

THE MAGIC OF BEAGLES

It all started with the death of my wife
When my wife died.

I never really expected it to affect me in such a profound way. Not that you can ever truly prepare for the death of a loved one, no matter how well you steel yourself or play it out in your mind like all the worst case scenarios of an impending, life consuming break up. It is never going to measure up to your faulty and misguided expectations. It always seems to fall short of the imagined drama. I think I was more disturbed and confused by my lack of feeling than what I felt like should have been a standard fare, typical expected, socially mandated reaction. I accepted it as a matter of course. We had drifted away and there was nothing traumatic or violent about her passing. She was simply gone, as if she'd left on one of her extended family outings and chose never to return.

There wasn't any more quality experimental cooking. No half finished craft projects decorating the living room, den, guest room, Florida Room and patio; no clothes, forbidden to visit the volcanic expanse of our turbo dryer, hanging from every conceivable precipice in the bedroom, no plethora of Marie Claire and Shape magazines cluttering the nightstand and no half empty glasses of milk on the counter and filing the refrigerator.

But I had the girls.

We never wanted kids. In retrospect, that probably was a good thing. But we had our "girls". Our three children, who just happened to walk on all fours, speak no English and run about the house and yard buck naked. Initially they missed their mommy. The youngest darting from room to room whimpering on an eternal quest for something she could only define in terms of "missing", the eldest, quiet and morose, laying on the floor near her toys in the living room or in the backyard under her favorite tree either in peaceful bliss or hopeless despondency and the middle child hyperactive as ever bounding from couch to couch playful and vigilant. Mommy wasn't there. She could walk through the door any second; but at this very instant, she was out of sight, out of mind. But they knew, as did I, she was never out of spirit.

Her spirit pervaded everything about the girls and the house. I lived there and it was replete with many of my individual flourishes, but she made it home. Her home. Often times by the effortless way she moved the air around her as she passed through a room. Either in a twisted flurry of activity or frustration usually aimed at me, or the quiet center of intent as she sought solace or relaxation.

The biggest cop outs
We're just friends
I'm just tired
I don't care what people think
Nothing personal
It's just business

I'd always fancied myself a writer.

The only problem being, I had never actually written much. Not that I couldn't turn a clever phrase or come up with neat idea or a new way of looking at something. I'd written several articles for the school paper, president of the Creative Writing Club and had been a co-editor for my college yearbook. I'd taken every short story and screenwriting class I could get my hands on, but truth told, I'd never really written anything of substance. I just don't write on a consistent basis, at least not with enough of a consistency to truly call myself a writer. I'd once heard an anecdote that seemed to apply readily. The best thing to ever happen to my writing was writing.

One thing I am, however, is a chameleon. Chameleons are renowned for their ability to change color as a method of camouflage or protection when in truth it is a biological response to mood and surroundings which I suppose is the way I responded

My mother has now taken to sending me newspaper clippings that she finds amusing.

The American success story. You can do what ever you set your mind to

Everybody has a story. And most have a cause they believe in or support to varying degrees of fanaticism. For my wife it was the girls. For me, it was often more about the stuff I didn't, things that were wrong. Cataclysmic events that were screaming to be drug tooth and claw from where they festered corruting the very fabric of decent society into the blistering cleansing condemning light of day

Somewhere deep down buried in my psyche I know I am destined for greatness. Well maybe not necessarily greatness, but something. I know I am destined for something. But I seem to find the most difficult thing is not just pushing through

whatever imaginary wall stops my forward progress, but in the finding, the locating and the simple recognition of said wall.

For way too long I always did what I thought others would want to see me doing. I have always tried to bring everyone that could along for the ride, my friends, my family, my compadres. And I never went out for myself. I have always thought of myself as a leader and yet there has been nothing to lead in a long time. Nor have I myself been worthy of following. But maybe I don't need to lead. Maybe I just need to do. Maybe I just need to forge ahead. I need to get uncomfortable and stay hungry, but more than anything I need to focus and I need to get busy. GOYA get off your ass.

I'm happy just working. I have nothing to prove, no one driving me, no one to stick it to

The truth of a scene (does the performance overpower the direction?)

Annotated Bibliography

Had a lot of great starts though.

That was all about to change.

As you might guess, I spent a lot of time in bookstores. Drooling over this well rendered cover or that cool premise or this fact filled strange but true tome. I was one of those guys that loved bright shiny new things but truthfully had little follow through. Owned a considerable amount of sharp books I knew I'd never read. But, I could day dream with the best of them. Certain circles referred to us as a Fanboys. Never cared for that name, but like sports fanatics, it summed up rather well.

So, I'm in a book store, part of my regular tour. Casually perusing the newest sci fi fantasy marvel and as usual, I kind of lose track of time. Only this time, "Time" seems to have lost track of me.

It simply never occurred to me otherwise. Nor did it ever occur to me that it would be that simple. That in the grand unalterable scheme of things that we would all come together to be greater than the sum of all of our parts, our fears our aggressions our dreams our passions our lives.

For the lion's share of my formulative years, I was utterly consumed with a singular all encompassing mission. An unwavering focus, if you will. My never ending quest to discover woo and conquer Mrs. Right became the light at the end of my tunnel vision. Now that is not to say that I did not have other interests or distractions. At varying points I became obsessed with baseball, World War II and reptiles along with the assorted cards, models, books, movies and ten gallon aquariums that accompany such concerns. But the undying goal, if not the sole purpose of my existence, was to find a mate and propagate my species. To the exclusion of this, all else was incidental.

Somehow, somehow, it never happened. Best laid plans of mice and men and all that. I always found how amazing it is that those who have "made it" have the veracity to tell everyone "you can do anything you set your mind to" or how "tenacity wins the day". Yeah, right. For them maybe. My story was a little different and I suspect, a little more commonplace than most people would care to admit.

Like most people, I'm sure, (or at least I pretend to imagine) most people often times in concert with a particular amount of alcohol, starlight, music and warm breezes often play "what if". The road less traveled, or rather, the other road. The one not taken. What if I'd taken or not taken the job. What if I'd moved or not made the move. Dated or not dated that ONE particular person. Swung at that pitch, left the house earlier, driven slower, looked behind me, not had that last drink, kept in touch, bought the shoes, whatever. What if you knew what was going to happen. Would you change it? Could you change it? But what if you were there? What if you were having your perfect idyllic life with your wonderful wife, nice home great kids, satisfying rewarding career and then one day - the roof caves in-----

I want the sense that the world just turned. That this is the last gig I do. From here on out, we work on our stuff. Of course, the pissy thing is, it's going to take a lot of disciple that I'm not sure at first that I will readily have. Doesn't matter. All my life I've looked back with certain regrets. Now is the time. If ever there was. For looking forward

I hate people. I knew a girl once and that was her credo. No one had burned her, ther was no trauma in her life, no reason for her conviction, other than the fact, simple and pure that she hated people. Mostly because they were stupid. And I've got to support her in a lot of things People are Stupid

The Final Word

As with all things, when you have doubts about where to begin, always start with the guilty.

That would be me.

I would prefer to address you all as friends, but by the time we reach the end of this letter that may not be the case for some of you.

I have often said I am my own worse enemy, but that seems to be a phrase that has fallen mostly on deaf ears, or maybe it has become such a cliché that people neglect its meaning. Simply put, it means I do the most damaging harm to myself because of who I am.

I have mentioned this to several of you, but know one seems to have taken notice. In that no one has made any inquires or expressed any concern. Everyone is so wrapped up in their own little worlds and no one is guiltier of that than me. I would not consider myself a man of false humility. I think I am a rather humble person and herein lay the problem. It is a problem both of perception and awareness of that perception. I am what psychologists refer to as a self actualized person. That is to say, a person is aware of himself his surroundings and his impact on those surroundings. I can honestly say I have never done anything to intentionally harm or slander anyone I have met, worked with or call a colleague compatriot or friend. I have spoken honestly and truthfully about faults I have found in those same people and have made remarks I am not especially proud of.

My off putting sense of humor is another story entirely, but I would think each of you would know me well enough to know that I would never insult or disparage anyone I did not know intimately. And I would never say anything about someone that I would not say to their face. I may not be proud of it, it may not be right and chicken shit that I am I may not want to do it, but I do own my own stuff, for good or ill. But if you quote me, get it right and get it in context.

As I stated previously, I believe I am a humble man. But I am not meek. I do not blow my own horn for my own sake. Unfortunately, in this business, that could be considered a detriment. So some portion of self aggradization must be evident. You do have to tell people to look at you or you won't get noticed. I seemed to have forgotten this and managed to err on both sides of the line. Not enough graciousness and not enough positivism.

I have always represented each of you in the best possible light under any circumstances

Apparently several of you have problems with me and my attitude of late. But none of you have nearly the problem with it that I have. I have to face it every morning and fight it every minute of every hour, while my friends instead of coming to me and confronting me or asking me to help have chosen to talk behind my back and misrepresent me when they do speak.

Several of you lovingly don't seem to have the capacity to admit error. It is never your fault or your screw up and if it were, the idea of admission of guilt is beyond you.

I am here before you to tell you yet again, that I have failed and let each and everyone of you down miserably, constantly and consistently. And most of the time I am at a loss to explain it, stop it or correct it.

All I can promise you is I wake up every single day and try to make the best of what I have in front of me and I usually drop the ball. I have also mentioned this to several of you recently and I will do so here again. I loathe myself and I have been in this position for some time now. I cannot seem to find comfort or solace in my own skin, so therefore I do not expect you to.

Whatever projects I currently have working with each of you I will see through to the end unless you chose to distance yourself from me. If that is the case please have the courtesy to contact me so we can come to a formal arrangement of closure. For those of you who no longer chose to associate with me, I understand and I thank you for the opportunities you have provided me and for the chance to know you, flawed people that we all are.

...and there it is, that sensation you get when you've consumed enough alcohol and you close your eyes and the entire world - or at least that which you can immediately experience - spins wildly on what you think is your axis.

Life is too short, way way to maintain any true sense of decorum, modesty or sobriety. Feel life, live it, make it, experience it mold it to your expectations. Make it work for you.

There is a lot to be said for the ability to maintain the PARTY LEVEL
It's like the BUSCH GARDENS mentality maintained over an unlimited amount of time.

The complexities of how much I love my wife and how much she frustrates me. The unspoken things that need to be said and the unsaid conversations.

The magic of beagles, Hawaii, thoughts unspoken, dreams unrealized and music forgotten.

Memories unbidden that flow back into your collective unconscious

The simple joy of being alive a living the joys and dreams of your youth.

Things seen and remembered through the nostalgic veil of alcohol.

What ever happened to the party bands?

The Jackets

Fat cat in the corner getting thick

My life through magazines and slightly out of focus.

The angry consumer.

Smoking not allowed in airplanes. The sign to "as a courtesy, please wipe the sink with your towel" When did we get this way. Nothing with a battery? When did this become a problem? We landed the Apollo mission on the moon with instruments powered with less than what it takes to run a Texas instruments calculator and an ipod with an internal battery is a problem. What are you going to do broadcast polka music to the pilot?

And another thing...no body ever says anything about how many thousands of flights land safely every day...

At nearing 43, I have turned seat 6E on American Flight 638 to Oakland California into my own personal nightclub at 12:30 in the afternoon and God am I glad I married the woman I did.

Just need to satisfy my need to go night clubbin'

An elderly couple sits next to us and I am amazed, humbled at their respect for each other. They are not a unit. They are strangers; the care they exhibit toward one another is a wonder to behold. I see so many things, so many wondrous memories, the chance to enjoy the simple opportunity of living. Mankind's capacity to do good will never cease to overwhelm and amaze me.

Very rarely have I ever been able to "be here now" living in the moment so to speak- I've always been some here in the future somewhere else
Even after I managed to define my focus I still found myself going twenty different directions at once

Most husbands live their lives in quiet separation. I think maybe it's time to update that cliché. I actually think I live a little more like languid hypocrisy. The dictionary definition of languid is Not exactly what I want that word to mean but I'm putting it out there anyway. Just another reminder of lost potential. That maybe I didn't exactly measure up to the exalted idea of what I had in mind for myself. The level of greatness that I was destined to achieve. Somewhere down the line I just got lazy. And now I'm just old. I wonder if Keith Richards has to wear reading glasses. But then again he's rich enough he probably just has people read it to him.

I often have to wonder why I even bother with this. Seriously, what could I possibly have to say that could be that fascinating? I don't expect to deliver any earth shattering advice, but I feel oddly compelled to write this. Like maybe this is what I really am supposed to do. It's not like I'm getting anywhere else doing anything else, so I jot down my thoughts as they drop into my head. I wonder if I should say something a little more grandiose, describe how like sugar coated lemon drops they seep from unconsciousness to land full formed in the pool of my languid thoughts.

Good thoughts, bad thoughts, thoughts that simply run on and make no sense. Why would my thoughts be any more important than anyone else's. Maybe they're not. Maybe I'm just taking the time to write it down.

My ability to follow through has always been sorely lacking.

Unfinished projects lie scattered like so much popcorn after a matinee in my wake. I guess I just never saw the point. Nothing ever seemed that great. Boy Scouts. I left one project and one merit badge short of becoming an Eagle Scout. College took forever, and I never even finished several of the classes I needed for my degree. I just managed to finagle rearranging the rules to get out. My senior thesis film took 7 years. Finishing things I start never landed on my radar. Maybe I got that from my dad and the house he tried to build us growing up. A house to make my mom happy that we never finished and bankrupted us

The inevitability of death never surprised me. I always knew I could handle it. Intellectually I was always prepared for it. It would come, as it does to all things, as a cold matter of biological process. The cessation of existence. I knew the shelf life of most things and even the tremendous care of our girls would not expand their life much beyond the expected 14 to 16 years and the hoped for 20 or 24. But intellectual reasoning and hard reality are separate and disparate creatures that have little accommodation for one another.

Sake lived and hard full and playful life. She had more hospital visits and injuries than the other two, my wife and I combined. She was sick the first night we brought her home and stayed up with her though out the night. I would do so again and again on numerous occasions and now I would do so one last time.

Whereas Wasabi and Dharma would always find comfort and relaxation curled up in my arms, Sake was another story all together. Feisty and energetic she would only find respite in those rare instances where she was physically spent or ill and even then it was a battle to get her to relax and sleep.

This night was different. She had run her course. Even though her eyes were bloodshot and droopy, she still retained that mischievous sparkle of wit and energy. Her breathing was labored and ragged as if she had run a marathon or smoked all her life. She looked up to me as if to say Thank You. Thank you for the journey, the run, the hunt. But Mom needs me now and I'm going to go see her.

Sake was my pirate, my soul mate and my life. She looked deep in my eyes, down to my core, breathed one final heavy sigh closed her eyes and she was gone. The life simply flashed from her and her body fell relaxed. I held her as tight as I had ever held anything in my life and I, a grown man who never had any interest in dogs, cried like a child, wailing from the depths of my soul, to the point I could no longer breathe.

Dharma sat by my side, cautiously licking her sister's nose as if that effort alone could resurrect her life long playmate.

I cried myself to sleep only to wake hours later with her cold stiff body in my arms and started crying yet again.

Parents should never outlive their children. And Sake was as much my daughter as my own flesh and blood.

I would never belittle death again.

It always seemed like I had so much to say at earlier periods in my life and those things unsaid, just drifted away into some forgotten back room in the halls of time. Things that I am certain at the time of their inception were extremely wise and very important. Little nuggets of wisdom that desperately cried out to be recorded and passed down from generation to generation all for the betterment of mankind.

But I think I'm just too lazy.

Yeah I'd love to have the vocabulary and the razor insight of plying words and ideas to clearly articulate the exact feeling I had about the exact experience at the exact moment I lived it, but like I said, I was far more interested in living life, such that it was than trying to chronicle it.

Be that as it may, I kept an intensive and gloriously detailed journal all my life. Very little of it to do with the telling of the experience and far more of it, far too much, to tell the truth imbroiled in the tragic minutiae of day to day living. Where I was and what I did and who I did it with. And what I bought and stores I visited and tv I watched ad nasuem Rarely

pithy commentary or observation, usually just simple unexciting didactic record keeping. I suppose it might come in handy in a court of law, but I never really lead the kind of existence that would ever find me there.

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It seems I get a particular amount of clarity about my life and my station in it every prime number years or so. 43 was significant as was 35. Of course 35 is not a prime number, but it was a bit of a milestone for me. Though for the life of me I can not remember what.