a cry from the heart by an older and world-weary bluesman. My revenge was two-fold. First I had the satisfaction of knowing that the mysterious Mister McCall had his national hit and that the protestations of a dissident disc jockey were not going to change the fact. Secondly I had the comfort of power, which I exercised by charting in the low twenties r&b records of outstanding merit, *Billboard* hits that might not otherwise have been played by a white station in Northern New England.

The most affectionate glance I ever got from 1968 WDCR General Manager and soul freak Jack Hopke was when he looked at the new survey and saw I had debuted 'Are You Lonely For Me' by Freddie Scott. 'Well done, Paul!' he said excitedly, looking at me with the kind of shared knowledge that befitted two members of a secret society. Who cared what was number one that week? Jack Hopke didn't! 'Are You Lonely For Me' was number twenty-two!

These singles had regular spins in Gile Hall. So did 'Make Me Yours' by Bettye Swann, whose singing was far better than her spelling, and 'There Is' by the Dells. Jerry Butler chilled me with his *The Iceman Cometh* album, and Isaac Hayes' *Hot Buttered Soul* got me when I was in a marathon mood – each side of his LP had merely two long tracks.

My 406 Gile roommates shared my preference for rhythm & blues. One day Larry DeVan got the news his beloved grandfather had died. 'Gambo, "Cover Me",' he requested, and I knew he wanted to hear the Percy Sledge ballad of that name. This soul stirrer was a slow and mournful plea for emotional support in a time of stress. As I saw Larry take comfort and strength from the recorded performance I wondered if Sledge himself

ever knew the positive effect his work had on people he would never meet.

DeVan was a walking contradiction. 'The Pear', as he was nicknamed because of his unusual shape, held rather disturbing views on racial issues, claiming to prefer George Wallace to Hubert Humphrey or Richard Nixon in the 1968 Presidential election. Yet he was a fervent r&b buff, consistently preferring black music to the rock so popular in the sixties. He saw no contradiction in these positions. In the dorm room we shared with Mike 'Thunder' Thorman during our second and third years at Dartmouth my desk was situated in an alcove, underneath the stereo. If Larry barked '"Everlasting Love", Gambo' from the lounge chair on the other side of the room, I knew he was ordering me to play Robert Knight's crossover hit, not promising eternal friendship.

Thorman was also an r&b fan, though his musical tastes were wider. A student government officer, he had to decide who our class should sponsor in concert at the college's largest venue, the Nathaniel Leverone Field House. I suggested that the '70s present Ray Charles. His live show, complete with orchestra and female vocal group the Raelettes, was superb, and his historic string of hits was still current enough to have big box-office appeal. A major promotion should go with a proven great, not a possibly off-the-wall psychedelic act. Thorman agreed, so did the class government, and Charles put on one of his customarily magnificent performances. He stomped through 'Hit the Road Jack', soothed us with 'Georgia On My Mind' and satisfied sweethearts present with 'I Can't Stop Loving You'.

All through the show I looked forward to my scheduled interview with the star. I had been too young to know Ray Charles' work during his years as an important jazz artist, and I did not hear this part of his output until years later. But I had loved his rock era hits, especially 'What'd I Say', and appreciated many of his country and western covers, especially 'Busted'.

After the show, which ended in a mighty ovation, I went backstage for my appointed meeting, accompanied

by my guest Kathy Shapleigh. Oddly, the dressing room had no door, but I realized that Leverone's architects had probably not thought privacy a priority in an all-male college. Kathy and I knocked on the wall, the nearest thing to a door available, and strolled in. Never have I so regretted such a casual entrance.

'Don't you have any consideration?' bellowed an unidentified aide. I could see his problem. There was a world-famous artiste, the brilliant Ray Charles, sitting in his underpants, and here I was trooping in with a teenage girl who, even though she was no naive ninny, was not accustomed to seeing nearly naked superstars.

'Couldn't you knock?' the handler blasted. He needn't have used such volume to make a point which had already impressed us. The sole and ironic result of his outburst was to draw the attention of The Genius himself who, being blind, had not noticed the presence of a silent young woman on the other side of the room. If he was embarrassed by our thoughtlessness, it was only at that point.

Kathy and I briefly retired to the other side of the dividing wall. Moments later we returned for a delightful twenty-minute session with Charles, whose love of music and mankind were equally evident. Particularly touching was his appreciation of Aretha Franklin.

'I *love* Aretha,' he purred, referring to the newly-crowned Queen of Soul. 'She has so much *feeling*.' I have never heard a word imbued with as much of its own literal meaning as 'feeling' was by Ray Charles at that moment. It seemed inevitable that he and Miss Franklin would have to seek each other out for a duet, as they indeed subsequently did for a live recording.

The Ray Charles interview, interspersed with some of his greatest hits, made for absorbing radio listening. This was more than could be said for Scott McQueen's talk with previous Dartmouth visitors the Lovin' Spoonful. I was still a freshman in the spring of 1967 when my mentor invited me to accompany him to interview these star guests who had only slightly cooled after having recently scored a phenomenal seven top ten

singles in seventeen months. When we returned to WDCR we discovered our tape was recorded at an almost indicipherably low level. The reason was obvious in retrospect. Scott had placed the large stand-up microphone in the middle of the dressing room, equidistant from the five members of the Spoonful. The group may have been equally close to the mike, but they were also equally far away. They all sounded as if they were mumbling on the moon. The interview was unusable. I had learned that guests always had to be told to come close to, and speak into, a microphone.

Ray Charles had performed all his classic hits in his concert, but another version of one of his discs was a highlight of a different Dartmouth appearance. Allen Ginsberg, the unofficial poet laureate of the beat generation and an idol of Bob Dylan, came to Spaulding Auditorium with his friend Peter Orlofsky. Ginsberg's curious poetry and avant-garde answers to unenlightened questions got his listeners first restless and then aggressive. After being subjected to taunts and heckling from literary lightweights in the crowd Ginsberg struck back.

'Fuck you in the mouth!' he retorted to a rude questioner. The hall fell silent. No one had ever heard this expression before. Hundreds of Dartmouth men with a reputation for being the crudest members of the Ivy League had been grossed out by a bearded poet from New York City. Many present were converted on the spot. Ginsberg was in, and 'Fuck you in the mouth!' and its logical variant, 'Fuck me in the mouth!' became dormitory catch phrases.

Peter Orlofsky sat silently through a good portion of Ginsberg's programme. Finally he was introduced. He began not with speech but with a bizarre wail.

'Ohhhhhhhh it's cryyyyyin' time again – Ray Charles!' he emitted, then paused. One could almost feel the bewilderment in the auditorium. Then the realization crept through. For some strange reason, Orlofsky had begun his portion of the evening with an impromptu version of Ray Charles' recent hit 'Cryin' Time', a Buck Owens composition.

Dartmouth men present may not have understood Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlofsky, but they never forgot them. My suspicion is that in the more liberal atmosphere of just a few months later they came to admire them.

Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin and the other great soul stars of the late sixties were never far from my stereo in 406 Gile Hall. Indeed, my passion for rhythm & blues even infiltrated my dreams. I once awoke in the midst of making love to Gladys Knight in a pink bathtub – or so it seemed, the action was so lifelike. At the time, 1967, I was enamoured of the singer for her wild delivery of 'I Heard it Through the Grapevine', rendered with an urgency that made it sound as if she really was in heat. The tub was a memory of my childhood Connecticut home where, for some reason known only to my parents, the bathroom fixtures were in pink.

I made the mistake of sharing this nocturnal fantasy with WDCR's Bill Moyes. Later that week I heard his introduction to the lovely 'Didn't You Know (You'd Have to Cry Sometime)': 'Here are Gladys Knight and the Pips with this week's number twenty-two. This one goes out to Paul Gambaccini. I'm not precisely sure why, but this song reminds him of pink bathtubs, right Paul?' I felt terribly embarrassed, as if the details of my private life had been broadcast, though no listener could possibly have understood the reference. I wasn't completely cross with Bill: he had executed a perfect voiceover, right up to Gladys' first words.

It is with great hesitation that I have related this incident. I don't wish to offend Miss Knight, a glorious singer and, as several interviews I conducted with her in the seventies proved, a wonderful personality. But I wonder if she had a notion of my dream. Of all the hotel suites she was staying in when I spoke with her, none had a pink bathtub. Has she been avoiding me all these years?

6

My personal number one record of the late sixties was *The Circle Game* by Tom Rush. I played it in 406 Gile more than any other, most often when Larry DeVan and Mike Thorman were out, in deference to their sanity. Not only did the New Hampshire-born folk singer have my top album, he had my most loved single, 'Urge For Going'.

My love affair with Tom Rush's music began in the first few months I was compiling the Tri-Town Top 25. WBZ in Boston charted 'Urge For Going', and I was inspired to do the same in Hanover. This acoustic ballad by an unknown woman named Joni Mitchell carried a poetic lyric, a laconic vocal, and a simple instrumental backing. The message of how impossible it is to hold on to the same circumstances forever went direct to my heart, bypassing my ears. I was always tremendously touched when I heard Rush resignedly admit that he, and we, always had to move on.

Imagine my distress when, the week I dropped 'Urge' from nine to fifteen in the Tri-Town Top 25, Scott McQueen deliberately did not play it, bypassing it with a quip that he was going to give Tom a rest and that 'you all know it anyhow'. My disc jockey hero had committed an offence against our profession. When one is doing a countdown one plays all the records whether one likes them or not.

I was one of the loyal listeners to Dick Summer's night-time WBZ programme who awaited Tom Rush's forth-coming LP with anticipation. After 'Urge for Going', I thought, it had to be great. One night I was driving up

a hill outside Hanover, an extension of East Wheelock Street. Summer introduced the title track from the soon-to-be-released album *The Circle Game*. I stopped the car and sat in the still New Hampshire air. Underneath the bright moonlight, with only trees to keep me company, I listened to the five minute-plus number. Moments of such purity are rare. I was gripped by the power of 'The Circle Game'.

Rush had the ears to recognize a fine song by a major talent even when the writer was still unknown and hence, in a success-oriented industry, generally ignored. 'The Circle Game', like 'Urge for Going', was by newcomer Joni Mitchell, who would shortly be acclaimed as a great singer-songwriter. Jackson Browne and James Taylor, also represented on the LP, were still searching for recognition in 1968.

Tom's most successful chart album, *The Circle Game* was also my favourite record to fall asleep to. Side two was so gentle I could put the needle down on the first track, 'Shadow Dream Song', and know I would not awaken until the needle made the jarring noise it does when the arm retracts at the end of a record. I have always been good at catnapping, awakening with renewed alertness, and during my Dartmouth years snoozed in places ranging from the student parking lot to the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. But nothing was as guaranteed to produce a quality quickie as side two of *The Circle Game*.

In the mid-seventies I interviewed Tom Rush for the Radio 1 programme *Rock Week*. He showed no awareness that his long player facilitated slumber. He also, sadly, did not seem to know that it was a masterpiece. One person who did share my enthusiastic recollections of the record was Linda McCartney, who as Linda Eastman had taken the photos used on the album sleeve.

The lyric of 'The Circle Game' concerned aging, but not old folk. Joni Mitchell wrote the song for her friend and fellow Canadian Neil Young, who had been petrified at the thought of turning twenty. Using the image of a carousel, the author reassured the childhood dreamer

that there were still many more and perhaps better dreams ahead.

This was emotional stuff, especially in the late sixties, when it was fashionable to be young and the young believed it was not only optimal but essential to be so. Nobody over thirty was considered trustworthy; the thought of increasing the first digit of one's age was a horror. The sentiment may seem amusing adolescent narcissism now, but at the time it was a matter of the greatest distress. As if life wasn't bothering you enough with an unwanted war, the draft, exams and essay deadlines, it had to sap your vitality and make you older, too.

We must have been an unconfident generation. We equated a loss of youth with a loss of moral purity, as if merely being older would compromise our character. It didn't occur to us that if we really were saintly instead of sanctimonious we could apply our principles in the working world instead of being stripped of them at a certain age.

I was as romantic as the next fellow, and so on 1 April 1969, the eve of my twentieth birthday, I turned out the lights in 406 Gile – Larry and Mike were once again conveniently absent – and put 'The Circle Game' on the stereo. As I lay on the settee I felt I was experiencing a sacrament more important to me than any of the rites I had participated in during my Catholic upbringing. This was not a ceremony whose form and content had been dictated by some anonymous churchman distant in both space and time. This was a ritual of my own invention, the meaning of which was profound. I, Paul Matthew Gambaccini, born the second day of April, 1949, in the Bronx, New York, was turning twenty. It had never happened before, and it would never happen again. *This was it.*

When the record was over I experienced a colossal letdown. It was only quarter past seven in the evening and I was still nineteen. Having performed my scripted routine, I now needed to spend nearly five hours before I hit the big two-oh. Homework filled some of the time, and so did John Ritchie.

John was a lanky six-footer whose limbs seemed long enough to lead independent lives. If one of my friends was ever the Elongated Man, the stretching character in *Flash* comics, it was Ritchie. At times John wore a black turtleneck sweater. I thought this habit evidence of an artistic soul. It may have merely been a sign of a lack of dress sense, but such cynicism never occurred to me then and I refuse to entertain it now.

My friendship with John was the first relationship I had at Dartmouth that I considered inspiring. For a time, going a day without seeing him made me feel unfulfilled. We shared an appreciation of things we considered poetic that others might have thought trite. I once drove him to a radar station on a hill to the northeast of Hanover. From this isolated spot one could view a rural panorama below. A spring sunrise was especially spectacular from this vantage point; I viewed a couple on mornings I awoke early.

On one occasion I drove out at about 6am and found the fields on the unpaved approach road vaguely obscured by a dense mist. Horses stood silent and unmoving. The tableau was breathtakingly beautiful. When I reached the radar station I saw this scene from above, where there was no fog, and the New Hampshire countryside seemed a three-dimensional painting. The sun rose through the mist and then burned it off.

I was deeply touched when, after leaving Dartmouth, I received a letter from John saying he had gone up to the spot seeking a moment of contemplation and, overcome by the perfection of the place, had taken off his clothes and lain naked in the high grass. I felt that my having introduced him to the site had made the moment possible and that, like an emotional echo, our bond had been restated.

I will admit to having been a bit sappy about John. One evening he smoked marijuana with a dormmate and I felt terribly left out. I retreated to my room and played Roy Orbison's pop aria 'It's Over' to work through my depression. On one memorable occasion we were *both* overly emotional. I drove John on the two-hour trip to

Wellesley, where his New Jersey high school sweetheart Jane Roessner was a student. WRKO, Boston, played Hamilton Camp's 'Here's to You', another of our great favourites. I found John and Jane's continued mutual allegiance in a world of one-night stands thrilling. After their date, as we bedded down for the night, John waxed lyrical and started quoting Erich Fromm's *The Meaning of Love*. Mystified by his rapture, I hoped he was alluding to our friendship. I was brought down to earth when I realized he was referring to Jane.

Heaven knows how I would have responded had John actually been talking about me. I had never taken the physical initiative with anyone. The nearest John and I came to a roll in the hay was a romp on his couch. It wasn't as exciting as it may sound, since we were fully clothed and both of his roommates were present.

'I love you, Paul, I love you,' John repeated, showering me with kisses and running his hands over my limbs while the on-lookers roared with laughter. I also found John's behaviour hilarious, but I enjoyed it. While I might have enjoyed a more intimate rerun, his was a performance more likely to be acted out publicly than privately. On our own it would have been too threatening for one or both of us to handle.

I mustn't give the impression that John and I spent all our time swooning over landscapes, Tom Rush, Jane Roessner and each other. We had many of the adventures one associates with undergraduate existence. During the brief spring break of 1968, a vacation of only ten days, we agreed to work our way through Massachusetts, visiting friends and taking in the pleasures of Boston.

On the first stop of our jaunt we stayed overnight at the home of John's roommate Vinnie Ferraro. His was a large close-knit Italian family, and we enjoyed the kind of generous dinner I associated with the Italian side of my own clan. The food was fine and plentiful, and so was the conversation, the parents actively seeking to win the esteem of their son's friends, John and I eager to earn the affection of our kind hosts.

Because the Ferraros were not equipped to deal with

visiting hordes from the north John and I were required to sleep in the same large bed. This was no problem; we had previously done so at Wellesley and slept soundly. The difficulty was a recurring glub-glub noise, as if a scuba diver was hiding in the closet. Since we couldn't figure out the identity of our aquatic visitor we turned on the light. The mystery was quickly solved. The glub-glubbing was coming from bubbles aerating the aquarium that belonged to Vinnie's little brother. John asked if we should turn it off for the night, and I saw no reason not to if he believed there would be enough air for the few fish in the tank. Assured there was, I assented to the unplugging of the aquarium. Free of noise pollution, we quickly fell asleep.

The next morning I awoke first, fully refreshed. The sun was shining brightly, promising a clear and crisp spring day. I should have been delighted, but instead I was terrified. There across the room, on the other side of my friend's still slumbering form, was an aquarium with lethargic fish gasping for air at the surface of the water.

I awoke John hurriedly. He, too, was shocked. We had nearly asphyxiated the Ferraro fish. He bounded out of bed and put the plug back in. The glub-glub noise that had hounded us so much the night before now seemed the sweetest sound this side of heaven.

My rejoicing was interrupted by a gasp from John. Having gone to the window to survey the fine morning, he spied a lifeless fish on the roof. This unfortunate creature, starved for air even when bobbing at the water line, had made life's last leap in an attempt for oxygen and had landed outside, either dying on impact or slowly and painfully from suffocation.

We had wanted to be good guests, but in our selfish desire to get a good night's sleep we had doomed one of our host's pets. Not knowing quite how to deal with this tragedy, or indeed which family member to mention it to first, we snuck down to breakfast, guilty men hoping to escape detection. For a few minutes, as the Ferraros gaily greeted us at the meal table, we thought we had

pulled it off. No such luck: Vinnie's little brother dashed into the dining room sobbing.

'You killed Caesar!' he cried, pointing a tiny finger of accusation at us. 'You killed Caesar!' There was nothing to do but confess. Yes, it was true. John and I had slain the noblest goldfish of them all.

Vinnie played a prominent part in another escapade John and I shared, this one almost being our last. In the winter of 1968 we all went down to Northampton, Massachusetts to attend a mixer at Smith, one of the 'Seven Sisters' women's colleges. We were joined by John's friends Jeff McHugh and Pete Wheelock, who became good buddies of mine as well. (Indeed, Pete was my roommate senior year in 204 Lord Hall.) I drove because I was the only one with a car.

In those days I always checked the UPI wire at WDCR if I was planning a long distance winter drive. I did not want to be stuck overnight away from Hanover, so I made sure there was no snow in the forecast for a full day after the time of my scheduled trip. I figured weathermen might mis-time a storm, but not by as much as twenty-four hours. On this occasion we were to leave the campus late Saturday afternoon in time to make the mixer at eight and get back in the early morning hours. Snow was not predicted until Sunday evening. Reassured, I hit the road with my Plymouth Sport Fury, a gift from my father, at six. It started to snow at seven.

I carefully crawled into Northampton and discharged my passengers. They were in a playful mood at the party but I mixed girl-watching with window-watching, observing the falling flakes and hoping against hope the snow would cease. By the time I rounded up my charges at midnight four inches had accumulated on the lawns of the Smith campus. Fortunately the Saturday night traffic in Massachusetts was sufficiently heavy to have melted the snow on all the major roadways. I started back up I–91 at the normal speed of sixty-five miles an hour. By the time I reached the sign 'White River Jct, 60 [miles]' I was doing sixty miles an hour. 'Good,' I said to my carload of cronies, 'only an hour to go.'

As we entered southern Vermont the traffic thinned. Snow began to settle on the passing lane. Still, one lane was fairly free of white. I reduced my speed to forty-five miles an hour as a precaution. Soon we approached the sign 'White River Jct, 45'.

'Only – ' I had started to tell John and company how much time it would take to get home when I realized I had said the same thing fifteen miles behind. 'An hour to go,' my voice trailed off.

I drove on through heavy snow. With almost no other cars on the road in rural Vermont a white blanket had coated the motorway. I was forced to drastically cut my speed. Soon I was travelling at thirty miles an hour. At that point – yes – we passed the sign 'White River Jct, 30'.

Our trip to nowhere ended when we finally reached White River Junction, at that time the last exit on I–91. The snow had just stopped, ensuring, we thought, a less pressured drive the five miles up Route 10 from West Lebanon, across the Connecticut River from White River Junction, to Hanover. On a flat at the base of a hill adjacent to Wilder Dam my car started nudging against the ploughed snowbank on the passenger's side of the vehicle. 'Good going, Gambo, good going,' joked McHugh, a natural comedian whose sense of humour was this time not appreciated. As I turned the car ever so slightly to the left in a corrective manoeuvre it skidded into the other lane. This would not have been cause for concern was there not an oil truck barrelling down the hill straight at us.

They say your life flashes before your eyes when you are in danger of death. This did not happen in my case. My first thought was 'My parents will kill me if they hear of this,' a gesture that on their part would have been unnecessary unless we somehow escaped. I pinned the wheel of the car to the right. Miraculously and so slowly it seemed to take an age the Plymouth glided back into the proper lane. The moment we arrived on the right side of the road the oil truck zoomed inches past my door at forty miles an hour. The driver had been

no dummy, realizing that if he had applied his brakes on a snow-covered hill he might well have slid into the ice-covered river, a more deadly option than smashing into a carload of college kids.

I naturally consider this episode a turning point in my life. Ever since I have been wary of the damage motor vehicles can do. We tend to breeze along highways without care. When one thinks of oneself as a sitting sardine in a metal can hurtling towards another piece of metal at many miles an hour, one's enthusiasm for high velocity driving wanes. Several acquaintances of mine have died in automobile accidents. I was nearly another victim. Though it is not a perfect precaution against incident, I take a train whenever possible on inter-city trips.

Years afterward Vinnie Ferraro was introduced to my boyhood buddy Steve Emmett. When Steve learned Vinnie had attended Dartmouth he asked him if he had known me.

'Know him?' came the reply. 'He saved my life once!'

How typically generous of Vinnie. I may have saved his life, but I almost was responsible for losing it, too.

7

My encounter with the pickle-and-eclair-eating George Wallace was not my only meeting with a 1968 Presidential candidate. Unlike the Alabamian, who was merely testing the cold Northern waters in his 1967 visit, Richard Nixon was a full-fledged front-runner when I covered him. The New Hampshire Presidential primary was the nation's first public poll, the moment when politicians who had previously jockeyed for position within their own parties had to turn to the people for a popularity rating. Almost all the candidates had to place themselves in this political beauty contest, and nearly all would be eliminated by the time of the last state primary several months later. They must have hated it.

The WDCR transmitter was located in New Hampshire, even though we would have slid into Vermont had the Hanover plain ever tilted westward. It was therefore appropriate that we cover the primary, from the first tentative trips of the prospective Presidents to the last farewell speeches the morning after the voting. Where DCR had a massive advantage over all other New Hampshire news departments was the size of its talent pool. Unpaid students are far easier to employ than salaried reporters. News Director Jeff Kelley faced a Studio One full of would-be correspondents when he invited newsmen interested in covering the primary to an evening meeting.

We could afford to allocate one man per candidate, a luxury that guaranteed thorough coverage of the race. Before making his assignments Kelley asked each member of the department which campaigner he would

like to follow. As might be expected in a liberal institution of higher learning, the pupils all plumped for one of the many Democrats fighting to wrest the nomination from incumbent Lyndon Johnson. I thought they were all falling prey to personal prejudice. Surely a reporter should want to cover a winner, I reasoned, regardless of whom one favoured oneself.

I had met George Romney, the Governor of Michigan, the previous summer at a select gathering of top New Hampshire politicos. The logic had been that under the leadership of the moderate Republican governor, Walter Peterson, the state machinery might get behind the amiable former auto executive. But Romney disqualified himself with his famous 'brainwashing' remark, in which he attributed his previous support of America's Vietnam effort to having been misled by the military. In pointing out his own lack of judgment he not only lost his place in the opinion polls but eliminated himself from serious contention.

I felt there could be no professional satisfaction in covering a candidate like this, a national novice who might not see through the campaign. Richard Nixon was an old pro, guaranteed not to make suicidal gaffes – at least not in 1968. With the Republican right wing having been humiliated in the Goldwater débâcle of 1964, and with the middle-of-the-road Romney suddenly out of the picture, I thought the Grand Old Party was likely to fall back on its old standby. I asked Jeff Kelley if I could follow Nixon through the primary. No one else was interested; I got the assignment by default.

In those days Americans were just learning the convenience of shooting dead public figures they didn't like. The traumatic assassination of President Kennedy was still a novelty; the deaths of his brother Robert, Martin Luther King and John Lennon were yet to come and attacks on the likes of George Wallace, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan were still unthinkable. Security for Presidential candidates, particularly in the early stages of the race, was far less stringent than today. I recall with bemusement how by flashing a simple press card

or ticket we could work our way into almost any political meeting. During that primary I was never searched.

I first met Nixon at a reception in Concord, the state capital. He was officially launching his campaign and had accordingly brought his wife Pat, daughter Julie and Julie's boyfriend, David Eisenhower, grandson of former President Dwight Eisenhower. My lasting impression of this gathering was not so much Nixon, who answered my questions by rote as if he were a jukebox dispensing recorded speeches instead of songs, but Julie. When she asked why we were present, Jeff Kelley replied that we were from Dartmouth.

'But Dartmouth's in Massachusetts,' protested the girl, who probably knew there was a town of that name in the Bay State because she was attending Smith College in Northampton, Mass.

'No, Dartmouth *College*,' Jeff smiled.

'Dartmouth?' Julie queried with an expression that combined dismay with puzzlement. 'Where's *that?*'

It is a powerful bolt of lightning that strikes broadcasters dumb, but Kelley and I were silenced by Miss Nixon's awesome lack of knowledge. Almost any student in American higher education would know where the Ivy League schools were. Surely every Smith girl, natural prey to the Dartmouth students who dated their kind every weekend, must know that their lair lay only a hundred miles to the north up Interstate 91? Did not the Athenians at least know the location of Sparta before they were caught unawares? Does not Superman know the colour of Kryptonite?

When Kelley gave the candidate's daughter a geography lesson, she brightened. 'Oh yes, I know,' she smiled, 'a girl in my dorm has a Winter Carnival poster from Dartmouth.' Better to be known for something, even a weekend party in the snow, than nothing.

David Eisenhower was far more sympathetic, and we felt for him. As the grandson of a former President and national hero he was constantly being asked for his opinions on matters of world consequence, as if in his late adolescence he was already a sage. He made clear

his resentment of this interference with his boyhood, and asserted he'd rather be a sports journalist than a politician. This is probably the most intelligent thing I have ever heard at a political meeting.

Nixon proved a convincing speechmaker in his New Hampshire appearances, winning standing ovations with his reassertion of traditional American values. He never let his audiences know they were small-time, and if the former Vice-President found schlepping through the snow in the boondocks a comedown, he never showed it. He really was a professional.

Late in the campaign Nixon gave a speech in Lebanon, five miles from Hanover on Route 120, a road carved through a hill that inexplicably changed from a two-lane track to a sixty-mile-an-hour highway in its midsection. He could not but help having heard of the rhubarb that had greeted George Wallace less than a year before, and five miles was as close as he would come to the spot of the trouble. Indeed, he even prefaced the body of his remarks with a few amusing asides about Dartmouth students, presumably hoping that wit would dilute the antagonism of any that had made the trek. Area residents might also enjoy a few laughs on the subject of the big-brained under-sexed over-boozed boys from Hanover.

He need not have worried. The five mile distance from the campus might as well have been five hundred. Only women and football games would make most Dartmouth men go more than a mile from the Green. Nixon found himself speaking to an audience of New Hampshire voters and only a few curious or supportive students. He was never heckled.

WDCR broadcast the Nixon address live. At the end of the talk he walked over to the small group of assembled press for further questions. I asked him one I had posed in Concord about the role of youth in society and, sure enough, I got the same jukebox recording I had received the first time. But this was not what struck me most. What I could not help but notice was that as Nixon opened his mouth to speak I was hit by a waft of bad breath. I was shocked, and had to consider my actions.

Should I announce on live radio that Richard Nixon had bad breath? Or, in the interests of manners and considering that he might have had an off night, or had rank game for dinner, make no mention of his odorous calamity?

I chose the latter course, but did phone my father, a Nixon supporter, to tell him the news. I expected him to be vaguely amused, but did not anticipate the events that followed. My father's photo-engraving company, which had long made plates for pharmaceutical journals, had a good working relationship with Warner-Lambert drugs. That firm's chairman, Elmer Bobst, was an intimate friend of the Nixon family. My father informed Bobst's secretary that I had interviewed her employer's pal and that he had nearly blown me into Vermont with his aroma (Dad doubtlessly phrased it more diplomatically). Instead of chuckling along she reacted with horror. 'Oh no,' she cried, 'we'll have to send him another case of Listerine!'

Bearing in mind the disagreeable aspects of Nixon's Presidency, I regret having told my father. The amount of people he did not alienate because his hygeine had been improved by the extra shipment of mouthwash could well have swung him the election in his razor-thin triumph over Hubert Humphrey. Ever since I have never joked about anyone's odour problems, for, almost anyway you look at it, I was to blame for Richard Nixon's election, and though I am not a crook, I was responsible for Watergate.

Nixon won the Republican primary, but the 1968 New Hampshire poll is best known for Eugene McCarthy's unexpected triumph. It is common misconception that he defeated Lyndon Johnson in the Democratic vote, but in fact the President narrowly pipped him. Crediting McCarthy with protest Republican votes he also received did, however, give him a higher total than Johnson. McCarthy's showing was so stunning that Johnson soon afterwards announced he would not run for a second term.

The big story of Wednesday morning, therefore, would

be the Minnesota Senator's 'victory' speech. Realizing that we could drive from Concord, Nixon's headquarters, to Manchester, McCarthy's base, in a half hour, a colleague and I zapped down early in the day. We wanted to carry McCarthy's remarks live on WDCR, but discovered to our frustration that Dave Prentice had only hired the telephone company long lines for the Tuesday evening. He couldn't be accused of oversight since no one had predicted McCarthy's vote, but we were miffed that we were missing a story. We stayed nonetheless to watch the day's national lead unfold.

McCarthy made a short but gracious speech in which he spoke of his determination to carry the campaign through to Chicago, site of the nominating convention. But what impressed me most was not the history that was in the making only feet away from me – again, security was at a minimum – but the conduct of the reporter from WBZ, Boston, Northern New England's most important television station. He was, to be blunt, hung over, and as his camera crew readied his introductory piece he appeared pained as well as pickled. Yet when the film rolled he gave a completely composed performance, one in which few critics could find flaw. He then dropped his head and restated his vow never to overdo it on election night again.

This was the first time I had ever witnessed this great truth about successful media delivery. The broadcaster, like the actor or musician, can be in utter personal disarray, but when the lights go up the show goes on. Performance is such an intimate act to the artist that it is more basic than common causes of behavioural disruption. Even if one is in such a state he can hardly carry on in his private life, he can still play to the masses. Years later I proved no exception, able to conduct radio programmes despite illness and despite having heard shattering personal news shortly before transmission, and one reason I didn't fear impending airtime was that in 1968, in a hotel in New Hampshire, a red-faced reporter from WBZ had managed to get off his butt and speak to the camera.

8

Teenagers will do almost anything for charity. They are so naive and well-intentioned they believe they can change the world by going door-to-door selling fruitcakes or organizing massive jumble sales. I was no different, except that instead of selling fruitcakes I stayed awake for a thirty-nine-hour radio marathon. That made me the fruitcake.

The cause was the 1968 WDCR Let's Help campaign. Let's Help had been a two-month charity campaign launched the previous year to benefit the Save the Children Fund. Now the beneficiary was A Better Chance, better known as ABC, a scheme for the education of minority children. Deprived black and Indian kids were brought to Hanover for education at the local high school; if they did well they might get admitted to Dartmouth. The inclusion of red-skinned native Americans was not exotic. The founder of the college, Eleazor Wheelock, had specified Indians as part of his original student body.

General Manager Jeff Kelley had the bright idea of holding a radio marathon, a pictureless version of the telethons that regularly raised millions. Listeners would phone in pledges in order to hear their favourite records. I would be the disc jockey and he would be the newsman, reading the reports at the usually scheduled times. This seemed an inventive scheme, but it was even cleverer than listeners realized. Kelley scheduled the fund-raiser to coincide with The Harvard Weekend, the time of the annual Dartmouth-Harvard game when virtually the entire student body drove down to Massachusetts for three days of dating, drinking and an incidental football

match. WDCR always experienced staffing problems during this exodus. To require only two on-air personnel for the entire weekend was a stroke of logistical legerdemain.

I didn't object to Kelley's suggestion that I miss two nights of sleep. I fondly recalled how one of my boyhood disc jockey heroes, Peter Tripp, had stayed awake for an entire week in a now-forgotten charity promotion on WMGM, New York. (Indeed, WMGM is now-forgotten, having changed its call letters in the sixties to WHN.) Admittedly Tripp, 'The Curly-Headed Kid in the Third Row', only broadcast his regular evening show during the period, but I figured it was more difficult to stay awake for a week with a lot of spare time than to keep going for thirty-eight hours. I had admired Tripp and thrilled to his cleverness when he ended his marathon by playing a record called 'I've Had It'. By this time he was sounding decidedly detached from his surroundings, and I was relieved to hear he was being assisted across the street to a bed. Tragically for those of us who loved his work, Peter Tripp lost his programme when he got caught up in a payola scandal. It was probably enough to make his curly hair stand on end.

I looked forward to our own marathon, scheduled to last from 6.30pm Friday evening until 8.30am Sunday morning. I tried to train for it not by staying up nights but by storing up sleep. I somehow thought that if I wasn't tired to begin with I could somehow sail on into Sunday without fatigue. The one thing I did that probably was genuinely helpful was to take a nap three hours before the show began. At 4.45pm, wide awake, I left my dormitory to go to the radio station. I thought I would drop in on my good friend Craig Sullivan, who lived near one of the dorm exits, before I took the two-hundred-yard walk to WDCR. Alas, dear old Sully, a dead ringer for a shorter and younger Warren Beatty, was enjoying his own afternoon siesta. When I bid him adios he dropped off for further adventures in the land of Nod, leaving me feeling deprived of sleep rather than refreshed.

I walked the two hundred yards or so from Gile Hall

to Robinson more attentively than usual. After all, I wouldn't be covering this stretch for nearly two days, and I considered it certain that when I did return I would hardly be in a state to notice anything. This time I noted how even the ecological horror of a parking lot behind Massachusetts Row had failed to make a serious dent in the tranquillity of the Northern New England environment. The land was so heavily wooded, its contours so naturally formed, that any tiny clearings made by man only made clear the scale of the glorious achievement made without man.

My contemplation ended abruptly as I reached the back door of Robinson Hall. My mission was to go where no WDCR deejay had gone before: thirty-eight hours into the future. Naive and nineteen as I was, I felt no fear. If I fell asleep while a record was on, Kelley or a worker would wake me.

Workers there were. Even though it was the Harvard Weekend and the massive undergraduate flight had already occurred, WDCR had attracted some of its most loyal men to the cause. There were volunteers to man the phones, taking pledged donations in return for the play of a favourite record. There were volunteers to find the discs in the Record Library and bring them to the studio. And, bless him, there was a volunteer to get our food from the Red Door delicatessen, which was supplying our grub for the weekend in exchange for a few well-timed though necessarily subtle on-air plugs.

The marathon began at 6.30. It was easy. I was given a pile of records with names and amounts of pledges attached and started breezing my way through them. This was less work than the usual disc jockey programme in which the announcer has to think of something to say between each record. Here the subject matter was provided in the form of the donations and the donors. All I had to do was throw in the occasional explanation of what we were doing, the Let's Help phone number, the always-changing but always-there time and temperature, and I was laughing for thirty-eight, thirty-nine,

heck, fifty hours. Bring on the night, I challenged the gods.

And then it happened. Unexpectedly, unthinkably, a plane headed for Lebanon Airport crashed into Moose Mountain only a few miles from Hanover. I first learned something was amiss half an hour into the marathon when Dave Prentice came into the studio to warn me that Kelley was on the phone about an air accident. We didn't yet know if anyone had died. We didn't even know if it was a passenger plane.

Seconds later Kelley rushed in, hurried in gait but calm in voice, to tell me that when the current record finished I should announce he had a bulletin to read. Yes, he told, a plane had crashed into the mountain. Yes, he confirmed, it was a passenger flight. Without warning the whole nature of our project was about to change.

I have often marvelled at the selfless service students at WDCR perform without thought of compensation. On that evening they gave special reason to be thought of with love. Immediately upon hearing of the disaster everyone with a car and a few without volunteered to go to the crash site, even though hardly anybody knew where it was. Moose Mountain was approached circuitously on an unpaved road suitable in winter for four-wheel drive vehicles only. No one was fazed: Prentice knew the way and others would follow. Armed with tape recorders and paper pads, the makeshift WDCR news team sped into the night.

Anyone who has ever listened to a radio station when news unexpectedly breaks knows that air product instantly assumes a schizophrenic nature. Frequent flashes of news are interspersed with regular programming, which must continue if only because there isn't enough news to fill the available time. Complicating our quandary was that our marathon had been heavily promoted in advance and that many listeners tuning in, oblivious to the events in Etna, would still be expecting to hear the charity broadcast. The result was that for the next eighteen hours the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, and whoever else someone wanted to pay

good money to hear alternated with Jeff Kelley's updates on the crash. Around 8.30pm one of the deans called in to say that the record I was playing, 'Journey to the Center of the Mind' by the Amboy Dukes, was a bit raucous for persons who had tuned in to hear the fates of loved ones. I had to agree that this dean, such a noted disciplinarian he had been nicknamed The Butcher, was on this occasion more sensitive than I, and I toned down the tunes.

For myself that evening was a peculiarly disjointed experience. I had to keep the marathon moving, aware that the tragedy had taken place but not sounding overwhelmed by grief. A sizable portion of any community takes cues from its broadcasters, and if a familiar figure goes to pieces on the air the mood of the masses can be negatively affected. I was writing down donations and dedications in spare seconds between starting one record and cuing up the next, but sometimes calls relating to the crash came through on my line. Moose Mountain was topic A on the world's wires for a couple of hours, and if only by default WDCR found itself the focal point of the planet's enquiries. For example, Reuters phoned to ask if it was true the college green had been turned into a helicopter pad. This would have enabled victims to be flown from the crash site to an open space less than a mile from Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital. Reuters had picked up on a good idea, but one that was impractical. Not only was Moose Mountain difficult for a vehicle to drive on, it was impossible for a chopper to land on. One quick glimpse out the studio window to the strangely silent green, lacking its normal student pedestrian traffic, told me the helicopter rescue plan had been a non-starter.

For Jeff Kelley the evening was the greatest test of professionalism he ever faced. What had started as an exercise in staying awake had turned into overseeing a news-gathering operation unlike any DCR had ever run. Usually one could incorporate wire service copy into one's story. This time Associated Press and United Press

International knew less than we and our makeshift news team had to provide all our information.

Kelley had to collate the staff's submissions and to read them in an authoritative but calm tone. He also had to make sure every report was tasteful. Any lapse in discretion, no matter how unintended or impromptu, would be remembered for years by a disappointed and perhaps unforgiving community. It was with this last consideration in mind that Jeff came into 3X around 9.15. 'Arthur has just filed a voice report,' he told me, 'but it's unusable. It is in *horrible* taste.'

What leading newsreader Arthur 'Friendly' Fergenson had done was to provide a very theatrical account of what he saw on the side of Moose Mountain. It befit the lover of drama he was, but it did not suit the subject matter. Arthur related how as he walked through the wreckage he could see parts of bodies strewn amidst the smashed suitcases and fuming fuselage. Here an arm, there an arm, he said, as if reciting a coroner's version of 'Ol' MacDonald Had a Farm'. Kelley got out a razor blade and spliced out Fergenson's more fulsome musings. The edited version that was aired left no hint of what had been excised. The following week, in one of the great ironies of my life, college information officer Bob Graham praised Arthur's broadcast piece as having been supremely tasteful.

Not only did Jeff and his make-do staff, most of whom had never previously been newsmen, have to gather the facts with the utmost accuracy, they had to field compassionately telephone enquiries from friends and relatives of passengers desperate to know if their loved ones were among the survivors or the dead. This was a particularly sensitive occasion because we had announced that not all on board had perished, and any party could logically have the highest hopes for good news.

One caller made a personal visit to Robinson Hall. Making a quick run to the newsroom for a new weather forecast, I saw the gentleman in a three-piece suit approach Jeff, who had the list of fatalities on a clip-

board. I stopped in the doorway and heard the visitor ask of the fate first of his wife, then his brother, and then his friend. One by one, Kelley had to confirm they were all gone. I then witnessed the embodiment of cool. Instead of shrieking or fainting, the middle-aged bereaved simply said 'Thank you' and walked down the stairs. Granted, his reaction must have been muted by shock, but nonetheless I have never seen such composure before or since.

To make the breaking of bad news even more difficult, the *Valley News* appeared on the newsstands Saturday morning with the preliminary list of dead. The airline had issued a supplementary list of more fatalities after the paper had gone to press. Breakfasters sat baffled at their kitchen tables as they read of one number dead and then heard of a higher toll. Had they heard properly? Had more really died?

And, more to the point from Dartmouth's perspective, had Professor of Music Milton Gill really perished? It wasn't in the paper, yet Jeff Kelley just said so on the radio. One of Gill's greatest friends, a member of the English faculty, called WDCR, puzzled and worried. I had to field his query. To this day I remember my rather formal pronouncement: 'I hate to say that he was among the victims.'

The Moose Mountain tragedy galvanized the Tri-Town area. Jeff Kelley and I would have been naive not to realize that some of the pledges that Saturday were made by listeners who might not have donated had not the plane crash given them cause to reflect on their own good fortune. Whether the incident aroused feelings of guilt or native charity, many members of the community gave generously, and we surpassed our goal. Gil Tanis, assistant to the President of the College, pilgrimaged personally to our third floor studio. 'You boys have done a terrific job through all of this,' he said, fighting back his tears and wordlessly leaving a generous cash donation on the console.

By midday Saturday, when the turmoil over the tragedy had begun to abate, Jeff and I were mentally if

not physically exhausted. Fuelled by adrenalin all night long, we now found ourselves in the situation many performers running on nerves are in after a performance: we wanted to collapse. Jeff didn't fall. I did, right on to the sofa in the second floor COSO (Council on Student Organizations) office. This sounds like a premature end to our marathon, but it wasn't. We were merely switching to Cambridge for coverage of the Harvard game. Knowing I wouldn't be needed for two hours or so, I conked out. Kelley went for a stroll downtown. I was awakened in time to resume our marathon later that afternoon. No one listening knew that I had slightly cheated.

I have never suffered pangs of guilt over my naughty nap because I left Robinson Hall Sunday morning in far worse condition than I had entered in Friday afternoon. Catastrophically, this was the weekend of what became known as The Red Death, the mass food poisoning of Red Door patrons. A woman preparing potato salad had not washed her hands properly. Her tainted tubers felled scores of deli diners, many of whom had to seek medical attention.

Was God punishing me because we had accepted a trade-out rather than insist on full rate card? I couldn't divine His intentions, but I do know I was in a terrible state. I first noticed it early on Sunday morning. I asked Kelley to feel my forehead, sure I had a fever. He replied that I was indeed warm but that this was probably the consequence of sitting next to the transmitter rack for an unprecedently long period. Also, he added, I had been without sleep for ages and was probably tired.

I certainly had been awake for a while, longer than even we had calculated. This was the weekend when Americans turn the clock back one hour to go on Standard Time. Incredibly, no one had warned us of this event, and we managed to avoid all advance word of it. Only after we had begun our marathon did we learn we were in for a truly long run. At what would have been 3am Sunday morning, announcing for the second time in

sixty-one minutes that it was now 2am, I played Jimmy Ruffin's recent hit 'I've Passed This Way Before'.

I thought I was being a wit. I was more a seer. Within minutes I began having attacks of diarrhoea. These were unpleasant episodes, bad enough for a teenager but catastrophic for a disc jockey. The men's room was on the second floor, meaning that whenever compulsion came over me I had to race down the stairs and, after what was at least a blessedly short spell on the toilet, run back up two steps at a time. I recalled that sprinting up and down stairs had been a way my high school track coach trained runners, but on this occasion I did not feel I was making myself fit.

One coincidence, and perhaps it alone, saved the programme from embarrassing silences caused by my absence from the controls. The standard 1968 pop single was three and a half minutes long. That week our number one record on the Tri-Town Top 25 was 'Hey Jude' by the Beatles, the longest chart-topper ever. At seven minutes and ten seconds, it provided ample cover for a dash downstairs. So, too, did the number two, Mary Hopkin's five-minute-plus 'Those Were the Days'. I had always loved these singles. Now I had extra reason to be grateful for them. Whenever I felt the urge coming on, which happened about once an hour, I popped one of these two carts into the spot machine. I always got back in time, and the marathon went on with no audible trace of my distress, courtesy of Apple Records.

The last few hours were spent in near-solitary. Jeff's forays into my studio declined in number, though he did rush in once to say that the insidious laughs on the long version of the Chambers Brothers' 'Time Has Come Today' were giving him the creeps. Kelley also forbade personal visitors, which I found odd. A sophomore named Terry Brown, who had been a big wheel in his freshman class student government, came to see me late Saturday night and started pouring his heart out. Jeff asked him to leave, which I thought slightly surly but excusable under the circumstances. A year later Kelley explained he had wanted us to be able to savour our unusual

experience together, the two of us. Only years on did it occur to me that Terry may have been in a genuine emotional predicament, and his ouster may have hurt him. Certainly he never sought my counsel again, and I long sought an opportunity to deliver an extremely overdue apology.

The final sixty minutes of the marathon were captured on tape. They proceed as I remember them, with the battle being not so much to stay awake as to pronounce words distinctly. No matter how long one is on the air one's attention is kept from wavering by the number of technical tasks always at hand. It must have been far easier for me to stay awake than my beleaguered newsman, who had twenty-five-minute gaps between engagements. But though the mind be willing the tongue may be weak, and slight slurrings of words characterized the conclusion of our superstint. At one point Kelley slipped and referred to me as his usual morning colleague Bob Shellard.

'Jeff, are they making minutes longer these days?' I enquired.

'No, but they're making more of them, Bob,' he replied.

Honestly – after thirty-eight hours in the same studio complex he still didn't know my name!

I ended the marathon at 8.27 with the very aptly-titled 'Urge for Going' by Tom Rush. Somehow I got back to my dorm. Unlike my reflective stroll to Robinson Friday evening, this journey was completely forgettable. I have no recollection of anything between the finish of the Tom Rush record and waking up back in 406 Gile at five in the afternoon.

It was just as well, for I had slept soundly through eight hours of terrible illness. I awoke in time to rush to the toilet and then had to contend with a crippling stomach ache and a burning brow. There are some pains that are so agonizing death seems a pleasant alternative, and the gut-wrenching symptomatic of food poisoning is one of them.

I staggered to the college infirmary, Dick's House, normally a short quarter-mile saunter but this time a

trip that seemed to the other side of the earth. There doctors confirmed that my temperature was over 100 degrees and that I was suffering from The Red Death that had already brought visits from victims begging for deliverance.

My medication came in the form of several suspiciously large capsules. 'My God, Gambo!' roommate Larry DeVan exclaimed when I returned to Gile. 'Down on the farm we use those to put horses to sleep!' I hardly needed any assistance in nodding off after two sleepless nights in a row, but at least the pills lowered my temperature and soothed my stomach ache. It wasn't until Wednesday that I could face food without fearing it would make a sudden and unwelcome re-appearance in the home stretch of my digestive track.

Records are made to be broken, and our thirty-nine hour spread was comfortably eclipsed in the early seventies by another team of DCR masochists. I had no regrets about being bested in mere number of hours. I dare say our weekend was one of the most memorable ever spent at the radio station. Though we all pray there will never be another plane crash on Moose Mountain, I wouldn't change anything about the way we conducted ourselves under the most trying circumstances we ever faced.

Well, maybe I would change two things. I would bring a change of clothes next time, and I wouldn't eat the potato salad.

9

In addition to *Sounds for the Tri-Town* and various newscasts I served on WDCR airwaves as the occasional host of the talk show *The Noon Hour.* This daily interview show welcomed local celebrities and visiting stars to a fifty-minute chat. (Our *Noon Hour,* following the midday newscast, was like an analyst's hour: fifty minutes.)

There was one problem. Hanover only had about five thousand citizens, and Lebanon and White River Junction weren't burgeoning metropolises themselves. To get new blood for the show we relied heavily on the Hopkins Center to provide us with artists in town for a show or a season. Inevitably, it is the odd programmes I best remember. On one occasion I booked on a dare the younger brother of a mathematics graduate student. This lad played *The William Tell Overture* on his head. The stunt was achieved by dropping his jaw and banging with his fists on a skull cavity on top of his head. An air-filled space in the skull supposedly produced the musical knocks, which changed note depending on the force of the blows and the shape of the mouth.

The performance of the famous *Lone Ranger* theme from *William Tell* went without a hitch. So far, so good. Then a listener phoned in and complained that the feat was not so difficult. There were quite a few people who could play *The William Tell Overture* on their heads, and he proceeded to do so himself. It was other pieces with fewer repeated phrases and greater intervals between notes that were hard.

Little brother would not accept this insult. He asked

for listener requests and, lo and behold, for ten minutes played phoned-in favourites on his head.

Another time I interviewed football coach Bob Blackman about the Big Green's chances in the forthcoming Ivy League season. Blackman had become a national figure by building Dartmouth into a regional football power. He was one of the college's biggest public assets. The great man appeared on one of the hottest days of the year. Sadly we were in the process of having air conditioning installed. The studios were baking. During commercials and strategicaly inserted records Blackman dashed into the corridor to cool his soaking armpits on our solitary fan. No one saw the great hero so demeaned, though the athletes he drove through arduous training would have loved to see their coach perspire.

I went into a cold sweat during one interview with a guest artist from Hopkins Center. The German had spent time at the Bauhaus and had worked with Klee. His career was fascinating, but I couldn't help but notice a gap of a few years. During a commercial break I asked him what he had been doing during this interval.

'I was in a concentration camp,' he replied without trace of emotion. 'My wife died there.'

I was glad I hadn't asked that question on the air. I don't know if I could have coped with his answer.

The Noon Hour took on special lustre on Celebrity Day. This idea was my contribution to the 1969 Let's Help campaign, a far easier effort than the charity marathon the previous year. On this day all the shows on WDCR were broadcast by area and campus dignitaries. *Daybreak* was hosted by the beloved Vermont raconteur Al Foley. The three local town managers answered community questions in a special edition of *Tri-Town Talk Back*. Even Rex Marshall, owner of arch-rival WNHV and nationally known from television commercials, lent his booming voice to one of the morning newscasts. NHV's star newsman, Eliot Page, also appeared.

Since the Hopkins Center had provided so many *Noon*

Hour guests it was only appropriate that this show was turned over to Hop Director Peter Smith. As his main guest he chose President John Sloan Dickey, who graciously donated his time to the fund-raising effort. Smith and Dickey conducted a discussion that shed light both on college policies and the President himself. As a 'kicker' Smith devoted the last ten minutes to a chat with yours truly. He wished to turn the tables and give listeners a glimpse at the person they regularly heard on the asking end of the questions.

Celebrity Day was a success, but not all the shows lived up to audience expectations. Dean of the College Carroll Brewster, a young man in the job for his first year and a fellow with a reputation for extroversion, presented a rather low-key *Sounds for the Tri-Town*. The real surprise was Professor Rogers Elliott. His Abnormal Psychology course, nicknamed 'Nuts and Sluts', was a mass audience draw, and his students assumed he'd enliven the airwaves with racy tales of deviant sex. They were caught off-guard when Elliott hosted a serious rock music programme. A fan of quality pop, he wasn't about to blow his only chance to present his favourite discs. It made one wonder. Scratch an Abnormal Psychologist, you find a rock fan. Scratch rock fans. Would you find Nuts and Sluts?

10

When I came to WDCR in 1966 revenues from advertising the previous year had approximated $20,000. When I left in 1970 they were up to $50,000. There were two main reasons for the increase. One was that the economy was on an upturn during the Vietnam War; when you sell guns and butter you also wind up selling automobiles and refrigerators. The other explanation is that we had a couple of staffers who loved to sell ads and a bunch of others who learned to tolerate it.

Imagine an army of eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds wandering the Northern New England wilderness with a rate card in one hand and a contract in the other, a commercial Children's Crusade. This is precisely what happened at WDCR. We all believed in the value of our air product and, American radio being what it is, had to raise the money to support it.

I personally hated selling and when possible serviced easy accounts. Ward Amidon, the Hanover jewellers, were easy, if eccentric. (Did the proprietor ever learn he was known to us as 'Weird Ward'?) Selling an expensive product to a high-class audience, they were bound to be polite and efficient, reducing the embarrassment of having to haggle over rates. Being the voice of Dartmouth College, we held the upper demographics so captive they were almost radio hostages. Amidon's had to go with us if they wanted to sell jewellery over the air. This account, in short, was painless. It was also just down the street.

They weren't all as easy. The entire Tri-Town area had to be canvassed by our salesmen. Businesses outside

Hanover were not necessarily charmed by a bunch of students from out-of-town trying to get their hands on hard-earned local money. The great heroes of the WDCR advertising department were those who went on missions of uncertain success. I generally refrained from this perilous exercise, but on one vivid occasion went to White River Junction myself.

A dealer in farm vehicles was making a fortune selling to the agrarian element of our listenership, about as far from the Ward Amidon clientele as could be imagined. Every morning our main competitor, WNHV-White River Junction, opened its airwaves to this gentleman. He held court for several minutes relating amusing incidents in his personal and professional life. To a sophisticated listener it made execrutiating listening, but to anyone who lived the farm life or had an appreciation of the *outré* it was compulsive stuff. Figuring he must be paying NHV a fortune to turn their station into his own facility part of every morning, I journeyed down to his dealership to pitch for part of his ad budget.

Here was a man who was successful in his field. He had earned his living through hard work in an unglamorous environment. He had no inclination to be favourably disposed to a well-off college boy whose most arduous physical labour had been as a paperboy. I had to play a card other than the Dartmouth connection. I played it.

The advertiser had had a cherished chimpanzee named Sam. For a very sad reason he had to bid farewell to the beast. He got a replacement which he named Samantha, if only to give an illusion of continuity. As a personal gift I gave him a copy of a record that had been listed in *Billboard's* Hits of the World section but had failed in the States, 'Goodbye Sam Hello Samantha' by Cliff Richard. It was, if Cliff will forgive me, perfect for the circumstances of the changing chimps. The owner loved my stunt and bragged about it the next morning on WNHV. He signed a contract with us and agreed to have his spots scripted and voiced before broadcast. Several years later I came to know Cliff Richard rather well, but

I never told him my first introduction to him was via two chimpanzees.

White River Junction was also the home of an account I will never forget. When my father first bought me a car he told me never to let anyone else drive it. If an uninsured motorist had an accident behind the wheel of my car, I would be liable. Dad's advice was good. On only one occasion at Dartmouth did I let anyone else take the wheel, and I paid for the mistake.

It was nearly 4 o'clock on a weekday afternoon. I was on the air doing *Sounds for the Tri-Town*. Ken Jones came into the studio excitedly.

'Miller Auto will buy,' he said with urgency in his voice, 'but they must sign a contract today or they'll go with another station. I've got to get down there. Graves is out in the mobile unit. Can I borrow your car?'

From the look of disbelief on my face Ken knew he was making a request that had never previously been granted.

'We've *got* to get this account,' he pleaded. 'I promise to bring the car straight back.'

Ken knew how I felt about lending my car. He also knew how strongly I felt about getting the Miller Auto deal. We college boys in Hanover had a kind of reverse prejudice when it came to advertising. Whenever we got an account in White River, which had every reason to support its own WNHV, we felt we had really achieved something and that, yes, we *were* a *professional* radio station.

I gave him the keys.

Slightly over an hour later I was back in my office downstairs. Jones entered, fidgeting nervously.

'What's the matter?' I asked. 'Didn't Miller sign?'

Miller had signed, Ken assured me, but something had gone wrong.

Driving back from Miller Auto on the New Hampshire side of the Connecticut River he stopped off at the Super Duper food store to buy potato chips and party snacks for his roommate Joel Feldman's birthday celebration. I had reason enough to dislike Super Duper. Their jingly-

jangly time tones, ten-second spots bought in bulk, were the most irritating constant feature of WDCR air product. Now I had further cause to dislike the store: it had an inclined parking lot. When Ken parked my Sport Fury he neglected to put on the parking brake. As he got into the supermarket the car inched backwards. Going with the tilt of the ground, it gained speed. It barrelled into a Shelby Ford Mustang, a fragile automobile, causing over $500 of damage at 1969 prices.

I was mortified. The fellow who owned the crumpled car, Garry, was civil enough about the incident. A graduate student at the Tuck Business School, he had enough money not to get hysterical about the accident. His temper was also assuaged by the knowledge that my insurance company would cover the full cost of repairs. And, thank heaven for me, he was a fan of *Sounds for the Tri-Town*.

The following spring the Dartmouth Glee Club toured the western half of the United States presenting the history of the college in song and narration. Our busy schedule allowed a free day in San Francisco, and when I read that Smokey Robinson and the Miracles were performing in a local nightclub I suggested to my tour roommate Faulkner White that we go to the show. Whitey was also keen to see Smokey. (This is beginning to sound like a nursery school primer.) The finest Glee Club vocalists, the Injunaires, had their own short set during the first half of the Glee Club performance and were featuring a version of Smokey's 'Here I Go Again'. It seemed only appropriate that while on tour we should see the originator of that song and so many other favourites like 'The Tracks Of My Tears' and 'Ooh Baby Baby'.

We had no guarantee we would be able to get tickets, but that did not deter us. Our alumnus host generously (and foolishly, given the incident I have just recorded) loaned us his car for the evening. We parked, making sure to apply the handbrake, and approached the cash desk of the nightclub. As we walked into the lobby I was shaken to the core. There, three thousand miles from

Dartmouth, was Garry, the owner of the car my Plymouth had plowed into!

Did he still carry a grudge? Far from it! The Dartmouth fellowship proved as true as celebrated in any college song.

'Hi, Paul!' Gary greeted me expansively. 'Good to see you!' It was only natural we should be meeting in California, as if we were bumping into each other in Tony's Campus Pizza.

'Come to see Smokey, eh?' he smiled. 'I was just in for the first show. Listen, the *maitre d'* is a friend of mine. I'll tell him to give you the best seats in the house.'

And he did. Whitey and I sat literally next to the stage as Robinson and the Miracles performed their greatest hits, from 'Shop Around' to '(Come 'Round Here) I'm the One You Need'. I was ecstatic to see my hero at such close range. Whitey was only slightly less manic.

Our enthusiasm did not wane when the woman to Whitey's left regurgitated her breakfast at close quarters. To think that such an enjoyable evening had been made possible by Ken Jones leaving the parking brake off made me consider, if only for a moment, lending the car out more often.

11

The attractive co-ed sat at the basement bar watching the walking wounded, victims of a lost weekend's alcoholic excesses, stagger into chairs and pillars as if they seriously believed they could walk right through them. A fraternity brother approached her, his face moving in a clockwise circle that indicated his brain had stopped telling his neck to hold his head up. He stopped one seat away from her, opened his zipper and placed what it usually concealed on top of the bar.

'Take a good look at *that*', he snarled. 'What do you think *that* is, baby?'

Her reply was immediate.

'It looks like a penis, only smaller.'

I have heard conjecture that this story is apochryphal, that it is the kind of thing that might have happened at any of several universities, that it did indeed take place but so long ago it has been attributed inaccurately to many colleges. I don't care whether it did or did not occur anywhere else: *it happened at Dartmouth.*

Fraternities were formed at Dartmouth to provide a social centre in a community devoid of night life, to give young men character-building companionship in a rural single-sex environment in which they might otherwise grow lonely and depressed. These were noble goals. They might have been more satisfactorily achieved had not the 'houses' become synonymous with the very worst of Dartmouth. Many fraternities were breathtakingly sexist and mindlessly alcoholic.

This seems a contradiction. How could the finest and most open-minded young men in the country hold trans-

parently thin opinions of a full half, indeed a majority, of their fellow citizens? How could the brightest boys in the land persist in behaviour that made them look stupid? How could prime physical specimens damage their bodies through excessive drinking?

Crudeness is like greatness. Some people are born gross, some people achieve grossness, and others have grossness thrust upon them. As an example of the first, take my classmate 'J.B.' A scientist, J.B. made a name for himself by devising new ways of shocking his mates and their dates. At one party, for example, he strutted around in a jockstrap.

His reputation spread amongst the women's colleges of New England. At a mixer held in the common room of three interlocking dormitories, one young lady decided it was finally time to put him in his place.

'J.B., I bet you five dollars you can't gross me out,' she challenged.

J.B. sized her up in a second. He whipped it out and pissed on her. She paid.

Other Dartmouth men who wanted to join fraternities had grossness thrust upon them. During the first week of their second year, prospective fraternity members visited houses of their choice and were seen in turn by representatives of those houses interested in them. Invitations to join were issued during the week. 'Pledges' had to undergo an apprenticeship period of several weeks during which they had to serve odd wishes of the upperclassmen and perform a humiliating public stunt.

My friend Craig Sullivan and his roommate Rick Mather 'pledged' Bones Gate fraternity and were made to dress up as testicles. Carrying an artificial penis bigger than either of them, they were to race through the basement of Baker Library, where students intent on 'serious booking' spent hours at a time. As they passed fellow pupils they were to throw paper streamers out the tip of their penis, simulating ejaculation. Members of Bones Gate took positions at study tables to evaluate the performance of their two pledges. As a friend and their Dorm Chairman, I was invited to watch.

It was certainly a once-in-a-lifetime sight. The six-foot penis struggled to get its testicles through the narrow library doorway while mere feet away dedicated book readers remained oblivious to the sight. Sullivan and Mather finally got themselves composed and ready as if at the starter's gate. The buzz of low-level conversation violated the silence of the study area and most heads turned to see them. Knowing they were being observed, they began their trot, passing directly in front of the librarian's desk and spewing 'semen' on the library floor. As they exited out the other side of the Baker basement they drew an ovation from their assembled brotherhood. *They were in.* The look of resignation on the librarian's face was classic Dartmouth. This stuff is stupid and anti-intellectual, it said, but at least it's quick and it doesn't hurt anybody. *At this place, I have to expect it.*

I fell for the societies' siren song myself during the first term of my sophomore year. My WDCR mentor Scott McQueen was a member of Gamma Delta Chi. This house had a reputation for being the crudest on campus, yet Scott himself was patently a gentleman. I chose to believe what I knew rather than what I had heard. It was not the first time in my adolescence I had been naive.

National Lampoon's Animal House was a smash film of the late seventies, grossing well over $100 million at the box office. John Belushi gave the best-known performance of his short life as the college slob who flattened beer cans against his forehead and instigated food fights in the cafeteria. The vulgar excesses of his fraternity brothers' behaviour made cinema audiences roar with laughter. What they did not realize was that one reason this film was so hilarious was that it was a mere 10% exaggeration, a closely observed study of fraternity hijinks extrapolated a few steps into fantasy.

I recognized several of the characters and sequences in *Animal House.* The reason was obvious. One of the three writers of the film had been a fraternity man at Dartmouth. The hedonistic life of the movie undergraduates was based on the genuine activites of youngsters

like those at the Big Green. For example, there is a sequence in the film where Belushi, dancing to the music of a rhythm & blues band on a party night, suddenly shouts 'Gator!' The entire assembly drops to the ground, assumes a horizontal position parallel to the floor, and makes movements that combine push-ups and pelvic thrusts. The less athletic simply roll around. The Gator was an actual Gamma Delt party weekend tradition. It was customarily danced with about half an inch of spilt beer covering the floor.

Being someone who didn't enjoy drinking, I refrained from gatoring, but I could understand the lemming-like behaviour of those who fell in. Succumbing to peer pressure, I willingly made a fool of myself during my pledge period by performing 'dies' around town. A 'die' occurred when a brother spotted you and 'shot' you with gunfire noises. On one occasion Rick Toothman saw me on the other side of Main Street. 'Gambaccini, die!' he ordered, filling me full of verbal lead. I decided to overdo it and performed a balletic 'Swan'-like death scene in front of baffled locals. Toothman took my pledge black book and entered three white balls, a high mark. 'Good die downtown!' he wrote.

If I, at eighteen still a pretty straight-laced kid, was willing to 'die' in public, I shouldn't have been shocked that those who enjoyed drinking would carry that activity a bit far. Drinking was more than a recreation at Gamma Delt, it was a tradition. We bought 'Bar Cards', cardboard rectangles with numbers that were punched out to the value of purchased drinks. The most famous Gamma Delt cocktail was one for which there was no recipe. The 'Fogcutter' was served only on Sunday afternoons of party weekends, by which time most of those gathered no longer cared what went into their glasses. Several available spirits were thrown together in bowls and coloured with grape juice. A cup of this was enough to make you high. Two and you were drunk, three and you had a coherence problem. After four you were sick. One visiting girl sank five and had to be taken to hospital. It was because of unnecessary excesses like

Fogcutters that Gamma Delt was referred to in some quarters as 'Gamma Douche'.

How pouring poison down one's gullet ever became a symbol of manhood I will never know, but every freshman who came to Hanover got the feeling he was expected to get drunk and fast. I felt the pressure my very first term. It was even greater than the need one felt to lose one's virginity. After all, there was a limited supply of women on campus. Booze was everywhere. In my first month I became good enough friends with Virginia boy Mike Thorman to confide in him about my alcoholic innocence. Mike, a handsome, dark-haired lad, admitted he'd never been 'shitfaced' either.

Thorman came over while my roommate Dwight was out for the evening. We planned to get high on gin and tonics, having heard that gin was tasteless. I bought the bottle of Gordon's, Mike the tonic. Having no sense of what makes a measure or indeed what a measure was I filled three-fourths of a tall glass with one-third gin and two-thirds tonic. We sat nervously, Mike on the couch and I at my desk, sipping our G&Ts and talking about our English seminar. We had no canapes, no dips, no peanuts. No cheese straws or pretzels soaked up our alcohol. We just sipped and conversed, downing two drinks apiece in about twelve minutes. Our third took slightly longer, about eight minutes. It was still enough to do the job.

'I think this is it, Mike. I'm drunk,' I announced, heading for the toilet. 'Please excuse me.'

While I spent a couple of minutes vomiting Thorman laughed and drank his fourth G&T. This was his big mistake. I came out of the toilet and began my calculus homework, satisfied I had gotten drunk and was now a man. Michael, affected by his extra gin, threw up and then passed out. By the time he awoke I had done all of the next day's lesson.

Shortly over a year later, when I was losing my enthusiasm for Gamma Delta Chi, I felt I might as well use up the remaining chits on my bar card. I had an hour and a half to spend before WDCR broadcast my

taped documentary special *Ten Years of Motown,* and I looked forward to hearing myself on the air for the first time. Many people forget that broadcasters don't get to hear their own live programmes being transmitted. I thought it would be delightful to have a couple of drinks, listen to the show, and celebrate by eating somewhere downtown.

I went to the house with Larry DeVan and dropped a couple of drinks. I watched with pleasure as the big numbers were chipped off my bar card. I got more of a kick from getting my money's worth than actually consuming the fire water. Then my friendly nemesis Ken Jones appeared.

'Joel has just made some lasagne,' he told me. 'Can you come over to the house and taste it?'

Phi Tau, Jones and Feldman's fraternity, was just across the street. 'The Toolshed', as it was nicknamed for its wimpy clientele, was the natural rival of 'Gamma Douche'. Not only might some brothers see me entering the enemy, I might get sick from eating mushy, messy lasagne while inebriated. I tried to beg off.

'Please, Paul,' Ken begged. 'You're the Italian expert around here and Joel wants to know how he's done before he serves it.'

Against my better judgement, I went into Phi Tau and ate. I gave my approval to a relieved Joel Feldman and staggered back to Gile Hall. As I approached the dorm I knew I'd made a mistake.

I managed to get in the door of the dorm and went into the first room on the right.

'Bob, can I use your toilet?' I gasped.

'Why, sure . . .' the obliging inhabitant started to say before my upchuckings drowned out his words.

'Are you OK?' he asked.

'Yeah, sure,' I lied. 'Do you mind if I lie down for a minute and listen to your radio?'

Not at all, he assured me, and furthermore he was going out so I could have the room to rest in and could even turn the light out if I wanted. I thanked him for

being extraordinarily generous, got into the lower berth of his bunk bed and turned on the transistor.

'It's eight o'clock, and WDCR presents *Ten Years of Motown,* written and narrated by Paul Gambaccini. . . . You've been listening to *Ten Years of Motown,* written and presented by Paul Gambaccini. I'm Pete McClanathan.'

I couldn't believe it. I had slept through my entire programme! All I heard was the beginning and the end, and that was blasted McClanathan instead of me anyway! I vowed then and there never to get drunk again.

This naturally meant I was out of the action on those weekends – home football games, autumn Houseparties, Winter Carnival, and spring Green Key weekend – when much of the pupil population was pixilated. On big weekends any mayhem was possible. For example, in one of his states that we used to call 'rages', a friend tired of his date in the middle of a weekend and gave her the bus fare to go home, no small sum since 'home' was over fifty miles away. He then walked back to his dorm but was so smashed he wound up on the golf course instead.

Unless you played it safe and invited someone you already knew you were always at risk of being matched with someone terribly incompatible. I never found myself fighting through the rough on the fourteenth hole, but I also was driven to distraction by one of my weekend dates. I was set up one weekend with a former go-go dancer nicknamed Linda DeBun. I couldn't blame her if she lived up to her reputation and wanted to dance all the time, but when she danced on the bar in my room in front of Thorman and DeVan I felt humiliated. No matter what activity I had in mind, she wanted to dance.

The worst aspect of a date at Dartmouth was that it lasted for three days. The girls would come up Friday evening and remain until Sunday afternoon, staying, unless one was intimate, in an approved local home. Though you might score a few hours' respite here or there along the way, you were in for the duration. If you

were unhappy come midnight Friday, you were doomed to be miserable by Sunday.

Gamma Delt saved me. I knew that not every brother was fortunate enough to line up a date every weekend. Some of the forlorn lost themselves in alcoholic stupor, but others remained alert looking for available 'tail'. I brought Linda along to our Sunday afternoon Fogcutters party, knowing someone would be 'prowling for a puss'. I introduced her to my friend Rick Toothman and conveniently disappeared for a few minutes. To my utter relief, by the time I had returned, *they* had disappeared. A few days later I received a letter from Linda DeBun thanking me for the lovely time she had had and expressing regret that we had become separated at the party. I couldn't believe that someone I had ditched could still be so polite to me.

It wasn't difficult losing someone at a Gamma Delt party. On one occasion, a toga party similar to the one in *Animal House,* I recall the debonair Lance Bertelson leering at my date Cheryl Donofrio's picture window arrangement of two breasts and a sheet. I finally decided to 'de-pledge', to leave the fraternity, one Sunday afternoon while the live band was playing an extended version of the Doors' 'Light My Fire'. They drew it out even beyond the six minutes on the Doors disc when they saw what was transpiring. A flesh pile of over two dozen people was pulsating on the booze-soaked floor, writhing in rhythm with limbs intertwined. The dress of Larry DeVan's weekend date rose over her head to cover his in one of the most bizarre courting positions I have ever seen.

It's not that I considered my fraternity a modern Sodom. But being sober and practical, I could never join in the festivities. I looked at the 'Light My Fire' flesh pile and thought of the clothing bill. With that in mind I couldn't possibly take part.

I gave most things at least one try. One night Larry offered Mike and I some hashish to smoke. I had puffed marijuana a couple of times and wondered why it had not affected me. This night, in the safety of 406 Gile, the

Terrible Trio was ready for some serious drug-taking. Imagine the earnestness with which Larry prepared the hashish in his waterpipe while Mike readied the jelly donuts, candies and snacks. We embarked on a journey of discovery that must have been repeated in tens of thousands of dorm rooms across America.

With the door securely locked and most of the lights turned off, we passed the pipe. My first two probes at pot had been mere warm-ups for this heavenly hash. No sensual experience I have ever had has surpassed eating a jelly donut under the influence of that hunk of hash, and I don't even like jelly donuts. The taste was supremely sweet, the texture sinfully smooth. The sight of the aperture ozzing thick juice was erotic beyond description.

These reactions were standard, so much so they became boring as reports of dope-smoking evenings poured in from around campus. I wonder, though, if they matched ours for the ultimate cliché. Mike Thorman put Jimi Hendrix' version of Bob Dylan's 'All Across the Watchtower' on to the stereo. At one point in this classic recording the guitar solo descends in one speaker and then ascends in the other. In a stoned state this clever use of stereophonic sound seemed a profound sensory experience.

It was my first great drug high. It was also my last. The next morning I got up for a lecture and realized to my horror that I was still stoned! It hadn't occurred to me that drugs do not honour the same schedules that its users do. I couldn't turn being stoned on and off at whim. At that point of realization I lost interest in yet another vice.

I even lost interest in sex my senior year. I was fed up with insincere dating, having a woman on one's arm just to appear virile. I did not have a date all senior year, though this did not bother me. I felt better freed from the pressure of having to pretend I was enjoying myself when in fact I couldn't wait for Sunday afternoon to compile the new survey at WDCR. I left Dartmouth still a virgin . . .

. . . Though not from want of trying. On Houseparties weekend of my sophomore year my high school friend Charlene asked me to wait when I was about to go to the football game with Larry DeVan and his latest tomato. She wanted to change into something suitable for the wet weather.

What she really wanted to change into was her birthday suit. I was so shy and frightened of being discovered by a returning roommate that I did not completely oblige her. By the time she had virtually dragged me on to the couch, however, I was into the spirit of her seduction. Being inexperienced, I did not know quite how to proceed. A beautiful, busty girl, Charlene was wrapped in so many undergarments she might have been auditioning as Tutankhamen's wife. Our wriggles on the couch may have registered on the Richter scale. Charlene moaned and groaned as I tightly gasped her bulging breast, her bra interposed between my flesh and hers. After ten minutes of this cursed calisthenics I unexpectedly peaked in my trousers.

I was embarrassed more by my premature ejaculation than any moral scruples. I had to think of a way to get into fresh pants without letting Charlene know I had soiled the ones I was wearing. Inspiration struck and I used her very story, saying I needed to get into new trousers for the wet seats at the stadium. She accepted the excuse, though it is as unlikely she believed it as I had when she had told it.

Girdles were the only things that kept me from losing my virginity far earlier than I did. Only six weeks later another one kept me from having sex with WDCR's first female disc jockey. Polly was an absolute darling, a person full of life and daring. In the man's world that Dartmouth literally was she refused to recognize sexual barriers. The daughter of a Dartmouth executive, she did anything she wanted to do regardless of whether there was a traditional sex taboo. One day she went rowing with a Dartmouth man, something I'd never heard of a woman doing. Alas, a thunderstorm struck, and the boat overturned. She arrived in the studio at the

end of my shift sobbing and sopping but determined to make her scheduled broadcast. The girl had guts.

She began her WDCR career as our Hanover High reporter, coming in weekly to give a report at 4.15pm. This was an ideal time to hit the high school students who were an important part of the *Sounds for the Tri-Town* audience. Polly was so good at these reports that when she graduated it seemed logical to ask her to help us out over the summer. She lived in Hanover and we needed all the assistance we could get in seasons of reduced manpower, so for practical reasons rather than those of principle we introduced our first female deejay. (For similar reasons of her ability and our need we utilized our first woman news reader, the marvellous Meg Colton. I shared Election Night 1968 with Meg at Richard Nixon state headquarters, realizing with horror as the returns started coming in that we actually did care who won and really would have preferred tired old Hubert Humphrey after all.)

New Year's Eve, 1967, it seemed only natural that I should ask Polly to be my date. Living in Hanover, she was going to be there, and there were precious few other people around during the Christmas vacation. Had I not been one of the crazy crew manning the radio station over the holidays, I would have been off-campus as well. I was sleeping in Gamma Delt, the Buildings and Grounds department having closed the dormitories to cut down on massive heating bills. In a town with one movie house and no disco there wasn't much to do on New Year's Eve except play around together. Polly and I grew intimate quickly in a brother's room. I had mastered getting a breast out of a bra for the first time in my life when he suddenly walked in and expressed his not uncertain intention to use his room for similar purposes. Polly and I, lovers without a loveseat, retired to the Tube Room.

The Tube Room was the darkened basement room in which members watched television on tiered benches. Polly and I assumed a horizontal position on the top bench and began serious kissing. For the second time that night I demonstrated my new-found skill at bra

removal. Alas, I could not negotiate her other undergarment.

'I wish I wasn't wearing this damn girdle!' she swore, whispering though no one else was within earshot.

'I wish my dorm wasn't closed!' I replied, realizing the implication – had Gile been open and my rooms available, I would have wanted Polly to stay the night despite parietals. I was pleased to think that, like nearly every other Dartmouth man, I was capable of illicit intent.

My experience with Charlene had taught me you don't have to have intercourse to ejaculate. This may be a basic fact about love-making, but it is astonishing how ill-informed Westport boys could be. My great friend Frank Spear once halted our golf game on a fairway of the Fairchild Wheeler Red Course to ask how he could be certain that if he made love to his current girlfriend he would not urinate inside her. Where was sex education when we needed it most?

Realizing I was on the verge with Polly, I briefly adjourned to the men's room. I stared at my erection like a boy in a chemistry class examining a new laboratory phenomenon. Just as I had unsuccessfully tried to masturbate when Carl had told me it was unnatural I had not yet done so, I now tried to grow flaccid through sheer willpower. I thought of total turn-offs like cigarettes and prunes until I was in a fit state to return to the Tube Room.

Polly and I quickly resumed our gymnastics. We had to halt when two shadowy figures entered the Tube Room and stretched out on the lower tier. I recognized these two as being the daughter of a Dartmouth faculty member, the winner of a recent local beauty contest I had judged, and the cute student Michael Michael. These beautiful people soon got down to basics, and it was horrifyingly apparent they intended to make love only five feet away from us without knowing we were there.

Polly found this hysterically funny. She giggled like a schoolgirl, containing her laughter by first covering her face with her hand and then putting her fingers in her mouth and biting them. The only reason Michael and

friend didn't notice her noise was because they were drowning it out with their own hubbub. Theirs were the sounds of passion. As they shared sex they grew less inhibited. Sighs and gasps punctuated their grunts and slight screams were the exclamation points of their body language.

There is something very odd about being present for an act of love and not participating. The twosome were providing a cabaret Polly and I found terribly amusing, yet that was not the aim of their performance. Nor could they have wished that we heard the conversation that followed their sex session.

'Well, that's it,' Michael sighed after ten minutes of activity, getting up to leave the room.

'Wait a minute!' pleaded the girl. 'What if I'm pregnant?'

'That's your problem,' Michael snorted. 'It was your idea.'

The ungallant lover strode out of the room. His conquest lay behind rearranging her clothing, sobbing pitifully. This was not amusing. Polly and I were now forced to observe a profound private sadness. As the unhappy girl left the Tube Room we realized we had lost all enthusiasm for love-making. Polly returned home for the night; I slept in my fraternity. It was the most memorable one-night stand of my life, but we had not made love. We never did.

12

The Dartmouth Fellowship is thicker than three thieves and more loyal than the firmest friend. Huddled together in the deep freeze of New England winters, without women and devoid of contact with the wider world, Big Greeners became part of a Hanover Hydra. Their faces look individual and they speak in separate voices, but their hearts pound to the same beat when mention of their alma mater is made.

To alumni of lesser places, the Dartmouth Fellowship is a lifelong illness that is spoken of in hushed tones, like an aunt's premature senility. Dartmouth men and, more recently, women, are the Masons of higher education. Why else would a 34-year-old television personality lunch with a 23-year-old feminist poet he had never met and whose work he had never read? Is there another reason why a millionaire businessman would house two travelling undergraduates and worry whether his hospitality was sufficient to please?

In socializing with persons with whom they share only a Dartmouth acceptance letter the men and women of The College on The Hill reassert the value of the time they spent on the Hanover Plain. They give themselves an infusion of a kind of plasma that cannot be found in hospitals, a green unseen that more than anything else they have ever had sets them apart from everyday people. Yes, I may have turned out to be merely what I am today, they are saying, but let me tell you of a time when I was *something*, when where I was and what I did was so special *it even makes me special today*. Say it loud, I'm green and I'm proud!

College President John Sloan Dickey ended his Commencement address every year with the same words: 'And now, men of Dartmouth, it is so long, but not goodbye, for in the Dartmouth Fellowship there is no parting.' These are strong sentiments. One's natural suspicion was to assume they were uttered to ensure that the annual Alumni Fund solicitation would not be consigned to the rubbish bin. But I learned first-hand even while still a student that the Dartmouth Fellowship was alive and thriving in the hearts and minds, as well as the wallets, of alumni around the country. In each case it was my job as WDCR General Manager that won me a privileged perspective.

1969 was the Bicentennial of Dartmouth College. In December the Board of Trustees held a special anniversary dinner where President Dickey himself was the guest of honour. A man who had given great assistance in the founding days of the United Nations and had won acclaim for his enthusiastic support for American-Canadian relations, John Sloan Dickey was widely credited with having built the Dartmouth faculty from its thin wartime ranks into a world-class body. As with any celebrity, mere longevity had given him mythic status. One wondered not only how he had ascended to his place of power but how he had managed to stay there.

Dickey was physically impressive, too. A tall man, his features seemed to have been chiselled out of New Hampshire granite, a slightly younger version of The Old Man of the Mountains, a naturally carved stone face that was a leading New Hampshire tourist attraction. The difference was that this solid face was animate. Dickey was blessed with the voice of a foghorn on a night without fog. It boomed to the farthest recesses of any room. His eyes would scan that room with authority and excitement. They seemed to say that being in charge was both fun and full of possibilities. In a way that too few people have, John Dickey had charisma.

Any collection of gifts from an educational establishment to its President must include one from the students, if only in their name. It became a political issue as

to which undergraduate should represent his peers and present Mr Dickey with a silver copy of the Wentworth Bowl, a symbol of the sequence of Presidents known as 'the Dartmouth succession'. Naturally a decision was made without consulting any students. They wouldn't be at the event, which would be held during the Christmas vacation. It was felt Brent Coffin, student representative on the Alumni Council, should have the honour of presenting the silver bowl.

Coffin, a religious man, shocked the organizers by declining to participate. He was firmly against American involvement in the Vietnam War. He felt that John Dickey's high Republican connections and his expressions of mild support for government policy made him as good as firmly for US participation. As a heartfelt protest, Coffin would not appear at the banquet.

The hierarchy was perplexed. What did the Vietnam War have to do with Dickey's career of service? Some administrators were guilty of insensitivity to their own charges' plight. There are times when a single issue becomes more important to a person than all other matters combined. For many students in the late sixties, Vietnam was such an issue. Dying for nothing was a possibility to be avoided above all else. For the conscientious like Brent Coffin, being associated with an immoral war was another anathema.

I agreed with Brent that American involvement was lamentable. But I recognized that Vietnam was a peripheral issue to John Sloan Dickey, who was more concerned with arrangements for his retirement. Dickey was not to be lumped with men in Washington I did consider evil. He was a man who had done a great deal for a place I loved. He may have been too set in his ways to perceive America's folly in southeast Asia, but I would not hold his age against him. When his assistant Alexander Fanelli asked me if, as General Manager of WDCR, I would present the silver bowl, I replied that I would.

It was not a comfortable decision. Sycophants of today may consider it unbelievable, but in 1969 showing support for an authority figure was the most un-hip thing

one could do. I accepted quietly, certain that Dickey deserved honours, yet grateful that most students would have already left the college for the lengthy holiday.

WDCR was transmitting the ceremony live. This wasn't the greatest thing for me either. We were so proud of being broadcasters we never wanted to remind our listeners that we were only students. Of course we covered campus news, but in doing so we never referred to *ourselves* as undergraduates. At this event Paul Gambaccini, top teen disc jockey and erudite chat show host, would be exposed as the mere student I was. This was that rarest of occasions, a moment when I would not have minded low listening figures.

The Bicentennial dinner took place in Nathaniel Leverone Field House. Many persons make bequests anonymously or in the name of a beloved friend, relative or teacher. Not Dartmouth men! The campus is pocked with memorials to boys who went into the world, became millionaires, and built buildings for Dartmouth, often with the proviso that the edifices bear their names. It is an act of great generosity to give an enormous sum of money to one's old school, but in the case of Dartmouth it is sometimes a financial virility test as well.

Leverone was a huge open structure. It had to be to allow field sports to be practised indoors. Its size also made it perfect for events which had nothing to do with exercise. Ray Charles, Simon and Garfunkel, and Sly and the Family Stone all entertained there. In December, 1969, hundreds of high-fliers ate there. Invitations to the banquet were like gold dust. There was something odd about eating a cordon bleu meal in a field-house, but nobody seemed to mind. Spirits were high and, since it was a Dartmouth event, spirits were making people higher. I spent a good deal of the meal contemplating my short speech. I have almost always written my own copy, but this time I had taken the address Fanelli and friends had penned for Brent Coffin and made only minor alterations. I didn't regard the evening as one of the high points of my speaking career and hadn't bothered to work on new ideas.

The evening proceeded to plan. Speakers were properly expansive in their praise of John Dickey's achievements. Finally he was presented with the Wentworth Bowl, to be passed on down the line of Dartmouth Presidents. Chairman of the Board of Trustees Charles Zimmerman introduced me in a fashion so generous it was obvious he didn't know me. I rose to polite applause and began my remarks.

I told President Dickey it was a great honour to represent Dartmouth students on this historic evening. After finishing my opening platitudes I paused, then resumed. 'Knowing that the gift you have just received will inevitably come to rest in the college archives, we thought we'd . . .'

I had to stop. Never in my life has anything I have said gotten such a laugh. Not just a laugh, a full scale riot. Middle-aged men were throwing their heads back on to their shoulders. People were wiping their eyes. Had it been the delivery or the drink? It hadn't even been my line! What was so funny?

'We thought we'd give you a present of your *own* . . .'

Someone must have released a canister of laughing gas. The proceedings came to a total halt. The level of laughter must have been pinning the needle on the DCR engineer's meter. I was pleased to have caused dozens of millionaires to roar and wheeze, but I couldn't understand how I (or Alex Fanelli) had done it. It couldn't have been my zipper because the podium concealed the lower half of my body.

Then I had one of those visions that stay with you for the rest of your life. When the stout parties around me were all collapsed I turned my head slightly to check out the Glee Club who had stayed on campus to provide songs for the occasion. Earlier in the year we had enjoyed the comraderie of a tour of the Midwest. Now they and director Paul Zeller were beaming incandescently at the response I was getting from the alumni. I particularly remember a happy-go-lucky mischief maker who had almost fallen off his riser one night from intoxication, grinning with delight. *This was one for our side.* In an

event that had been designed to exclude students we had somehow scored one of the biggest points of the night. If only for as long as it took the laughter to die down, we were not just a part of the Dartmouth Fellowship. We were the most envied part of it, the kids who were there at the moment. We were the focal point of the Dartmouth community.

The effects of my speech were not limited to Leverone. President Dickey wrote me a recommendation for law school and Oxford applications stating I would be 'a good man for any company'. Most unforeseen, a founder of one of America's largest advertising agencies, a Dartmouth graduate, offered me a job upon commencement to begin at $20,000, a substantial sum in 1970. I politely told him I planned to continue my education and would be unavailable. Undiscouraged, he asked me to check out the London branch of the operation while I was in England and wrote again a couple of years later reminding me the job was still open.

It seems preposterous to offer someone a prime slot on the basis of one speech, but with the benefit of fifteen years' hindsight I can understand why he did it. To an alumnus, particularly one long gone from his alma mater, the sight of articulate youth is a vision, a nostalgic reminder of the best of what the old-timer was and an incarnation of what he himself could have been had he been in top form on a similar occasion. Youth seems so far away and so irretrievable it is worth making a fuss over just to touch, to savour.

Experiences I had on two Glee Club tours of the United States showed first-hand how Dartmouth alumni love to host students, not merely out of obligation to the old school but as a ritual of renewal. When we went on our trips every host in every city went out of his way to give us the finest food, the homiest hospitality and the punchiest party. Here was the Dartmouth Fellowship in classic form. The students gave the alumni their youth, their performance, their sheer Dartmouthness. the alumni gave the riches of the world beyond the Green. In some cases, such as that of the 95-year-old St Louis

man who had to be carried out of the auditorium weeping after seeing slides of his college days, the comparative value of those riches paled into insignificance. What profits a man who gains wealth but loses his soul? What gains a man who makes a million *but has to leave Dartmouth to do it*? Perhaps any man who had lived to be ninety-five and knew that despite his wealth he would have been happier staying at Dartmouth would cry, too.

My part in the Glee Club show was another result of my involvement with WDCR. Warner Bentley, revered Director of the Hopkins Center, the college arts complex, was auditioning for three narrators to read Ralph Nading Hill's history of the college. The text would be illustrated by slides and interrupted every few minutes by an appropriate song from the Glee Club. Bentley figured that WDCR men accustomed to reading news bulletins would be best for the job. John Lippman and I were chosen to read for the 1969 tour, and we were joined in 1970 by Bill Downall, who replaced a graduating senior. Our tour of the American Midwest took us to cities like Chicago, Cincinnati and Cleveland – cities beginning with the letter C. Fortunately we played towns beginning with other letters, too, or we might have been stuck in such centres of middle American high living as Cairo and Cicero. Detroit and St Louis were among our other dates.

John Lippman and I had an unforgettable evening the night we played Cincinnati. The alumnus who hosted us lived across the Ohio border in Kentucky. (I hadn't previously considered that Ohio and Kentucky were contiguous. Their reputations for industry and bluegrass seemed incompatible.) We were stunned to see that our aged alumnus and his wife had the functional equivalent of a slave. Their black servant, as old as they, carried deference to the point of what we considered humiliation. At several times during the evening John and I whispered to each other '*They have a slave!*' To us, brought up during the civil rights struggle of the sixties, this was an immoral anachronism.

The black man's face seemed etched with a line for

every year of his life. He seemed to be constantly bowing and saying 'Yes, man,' or 'Yes, sir'. He hardly needed to bow since his back was slightly stooped anyway, probably from too much bowing. The fine dinner served in a luxurious dining room was at one point accompanied by a bizarre exchange.

Our host started relating how much he enjoyed flying in his private aircraft. His wife, who acted like a true Southern matron, concurred. The head of the house then said 'And Remus loves it too, don't you, Remus?'

'Yes, sir!' Remus nodded, trying the hardest he could to spoon out the carrots while stooped over.

'We took Remus out for a spin one afternoon and he really loved it, didn't you, Remus?'

'Yes, sir!' said the slave, now on to the potatoes.

Lippman and I had never seen such condescension. We recognized that Remus was treated with kindness and might well be lost were he to be sent into the world to fend for himself at his advanced age. Yet we could not help but feel that we had witnessed a historical link with the Old South we would never see again and that the type of happy household we had observed would be impossible once Black Power became part of the consciousness of blacks even as far removed from academe as dear Remus.

There were other doses of reality on our jolly jaunts. For a concert in Massachusetts we stayed with hosts who had recently lost their son in Vietnam. Though he had died, they wanted to affirm their link with Dartmouth by housing two students during the Glee Club visit. Lippman and I were warned we would be entering tragic territory. We would have to be careful not to be gauche in our references to their son. We were aware, though perhaps our tour organizers and maybe even the parents themselves were not, that we were part of a privileged elite that until the 1969 draft lottery had been protected from the draft. Student status gave a teenager a 2–S classification and automatic deferment. We had been kept above the draft that took growing boys and sent them to kill and be killed by growing boys on the other

side of the world. Our hosts' son had not been so fortunate.

Conversation was conducted gracefully but respectfully on all sides. Our hosts spoke of their son lovingly but in the past tense, not trying to pretend he was still alive, nor presuming his death had a special meaning. Composure was maintained even to the most moving moment of all. As John and I lay in our beds, our host's finger on the light switch, the bereaved father said 'This was our son's room. We hope you enjoy it.' We were plunged into a darkness that was emotional as well as physical.

The 1969 tour travelled by Vermont Transit coach. The firm was reliable, but dependability can't make a bus comfortable over hundreds of miles. We would be restless after a few hours on board, especially since Route 66, our main road through the Midwest, was as boring and bouncy as the songs about it have been entertaining. No matter how late we'd stayed up the night before, we'd be frisky as felines by three in the afternoon. When we dressed into our Glee Club uniforms in the early evening our mood would be manic. We compared notes about our hosts and speculated on the prospects of that night's party. Liberated from the confines of the coach, we were a restless and exuberant bunch of boys.

The 1970 tour was the Glee Club's biggest production of all-time. The Bicentennial committee had raised enough money to pay for a tour of the Far West by chartered plane. We would swoop into town, rest and feast at our hosts' homes, perform and party, and catch four or five hours of sleep before beginning the cycle again. Faulkner White was my roommate on this tour. We should have been walking zombies at the end of this fortnight-long bacchanalia, but we always managed to 'rally' for another day's work and play.

Once, though, we almost died – all of us. Our tour coincided with a national air controllers' strike. You couldn't tell when you went from city to city in what condition the air control facilities would be when you arrived at your destination. As we were coming into San

Francisco we got close enough to see people on the tarmac when suddenly our pilot put the plane into a steep climb. This U-like movement, so pronounced it felt like a V, sent stewardesses scurrying to their seats. Seeing a cabin crew desperately snapping their safety belts convinced me we were in big trouble. Looking back towards the airport I could see why. Another plane had been taking off on the precise runway we had been approaching. The possibilities for mayhem did not bear contemplating.

Two other memories of that flight stay in the mind. One is of the long time our pilot spent circling magnificent rock walls between which the Colorado River flowed. 'Below us you see the Grand Canyon,' he announced. Observing many miles of cliff face I thought 'Which one? Which one is the Grand Canyon?' I was being incredibly stupid. The entire stretch was the Grand Canyon. Its very extent was what made it grand.

The same flight continued to Los Angeles. As we passed the last mountains and began our descent I was puzzled by the sight of miles of unbroken black asphalt. I couldn't understand how land could be level with mountain peaks. For the second time in a single flight I was being cretinous. This was no road surfacing, this was smog, big black clouds of soot. Having grown up in New England, where the air is clear and the sun shines rather than filters through, I was appalled. I have never forgiven Los Angeles for foulling its own air, nor have I considered living there. The horrible pollution seems to reflect a fundamental lack of concern for health and the environment.

We were incredibly fortunate to be on the 1970 tour. We were seeing the United States for free and being treated like honoured guests in the process. Just thinking about it makes me feel like being carried out of the room crying, and I'm not near ninety-five yet. We gaped in Denver at how the Rockies seemed to rise at a sheer vertical out of flat earth. We were astonished to find out how much of Seattle had easy access to water sports, and we made personal use of the facilities. We sighed when we saw that Portland, Oregon, a city whose

name evokes the clean outdoors, has a pollution problem by virtue of its location in a basin. We gawked with incredulity when we saw houses in San Francisco being built literally on the San Andreas fault line itself.

Two musical moments marked our visits to the rather nondescript cities of Kansas City and Omaha. When in K.C. I pilgrimaged, not out of choice but by a nearly religious compulsion, to 12th Street and Vine. This was the intersection Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller had mentioned in their classic song 'Kansas City', which had reached number one in the United States in a 1959 version by Wilbert Harrison. I made my way there on my own. How could I have expected any of my Glee Club colleagues to share my insane devotion?

When I reached the sacred crossroads I was shocked. There was no monument to Lieber and Stoller, not even a blue circular plaque in honour of Wilbert Harrison. Worst of all, the place was a dump. There was no evidence any joint had been jumping for years. 12th Street and Vine was, to be blunt, slummy. Years later I had the thrill of interviewing Lieber and Stoller live on BBC television. I told them of my tribulations on their behalf. I asked them why they had chosen that particular intersection to immortalize in song. They hadn't, lyricist Lieber admitted. They had looked at a map of the city to find a rhyme for 'bottle of Kansas City wine'. Their artistic licence had created a legend. I had fallen for the myth.

Flying from Kansas City to Omaha was a revelation in itself. The vast expanse of America's flat heartland was covered by millions of acres of farmland arranged in rectangular patterns. Moving over it as we were on a clear day, it appeared we were a playing piece on God's own checkerboard. Looking down on Nebraska gave new meaning to the word 'monotony', and being in its major city didn't do much for its reputation either.

Omaha was another city where Whitey and I were offered use of the family car. Generous alumni often made this gesture. This time we also had the extra responsibility of carrying two alumni daughters in the

back seat. The Dartmouth Fellowship had run amok! Not content with loaning students their automobiles, graduates were now giving them their daughters, when they themselves had sung the popular though unofficial song 'Dartmouth's in town again, fun fun fun! Dartmouth's in town again, run girls run!'

Our courtship that night was limited to flirting over the menu in the International House of Pancakes, then the high spot of Omaha night life. It may sound difficult, but with raised eyebrows and altered delivery a lot can be conveyed with phrases like 'blue*berry* pancakes' and 'maple *syrup*'.

My musical memory of that night is of driving on the town's main drag, a strangely wide but lightly travelled road. The disc jockey on a local country and western station announced that he was about to play 'Mr Policeman' by Hugh X. Lewis. He said that since this disc had started getting attention Lewis had been advised to soften his tone, changing his hook line 'Be brutal if you must' to 'Be firm if you must'. At a time in American history when the beleaguered boys in blue were being accused of police brutality against blacks, demonstrators and students, Lewis was offering lawmen support. In a spoken word delivery he described several unsavoury situations and after each one said 'Be firm if you must'. The Omaha deejay celebrated the record's local success by playing the original version with its tag 'Be brutal if you must'.

I was entranced by this horror. Hugh X. Lewis had even included a verse in which he told the force that if they found his own son selling drugs it should 'Be brutal if you must'. For some reason right-wing record makers of the late sixties wanted to show their willingness to sacrifice their own offspring in the interests of political purity. Victor Lundberg had already talked his way into the national top ten with his ghastly 'Open Letter to My Teenage Son', in which he instructed his boy that if he burned his draft card he should burn his birth certificate, too, for from that moment on, he had no son. God had to

ask Abraham to sacrifice his son, but Victor Lundberg and Hugh X. Lewis were offering theirs up for free.

When I returned to Hanover I made sure I located 'Mr Policeman' in what we called 'the ding pile', those singles that had been put aside in the rather safe knowledge they would never be played. I took the record for my own collection and years later submitted it to Kenny Everett for his World's Worst Record Show. He was only too happy to give it a spin.

In Omaha, Kansas City, and every town, there were two parts of the Glee Club concert I found special. One was the too-brief time during the first half when the Injunaires serenaded the hall. Larry Detwiler's 'How to Handle a Woman' and Tony Russell's exquisite 'Here I Go Again' were standouts I waited for every night. I bemoaned Tony's perhaps necessary decision to go to medical school rather than pursue a career in singing.

The best moment, though, was the last. After our second-half presentation of the history of the college the Glee Club concluded with 'Dartmouth Undying', a lyrically and harmonically beautiful evocation of campus life. Since I was on stage I got to sing along, too. The unofficial college anthem, it ended with a humming reprise that got everyone emotional. At that point we really did feel as one on stage, and thinking of that song even now brings back a feeling of . . . yes . . . fellowship.

13

Standing on the lawn of the Dartmouth administration building Parkhurst Hall two hours after it had been occupied by student dissidents in May 1969, I asked Government Professor Vincent Starzinger if he thought our turbulent time on campus was the beginning of a new age or merely a historical aberration. 'Zinger', whose intellect and poorly concealed warmth were so great he was about the only conservative on the faculty still taken seriously in this liberal period, said that it was an aberration and the sooner things got back to normal the better.

By an accidental matter of timing I managed to be present when student life changed so radically one would have thought successive classes had been members of different species. 1967 was as clear a dividing line a year could ever be in demarcating two different lifestyles. When the twelve months began 'parietals', hours limiting the presence of female guests in dormitories, were in effect and generally observed. As 1967 passed abuses became so widespread and flagrant they were soon dropped. Women came not only to visit but to live in dorms when the college went co-educational in the early seventies.

In late 1966 I saw no overt signs of drug use in Gile Hall. By the end of the following year marijuana was being widely smoked, sometimes openly. Consumption of alcohol, the traditional Dartmouth drug, seemed to decline correspondingly.

The Dartmouth I came to in September, 1966 bore no clear signs of the presence of homosexuals, though a

measurable minority of the students must have been closet cases. My class contained a few brave pioneers who did not make excessive efforts to conceal their characters, and by 1968 what appeared to be a gay couple were living happily in Gile Hall.

These changes did not occur in isolation. They were parts of a sweeping liberalization of personal morality that went hand-in-hand with changing attitudes towards the Vietnam War. In my first freshman term few students were questioning the wisdom or morality of American involvement in that conflict. Within two years the majority of the undergraduates were firmly against it.

The switch was signposted by a silent demonstration on the Green. For several weeks a tiny group of protesters had stood speechlessly in a line by the American flag every Wednesday between noon and one. Disturbed that this display was untypical of Dartmouth students and presenting a cowardly face to the Upper Valley, a group of counter-protesters announced that the following Wednesday they would stand in a line parellel to and facing the antiwar lot. This challenge caught the imagination of the campus and the next midweek found a turnout several times greater than anyone had imagined.

Jeff Kelley and I both had the same thought: we should get out there and count. We were both staggered by the result. There was a sizable majority of men against the government. (War supporters, however, still won a symbolic victory. Viewed from the heights of WDCR's second floor studios, the weaving double line resembled a W.)

The news had an electric effect. Students were stunned that most of them, or at least most of those who could be bothered to stand on a peaceful patch of lawn in ideal sun-bathing conditions, opposed official policy. From that day forward, in a way that discernibly marked that demonstration as a turning point, they leaned to the left. Some of them tottered over and became radicals, and it

was this fringe that provided Parkhurst with its historic twelve hours.

Dartmouth played host to the Reserve Officer Training Corps, a branch of the United States Armed Services that prepared young men for top rank service in the military. Students received scholarships from the government in exchange for a few years of their lives after college. In the late sixties a controversy arose over the awarding of course credits for subjects of a strictly military nature. The academic integrity of the institution was threatened, the argument went, if some students could graduate with diluted degrees.

Under ordinary circumstances the debate might have stayed within faculty meetings or administration parleys. But during the expansionary phase of the Vietnam War there was no chance that any argument about the conflict could avoid being seized upon by disgruntled students. There was no way they could protest directly, so they picked up whatever causes they could at a local level that had any bearing on the issue. By striking at ROTC, the logic ran, Big Greeners could lodge an effective protest against the military establishment itself. The programme should not just lose course credit. It should leave the college.

The unfortunate boys in ROTC were caught in the middle. They may not have been enthusiastic about the southeast Asia campaign themselves, yet had to live with being labelled 'fascists', a popular epithet of the time. Some genuinely needed the scholarship money and would have to seek alternate support or abandon their academic careers if ROTC left the campus. Most disturbing of all, they were the dormitory and fraternity fellows of the very students who were showering them with abuse. Dartmouth teetered on the threshold of an unhappy civil war.

Protest meetings and warm-up demonstrations, all clearly building towards more dramatic action, convinced responsible administrators that something had to be done. One morning in the spring of 1969 I was summoned in my role as General Manager of WDCR to

a conclave with some of Dartmouth's luminaries. George LeMaistre, editor of *The Dartmouth*, was the other student representative. Government Professor Frank Smallwood, nicknamed 'Fabulous Frank' because of the seemingly effortless way he drifted into positions of responsibility on campus and in Vermont politics, told us that the faculty had decided to hold a student referendum. Letter A on the ballot would be to retain ROTC courses as they were. Letter B would keep them but deprive them of credit towards the college degree.

We were given approximately four hours to mull over the proposal. I left feeling uneasy. I knew the teachers had underestimated the strength of negative feeling amongst their young charges. At the corner of Main Street and West Wheelock I ran into John Beck, briefly a fraternity brother of mine at Gamma Delta Chi and a genuinely impressive anti-ROTC campaigner. John was a true pacifist. He was also a Christ clone. In his sandals and beard he evoked Jesus uncannily, so much so that to resist his arguments seemed blasphemous.

John asked what I'd been doing and, as usual in the company of a big brother and as always in the presence of Christ, I told the truth. I informed him of the two options that were being mooted for the referendum ballot.

'But that's not what it's about, is it, Paul?' he asked me beatifically. We both knew without having to hear me answer aloud that I understood what he was saying. Any referendum that pretended to give voice to the full range of student opinion would have to include a proposal to eliminate not just course credits but the entire programme.

Inspired by my meeting with John Beck I returned to the afternoon session of our makeshift committee. I told the group we should add a Letter C, to remove credit immediately and ROTC itself when those students presently enrolled graduated. Professor Smallwood suggested that to make the ballot symmetrical we might as well add a Letter D calling for the immediate ousting of ROTC.

Students and faculty in touch with the protest movement knew the referendum was far more vital than a mere opinion poll. After the well-publicized occupations of administration buildings in several prestigious American universities it was inevitable that some sons of Dartmouth would 'go into Parkhurst' if only as proof of their movement's virility. Our radicals could hardly concede they were less devoted or less effective than their counterparts across the country. Not only did they feel as strongly, they had to be seen to feel as strongly. What was at issue was therefore not whether there could be an occupation but how many invaders would participate. A group of leaders who considered themselves the student élite (curiously and conveniently, they all agreed they all qualified) met to discuss the dilemma. Never before had the captain of the football team, student government officers and heads of undergraduate media met in conclave.

It was agreed the optimal outcome of the referendum would be that which minimized the number that 'went into' Parkhurst. For this reason and because it also happened to represent the taste of the self-appointed élite it was decided to organize a mass public relations campaign in favour of Letter C. Almost any student opposed to ROTC would be happy with an option that got rid of it. Only diehards would sacrifice their companions as well and insist on Letter D.

The Letter C movement was launched with a heavily attended public meeting in the courtyard of the arts building, the Hopkins Center. Leaflets were circulated, paid for by a sympathetic administrator. Radio commercials urged listeners to end the controversy once and for all by voting for Letter C. Rarely could student opinion have been so energized. When the polls opened queues formed immediately. By closing time an awesome statistic showed the intensity of feeling on the issue: 89.6 per cent of the student body had voted. The turnout for the last student government election had been under 20 per cent.

WDCR staffers tallied the ballots. Letter C triumphed

with a clear plurality. Letter D, originally the throw-away option, was a strong second. Together Letters C and D won over 60 per cent of the vote, an undeniable repudiation of ROTC. The moderates had won. For the bulk of the student body the issue was resolved. ROTC took the massive hint and left campus voluntarily. But the radicals were not so gentlemanly. As had been known all along, they were determined to occupy a college building, regardless of reason and regardless of the consequences. At least the triumph of Letter C had deprived them of widespread support.

One early May evening I received a phone call from WDCR's contact in the movement. A meeting of supporters was going to take place in College Hall at three the next afternoon. A vote, the result of which was almost certain to favour an occupation, would be held. If positive, a takeover would occur at once. Dissidents would go into Parkhurst. If there were signs of a police presence there, they would proceed to Crosby Hall, the centre of alumni relations. If that, too, seemed guarded, the protesters would go on to Wentworth, where the Provost was officed. The entire action seemed rehearsed. The administration, well aware of the disruption about to break out, was well prepared. President John Sloan Dickey had readied an injunction against trespass and Dean Thaddeus Seymour had armed himself with the appropriate regulations from the College Committee on Standing and Conduct.

The two news organizations readied their coverage. I called for a meeting of all newsmen at 2pm, one hour before the gathering of demonstrators. *The Dartmouth*, similarly tipped off, chose Richard Zuckerman, younger brother of our Directorate member Stuart, to be a runner. He would attend the College Hall meeting and then dash to tell *The D* where the action would be. We selected Jeff McHugh for similar duty.

I could not resist relishing my moment of drama. I entered the buzzing roomful of newsmen – what could be so important as to get everyone together in mid-afternoon? – and announced 'In one hour a college building

will be occupied'. The low level rhubarb that greeted this pronouncement would have done the House of Commons proud. We stationed Bill Downall and John Lippman at the alternate targets and I unashamedly reserved Parkhurst for myself. I was usurping the power of the News Director, but that was what General Managers were for.

I arrived at the administration building with a tape recorder shortly after 2.30. One couldn't tell if some extremists wouldn't force their fellows' hands by bursting in early. Rarely have I felt as conspicuous and as foolish as I did those few minutes waiting for the wild ones. I grinned sheepishly at secretaries and executives who passed by. Fortunately I was a familar enough campus figure not to have my presence questioned.

The silence was shattered at ten past three by the footsteps of a panting Jeff McHugh. He had been in College Hall; the vote had been overwhelmingly in favour of occupation; the radicals were on their way.

Smug satisfaction that our messenger service had worked turned to disquiet. Now what? Over fifty angry young men were approaching the Parkhurst steps. An interview was certainly not what they had in mind. I decided to go to the seat of power, the President's office, and then follow the action from there. President John Sloan Dickey was spared the humiliation of being carried out; he wasn't in. His immediate aides were not saved. Gil Tanis was being bundled out of his office when he pleaded into my microphone 'Help us, Paul! You've got to make up your mind! You've got to take a stand, this isn't a story! You can't be impartial this time, you've got to help us!'

His distress was understandable but this takeover certainly *was* a story, and despite sympathy for my friends in the upper echelons I had to cover what was the biggest single news event of my years at Dartmouth.

Once I had taped a few quotes from an alarmed administrator there was little purpose in hanging around him as he was being forcibly carried downstairs. I aimed to get remarks from all the evictees, and some of the best

turned out to be from men I hadn't expected to meet. Arthur Jensen, an elderly college sage who had thrived in an era when behaviour was better, was not putting up a fight with his captors so much as offering an etiquette lesson.

'Don't you have any *manners*?' he grilled Guy, the underclassman who was pulling him by the arm. 'Didn't your parents teach you any *manners*? Paul, can you tell this boy he should have some *manners*?'

It was no use imploring Guy to show consideration for his aged victim. One look in his face told the tale. He was shocked that the big moment he had looked forward to had finally come to pass and that the enormity of his folly was as great as the size of his convictions. Chasing this codger out of an office was not going to end the Vietnam War. His determination to get the grand old man out of the building was now fuelled not just by his political beliefs but by personal fear. Now that it had started, the deed had to be completed before sanity cut it short.

On the main floor Dean Seymour played to one of the least attentive student audiences of his career. As several youths boarded up the large wooden front door as part of their well-planned operation he strode out of his office and planted himself at the base of the stairs in the centre of the foyer.

'I have to inform you that you are in violation of the regulations of the College Committee on Standing and Conduct,' he bellowed.

'Fuck you,' replied radical leader David Green.

This was not a promising beginning for a dialogue, and none was attempted. Seymour read the riot act and the students acted out the riot. He, too, was forced outside, though he resisted.

His bearers might have been more considerate of their Dean if they had noticed that even while they were using physical force against him he chose to avoid inflicting injury on them. As he was being unceremoniously pulled downstairs, he managed to get David Green in a headlock. As the scrum passed the bulky marble posts

at the base of the stairs it would only have taken a turn of Thad's torso to smash Green's head against the rock. Seymour was cool enough to resist this dramatic opportunity for instant revenge.

The lower stairway also provided the showcase for Dean of Freshmen Albert Dickerson's finest moment. Not only did he object to being led outside, he wouldn't even leave his chair. There followed a ludicrous sequence in which he had to be carefully carried through narrow corridors. Outbursts of invective such as 'You support General Ky! He admires Hitler! Therefore you support Hitler!' alternated with 'Watch that corner!' It was hard for the bearded and bespectacled commander of the Dickerson operation to maintain the mood of his abuse when it was constantly punctuated by the more practical problems of getting the large bundle out of the building. Dickerson's ploy, to take the assailant's dignity out the back door with him, was a success.

The silent hero of the day proved to be Dean of Summer Programmes Waldo Chamberlain. An unfamiliar figure to students in regular term time, he was overlooked in the eviction process. He locked himself in his office and completed a full working day before strolling out under his own power at the end of the afternoon. By that time the gravity of the situation was becoming clear. I had left the building after being advised that if I remained after the injunction against trespass and criminal damage was served I would be a candidate for the clink myself. I was therefore already outside Parkhurst around half past five.

The tapes I had sent back to the radio station with Jeff McHugh had been edited and broadcast. 'Hey, Thad,' heard you on the five!' Vince Starzinger greeted Dean Seymour, referring to the five o'clock news. WDCR had allowed the entire Tri-Town area to hear the Parkhurst takeover first-hand. Now, as a crowd of the curious and the concerned gathered outside the occupied edifice, with student guards visible at windows out of which secretaries usually checked the weather, we waited for the next move. Everyone had been so hyped up about the

imminent takeover that they had not given much thought to what would happen afterwards.

After a meal that was about the only unmemorable thing about that day we returned to the scene. The injunction was served, protesters being informed that those who did not leave the building would be taken away and imprisoned. This stark declaration was enough to bring about the speedy defection of nearly twenty youths. The renegades slid out the back door, perhaps without honours but without the anticipation of a court conviction.

In the early hours of the morning coachloads of state troopers, bright headlights beaming on to the campus, drove up Main Street. It was such a cinematic image one felt one was living inside a low-budget movie. The state Marshal took the bullhorn for the last time. I held my microphone a couple of feet away to capture his words. A photograph of this scene appeared the following day on the front page of *The Valley News*.

'This is your last chance to come out,' the officer called. When no response came he announced 'All right. We're coming in.'

WDCR's Dave Graves, who had volunteered to stand on the Parkhurst steps with an outside broadcast microphone to relay the action back to Robinson Hall, took his position. I went to the bus that was to take the miscreants to prison, hoping to record their reactions.

The state troopers did not fool around. They broke down the door and removed the radicals in a relay. They're passing a student out the front door now, Graves would say. Oh, they've dropped one. Now they've picked him up. There's another one for the coach. The excitement in his voice was understandable: he was only inches away from the operation. His gamble that the troopers would not touch him paid off with extraordinary reportage.

The boys in the bus were not silenced by their removal. Indeed, as I spoke to them through the windows, some were still quite spirited. One demonstrator I had come to know during the build-up to the takeover went into a rehearsed rant when I spotted him.

'*Mace!*' he screamed. '*Mace!*' We were *maced!*'

He had so counted on being a victim, been so certain he was going to be maced, that he worked himself into a frenzy that he *had* been even when it was clear no mace had been used. I was reminded that an element of mental instability had gone into the occupation of Parkhurst Hall.

The scene was clear by 4am, and we busied ourselves in Robinson. National press agencies were fed stringer reports by our newsmen and cartridges and copy were prepared for our morning newscasts. When the *Daybreak* dust had cleared it was time to return to the normal operations of our nervous systems. Our adrenalin flow finally ceased. We consequently fell asleep in odd circumstances. I passed out on my desk in the middle of a conversation with Jeff Kelley. Bill Aydelott dozed off behind the wheel taking film footage to White River Junction for shipment to Boston. Miraculously, Bill was unhurt when his car hit the I–91 guard rail and flipped over. Though no other vehicle was involved, he had clearly committed an offence. He shrewdly filmed the aftermath of his accident and got off in court by presenting the movie as a lesson in safety instruction.

Nothing, however, could save the young men who went into Parkhurst. Thirty-six of them were sentenced to several days in prison and had to have schoolbooks brought to the jail. Theirs was not the final protest at Dartmouth, but it was the last of the violent gestures. The inevitable caterwauling from alumni about lack of discipline on campus missed the point completely. Dartmouth had come under siege, but it had defended itself firmly and effectively, so much so that no one since has tried any remotely similar tactic.

As the seventies transpired and the occupation of Parkhurst passed beyond undergraduate comprehension I found myself realizing that Vince Starzinger had been a seer. Rather than the dawning of the Age of Aquarius or a new Enlightenment, our Dartmouth generation had been a historical aberration.

14

The War was with us every day, in the news and in our fears, but for the first two and a half years of my time at Dartmouth the draft was not the immediate worry it might have been because students had their 2–S deferments. That changed in the spring of 1969 when the method of getting inductees changed. The Selective Service System, onimously abbreviated SSS, announced that a draft lottery would be held each year randomly matching birthdates with numbers 1 through 366, one for each day of the year including February 29. One young person would pick dates out of a giant fishbowl and another would take numbers out of an equally large bowl. Pairings such as '8 March – 253' and '15 July – 112' would be announced as the double draw went on. The SSS would then call up youths with numbers below a certain limit. 1969's ceiling was likely to be 185.

The 1969 draw was all the more dramatic because being the first it covered everyone eligible at the time, not just the year's crop of eighteen-year-olds. During the fateful day the lottery was naturally Topic A. Whomever one spoke to, they planned to listen to the lottery that night. WDCR's broadcast of the event may have been heard by more students than any other programme in station history.

I was not one of them. By a quirk of scheduling I was to dine with Jonathan Miller, the British theatrical *wunderkind* who had gone on from *Beyond the Fringe* to other projects. He had expressed the wish to dine with three leading students during his visit to Dartmouth. The campus politician Bob Harrington and I were chosen

along with a more appropriate star of the Hopkins Center arts group.

Miller was fluent in many subjects and genuinely interested in our descriptions of current student life. Yet though he was charismatic and charming I felt a great irritation. I wanted to know what was happening in the draw.

Finally Miller asked how we were coping with the draft. We informed him of the evening's ceremony.

'Do you mean to say your future is being determined by a lottery?' he asked incrdulously. 'At this very moment?'

'Yes,' the three of us replied as one.

'Extraordinary,' said the Englishman.

After coffee – no liqueurs, thank you – I traversed the hundred or so yards between the Hanover Inn, where we had eaten, and WDCR. I didn't run. Though President Nixon and draft director Hershey might be taking my future, they weren't going to take my dignity.

I climbed the two flights of stairs to our studios. Dozens of students had felt they had to get as close to the source of the news as possible and had come to Robinson Hall. They gravitated around posters on which reporters were continuously making entries. Newsmen had prepared sheets with the 366 dates in chronological order and were marking digits next to whichever natal days were drawn. A student could immediately see if his fate had yet been determined.

Never have I seen self-interest more nakedly demonstrated than on that night. Many a student who drew a 'safe' number – any over 200 – shot his fist into the air in triumph, raced around the top floor and jumped down the stairs two or three steps at a time in a spontaneous display of joy and relief. The day's tensions and a lifetime's fears were worked off in this half-minute or so of celebration. Only then would the lucky ones consider the plight of those less fortunate than themselves who had journeyed to WDCR to learn first-hand that their low numbers virtually guaranteed them a ticket to Saigon. These men, too, reacted to their news with uninhibited displays of emotion. Some staggered around our corri-

dors, dazed. Others cursed and struck the air with their clenched hands, the fist that had for others symbolized release now representing rage. The reaction of Larry Stephens, one of the brightest and most respected black members of our class, was simple. Informed he had drawn a 20, he shook his head. 'God,' he kept saying. 'God.'

I finally reached the top of the stairs and was greeted by John Marshall, one of the newsmen covering the story. Being an ROTC student, his own number was inconsequential.

'They haven't called yours yet, Paul,' he told me.

I walked over to the numbers board and looked for myself. There was one of the most beautiful arrangements of letters and numbers I have seen in my life. '2 April – 271,' it read. I was free.

'I wanted you to find out for yourself,' John said from behind. He had been a sensitive friend. Though not part of the emotional spectacle himself, he realized that for students not already voluntarily committed to the forces the act of learning one's lottery number was profoundly personal.

I beamed with happiness. Anyone who ever wanted a favour from a WDCR General Manager should have asked me for one that evening. The mundane did not matter. I had been delivered. I would not have to wrestle with the psychological problems of applying for conscientious objector status, my intention had I been likely to be drafted. For others preparation for a 'CO' application began immediately. Many went within the month to friendly doctors in New Hampshire or their home states to get documented evidence of newly-discovered physical maladies, hoping to win 4–F classification declaring them unfit for service.

News of the lottery numbers of friends and prominent students swept the campus like a flash fire. Some men had drawn even lower digits than Larry Stephens and no doubt envied the fate of WDCR record librarian Pete McClanathan. He had drawn the 366. Nearly every other

man in America would have to be drafted before he would be called.

Although WDCR was ideally situated to cover aspects of Presidential politics, it could in no way cover the Vietnam War, and we were dependent on UPI and our later addition of AP to get news of the conflict. So we dealt with the issue tangentially, as in the Parkhurst siege and the regular demonstrations on the Green. I interviewed the Peace Pilgrim, an elderly woman in blue track suit and sneakers who had walked thousands of miles to promote world peace. This wasn't enough for Dave Graves, who replaced Win Rockwell as my Directorate's Programme Director when Win retired in late spring, 1969. Graves was my perfect complement. I was a respectable boy who did not look out of place in a jacket and tie. Graves was the nearest thing we had to a hippie, a less frequently washed lad who slept unusual hours and slouched all over our shared office. But whereas I was a fairly conventional broadcaster, happy within the parameters of *Sounds for the Tri-Town* and *The Noon Hour*, Graves was an experimenter. As a deejay he presented our first progressive rock show, *Adam's Original and Unparalleled Floating Opera*. As Programme Director he suggested many innovations I was only too happy to approve and share credit for.

Graves originated our first phone-in, *Tri-Town Talk Back*. He suggested we solve the problem of our dreary midnight to 1am slot of bedtime music by giving Wally Ford the hour for his brew of black music and black consciousness. Noting the surplus of would-be deejays, Graves made the revolutionary suggestion that we not sign off arbitrarily at 1am but go on through the night, giving trainees valuable experience on the all-night show. The expansion to continuous broadcasting was a great success. Dave also proposed that we take our Vietnam coverage at least once to Washington. The two of us and ace sophomore newsreader Bill Aydelott drove down to the District of Columbia in our motoring unit.

The specially painted station wagon had been obtained on a trade-out, merchandise for commercial airtime, another of Graves' ideas. Unfortunately he had not contracted for power steering, and many privileged pupils accustomed to an easy turn of the wheel were daunted at the prospect of using their muscles to pilot the large vehicle. I personally was terrified of the thing and was happy to let the others do the driving to D.C.

We stayed at the home of Carol Dudley, one of the magnificent seven drama co-eds. She and Graves were friends through his contacts at the Hopkins Center. Carol Dudley was a trouper in more senses than one. She wasn't just an actress. She insisted she come with us as we venture to a protest march that was due to culminate at the Vietnamese Embassy. The police had blocked off road access, so we clambered up a large hill and took a short cut through the back yards of 'Embassy Row'. This approach would probably get us shot today, but in 1969 we were able to get to the street the police had cordoned off without being detected.

One noticed the same expectation in the air that had preceded the Parkhurst occupation. While police waited behind barricades residents of apartment blocks stood in their foyers studying the site as if at ringside of a boxing match. Finally the challengers emerged from the direction of DuPont Circle. In the confrontation that followed tear gas was set off. I had never seen non-athletes move so fast. Unfortunately we couldn't keep up with them. Something happened that none of us had considered.

Carol Dudley wore contact lenses. The tear gas made her eyes water, but the drops, trapped by her lenses, could not escape. Her eyes suffered excruciating pain, agony so great she could not compose herself to take out her contacts. The four of us went to the nearest apartment block and sought entry. The glass door was locked. We pointed to the suffering young woman. Aydelott yelled that we were reporters and pointed to our tape recorders. Either the residents didn't want to get involved or thought we were demonstrators who were getting what we deserved. Some onlookers enjoyed

Carol's plight. They gloated at her through the glass like sadists. Our repeated entreaties made no impression. 'You bastards!' Aydelott finally shouted. That didn't endear us to them, either. When we left the area Carol's problem subsided and she was eventually able to remove her contact lenses. We proceeded to DuPont Circle and witnessed a small scale riot.

The next day we went back for more. A great crowd gathered at a rally in front of the Washington Memorial. In typical late sixties fashion the estimates of its size varied widely depending on whether one spoke to the police or the sponsors. This group was said to be between 300,000 and 1,000,000 people, which made me wonder what a gathering of 700,000 missing persons would look like.

Fortunately for us the access arrangements were like a rock concert, press passes gaining admission to a special enclosure close to the stage. There was a tent to one side of the stage and a sizeable observation area in front of it. We noted the special attention given to Theodore White, author of *The Making of the President* and its sequels, and realized that a journalist, too, could be a 'star'.

Particularly memorable during the course of the rally was the singing of John Lennon's recent hit 'Give Peace a Chance'. The song was performed by Pete Seeger, the great folk and protest veteran, and the acclaimed black artist Richie Havens. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, like Nijinsky leaping on stage, Mitch Miller appeared. The leader of the television and record series *Sing Along With Mitch* conducted the throng in song.

What few people attending mass events consider is what they will do when the event is over. Anticipation is so great it blocks out thought of afterwards. In this case a fragment of the crowd allegedly marched towards the Justice Department and caused mischief. Tear gas cannisters were again fired. This time the results were different. Wind took the miserable fumes into downtown Washington, dispersing not only demonstrators but startled pedestrians, who ran for cover into whatever store

was handy. Those that could hurried away in their automobiles. We broadcast to Hanover from Carol Dudley's house. Tests in school years before had shown I had poor mechanical aptitude. I had no idea how Graves and Aydelott patched cords together to enable us to make a WDCR news report from a house hundreds of miles away. I just sat back and watched them do it.

The Vietnam War was not unconnected with the other great issue of our college days, race relations. Many blacks and white liberals saw the conflict as a white man's war on Oriental people. There was zero enthusiasm for the crusade amongst most Dartmouth blacks. This made the dilemma of someone like Larry Stephens, cursed with his 20 lottery number, even more poignant. The formation of the Afro-American Society, a campus organization of black students devoted to an awareness and appreciation of shared negritude, was a timely development of the late sixties. Stokely Carmichael, a nationally known black activist, addressed a full house of students in Webster Hall, recent site of the George Wallace riot. There had been considerable advance speculation as to whether this appearance might trigger a counter-disturbance, but nothing of the sort took place.

When Dave Graves suggested that Wally Ford be given the midnight to 1am slot we had to face our own fears that Ford might use his microphone to broadcast black power propaganda or incite racial violence. I saw the situation from a unique perspective. I had been broadcasting a rhythm & blues programme on Friday evenings during autumn, 1967. I had just completed my first summer as a disc jockey and now that the 'real' year had resumed I was not yet quite ready to be appointed a *Sounds for the Tri-Town* slot. Since after my resignation as Local News Director I was denied a news slot, this was my only on air appearance. Wally Ford took over the show after mine, continuing with r&b.

I began to feel uncomfortable. Rhythm & blues was

my favourite music. Yet I was white and Wally was black. Despite the protestations of those who claimed that in matters like this colour didn't count, there was no denying that he would be a more authentic voice to present the programme. He was interested in avant-garde black music, of which I had only a scholarly awareness. Fortunately I was named to present *Sounds for the Tri-Town*, at first in alternation, then on my own. I had no qualms about leaving the exclusively black programme to Wally Ford. The expression 'rhythm and blues' vanished from the show's title as quickly as it did from popular usage, which now spoke only of 'soul'.

Ford's presentation was more influenced by Frankie Crocker, the legendary New York deejay, than any activist. As a matter of fact, he owed his guarantee to 'put more glide in your stride, more dips in your hips', and so forth, directly to Crocker. He was also too much an Establishment figure to make a fool of himself for the sake of a temporary sensation. Years later *Time* selected him as one of America's fifty leaders of tomorrow (also choosing our classmate Joe Avellone), and he earned several important public positions.

The only time Wally really did scare us was the night of Dr Martin Luther King's assassination, when he made a diatribe about the possible consequences of the murder. But almost any outburst would have been understandable that night. Recently appointed General Manager Jeff Kelley declared we should suspend regularly scheduled programming in favour of a continous tribute to the civil rights leader.

We could hardly mount a worthy salute to one of the greatest men of our lifetime, but we tried. The end result was inevitably patchy. There were readings of his writings, a hastily-constructed biography, and audio clips of his most famous speeches. One couldn't help but feel that we were running in search of a finish line, not really knowing what was going to fill up the rest of the evening. In one nearly disastrous episode we agreed to interview a student who said he 'knew' King. This was a scoop, we thought. It turned out he 'knew' the man as

one 'knows' a great leader or guru one has not actually met. This fact was discovered shortly before the upset youth was due to go on air and caused many sighs of relief among the staff.

We all threw ourselves into the instant programming so intently we breezed right through dinner. Around midnight, when there was obviously nothing more we could do and Dr King's killing had become sad history, Bill Moyes and I went to Tony's Pizza. A late-night snack at Dartmouth in 1968 meant either Tony's or the Campus Sub, two calorific restaurants on either side of Allen Street. The pizzeria was chosen because its larger seating area allowed us to sit and talk.

Moyes and I needed to speak our minds that dark night. We gabbed so garrulously I didn't really notice I was eating until I realized to my shock that I had devoured five large pieces of pizza. I had never gone beyond four before and had often settled for less. The adrenalin flowing in my veins that night had put me into eating as well as programming overdrive. As an odd example of how we interpret life's events personally, I always remember Martin Luther King's assassination not only as a tragedy for mankind but as the spur that made me eat five pieces of pizza.

The following morning Larry Smith, our humane and gifted history instructor, placed cartoonist Bill Mauldin's drawing of a weeping Abraham Lincoln at the front of the classroom. It was a suitable symbol for that cursed year.

Only two months later I was awakened by my clock radio to hear Dave Graves in a special news report. 'The Senator was shot after claiming victory in the California primary,' his voice called at me through the morning haze. We had worked into the early morning hours on our California coverage, but I had gone to bed before the final result was known. Both Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy, leading contenders for the Democratic Presidential nomination, were United States Senators. The statement might apply to either of them. Who

had won? *Who had been shot*? Dare I wonder if he was dead?

Sadly, Graves answered my questions. Robert Kennedy had been slain, the second noble member of that clan to fall to an assassin. I grimly prepared for my morning history class. I wandered across campus and staggered into Larry Smith's classroom. There on the front desk was Bill Mauldin's cartoon. For the second time in two months, Abe Lincoln was crying.

15

A college student's senior year is usually spent preparing for and worrying about his future. I was an exception to the rule. I was having such a fabulous time I never worried about life after Dartmouth.

My job as WDCR General Manager was a pleasure. With Dave Graves' programming innovations and Stu Zuckerman's financial wizardry the station was having its best year in both revenue and ratings. Confident the expansion would continue, we gave the approval for an investigation into the possiblities of acquiring a licence for an FM station.

My academic work was satisfying, too. During my early terms at Dartmouth I took a variety of courses, satisfying the 'distributive requirement' that guaranteed all pupils took at least some courses in English, social studies, mathematics and science. I finally elected history my major. I had an aptitude for remembering lists of dates, names and places, useful when preparing for examinations.

I also loved great stories, and history was full of memorable characters and remarkable tales, rather like comic books. During the early sixties I had been a passionate devotee of the superhero comics of DC and Marvel. I was an early member of comics fandom and read a great deal of the behind-the-scenes world of comic publishing. I was able to use some of the lore I learned in my Dartmouth history thesis.

During the last half of my junior year the boy who seemed certain to be our valedictorian, Craig Joyce, informed me he would be writing a thesis on a speech

President Lincoln gave to Union troops. I was depressed by this news. Craig was already going to win the college's highest academic distinction. It would be a poor show by our class to let him also win the Jones Prize, given to the author of the best American history thesis, for a piece on such a dull subject. I decided to compete against him.

That Craig was brilliant was beyond doubt. If I were to top him I had to conceive a clever strategy. The judges would probably be bored by a succession of serious tomes. If I could amuse or entertain them they might think more highly of my work. I should choose a subject on which I knew more than they, an impossibility if I chose a typical topic from American or European history.

Comics were the obvious choice. They were an important part of the popular culture of the United States, so they qualified for the competition. I chose the campaign to clean up the comics in the late forties and early fifties, a censorship struggle that was quite bitter and led to Senate hearings reported on the front page of *The New York Times*. I called my thesis 'The Marijuana of the Nursery'. I was delighted to win the approval of my supervising Professors, Jere Daniell and Charles Wood. I was equally as delighted to win the Jones Prize, an award listed in the same Commencement programme that confirmed Craig Joyce the valedictorian of the class of 1970.

My network of friends, mostly from WDCR, was also an inspiration to me. Particularly close to me during my senior year was John Marshall, ultimately my successor as GM, with whom I shared a profound love of the local area. We often ate in rural restaurants within a fifteen mile radius of Hanover, frequently toured local beauty spots and occasionally attended church bazaars. It was great for the soul and better than drugs.

One day Bob Harrington met me on the Green and asked if I'd considered applying for a scholarship to Oxford. By all accounts, he related, going to the esteemed English university was 'a paid vacation'. One was travelling abroad and getting the perfect preparation for law

school without having to toil as hard as one did at Dartmouth.

The idea appealed instantly, and not just for Bob's reasons. I detested the Republican administration of President Richard Nixon and Vice-President Spiro Agnew. I felt them unsavoury characters unworthy of high office. I could not understand how the majority of Americans could have been so naive or stupid as to swallow their anti-intellectual rabble-rousing. I found Agnew's diatribes against young people and academics particularly offensive. To exacerbate conflict between groups of American citizens for one's own political ends was the basest behaviour. I welcomed the opportunity to escape from these terrible men.

It may seem strange that Harrington should emphasize that Oxford was a good preparation for law school. In 1970 it was assumed that every outstanding Ivy League graduate would want to go to either law, business or medical school. Law in particular was the degree to get if one wanted to win a position of distinction in public life. We were often told the future leaders of America would be lawyers. Of course, as the Watergate scandal proved, the future criminals of America would be lawyers. I was happy to go along with the crowd and applied to Harvard and Yale law schools, considered the nation's top two at the time, and for a Philosophy, Politics and Economics course at University College, Oxford. I applied to 'Univ' because Bob Reich, a Dartmouth '68, had gone there. Reich had so dominated campus politics during his years in Hanover that I figured he must have proved a success at Univ. Admissions authorities would want more from Dartmouth. My supposition was correct, and I was informed of my acceptance by Tutor for Graduate Admissions George Cawkwell. I later learned that when the diminutive Reich had arrived at Univ with his friend and fellow '68 John Isaacson the college porter Douglas had boomed 'They promised us two Rhodes Scholars and what do we get? One and a half!'

In a satisfying season I won Keasbey and Reynolds scholarships to Oxford, got into Harvard and was the

first person admitted to the next Yale law class. The latter was not a great accomplishment. Dartmouth's Dean of Students Carroll Brewster had been on the Yale Law Board of Admissions the year before and had simply told his old buddies they should take me. I informed the two law schools I would return to America to pursue a law degree after taking my Oxford course.

It seems absurd that not a single college authority suggested I try a career in radio. After all, broadcasting was the one thing I had shown I could do. Any standing I held on campus was owed to my base at WDCR. Might it not be likely the same would hold true in the outside world?

The Dartmouth executives suffered from an unconscious inferiority complex. It didn't occur to them that their student performers, whether they be broadcasters, journalists or stars in the arts, might be good enough to 'make it'. But WDCR was, after all, a commercial radio station of professional size and quality. Some of the work done at the Hopkins Center was of an extremely high standard. We were getting a superb vocational as well as academic education. Yet because this wasn't considered the primary purpose of our learning it was discounted. Institutions like to reinforce other institutions, in so doing buttressing the system of which they are a part. By encouraging us to go to law school Dartmouth officers were reaffirming the validity of higher education and hence Dartmouth itself.

In fact, WDCR provided better basic radio training than I could have had anywhere else. Not having to pay its workers it put all its profit into new equipment and facilities, giving it a better plant than stations of comparable size. Its large staff provided the manpower for big projects small stations could only dream of, and the long queue of hopefuls just waiting for on-the-air personnel to falter spurred us on to our best work. It can't be a coincidence that several of my peers from my class of 1970 also went on to happy careers in broadcasting.

In the winter term of 1970 outstanding juniors took our places on the Directorate. To our great irritation

Mike Moore, a promising newsman who through his own lack of interest had failed to develop, announced the changes and, unfamiliar with station staff, made several mispronounciations.

It was also convention that in the last term of the year underclassmen took over the top shifts from graduating seniors. I relinquished my hold on *Sounds for the Tri-Town*, ending my run by counting down a Top 25 with 'Let It Be' at number one. I remarked over the brief instrumental introduction of the single that it was appropriate that on this, my last survey, the Beatles, who had dominated my years on the programme, were number one with the title track of their own last album.

This may have been a none-too-subtle attempt to let the Beatles' greatness rub off on myself, but it was an emotionally valid remark. I had been proud to present popular music during an exceptional era. I was almost saying that the Beatles were leaving the scene so I might as well, too.

My remark was premature in three senses. First, Capitol Records culled another single from *Let It Be*, 'The Long and Winding Road', which also became a number one. By releasing more singles in America than EMI had in Britain, always to promote sales of an LP, Capitol insured that the Fab Four had more chart-toppers in the US (20) than the UK (17).

Secondly, I was brought out of my retirement after only two months to prepare and present a Tri-Town Top 25 when new Program Director Mark Stitham was unable to make it. I grudgingly made 'Love On a Two-Way Street' by the Moments the new number one, happy in a way because it was a triumph for quality soul music but distressed that it in no way measured up to the Beatles' classic hits. It wasn't a great exit, but then hardly anybody listening realized it was an exit. Since we never referred to ourselves on the air as students we never mentioned we were graduating. We just weren't there one day. To paraphrase General MacArthur, old deejays never die, they just fade out.

The third reason I was hasty with my retirement

notice was that I was persuaded by General Manager John Marshall to do *Daybreak* during the summer after my graduation. I had been hired as assistant to the new Director of Summer Programmes, Gregory Prince, to help accustom him to the college during his first term. John figured that if I was around I might as well help out the few DCR boys who would be slogging away at manning the station between June and September. My friend Marshall must also have known that he was doing me a favour by allowing me to broadcast for yet another few months.

The spring term of 1970, my last as a student, had seen me unintentionally take my career one step beyond WDCR. In early May President Nixon ordered the invasion of Cambodia by American forces. I learned later from an ex-Marine that US soldiers had also gone on missions in Laos, though this went unannounced by the government. Students already furious over the war in Vietnam were irate at this escalation. When four demonstrating students were slain at Kent State University the resolve to protest was strengthened.

For the first and only time in the history of the college students went on strike. They refused to attend classes and resolved to spend all their extra time on the most important subject of all, peace. They would educate themselves and others about the roots of the southeast Asian conflict and would try to convert non-believers to the antiwar cause. So many students went on strike and so many faculty members supported them that pupils were officially given gradeless credit for their cancelled courses. Some lectures were still held, but attendance was optional.

Not all students were in sympathy with the goals of the strike organizers. Some men left campus at once to start summer jobs early. Others made the spring term a long and loud party. Many actually did devote their time to the war and peace issue.

I found myself in an unusual dilemma one night as a direct consequence of the strike. Mark Stitham woke me at 2am with a phone call asking me if I could fill in for

Jim Coakley on *Daybreak* the next morning. I agreed to do the show. In those days I couldn't get back to sleep quickly if I was awakened shortly after having dozed off. I had to wait a couple of hours to become exhausted again. I considered the options for filling those two hours. My friends were all asleep, so I couldn't talk to them. My courses were cancelled and I had finished my thesis. What could I do?

An idea came from out of the blue. 'Well, you always thought you could write a better singles review than Ed Ward.' He was one of *Rolling Stone's* top writers, but his singles reviews lacked something. I sat down and typed out a critique of my current favourite single, 'Band of Gold' by Freda Payne. The mental exertion fatigued me and I fell asleep easily.

When I returned to my dorm after doing *Daybreak* I had second thoughts. I couldn't just send in one review, I'd have to do another. I wrote caustic comments about three recent British releases I disliked, 'My Baby Loves Lovin' ' by White Plains, 'United We Stand' by the Brotherhood of Man, and 'That Same Old Feeling' by Pickettywitch. I said something to the effect that 'If these three records have their fingers on the pulse of the British record-buying public, someone should slit the wrist.' I posted the two reviews and thought nothing more of them. They had been meant to fill time and had succeeded in that purpose.

A week later I received a full-page single-spaced typed letter from Ed Ward. 'Thank God for unsolicited manuscripts!' he wrote. 'Anything that makes me laugh as hard as your White Plains, etc. review has got to go in. Enclosed please find your *Rolling Stone* due date calendar.' I looked at the enclosure, an Elvis Presley wallet calendar with dates circled.

The cynical review I had written as an afterthought had earned both pieces places in the paper. The man I had discounted had proven to be my Messiah. My relationship with *Rolling Stone*, America's top counter-culture publication, was casual at first but became crucial to my career when I went to England.

Commencement Day passed slightly eventfully. At the awards ceremony beforehand I whispered to Sandy Ferguson, also Oxford-bound, that I was glad the élitist Barrett Cup for All-Around Achievement, presented to the student 'most likely to become a factor in the outside world', had been retired. Seconds later, I was announced its winner. We went outdoors for our graduation ceremony and during a boring forty-minute speech I fell asleep. So much for the outside world.

During the late summer days prior to my departure from Dartmouth I suffered a mellow melancholia. I played frisbee on the Green with DCR friends each evening to reassure myself I wasn't really leaving them. I put 'Gone Away' by Roberta Flack on my personal stereo every morning and night, as if my friends were going instead of me. I could pretend no more when it came time to present my final WDCR programme, a September *Daybreak*. At four minutes to nine I announced it was my last show, spoke briefly of the great times I had enjoyed at the station, and closed by paraphrasing Joni Mitchell's words: though this dream was over, there would be better dreams, and plenty. It was time to move on. I played 'Urge For Going' by Tom Rush.

When Tom's last guitar chord decayed I hit the news jingle. I was stunned when Bill Downall, my roommate that summer and the *Daybreak* newsman, headlined the newscast with word of my departure and upcoming enrolment at Oxford. He spoke kindly of my past, as if I were dead. He spoke hopefully of my future, as if I were reborn. Bill had his newscast taped so a record of the occasion could be kept in station archives. It was a generous gesture typical of my best DCR friends.

Though loath to leave it I never attempted to influence the station once I was at Oxford. WDCR men historically resented interference from alumni. Once you were gone, you were gone. I comforted myself with the utopian scheme a group of us had concocted: that after we had earned our respective postgraduate degrees we would reunite at an unspecified small station we nicknamed

the Great Radio Station In The Sky – GRITS. A few months into my Oxford education I visited Professor Vince Starzinger, on sabbatical in London. I spoke to him of my hopes for GRITS. To my horror this sage, who had correctly perceived that our rebellious generation would prove a historical aberration, dismissed the plan.

'You may make it alone,' he stated firmly, 'but you will not make it together. I have heard these schemes before. They never work. You may make it – but you will do so on your own.'

For not the first time, Vince Starzinger was right. Our WDCR group never convened again. Some of us met frequently as friends, I worked briefly with one of them in Boston, and a few of us got together at the 25th WDCR Anniversary Party brilliantly organized in 1983 by General Manager Dan Daniels. But for all the love and the best intentions in the world, GRITS remained a fantasy. In time it appeared it had always been an illusion.

Now I would not want to return to those days. I have moved down a career road of no return and learned that one always finds new partners and new friends. Whether one wants to or not, one grows up. The person I am now could not be as happy at WDCR as the boy I was. I know far more about myself and about life than I did then, and I can never again pretend that all is right with the world. My naiveté was a necessary condition for my delight at Dartmouth. But I will say this. I may have been naive, but I have never been happier.

16

It was with expectations greater than Pip's that I sailed for Southampton the first week of October 1970. This may have been the intellectual package holiday of all-time, with Rhodes, Marshall, Keasbey and other scholarship winners on board. Nearly thirty of us Oxford-bound smarties left New York on the *QE2*, barracked on the unglamorous fifth deck in what quickly came to be known as 'the student ghetto'. I occasionally wondered what stroke my roommate Sandy Ferguson and I would use to escape should a large wave come crashing through our porthole, but we remained dry for the five days it took to cross the Atlantic, even during the day-long storm that marred the middle of the journey. We all thought it suitable that the only member of our party to suffer severe seasickness was a star basketball player. His mouth had been as big as his talent, but now he found occasion to open it in the most unflattering fashion.

Being with some Rhodesies gave me the sublime feeling that no matter how wonderful I had been told I was, I was now in the presence of people indisputably and immeasurably brighter. Take, for example, Jim Fallows, whom I met in the ship's sauna. To the undiscerning bather this tall thin lad was quiet and shy, not one to force himself upon others with unnecessary banter. Engage him in conversation, however, and one discovered an absolute brain boy. The former editor of the *Harvard Crimson* student newspaper, Jim had also been convinced that a paid vacation at Oxford was a marvellous preparation for law school. He had also won admission to Harvard and Yale and put them on hold,

but in his case the schools must have been holding with excited anticipation. Fallows had scored an astonishing 799 out of a possible 800 on his Law Boards, the screening test prospective legal students must take. I had never heard of such a feat.

Jim's insights on American politics were always informed and enlightened. He was the one man with whom I was frightened to discover I disagreed because I immediately feared I was probably wrong. Just as I missed radio and never went into law, he missed political journalism and never went to law school. I was thrilled when his risk paid off and he became President Carter's head speechwriter and later, after his disillusioned resignation from the White House post, the Washington editor of the distinguished *Atlantic Monthly*.

Putting Rhodes Scholars and winners of other scholarships together on an ocean crossing made sense for reasons other than economic. Sailing the Atlantic losing one hour a day is far more pleasant than forfeiting five as happens when one flies. Even more important, spending five days in close quarters with our fellows gave us the perfect opportunity to get to know each other, to make friendships and to learn which stuffed shirts to avoid.

Life at leisure for five days was a never-ending party. From our inexpensive quarters on the fifth deck, we had free run of most of the ship. We amused ourselves watching feature films in the cinema, howling with laughter when Pearl and Dean advertisements appeared. We didn't realize commercials in cinemas, unknown in the United States, were common in Britain. We thought the *QE2* had come up with an undignified way of earning extra cash.

We examined the offerings in the liner's library. Noting a full dozen copies of the current bestseller *Love Story*, a slender volume which took about ninety minutes to read, most of us vowed to read the book before journey's end. Vacationers unknowingly witnessed the touted young minds of the Western World engrossed in the soap opera by Erich Segal.

Many of us dined our way to a few extra pounds. In so doing we learned a lot about European vegetables. Most of our group had not previously heard of endive, and on the example set by the *QE2* species did not care if they did so again. The greatest negative reaction was saved for Brussel sprouts, an uncommon vegetable in America that was overcooked and overserved on board.

Inevitably, however, special memories of the trip were personal. I was thrilled to pick up WRKO-Boston on my transistor radio our second night at sea. Since we could not hear it on the first night I had assumed we'd lost it. The next evening we must have picked up the station under unusual conditions; I couldn't imagine any outlet intentionally sending part of its signal out into the ocean. This was the last American transmission I heard before we sailed out of earshot.

For pop music we thereafter had to rely on the ship's disco and jukebox. I myself was delighted to hear some romantic put a dime in for 'Where Are You Going to My Love' by the Brotherhood of Man. Though it was my sarcastic slating of the same group's 'United We Stand' that had helped earn me my reviewer's position with *Rolling Stone*, I had a soft spot for this single. I was voyaging into an unseen future, leaving friends and family behind, and the sentimental lyric and lush harmonies seemed personally appropriate. In more maudlin moments I paid for a couple of plays myself.

One scene could only have been accompanied by the most solemn music. On a solitary sunset stroll I came to the stern of the vessel. There a uniformed Englishman stood with head slightly bowed, staring into the turbulent waters in the ship's wake. Without waiting for my obvious question he spoke.

'We lost James here on our last crossing,' he said. 'He jumped over the side near this spot. He was a friend. I still don't know why he did it.' Muttering a mere and inadequate 'I'm sorry', I left him to his private grief.

The ship arrived at Le Havre, France, on 7 October, and crossed the channel to Southampton on the 8th. It was on that day we took our first steps on British soil.

They were almost the last for one of our number. Our coach to Oxford stopped at an inn for a country lunch. On emerging one of the Rhodes Scholars looked to his left, saw no traffic coming, and stepped into the street. MENSA level intelligence, yes; common sense, no. The frantically-honked horn of a lorry reminded him that in Britain one has to look right, not left, before crossing. His stay in England had nearly been the shortest of any Rhodesie. I could not gloat for long. Shortly after my arrival at University College I suffered the same lapse and missed a close encounter of the terminal kind with a double-decker bus by less than a foot.

I soon learned how that horrible incident would have been reported by British radio. 'A two-ton double-decker bus and a pedestrian were involved in a collision in the Oxford High Street', a newsreader would calmly intone. My American friends and I creased ourselves laughing over the delicate way indelicate matters were phrased. Mostly because the British had to observe legal restrictions, but also because they chose to honour social niceties, a story might emerge as 'a prominent television executive fell to his death today from the terrace of his sixth floor apartment; foul play is not suspected.' In the States we would hear the same story as 'a top TV man has committed suicide by jumping out his window.' When lawmen found a suspect in a crime of violence or terrorism the BBC would announce 'a man is helping police with their inquiries' when what we thought he meant was 'the cops are beating the shit out of the sucker'.

Newspapers gave us a daily dose of the giggles, too. We had never seen a species such as the British tabloid with its short stories, non-news and pulchritudinous photos. Accustomed as we were to the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe* and *Washington Post*, we looked down and laughed at these pathetic journalistic efforts from a great height, not realizing the reason these papers were published was because the public purchased them. Writing down to one's readership without making the condescension obvious was a perverse art form.

We could not get over how British headline writers, especially on the tabloids, used nouns as adjectives. A rabid alsation would be referred to as 'Danger Dog' rather than 'Dangerous Dog', as in 'Danger Dog Terrorizes Town'. Someone who took special delight in this preposterous practice was my fellow American-at-Univ Karl Marlantes, an ex-Marine who had won a Rhodes Scholarship after having served in Vietnam. Our favourite was the absolutely indecipherable 'Student Drinks Ban on Thalidomide Drugs Firm'. Read as a headline in normal English, it suggested that an individual pupil had ingested in liquid form a boycott on a company that had something to do with, or resembled, thalidomide. We figured out that what the writer was trying to convey was a general, not specific, boycott by a number of students, and that their ban was on drinks manufactured by the makers of thalidomide. 'Drinks' was a noun, not a verb, modifying 'ban', and was itself qualified by 'student'. To this day I occasionally receive a letter from Karl addressed to 'Danger Dog'.

Our confusion over the British media wasn't restricted to newspaper headlines. Weather reports confounded us, too. We were accustomed to local forecasts on radio stations in our home towns. British prognostications covered the whole country, breaking the nation down geographically only to areas like 'southwest England', 'northern Scotland', and 'Wales'. 'The London area' was the most specific locality ever described in these forecasts. I could never figure out if Oxford qualified as part of 'the Midlands' or 'southeast England'. Anyway, what did it matter? If the forecast didn't seem to be calling for rain, snow, sunny periods, fog and frost all on the same day, it usually predicted 'sunshine and showers'. Of what use was that?

Only gradually did I see that British weather was substantially different to that I was accustomed to in the greater New York area. Weather there usually came from the south or the west and could be seen coming by radar well in advance of its actual arrival. In Britain fronts or pressure areas could actually come from any

direction. The notion that weather could come from the east, as in the case of Siberian highs or low cloud off the North Sea, was a thrilling addition to life's possibilities. It was like discovering there really is a fourth dimension. I also learned that, being an island nation, Britain tended to have a moist lower atmosphere that could precipitate at almost any given moment in any place. Precise predictions were nearly impossible.

Television shocked us because it shut down around or before midnight. Americans, at least those from the Northeast and West Coast, were accustomed to nearly round-the-clock programming. Insomniacs could watch old films all night long. Those who woke unsociably early could watch televised sermons and school lessons.

There was also a difference in TV taboos between the US and UK. In America sex was strictly censored but violence, a ratings-grabber, was rampant. BBC programmers seemed to realize that most grown people do have some sort of sex lives, and I was delighted to see a couple in bed as a pair of people would be in bed: naked, not clothed with one foot on the floor or with a board between them. I quivered in sympathy as a schoolboy in a play fantasized over a classmate's naked body, his hand irresistably drawn to the hellfire symbolically covering the idol's genitals.

Most memorably of all, I was stunned by an exchange between George Melly and Kenneth Tynan on the former's late-night ITV chat show. Though I do not have a transcript of the show, the gist of it is branded on my brain.

'Kenneth, do you regret that despite your great contributions to the theatre and theatrical criticism in this country you are still best remembered as having been the first person to say "fuck" on television?' Melly asked politely.

I could not believe my ears. A guest who used the 'f-word' on American television would be bleeped out, then blacklisted. Tynan had apparently said it and gotten away with it. A *host* who used the word with premeditation would effectively cancel his contract.

Were this the Johnny Carson show, the nightly American institution that occupied the same time slot as the Melly gabfest, the question would probably have been over the propriety of the exclamation 'Egad!'

Kenneth Tynan did not share my shock, and answered the question without missing a beat. 'I do sometimes wish I were broadly remembered for something more substantial,' he admitted, 'but I have no regrets. I think it was time to say "fuck".'

There! He'd done it again! I may not have been around the first time, but I heard the second one!

I had never been much of a television watcher, so it took time for me to learn the full range of BBC offerings. I recall being aghast while watching a news show in the Scottish home of Alastair MacGregor, my first friend from Oxford. ' . . . after your own programmes, *Nationwide!*' Michael Barrett intoned. I was flabbergasted at what seemed rinky-dink music and visuals, and puzzled at the host's cheery manner. In America hosts of news broadcasts in the early evening were terribly serious, even solemn. There was no place for the individual personality. It took time to realize that in Britain warm-hearted avuncular types make ideal presenters of feature programmes and that Michael Barrett was that rarest of media creatures, a much-loved star. Within a dozen years most American cities had *Live at Five* shows similar to the 1970 *Nationwide*.

There were only two must-see shows for Univ undergraduates. One was *Top of the Pops*, whose format of chart stars miming their hits was easy to grasp, and the second was *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. I felt an eavesdropper on a secret ceremony as I watched British boys in their weekly ritual. When they weren't legless with laughter they viewed with religious devotion. It took me a couple of shows to pick up the structure of *Python*. After I had ascertained the prerequisite knowledge that none of the cast were named Monty, there was no snake and all the action took place on the ground, I realized that this troupe had invented a new way of ending comedy sketches. Instead of forcing themselves to

resolve the situations they had created with a contrived conclusion, they just uttered a *non sequitur* like 'And now for something completely different' and started another skit. With the BBC's lack of commercials – and only someone who has suffered ad-saturated American television can appreciate freedom from obnoxious interruption – the Pythons could whip non-stop through a programme's worth of material. I was a quick convert to their cause and joined the weekly pilgrimage to the TV room.

The medium that made the greatest impact on me was naturally radio. With my interest and experience I paid greatest attention to the four networks. I quickly dismissed Radio 2 as a horrid home for musical geriatrics. Whatever merit some of the hosts may have had as presenters, and in some cases it was considerable, I was alienated by their obvious indifference to the music they featured and to the material itself. No major American pop station would play such antiquated and over-orchestrated selections.

I also wrote off Radio 3, a decision that might seem surprising for someone who had taken five years of classical piano training. But my mind was made up for me partly by the terrible reception of Radio 3 on my AM radio. The other determinant was that the slow deliberate pace the announcers assumed as a matter of apparent policy seemed insincere and arch. It did not occur to me that the people reading copy on Radio 3 were not necessarily the people who had written it, and indeed probably were not. My personal experience had been that I wrote my own copy, and I was so accustomed to delivering my own words I didn't realize big-time broadcasters could choose or be forced to read items they had not prepared and in which they may not have any interest.

Radio 4 was the home of quality newscasts and my beloved in-depth weather reports. It distressed me when it signed off at what for me was an early hour. Students often stay up into the early morning, especially when faced with an essay crisis, and companionship is scarce

in these circumstances. Knowing that someone had deserted me, even if it was only the Radio 4 continuity announcer, made me feel more isolated.

Radio 1 was on the air even less, devoting some of its hours to a simulcast of Radio 2 as well as shutting down overnight. I first heard the station in a Chinese restaurant the Sunday after I arrived in Oxford. I was eating dinner around 6pm, my usual hour for that meal in the United States. I got to hear the last hour of *Pick of the Pops* as presented by Alan Freeman. Though I had been following the British chart in *Billboard* for years and was well aware that a significant percentage of UK hits did not make it in America and vice versa, I was unprepared for how some of the domestic successes sounded in the context of a broadcast hit parade. 'Paranoid' by Black Sabbath and 'Black Night' by Deep Purple were heavy metal hits far more raucous than anything AM radio would play in 1970. To hear these hits side by side with international soul smashes 'Give Me Just a little More Time' and 'Tears of a Clown' was startling.

In the same top ten stood 'You Can Get It If You Really Want', a Desmond Dekker hit that introduced me to an unusual phenomenon. Lacking a domestic black music of its own, Britain would occasionally make a Jamaican reggae record a pop smash in the same way American white kids would pick up on a Motown disc. Whereas Tamla talent often made it in the UK as well, reggae records almost never made it in the US. Dekker's 'Israelites' and Jimmy Cliff's 'Wonderful World Beautiful People' had been the only prominent exceptions to date. It was nonetheless exciting to see how black music of any kind, given a rough ride in Britain before the mid-sixties, could now do big business. It was downright thrilling that Freda Payne's 'Band of Gold', the first record I had reviewed for *Rolling Stone*, was Radio 1's number one the week I arrived in England.

I was further stunned by the disparities between the US and UK charts when I heard Freeman introduce the year-end tabulation of 1970's bestselling singles. To read a title in *Billboard* was one thing, to hear it on the radio

something else. How was I to know that 'Back Home' by the England World Cup Squad, one of the year's top ten, was an only marginally musical experience, that 'All Kinds of Everything' by Dana was a wet work from something called the Eurovision Song Contest, or that 'Wand'rin' Star' by Lee Marvin was half-spoken, half-sung, making the Hollywood hero the first artist to ever talk out of tune? As I pressed my transistor radio close to my ear on a train travelling from Dover to London I lived the listening equivalent of jumping into frigid water after a sauna. *This was not only different, it was shocking*. Radio 1 would play whatever sold, regardless of whether it fit a format or not. Freed of commercial considerations, the station aired whatever was popular, even if it was by a football team.

Presentation was another problem for the American auditor. Tony Blackburn, Radio 1's breakfast deejay, seemed fine for the job, and as he segued hit after hit with perfect talkovers I speculated he could have been a success on a major American station, to my naive mind still the highest broadcasting achievement. His habit of mentioning the Tamla Motown label every time he played one of its records struck me as being a bit unnecessary, but since this was my favourite company as well I wasn't going to complain.

The rest of the Radio 1 day was of another standard altogether. I could not understand why a network would voluntarily turn over part of its broadcasting day to transmitting the programmes of another station, especially one that had a much older sound. I couldn't imagine why any executive would choose to commission and air inferior cover versions of hit records by studio orchestras. It seemed amateurish and egotistical that deejays would spend so much time between records with inane competitions, dedications to every man, woman, child and pet in the British Isles, and, heaven help us all, recipes. Only years later did I learn that an array of restrictions imposed by government, unions and record companies had caused Radio 1 to undertake this bizarre programming. All I knew was what I heard, and what I

heard sounded bush league. I found myself thinking 'We could do better than this', meaning that the best of WDCR's staff were superior.

At the mere thought I shuddered as if I had blasphemed. These men were professionals. How could I doubt their ability? Even worse, how could I exaggerate ours? Could I be guilty of hubris? The Catholic child inside me who feared divine retribution was terrified I might get some kind of career zapping for my arrogance. I might not have worried had I appreciated the extent to which WDCR had been professional and how Radio 1 deejays lacked rock radio experience. I didn't know that the network had only been going for three years, that before the pirate stations of the mid-sixties there had been no tradition in rock music broadcasting in Britain. Dave Graves and Scott McQueen *would* have sounded better than some of the Radio 1 deejays of 1970 because, with the exception of a few hardies like John Peel and Johnny Walker, the Dartmouth deejays *did* have more experience.

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During my first year at Univ I lived in Helen's Court, the accomodation for overseas students. Needless to say in these all-male surroundings, there was no sign of Helen, who turned out to have something to do with the benefactor who bequeathed the beautiful courtyard. I had two rooms, central heating, and a shower outside my door, and could not have been more pleased. The German Rhodesie across the hall could have been. He would have preferred it if someone else spoke his language. How the Rhodes Trust could have approved a Scholar who spoke only halting English was beyond me, and I will never forget the panic suffered by this German genius when he realized he couldn't communicate with us. He was gone the next day, replaced by a chap from the Channel Islands.

Helen's Court was separated from the rest of Univ by a covered walkway leading from the college rubbish-burning tip. A journey home was therefore always guaranteed to go from the ridiculous to the sublime. Young trees decorated our courtyard and vine plants clung to the housing for three dons that faced our dormitory. We even had a scout, the beloved Archie, who had been catering to the whims of Univ men for half a century. Since 'scout' seemed a euphemism for 'servant', I at first felt distinctly embarrassed by the kind man's attentions. It took me a few weeks to realize that he wasn't just obliged to make my bed, he *wanted* to make my bed, and in observing the dutiful and affectionate Archie I learned of the dignity and pride some service workers get from their jobs. What Archie's post owed to

surviving remnants of Britain's class system was not visible to me or my American classmates for many months.

One young lady, the estimable Liza Lunt, briefly became the centre of my attention. Her unlikely name may conjure up the image of a young Diana Dors, but there the analogy must stop. Liza was slim and petite with a voice like birdsong and a smile like a summer sunrise. She was also the first woman in Britain to invite me to tea. On a warm sunny day this took the form of cucumber sandwiches on Somerville lawn. Liza's radiance and the setting afternoon sun complemented each other perfectly. The only odd thing about what was obviously some sort of native tradition was the filling in the sandwiches. Cucumber? Where I had grown up in New England this was one of the most common of salad vegetables. To have it between slices of bread was as inappropriate as having a lettuce sandwich. Adding butter was a nauseating prospect, but the eating belied the fears. In the halcyon Somerville setting cucumber sandwiches seemed right. After that Liza could have offered me anything, turnip sorbet or spinach cream pie, and I would have tried it happily.

What she did offer shocked me. 'Why don't you come around and knock me up tomorrow?' she asked with her sweetest smile. Had she laced my tea with LSD? In the States 'knock up' meant only one thing, to impregnate. The notion that she might be ready for that immediately after our initial meeting was too good to be true.

It wasn't true. She merely meant I should knock on her door to say hello. Our relationship had peaked in a few seconds of sordid fantasy. Since that afternoon I have conveniently blocked from my mind the names of both the boy who shared our tea and the man she ultimately married.

I found it far more difficult to appreciate the male undergraduates than I did Liza. These kids, three or four years younger than those of us who had already attended an American university, seemed stuck up for no reason at all. They had not particularly distinguished them-

selves in any extra-curricular endeavour, they had no visible special talents, and they seemed to lack any winning personality beneath their smugness. Only in time did we realize that the reason these boys acted as if they ran the country is that one day they would.

I never felt completely as one with these Oxford brethren. I tended to keep with my slightly older fellow foreigners whether they be from America, Australia or Africa, and only befriended a few underclassmen. My first British friend was Alastair MacGregor, who being Scottish perhaps knew what it was like to be visiting another planet. Ali realized I was an alien and needed to be personally introduced to British customs. He invited me to his home outside Glasgow for Hogmanay, when I was treated to the sight of three generations of family circling the living room drunkily to Perry Como's 'Delaware'. After midnight we young high lifers drove to Edinburgh for another party. Around 3am, feeling melancholy at holiday time for the friends I had left behind in New Hampshire, I paced up and down the Royal Mile, brimming with excitement when I spotted an eatery named The Country Fare, the name of a favourite restaurant in the Dartmouth area, and marvelling at more broken bottles and vomit than I had ever seen on any street in any city.

Alastair's mother was a gracious host. Her generosity continued to manifest itself long after the serving of a delightful dinner. As Ali and I prepared for bed the first night of our visit she sweetly enquired if I would like a hot water bottle. I thought this one of the most eccentric questions ever asked me. I had long stopped taking cuddly toys to bed, and did not feel the need to snuggle up to a pulsating piece of plastic. But when I politely declined the offer Alastair said 'Yes, please', and I realized I may have made a major mistake. 'Perhaps I should,' I corrected myself, still having no idea what use a hot water bottle could possible have in bed. Only when we retired did I learn that Scotland is a country where they turn the heat off at night.

That first autumn I cycled all over the Oxford area, at

one point leaning my bike against a stone wall and taking a peek around the corner to see what was there. I was astonished to see what looked like Disneyland East and turned out to be Blenheim Palace. I had no idea a building and grounds so attractive existed, let alone on the other side of a wall against which I was resting. On another cycling jaunt I was jolted to discover the Oxford Crematorium, my first.

One day I called on my courage and cycled out to Radio Oxford hoping to get an air shift. I parked my bike outside the studios. Without an appointment I walked up to the receptionist and said 'Excuse me, I'm wondering if I could do anything for you. I've managed a commercial radio station.'

The middle-aged woman was not impressed by my youthful bravado. She simply asked 'Are you an American?'

'Yes – '

'Then we can't employ you. You'd take the job of an English person.'

It had never occurred to me that I might be barred from broadcasting on grounds of nationality. Competence, yes. My surname, maybe. But my nationality? This had to be some sort of stunt –

'Could I speak to the General Manager, please?' In the case of something that mattered so much to me I was prepared to be pushy.

'Certainly,' the receptionist shrugged with a nonchalance that suggested she'd been through this hopeless routine every day of her working life.

The response was prompt. 'May I help you?' a bespectacled gentleman with an Oxbridge accent enquired.

I repeated my question and to my dismay he restated the receptionist's objection. There was no point in my submitting a demonstration tape or having an audition. I was an American, and I could not be hired. After a lightning tour of the facilities, during which I noted the Radio Oxford record library was substantially smaller than WDCR's, I pedalled back down the Banbury Road. Inappropriately, the sun was still shining.

It might seem odd that as an Oxford student I felt the need to broadcast. It wasn't a paid job I was seeking; my Keasbey scholarship was generous and my father was always kindly on call in case I had a financial crisis. I simply wanted to continue the activity I had come to love at Dartmouth, and Oxford did not have a student radio station. Indeed, the general standard of extra-curricular activities at my new university was lower than it had been in Hanover.

Part of this could be explained by the greater wealth of the Ivy League and part was due to the industriousness of American students. Brought up to think optimistically in an achievement-oriented society, they loved to do things without thought of waiting for a 'proper' time of life. The typical Oxford undergraduate seemed to want to live the life of a gentleman and would not think of doing anything as crude as starting a quasi-professional company. I came to expect, rather than be surprised, that, for example, *The Cherwell* was inferior to *The Dartmouth* or Jim Fallows' *Crimson*. The biggest thrill that Oxford student newspaper gave me came when one of the editors suddenly fled to India.

The lack of a quality radio outlet made me feel unemployed at the age of twenty-one. I decided to get up off the canvas and fight again. I would go in to the London office of *Rolling Stone* and see if I could do freelance features to add to my occasional singles reviews. I arranged an appointment to see the local editor, Andrew Bailey.

Karl Marlantes gave me a lift into London in his second-hand post office van. We left the car near Park Royal underground station – for a first year student Karl knew a lot about inner London parking restrictions – and we took the Piccadilly Line into town. The *Rolling Stone* office was located on Newman Street, a ten-minute walk from the Piccadilly Circus tube station.

I felt totally inadaquate for the job before I even walked into the office. The receptionist, a blonde with no bra, was rolling her own joint. These people are too hip for me, I thought. I can't compete.

It turned out I didn't have to. I was welcomed in a most friendly way and shown in to Andrew Bailey, who sitting behind his desk in the centre of the office flanked by two aides seemed like The King of Cool with his courtiers. Everyone was extremely kind and Andrew, as befit the tail end of the hippie era, was extremely laid back. After a few minutes of chat he asked me what I was most interested in. 'Radio,' I answered.

'Why don't you do an article on British radio?'

I did, and it was published.

Broadcasting was in my blood. I wasn't going to let a mere obstacle like being barred from the BBC stop me. I knew that the speaker at our 1970 Directorate Dinner, a UPI Audio newsman, was now running the service's London bureau. I pilgrimaged to 8 Bouverie Street, just off Fleet Street, and asked if I could work part-time for the chief, Art McAloon, and his colleague Roger Norum. To my delight, they said yes.

For two happy months I went down to London once or twice a week to file voice reports for American syndication. It thrilled me beyond words that I was reading my own copy in London and it was being received and broadcast in Hanover. I hoped my DCR buddies would be proud and impressed, and I felt we were still sharing important experiences.

That was romantic twaddle. What I was actually doing was taking stories from British publications and Radio 4 and rephrasing them for American consumption, sometimes using actuality material from the BBC under an agreement the Corporation had with UPI. This all took place in a one-room office with a tiny adjacent studio. Even when I did do a cut longer than a minute, a feature on decimalization that ran about two and a half, I used interview material from Radio 4 rather than stalk the streets with a tape recorder. And, of course, Art and Roger rightfully kept the hard news stories for themselves, leaving me with 'kicker' tales like the department store Santa Claus who ran after and tackled an assailant and the disastrous opening night of a follow-up to *Hair*, *Isabel's a Jezebel.*

Still, it was professional broadcasting. I would sometimes get up in the dark and struggle to Oxford station for the first fast morning train to London. I was using real UPI equipment with men we'd aired ourselves at WDCR. And I was coping, heaven knows how, when in Art and Roger's absence I had to feed the circuit to send our stories to New York. This technical feat was as terrifying as turning on the DCR transmitter had been in the summer of 1967, and I still don't know how I fudged my way through it.

My part-time stint provided my family's local Connecticut paper with an unlikely story. On my father's birthday in December 1970, he was having his morning bath when he heard a report of mine on his favourite station, WOR-New York. Soaking wet and flapping around, he shouted for my mother to join him in listening to the transatlantic transmission. Dad told the story to the local paper, which headlined the item 'Son's London Job Brings Birthday Joy'.

The joy was short-lived for me. UPI Audio could only use me until I had earned a certain sum. After that I would have to be reported to the tax and immigration authorities and a proper work permit applied for. I couldn't accept full-time employment while in the country as a student and the company couldn't waste a precious work permit on a part-timer.

I was stymied again. This time there seemed no alternatives.

18

One hundred and twenty inches of snow had fallen at Dartmouth during my last year there. I loved the crisp and clear Alpine conditions. The drizzle and low cloud that plagued Oxford in early 1971 constituted an aesthetic disaster in comparison. I felt deprived of natural beauty I had naively considered my birthright. To make matters more miserable a lengthy post office strike prevented normal mail deliveries that season. Only an American Air Force officer studying at Balliol came to our rescue, allowing each of us two pieces of mail per week through his military box. That winter I corresponded only with my family and my successor at the helm of the Dartmouth radio station, John Marshall.

One night I placed a call to John at WDCR. He described the annual changeover banquet that marked his Directorate's retirement and Bill Downall's assumption of the General Manager's position. As soon as I hung up I felt an unusual uneasiness. In the weeks that followed this feeling grew more intense and became more frequent. With John gone from WDCR and a group of yet younger friends at the helm I was another step gone from my own beloved past. Not only had I left New Hampshire for good, I had unintentionally changed countries. My entire present was now in Britain, not America, and there was no continuity for me to re-enter in the States.

It was Dartmouth classmate Bob Harrington who had originally suggested I go to Oxford for a 'two-year paid vacation'. He had been wrong, as he himself admitted when he gave up managing a magazine in California

and returned east. Success can bring geographical moves one is not prepared for emotionally. This was no vacation, this was a self-created identity crisis.

I was overwhelmed with feelings requiring emotional adjustments. The anxiety became so great I briefly nodded off many times during a day just to escape the pain of being conscious. Several Univ classmates, particularly a fervent Christian named Bill Wright, were sympathetic during this time of trial, but the problems I faced were ones I had to overcome myself. At the suggestion of the extremely helpful College Chaplain David Burgess I took a year off to calm down and figure out what to do next.

I have never known such suffering as I experienced that year. My months back in the States included two stints in hospital for chemical treatment of emotional distress. To tell this tale in detail would require taking a completely different tone than that of this book. The characters would be of a different sort, too. Instead of striving like my Dartmouth and Oxford friends to achieve distinction in professions approved by others, my fellow patents were fighting for a personal prize, their own sanity.

Just as regular hospitals treat various physical disorders under one roof, mental hospitals deal with the entire range of emotional problems. During my treatment I came to know unhappy people with a catalogue of invisible ailments.

It is difficult to relate case histories without depriving patients of their dignity, since their agony seems absurd in print. The young woman who swallowed drain cleaner in an attempt to take her life but only succeeded in rotting her stomach so she could never again eat solid food seems a natural candidate for derision. A healthy person might assume that such daft behaviour would logically have a gruesome result. But the consumption of the crazy cocktail was not fundamentally a physical act but an emotional one. In an anguished state because of her private pain she felt compelled to head for the nearest exit. The drain cleaner bottle seemed the way

out. It did not terminate her existence but instead had a lasting physical effect, adding a new dimension to her misery. I learned from briefly living with several would-be suicides, at least one of whom was eventually successful, that their self-destructiveness was not motivated by a reasoned desire to leave the earth but by a desperate need to escape inner anguish. Because private pain is invisible their acts always seem bizarre to the healthy outsider, who sees only the horror of the deed.

Survivors always aver that one has to have 'been there' to understand how a person could attempt such a terrible thing. I was 'there' for a time but never tried to take my life. Some nights as I lay in the New Haven, Connecticut guest room of Tom and Peggy Picton, friends I had made while Tom and I were fellow patients, I found myself thinking 'It can't end now. *I can't have peaked at twenty.*' As odd as this might sound a reason for going on, it sustained me. I had looked with derision upon Dartmouth alumni who came back to campus fifty years later, gathered on the college green, and bayed school songs at the moon, crying to space that their best years had been spent on the Hanover plain. My pride was such I could not admit they might have been right after all. No matter how accomplished I had been as an undergraduate, it must not have been the summit of my life.

Working in a New Haven bank after my hospitalization in the city kept me busy. It also kept me on the roads. I look back at my daily fifty-mile round-trip commute on Interstate 95 between Westport and New Haven with dismay. Doctors had me on so many drugs my body had become a medical gymnasium. A virtual zombie behind the wheel, I was zapping around southern Connecticut at sixty miles an hour. How I avoided an accident I will never know. That there are undoubtedly a few drivers out there right now in the condition I was then is one of the reasons I dread motorway travel.

I also shiver when I consider my eventually demonstrated allergy to several drugs. Over-medication may have prolonged my distress rather than shortened it. When I returned to Oxford in the autumn of 1972 Dr

Phyllis Shaw, who counselled at the Warneford Hospital, reacted with horror when I showed her my drugs. When I said I had fallen down shaking with slight seizures outside my front door and in the middle of Oxford High Street, she ordered me to stop taking the tranquillizers I had been prescribed in America. The seizures ceased and my mood gradually improved as I worked out my difficulties in what patients on the inside call 'the outside'.

It is impossible to return to the emotional state I was in those years ago. The depths of the mind are off-limits to all but those mired in them. Now I never take life and health for granted. I am grateful for every meal and every morning. Perhaps this is one reason I rarely feel professional pressure. Success or failure are secondary to the great gift of being alive.

Because I am past my private pain I find that when I do think of my troubled times I consider my fellow patients more than I did when we were together. Though we all offered each other valuable solace we were too wrapped up in ourselves to fully appreciate our friendship. I particularly recall one beautiful teenage boy who confided that he had come up with the perfect suicide plan. He would board a long distance commercial flight, go to the toilet and swallow a fatal dose of drugs, and then return to his seat. Thirty thousand feet above and many miles from the nearest hospital, he would be certain to die. I sometimes wonder whether he ever executed his scheme. Though he would now be over thirty, he remains to me the symbol of young people driven to self-extinction before their time.

My interest in music did not flag during my illness. On my dangerous daily drive I paid particular attention to New Haven radio stations WAVZ and WNHC. Like most community stations they charted some singles that never became big national hits. Two tasteful examples were Paul Williams' 'Waking Up Alone' and Ronnie Dyson's 'When You Get Right Down To It'. The latter was the all-time example of a record starting classically and ending chaotically. The haunting instrumental

introduction was sufficient to make the listener want to hear the record again and again, but the inconclusive rumpus of a fade discouraged him or her from buying it.

No matter how troubled I was I always looked forward to penning another piece for *Rolling Stone*. I was thrilled that I was now the paper's main singles reviewer. Never until this moment has it occurred to me the editors might have been less than thrilled had they known that some of their copy was being penned from inside a mental hospital, but since much of the publication's contributions were sent through the mail they could have come from anywhere.

It was a big moment for me when I was given nearly a full page for my year-end evaluation of 1971's singles. My next milestone with *Rolling Stone* came with my first lead music piece in the autumn of 1972. I had just returned to Oxford and proposed to Andrew Bailey that I cover Lou Reizner's all-star stage production of *Tommy*. Just when it seemed the Who had made the most of their classic rock opera, performing it on tour and even at New York's Metropolitan Opera House, others leapt in to present it in different forms. Record producer Reizner's scheme was to record a version with the London Symphony Orchestra and then have the LSO and star singers perform the piece at the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park.

After interviewing Lou and leading lights from the orchestra I attended a news conference featuring stars of the show. It is the only occasion on which I shamelessly used my position to influence a woman I wanted to bed.

I was in hot pursuit of female company at this point, having lost my virginity at Oxford in 1971 to a female visitor from Dartmouth whom I will call Miss Europe because of her origins. I had been completely unaware that I had earned the attentions of such an attractive and affectionate girl while at Hanover. It turned out to be due to my ten pin bowling prowess. The young woman's previous lover had been one of our radio station clan. Together we had occasionally trooped to the lanes on Lyme Road. One night I bowled a 210 out of the

possible 300. This fluke feat inexplicably thrilled her. Whenever we went there again she would say in her fractured English 'Bowl for me the 200 score'.

On my first trip to London I dropped in to the Piccadilly Lanes on Shatfesbury Avenue and bowled an exact 200. I sent my score sheet to Miss Europe as a friendly joke. I later learned she had hung it in her room. I also was told she had taped over her bed a copy of a poem I had playfully sent her boyfriend. A British Prime Minister had written it to his beloved, whose name Miss Europe shared. She thought it was a personal tribute from me. Still, misunderstanding must have its merits if it can lead to a good result.

I went to London to meet the travelling Miss Europe at Paddington Station. We walked in Hyde Park and then dined in an Italian restaurant a hundred yards from the flat where I later lived for seven years. Returning to Oxford on British Rail we had just settled into a glorious cuddle when over my guest's shoulder I spied the Master of University College, Lord Redcliffe-Maud. Never had I felt so caught with my hand in the cookie jar. Here I was, publicly groping a foreigner in a second-class carriage of a passenger train during term time. I feared the Master's wrath.

Instead his face lit up beatifically as if to say 'Well done, my son.' He never mentioned the incident.

That night I slept with a woman for the first time. I learned it was true that Oxford scouts looked the other way when their charges had female visitors. Another elder who approved of our liason was the father of a friend who put us up the following night in their Regent's Park terrace. Not only did he insist we spend the night in my absent friend's bed, he pumped me for information the next morning as to what had transpired.

I had my first homosexual experience in equally unpredictable circumstances. In the hospital where I was confined in Vermont in mid-1972, and I use the verb 'confine' because the doors were locked at night, we had a patient in his early twenties who would sometimes suddenly assume a glazed expression. He would then

grope one of us. It was irrelevant to the boy whether his subject was male or female. We never figured out if this ritual was a genuine symptom of illness or an ingenius excuse for a feel.

Nearly all the young patients were eventually groped. I received my unexpected advance one night while in my small individual bedroom. When the lad staggered in looking like James Arness in *The Thing* I knew my time had come. I ejaculated after a brief fully-clothed feel, but was so drugged out I shrugged off the incident as being all in a day's hospitalization. The emotional and erotic feelings I had for absent friends were of more import to me than a trivial one-off.

By the time I took a student teacher named Candy to the *Tommy* press conference I was in an Italian stallion phase. But instead of being impressed with my conversational style with the stars, Candy kept gurgling 'Richie Havens looked at me! He kept looking at me! I know he wants me!'

This reversal did not stop me from having a memorable one-night stand with Candy. On the train from Waterloo to Richmond she told me she needed love because of a tense family life that included a lesbian relationship with her young sister. When we finally did climb into bed she pulled off a wig.

The *Tommy* piece was the beginning of my greatest period at the paper. During 1973 I had more by-lines than anyone else. Admittedly many of these pieces were singles columns and album reviews, not major articles like those of Hunter Thompson and Tom Wolfe. But I did score my first cover story in 'The *Rolling Stone* Interview: Elton John'.

The dramatic billing 'The *Rolling Stone* Interview' had special meaning in the early years of the paper. Few publications featured definitive question-and-answer sessions with top rock stars, and those that did lacked the access of *Stone*. Many writers would love to score a *Rolling Stone* interview assignment.

Those of us in Britain had the geographical proximity to English rock stars the American offices lacked. It

occurred to me in the winter of 1973 that while everyone was marvelling at the ascendancy of Stevie Wonder, a London-based star had become the world's greatest record seller. Elton John had just come off his first American number one, 'Crocodile Rock', and was at the top of album charts around the world with *Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only the Piano Player*. Furthermore, a second single from the set, 'Daniel', was climbing internationally. I knew that Elton was a logical candidate for the *Rolling Stone* Interview. I also knew he felt strongly about 'Daniel', a ballad his record company had considered so uncommercial it had, according to Elton, resisted its release. The pianist had promised he would pay advertising costs for the single if it did not reach the top ten. Surely this was the time to offer him a soapbox. Andrew Bailey agreed. My only problem was finding Elton.

The enthusiasm of the young sometimes knows no etiquette. This was one of those times. I was surprised to see John in the audience at a Bee Gees concert in the Royal Festival Hall. During the interval I followed him out of the hall and into the Gentlemen's room. I had the gracelessness to actually ask him for an interview while he was standing at a urinal. He later told me he was surprised at this violation of sanctuary, but he had the manners to remain civil, asking me to direct enquiry to his record company press officer, Helen Walters. I was too keen and naive to realize this was a customary aversion ploy. She could simply tell me he was too busy to answer questions and that would be the end of the matter.

What I didn't know was that Helen considered the interview a great idea. She badgered Elton until he agreed to do the piece. I met him at the Wardour Street offices of the Rocket Record Company he and some associates were starting and we were driven to his home in Virginia Water. Photographer Phil Franks had already taken some pictures of lyricist Bernie Taupin, Elton's songwriting partner. We settled in for a lengthy session that remains the happiest interview I've ever done. Elton and Bernie hadn't talked at length together in some

time, and I got the benefit of their excitement at exchanging news and views. During the course of the discussion Elton's penchant for hilarious debunking of himself and other artists was greatly in evidence. When back at Oxford I finished the 120-page transcript, I knew I had a winner. I gave the piece to Andrew Bailey and awaited canonization by our publisher, Jann Wenner.

Helen Walters, equally pleased, asked me out to lunch to thank me. Andrew then told me that the arrival of my piece at *Rolling Stone's* San Francisco headquarters had sent the office into minor turmoil. An influential writer there had wanted to do the big Elton interview when the artist toured America later in the year. He was irate, expecially since it turned out Andrew had not won complete approval for me to do the article in the first place.

I went to lunch with Helen Walters not daring to tell her the entire affair might have been a complete waste of time. Fortunately our conversation did not touch on when the piece would run, since she had brought along her husband John, former member of the Alan Price Set and now John Peel's producer at BBC Radio 1. Few matters of little consequence to John Walters are ever discussed in his presence. He is a raconteur who exhausts fellow conversationalists with both the hilarity and length of his stories. Over dessert Walters switched the tense of his talk to the future. In the autumn, six months hence, he would be starting a weekly rock magazine programme on Radio 1. He wanted to include a ten-minute look at the London rock scene from the perspective of an American. Would I be interested in writing and presenting this piece?

It was like Scott McQueen asking me if I'd like to compile the Tri-Town Top 25. I had fought as hard as I could for a year to get a position in British radio; I had despaired of ever doing so for two years. Now I was being handed one on a plate. Yes, I told Walters, trying not to leave my seat and hit the roof in my exhiliration. 'Have you had any radio experience?' he asked. I could not believe the turn of events. I had been refused even an

audition when I had presented myself as a former commercial radio station manager. Now I was being invited on national radio without my prospective producer knowing if I had any prior experience at all.

In late September 1973, I ventured to the BBC near Oxford Circus to record my pilot piece. *Rolling Stone* had run my Elton and Bernie interview as a cover story to coincide with John's summer tour of the States, so there was no embarrassment in greeting Walters. He turned me over to producer Tony Wilson and in the third floor studio of Egton House, home of Radio 1, I read my written piece. It included four or five brief breaks for topical tunes, including Al Green's 'You Ought to Be With Me' and Helen Reddy's 'I Am Woman'. At the end I waited, expecting measured criticism from Wilson. 'Fine,' he said. 'That's it.'

And that was it. The pilot piece was broadcast in the first edition of *Rockspeak* the following week. I was on the radio again. For a full two years the magnitude of Radio 1's importance did not occur to me. I was just glad to be working for another radio station.

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During the period October 1973 to June 1974 I juggled the careers of student and media man. I would go into London three or four times a week for *Rolling Stone* or Radio 1, but the quality of my academic work improved rather than suffered. The alternation of activities seemed to inspire rather than sap me. I also enjoyed the house in which I spent my last two Oxford years three miles to the west of the town centre on Cumnor Hill. Here my three housemates and I would have meals together and trek into the overgrown garden on pruning expeditions.

As exams approached I found I actually liked the study of philosophy. I thrilled to the brilliance of tutor Gareth Evans. One day I saw him grow impatient in a revision class and go into what can only be called intellectual overdrive, leaving we mental midgets behind as if he had just flown to Mars under his own power. In one study session with the Dartmouth Rhodes Scholar Jesse Spikes and his neighbour I got the heady feeling that this was what it was like to have a scholarly philosophical conversation, an exhilaration I am afraid to say I have never felt before or since.

We took our exams in June 1974. The ordeal was a test of one's wrist as much as knowledge. Many of us had routinely typed essays as we did personal correspondence. To write by hand for three hours employed muscles which had almost atrophied from disuse.

Our nerves were under pressure before as well as during the finals. The student psychiatric clinic prepared extra beds in anticipation of breakdowns and anxiety attacks. I took this as a personal challenge to remain

sane. Twice in April I woke up in the middle of the night seized by the silent fear that in defiance of overwhelmingly favourable odds I might be one of the handful of students who failed.

A strategy was in order. I monitored my optimal study time, the number of hours I could revise before I began to lose concentration. Excluding meal breaks, trips to the toilet and time spent daydreaming, my optimum was four hours per day. For the rest of term I crammed every day for four hours and then stopped. I could pursue an evening's or even late afternoon's entertainment without fear or guilt that I really should be memorizing the members of Disraeli's cabinet.

Some of my classmates could not take a calm approach. One longed to be a philosophy don, and to do so had to achieve a First Class degree. Extremely edgy, he contracted diarrhoea while sitting in the examination room. It was a tribute to his brilliance that he was able to write First Class answers in between desperate dashes to the toilet.

I won a Second. All my results were between Beta and Beta-Alpha. This seemed to say more about my ability to take examinations than my knowledge of any one subject, as the odds against my being equally educated in every paper were astronomical. I was quite happy to wind up in what my tutor Maurice Shock called 'the top of the Second Class', bearing in mind his previous remark that all the students he'd known who had gone on to do well in the wider world had achieved high Seconds, not Firsts. I am now the proud possessor of an M.A. in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Since candidates in this course only had to study two of the three subjects I find myself with an M.A. in Economics without ever having taken an Economics course in my life, which must be some sort of record.

When people now ask how I enjoyed Oxford, I reply that 'enjoy' is an inappropriate word. One cannot be said to have enjoyed the most miserable period of one's life. But I find a special savour in returning for visits. I walk the streets where I fought and won my hardest battle,

the struggle to adjust to a new way of life, and am humbled that with the help of people like David Burgess and Phyllis Shaw I was able to make the transition. It is more than just their legacy that lives inside me from my Oxford days. In my work I apply the discipline of writing essays on a deadline to writing scripts; I read *The Economist* every week; and sometimes – just sometimes – I eat cucumber sandwiches.

By the time I received my exam results it was the middle of summer and I was happily living at 1 Wilton Street, London SW1 with two Oxford friends, Alastair MacGregor and Steve Kirrage. I told members of my family the nearest residence to our left was Buckingham Palace, but I did not tell them that the National Coal Board stood between us and Them.

Our landlady bore the exquisitely inappropriate name Miss Tenant. She was generally lenient, though she did enjoy making reconnaissance missions to our kitchen and moaning 'How can you stand to live in such squalor?' In fact we recent graduates were just beginning to learn tidiness and etiquette. Indeed, Steve was the epitome of a British gentleman. 'I wouldn't advise going into the bathroom at this time,' he announced one evening. 'It's rather anti-social in there at the moment. I had mortadella for lunch.'

Our tenancy with Miss Tenant coincided with an IRA bombing campaign. Several nearby sites, including Edward Heath's home across the street, were considered prime targets. On one occasion I watched the evening news and saw there had been a blast at a club off Pall Mall. Without fear, and in hindsight I would have to say without sense, I ran over to see the debris.

One night at Wilton Street I received a telephone call from Boston. The previous summer I had devised an oldies list and rotation system for the city's most listened to station, WBZ, where my WDCR colleague Dave Graves was Executive Producer. Now Graves was being promoted. Would I return to America and take his job?

I had to say yes. The opportunity to enter American commercial radio at such a high level was rarely offered.

Unless I gave WBZ a try I would always be wondering 'What if?' At least I would know quickly if radio management in the United States was to my liking. My superior friends at Radio 1 – that is to say, my superiors who were also my friends – were very understanding and agreed I should give it a go. I would continue to send my American commentary and interviews to *Rock Week*, the new name for *Rockspeak*, via the BBC's New York office. I would conclude my special series of talks, *All-American Heroes*, the same way.

I thought I was leaving England for a long time and did not have the financial resources to visit in the foreseeable future. I held a farewell party at *Rolling Stone*, a shindig distinguished by the conduct of a record company promotion man, previously considered heterosexual, who shoved his hand down my trousers and cried 'Give us a fuck!' Moments afterward he set off the fire alarm. A few years later he had several hit records as an artist.

He should have come to Boston with me to provide light relief. My misadventures in that town were a catalogue of catastrophes. Shortly after my acceptance of the WBZ offer but before assuming my post my assistant Beverly Mire was stabbed in the back while in the laundromat by a wailing woman wielding an icepick. She suffered a collapsed lung and required a month's hospitalization.

When I arrived in Boston I was indirectly involved in several other unhappy incidents. After having been housed for nearly a fortnight by disc jockey Ken Shelton and his wife Eve I found a fine one-bedroom apartment on Commonwealth Avenue, the main drive in the fashionable Back Bay. The flat was unfurnished, and I spent my first night sleeping on a cot I had borrowed from another deejay, Robin Young. The cot collapsed in the early morning hours and I spent the rest of the night on the floor. Next day I was informed that despite my uncomfortable position I had slept through the arrival of several fire engines fighting a blaze next door.

Within a week I was given the use of a family car by my parents. This was essential, since the WBZ

radio/television complex was on the periphery of town and ill-served by public transport. I had not yet found a regular parking space, a coveted commodity in Boston, so parked the car in front of my apartment.

I should have remembered Woody Allen's *Sleeper*. Awaking two hundred years after an operation, he realizes he should have known he was too lucky getting a parking place near the hospital. I rose at 7.30 and looked out the bay window to see a car on top of my car. After dressing hurriedly I raced outside to learn that during the night a drunken teenager in a stolen station wagon had come speeding down Commonwealth Avenue. He ploughed into the car behind mine, forcing it to mount my vehicle.

The owner of the other car saw no humour in the obscene coupling of our vehicles. Blissfully unaware of what had occurred while she slept, she exited her building and let out a blood-curdling scream of horror.

There was nothing either of us could do standing there moaning, so we decided to leave the matter in the hands of the police. We each went to work. We should have known better than to think our troubles were over. That night I returned to find two parking tickets on my windscreen, one for my car and the other for the one on top. The police were of no help in getting my car repaired. Why should they have been? I was still perfectly healthy and they had the murder of a young woman down the street to investigate.

Getting an estimate and a repair job for the automobile was not the end of my motoring worries. My radio aerial was snapped off by vandals, an inconvenience that befell anyone stupid enough to leave an antenna up. More bothersome were my ultimate parking arrangements. I finally found a parking space in an alley, one I paid for handsomely, but it was only for the hours excluding weekdays 9 to 5. That period belonged to someone else who worked in the area and paid his own sum to the landowner. The arrangement usually caused no problems, as I was away at WBZ those eight hours. But one morning I was terribly ill with flu and still had to drag

myself out of bed to move the car. A doctor might have recommended I stay in bed all day, but every two hours I had to leave the apartment to feed the meter.

One night I returned home from a cinema to be greeted loudly by my landlord. 'Is that you, Paul?' he boomed from the top floor to the foyer. I thought he must be untypically lonely. He was not so sociable with his tenants that he would risk a sore throat merely to say hello. I realized what he was doing when I heard footsteps down the rear exit. My apartment had been broken into, and rather than risk a face-to-face confrontation with weapon wielders, he was letting them know that others were present who would soon be entering the flat.

The landlord and I met on the second floor landing and entered my room together in time to look out the window and see a white girl and a black boy loading my television into a car. They were young teenagers. At least they had been scared away in the midst of their looting and had left my stereo. My front door, however, had been ingeniously vandalized. In true American fashion, I had put two different locks and a chain on the door. In true American criminal fashion, they had circumvented these obstacles by chiselling around the locks and swinging the door open.

The cavalcade of crime went on. I had a joyful reunion interview with Elton John at the hotel behind our block but someone stole my tape recorder, making me the first person in history to lose money on an interview with Elton. Someone drove across the lawn in front of the apartment, leaving a signature of treadmarks across the small plot of grass. I witnessed and took cover from a shoot-out between police and a suspect one street away. Wondering whether I would be shot, burned, plundered or smashed out of Boston, I realized the fates were trying to tell me something. That something was to get out of Boston, pronto.

Events at WBZ were hardly more encouraging. I had entered a political cauldron in which two of the four main executives were trying to squeeze out a third. It was assumed I would side with the pair. Inconveniently,

I reported directly to the hapless hit list victim and felt great sympathy for his plight, more so when I visited his home. He and his wife were Catholics, and she had borne so many children they could have staged *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* without hiring any extras. Their house was non-stop bedlam, and the woman herself showed evidence of a former beauty gone to fat from nearly constant pregnancy.

Trying to give a man like this the push was more serious than merely keeping a bad broadcaster off the air at WDCR. I did not relish the prospect of using this type of management power. I was also put off when I realized what my reward for good work at WBZ would probably be. Promotion within the Westinghouse network was almost always from station to station rather than within one facility. There was every chance that after a stint as WBZ Executive Producer I could wind up Programme Director of WOWO in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was another possible destination.

After leaving high school I had always chosen my environment. To go to Dartmouth, Oxford, London and even Boston had been my decisions. To be forced to move to a cultural backwater in the name of business promotion would make me extremely unhappy. After Hanover I was seeking to rediscover *querencia*, a union of self and place, and I would never find it in a city I didn't choose myself.

The end of the rainbow didn't look that attractive anyway. I was shown around corporate headquarters in New York near Grand Central Station. The offices were depressingly institutional and impersonal for my rurally-honed standards. It seemed pointless to embark on a years-long circuit of cities with Westinghouse affiliates if ascending into corporate heaven meant taking the elevator to stuffy offices.

The WBZ job proved nothing that I expected anyway. Almost immediately upon arrival I was asked to sack all human beings on WBZ-FM, the sibling station with fewer staff and listeners than the AM. I was to get esti-

mates for the full automation of the FM and dispense with the people. I found turning a waveband into nothing more than a jukebox with one deejay's pre-recorded voice a disagreeable assignment. This was not broadcasting, it was just the cheapest way to continue transmissions. More personally, to sack all humans would mean firing Ken Shelton, my benefactor during my first few days in Beantown. I simply would not do it.

I was equally unhappy with my tasks on the AM. WBZ, the flagship of the network, was highly profitable in a year when Westinghouse was having a bad time in the electrical appliance division. Revenues from broadcasting had to be kept high for the sake of the corporation's health. We were consequently deterred from making any significant changes in programming. Current musical selections on the morning and afternoon programmes were limited to about thirty and determined by a committee on which music buff Beverly Mire and myself were two minority members. Ever since the payola scandals of the late fifties the playlist had to be determined by committee to prevent personal favouritism or bribery in the choice of records. Not only did this process keep several good songs that were not bestselling singles off our air, it kept away several bona fide hits that did not 'fit the format'. WBZ was what WDCR would have called 'chicken rock' and would later be known as Adult Contemporary. Diana Ross was playable, for example, but anything too obviously 'black' was out. When 'Fire' by the Ohio Players was the number one record in America I even wore the promotional t-shirt to the music meeting as a visual aid, but it did not help the hit get on to WBZ.

After a late afternoon and early evening news block WBZ turned to talk and phone-in shows. I was instructed to send all producers a memo stating that if someone shot themselves on the air during a phone-in to bleep it out. This followed an incident on a sister station in which, we were told, a man called to complain about his problems. 'I'm out of work,' he moaned, 'and the children are sick.' A loud retort was followed by a second's silence,

then the crescendoing pitter-patter of someone running to the phone. 'My husband's just shot himself,' a breathless woman informed listeners, 'but he's only wounded!'

I was distressed that although talk host Jerry Williams did conduct some worthwhile programmes, a campaign on nutrition being of particular interest, station mentality seemed to be that familiar controversial guests, proven ratings winners, were preferred to calm and considered experts. A famous John F. Kennedy assassination conspiracy theorist and America's best-known atheist, for example, were preferred over more objective but less flamboyant speakers. I was also depressed when assisting Williams on one of his interviews with Senator Edward Kennedy, conducted during a week in Washington. I was shocked by Kennedy's complexion, a redness I realized he had achieved without crayons.

The name of the radio game was, of course, ratings. High figures kept advertising dollars coming in and that kept the parent corporation happy. I learned the lesson that American radio is designed to fill the gaps between commercials in such a mass appeal way as to attract more and more expensive advertisements. This mentality was so far from the public broadcasting spirit of the BBC and the creative freedom we had enjoyed at WDCR that I lost all interest in working in American radio.

This is not to say there weren't some good times. The best were spent with Beverly Mire and Robin Young, two firm friends and the finest example of a deep rapport between women I have seen. Beverly was black, walked with a limp and wore glasses. Robin was white, attractive to men and charismatic. Beverly was witty and world-wise, Robin enthusastic and ambitious. The three of us were great devotees of the Philadelphia International label and its artists the O'Jays, Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes, and Billy Paul. In honour of the Three Degrees' Philadelphia smash 'When Will I See You Again' we referred to a line in the song whenever things

were going well by asking each other 'Is this a precious moment?'

Beverly loved Elton John. She appreciated his flamboyance as well as his music. One evening she and her boyfriend Johnny had a party. Robin entered hidden behind a five-foot high cardboard cutout of Elton, waving a hand at the end of the star's arm, as if Elton were greeting the hostess. Beverly cracked up. I was pleased to be able to introduce Beverly to Elton at the party John held in New York the night John Lennon joined him on stage at Madison Square Garden. She was touched that even on this night of nights Elton was friendly and courteous to a stranger like herself. I was pleased that if only briefly I had been able to bring my London and Boston lives together. That evening I was also aware, as I was during all of Elton's peak period in America, how fortunate I was to be able to watch the world go crazy knowing the perspective of the subject of the adulation.

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I was extremely grateful during my time in Boston for the friendship of Beverly and Robin. I lived alone, and my social life was poor. One night I walked down Commonwealth Avenue wishing I could visit a gay club but not knowing where any were nor how to learn their whereabouts. A couple of years later, having returned to London to live but on a visit to Boston, I accidentally found a gay bar. I had enjoyed a tryst with one of the female players on our London softball team in the Holiday Inn near Government Center. Looking for a place to share a nightcap, we ventured into a bar across the street. I thought it odd the place had neither signs nor windows. It took my infielder friend and I only seconds to note with curiosity that she was the only woman in the place. I was also struck at the disproportionate number wearing checked lumberjack shirts. As we stood at a bar a middle-aged gent who had apparently had a few beverages already looked at my guest a full ten seconds and then cried mournfully '*Why*?' I didn't know the full question and hadn't a clue to the answer, but the desperation in his voice has remained with me since.

One afternoon my old Westport friend Steve Emmett came to visit me at WBZ. I informed him I was partly homosexual.

'Don't give me that,' he dismissed the idea. 'You're the least homosexual person I know.'

As far as he was concerned, that was the end of *that*. He had known me longer than any of my other friends so, presumably, knew me better than any of them.

My major romantic involvement while in Boston was with a woman I had met in Oxford but who was a fellow American. She had enjoyed a brief fling with one of my housemates. One evening we had an enormous party, the kind of do only students have where three-fourths of the guests are complete strangers to three-fourths of the hosts and a few crashers walk in off the street. When most people had left we still had a dozen to spend the night, far more than could be accomodated in four beds. Visitors fell asleep where they may as if sleeping sickness had swept through the building and people had passed out where they stood.

I slept on the living room floor, uncomfortable for slumber but perfect for viewing Virginia when she took off her blouse as she prepared to lie on the couch. Was it the angle, the primitive conditions or her true beauty that filled me with lust as I stared at her either amply filled or artificially padded bra? I had her in and out of my mind for months. When in Boston I invited her to visit. That trip, and one I made to her home state, went well. We decided she should come up for an indefinite stay.

We learn from experience. Inviting someone to live with you when they have no reason for being there except you and you have a busy life that limits the amount of time you can spend with someone else is an invitation to anxiety. As days passed and Virginia ran out of tourist treats she grew moody waiting for me to return home. I became uncomfortable with the weight of her expectations. At first we dissipated some of the tension by trying novel ways of having sex, but there are only so many walls and floors in an apartment.

It only took ten days for the conflict to become unbearable. Virginia returned home. What had been a slowly growing friendship had become an impossibly fraught love-hate relationship. We saw each other again in England, but the best part of the affair, the hopeful part, was behind us. Years later she married. I hope she is happy.

I was to leave Boston soon myself, but not before a

memorable morbid moment. Richard Nixon, who had recently resigned as President, was seriously ill with phlebitis. His death was a possibility. On management instructions I prepared a tape of between ten and fifteen minutes duration to be aired in the event of his demise, giving newsmen a chance to prepare a coherent live programme. I interspersed biographical material with sombre music like Handel's Largo from *Xerxes*, having a deep-voiced newsman read the solemn commentary.

Another newscaster walked into the control room as an engineer was putting the tape on to hear how it began. 'Richard Nixon, 37th President of the United States, is dead,' the reader announced. The reporter decided he had to interrupt programming at once for this sudden flash. Fortunately he had the presence of mind to ask the engineer where he got the tape. Seconds later he was counting his lucky stars, realizing how close he had come to breaking the news of the death of a still living ex-President.

Another communication foul-up brought good news. Stuart Grundy, producer of my BBC *All-American Heroes* series, was in the States working on *The Who Story* for Radio 1. He related that financial problems had forced the network to make cutbacks, including closing down early at night and dropping some deejays. 'This means that we won't be able to start your American hits series yet,' he explained.

He said this quite sadly, as if something was being lost. I had to ask him what series he was talking about. It turned out that in my absence Radio 1 chiefs had agreed with Executive Producer Teddy Warrick that a weekly 90–minute show of current American hits presented by myself would be worth trying. The only twist, I told Stuart, was that no one had asked me if I wanted to do it nor informed me it had been planned. What Stuart had thought would be sad news was instead good tidings. I would soon be offered my own series, to be recorded at WBZ and sent to London through the New York BBC office.

Shortly thereafter a second piece of news clinched my

decision to return to England. Andrew Bailey had been invited by Clive Davis' new Arista Records to be London head of Artists and Repertoire. Jann Wenner needed someone to run *Rolling Stone* affairs in Britain. Knowing all the angles from experience, I was an obvious choice. The Home Office agreed I could enter the United Kingdom once again as London representative of the magazine. While legally in Britain I could broadcast.

Though I was taking a great gamble leaving my home country for what really might be good, I did not hesitate. Because of my unique combination of bad experiences Boston held no appeal for me. I chose what I considered a better place to live and a better system in which to work.

In the spring of 1975 I arrived back in London. I borrowed £20 from Teddy Warrick and another £20 from Alan Price and got started on *Rolling Stone* business. On 27 September, 1975, I did my first Radio 1 American hits show. My life was changing for the better. I owed if not all at least a lot to WDCR, John Walters and the night I met Elton in the john.