

San Francisco: 1954 -1957

Arrived in New York after a rough crossing involving hurricane [Hazel](#) on M/S [Stockholm](#) on Oct 14, 1954. Met at the ship by [Uncle Ed](#) and his children, Roy and Irene. Stayed with them in their house in New Hyde Park for about ten days and spent the time sightseeing in New York. Visited the museum of natural history, museum of science, Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, and Radio City Music Hall where I saw the Rockettes and White Christmas. Went out for a ride on Uncle Ed's boat, which had suffered some damage in the recent hurricane. Also, went with Ed and the family to visit Rolf Soderlund in Lake Hopatcong, NJ. Saw an absolutely delicious looking hamburger on a huge billboard as we were driving. Ordered one when we stopped for lunch and found it disappointing, flavorwise. Similar experience at a diner in Manhattan with a delicious looking ham-on-white-bread sandwich. It came as complete surprise to me that something that looked so appetizing could turn out to be so lacking in flavor. Later in the afternoon a persistent and steadily increasing pain in the small of the back made the ham sandwich seem even more repulsive than when I first forced it down. Increasingly miserable I headed home to Uncle Ed as quickly as I could, jouncing painfully on the hard seats of the Jamaica subway train. When I told Helen I did not feel like eating anything she asked about my health and I told her about my pain. They called a doctor who came over and after a few questions diagnosed it as kidney stone, gave me a shot for pain and told them to take me to the hospital. At the hospital there was no kidney stone to be found; the immediate cause of the problem was severe constipation, but the ultimate cause would require further investigation. I was told to see a doctor about it as soon as I got to San Francisco. During my two-day stay in the hospital I was in a ward with five other people, one of whom had a heart attack and died the second evening. He was lying in the bed next to me.

Going to San Francisco was exciting. I got to travel by air on a TWA Lockheed Super [Constellation](#). Ed and the kids took me to the La Guardia airport and waved me off. On the plane I was seated next to a German war bride who was going to meet her husband in San Francisco. Dinner was served and included among other goodies a miniature pack of five cigarettes. The plane left in the evening and after dinner I fell asleep and almost didn't even wake up for the stop in Chicago. The war bride gave me her phone number, but I never called her.

[Aunt Annie](#) met me at the plane together with her dog [Skippy](#). We drove to her friend Jane's house where Annie made dinner for us. Jane was not home. Annie's first disappointment in me came when I lighted a cigarette. "So you have taken up smoking" she said and not in an approving manner. The next came when I dropped Jane's fancy cigarette lighter on the coffee table and broke the glass so Annie had to write a note to Jane apologizing for my clumsiness. Next day we drove to [Paradise](#) to visit [Uncle Axel](#) and Aunt Hannah and stayed there for a couple of days. After we came back we moved into an apartment that Annie had rented on Divisadero Street, right next to the Haight Ashbury district. It had

two bedrooms, a kitchen and a small living room overlooking the Haight-Divisadero intersection. There was a small table with a funny looking AM radio which did not play many songs I liked. After getting settled in we visited with friends and relatives. Uncle Gus with his wife Ocie and daughter Joan, who was three or four years younger than me. Also, cousin Agnes and her son Ronnie, Mr and Mrs Peterson, Joe and Anita, and maybe a couple of others.

One evening Gus invited us all for dinner at Fisherman's Wharf, where the menu included a number of sea creatures I had never before seen, let alone have the opportunity to eat. Unfortunately, the dinner was interrupted by a recurrence of my kidney ailment which hit me so hard I had to ask to be taken to the hospital. So if I had hoped I might not have get involved with doctors right away, I was now disabused of that hope.

The doctors decided that the kidney problem was due to a congenital constriction of the urethers and that both sides needed fixing. The first operation took place in the November-December time frame. The huge incision and the rubber catheter sticking out of my side draining into a glass bottle came as an unpleasant surprise when I became fully conscious after the operation. There had been no discussions or explanations about what to expect before the operation and I had expected short little scar and quick recovery. I was definitely not ready for this kind of mutilation of my body. The surgical technique was to increase the diameter of the urether by slicing it open and suturing it back together around a catheter, thereby encouraging it to stretch itself to a larger size. The plan now was to complete the process by allowing the urether to heal around the catheter and then withdrawing it gradually, starting about four weeks after the operation at the rate of couple of inches every week until it was fully out, allowing the kidney to drain normally. In the meantime the kidney drained through another catheter, inserted into it through a hole in my side, which emptied into a rubber bag strapped to my thigh. Unfortunately it did not work out as planned. At the end of the eight-week period when the entire catheter had been withdrawn, in less than an hour the familiar relentless build-up of small-back pain signaled with authority that the kidney was not draining. Oh well, nothing for it but to stick the balloon catheter back into the kidney and strap the rubber bag to the leg again.

Draining the kidney in this manner impacts your quality of life in a number of unpleasant ways. The bag needs to be emptied, the catheter needs to be irrigated every day to keep it from getting clogged by the mineral deposits from the urine. To irrigate you squirt tap water straight into your kidney and slosh it around. It gets clogged anyway from time to time requiring an emergency trip to the hospital, usually in the middle of the night, to replace the catheter. The catheters are anchored inside the kidney by a small balloon filled with water through a narrow side channel in the catheter wall. After inserting it into the kidney the doctor expands the balloon with water, so it forms a kind of bulb, and ties off the side channel. Removing it then is simply a matter of untying the side channel to let the balloon drain and the thing slips out, slick as anything. That's

the theory. In practice it sometimes happened that the side channel was clogged up for some reason so the balloon could not be drained. The only nothing to do then was to puncture it with a long needle that the doctor inserted along the catheter all the way into the kidney, poking it around in there until he found the balloon and stuck a hole in it. It goes without saying that all this probing and sticking and manhandling of my internal organs was without benefit of any sedative or anesthetic.

Showering or bathing with an open channel directly into your abdominal cavity requires extreme care to avoid infections. They happen sometime anyway, resulting in extreme fever spikes which I would treat with large doses of aspirin resulting in the subsequent soaking of body, pajamas, and bed clothes in sweat.

In this situation it seemed that getting a job was not very practical, and as for a social life, it is quite limited when you walk around with a bag of urine sloshing inside your pants leg.

With all this free time available it seemed best to put it to use working on my education. During my first hospital stay I found the book *The Prince of Foxes* by Samuel Shellabarger in the library. I had read this book in Swedish shortly before, so I thought that trying to read it would be a good way to start brushing up on my English skills, since I knew how it came out. By the time I was discharged from the hospital I had finished the book, and from then on I was essentially fluent in reading English. (This was about two months after I landed. It took probably another three or four months to become fluent in spoken English). Aunt Annie, as well as other friends and relatives, emphasized the importance of obtaining a high-school diploma. Being more or less house-bound I started to take a correspondence course in high-school math. The material turned out to be fairly trivial so I dropped the course. I was not likely to advance my education by that route.

The tragic thing here is how uninformed I was about the educational system in the US. My relatives were not able to be of much help since they had not had the opportunity to partake of any formal education, and personally I was helpless and/or otherwise lacking in initiative to research the subject. I could have gone to City College, or Cal State, or UC Berkeley, found out what their academic requirements were, how much tuition would cost, and what types of financial aids were available. However, I didn't, and I can only guess now at what was stopping me. Maybe the medical situation slowed me down, maybe I assumed that there was no way I could afford it, or maybe I assumed that my lack of a matriculation exam would disqualify me. Whatever it was, the pathetic fact is that I relied on the Yellow Pages and random advice from strangers to guide me in setting the course for the rest of my life. That this resulted in a career pretty much along the lines I had dreamt of as a youth, and with greater success than I had dared to hope, can only be ascribed to great luck, combined with an unrealistic optimism.

1955

The second try to fix the right kidney was scheduled for sometime in February. When this attempt also proved fruitless, the decision was made to leave this aside for the time being and go fix the left kidney. After that operation I thus had two kidneys that couldn't drain naturally, so I was walking around with two urine bags strapped to my legs and two open holes into my abdominal cavity. At this point there were some searching thoughts as to where all this was heading. The possibility of having to live like this for the rest of my life started to occur to me and raised the question if it would be worth it going on.

Annie had a house on Wavona Street which she rented out. When her tenants moved it stood empty for a while before she sold it. During this period it happened to be my 20th birthday and Annie threw a nice birthday party for me there.

A couple of halfhearted attempts to get some kind of job and earn some money led me to a short and spectacularly unsuccessful career as a door-to-door salesman. My first job was with an organization called Realsilk which sold men's and women's underwear and socks, and such, door to door. It was a high-end product, good quality and moderately pricy. In fact I bought some socks for myself, which I finally had to throw out after two or three years because I couldn't wear them out. The only sales I made was to myself and Annie and to an old lady who was a regular customer who had been waiting for the Realsilk man to come around. Other than that it was mostly polite no-thank-yous, some looking through the catalog, some doors slammed in my face, and even some threats to beat me up. I soon recognized that this was not my forte and resigned my position. The next job I took was selling encyclopedias, the classic door-to-door product. This position offered a fixed payment for each presentation made so I figured here is my chance. Even if I can't make the sale, I can still collect my payment for making the pitch. After the initial training I went out with the boss to observe him in action and see how it is done. For some reason he chose to introduce me to the business by going door to door in a fairly poor section of Chinatown with large depressing apartment buildings and small unpleasant apartments and dirty hallways. The first person to let us in was Chinese housewife with two or three kids she was desperately trying to control while she politely listened to the guy's pitch. She was not inclined to buy, however, probably because of the expense, it was after all around \$400. The salesman did not make it easy for her to say no, however. He appealed to her hopes for her children's education, accused her of not doing for them like she should, divided the price down to how few pennies per day it amounted too, rolled out all possible payment plans, wrote up the contract and kept sticking it under her nose and generally badgering her unmercifully for at least three quarters of an hour. We still had to walk out without a sale, and later I have wondered if this was a set-up arranged for the boss to

demonstrate all the tricks of the trade. Unfortunately what it mostly did was to convince me that I was not going to be able to sell Encyclopedias any better than underwear.

After we had moved to the 4th Ave apartment aunt Annie noticed an intriguing little shop across the street from us, without name or other signs and that was open only on weekends and evenings. Her curiosity compelled her to go in and find out what it was all about. There she met a gentleman named Nelson Bohall who used the place as his private hobby shop and hi-fi listening room. It contained a small electronics lab, a machine shop, and an audio listening area with a couch and coffee table. The lab was equipped with a fairly complete set of tools and instruments such as scopes, waveform generators, meters, counters, and the like. The machine shop contained a drill press, a metal lathe, a grinder, and various small tools. For audio listening there was a professional turn table, high quality audio preamps and power amplifiers and a Klipschorn speaker as well as a large classical record collection. On seeing all this hi-tech stuff going on Aunt Annie told Mr. Bohall about her nephew that was staying with her and was idle due to his medical situation, and asked if he could come in and visit sometime and perhaps learn something. He very graciously agreed and I went over there at the first opportunity.

Nelson Bohall was a thirty three year old bachelor who lived with his parents and had rented this storefront as his own home away from home. He was a tall, skinny, red head who smoked like a chimney. He worked as a microwave engineer for the phone company (Pacific Telephone and Telegraph) and his main projects were to install microwave radio systems for various large users, as well as for PTT itself. One of their large users was the National Park rangers in various states. They required microwave communications systems that allowed the rangers to talk to each other as well as to home base. It was Nelson's job to go to various mountain tops and other high points in the different national park to survey antenna sites as well as to do the installation and checkout of the systems. This gave him an opportunity, equaled only by the rangers themselves, to become familiar with back roads as well as the front roads of the different parks.

Nelson was an extremely bright guy who understood the basic theory of the electronic circuits and systems that he worked with, but he was also an excellent craftsman who could build extremely professional looking prototypes and even more finished pieces. He had used his shop on more than one occasion to design and build equipment that was then used by the phone company. He was a very patient teacher and explainer of the mysteries of electronics.

I still remember the aha experience when I realized for the first time how a plate loaded voltage amplifier worked. I had seen the basic circuit ever since my time in Mariehamn, and had struggled to explain to my own satisfaction how it could be that this circuit made it possible to amplify radio signal received from the air.

After Nelson's explanation I knew. My original intent when I came to the US was to study mechanical engineering. After spending a few weeks with Nelson in his shop I was persuaded that electronics was the way to go, so when I applied to Heald's it was to their Electronics Engineering program. In this fundamental career decision of my life Nelson was the key deciding influence.

Nelsons family was the most exciting group of people I had met up to that time, and possibly even to this day. His father was an innovator in the field of mechanical engineering education and had invented a system of mechanical drafting that was called isogonic drafting, which he taught at the college where he was a teacher. One of my most vivid memories from my time in San Francisco was Christmas 1958 when I was invited to the Christmas party at the Bohalls. Prior to this, Nelson and I had spent a lot of enjoyable time and energy on coming up with appropriate gifts, subtle ways to package them so as to disguise them and thinking of tricky clues for people to use in guessing their contents before opening them. The Bohall family was a very quick-witted bunch of people, especially one of the sisters and one of the son-in-laws, not to mention Nelson of course who was the smartest person I had ever met.

The youngest sister was unmarried and she had a boyfriend who was a cartoonist, whom I was very impressed by because of the clever cartoons in his portfolio that I had a chance to look at. However, she wound up marrying Nelson's buddy, Harry Hatt, who was in my view the direct opposite of an artistic creative type, but a super personable friendly guy, who no doubt needed all his personal pleasantness to put up with the excitements that his very emotional wife might give rise to.

Heald's College 1956-1957

When the medical problems seemed to be clearing up I resumed my educational pursuit by starting to attend evening high-school classes at Galileo High on Van Ness Ave near Fishermans Wharf. These were provided for adults who needed to go back to school to obtain their high school diplomas. I took a class in algebra, I guess to calibrate where I stood in terms of high school requirements, and found it to be an easy review of material I had already covered in Ålands Lyceum. Compared to the rest of the people in the class, who presumably encountered the material for the first time I apparently appeared overqualified for the class. At any rate, one evening when I was riding the Van Ness Ave bus on my way back home, the instructor of the class was on the bus and started talking to me. He wondered why I was taking his class and I told him I wanted to get my high school diploma so I could qualify for college. He started telling me about Heald's College where he also was an instructor and suggested that I already had the necessary qualifications for admittance there. Heald's was a small non-accredited college that offered courses in business, engineering, and

architecture, located on the second and third floor of a building at Van Ness and Bush that housed Smiling Jack's Used Cars on its first floor. On further investigation I found that the electrical engineering curriculum for a Bachelor of Science degree could be covered in 24 months of continuous study if you maxed out on the course load, and the tuition was \$500 per year. All in all this seemed like a very good deal to me, the price was right, and the schedule fit my situation perfectly. I did not delve further into the downsides of attending a non-accredited institution, either because I didn't know there was a difference, or because I decided to ignore the issue and hope for the best. It's even possible I was slightly misled by the Heald's people I talked to. The bottom line is I decided to apply there and borrowed \$500 from Uncle Axel for the tuition.

School started the first week of January 1956. The location was perfect for me, I could get the bus right outside our apartment and get off about a block from Heald's with only one transfer. I felt right at home very quickly and found the class work interesting and rewarding, and very doable. I had no problem with motivation to do my homework. My immediate past of flunking the matriculation exam, sleeveless attempts at finding a job back home, and a one year period of inactivity in the US (albeit for medical reasons) with equally fruitless attempts at gainful employment here had instilled in me a certain amount of panic about the future. Now, that I had gotten hold of this one lifeline there was no way I was going to let it slip out of my hands for lack of trying. Consequently I worked as hard as I possibly could in all my courses and was able to secure A-grades in all but four or five classes, where I received B, for the entire two-year course of study. If I had put in the same effort and energy into my work in Ålands Lyceum I probably could have graduated from there with a Cum Laude as well. Needless to say I was a favorite with most of the instructors: I was enthusiastic about the material, did my work, and didn't give them any problems. Well maybe some problems: our physics instructor who was fairly young and inexperienced and not able to control the class very well had the difficulty that a number of people would gather round my desk during tests and try to copy from my paper. I was totally innocent of doing anything to facilitate this cheating so he could not hold me responsible for it or for preventing it. He solved the problem for the final exam by announcing to the class that everyone would have to take the final except Nordling. The English teacher on the other hand had no such problem, he made me his assistant and had me help him with chores such as taking roll call and handing out papers.

Some of my relatives were dedicated new-deal democrats and others were not, so sometimes at social gatherings we would get into political discussions. At the time I thought of myself as conservative and chimed in with that viewpoint. One of the arguments I used once was the mess that the Labor party in England was making of the economy. I think I got most of my information from Readers Digest. Cousin Agnes' response to that was to uncork a torrent of abuse against

England, mainly complaining about all the help the US had given them during the war. I was taken aback and surprised that anyone could have such strong emotions about a country; personally I had not had feelings for or against any country that generated anywhere near that much heat. This attitude of indifference to such issues started to change, however, as I became more tuned in to the new environment in which I found myself. One specific marker in this change process stands out. It was on the occasion of the Law Day, 1955. Law Day was then a somewhat half-hearted attempt to compete with the socialist and communist celebration of May Day as the workers day, the idea being to emphasize that America is a nation of laws that contrasts favorably with the communist countries which were ruled by dictators. The editorial in the San Francisco Examiner for this day had among other ringing statements the words: "The proudest word of man: I am an American." This claim made me draw some unintended conclusions, or maybe they were intended. According to this newspaper, no-one where I came from, no matter how accomplished or distinguished, could be as proud of his station in life as the meanest bum on the Skid Row at Fourth and Howard. Not my father who had led an honorable, pious, and dutiful life, not my teachers whom I admired for their knowledge, intelligence and dedication to their vocation, not the Finnish soldiers whose superhuman courage and sacrifice had prevented the Red Army from conquering Finland, making it possible for me to read this particular editorial, nor any Finn, or Swede, or indeed any European no matter how accomplished, no matter how virtuous, no matter how honorable, no matter what he had contributed to the welfare of humanity, however much he has strived and achieved, still could not be as proud as the winos in the tenderloin. Perhaps I took the editorial a little too seriously, but for the first time it made me question whether I had done the right thing in coming to America.

Sometime in this period, probably before I started at Heald's but after I had become somewhat familiar with electronics in Nelson's shop I saw an ad by IBM for field engineers and decided to apply for it. I went for an interview and thought I did pretty well; they had a technical test which I thought I handled OK, but the interviewer thought that my answer to a question about parallel resistors indicated that I wasn't sufficiently familiar with the issue, even though I gave a correct, and correctly reasoned answer. He thought I had to think too hard about it, it should have been second nature to me. Anyway the rejection letter stated that I had insufficient command of the English language for an IBM customer service representative. Considering the general level of English competency in the technology business, no doubt including IBM, that is a pretty funny reason.

One of my two good friends at Heald's was a Norwegian named Bjarne Lehrpold. Bjarne had a rather colorful background for an electrical engineering student. He had come to California as a tourist and gotten a job as a waiter in Valhalla, a restaurant in Sausalito which was run by a lady named Sally Stanford who used to be the most famous madam in San Francisco. Sally was fond of Bjarne and

offered to sponsor him for his immigration visa, to obtain which he had to be out of the country during the application and waiting period. He decided to go to Panama where he got a job as a waiter at the Panama Hilton where he learned the finer points of waiting on people in a high class restaurant. He had also managed to loose all his money gambling and possibly rack up some debts, so when it was time to return to the US and a Norwegian freighter happened to come by on its way to San Francisco, he thought it gave him an excellent opportunity to skip town. According to his own telling, he had a cab park under his hotel window from which he let down his luggage with a rope and departed without checking out or paying his bill. On the freighter he spent the time between Panama and San Francisco playing poker with the crew and managed to win enough money that he stepped ashore in San Francisco with a healthy bundle of cash. After working at Valhalla for a while he decided it was time to get an education so he started at Heald's. Instead of continuing at Valhalla, which was located across the bay, he got a job as a bartender at the Tin Angel, a night club on the Embarcadero in San Francisco which was owned by [Peggy Tolk Watkins](#), a protégé of Sally's. The Tin Angel was the home of San Francisco jazz and hosted bands such as [Kid Ory](#), Bob Scobey, [Turk Murphy](#), and [George Lewis](#). It was open six nights per week from 8pm to 2 am and charged \$1.00 per person entrance fee and \$1.10 for drinks, which were the only form of refreshments available.

Bjarne got me a job at the [Tin Angel](#); I started out as the doorman/ticket taker/bouncer working on weekends and was promoted to bartender working weeknights as well, after Bjarne had left.

Peggy Tolk Watkins was a thirty-something unglamorous brunette who cared little about her appearance except to let you know that she didn't care. Her personality was a tough in-your-face abrasiveness that usually served to put people off, if not outright intimidate, on first occasion. One night just after closing I let the last remaining customer wait for his cab inside the door since it was raining heavily. Peggy saw him and came over and demanded to know why he was here after closing time. The man explained he was waiting for a cab and introduced himself and handed Peggy his business card. She looked at it and handed it back to him with a sneer. "Legislature, hah? Well I am impressed. Now get out of here."

According to Bjarne, Peggy would brag about having been married twice but she has had more mistresses than husbands. Basically she was an open out front lesbian. I recall one occasion when I was assigned the task of driving Peggy and one of her partners to the airport. For a young fellow, fairly fresh off the farm on Baggholma it was a novel experience to be driving through nighttime San Francisco with two women romantically involved in the back seat. One of Peggy's partners was [Joanne Beretta](#), the cabaret singer who filled in during intermissions. She was a full-figured woman who favored flowing billowing outfits that were intended to give her ample contours the benefit of the doubt. She was

sensitive vulnerable type that seemed entirely in keeping with the mood of the English ballads that she sang. To see her in her black outfits, plucking her guitar and singing in her plaintive voice was to feel her pain. Peggy, however, was not moved. When a young attractive groupie, who did not dress to conceal, caught Peggy's attention Joanne's time was up. According to the gossip which the waitresses would fill me in on during lulls at the server station, Peggy stole the groupie from Turk and brought her home and into her bed and kicked Joanne out. Personally I was detailed to sit at the groupies table from time to time as a kind of guard to discourage sailors and other young men on the make who viewed her as a target. Joanne for her part tried to find consolation and/or revenge in an affair with the trumpet player Tom Jefferson. Tom was probably the most immature, macho, insensitive black buck in the band, and definitely not the man made for someone like Joanne. The experience was not happy for Joanne and apparently discouraged her from further adventures in heterosexuality.

My relationship with Peggy felt a little bit like I was one of the bar appliances, there to be used as needed, but not to communicate with. Whether it was my appearance, lowly position, or my emerging geek personality, there was not much human interaction between her and me. When on a couple of occasions she deigned to notice me as a member of the same species you could almost hear the gears turning in her mind as her perspective changed to say hey, there is another human being there, let's hear what he has to say. On one such occasion she quizzed me skeptically, even in a somewhat hostile manner about the treatment of Jews in the Scandinavian countries. On the other I was invited along with the staff to go for a midnight skinny dip in the pond on her farm somewhere in Marin County. She pretty much let me know I was a wuss for declining.

Business was not as good as she had hoped at the Tin Angel so in the spring of '56 she sold the place to the Weiss brothers with whom she had various business relationships. They were the owners of Fantasy records, which was recording artists such as Dave Brubeck, Cal Tjader and Lenny Bruce. Peggy contributed with paintings for the record covers which were described as outstanding examples of "primitive art". In the fall of 1956 the Republican National convention was held in San Francisco (this was before it became the ultimate left city in America) and as a result there was significant uplift in the tourist business in the city which also provided a much needed boost in business at the Tin Angel. It was the best of times on the waterfront for several weeks, the crowds kept filling the Tin Angel every night and the dough was rolling in. I often collected more than \$100 in admission fees. Not everyone was totally happy about all the republicans. Don Ewell, the piano player in Turk's band was a staunch democrat with a shoe-sole-with-a-hole-in-it lapel pin, which was Adlai Stevenson's campaign symbol. At one occasion he asked about my views and I said I tended republican, because of my background. Is that because you come from an aristocratic family he wondered. My natural diffidence kept me from

making a big deal about how far off the mark he was and I just said I came from a small farm where self reliance was a big thing.

When the tourists gradually went back home business at the Tin Angel also went back to its former marginal levels. Shortly thereafter we were informed that we were no longer working for the Weiss brothers, one of the perks of which had been that I got to meet people like Mort Sahl and Cal Tjader. It seems that Peggy had repossessed the Tin Angel for non payment. The inside gossip was that the Weiss Brothers had engineered the purchase without intent to follow through so they would be in position to skim the revenue cream during the good times of the convention. Then when it was back to money losing business as usual they let her have it back. If they were conniving enough to engage in this kind of scheme, they got their comeuppance when they lost control of Fantasy Records just before it hit the big time with bands like Credence Clearwater Revival.

Besides the Tin Angel, Peggy owned another night club called the Fallen Angel, which was located at 1144 Pine Street, and in its earlier incarnation had been Sally Stanford's whorehouse. It was still decorated in the manner of its former function, including a circular intimate alcove off to the side of the bar with lots of draperies and pillows on the floor. I don't know what the exact relationship was between Peggy and Sally, but I assumed she was some kind of sponsor or backer. In spite of its racy past, the Fallen Angel was not an exciting place, primarily because of its low key entertainment. It alternated between an unknown pianist who was doing Cole Porter songs and Joanne who was doing her ballads, and neither one really set the house on fire. Depending on business I would sometimes work at the Fallen Angel and I found it nice break from the tedium of slow nights at the Tin Angel and the entertainment suited me just fine.

The other fill-in artist between sets of Turk Murphy or George Lewis was a jazz and folk singer named [Barbara Dane](#). Although she was an older married woman with husband and kids I had an absolute crush on her. She had the talent and personality to be one of the great stars along with the likes of Bessie Smith, according to Time Magazine. She appeared on nationwide TV with performers like Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Earl Hines. She also appeared on the Johnny Carson show as solo guest artist.

Although she was best known as a jazz and blues singer, at the Tin Angel she did mostly folk songs accompanied by her guitar. One of my favorites was a song called "The Frozen Logger" whose lyrics went as follows:

As I set down one evening in a timber town cafe
A six foot-seven waitress, to me these words did say
"I see you are a logger and not just a common bum
For no one but a logger stirs his coffee with his thumb

"My lover was a logger, there's none like him today
If you'd sprinkle whisky on it, he'd eat a bale of hay
He never shaved the whiskers from off his horny hide
But he'd pound 'em in with a hammer, then bite 'em off inside

.....

Some time in 1956 or 57 my brother Sven Olof visited San Francisco when his ship made port there for loading and/or unloading. He was then in his see-the-world phase of his life, working as a "motor-man" on a freighter owned by the Tordén line of Sweden. Bjarne very kindly lent me his car so I could take Olof on a sightseeing trip around the city. From San Francisco the ship headed for Japan, as recall, where Olof had the opportunity to experience yet another part of the world, so different from the small-scale neighborhoods of Baggholma and Brändö.

1957

As business got slower and slower Bjarne quit the Tin Angel and I wound up working weeknights as well as weekends. It became increasingly stressful to keep up the school work, including a substantial amount of home work, while holding down a job as bartender six nights a week from 8pm to 2am. I still needed the money so I started looking around for another part time job and got one loading trucks for UPS two to three hours per day, five days per week. The pay was 90 cents per hour which was about double what I earned at the Tin Angel. Loading trucks was the lowest rung on the ladder at UPS since it required no judgment or mental capacity whatsoever. Your task was simply to take whatever packages that came to the end of the chute and to stow them neatly in the truck. It involved a lot of walking back and forth inside long semi trailers. To speed up the process and reduce the amount of walking I am afraid that we resorted to practices that were not in the UPS hand book or in the best interest of its customers. We would use big cartons to build walls in the truck at about 10-foot intervals starting at the far end of the truck and fill the space between the walls by throwing smaller packages behind. We started at the far end and filled up that space, then moved on to the next wall, filled that space and so on until the truck was full. This method was probably not approved by management, but so long as we worked deep inside the truck we were able get away with it relatively undetected.

There were three opportunities in this job for supplementing the somewhat modest hourly income. One was "double-addresses". UPS paid \$1.00 for each package we found that had two equally valid address labels with different addresses, a situation that arose when the shipper reused an old carton without crossing out or otherwise invalidating the old address label. This bounty was quite efficient in keeping all eyes peeled for double addresses. Unfortunately for us loaders, most of them had already been discovered by the time the packages got to the truck.

Another perk was the opportunity to buy goods that had been damaged in shipment. This was generally done by periodic auctions and prices tended to be quite low. It would seem that this is a counterproductive policy for a company who wished its employees to handle the packages carefully, but presumably somebody had done the cost-benefit analysis and concluded that the money from the auction was worth more than increased cost of insurance. Later in life (at Kinex) I was a customer of UPS and had occasion to investigate the worst-case shipping stress that a package would experience at UPS. To do this we obtained a shipping damage assessment from UPS by giving them one of our standard shipping containers with the product packed inside, and then examining the contents after UPS had subjected it to their test procedure. Significantly, they do not disclose what this procedure consists of, but by a process of duplicating the damage they caused we concluded that it consists of dropping the package on all sides, all edges, and all corners from a height of three feet onto a concrete floor. No indication that it had been thrown 2/3 the length of a semi trailer, however.

The final goodie was the extra \$1.00 that you were paid for working past 9 pm. They did not pay overtime for part-time workers, but if you worked past 9 pm you got an extra \$1.00 in addition to your hourly pay. To minimize the number of \$1.00 bills they would have to give out, the strategy was to keep everyone working as close to 9 pm as possible, and then have all but a few people punch out 9:00. The time clock clicked over at 9:00 and then at 9:06, and if your card said 9:06 or later you got the extra dollar. It was an exceedingly slow shuffle in the queue for the time clock every night right after 9 pm as people hoped that despite their best efforts the clock had unfortunately clicked over to 9:06 by the time they reached it. If you were among the last in the queue, and if you moved slowly enough you might succeed in getting the extra dollar without having to actually stay and work until 10 or 11 pm.

Even though Heald's wasn't exactly an Ivy League school, there were corporate recruiters that came around to interview graduating seniors. IBM was one of those, and he was interviewing for position on the SAGE project, which was part of the North American air defense system. Since this job required a secret clearance, and I was not yet a citizen I did not bother to do the interview; I assumed the hassle of getting the clearance was more than IBM would be willing to go through. Bjarne, who was graduating three months before me had gotten a job with a company called Burroughs Corporation, which I was vaguely familiar with, so when the Burroughs recruiter came around again I signed up for an interview. This resulted in an offer of a position as an Assistant Development Engineer at their research center in Paoli Pennsylvania, at a salary of \$5700 per year. I had no idea where Paoli was, except that it was in Pennsylvania and a long way from San Francisco which was a definite negative. I accepted anyway, without trying for any other interviews because I considered my prospects in the Bay Area somewhat limited for two reasons. First, most companies doing

electronics work in the area, such as Lenkurt, Varian, Sylvania, Philco, were mostly military contractors which required security clearance, which would be hard for me to get since I was not a citizen. Secondly, being local they had a more prejudiced view of Heald's college and did not consider its graduates full-fledged engineers; several of my class mates wound up taking jobs at places like Hewlett Packard as technicians. Aunt Annie accepted my decision to move across the country without objections although it must have been a disappointment for her, although the fact of my graduating from college with excellent grades and getting a job as an engineer at a good salary might have seemed like a miracle considering the beginning of my life with her.

One of my two favorite days at UPS was when I had to ask for a day off to fly to Los Angeles for an interview with Eric Seif of Burroughs Corp. For a guy who flunked out of Ålands Lyceum a couple of years ago and now working his way through unaccredited Heald's College at UPS for 90 cents an hour to have a nationally known corporation fly him to Los Angeles just so they could talk to him, this was sweet validation. My other favorite day was when I told my boss that I was quitting to take a job at Burroughs Corporation as an Assistant Development Engineer. Well, hrrmph, you will always be an assistant engineer was his reply. I wondered what made him want to rain on my parade, but now I can imagine that he might have felt resentments at these young careless part-time college-student truck loaders who kept cycling through his unglamorous work place only to fly off to futures that he could only envy.

My other good friend at Healds was [Frank Lanza](#), a distant cousin of Mario Lanza according to his own claim. Frank and I spent many hours at Mel's coffee shop right next door to Heald's discussing many neat things you could do with electronics and the possibilities for making money on them. One of our neatest ideas came about when we realized that television signals were a form of time varying electrical signals just as the audio signal recorded on phonograph records. Why not, said we, couldn't you make a device which would record video signals on the same kind of disk so that you could watch movies on a video version of a record player. We still hadn't got to the part in the book where they discussed bandwidth requirements and availabilities. The simple calculation we forgot to do was how many bits per second of information are needed to update a full-motion video screen and how many bits per second can you get from a record player. (Just for fun, here is a rough estimate: a decent quality black-white video picture consists of about 400X400 or 160,000 pixels, with about 6 bits per pixel. It needs to be updated 30 times per second for flicker free viewing, which works out to 28,800,000 bps. For a color image these numbers are multiplied by three. A high quality record player gives decent frequency response to about 20,000 HZ with about 15 bit resolution, which is equivalent to 300,000 bps, but since it can do stereo, it really is good for twice that or 600,000 bps. So we were only off by a factor of 48.) The instructive part of this story is how long it took for this ingenious idea to come to fruition. The fact that a couple of naïve students at Heald's college could come up with this idea tells us that many other people had

also thought of it and long before us. Still it took until about 2000, or more than 40 years, with enormous resources applied to the problem before all the tricky little details had been worked out. The Devil, truly is in the details.

Frank and I did our thesis project together, which was to design and build a 4-stage binary counter and prove that it worked. It used a twin-triode tube (6SN7 if I remember correctly) to implement the flip-flop for each stage.

One Thursday night when we were at my house working late on the project Frank found to his distress when he got ready to leave at about 1 am that his car had been stolen. He had parked in the street just outside our apartment and it was no longer there. The car was a 1955 Or 56 Chevy Bel Air, which had the handy feature that it could be started without an ignition key. The ignition switch had an unlocked off position as well as a locked off position. In the unlocked off position it was possible to turn the switch without a key, using a kind of rudimentary knob-like collar surrounding the key hole. Frank, taking full advantage of this feature, never bothered with a key at all. No matter where or when he parked the car, he left it unlocked and as ready to be driven off by any stranger as by Frank. That he had gotten away with this for the better part of two years until that unfortunate night outside my apartment is perhaps an indicator of his luck.

The car was found abandoned along a road in Marin County three or four days later. When the highway patrol approached the car they noticed a powerful odor that indicated something dead and rotting. Suspecting that there was a body in the trunk they broke in through the back seat and found a dozen rotten crabs in it. It seems that Frank had been asked by his mother to get crabs at Fisherman's Wharf for the family's dinner on Friday. The good part about this was that the smell had apparently gotten so bad that it forced the thieves to abandon the car. The bad part was that the smell was extremely difficult to get out. Frank kept washing and shampooing and airing it out with Pinesol and whatever deodorants he could find, but it was still a stinker to ride in. With the odor still in the car we were driving back to Heald's a few days after this fiasco when Frank made an illegal left turn on Van Ness Ave, not noticing that there was a police car a couple of cars back in the queue that he jumped in front of. Naturally the cop pulled us over and proceeded with the usual drill. Let me see your license and registration. I don't have them. (Frank never carried these with him in the car either, figuring that they were as unnecessary as the key.) How come? Well you see my car was stolen a few days ago and I just got it back and the thieves took them from the car, where I normally keep them. Well you are supposed get it replaced as soon as possible when something like this happens. I did, I went to the license and registration office on Saturday. They are closed on Saturdays. Not in San Mateo, which is where I live. etc, etc. The whole thing ended by the cop giving Frank a warning and telling him never to do it again. To put this in perspective, here we were in a car that had been reported stolen a few days earlier, and recovered in another county, with no license and registration or any other means of

identification. It would not have taken a very suspicious cop to wonder if we were the thieves and arrested us both. But Frank talked his way out of it without even so much as a well deserved traffic ticket. If I had been as smart then as I am now I would have realized that here is a guy who is going places, maybe I should follow him.

Camping trip with Nelson

The academic year at Heald's consisted of 50 weeks of class work and a two-week summer recess. Nelson, his colleague in the phone company, Harry Hatt, a family friend of Nelson's named Dennis, another Heald's student named Bob Woods, and I had made plans to go on an extended vacation trip together. This vacation trip was to be supported by all the latest communications and recording technology that Nelson could muster. With my and the other fellow travelers' eager assistance he spent several months getting ready. The list of equipment included the following, plus tools that might be needed to keep it all running:

- LP gas powered generator
- Normal camping equipment
- Professional reel-to-reel tape recorders
- Microphones (two for stereo recording)
- Telescoping microphone booms and stands
- 16 mm movie camera
- Citizen-band radios
- Trailer to house the equipment

It took two station wagons and a trailer to haul all this stuff, in addition to the normal camping gear for a two-week trip by five people. The experiences offered by this unusual camping trip started as soon as we hit the road. With one CB radio in each car we kept in regular contact with each other and were able to facilitate such traveling niceties as passing other cars going around blind corners. The car ahead would report what cars were coming in the opposite direction and would give clearance to pass like: "after red Chevy has gone by". The object of the game was of course to confound and astound the drivers we were subjecting to this unsafe seeming maneuver.

The route we took was up the Pacific coast through California, Oregon, and Washington, stopping in various state and national parks and other camp sites. Among the sites we visited were Crater Lake, Olympic Peninsula, Columbia River Valley, Mount Shasta, to name a few.

We caused quite a stir when we pulled into a camp site with our two cars, trailer, and the outrageous collection of equipment. One night in particular stands out in my mind, in a park where the rangers were conducting a typical campfire ceremony with marshmallow toasting and singing. Here the normal campers were sitting around the campfire enjoying the marshmallows and the singing and there were we nerds on the periphery with our recording equipment set up, the microphone booms extended precariously toward the audience, Nelson filming with the movie camera and me and Bob Woods acting as the audio engineers, and Harry keeping watch on the trailer and our power supply. The audience was a little mystified by all this and the rangers were somewhat bemused but left us good-naturedly alone to do our thing.

In the middle of the performance the battery ran down to its limit and kicked off the motor generator with a shattering racket that overpowered both the rangers and the singing. There were probably a few frowns at this rude discord into the harmony of the occasion but fortunately nobody tried to remove us and our equipment. When the battery was recharged, the motor stopped and the singing could be heard again.

The first money I earned for doing engineering type work was to make a drawing of the Safeway [logo](#) for a Safeway grocery store, for some sign or brochure I imagine. Mr. Nelson, the mechanical drafting instructor had been given this project by someone at the store, and even though I was an EE student instead of an ME, he turned the project over to me for some reason. I worked on it for a couple of hours one Saturday and earned \$5.00. A second engineering job I got was to fix Don Ewell's hi-fi amplifier, which suffered from a pronounced 60Hz hum. I tried the few tricks I knew, shortening some wires, soldering better grounds, maybe relocating some components, and so on. My efforts were less than successful, after all my efforts the hum was still there, although reduced somewhat. I charged him \$15.00 for my work anyway, but I felt slightly guilty about it. I hope Don didn't hate me too much for it.

I graduated from Heald's Engineering College on December 31, 1957 with the [degree](#) of Bachelor of Science-Electrical Engineering (Electronics). My grade point average was 3.56 out of 4.0. In January of 1958 I proceeded to move to Pennsylvania to go to work for Burroughs.

End of part 1

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MS Stockholm

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Uncle Ed, Helen, Roy and Irene outside their home in New Hyde Park on Long Island

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Lockheed Super Constellation.

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Aunt Annie.

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Uncle Axel and aunt Hannah.

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Gus, Annie, and Uncle Axel in Paradise.

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Gus and Ocie.

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Skippy in Jane's back yard.

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Joan up a tree



Joan and Art outside her home in Daly City.

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Sally Stanford For more info click this [Link](#)

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Peggy Tolk Watkins. For more info click this [Link](#)

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Turk Murphy on the Trombone, Bob Helms on clarinet

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Joanne Beretta

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Barbara Dane

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Frank Lanza For more info click this [link](#)

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Nelson Bohall For more info click this [Link](#)

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Loaded up for camping

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The camp site with Nels, Harry, and Bob Wood



Safeway logo (I did only the red part)

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Sven Olof at the San Francisco Airport

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OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

HEALD ENGINEERING COLLEGE

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Record of Nordling, Karl I

Course Electronic Engineering

Address 22 South Ave., Media, Pa.

Entered 1/3/56

COURSE NO.	SUBJECT	Quarter Units	GRADE	COURSE NO.	SUBJECT	Quarter Units	GRADE
E.E. 110	Dir. Cur. Electricity	5	A	E.E. 212c	Electronic Engineering III	5	A
G.E. 110	English	3	A	E.L. 216c	Electronic Eng. Lab. III	2	A
E.D. 110a	Mechanical Drawing I	2	A	E.E. 322	Transient Circuit Analysis	5	A
G.E. 112	Strength of Materials	5	B	Math 222b	Differential Equations II	5	A
E.E. 112	Alt. Cur. Electricity	5	A	Math 220	Vector Analysis	5	A
E.D. 110b	Mechanical Drawing II	2	A	G.E. 220	Engineering Law	3	A
E.L. 110	Electrical Eng. Laboratory	2	A	K.E. 312d	Electronic Engineering IV	5	B
E.E. 118a	Dir. Cur. Electricity I (Adv)	5	A	E.L. 316d	Electronic Eng. Lab. IV	2	A
G.E. 118a	Physics I	5	A	K.E. 214	Electronics for Industry	5	B
E.D. 118a	Electrical Drawing I	2	A	E.L. 212c	Electrical Eng. Lab. III	2	A
G.E. 222	Economics	5	A	K.E. 316	Transmission Lines & Antennas	5	A
E.E. 118b	Dir. Cur. Electricity II(Adv)	5	A		Total Quarter Units		171
E.D. 118b	Electrical Drawing II	2	A		or		
G.E. 118b	Physics II	5	A		11th Semester Hours		
G.E. 118	English (Engineering Reports)	4	B				
E.E. 218c	Dir. Cur. Electri.III(Adv)	5	F				
E.E. 220a	Alt. Cur. Electri. I (Adv)	5	A				
Math 216	Differential Calculus	5	A				
K.E. 210	Vacuum Tube Theory	5	A				
E.L. 214	Vacuum Tube Laboratory	2	A				
Math 218	Integral Calculus	5	A				
K.E. 212a	Electronic Eng. I	5	B				
E.L. 216a	Electronic Eng. Lab. I	2	A				
K.L. 212a	Electrical Eng. Lab. I	2	B				
E.E. 220b	Alt. Cur. Electri. II (Adv)	5	A				
E.E. 220c	Alt. Cur. Electri. III(Adv)	5	A				
K.E. 212b	Electronic Engineering II	5	B				
E.L. 216b	Electronic Eng. Lab. II	2	A				
K.L. 212b	Electrical Eng. Lab. II	2	A				
Math 222a	Differential Equations I	5	A				

ENTRANCE UNITS FROM		ENTRANCE UNITS FROM	UNITS	DATE OF BIRTH <u>3/26/35</u>	KEY TO GRADES:
Coll. Algebra II	5			PLACE OF BIRTH <u>Finland</u>	"A" 95-100
Trigonometry	5			HONORABLE DISMISSAL <u>12/31/57</u>	"B" 85-94
Coll. Algebra III	5			GRADUATED <u>12/31/57</u>	"C" 75-84
Analytical Geom.	5			DEGREE <u>B.S. in E.E. (Electronics)</u>	"D" 60-74 (Conditional)
Coll. Algebra I	5			MEMORANDA:	"F" Failure

I CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS CORRECT.
Date 11/21/58 

My grades

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Keald Engineering College

San Francisco

California



The Board of Directors of the College by virtue of the Authority vested in them by the State of California upon the recommendation of the faculty have conferred upon

Karl J. Nordling

the degree

Bachelor of Science-Electrical Engineering

Electronics

with all the rights, privileges and honors thereto appertaining.
We hereby certify and give testimony of the fulfilment of all requirements for the degree. Given under the Seal of the College at San Francisco, California, the 31st, day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and fifty seven.



R. Nordling, S. C. E. L. Ohmen
Dean President

My diploma

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Burroughs



BURROUGHS CORPORATION
RESEARCH CENTER, PAOLI, PENNSYLVANIA

September 4, 1957

Mr. Carl I. Nordling
216-4th Avenue
San Francisco 18, Calif.

Dear Mr. Nordling:

We are pleased to offer you the position of Assistant Development Engineer at a starting salary of \$5,700.00 per year. This is contingent upon your ability to pass a routine medical examination and reference check.

Burroughs will pay your moving expenses which will include packing, moving and unpacking and will pay traveling expenses for you and your dependents involved in relocating. In the event you accept our offer Burroughs will select the moving company and we will require certain information from you prior to selecting the carrier.

We would appreciate your contacting us as soon as possible as to your acceptance or rejection of our offer and hope that your decision will be in our favor.

Your interest in Burroughs is appreciated.

Very truly yours,

BURROUGHS CORPORATION

M. E. Jenkins
Professional Placement Manager

MEJ/dcc

My first job offer



Drink coaster from the Tin Angel promoting Peggy's relationship with Fantasy Records

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