What's your story? An experiment in storytelling and film making

Julie Ann Haas

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WHAT'S YOUR STORY?
AN EXPERIMENT IN STORYTELLING AND FILM MAKING

by
Julie Ann Haas

B.M.E. University of Denver, 1991

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

The University of Montana

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Approved by:

[Signatures]

Dean, Graduate School

7-28-06
What's Your Story? An Experiment in Storytelling and Film Making

Chair: Randy Bolton

For my final project I engaged in film making combined with the art of storytelling. I wanted to experience different types of storytelling by many different people, about many different subjects. The storytellers I engaged are not professional actors, but merely individuals from different walks of life, different parts of the country, and at different stages in their life journey. To capture the art of storytelling, I spent several months filming in a documentary type style, different people telling stories. The task was simple: I asked individuals to tell me a story. A funny story was my personal preference, but I gave no specific directions. Some stories were funny, some were entertaining, some were boring, some were dumb, and some were poignant. The point of the project, however, was to capture on film true stories. The unadulterated story. True, yet unbelievable stories. During the process of my filming, I came to the realization that the most entertaining, and captivating stories, were those that had some tragic moment, or some horrifying event associated with it.

Along with storytelling of others, I wanted to extend my creativity and experience my own storytelling process through a series of short stories, and monologue type of writing. I tried to use different types of writing styles in my storytelling, narrative, journalistically, and a diary-type format.

The final step of my project was to create a short film of "storytellers." For this process I had to purchase a new computer, new software, and learn how to use the new equipment. The short film contains text, special effects, and music. Culminating in an organized, funny, and thought provoking short film.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all of the story tellers that I have encountered in my life. My family, friends, coworkers, acquaintances, and students. I especially would like to thank the story tellers who were brave enough to appear in my film, making my final project possible.


To all of the “characters” (whose names have not been changed to protect the innocent) who are featured in my short stories.

To the very smart Apple One on One Professionals who helped me with the Final Cut Express project: Jason, Ian, and especially Miguel who worked with me the most, and taught me the art of Italian Neorealism.

To my sister Lisa Haas, for suggestions and help with my final creative project proposal.

To the University of Montana, for creating the Creative Pulse Degree Program.

To the main instructors of the classes for the Creative Pulse, Randy Bolton, James Kriley, Karen Kauffman, Dorothy Morrison, Rick Hughes.

Finally, to my fellow classmates, who traveled with me through “The Pulse.” May their future journeys be creative, and may they always strive to be a Teacher Artist.
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FINAL CREATIVE PROJECT PROPOSAL

I recognize that what I did in class with my monologue resonated with everyone there and myself, and they were emotionally moved and entertained by it, (as was I.) However, I do not know how to manifest that into a final creative project. I see it as a solo performance piece, or a storytelling type of art form I do not believe it has the capabilities for the style that is used in comedy clubs, or other various forms of comedic entertainment.

Here are some questions I've asked myself when thinking about doing my final creative project: What's my goal for my final project? What's my professor/classmates goal for my final project? If this (monologues) resonates with so many people, why am I resistant to do this? How do I go about creating a solo storytelling performance piece? What do I want to learn? What is my interest in the film video thing?

Here were some answers I came up with: What I did in my monologue was just truth, and no veneer. The monologues are made up of true yet unbelievable stories. The core element is really without a filter. People are quick to say, "Do stand up comedy!" but storytelling in the comedy venue wouldn't fly. The audience needs to laugh within the first 15 seconds. I have no desire to be on stage. I do not want to be a "copycat" of my sister's work. I really want to do something with the video filming/making a movie thing. I come from a family of storytellers, whose stories are tragic, yet entertaining, so I have learned my craft from the best. Capturing on film is honest and funny because we get to see people how they really are. So I've decided to capture a series of stories on film.

For my field project in the previous year, I wrote a "cabaret" show. It began with two characters rehearsing for a show, and then turned into a four character show with previously composed music. I would like to explore the possibilities of that character in a media arts production.
1. **The Intent of the Project:**

I would like to pursue a media arts production project. (Film.) I would like to create a media arts production project where I capture on film a series of stories or monologues as told by myself and various people.

2. **Students background and experience in preparation for the project:**

I have my two weeks of the Media Arts Production class under my belt. I'm planning on purchasing a new Macintosh with Final Cut Express, and learn that program.

3. **Approach, methods, and procedures to be used:**

I am going to capture a ton of stories on film. I will film as much as I can. I will continue to write monologues, my own personal stories and monologues to be used for the process.

4. **Timeline for the project and it’s various phases:**

Between September and December I am going to do the filming. January through May I will complete the project on Final Cut Express using film editing techniques.

5. **Anticipated results and hopes: (inter relate this project to your development as an artist/teacher)**

I hope to be able to create two movies: 1) My documentary of the character from my stage show to practice the filming and editing techniques on, and 2) The movie of monologues. Working with this filming technique will enhance my abilities with technology and I will be able to use more filming for my own personal use, and integrate it into the classroom with the opera productions and grade level programs.

6. **Bibliography of a variety of types of resources to be utilized:**

Canon video camera, PowerBook G4, Final Cut Express, People.
"You have got to write a book!" John Brasaemle said to me one day during lunch. For some reason, we had gotten on the topic of death, and I had just told him about how my Uncle was taking pictures of my great grandmother in her casket, and was so drunk he knocked the casket over. My mother, foreboding of what was to come, kept screaming at my sister and I. "LISA! JULIE! COME OVER HERE! COME OVER HERE NOW!" She didn't want us to witness the body falling out of the casket which might cause us undue emotional stress in our later years.

"What do you mean?" I questioned him.

"You have got to write down the stories that you're constantly telling me."

"Stories? I'm not telling stories!" I exclaimed, beginning to feel a rush of indignation. "I didn't make that up! That's what really happened!"

"Unbelievable!" said John. "Your stories are so amazing they just can't be true."

"I'm not joking. " I said.

"I should have been writing them down all of these years. I could be making some money." John said.
INTENT

The archetypal story unearths a universally human experience, then wraps itself inside a unique, culture-specific expression.

Storytelling. One of the oldest forms of communication. Passed down from generation to generation. Storytelling is how people connect with one another, even if there are uncomfortable truths. Some stories are silly, some contain a lesson to be learned, some are dumb. Stories can be truth or fiction. Sometimes the stories are taken out of the spoken context, and created as a different art form: a painting, an opera, a sculpture, or architecture. One can even find the same story line in different cultures. There is a story to everything and everyone. Everyone seems to have a story to tell. As long as humans exist, and can communicate, whether through language or art, storytelling will exist.

During my experience in the Creative Pulse, I found a way to communicate. A specific form, which seemed to suit me well. With classes in creative writing and acting, I had a chance to experience a type of writing that I never had before. The last time I really spent any time doing any serious writing of any length was in high school. I also engaged in a small amount of writing at the beginning of my Bachelor’s Degree. Towards the end of receiving a degree in music however, there was not much writing to be done, but only performances and playing my horn. So during The Pulse I began to write, and began to write a series of short stories/monologues.

The second year of class, writing was one of the few ways I could communicate. I was unable to walk for most of my second year in The Pulse, due to an ACL surgery that had me non weight bearing for most of the class time. I could not really participate in any physical performances, and had to do most of my work from a chair. So I began to write, and found a great way for my presentations was to tell a story. I wrote in a monologue type style, as I learned in the acting class. I had

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memorized and regurgitated many monologues during my English classes in high school, but had never really written any. Classmates found my monologues funny, and urged me to do stand up comedy. My stories/monologues could have people laughing one moment, and then crying the next. I was able to move an audience through a story with me.

I recognized that what I did in class with my monologues resonated with everyone there and myself, and they were emotionally moved and entertained by it, but I did not know how to manifest that into a final creative project. I saw it as a solo performance piece, or a storytelling type of art form. I did not believe that it had the capabilities for the style that is used in comedy clubs, or other various forms of comedic entertainment. However, I did realize that as I wrote and delivered the stories, there was a certain comic timing I expressed, and a certain quality about the stories. I began to think about how I was delivering the story. I began thinking about how I learned this. This skill must have been learned long ago, and was something that I had been practicing for many years. I then realized that there were so many people in my life that have been storytellers, and they taught me to tell stories. I have learned their comic timing, listening to these people over the years, and I wanted to experience this live. What is the process for a truly good story? What does it contain? What makes it humorous? How is it told? A story is not only what you have to say but how you say it.

I realized that some of the funniest stories I had heard contained one specific element: something traumatic. There is always some tragic moment, some “thing” that happened that is either horrific, sad, unbelievable, or something that makes the story funny and real. Not to discount the tragic moment, or to make light of a sad event, but this moment brings the story home. The highlight, the climax of the story. It is this traumatic event that makes the story funny.

I also wanted to experiment with film making, finding great interest in the Media Arts Class which used Final Cut Express. I took the class the second year due to my interest in learning the program. I then decided that for my final project I wanted

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to do something which involved film. This process would really take me out of my comfort zone, learning something as difficult as filming and editing techniques. I wanted to create a film using stories. I wanted to film these different people in my life, whom I had learned the comic timing from, telling stories. I wanted to work with the special effects of the Final Cut Express program. Captions, music, fading in and out, adding text. The presentation of the story on film. I wanted to be able to move an audience with film, just as well as I moved an audience with a live performance. The intent of my film was to capture just truth, and no veneer. I wanted my storytellers to tell me a true story. Capturing on film is honest and funny because we get to see people how they really are. So I captured a series of stories on film.

I also wanted to write, and continue with the stories and monologues I had started during class time. Struggling with my writing abilities, I wanted to pursue my writing throughout the process of my final project. I wrote many short stories and monologue type stories. As I discuss my final project, I have included in my professional paper many stories that I have written during my time in The Pulse.
I picked up the phone and called my mother. "Well, I said, "I have some bad news. He's been married." Silence was heard from the other end.

"How'd you find that out?" my mother asked disgustedly.

"It was an accident really. I wasn't snooping. I was just trying to get my suitcase open, and there was so much stuff in the room that I had to push some boxes that he had under the desk, and when I bent over I saw this big white album."

My heart sank at that moment. What else could a big white album be? He had never told me he was married. Or been married. Where was the wife now? Did she die? Was he divorced? What in the world was going on?

"I told you something was funny." My mother spoke again. "You don't know anything about him, and you just hopped on a plane and went to see him."

It was the day after I arrived in Washington D.C. to visit a friend from junior high and high school that I had reconnected with through classmates.com. We started e-mailing, and then calling, and our conversations were great. He must have had a better long distance calling plan than me because he did most of the calling and we talked for hours. I realized I had really missed him in the last 17 years. He was always one of my favorite people and one that I regretted not spending more time with. Soon, he invited me out to visit, and since I was going to be taking a class in New York City, it wasn't too hard for me to take the train down to Washington D.C.

Maybe my "fengin and shuing" was paying off. I had been paying special attention to my "love" corner, wanting and hoping for a relationship. The "perfect person for me," I said as I put my intention out to the universe. Pat wasn't a particularly great looking guy, but I always found him attractive. He was a wrestler and soccer player in high school. When I was with him I was always surprised about how big in stature he seemed to me. He didn't disappoint after seventeen years either, now a scuba instructor. Still attractive to me, and in pretty good shape. He had thighs like
tree trunks.

"I thought there was something strange about him in high school." my mother continued. "I always thought he had a drinking problem.......even back then. You'd better look out in the backyard to see if he's got her buried out there."

My next phone call was to my friend Jacquie. "He's been married." I said as I relayed the same story. Her advice was much better than my mother's.

"Well, you know, when I first met Bruce, his marriage had just ended and he was all messed up. Give him some time. I'm sure there's a good reason why he hasn't told you he's been married. Maybe she died, and it's too hard for him to talk about it. If he didn't want you there he wouldn't have invited you. Go to some museums, have a good time. Don't stress out about it and get all weird like you do. I'm sure the subject will come up."

The next call was to my best friend Lisa Appleton. "He's been married. I found the wedding album under the desk."

"OH MY GOD!" She shrieked. "YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF THAT HOUSE RIGHT NOW! You call Mark Steven's, and go and stay with him! For all you know he could still be married and his wife could show up. JUST GET OUT OF THERE!"

My last phone call was to my other best friend Tracy. My fingers were burning from all of the dialing I was doing. For the fourth time I relayed the story.

"Well," she said, taking a long puff on her cigarette. "All I know is, I wouldn't let some studly guy get away from me." She must have been impressed with my description of his thighs.

I listened attentively to all of this advice. One night, after the second week I was in his house, we were talking, and he pulled me down onto his chest as he was lying on the bed. "Pat what's going on?" I asked him tentatively. He told me that he was really messed up right now, going through a lot of personal issues. It was then that I decided to take the advice of Tracy. I didn't know if I'd ever have a chance to be with Pat again, and I took it.
My best friend Frank was a conductor. When he auditioned for the Teaching Assistant spot at DU, he blew everyone away. He jumped off the podium when a bassoon player missed a part, leaping forth to see what the problem was. An incredible musician, an incredible conductor, (which is hard to come by) and an incredible person. Frank knew everything about music. He knew scores, history, instrumentation, everything. He listened to music all of the time. Any question I ever asked him about music he had the answer for. His great love however, was opera. Frank knew everything about any opera ever written. The "Opera Queen," we fondly called him. Frank accepted this title graciously.

The Metropolitan Opera House in New York City broadcasts their matinee production every Saturday during their season. Frank listened to the Met broadcasts every Saturday. Faithfully. At intermission, they had a series called "Opera Quiz." It is a live broadcast with a panel of "experts" who answer opera questions. Listeners of "Opera Quiz" send in questions for the panel of judges to answer. Most of the questions sent in are very inane, and only written by people who are like Frank, Opera Queens who know just as much as the panel of experts. Frank sent in a question every week. Faithfully.

We made our first trip to New York City together in 1994. We purchased tickets to one of Franks' favorite operas, Madama Butterfly by Puccini. We arrived at Lincoln Center, which is the center of the universe. Home of the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet, and the New York Philharmonic. The symbol of everything that is musically good and holy. The place where everyone dreams of performing one day.

Before the opera begins, we trundle down to the orchestra pit, our tickets being in the highest, cheapest level. Frank kneels in front of the orchestra pits, exactly where James Levine the conductor stands. He kneels, prostrates himself, and pays homage. Prays that someday he will be standing on this podium conducting. The
ushers spy us as he exhibits this odd behavior and I look awkwardly on. We leave before the ushers have a chance to escort us back to our proper seats.

We sit through the first act, and I watch Frank as he bawls and croons. Savoring every note as the singers emit it. This is high holy time for Frank. I'm more fascinated with him than the opera. The last note of the first act is still resonating in the air, and Franks turns to me and says, "RUN!" I leap from the chair, climb over the audience members who are still sitting, and begin running through the opera house. I look to Frank to figure out where I am going. I follow him frantically as he barrels through the audience as they empty the auditorium. I turn where he turns, descend stairs when he does, close on his heels in my new Met dress. (A black dress with red buttons and a red sash type material at the bottom. Cool looking, not necessarily sexy, typical style of that year.) Down the stairs we flee, I have no idea how he knows where he is going. He's never been to the Metropolitan Opera House before. Down, down, down, we go, running on the stairs. Suddenly, Frank turns into a hall, probably a place where they public is not supposed to go. There is a classroom up ahead, and Frank pushes his way through. I follow his bulky form. We are the last ones into the already full classroom. We stand at the edge. They door closes behind us. The host of "Opera Quiz" picks up his microphone, and reminds everyone that this is a live taping. Opera quiz begins.
My process was really quite simple, and I seemed to follow my plan closely. There were several months however, throughout the year that I could not actually work on my project due to the enormous amount of time involved in teaching. I spent the first three months after returning from The Pulse talking to the nice computer people at the Apple Store. I had bought a video camera a year earlier, and when I purchased the camera I made sure that I would be able to download video from the camera to regular VHS tapes, and eventually into a computer. The Physical Education teacher at my school helped me pick out this camera, and made sure that I could use a “firewire” with it. That was very important, although I didn’t know what a “firewire” was at the time.

Next I took out a small loan from the National Education Association to purchase my new computer. I tried to cash in on a couple of deals the Apple store was offering, like getting an iPod when you purchase a computer, but I missed out on them. When I bought the computer I didn’t quite have enough money to purchase any of the extra software, but I made sure that the computer I was buying would be able to run the software I would eventually purchase for my project. They assured me that this was the most powerful machine on the market today. The PowerBook G4 can do everything. Then, a little at a time, when I had more money, I purchased the software to go on the computer. AppleWorks, (which replaced ClarisWorks) which is a word processing program, Final Cut Express, to create my video, a Lacie Hard Drive upon which to store the video I would create, Quicken, which I use for my budgeting/financial program, and a new printer with a USB port. My final purchase was an Airport Extreme base station, (a wireless network) so I could move all of my computer equipment down to the basement, my office area, and not have the computer in the kitchen. It took several months to get my airport extreme base station to work with dial up, because I did not want to pay for DSL. Dial up is just fast enough and cheap enough for me. Along with all this software, I also purchased
AppleCare, a program for repair and maintenance, and the best program of all, ProCare. Using ProCare I could receive one on one help at an Apple store. ProCare has been by far the best thing that I purchased. I did not realize at the time the amount of help I would need.

During this whole process of purchasing the new equipment a little at a time, I was using the video camera to film stories. At first, I used the tripod and made the film very official, seating the storyteller in a nice atmosphere. But by the time I went through all of this set up, and then asked the person to tell a story, they were very stiff, and formal, and not very funny. I couldn't use this footage that had great lighting, camera shots, and sound. It just didn't work. So I began to carry my video camera around with me wherever I went. When people began telling stories, I would whip out my camera, turn it on, and ask them to tell it again. Even this way I did lose some of the animation of the storyteller. There is something about a camera being turned on that makes people stiffen up. Sometimes I would be prepared, and no stories were to be told. Sometimes in the most opportune moment, I did not even have the camera. So there were many stories lost over the year.

Another technique I tried was when filming was having a "listener" in the frame. Someone sitting/standing next to the storyteller, who appeared to be listening to the story and responding. After a couple of stories this way, I switched, and had just the storyteller in the frame. After a couple of sessions with the Mac One on One Professionals who gave me some advice on filming, I tried to experiment. Zooming in on certain body parts as they were telling the story, focusing on other objects, not putting the storyteller directly in the middle of the frame, but maybe off center. I used a hodge podge of filming techniques, but something that a first time film maker will do.

Last of course, was the process of transferring film, creating a project file folder, editing, adding, special effects, saving changes, storing the film on the hard drive. Actually connecting the camera to the computer the correct way. I did leave many stories "on the editing floor" so to say, while creating the film.
I have to tell you about the game called “Don’t Drop the Baby.” We were a group of college aged students working as ushers at the Central City Opera House. That summer, the opera company was producing the tragic opera *Macbeth*. For the production the stage crew needed a prop—-a real life looking baby doll. To be used for the scene where the baby is taken from the womb and gets dumped into the river being held by the heel of the foot. The stage crew was going to “bloody” the baby for that scene. But before that happened, all of the ushers have a prop to play with. That summer that baby doll was used for many fun and interesting things. This baby doll was so life like, that if you held it just right, and manipulated it’s arms from behind, it actually looked like a real infant.

So there is this trolley bus that makes a tour of the historic streets of Central City. The Opera House is one of the attractions on the tour. The bus slowly trudges up the hill and turns around at the Lost Gold Mine. Up and down, up and down, all day long with a load of tourists. When the trolley passes in front of the opera house, Royden and I stand on the steps and I hold the baby, acting as a proud momma as it’s little arms wave. Royden looks on, as if he is the doting father. We smile as the trolley passes us. Just a couple of parents with their baby on the steps. The bus reaches it’s destination and turns around. Trudge, trudge, trudge, back down the hill. As the bus passes the opera house for the second time, the loving father wants to hold the baby. I pass the baby over to him. WHOOPS!! We drop the baby! I scream in disbelief as the baby plummets to the ground. The people on the bus gasp in horror, and from the open windows on the bus we hear, “Oh my God! That woman just dropped her baby!” The bus sways as the tourists rush to the side and watch us in horrified stares. At that moment this bus turns the corner. “Don’t Drop the Baby” was a fun game. Only to be surpassed by the other fun game called “Don’t Steal the Baby.” That was a fun game too. Until the Sheriff made us stop.
The other fun game to be played by the ushers at the Central City Opera House was called “Don’t Steal the Baby.” Using that same baby prop that was to be used in the MacBeth Opera, (that real life like looking baby that you could manipulate it’s arms and legs, and make them move and wave,) we would play this fun game. Standing on the same steps of the Opera House, I would act as an innocent young mother, taking in the sights of the historic town. A looky-loo on the streets of Central City. It was very hot in the summertime, which was probably the reason why no one ever wondered why the baby didn’t have any clothes on, just a diaper. Sometimes parents will do that in the summer. But none the less, I would stand with the baby. Here comes the trolley bus down the hill. The sightseeing trolley that would slowly make it’s way around the streets of the historic town. Trudge, trudge, trudge, slowly past the opera house. Suddenly, from up the hill, Dean, another usher, would come running down the street. I would hear him, and make a move to get out of his way, as this must be someone hurrying through the streets. Out of the way so the baby and I would not be trampled. But Dean doesn’t run by me, he runs to me, grabs the baby from my arms, puts a strong grip on the baby’s head, and runs like hell down the street.

“OH MY GOD!” I scream, as only a tortured mother can. “That man just stole my baby! Somebody stop him. Help! Help!” The people on the trolley gasp in horror and shock, as Dean runs away. Sometimes it was just Dean and I. Other times we had it staged that the other ushers would run out of the opera house, and start chasing Dean down the street. The chase scene added a great dramatic effect for our scene. Several times we played “Don’t Steal the Baby.” That’s when the Sheriff made us stop. I think someone on the trolley must have reported it. I’m not really sure, that’s just my guess.
One of the biggest obstacles during my project was when I turned the camera on. The humor of the storyteller would disappear. The spontaneity would melt. The storytellers became very formal, and not very funny. There were only a few storytellers that acted normal with the camera. It was almost like when the camera turned on, the storyteller had to "act." The whole point of doing the project in the first place was to capture the funniness and the honesty of the story. It was difficult because in some situations a funny story would be told, and then I would ask to film it, the moment had passed. Even when someone was filming me for my own project, I found myself losing my naturalness. Also, many participants wanted to tell jokes rather than a real story. Many times I was filming, using many sections of the tape only to realize that at the end the storyteller was telling a joke.

Another obstacle I ran into was the "not so funny stories." One of which I've included on my video. There were several participants who didn't really have a good, or funny story to tell. The stories were rather lame. Which was fine, I filmed them anyway. However, after watching the videos when I downloaded it into the computer, some of the "not so funny stories" gave me pause. One of these stories I have included in my video. It is a World War II story, which struck me as very poignant at the part of creating my film. I realized that this story should be included in the film, and not left out. While editing the movie I was very moved by it, and felt as if it should be included, even though it strayed from my original idea.

I also found my computer skills quite lacking when it came to the area of technology. I can turn a computer on, and do some stuff, but I don't know how to superimpose, transfer images, plug in a firewire, save data onto an external hard drive, and connect to other programs. What's an external hard drive? What happened to the floppy disks? You know, the kind that were about 4x4 and really were floppy, and then they turned into a 3x3 hard disk. That's the last disk I used! It was also so long since I had updated any of my personal computer materials, that I
was completely lost. My PowerBook 520c that I had bought in 1994 seemed to work well for everything I needed, so I never had any updates done, or new software installed. I trundled along for many years, surviving on the computers that were installed at my school. So another great obstacle was my lack of technology skills.
Chemistry. Now that's a subject. I'm really disturbed about the whole chemistry thing. What is chemistry? Why do some people have it and others don't? Why are you drawn to certain people and not to others? Even with something as simple as a friendship. Why do you end up being friends with some people and not others? My distress has driven me to read a variety of self help books about love. The self help guru of love Barbara DeAngelis said that chemistry is nothing more than smell. How you smell attracts other people. And not the unnatural smell of the perfumed and deodorized state of the modern human. Just your natural smell makes you attractive to some people and not to other people. The male counterpart of love, guru Harville Hendrix said that chemistry is nothing more than when you find someone who will hurt you at the exact same stage that your imperfect care takers (your parents) hurt you, but in the opposite way. Somewhere along your stage of development everyone gets hurt, because they don't get what they need at the stage. You then hook up with this person to try and fix yourself at the exact same stage where you got hurt at. And that's what chemistry is. Hendrix says that's why you make statements like, "I feel like I've know this person forever." Because literally you have. Which of course means that you're just going to be re-hurt by this new person in the same way. It's a never ending cycle. It's based on that whole Erikson's life cycle module. When I was dating Drew, his good friend Paul Musso said to me, "I'm so envious. You guys have such great chemistry.") I thought so too, and was grateful that he had noticed. Shortly after this we broke up. I haven't see or spoken to Drew in eight years. What kind of chemistry was that?
I have been in love with three people in my life. Andy, Ernie, and Drew. Drew was a jazz piano player. He played around town for many years. Later on, he became a rockin' bass player. I always knew Drew, and thought that he was nice. I was always kind of interested in dating him. “What’s Drew's’ story?” I would ask my friend who knew him better than me. “I like him.”

“He’s got a girlfriend that he’s been dating for years.” she said.

“Oh?” I was slightly surprised.

“Yeah, they've been together for a long time, but he dates other women. He'd probably go out with you.”

“Oh?” I said again, not really particularly interested in getting involved with someone who was dating someone else. I wondered why they didn't break up.

Lo and behold, Drew eventually broke up with his girlfriend of seven years named Kay. “I dated a letter of the alphabet.” Drew would say.

The opportune moment to hit on Drew came at the wedding of a mutual friend. My friend Stoner was hot for the best man Mike. I was hot for the other groomsman, Drew. So we spent the reception trying to hook up. Stoner being more successful than I, she ended up giving Mike a blow job later that evening. The closet thing I got to do was to dance with Drew, and said something like, “We should go out sometime. It would be really fun.” We ended up exchanging numbers at the end of the reception.

I called him, as contrary to “The Rules.” I was too excited to wait for him to call. I really liked Drew. We went out the first time, and I was not disappointed. Our first date was the most fun. We went to a Chinese restaurant, giggled and laughed, and talked. We really had so much in common. He was a musician, I was a musician, he lived with his mother, I lived with my mother. We were close to the same age, neither one of us had been married, he didn’t have any kids, etc. etc. etc. The list could go on an on, Drew successfully meeting many of the things on the list of
After dinner and a walk, we returned to my friends house where I was house sitting their dogs, and we made out. When he left and kissed me goodbye, I knew that he was “The One.” It was an overwhelming feeling, a sensation I had never had before. No wonder all my other relationships had never worked out! Drew was “The One.” No wonder I had all those years of unsuccessful dating! It was because he was “The One.” Wow! How incredible! This is what it felt like to finally find “The One.”

It took me a couple of days to fall in love with Drew, even though I knew he was “The One.” He had invited me down to a bar where he was doing a weekly gig. The next day I called him to thank him for inviting me. He said he was glad I came and wanted to “play well” for me. I fell in love with him at that moment. I hung up and immediately called my friend Lisa Appleton, shrieking into the phone, “Oh my God! He’s the one!”

Thinking back, we never really “dated” though. Every Thursday I diligently went down to the Purple Martini to hear him play. Then I would wait for him to call. We never did anything on the weekends, he had too many gigs. He claimed that he spent so many years with Kay not playing gigs to make her happy, that he was going to take as many as he got. I completely understood. I’m a musician as well. We did take our mothers to the ballet once. It was his idea. One Sunday when he didn’t have a gig. What a wonderful thing to do! Take our mothers on an outing! I was so enamored with him!

After a few months of seeing him one night a week at the Purple Martini, a few phone calls, and some confusion on my part, knowing that he was “The One” but never spending any time together, he told me that he just wasn’t ready for a relationship. He had spent seven years with the wrong person.

“I can’t be there for you right now, emotionally or physically.” he told me. “This is all I can give you. If you’re not okay with that, I’d completely understand.” That backfired on him when I didn’t take the hint. “Oh Drew! I sooooo understand! And that’s ok with me. I just want to be with you.” So I waited, and pinned, and waited, and called him too many times when he didn’t call me.
The disastrous night happened when once again I went down to the Purple Martini to hear him play. At 2:00 in the morning when his gig was over, we sat in the car and talked. It was our one precious moment together for the week, and I cherished this time. He was telling me about his golf game, and what a good golfer he was. With a special outfit and everything! I remarked that Stoner really liked playing golf with him.

"Really?" He seemed impressed.

"Yes," I replied. "She really likes to golf with you because she says you are both at the same level."

"What!?" He exclaimed with astonishment. "I can't believe you just said that! I am a much better golfer than Tracy."

"Oh.............maybe I misunderstood her. I thought she said you guys were on the same level. At any rate she really enjoys golfing with you." said I dismissively, not realizing the gravity of the situation.

"You know Julie, you just.......you just....... you just SAY things! And I don't have skin thick enough for you to say whatever you want and expect it to roll off of me!"

"Oh! I'm sorry.......I thought..........I didn't mean........" as I tried to retract my words. But no amount of apologizing could change anything.

What we have learned: We don't date men who really don't want to date us.
XI

CHALLENGES

The hardest part of my entire project was the challenges I faced with the computer and software. I purchased a new PowerBook G4. This was to replace the PowerBook I had bought in 1994 at the end of the school year. Macintosh/Apple was offering a discount to educators and I purchased my first computer then. It was a PowerBook 520c, with all the bells and whistles. When I attended my 10 year class reunion and everyone asked me for my E-mail address, I didn't have one. I was distressed that I couldn't give one to my classmates to keep in touch with them. (And also somewhat impressed that my blue-collar friends were more technically advanced than I.) I bought that 520c, and signed up for aol, and my friend helped me connect through an external modem for my first E-mail address. I was an official member of aol with an E-mail address and everything. Unfortunately, my reunion was over and I did not have a chance to communicate with those people. (Of course most of these people that I wanted to stay in contact with did not attend our 20 year reunion, and I have no way to connect with them now.)

In order to pursue my final project, I realized I had to purchase a new computer and a ton of new software. Rick Hughes suggested a standing computer with two monitors, but since I knew I would be using this computer for the next ten years, I wanted a mobile one. I knew it would cost a great deal of money, and I would have to buy expensive software and upgrades. Which wasn't necessarily a bad thing, I knew I had to update, and just hadn't in the past ten years because of expense. I also realized that trying to create a film is really out of my comfort zone. I was also quite scared for quite awhile to do anything on the new computer, not wanting to mess anything up. I did not want to have to lose film, or be in a situation where I could not re-create my project.

When working with my project, I also found it challenging to relearn the program. There were many things that I had forgotten about Final Cut Express since the Media Arts class. Fortunately, Apple is quite a user friendly computer, which is why
I prefer it to PC's. When I had the time to explore I found quite a few things that I could do with the new computer.

I also found the filming process quite challenging as well. As I discussed earlier, to get just the right lighting, was a difficult task, especially when I was trying to capture a spontaneous story. I could not get my Uncle out of a chair into some decent lighting for anything. Audio was also difficult because during the storytelling there were many extraneous noises going on, sometimes being in social situations. Sometimes I tried to coach the shy storyteller into telling more, and you can hear my voice on the video, which wasn't particularly what I wanted.

The editing process was also very time consuming and tedious. I spent many hours editing one tiny little segment of the movie. For example, I wanted the screen to fade slowly out at the end of the A NOT SO FUNNY STORY, and give the audience a time to pause and reflect. The story is powerful and moving, and it needed some space. So I created a cross dissolve, where the screen would slowly go black into the next segment of film. I had to move the cross dissolve to another line and drag it out to make it longer. This worked great, but it also drug out the film that I didn't want. The story continues, but I wanted to edit that part out. Finally (with the help of my friends at the Apple Store) I had the audio fade out so you can't hear the storyteller talking any longer, and you can barely see him as he moves to tell another story. Then the cross dissolve goes slowly to the next frame which is the title of the next story. I would like to make it even longer than it is, but didn’t want to chance messing anything else up.

I also discovered that when I changed one small part of the movie, for example adding a fade out/in dissolve, that sometimes I couldn't do it all the time. That part of the program does not make sense to me. If I'm able to do it once, I should be able to do wherever I want it. Many times the computer said that the “operation not allowed.” when I had just done it. It was very frustrating.
I always wanted to be a fairy. Or an angel. Or maybe I just really wanted wings. Either way we found the perfect costume for Halloween. A fairy princess costume in a box. Complete with a blue sparkly gown, pink sparkly wings that attached to your back, and a beautiful plastic mask. Ruby red lips, pure white complexion, blonde plastic hair (with a blue head band to match the dress) and a perfectly formed nose with small holes for breathing. We bought our costumes early, so as to avoid the rush at Walgreens. I had many days to gaze upon my new beautiful costume before Halloween. Occasionally, I would try it on. On one such evening my father happened to be home. Uncle Bill was over and they had gone to the garage. Banished was more likely because they were out there smoking cigarettes. Unusual for my dad, because he preferred a good cigar to a stinkin’ cigarette any day. I had my costume on, and was practicing with my fairy wand that I had added as an accessory to the costume. Spinning and twirling, spinning and twirling. I went down to the TV room. The garage door was open and I could spy my dad and uncle in the garage. Gaily I said “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Look at me! I’m a fairy princess!” My father stopped talking and checked out my costume.

“Come here,” he said. I merrily skipped to him, casting a spell with my wand.

“You can’t breathe in that mask.” he said, as he pulled the plastic mask off my face, and took the cigarette out of his mouth. With the end of his cigarette, he burned two black holes into the already existing nostrils of the mask. I gasped, I choked, I sputtered, I was horrified.

“MOMMIE!” I screamed as I ran up the stairs, not even able to talk due to my horrified state, the beautiful face now ruined with two ugly black cigarette holes.

“MOMMIE!” My mother stopped me and took the mask out of my hands to see the damage. “Oh for God’s sake Gene, what did you do that for?” my mother asked down the stairs, mad that I was upset.
“God Dammit, that kid's gonna suffocate in that plastic mask! You don't want her to suffocate do you? I hate those Halloween costumes.”

The fairy princess costume sits quietly in a box in my basement, as a reminder of that traumatic Halloween, and a story for years to come.
It was in the seventies, somewhere between the sparklers and the big fireworks that my father kept in a coffee can in the garage. A hot fourth of July evening. My sister and I, along with several neighborhood children, began the evening with the usual black snakes. The little black button type of thing that you lit and out came some black ash stuff that resembled a snake and entertained children for hours. Taking our lighted punks out into the gutter, we would light the snakes and watch them grow. One snake after another, and we would giggle all the while. Couldn't light the snakes on the driveway or the sidewalk. Made too much of a mess, my mother said. So as evening would fall we would entertain ourselves with our snakes. Later on, before real darkness, we would be allowed "the sparklers". What a strange thing to do, give your child a stick that shoots sparks and then yell at them to keep it as far away from you as possible. "Julie, Julie! Don't get it too close" Hold it AWAY from you!" My mother would scream at me. No problem there. I was actually rather frightened of the sparklers. When the sparks hit your skin they burned for just a second. But Lisa had one, and Paula had one, so I had to have one too. As darkness approached, my father would retrieve the "big" fireworks from the coffee can. The neighbored children would assemble on our driveway and lawn to watch the Haas family in action. My father only had the best fireworks. The ones that would shoot up into the air and later became illegal in the state of Colorado. Not many families had these types of fireworks, they were more on the expensive side. We had our punks in hand, excited to light the first fire work of the evening. My father strolled around the driveway with a big ol' stogie in his mouth. He placed a rather large looking firework in the middle of the street, away from the beloved station wagon and any other piece of shit car that was not made by Ford. We eyeballed the firework and wanted to approach it with our little lighted punks. My father pushed us aside.
"Punk" he said as he sucked on the stogie. "You don't need no punk. I got your punk right here." He strolled out to the street taking one last long puff on the cigar. The end of the cigar turned red in the darkness. He bent down, lit the end of the wick, and ran like hell.
One of the unexpected results of creating my final project is how savvy I've become with my computer. I'm exaggerating a bit, but I have become pretty good. At least more knowledgeable than I was. I was able to download programs, and one of the most exciting things that I did was taking my new PowerBook to meetings and being able to work on my paper. In fact, I was at a union meeting, and I thought I would try to sign online. Thanks to the wireless systems, I was able to sit in a meeting and access my mail! It was so exciting! And then I went through and entered all of my contests that I do on a daily basis. It was very cool!

I also learned many other computer skills through the process. I can download a document that is in Microsoft Word, drag it to the AppleWorks folder, and AppleWorks will translate the document for me in a printable and readable form. Thus, saving me the money of purchasing MicroSoft Word. Unfortunately MicroSoft does not have that same capabilities for Apple Programs. Once again, Apple showing its superior technology.

Another unexpected result was the training at the Apple store. I went many times to get help making my film, but also could go to learn other programs as well. After I finish with my project I am going to learn to download tunes to my new ipod, and get a digital camera and download pictures. I can also scan pictures with my new printer.

There is also a garage band program on my computer. With the right cords, I can plug a keyboard into the computer, play something, and the computer will record it and play it back for me. It won't print the music quite yet, but I'm sure I can find a program to do that. This will be a valuable tool when working with my students on composing projects. Who knows, I might even engage in a little composing myself since garage band makes it so much easier. I know it seems quite silly to be impressed with all these technological advances that have been around for quite awhile, but since it has taken me so long to update I find them fascinating.
A big Italian family. An aunt or uncle was hosting dinner. I don't even think it was for any particular occasion. Just a "come to my house and have dinner" event. Which actually turns into a large crowd. Even going out to dinner with some "family" turns into at least ten people. So we're having dinner, and there's a ton of people. Everyone is crowded around the table. So many people sitting around the table you can hardly move. You can barely lift your fork to your mouth. I'm placed next to my sister, squashed between adults. We're eating spaghetti. For some reason, nobody seemed to have a napkin. Unusual, because my mother, in her obsessive compulsive nature, would have made sure we had all the proper eating equipment. And for another strange reason, we weren't even sitting next to our parents.

We eat the spaghetti, getting sauce on our hands. Since we were not the normal kids who would have wiped our hands on our shirt sleeves, we politely asked for a napkin.

"Can I have a napkin?" After a while, a dish rag comes in my direction. This was to be used as the napkin I suppose. The only problem was that it was already covered in spaghetti sauce. I try to find a clean spot to wipe my hands, but to no avail. The rag gets taken away. My sister tries next.

"I need a napkin." she states boldly. Again the rag returns, this time more soaked with spaghetti sauce. She tries to wipe her hands. Dinner continues and the rag circles around the table. I once again find myself with spaghetti sauce on my hands. I don't yet have the cognitive skills to say "Would someone hand me a clean napkin or paper towel? I can't use the sauce soaked one." So again with my second grade skills I ask for a napkin. The rag comes back. What was the deal with this rag? Why couldn't I get a napkin? Or a paper towel? Or something NOT soaked in spaghetti sauce. I guess someone thought it was funny to pass this towel around. Everyone else took up with the joke and continued passing. And no one else seemed to have
a napkin either. The crowd at the table starts referring to the rag.

"Somebody pass the mopine!" (a slang bastardized term used by my family members for dish rag/towel)

"Who needs the mopine?" shouts another.

"Louise! Pass that mopine over here!"

"The girls need the mopine!"

To this day I still haven't quite figured out what the deal was with that rag.
It's hard being obsessive compulsive. It's even harder being obsessive compulsive when given the choice of a self serve checkout lane. Several years ago, the grocery stores that my mother and I frequent in Colorado decided to do a self service checkout lane. There used to be two fast lanes, one for 8 items or less, and then they added one for 15 items or less. As more and more people kept sneaking in one extra item here and there, and causing commotion, King Soopers went to a self serve checkout lane. Four different checkout lanes to push customers through faster. So if you have one or two items, there are lanes available. If you want to have a little more, that's ok too. And if you want to check all of your groceries that fill up your entire cart, that's ok too.

God love my mother who is obsessive compulsive. Long she has complained of the grocery store, and of the way they sack the groceries. "They sack them too heavy." "I asked for paper bags and they gave me plastic." "I asked for paper bags, and to sack them light, and they didn't." "I asked them to give me a few empty bags and they only gave me two." On and on the list goes, and nothing is ever right. So my mother rejoiced at the thought of checking herself out, and sacking her own groceries.

First it took my mom awhile to use the touch screen. Touching the screen to begin the process. Scanning your Sooper card for extra savings. Finding the bar code on the item, and making sure it beeps when it is properly scanned. Finding the code on the paper to enter it into the computer when you have an item without a bar code, such as bananas. And then the final step of placing your item in the bag, which sits on top of a scale. The scale is used so that the computer can register that you are done with that item and reset the screen to scan the next item.

"Please place your item in the bag." The screen reminds my mother. She is busy putting a plastic bag in a paper bag. She wants the item to be by itself in the plastic bag, inside the paper bag. Getting her bags just right, she puts the item in
and the computer screen begins to reset itself. But wait! She is not satisfied with the way it is sitting in the double bag. She picks the item up and readjusts it to be just right. "Please place your item in the bag!" The screen firmly reminds her a second time. She dismisses the order and picks the item up yet a third time, shuffling around with the plastic bag inside the paper bag. "PLEASE PLACE YOUR ITEM IN THE BAG!" The screen now screams at her. The other customers look up from their scanning to see what is going on. The cashier who mans the manual station glances over to see what the problem is. Still not satisfied, she picks the item up and decides to add a second paper bag to the scale. She reaches for a plastic bag, to put inside the paper bag. "PLEASE PLACE YOUR ITEM IN THE BAG!" The screen screams! Finally, she places the item in the second bag she has opened. She is satisfied. The screen can now reset itself. She picks up the second item in her grocery cart to begin again.
Doing this project has been very therapeutic for me. During the writing process I
was finally able to write down things that I’ve thought about, or things that have been
bothering me for years. Writing down my stories in my own personal style. For
years an art teacher I worked with told me that I needed to write my stories down.
So I did. I guess the funniest part about my own personal writing is that all of my
stories are true. Reading them through now, I haven’t changed much, or shifted
events around to make the story better, or more dramatic. It is what it is.

Being able to write my stories, I’ve decided that I would like to pursue some sort
of writing, maybe a column. I am going to do some research and planning on
submitting some articles. One of the popular type of literature these days is the
whole “single girl” stuff that the market seems to be saturated with. Books by Janet
Evanovich about a character named Stephanie Plum, who is single girl living in
Trenton, New Jersey, and her adventures as a bounty hunter. Television shows like
“Sex and the City,” written in a documentary type fashion where the main character
talks to the audience (her readers) about modern day problems and dating.
Hopefully I can find a niche somewhere, a small publication where someone would
enjoy reading a short story.

I also experienced my self doubting issues again, as I tried to process my final
project into a paper. The thoughts of, “I’m not good enough, I’m a sophomoric
writer, I’m not very smart.” resurfaced again as I began to write. Why on earth would
I choose something so difficult as making a movie, when I have no experience with
film making wa one of the questions I asked myself.

“I can’t fucking believe I decided to do this.” I told Miguel, my Apple One on One
Creative Consultant one day.

As with anything difficult however, when you force yourself to step outside of
your box, and to be uncomfortable, there is always growth. I feel as if I’ve grown.
Sometimes I feel my growth in The Pulse is more personal for me, rather than as
being a teacher or as an artist. There were many things that I learned in The Pulse that I could not necessarily take back to the classroom. Which was fine, because if I had wanted that type of program I would be attending the University of Colorado and getting a Master's in Music Education. Thankfully though, I went to The Pulse instead.
I've always wanted to be on a ski team. In the early seventies, when my aunt decided my sister and I should ski, my parents dutifully drove us up to Loveland to begin a series of ski lessons. I seemed to show an affinity for skiing. Not so much for my sister. After a couple of lessons the instructor told my mother that I could be a racer one day. "Right on!" Thought I.

"Oh.....I don't think so," my mother replied. Thus ended my burgeoning ski career.

But I continued to ski, infrequently throughout the years. Skiing with friends. When I got to junior high I wanted to join the Ski Club. But cheer leading and band kept me busy. When I got to high school I once again wanted to pursue membership of the ski team. But by now my assimilation as a band fag was complete and I didn't have time for the Alameda Ski team. However, I did purchase a long sleeved T-shirt from Pat Bloxham that they were selling as a fund raiser. I had never had a long sleeved "T shirt" before, so this was a novelty. Also I had a thing for Pat.....being the first person I had ever french kissed. But that's another story. When I went to college, once again another opportunity arrived for me to join the DU ski team. But by now my skill level was too low and I was far too busy with music and my degree program.

Finally, after teaching in the Jefferson County Public Schools, I had the chance to join the Jeffco schools ski team. All levels and abilities welcome. So I joined and convinced a fellow teacher to join with me. The team had just enough members for a ski team that season. Five member, 2 of which had to be women.

That's where I met Tom the Sexless Wonder. My initial impression of Tom was that he was a little strange. Great skier, not many social skills, but how social can one be for the 10 minute lift ride? I have to admit that I was strangely attracted to Tom. When we stayed at our Captain's condo in Steamboat for a race, he just got up and
disappeared one evening. I was disappointed because I wanted to get to know him a little better, and would use the evening to do that. Wondering where he went, I went upstairs to the restroom and saw him in bed. Strange that he never even said goodnight to everyone staying in the condo. But I thought maybe he was really tired, or not feeling well, and didn’t feel like a series of goodnights with all the other members of the team.

So at the party after the last race, Tom turned to me and asked me if I would like to go out sometime. “I would like that very much” I replied. Our first date was nice. He came and picked me up, and we went downtown to the Buckhorn, a hundred year old steakhouse. Very impressive. I order the cheapest thing, our bill still being well over a hundred dollars. I thanked him, enjoying dinner immensely. He wanted to attend a movie next. Dinner and a movie—that’s a great date! The strangeness began at the movie, where he took me to see a shoot ‘em up gory Zombie movie. I was a little curious if there was something wrong with him to take a date to an awesome dinner and then a Zombie movie. But I let it pass.

We dated a few times, went to some movies, had some dinner, hung out a bit. He seemed to be a bit of a curmudgeon, but hey, no one is as exciting and fun as me! Sometimes one must settle! During private moments though, he never seemed very interested in making out. At first I thought he was just a nice guy. Feeling relief, because sex takes a relationship to a whole different level. But I began to wonder about him, being the passionate touchy feely person that I am. I rationalized his lack of interest away. “We didn’t see each other that often.” I thought. “Maybe he was dating others,” was another thought I had. And then it was time to trundle off to Montana.

I went to Montana to begin a Master’s program for five whole weeks! Tom decided that he wanted to come up at the end of my class and join me in Montana. My friends all agreed that this was a big deal. “He must really like you.” my best friend Lisa Appleton said. “You’ve never had a boyfriend who wanted to take a trip with you.” Stoner, sagely said, “Taking a trip together is a huge deal. I’m not quite sure you guys have gone out enough to plan something this big.”
But plan we did, and we would do something fun. Go to Glacier, go rafting, drive back together. After a few phone calls during my stay, Tom the Sexless Wonder arrived in Montana. Tom drove 895 miles for me! Wow! Most times I can't even get a guy to drive around the block for me. Once again, I was very impressed. I was excited to see him. He drove all day, and when he arrived I went to give him a hug and a kiss, and he didn't really want to kiss me. Ok. He was tired. 895 miles without a nap break. I had fantasies about camping with him in the wilds of Montana. Of holding hands and strolling through Glacier. Taking pictures, and wait, my thoughts jumped ahead! Maybe next summer he would come back to Montana with me and propose to me in Montana! Should I be picking out the colors for the wedding? Gold and green seemed like two good colors!

But no kissing turned into no nothing. I spent 7 nights in bed with Tom the Sexless Wonder, and not a damn thing happened. When we got to Glacier he abandoned me on the trail. He made me listen to Rob Zombie in the car for 18 tracks. He wasn't interested in dinning with me because he was one of those dudes that doesn't eat. My fantasized road trip turned into a nightmare. But still, I was trying to be cool, you know, act like nothing was wrong, nothing bothered me. Chillin'.

During the end of the trip I broached this subject with him. Tentatively I said, "You know Tom......we've been staying in a hotel room for a week now......and, uh.... nothing seems to be happening...."

"I'm just not a very sexual person." Tom replied.

Being disappointed, I said, "Well.......my last boyfriend thought sex once a week was too much." I guess trying to feel him out, seeing what he would say.

"I just don't need sex, or think about it much." Pointing to my ass he says, "And you need to work on that. That would help."

Taken aback, and slightly shocked by the vulgar truth, (as I know my ass is fat,) I say, "Oh.......you mean.......you're.......you're not attracted to me?"

"I'm very attracted to you, but sometimes when I look down (pointing again to my ass) there I just shudder."
I thought to myself, “There are lots of people who want to have sex with me.”
and I turned on my side and went to sleep, brushing off his arm that was hugging me. And that was the end of Tom the Sexless Wonder.
What have we learned: We don’t date men who don’t want to have sex with us.
"Meet me at Grand Central Station. At the kiosk in the middle with the clock on top. Take the 1 or 9 train to Times Square. Get off there and take the ‘S’ shuttle over to Grand Central. I’ll get you a ticket to Peekskill and we’ll go together." Ernest said to me on the cell phone. I followed his instructions, getting off the subway at the Times Square 42nd Street station. This subway station was very confusing. Passage ways leading to several different directions, and people bustling everywhere. There were two signs pointing two different directions to the ‘S’ shuttle. Which way should I go? I definitely didn’t want to take the wrong train. That would be a disaster. Suddenly, from behind, I hear that familiar resonating voice. “I think you want that train over there.” Ernest booms as he points the way. “It’s so good to see you!” I exclaim, slightly surprised to see him there, finding me in the crowded subway. We hug and kiss. It’s been two years since I have seen him. A bit heavier in the face, clean shaven as is my preference, a light in his ever color changing eyes, and the same Fedora hat that he has been wearing for over twenty years. Its brim bent with age, giving him an intriguing look. Or at least makes me wonder if he’s ever going to get his hat cleaned.

We have some time before the train leaves for Peekskill, and decide to have dinner in the city. Crossing across the street to a nearby Japanese restaurant, we catch up on our lives for the past two years. What we’ve been doing, how our families are. Getting to know each other again. It’s easy to do.

Dinner over, we load the train for Peekskill and find a semi vacant car this time of the evening. The lights remain on in the car, which is annoying because I cannot see the lovely scenery traveling through Yonkers, and all those other partially famous towns on the Hudson. Ernest has been in and out of my life for over twenty years. I met him when I was sixteen, and since then we have had a relationship of sorts. Enamored with one another, yet life has kept us apart. Still talking and getting used to each other again during the ride. It’s obvious I have great affection for this man,
and he for me. I hook my arm in his, we chat, and as the train progresses we begin to hold hands. His touch brings back many memories.

Arriving at Peekskill we walk to his home. Located in the heart of this historic city, he lives in an “artist commune,” town homes of sorts for people whose sole income is based upon working as an artist. He plays a new song he has written, shows me the differences and improvements to the place since the last time I was here, and eventually shows me the bedroom.

The morning comes too soon, always too soon when I am with him, and we arise early to leave because he needs to get to his job in the city. Walking together to the station, we try to find another less populated car, harder this time as the morning commuters are trying to get to work. We hold hands, and are fatigued from the sleepless night. As the train travels, I place my face against his. There is nothing I can say. Nothing that I haven't said to him already in the last twenty years. I told him I loved him for the last time five years ago. “I love you, and I want to be with you.” I told him one night before I left, wrapped in his arms. “We can work this out. Whatever I need to do to be with you, I will. I’ll move to New York, I can get a teaching job upstate, whatever. This is the last time I’m going to tell you.”

“You should find someone else.” was his reply. And try as I may, it never happens. I never seem to be able to break the cord he has tied to me. Invariably we find ourselves together again, if only for a night or two. All is said and done.

We have this moment together, and nothing more. I soak in his essence, and memorize everything about him. His hand reaches up to caress my face, my hair. I'm not sure what the older couple sitting fairly close to us is thinking as they watch us. Are they thinking that we're a married? Or that we had a one night stand? Two star crossed lovers meeting on the road to life? Or that we'll be seeing each other again that evening? Ah, but if they only knew our history! We ride like this in silence for the remainder of the trip. I can tell we've reached his destination as his body tenses. He kisses me. “Have a safe trip back to Denver.” He places that same hat on his head, turns, and walks away. I watch him leave, wondering if this will be the last time I will ever see him. He turns and blows me a kiss, disappearing down the stairwell.
I face forward in the seat, not looking to see if he is gazing longingly at the train as it pulls away. I know he isn't. I sit, devastated by his absence.
I have discovered that doing my final field project was very therapeutic for me. Writing the stories was a way to express myself, which I used to do in daily journals and diaries. Now however, I had the opportunity to work on each individual story. For years I kept a daily journal, jotting down everything little thing that happened during the day. One day, however, I decided that my life was not really that important or exciting, and I didn't need to write down every little juvenile thing that happened. So taking the time to write while working on my project, and throughout The Pulse has been therapeutic. I also discovered that as I began to write some stories, I really didn't have a need to finish them. They have been discarded, because the emotional hold is no longer there, and I have no need to talk about it anymore.

I also tried to expand my storytelling in several different ways. Humorous, straightforward, narrative, diary type. I even tried to present a serious story which has a great emotional tie for me. I am going to continue my writing process after The Pulse is over. Writing also made me think about different perspectives and presentation, which bled into the film making.

While looking at my film, and other filming techniques, I discovered Italian Neorealism. Neorealist films was a movement in Italian film making depicting the lower classes and their despair and squalor. I had never been introduced to that terminology, and only discovered it while working with Miguel, my Apple Creative Consultant. Miguel also discussed with me other filming techniques, such as dividing the screen into segments, what makes a good photo/frame, lighting, background, and color. Being a beginning film maker I had not really studied or paid attention to these types of techniques used for filming. As I begin my next film I will pay heed to these techniques that I learned through this process. Oh yes, there will be many more films! Even though filming is hard, I discovered that I did enjoy the process.
Alameda High School was divided into many different cultural groups. The main ones consisting of Hicks, Spics, Jocks, and Band Fags. Each cultural group also had its own hang out place. These were the areas designated for each group to "hang out" in at the school.

The jocks were the majority of the population at Alameda. Many students participated in sports, and their area was the main hallway. They would sit on the benches around the trophies displayed in the hallway, surrounded by championship wins of years past. This hallway was also connected to the gymnasium, for easy access to lockers and practice areas. The jocks were also the guardians of the pirate logo, a mosaic on the floor with tiny small colored tiles, making up the face of a surly Pirate. The mascot was protected by the Jocks, with blue ropes kept people from walking on the mosaic. This main hallway was brightly lit from the windows that surrounded it, and also the windows that shed light from the courtyard. (The courtyard that nobody was ever allowed to go into.)

The Spics were just around the corner from the jocks. A dark hallway, with not much light, being that these benches were in front of the theatre entrance. Many a student found their heritage here in the hallway of Alameda. I always found it fascinating that many kids whom I had gone to school with since first grade suddenly developed an accent, as if they had just crossed the border, when sitting in this hallway. "Hey man." they call out to the students passing by, "I gonna cut you man, cut you with my knife." Hence students tended to avoid this hallway while traversing to other places in the building.

The Hicks laid claim to the cafeteria. Directly opposite of the jocks, on the other side of the courtyard. There they hung out in between class, and the classes they ditched. Wearing their John Deer baseball caps and cowboy boots, topped off by Levi jeans. The strange thing about the Hicks is that no one from Alameda High School actually lived on a ranch, in the suburbs of Lakewood, Colorado. There were
some cattle across the street, on a couple acres of land, but that man's children had long since graduated from Alameda, the school being over 50 years old. The Hicks spit chewing tobacco everywhere. They were like male cats who spray their territory. Spitting tobacco on the wall where a mural had been painted by one of the strange art kids. Spitting tobacco in the sinks. You knew a Hick had passed through when you saw the wad of chew.

Up in the library on the second level, far away from the Hicks, Spics and Jocks, were where the Advanced Placement kids hung out. The scholarly type. Those who actually took their public education seriously. The nerds, the brains, the smart kids. (At my 20 year reunion I am proud to announce that I did sit at the table with all the "smart" people, whom, only one, was actually married, and another slightly committed. One of the Hicks with his mullet hairdo still intact from 1985 passed by the table. "This must be the Fortune 500 table." he proclaimed. I didn't disagree with him.) These were the kids that took the Advanced Placement classes. The kids on the "Math Team", in the "Science Club," the "Paragon" (the journalism club) The library had many glassed "Study Rooms" where they would usually play the card game Bullshit and eventually get kicked out because of the ruckus. The teachers offices were also located in the library, and the AP kids had easy access to the teachers harassing them about their grades as the teachers tried to sneak into their offices during their planning period.

The band fags were the culture group that I was a member of. And the theatre kids, (thespians) were also lumped into our group as a sub species. The "arts' hallway and "wing" was directly opposite of the library, in between the Hicks and Spics, somewhat in the basement of Alameda. On one side was the band room and practice rooms, the other side was the choir room and theatre. The "bowels" of Alameda high school. Reaching it you had to traverse a short staircase. No windows were in this hallway, the only sunlight showing through the blue doors at the top of the short staircase. In the winter when I would emerge from the bowels, the first sight I would see was the courtyard. The snow would shine into the windows, making it a brighter happier place than any other that I have known. We were safe,
due to our numbers. There were always a few band fags in each class, and the
days we had to wear our uniform to class because we had to get to a
performance was was ok, because you weren't alone.

The smokers hung around outside, between the back of the theatre and the temp.
A small strange group. Not much to say about them. They were almost like the
"goth" crowd, only that wasn't a term yet. Nobody can really recall who the smokers
were.

Then there were the art students. Another strange crowd. The visual arts wing
was on the opposite side of the band room. Theirs was a long foreboding hallway
that led to the art classes. I always saw students going down there, but never really
saw anyone come out. Not much traffic. I always thought that was strange.

Survival at Alameda meant you belonged to one of the "culture groups." Those
that didn't belong to a group got lost, and no one can remember them graduating, or
even being in any classes with them. One such student that was lost and didn't
really belong to a group showed up at our 20 year class reunion. I always liked
Kathy Warnser. She was a nice girl. Had Algebra with her in 10th grade, and then
she seemed to disappear. I don't recall her being in any classes with me after that. I
don't even recall seeing her at graduation. She was at the reunion though. Chatted
with everyone, and ended up going home drunk with Kirke Adamson. Later on I
found out that they had a four day fling during our four day reunion. She ended up
going a little psycho on him. Not too psycho, just slightly. She was divorced and
had two kids, lived in Highlands Ranch, a growing popular suburb inhabited by the
people from California. Kirke was living in Utah, coaching track at a small community
college. She wanted him to move back, but he wasn't all that interested, and that
didn't work out too well. Thus the end of the four day reunion fling.

The thespians, the sub species of the band fags, spent their time in the darkened
theatre, located in the Arts wing. When musical time rolled around the band fags and
thespians would intermix, and sometimes interbreed. They were a strange lot as
well, but meshed more with the band fags than others. They seemed to have more
free time than most of the other students in school. They would stay in the theatre
and paint, create, practice, and hang out. They were generally protected by the Band Fags, as a few thespians were gay, and the other culture groups did not understand homosexuality. The band fags didn't mind though, as long as the booze and drugs kept coming.

There was a large population of English as a Second Language (ESL) students at Alameda. They consisted of students mainly from Korea, Vietnam, and Nepal. They never really took classes with the other students, but sometimes an ESL student would find themselves in a regular classroom. Pecos from Nepal was one such student. A good natured fellow, and rather attractive. I'm sure he didn't understand much of what was going on. Fortunately our social studies teacher was very much into showing movies, and Pecos found he could nap during class time. I wonder where he is today.

The "Tech Arts" kids were the final culture group at Alameda. There was a large "shop" at the end of the "art" hallway. They also had a small outside area for the storage of the many vehicles that they were working on. These students invariably found themselves transferring to Warren Tech, an alternative occupational high school, where they could begin their blue collar careers before completing high school. These students are probably very busy mechanics today, making far more money than I ever will.
I have to tell you about how devastated my sister and I are. My brother had open heart surgery yesterday. I didn't know I had a brother, until six months ago. Two brothers, actually, and a sister. Aunt June finally spilled the beans. My father's sister called me over last December to reveal the biggest, deepest, darkest family secret. Something so totally unbelievable, that as she was revealing the information I kept saying, “Who are you talking about?” Apparently, my dad got a girl pregnant in the town of Kiowa, Colorado when she was fourteen and he was sixteen. My Aunt claims she was the town whore and was like the village bicycle: everyone had a ride. They sent the girl named Doris away to have the baby, as was fairly common place during that time. Doris was sent to California where she had an older sister that she could stay with. My dad, Gene, soon followed her to California. The child was born dead, or so it was reported to Aunt June, with the umbilical cord wrapped around its neck. Gene and Doris eventually came back to Colorado.

“Are you kidding me?” I asked Aunt June. No—- the honest truth. Not being able to keep their hands off of each other, Doris was soon pregnant again. But this time they got married since my dad had passed the age of 17. Janis Lee Haas was born in 1951. Trying to make a living and support a family, my dad moved the Doris and Janis to Salida, Colorado, where they owned and operated a liquor store. Steven Gene Haas was born soon after Janis in 1952. After some time at the liquor store, my dad moved the family to Denver where he became a police officer. At that time anyone could be a policeman, just six weeks of training and you were in. None of the formalities and degrees required today. Doris, who seemed to be the town whore in Kiowa, (according to Aunt June) continued with her meandering ways, and always continued to have a guy on the side. Their last child, Charles David Haas was born in 1955. (I gotta take some lessons from Doris!) Due to Doris infidelity, there were apparently some question as to the paternity of the children, and there are some reports of incidences of alcohol abuse and domestic violence,
but never any arrests, since police officers protect their own.

At some point, after being promoted to Deputy Sheriff in the Arapahoe County Police Department, my dad somehow became involved in some sort of police scandal, a ring of cops who were running around Denver stealing things. Money, objects, whatever they could get their hands on I suppose. Since they were cops they knew the ins and outs of businesses. These police officers would go to a business while on duty, and check out the situation with the safe. Where it was located, etc. Then when they were off duty, (and sometimes on duty), they would return to the business and crack the safe. My dad figured out a way to drill out the lock, and steal the money. If they couldn't drill out the safe, they would steal it.

"Honey, your daddy was the best safecracker around." Art Winstanley, one of my dad's prison buddies told me. "If we couldn't crack a safe we'd call in Haas." If they stole the safe and my dad cracked it, they would throw the safe in the river.

"River!? What river?" my best friend Lisa Appleton asked.


"Well that's not much of a river, it's pretty shallow." I told him.

"Well you have to understand that fifty years ago it was alot higher, and they knew just where to throw the safe so no one would find them." I sometimes compare my dad to Jean Val Jean from Les Miserables. Although apparently my dad stole alot more than a loaf of bread.

But wait! It gets better! At any rate, as all illegal activities do, they come to an end, and the police ring was broke. My dad being one of the first officers arrested. Art Winstanley and my dad went to the Alamo Cafe to crack the safe one evening. They were off duty at this time. This 300 hundred pound safe they discovered they couldn't crack, so they decided to steal it, putting it in the back of Winstanley's '53 Chevy. As they were driving away, the safe fell out. Unfortunately the car behind them was a police car. An officer that Winstanley knew from the Denver Police Department had been following them. An uncomfortable situation arise, and after much embarrassment and covering up, this officer decided to let them go. Finally, after much soul searching, this officer decided to report the incident to his superiors.
His superior officers tried to keep it quiet for awhile as they were involved as well and knew what was going on. They told the reporting officer he was crazy, and tried to get him removed from the force by reason of insanity. The superior officers claimed that this reporting officer was trying to get an early retirement. After four months, the incident became known, and action was taken. Some 50 officers were arrested in the late 1950's, and 37 did jail time. My father, being one of the first officers to be arrested, had his picture splashed all over the front page of the newspaper. This was one of the biggest scandals in the history of Denver.

"This wasn't just one of the biggest scandals of Denver," Winstanley said, "this was a huge national scandal as well."

"Art" I said to Winstanley when he graciously agreed to meet me one day. "If I just stole a 300 pound safe and put it in the back of my truck, I'm thinking I'm going to cover it with a tarp or something. Were you guys drunk?" Winstanley verified that there was alot of drinking going on that night.

So my father is convicted in 1960 for "receiving stolen property," and gets a 2-5 year sentence at the Colorado State Penitentiary in Canon City. Somehow, and this part is still hazy, Doris was involved in the scandal as well. Working for Safeway, a large grocery chain, Doris would let the officers know when the safes would be open at certain times. I guess there were many wives involved in the scandal, at least they all knew what was going on. The District Attorney at the time however, did not want to convict the wives. So Doris was "convinced" to leave the State of Colorado for five years so she would not be indicted.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" I ask Aunt June. My poor grandparents were completely devastated. Going to get a newspaper one morning and seeing their son's face on the front page. Can you imagine? Shaming for the entire Haas family.

So Doris hooks up with the local bartender, (Aunt June says) takes the kids, and leaves my dad in prison. They couldn't keep the convicted officers in the state penitentiary, it caused too much unrest with the prisoners. As Art Winstanley says there is a hierarchy in the prison system: The cop killers are at the top, the child molesters are at the bottom, and the cops are below the child molesters." Most of
the convicted officers were shipped out to a nearby work farm, where they did manual labor and received a small income which they could use to buy cigarettes, or give to other prisoners whose families were in need. The regular prisoners at the work farm became incensed, angry that the cops were there, feeling like their turf was being invaded.

"Your father was a good man." Art Winstanley told me. "He watched my back. He took many a prisoner behind the barn and sent them to the hospital, to give a message to the others that it was all right the cops were there."

So when my dad gets out of prison, (early for good behavior) he decides to turn over a new leaf. His family was gone, he was free from the situation with Doris the whore. So he decides to create a whole new life. Become as straight as an arrow. Does minor jobs for people who are willing to hire him, because as a convicted felon it's hard to get work. And then he met my mother, Josephine. Gene fell in love with Jo, and they decided to get married. While he's still on parole, mind you. After a few dates he told Jo the whole situation, what happened. She decides to accept him as he is. They decide to carve out a new life for themselves, buy a home, have children, live like a normal middle class family in the suburbs of Denver, yet covered in a shroud of secrecy. They decided that the whole episode is in the past, a tragic event, and that the whole scenario should be put to rest. Buried. Their "new family" would not have to be burdened with the tragic events of the past. And the other kids were off in California, so they had a chance to start a new life over. Jo never wanted her children to be affected by what happened, or the knowledge. So my sister and I were put under "Police Protection" so to speak. Everything before 1963 being swept under the rug. Including the previous marriage, the prison record, and most tragically of all, the three children. My mother's family accepted Gene, felt he was a good guy, and that he had paid his dues. The entire Haas family wanted Gene to make a new life as well, and agreed with their decision of secrecy. "OK" said the entire Haas family, and for 40 fucking years every single person who knew the story kept the secret. And out of all these people who knew, in 40 years not one person ever said or did anything that made me go, "Hunh? What'd you say?" I
understand the DaVinci Code!! My family is the order of the secret priory.

"My God! Where were all these people when everyone died?" I asked Aunt June. My grandpa, my grandma, and even my dad.

"They were asked not to come." Aunt June said.

"Why?" I asked, horrified.

"To protect you." was the reply.

"Protect us from what?" Apparently from not having a bad image of our father.

"That's the most fucking retarded thing I've ever heard." My sister said when I told her the story. And for 40 years my sister and I have lived in a bubble, protected by everyone. Hiding, dodging, people telling stories but leaving parts of it out. And of even more staggering disbelief is how all of these people who knew the story, my mother's big Italian family, all of the Haas', and the entire town of Kiowa, kept the secret for 40 freaking years. Welcome to the Matrix.

"It's a good thing I'm not emotionally unstable." my sister said, "Because hearing something like this after all this time would push me over the edge. Someone bring me a Bloody Mary!"

Talk about cognitive dissonance! How could this man that I knew so well, and lived with for 27 years, have such an entirely radically different life that I never knew about, never guessed at, and was completely clueless about? And the rest of the Haas' maintained a relationship with all of these children over the years. They hung out with my grandparents, my aunt and uncle took them on family vacations. And now looking back, the holes in my dad's life story that never made sense, but I didn't have time to think about, now make sense. Now I say, "Oh.........that's why my dad said that!" All the things that happened when we were kids that we thought were crazy. The holidays that we didn't spend with the Haas' and spent with my mother's family so no one would say anything about these other children. And my poor Grandma, having to hide pictures of her grandchildren whenever we came around. And no one dared say anything. Uncle Dale told me that my Grandma wanted us girls to know really bad.

"Ethel wanted to tell you, but she didn't dare." Uncle Dale said.
So why tell us now? "Because I'm the only one left who knows the whole story." Aunt June said. And before she died she wanted us to hear it form beginning to end.

"I've honored your mother's wishes for 40 years and I can't do it any longer." That coupled with the fact that these three other people think the secret is stupid and totally ridiculous, and I think they pretty much told Aunt June that if she didn't tell us, they were going to.

My sister and I have since established a talking relationship with these kids, which is what they wanted all along. They always wanted to be a family with us. They know all about us, what we did growing up, receiving pictures of us from Aunt June and my Grandma. I've asked for pictures of them, since I have no idea what they look like. I can't tell you how fucking weird it is to get pictures of your family from strangers. And now that the secret is finally over, my brother is having open heart surgery. He could die, and I'll never have met him. I can't tell you devastating that is to us after all this bullshit.

"Have you told your mother that you know?" Uncle Dale asked.

"No, we're going to tell her that the secret is over when Lisa and I are together." I told him.

"You mean I'm still being held hostage? God dammit, I've been held hostage for 60 years!" Uncle Dale said.

"Well another year or two isn't going to hurt." I told him.
Several months after my father had a massive stroke and died, I would drive to the cemetery to see the process. For weeks the grave lay unmarked. I knew it was his by where it was located, and the dirt still in a pile on top. I had been stopping by the cemetery every once in a while to see if they had the tombstone placed. I'm not sure why I kept checking, just to make sure everything was ok I suppose. One day, when I arrived at the cemetery, there planted in the lush ground, with freshly dug dirt spilling all over, was the tombstone. HAAS Gene A. 1930 - 1994 It was so final, and so traumatic, I freaked out, and immediately drove away. I wandered around town for awhile in the car, with no particular destination, crying hysterically.

There were three times during the whole death process that I just couldn't take. 1) When I walked into the intensive care room and saw my father with the respirator for the first time. 2) When we drove to the church the day of the funeral and I saw the hearse parked in front of the church. 3) When I saw the tombstone. I was bemoaning this particular event to my uncle one day. My dad's brother. I was telling him about how upset I was when I saw the tombstone. He said to me, "Now you need to take your camera and go to the cemetery and take a picture of the tombstone."

"Why?" I asked, with a horrified tone.

"So you can get the whole story" he replied.
APPENDIX A

FILM SCRIPT

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?
An Experiment in Storytelling and Film Making
by
Julie Haas
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>AUDIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:19</td>
<td>John Asti</td>
<td>THE CUBAN</td>
<td>I'll tell you the story.....about when my instruments got ripped off........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7:40</td>
<td>Alison Mall</td>
<td>TWISTY TIE</td>
<td>So my mom died a couple of years ago........</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9:25</td>
<td>Ron Malpede</td>
<td>THE ENEMA</td>
<td>When we were little it was all Dr. Spock, so no matter what was wrong with us.........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11:42</td>
<td>Dale Haas</td>
<td>NELLIE</td>
<td>Well when I was about 5 years old, we had this ol' black horse named Nellie....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12:25</td>
<td>Natalie Mall</td>
<td>I'M NOT GONNA DIE IN CHICKEN FAT</td>
<td>So when I worked at Kentucky Fried Chicken......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>Bertie Mark</td>
<td>LORETTA GATES</td>
<td>Ok. Now Loretta. She used to just aggravate us because we had to work, clean the house and all....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>16:55</td>
<td>Dale Haas</td>
<td>TROUBLE</td>
<td>My mother told me not to run from her, and I was about 6 years old......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>18:58</td>
<td>David Wallace</td>
<td>FRENCHIE</td>
<td>Ok, so my boss was French, little Frenchie, and my other boss.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20:17</td>
<td>Dale Haas</td>
<td>HORSE TROUGH</td>
<td>Well when I was little too, after I fell off of that horse.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>21:05</td>
<td>Julie Haas</td>
<td>STICK SHIFT</td>
<td>About when my dad tried to teach me to drive a stick shift.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>22:26</td>
<td>Jim Teti</td>
<td>A NOT SO FUNNY STORY</td>
<td>My good buddy from Rifle Colorado......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>24:29</td>
<td>John Asti</td>
<td>INFANTILE ROUNDTREE</td>
<td>We're on. I'm back. So......you want to know about this.....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

DVD
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