

## **TAKING ON TIME: A CAT'N'MOUSE GAME**

Time to give time a hard time again, use it to advantage (collapse it and blow it back up).

Stand up to it for once, stare it down, play with it. Pounce on it, attack it, devour it. Take a stab at it. Dissect each passing moment and find out what makes it tick. Show it who's in charge, who's boss, who's in control.

Keep it plastic fantastic. <sup>i</sup> <sup>ii</sup>

## TREADING TIME: MULTIPLE APPROACHES

**“Don’t let the past remind us of what we are not now.”<sup>iii</sup>**

**“The voyage of discovery lies not in finding new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”**

**Marcel Proust<sup>iv</sup>**

Is the past excess baggage, irrevocable, best forgotten and left behind?

Or could it be that today’s a pain, tomorrow the same but the past is a game? There are so many different pasts available to choose from – bogus, checkered, imagined, mysterious, packaged, peculiar, vanished and made to last, to name but a few.

An invention recreated every morning, a game hovering powerfully in the background for the length of the waking day. An ever-changing puzzle: the pieces jump around and reconfigure in rebellion, resisting efforts to impose structure on them, to create narrative.

### **A Restless Wriggle In Time**

In any case, graduating high school in June 1973 meant being a little too early for slacker but not necessarily too late for the Vietnam War – too late to have suffered through the unrest and fervor of the Sixties but not too late to idealize them, to be caught up in their legacy.

Like any other kid born around 1955, the landscape of my national political subconscious was occupied by those classic, mammoth, unpeaceful things seen in the den or living room on the family television: the JFK assassination, the Civil Rights movement, the MLK and RFK assassinations of 1968, the first landing on the moon, Vietnam, the ongoing dissent to it, the interminable negotiations in Paris to end it, the humiliating pullout (standing room only helicopters off the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in late April 1975).

### **All Wound Up With Nowhere To Go**

It seems like time has largely been standing still since then, relegated to the sidelines. Once, once, it served as the medium for astonishment, outrage, youthful and outlandish folly – of talent and intellect gone astray, run amuck. First in the ManyNapolis suburbs of the late Vietnam era; later in urban lower middle class duplexes and apartments rented in the post-Nam Seventies and the early Eighties.

## For Tardy Baby Boomers Only

**“Ah, the Sixties. If you remember it you weren't there.  
Seems I couldn't even remember it as it was happening.”<sup>v</sup>**

Fine for famed photographer Robert Altman. But what happened to us, a few true-blooded bred-in-the-bone Bohemians born just a definite tad too late for the Sixties? Abandoned artist-dreamers, gifted discontents imbued with the value of idleness and some obsessive cultural interests, we were mavericks who were unwilling or unable to make the leap from the 'idealism of the Seventies' to the 'materialism of the Eighties'.

## Unmerited Expectations

We had no sense or taste for progress or destiny. Instead we shared a musical gypsy spirit and sense of pilgrimage derived from **Grateful Dead** culture, a natty dread of the suburbs that spawned us, some vague knowledge of The Beat Generation (mostly gained via reading Kerouac's **On The Road**) and, not to be underestimated, passing an endless stream of bowls and joints.<sup>vi</sup>

Herein unravels the rave rant confession of one such psychedelic slacker, a contemporary, secular and loose **Pilgrim's Progress** in reverse.<sup>vii</sup> Cyberpunk gone retro – come back down to earth to roost at the end of a roach clip.

And why not? We were persuaded that we were inherently at odds with society and living “in the chaotic whirlwind of the Sixties counterculture.”<sup>viii</sup> Regardless of our utopian desires, times had changed and we were actually graduating into its aftermath.

There I was hanging around someone's suburban driveway shooting baskets, a latecomer to the decade at age fifteen, when a neighbor kid says "It's on the radio. Jimi Hendrix died!" I knew it was significant but no more than that. I was still unexposed to his music that September day in 1970 but not for long.

Like Hendrix the draft was officially over by 1973 but if you were male and turning eighteen you could still feel it on the back of your neck. Mandatory conscription may have been over but the war was not so they assigned each of us numbers, just in case. My number was right in the middle, one hundred eighty or something.

Unlike Hendrix I had the distinction of being born on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>ix</sup>

**Name** : Felix Mark Skidwell  
**Selective Service Number** : 184  
**Occupation** : Aspiring High School Graduate,  
Future [Psychedelic Slacker](#)

"Skidwell (eh?). An interesting last name," you might say. "Any relation to Edith Sitwell?"

No. No relation.

### **Sweet Thirteen**

And now that the raging extremities of middle age and the dim vision of the diminishing horizon that lies beyond have set in, Sleepwell would be more fitting. But Skidwell is descriptive of the lucky thirteen raucous, scattered, adrenalin-filled years from the spring of 1973 through the spring of 1986 when, in restless pursuit of my dreams, I finally made it to, and found myself living in, the golden state.

### **Redemption Song (The Rasta Twist)**

'Tis a fitful episodal tale stretching from the virtual eve of an Upper Midwest high school graduation and first acid trip at a Des Moines Iowa Open Air **Grateful Dead** concert through programming artsy game software for, and a brief association with, Sixties guru Timothy O'Berry in Southern California.

A story filled with hope and longing:

"Go west, young man," a prophet on the burning shores? <sup>x</sup>

It is neither the malaise of being frozen permanently into the tundra or that of sinking helplessly into the creosote pit.

---

Excerpted from [The Psychedelic Slacker](#)

Copyright © 2006 by

Alan Mark Train

For [Don't Dye Here Studios](#)

---

i

“**Make time very plastic as Merce would say.**”

– Jazz, Tap and Modern Dancer Toni Jean Wisti aka Vera Jane Jenkins in [The Psychedelic Slacker](#).

“The dance is an art in space and time. The object of the dancer is to obliterate that...”

Excerpted from **Space, Time and Dance** by Merce Cunningham, published in *Transformation* 1:3, © 1952.

<http://www.ubu.com/aspn/aspn5and6/audio5D.html>

ii

“Data control and IBM  
Science is mankind's brother  
But all I see is drainin' me  
On my plastic fantastic lover...”

Excerpted from **Plastic Fantastic Lover** by **The Jefferson Airplane**, © 1967.

<http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Plastic-Fantastic-Lover-lyrics-Jefferson-Airplane/827E48E3B822E6C148256BF400081053>

iii

Excerpted from **Suite: Judy Blue Eyes** by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, © 1969.

<http://www.zenlyrics.com/Crosby+Stills+&+Nash/Suite:Judy+Blue+Eyes/showlyric/searchid/232114/>

iv

<http://members.tripod.com/~cannabishempstiva/quotes.html>

<http://followyourdreams.com/postcards/images/Crmo5.jpg>

v

Excerpted from **An LSD Story for the Soul** by Robert Altman, photographer (not the M.A.S.H. film director).

[http://www.altmanphoto.com/lsd\\_story\\_for\\_the\\_soul.html](http://www.altmanphoto.com/lsd_story_for_the_soul.html)

vi

“Still, if I'm honest, the most thrilling moments all came early, in the Fifties and Sixties, when the music was a primary focus of my energy, shaping my desires, coloring my memory, and producing the wild fantasy, widely shared, that my generation was, in some inchoate way, through the simple pleasure we all took in rock and roll, part of a new world dawning.”

Excerpted from **Flowers in the Dustbin: The Rise of Rock and Roll, 1947-1977** by James Miller, © 1999, published by Simon & Schuster.

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0684808730/104-0184453-5798370?v=glance&n=283155>

vii

<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/m.sion/bunypilg.htm>

viii

Excerpted from an interview article, **The Kids Are All Right**, written by Patrick Sullivan and published in the December 5 2001 **Metro Santa Cruz**. In it “memoirists Lisa Michaels and UCSC's Micah Perks compare notes on their hippie childhoods” and their books **Pagan Time: An American Childhood** by Micah Perks, © 2001 and **Split: A Counterculture Childhood** by Lisa Michaels, © 1998.

<http://www.metroactive.com/papers/cruz/12.05.01/kids-0149.html>

ix

“Well, the night I was born

Lord I swear the moon turned a fire red.”

Excerpted from **Voodoo Child** by Jimi Hendrix, © 1970.

<http://www.lyricattack.com/j/jimihendrixlyrics/voodoochilelyrics.html>

x

“He's a poet, he's a picker--  
He's a prophet, he's a pusher--  
He's a pilgrim and a preacher, and a problem when he's stoned--  
He's a walkin' contradiction, partly truth and partly fiction,  
Takin' ev'ry wrong direction on his lonely way back home.”  
Excerpted from Pilgrim Chapter 33 by Kris Kristofferson, © 1971.  
<http://www.guitaretab.com/k/kristofferson-kris/10042.htm>