

# Charles Drekmeier

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## Prelude

On the eve of my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, I would like to think that the “answer” and the question of my coming of age have combined. That together we are making a world in which freedom of expression and the personalities in which they find expression meld with the satisfactions that come with communal associations as we come to learn about all that we have in common and stand to gain from this commitment to keeping the planet alive.

The “drugstore days,” during which I learned so much about individual enterprise and also about cut-throat competition, have sustained me in ways I don’t wish to derogate. But the florescence of the business mentality, the “art of the deal,” the manipulation of marketing and all the rest of what I learned about drug pricing may have contributed to the values of the “founders” at one time. But no more.

And I deplore the columnists in daily newspapers who, in their turn, deplore the present ambiguities of “the system” without sticking their necks out and locating the incongruities in liberal democracies’ coziness with capitalistic self-promotional greed. We’re smart enough to know that we’re in this boat together, but not smart enough to give up our privilege among those who wish to identify with the downtrodden but not enough to make the sacrifice that honest empathy requires.

A memoir can sometimes be a stodgy thing. More often than not when the performer isn’t intimately known. Then, too, “intimacy” and other of our most interesting parts, are often omitted. Which may be just as well because when one bravely chooses to “tell all,” the actual relating of such has mysteriously lost its

pizazz. Of course, we don't want to offend the reader – some of whom may be unknown to us and may represent values and even perceptions that we cannot anticipate.

And so, we walk on stilts and the result is stilted. We are listening to imagined voices, including our own. There are also temptations to stretch the facts and other “truths” to make things interesting. Like the lineage attributed to one's parents: was it Mark Twain who described himself as coming from “poor but dishonest folks”?

As the curtain goes up on what follows we meet my parents and theirs. There was actually an unusual beginning. My mother and father were born on the same day of the same year, March 23, 1898. That may have also been a notable year – the country readying its colonial career – but the coincidental birth continued as a reminder that even in small-town Wisconsin there can be what we all saw as a minor miracle. My father, always prepared for opportunity, decided he was the younger of the two and thus entitled to special treatment.

In 1927, between the First World War and the Great Depression, “Showboat” landed on Broadway, Charles Lindbergh landed in Paris after a solo flight across the Atlantic, and I landed in a Wisconsin hospital an hour before dawn on a 100-degree day in September.

What follows is dedicated to my parents, who made these pages possible.

Charles Drekmeier, 2017

## Chapter One: Family

*(An opening apostrophe. In reading this manuscript, I had the odd “out of body” experience of being an object. Or perhaps like one of those characters who appear from time to time in TV comedy serials and refer to themselves not as “I” or “me” but by their given first names. Perhaps there is a kind of salvation in overcoming modern subjectivity and our becoming objects cherished by one another, replacing the commodification that characterizes objects and objectification today. – Charles Drekmeier)*

Charles’s mother and father were born on the same day, March 23, 1898. Their respective families came from Scotland and Germany, at different times, to settle in Wisconsin, which had many European immigrants in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Beloit, on the Rock River at the Illinois state line, was in the process of becoming the most industrialized small city in Wisconsin. It was also home to Beloit College, giving it a certain cultural sophistication. South Beloit, just across the border, was a poorer community, home to many African Americans who had come from the South to work in local factories.

The family of Charles’s maternal grandmother, Alice Griswold, was from Aberdeenshire, Scotland, immigrating to the Beloit area before the Civil War. Her father (whose last name was Thom) was not yet old enough to serve in the Union Army during the conflict.

“My grandmother was a pillar of the Second Congregational Church and, according to my mother, introduced some discussion groups which disturbed the

more conservative pastor,” Charles recalled. “She, and her friend, Hattie Skinner, founded the Westside Monday Club, the first women’s nonfiction discussion group in Beloit. She was a free-thinking but always decorous woman.”

This was in a town at a time when conventionality was highly valued. His grandmother, alone in his family, supported the progressive policies of Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression. “She cheerfully resisted the taunts of my FDR-hating family,” he said. “And when her National Recovery Act posters were removed, she put up new ones. When he was a candidate for president, she voted for Norman Thomas, a socialist. ‘Don’t believe everything they tell you,’ she told me, and this advice, I think, has served me well. And yet, in subtle ways, she taught me to avoid cynicism and despair.

“Grandma Griswold spent many hours of her time reading to me when I was 5 or 6,” he continued. Those books included the historical novels of Kenneth Roberts. “I knew more about the slave rebellion in Haiti thanks to the novel ‘Lydia Bailey’ than I knew about racial discrimination in America at the time. She added flourishes, including the oft-forgotten ignoble role Thomas Jefferson played in that historical episode. Some of the things I learned from my self-taught Grandma ran counter to what I would later read in the hagiographic textbook accounts of the Founding Fathers.”

While his grandmother read to him and listened to whatever he had to say, his grandfather impressed him in a different manner. “Grandpa Griswold was very demanding and very precise as a carpenter, and somewhat intimidating,” he said. “In helping later to build garages, I learned much about hardware and lumber.”

His grandmother and mother steered Charles and his sister, along with their father's sister's children, away from the German Lutheran Church of their father's family. His mother eventually became the first female moderator of the Congregational Church of Wisconsin. "Her churchly commitments never got in the way of her enjoyment of a good joke – although her propriety may have been the cause of her forgetting or muddying the punch-line of off-color stories. She had a wonderful sense of humor. And her Calvinist ethic never got in the way of honest appraisals. I vividly recall her visit to my room where I had been exiled after some small infringement that now escapes my memory. She had determined that she'd been wrong in blaming me and came to apologize – something that is probably difficult for most parents."

Charles noted that she had received a bachelor's degree from Beloit College and, before her marriage to his father, she had taught Latin for three or four years in Aurora, Illinois, which was accessible by interurban trains in the 1920s.

Charles also has warm memories of his paternal grandfather. Henry Drekmeier grew up in Bremerhaven, Germany and skated on the Rhein River estuaries when frozen. When he came of age, he joined the merchant marine to avoid Bismarck's military conscription.

When Charles was a small boy, his grandfather would regale him, his sister and their cousins with stories of his voyages in the China Sea as a merchant seaman. One of the stories was about carrying Muslim passengers to the port of Jeddah on the Red Sea for the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. Typhoons were a constant threat.

“On such occasions, those poor men, in their fright, attempted to throw themselves overboard,” Charles said, “and Grandpa would have to sit on them to prevent this misfortune. The image of a man, rather slight like me, sitting on a Muslim, perhaps two at a time, has stayed with me. After a few years, he jumped ship in Hoboken, New Jersey, and found his way to a German community in south-central Wisconsin. German was the language not only of the churches but also in the parochial schools. (My father’s language was German until his early teens.)”

Henry went to work for the railroad, and eventually met and married Mathilde Wagner. She came from the eastern end of coastal Germany, from that part of Prussia known as Pomerania, now a part of Poland. Charles was fairly young when she died, probably from complications of obesity. She was a renowned producer of potato pancakes (popular among both Poles and Germans) and other Teutonic delights, the recipes of which remained her secret.

Mathilde’s sister, Augusta, had worked as a seamstress for the Kaiser in Imperial Germany. When Wilhelm abdicated, Augusta moved to Holland with the royal retinue and eventually immigrated to the United States where she joined her sister in Wisconsin.

“Aunt ‘Gustie’ was as small as her sister was large, small to the point of fragility, I was told. She had once been kissed by the Kaiser in what was more ceremonious than affectionate, and she immediately acquired great authority in Tomah, Wisconsin. I never knew her, and in the one book I’ve seen on the German court of that time she was not mentioned. But she was just a seamstress.”

“About this time, my father, Albert, the eldest of Henry and Matilde’s five children, had finished pharmacy school at Marquette University in Milwaukee where the Army had sent him during World War I,” Charles said. “His first job was in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. He then joined his uncle’s drugstore in Beloit after a few years. A reticent man, he never talked much about those early years of his profession except to say how difficult it sometimes was to balance the medicinal demands of the job with the merchandising business.”

Charles remembered being touched by his father’s mild complaint that he was never told that men no longer wore celluloid collars above their shirts. His father was wearing one of those out-of-date collars on a memorable day.

“One afternoon, it must have been springtime, the pills and syrups and cigarettes and sundaes were interrupted by a young couple, the woman impressing the young druggist as radiant. ‘Radiant’ in his vocabulary was more apt to refer to radium than to a very pretty woman whose refinement belied the fact that she had just descended from the horse tied in front of the store. ‘If it was not love at first sight, it didn’t take long,’ he later told me. I remember the date of the wedding (June 18<sup>th</sup>) but I am not sure of the year, 1924 or 1925. I arrived in 1927 and my sister 19 months later.”

Charles was born in his grandparents’ home while his grandfather was building a house for his parents around the corner. “I remember crawling up the open stairs of the unfinished house,” he said. “It was done in time for my sister’s birth.”



When Charles was 2 in 1929, he was able to walk confidently by himself. Early one morning, while his parents still slept, he got of bed, walked out the front door, and toddled across the street to his grandparents' house.

“When my mother saw my bed was empty, she was beside herself,” Charles said he had been told. “I had walked into my grandparents' house and they hid me under the covers of their bed. When my frantic mother came in, I popped up and said ‘Hi Mom!’”

That story of the 2-year-old is revealed in a story in his “baby book.” One afternoon when Charles was being wheeled down Ninth Street in his stroller, his mother met a friend who exclaimed over the child and dug into her purse for a nickel (not a small sum in the 1920s). “What do you say to Mrs. Barnum?” asked my mother. “More, please,” Charles replied.

Charles had a love of books and words before he could read by himself. “My mother would read to me when I was very young,” he said. “My favorite book was about an Indian chief, whose name stayed with me – Nu-ka-be-ka-da-wa – and I would ‘read it’ to her because I had memorized the book. Once, displaying my reading skills to friends, I continued ‘reading’ before she turned the page. The jig was up.”

His love of words led him to compose simple poems, always with rhyming lines. “I started writing poems when I was 4,” he said. “A book of sonnets about anthropomorphized flowers occupied me for a time. I’ve been writing poems ever since then, maybe 3,000 of them,” although few about flowers.

When Charles was 5, he was stricken with scarlet fever. In significant ways, it shaped his childhood and his perspective well into adulthood. An infectious

childhood disease, scarlet fever was cause for alarm for parents of young children because it often affected the heart and proved fatal before antibiotics were developed to cure it. “I was quarantined to my room,” he said. “And not just to my room, but to my bed for six weeks.”

His mother brought him meals and his father also visited him to keep his spirits up. But he couldn’t see his sister, other relatives, or his boyhood friends. “I became part of my bed for those six weeks,” he said. “I wasn’t separate from my environment. I remember counting to 100 by myself every day until the triumph of reaching 1,000! I became used to being by myself and relying on myself for my own entertainment.”

The worst part of his confinement was when he needed mastoid surgery on his left ear, a procedure performed in his bedroom. “The anesthesiologist wouldn’t come into the room, so the surgery was performed while I was conscious,” he said. The next-worst thing about being quarantined was that all of his toys had to be burned, including a six-foot-tall, inflated giraffe. “I loved that animal.”

Surviving scarlet fever may have had one lasting physical effect for Charles. “The illness may have affected my coordination because I was never good at throwing a ball,” he said. “I would have enjoyed being more athletic, but it wasn’t to be. Being confined while I had scarlet fever helped me learn about my limitations. I became very introspective when I had scarlet fever because that kind of solitude turns one inward.”

In school, like the other boys of the time, Charles wore corduroy knickers which came below the knees and high-top, lace-up boots. “Our desks connected

front to back, six in a row, and once I got my foot caught when I was in the first grade and the janitor had to be called in to dismantle the desk, which was embarrassing for me.”

He was also very protective of his sister, Mary Alice. “I was very proud when she was named Queen of the May in kindergarten, which was part of a tradition. On May Day, we boys would leave anonymous May baskets by the front doors of girls we liked and then run like hell!”

Charles attended Royce Elementary School, “a forbidding stone edifice.” The school, like Beloit, was mostly white. There were two black students in his class. One, whose mother ran the elevator at the department store, was his friend. There was one Asian family whose parents ran a Chinese restaurant.

“I was obsessed with geography back then,” he noted. “I made a desk at home with a glass top and a light below so I could trace the maps of European countries. I was also interested in European history. Grandpa Drekmeier used to talk about the old Germany, pre-World War I.”

Charles developed a love of nature when he was very young.

“When I was about 4, I started spending 10 days each summer with my cousin, Clifford, at his parents’ farm, 10 miles from Beloit on some of the richest farmland in the country. It was a dairy farm and they also had some pigs, some chickens and a couple of goats. I remember herding 30 cows into the barn to be milked. That moment of omnipotence was a treasure. Being on the farm opened my eyes to the beauty of nature, the fragrances, both sweet and foul, and wildlife. I also used to go to the Madison zoo with my family. The badgers had very slick, oily hair and I once leaned over a fence to pet one and was bitten. The badger is

Wisconsin's 'icon,' and the University of Wisconsin athletic teams are nicknamed badgers. I was the consummate badger. We would also feed peanuts to the elephant, and when we ran out of peanuts once and tried to trick him by holding out a closed hand, he walked over to a pool of water, filled his trunk, then walked back and gave us a shower."

In 1933, Charles and his family traveled to Chicago for the World's Fair. "I got to ride atop a camel. It felt regal looking down on everyone else," he remembered. "But herding the dairy cows on Clifford's farm was even better: I was 'in charge.'"

At home, Christmas was the highlight of the year for Charles and Mary Alice. "We had a cornucopia of delights under the Christmas tree, and my sister and I had stockings hanging from the mantle with little treats inside. We would usually end up at my Aunt Rose's house for Christmas dinner. They also had a big Christmas tree which they kept up until April – with all the ornaments still attached – although they finally moved it to their enclosed porch."

During late summer heat waves, his mother would spread a cool sheet on the living room floor so he and his sister could stretch out in comfort while reading Dr. Doolittle, Albert Payson Terhune's dog stories, Thornton W. Burgess and Childlife Magazine.

The real world intruded somewhat rudely on Charles when he was in elementary school. "A family that lived across the street from the school had four boys who were tough and liked to prove it. They would beat me up from time to time. As I got older, I would run. If I tripped, I would get pummeled. So, I made a point of walking home with others."

Reflecting back on his childhood, Charles noted that it is difficult to remember events exactly as they happened through the events of the intervening years.

“We are all aware of turning points, important decisions we’ve made, and dramatic events that have shifted the course of our lives or at least our well-laid plans,” he said. “But it takes an abstracted distance to perceive such ‘awakenings’ in childhood. This is not the ‘childhood amnesia’ some writers speak of, or the opening of experience to include a sense of the independent self. It may come when the comforting, inward-turning sensations are challenged.

“When, for instance, ‘bath night’ at the farm required getting into a wash tub only a little larger than oneself with relative strangers pouring in the needed hot or cold water to get the right temperature. Or visiting an outhouse – in this case a ‘two-holer’ – for the necessary morning performance. Definitions of privacy vary, for reasons I would someday learn. An illustration of this shared experience (along with the intimacy of the neighboring outhouse visitor experience and the washtub audience) was the party-line telephone. No tabloid newspaper was needed for participation in community gossip...”

“The summer visits with my cousin Clifford and his family prepared me for the inconveniences and exposures that middle-class children, at least the Midwestern, small-town variety, tend to be filtered. Life was comfortable. If mine hadn’t been punctuated by summer visits with country cousins lacking in many of the amenities, I might have grown up with a weaker social conscience – like a number of my friends. To put things into perspective, I also have my Grandmother to thank. And perhaps, also, the challenge of scarlet fever.”

## Chapter Two: Growing Up

As a boy, Charles loved riding with his parents when they drove through the rolling hills of the Kettle Moraine country of southern Wisconsin, formed by the last Ice Age when the glaciers retreated.

“As a boy, I was fascinated by cows,” he remembered. “When Holsteins gathered at a fence, my parents would stop the car so I could have a talk and tell them about my farm adventures.”

Charles’ love of the outdoors went only so far, though. “I joined the Cub Scouts out of a need to conform more than anything else. I preferred books and maps and being with a couple of close friends. I thought the Cub Scouts would be a way to develop the ‘boy side’ of my nature by going on camping trips and I went along with it for two years. It was intended to be a diversion but I found it a distraction. But it was good for me to be with other boys. I also endured the fishing trips I took from time to time with my father and his two brothers.”

His best childhood friend, in fact, was a girl, Betty Niesen. “Her father was also a pharmacist and her parents and mine were in the same six-couple dinner club every other Thursday,” he said. “Our parents would have a potluck dinner and then play bridge.”

As toddlers, their mothers would go to the park together wheeling side-by-side strollers. When they got older, they played music together – she on the piano and Charles on the flute. “We once wrote an opera about the sacred stone (kaaba) of Islam,” he said. “She was the one person I could share secrets with and with whom I was completely comfortable. To the consternation of adults, we

picketed a neighbor who didn't want kids playing in the open lot he owned next to his house. We were joined by a dozen other children and it was written up in the local newspaper. This was the first of many protest movements I participated in."

Although they both attended the University of Wisconsin, they gradually grew apart. "She married a football star from the university," Charles said. "They had two sons and eventually ended up in Florida. I didn't see much of her after college. Fifty years later, one of her sons looked me up after she died and said I had been like a brother to her when we were young. How is it that people once so close lose the connection?"

Once, Grandma Griswold treated him to a trip on the then-newly inaugurated Chicago & Northwestern Railroad spur line to Browntown, Wisconsin, 25 miles west of Beloit. The train trip would become an adventure for him. But his grandmother had another purpose, to visit her son who worked in a silicon plant in Browntown (back then, not many knew what silicon was.) The memory of that train trip also sparked some sadness in Charles.

"My mother's siblings – Uncle Carlton and Aunt Lucile – both had problems," he said. "My uncle kind of disappeared in a cloud of legal problems and my aunt had a series of unsuccessful marriages. My family had to take care of her in later years. It's interesting that my sainted grandmother had three children and my mother was the only one with a functioning family. This started me thinking about how different families were – and how unpredictable."

At Lincoln Junior High School, Charles started to distinguish himself academically. "Four of us were awarded pins as top students," he said. "I was the

editor of the school paper, just four pages, published every few weeks. I would sit in the back of a history class working on the paper. Once, I sat outside the school for two hours, sketching the school. It became our front page.”

His history teacher, Miss Garrigan, encouraged Charles in his work. “She had a great sense of humor and never belittled anyone, but she was a strict grader,” he remembered. “I enjoyed her teaching so much that I sometimes would sit in the back of her other classes with a friend of mine. She took us on the pathways of history beyond the textbooks and triggered my interest in the variety of cultures.”

Later, after she retired, she and her gentleman friend would come into Charles’ father’s drugstore and Charles would make them ice cream sodas or sundaes. It was kind of a payment to her.

“My father’s sister married Merritt Bach, and he and my dad bought a drugstore in the mid- ‘20s, eventuating in four Bach & Drekmeier drugstores serving Beloit. When we had a grand opening of the ‘downtown’ store, my sister, 4, handed out little boxes of chocolates to the women and I handed out cigars to the men. We felt like partners in the business.”

When he was old enough to work in the store, he remembers something about his father which impressed him deeply. “My father, as a pharmacist, helped diagnose symptoms for people who couldn’t afford to see a doctor. He was called ‘Doctor Drekmeier.’ This kind of prescribing may not have been entirely legal, but it eased much physical and financial pain and perhaps even saved a life. It was my first experience of the occasional inadequacy of law.” Sometimes, people would



exchange items in barter as payment. “You would be surprised at the variety of homemade objects my father received in exchange for medicine.”

Charles worked weekends and in the summers in the drugstore once he was old enough. “At closing time, I would sweep out the store as one of my jobs,” he said. “The store was at the corner of Grand and Pleasant, which led to many jokes. The long soda fountain had 15 or 16 stools. I became a maestro of ice cream concoctions.” There were also side benefits. “Older, attractive high school girls worked at the store. I acquired great prestige from working alongside these beauties. And I’m sure it enhanced the quality of the milkshakes.”

But when shy young men came into the store seeking certain items, Charles would have to wait on them. “I sold condoms to young men who were too embarrassed to go to one of the female clerks,” he explained.

The store also sold liquor, and Charles was selling bottles to customers when he was 11 or 12. “The laws seemed flexible. When the carnival came to town, we had to lock up the morphine cabinet to keep the drugs from being stolen.”

The store was a place for friends to congregate casually; the long soda fountain was a social center and always busy with people coming and going.

“My father and his brother also made ice cream – seasonal specialties were pistachio and strawberry for Christmas, orange and chocolate for Halloween. The ice cream was advertised as having the highest butterfat content in the state of Wisconsin.”

Charles was 14 when World War II broke out. Some items were in short supply because of rationing and he remembers that his father would save the cigarettes and nylon stockings for the store's best customers. "But this was a practice that at times irritated other customers," he said.

His parents, who were very social and often had friends at their home for dinner, went one time to the closed store to make ice cream sodas for dessert – and surprised a burglar. "My father saw the man hiding inside the phone booth and, without saying anything, quietly called the police," Charles remembered. "My dad was robbed three or four times, tied up by thugs working for a Capone 'affiliate.' They thought it was an attractive place to rob, being across the Illinois state line, but there really was never enough money in the safe to make it worth the effort."

In an effort to boost business, Charles's father opened a small kitchen in the basement and installed a dumbwaiter. "We served hot pork sandwiches two days a week," Charles remembered. "But the women working the basement often had to stand on crates because the Rock River flooded occasionally. The high water brought rats with it and my father and I would have to drug them and then kill them with spikes nailed to sticks. It was traumatic for me."

He also recalled that the Olympia Brewing Co. once tested the water to see if the Rock River was clean enough to be used for brewing beer. It wasn't.

"A high moment came when WLS Radio in Chicago invited me and three other junior high students to come to the station to discuss world events for a half hour," he said. "My father brought a radio into the drugstore so everyone could listen to us on the radio."

His love of music, engendered by listening to broadcasts of the New York Metropolitan Opera, sparked his first excursion on his own as a young teen. “I wrote to the Lyric Opera in Chicago and I bought a ticket by mail when I was 13,” he said. “I took the bus to Chicago and returned on Chicago & Northwestern’s ‘milk train.’ I got back to Beloit at 4 a.m. and walked home from the station with my brain still spinning after seeing the production of Verdi’s ‘Aida.’ Later, in high school, I would talk three friends into going to Chicago to see a performance of ‘Carmen.’”

In high school, Charles played the piccolo in the marching band and flute in the school orchestra. There was also a side benefit to that, since most flute players were girls. He also joined the high school ROTC, not out of any military bent but because it got him out of gym.

He was from the West Side of Beloit while the high school included students from the East Side. “The East Side students came from somewhat different backgrounds. I had new friends – kindred spirits – including girlfriends I met through the concert band. I began to think it was OK to be kind of a nonconformist. I realized you can have values even if others don’t accept them.”

He wasn’t a fan of football games and didn’t go in much for “school spirit.” He also didn’t make any extra effort to impress his classmates.

“Being popular to me just meant being liked for some of the wrong reasons, and I didn’t want to be liked by some of the people doing the liking,” he explained.

Charles finished high school in three years. “I was in the class of ’45 but I didn’t skip a grade,” he said. “I graduated after my junior year because I had taken

extra classes, including a correspondence course from the University of Wisconsin in Madison.”

In the summer of 1944, after he graduated, he took a summer job at Gardner Machine Works in South Beloit while getting ready for college in the fall.

“They made grinding machines and we had to wear masks because of the fine copper dust,” he said. “I worked a 12-hour shift, 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. When I got home, my mother would rush downstairs to wash out the lunch box so my sister could use it when she rushed off to detassel corn. She later wondered why she didn’t buy two lunch boxes.”

At his job, he remembers reading Arthur Schlesinger’s “The Age of Jackson” on his lunch hour. ‘History’ arrived with a vengeance. “On my bike ride home one morning I saw newspaper headlines that Americans had landed in Normandy in the Allied invasion of German-occupied France.” It was June 6, 1944.

He also expanded his horizons – literally. “For a few weeks, on my way to work, I would stop off at a small airport and pay \$5 for a half-hour flying lesson,” he said. “I took three lessons, but I realized I was too busy to continue. I had never been up in an airplane before then. It was seeing the world from a perspective different than my maps provided.”

Charles worked at Gardner until a week before he started at the University of Chicago.

## Chapter Three: The University of Chicago & Madison

After finishing high school and just having turned 17 years old in the fall of 1944, Charles left for the university.

Chicago was known as intellectual and innovative. Robert Maynard Hutchins, the university's president, had designed a program allowing students to complete their bachelor's degree in just two years instead of the usual four. This was the reason Charles chose Chicago. He hoped to have a B.A. before he was drafted.

"The two-year core-curriculum program intensified the content," he said. "It was the most exhausting and demanding period of my life. I found myself in a milieu I had never experienced before. I felt inundated by this intellectual avalanche and by the eccentricity and esoteric knowledge of my fellow students." Many of his classmates were older, including some returning war veterans, more mature and certainly more sophisticated than he was.

The signs of the war were a daily reminder for Charles. He was housed in a complex that also had naval officers in training. "They saw us as privileged college kids, and possibly also draft dodgers."

His classes started at 8 a.m. and ran to the mid-afternoon. As if he didn't have enough to do, he got a job to help defray college expenses. "I worked as an orderly at Billings Hospital three hours a night, mostly attending to bedpans, I worked from 10:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. at the hospital, but after a week I realized I couldn't do it because the demands of my studies were leaving me exhausted."

Looking back at what turned out to be a hectic few months, Charles concluded wryly, “Illusions of grandeur kept me going.”

His brief sojourn at the University of Chicago did have a lasting effect on how Charles viewed the world. Thanks to the effect of his grandmother in a family of Republicans, he was already receptive to social criticism and concerns.

A student he remembers by his nickname, Red, was in an adjacent dorm room and they became friends. “He had red hair, so most of us knew him as Red. But for some, the name reflected his position as Secretary General of the New Jersey Communist Party. Meeting him was a turning point in my life. The veil fell from my eyes. He had me reading about the injustices of the capitalistic system. I soon realized how little I knew of the real world and the miseries of the downtrodden.”

During the 1944 presidential election campaign, the Hyde Park Republican Women’s Club used a university lecture hall for a program promoting Republican candidates. Charles and Red, and most of their dorm, attended.

“Red spoke up, mildly correcting some of the speaker’s facts and comments,” Charles remembers. “One of the women then admonished him, asking him why he wasn’t in the trenches with the other boys, and he replied that they were called trenches in World War I but were now foxholes. Then he unbuckled his prosthetic leg and held it up, saying he left part of himself in a foxhole in France. The woman collapsed into her seat and the program ended.”

The University of Chicago was on a semester system, and before final exams in December Charles decided that the accelerated bachelor’s degree

program “wasn’t for me. My parents saw it coming. They knew from my letters I was frustrated.”

He enrolled at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in January. “I went to the UW housing office and got a shared room in a boarding house for \$2.50 a week,” he said. “The tuition at Madison was \$48 a semester.”

“The state of Wisconsin had a rich progressive tradition owing much to the LaFollettes,” Charles said. Robert LaFollete had been a Wisconsin governor earlier in the century and a founder of the Progressive Party. “Liberal professors served as a kind of brain trust for me during those years. John R. Commons and Richard T. Ely, economists, were the most prominent.”

His favorite professor at Madison was Robert Reynolds. “He was very popular, which was not always true of specialists in medieval economic history. He would call us in to talk individually about the course even though he had 200 students. He inspired my later teaching.”

Charles would attend three semesters at Madison before he was inducted into the service in March 1946. He would have been a drafter earlier, but his induction was delayed when he was thrown from a toboggan and broke his hand. He returned to Madison to complete his undergraduate degree after his stint in the Army.

“At the time, I thought I wanted eventually to go into government foreign service, perhaps as a diplomat,” he explained. “But I began to feel that knowledge was artificially divided among politics, history and economics: universities were so specialized that important problems and areas escaped attention. I really wanted to be interdisciplinary, but there weren’t many possibilities of that at the

university then, so I majored in international relations when I returned to Madison.”

He would finish his bachelor’s degree in three years at Madison. First, however, he would become Private Drekmeier.



## Chapter Four: The Army

“I remember catching the 4 a.m. bus in front of the Beloit post office on a wintery March morning,” Charles said. He and other draftees were bused to Great Lakes Naval Station north of Chicago to get uniforms and then shipped to Camp Robinson near Little Rock, Arkansas, for basic training.

“We had small, six-man hutments, with three bunk beds,” he said. “I was with three fellows from Brooklyn and two from southern Illinois. I tried to find some common ground and we agreed that we all disliked the Army.”

Basic training is all about difficult physical training, obeying orders instantly, and being shouted at by the noncommissioned training officers (NCOs), all veterans who relished making things uncomfortable for the raw recruits.

“My hut-mates, the Dionysio twins from Brooklyn, received shipment of cookies every week,” he noted. “Bless Mrs. D.! One week, a general was doing inspections, and I could see he was stopping to examine every sixth hut. We were the next 6<sup>th</sup> in line. Once inside, the general bounced a quarter off our beds, which were to be made so tightly the quarter would, indeed, bounce. The quarter bounced off the bunk, which had the cookies under the bed, but the aroma of the cookies betrayed us.”

For punishment, Charles and his five fellow draftees had to dig a hole six feet square and two feet deep and then fill it up again. “Six is not my lucky number,” he joked.

Basic training was a test he had never experienced before. “We had to cross the Arkansas River hand-over-hand on a cable suspended over the water. It

took about 10 minutes. The river was reddish brown from clay along the banks. If you fell, you could be finished ahead of time.”

In another exercise, a group of eight trainees would have to lift up a telephone poll and throw it towards eight others, who would work to catch it and throw it back. The purpose of the drill was to teach teamwork. It worked.

Charles did meet a fellow draftee who would become a fast friend. “I remember sympathizing with a trainee who had a slight German accent,” he explained. “He was from a family of Jewish intellectuals, emigres from Stuttgart who left Germany in the late 1930s. His name was Frank Sander. He would later teach at Harvard Law School and for many years was one of my best friends.”

Charles and other educated trainees were interviewed during basic training for possible enrollment in officer’s training school, but by that time Charles had no interest even though he once hoped to become an officer.

“But I said I could play piccolo in the band. Frank was also a piccolo and flute player. We were transferred to a camp outside Aniston, Alabama, near Birmingham, then to Ft. Bragg in North Carolina, then to Army band school at Ft. Lee, Virginia.” Charles was able to see much of the South in those spring months.

“The director of the 26-member band to which I was assigned was a warrant officer who had played first clarinet in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Frederick Stock. Frank applied for the West Point Band and was accepted. He was a far better player than I was.”

While in band school at Ft. Lee, the band played reveille every morning to wake up the troops. Except it was recorded. The band actually slept in.

Charles applied to become a member of the U.S. Army Band based at Ft. Meyer. “They were all highly professional musicians,” he said. “I was tested with the demanding flute part in one of the two Romanian rhapsodies of Enesco.” He didn’t pass the audition and had more than a week before reporting to his next posting. “So, I took off for Beloit and, as it happened, arrived in time for grandfather Drekmeier’s unexpected funeral.”

When he returned to the Army base, he found out that he had been AWOL. Because it was an innocent mistake – he hadn’t known he needed a pass to the leave the base – he didn’t suffer any consequences.

He then rejoined the Army band at Ft. Lee and played at Army functions for the three summer months of 1946. “We were marching in the summer heat of Virginia,” he noted. “The brass players really suffered in the heat, while I could stick my piccolo in my shirt pocket.”

In October he and other draftees were sent to Ft. Dix in New Jersey where they waited to be shipped out to an Army base in Europe.

At Ft. Dix, the recruits were assigned menial tasks and the weeks ahead looked dismal. “I went to the company headquarters and asked to see the colonel in charge. I was looking for other duties and volunteered as a clerk typist, and I ended up typing memos for the colonel. I wasn’t much of a typist but evidently good enough.”

His new duties included working as “charge of quarters” on Thursday nights. This all-night vigil served to protect the slumbering troops. And it entitled him to three-day weekends, which he spent in New York City, 40 minutes away. It was easily the most agreeable part of his time in the Army. “I would take the train

to New York each Friday and go to the USO in Times Square, take a shower, change into the fresh clothes I brought with me, and then get free tickets from the USO for the opera or symphony. I would stay at the YMCA.” He also got theater tickets from time to time, including to a performance of Ingrid Bergman in “Joan of Lorraine,” a George Bernard Shaw play.

“Perhaps the most memorable event was a New Year’s Eve concert. I secured a ticket to Carnegie Hall and mingled with a crowd of Central European war refugees, in formal dress; I was in my nondescript uniform,” he remembered. “The program promised a surprise celebration of Old-World European culture. As it got closer to midnight, the suspense built and then ignited.”

“The announcer appeared and said, ‘I give you Richard Tauber,’ who was the Pavarotti of the day, a Viennese tenor who could arouse almost any emotion from his audience. In a mix of cheers and tears, we listened to him sing ‘You Are My Heart Alone,’ ‘Vienna, City of My Dreams’ and great moments from ‘The Merry Widow.’”

Waiting in line on another day for a performance, Charles met an older woman, the age of his mother. “She was wearing a black dress and a hat with a veil, the picture of subdued elegance. She was a retired concert pianist from Vienna and had many friends with musical connections and could get concert tickets for the front seats at the Metropolitan Opera. She didn’t want to talk about her background. Her name was Marie Miller and a confirmed Wagnerite. We shared some splendid ‘Tristan’ and ‘Ring’ episodes.”

“It was a very mysterious relationship,” he continued. “She would send me Wagner opera recordings after I returned to Madison, and I sometimes took the

bus to New York to see her and go to Carnegie Hall. When the first long-playing records came out in 1948, she sent me my first Mahler symphony, the fourth. I gradually lost touch with her.”

In a curious footnote, the FBI visited Charles several years later when he was teaching at Boston University. He never found out why the FBI was interested in her, but they questioned him in the midst of the McCarthy “red scare,” when people with suspected communist ties – or who just knew such people – were subjected to political interrogation.

Charles’ Army band never was shipped to Europe. The Army, deciding it had enough soldiers for the post-World War II reduction in force, sent the more recent draftees home.

“One of the things I learned in the Army was to talk with people and then discover we were talking from different premises,” he concluded. “It was like being in a different country. I discovered the self is more like a set of performances where you have to reconcile yourself to something different from time to time.”

“In the Army, you’re always on stage in a regimented life better suited to unreflective people. I realized I would have to adopt a kind of false self to survive, but I was only in for a little more than a year.”

## Chapter Five: Return to Madison

At the end of March 1947, Charles returned to Beloit and worked on a road crew while waiting for the summer semester at the University of Wisconsin to begin in June. (He was a member of the Teamsters Union.)

“I believed I could finish my bachelor’s degree in three semesters and did, by taking one extra class each semester,” he said.

But he returned to a university much different than the one he had left when he was drafted into the Army. Outwardly, the campus still looked familiar. But it was bursting with students.

All universities had to deal with this flood of students returning from the war on the G.I. Bill. Many historians regard the G.I. Bill as one of the most significant, society-changing pieces of legislation of the last century.

Madison had swollen to 16,000 students, from a prewar enrollment of about 9,000, and there was no place to put them all since new housing was not yet adequate. Boarding houses and rental rooms in homes were used, while fraternities absorbed non-member students by setting up cots in basements and attics.

Madison had also become what was called a multi-university. “UW had opened its doors to students from around the country and the world even before the great postwar influx of students,” Charles explained. “It was a very diverse student body, very cosmopolitan.”

For the summer semester, which had fewer students, Charles lived in one of the fraternity houses on the shores of Lake Mendota and delighted in taking midnight swims with housemates and their sorority friends.

“Back at Madison, I had a marvelous sense of almost pure freedom,” he said. “I was with people I could share my innermost thoughts with, in and out of class. The sense of freedom was exhilarating – enhanced, I suspect, by the Army interlude. I had choices I hadn’t known existed.”

For the fall semester, Charles moved into another fraternity, Theta Delta Chi, to live as a non-member. “I shared a small attic room with a fellow vet,” he recalled. “One quarter of the men were non-members, including two Persian princes. There were classics and literature majors and art historians, one of whom became a noted photography curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Fraternity members bragged that ‘We even have Jews here.’ They were a congenial group of men, partially because fraternities looked at non-member residents as potential recruits.”

Meanwhile, his academic focus had crystalized.

He studied Russian because while the Soviet Union had been an American ally during the war, the postwar world was shaping into a U.S. versus U.S.S.R. contest of philosophies, influence and military might. “I can still translate the Cyrillic alphabet,” Charles noted.

Theta Delta Chi also invited Charles to become a fraternity member. “Which I did, because my rent would be lowered,” he said. That meant, however, that he had to go through a “mild form of hazing, which was somewhat humiliating and totally unnecessary. Later, I was asked to be the president for the

next academic year. I replied that I would have considered it if the fraternity had voted to end hazing, but I was graduating so the point was moot.”

He also joined the University of Wisconsin Concert Band, and contributed in small ways to UW football victories.

“If you play the flute, you meet a lot of girls because it’s basically a woman’s instrument,” he noted. He dated several girls at UW, including one he had known from high school in Beloit, but there were no big romances. “I was still in my teens,” he explained.

Through a fraternity brother’s interest, Charles also became a member of the student International Relations Committee. “We collected old textbooks that were donated by students and then we had to raise money to ship them abroad,” he explained. It was part of a broad effort to support damaged libraries in Europe with new materials. “The Norwegian ambassador wrote us a thank-you note,” he added. “Because of the devastation in postwar Europe, there was a generosity of spirit among Americans and our book collection eventually became a shipping burden.”

Europe was Charles’ next focus, in keeping with his interest in someday joining the United States Foreign Service. A fraternity brother, Fred Siebold, was applying for a U.S. State Department grant, administered by the University of Vermont, to study the effects of the European Recovery Act (popularly known as the Marshall Plan). The Marshall Plan is celebrated for helping rebuild Europe and is regarded as one of the significant American achievements of the post-war years.



“Not having many prospects and being uncertain of my future goals, I applied, too,” Charles said. “We were both accepted. I had wanted to be sent overseas when I was in the Army, and graduate school wasn’t on my horizon yet. There were 50 or 60 of us who sailed to La Havre, France, on a small Dutch ship.”

While Charles was adept at finishing high school and his undergraduate work sooner than usual, he would stay in Europe longer than expected, deepening his focus for eventual enrollment in graduate school.

## Chapter Six: Europe

The 'Marshall Plan in Action' summer program was built around lectures at the universities of Birmingham, Leiden and Paris as well as factory and farm visits. "As I recall, we first went to Birmingham for several lectures and a general orientation," Charles said. "I'm sure we all remember Dame Cadbury treating us to products from her chocolate factory."

The object of the program was to determine how the Marshall Plan was being accepted and what more was needed from the United States to assist European postwar recovery.

After briefly visiting the University of Birmingham in England, Charles and the others headed to France and the University of Paris.

"I stayed with an impoverished French student for several weeks," Charles remembered. "He was studying at the School of Mines at the Sorbonne, and I felt so intrusive and privileged compared to him. I had never before had a roommate who had survived such deprivation. We kept our vegetables in the bidet to keep them cool. There was no refrigeration. After the Sorbonne, we then traveled to the Netherlands and briefly attended the University of Leiden and talked to Dutch and Belgian miners about problems they were encountering."

After gathering information in France and the Low Countries for three months, Charles submitted a report detailing what he had seen and learned. (The Marshall Plan, from 1948 to 1951, provided \$13 billion in aid to 18 European countries, with almost half going to the United Kingdom, France and West Germany.)

While the other Marshall Plan observers went back to America after the three-month grant, Charles and his friend, Fred, decided to stay on. Charles wanted to visit Prague, where he had a pen pal, a young Czech woman. “While in Madison, I had got Elena’s name from a list of European students who wanted to correspond with American students. We had only exchanged a few letters, but I wrote her from Paris and she invited me to Prague.”

Getting to Prague from Paris meant taking a train, the Mozart Express, which transited West Germany. There was a major reason for going to Czechoslovakia, though, as Charles very much wanted to see Germany. “But Germany was off-limits to visitors. The Mozart Express was a sealed train and you weren’t supposed to leave the train.”

But Charles did get off the train in Germany. He was in the American zone of occupation, which worked in his favor, since he was wearing his old Army uniform (although without its identifying unit insignia). “I thought it would make it easier for me to get around.”

Charles left the train in Frankfurt, which had been bombed extensively by the Americans and British. “I spent a night in my sleeping bag on a bench in the almost destroyed train station,” he noted. “The extent of the devastation in West Germany was a scene of nightmarish proportions.”

Charles hitch-hiked through southern Germany and visited cathedrals that had been spared in Ulm, Augsburg and Munich, staying in youth hostels when possible. “I bought tomatoes from farmers along the way and I had a small ‘stove’ with potassium cubes for making coffee. I was a kind of gypsy. I was always in the American sector, so no one paid much attention to me because of my uniform.”

He saw the Alps from Garmisch, where he knew Richard Strauss lived out the war. "I asked where he lived, which was in a large house," Charles said. "He was evidently apolitical and had weathered the storms of the war." Standing outside, he heard someone playing piano. He later figured that Strauss had been composing, working on a final work, "Four Last Songs."

Charles crossed the border at Regensburg into communist-controlled Czechoslovakia without incident.

"Elena was from a bourgeois family whereas I had left-leanings, which were to be tested. She introduced me to her college friends, who couldn't have been more hospitable nor, in some cases, more antisocialist."

In Prague, Charles stayed in a large apartment belonging to her cousin, Julius, who had owned an architectural firm employing more than 40 people, which had recently been appropriated by the state. "His wife and children had settled in Copenhagen, and he was anxious to join them."

Julius had a problem. The assets of Czech citizens in French and British banks had been frozen, and he needed to establish a new foreign account in order to be allowed by the Czech government to leave the country. But Julius had a plan.

On his tenth and final day in Prague, Elena and her friends threw Charles a party to celebrate his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. "It was large and alcoholic," Charles admitted. When he returned to Julius's apartment after midnight, he was surprised to see a light at the end of a long hall under the door of the former maid's room where he had been staying.

“When I entered, I was startled to see 12 or 14 (my memory is vague), small, collapsible tables. Each table had a number of folded papers with diamonds, rubies and sapphires in cotton.” A friend of Julius, a newspaper editor, was, with the cousin, taking inventory of the gems. The friend reminded me of the family’s generosity. I said I appreciated their hospitality. He replied, ‘You can do something to show your appreciation.’ I asked what that would be. ‘Take some of these jewels to a friend in Paris. You wouldn’t be questioned at the border wearing your American Army uniform.’ I vigorously declined. Even though they assured me the diamonds were fakes, just paste, I still didn’t want to take that risk. They wanted me to smuggle diamonds for them, and probably lied when they said the diamonds were paste. I didn’t have the expertise to tell the difference.”

Charles, exhausted, agreed to take a folded paper containing about 20 diamonds.

“That morning the family met me at the train station. They also presented me with some cut glass, including a large lead crystal vase and a bowl,” Charles added. Such finely cut Czech glass items were prized as works of art. “They bought me a ticket for a second-class compartment, which was a luxury for me. Before the train actually started, I could hear glass breaking as other passengers threw their cut glass out of the windows rather than give them up if ordered to do so. The shattering of glass sharpened my perception of the most immediate danger. It lay not in the diamonds, which were tucked away in my undershorts, but in the discrepancy of valuable leaded glass not reflected in my currency record. But, strangely, the revelation that would stay with me was the capacity to

disengage myself. To see myself as an actor in a drama, moving from a first-person identity to a third-person one. For protection? To avoid certain truths? Although my anxiety mounted as the steps of the customs officers sounded closer, I found momentary refuge in a thought that had preoccupied me since my early social and psychological sciences courses: That we know ourselves, even have our 'meaning,' through other people – and that this comprehension was our cue to the possibilities of a cooperative social life. Getting outside ourselves, even for only a brief moment free of personal needs is a first step.

As it turned out, Charles was right to be concerned about his currency report which showed that he had spent almost no money during ten days in Prague but was carrying valuable glass items, including a menagerie of small glass animals in addition to the large vase and bowl.

“The customs officers turned out to be accommodating and genial,” he said. “We had a discussion in broken English and German (like the shattered glass), about the war but not about the occupation. They did make it clear, though, that my currency record was a concern and that the exception they were making was unusual. I told them I had stayed with friends in Prague and the glass items were gifts from them. My G.I. uniform stood me in good stead.”

He later heard a story about a Pole who had glued diamonds to his chest underneath his shirt, but the diamonds were discovered and he was taken off the train and jailed.

Once in Germany, he changed trains for the international express to Venice. “My gifts proved again to be a problem. We were held up at the border where officials were concerned about my treasures,” he said. “Since they were gifts, I

had no receipts for them. After much commotion among the passengers, who were restless after the 20-minute delay, we headed to Venice without further questions.” In Murano, a suburb of Venice he met a couple of British naval officers who befriended him.

“They were on their way to Paris in a couple of days and they offered me a ride, which was made to order for my plans. We later set off for France, loading their car onto a train at the Mt. Blanc tunnel, then drove to Paris. During the drive, they regaled me with stories about their various female conquests of many nationalities, and talked occasionally about serving in the war.”

Once in Paris, the officers asked Charles to recommend a restaurant and he chose an inexpensive eatery, with wood shavings on the floor, across from St. Sulpice Cathedral. The wood shavings, common before the war, made it easier to clean the floor at closing time.

“I wanted to respond to their remarkable stories in kind, but unfortunately I hadn’t had their erotic experiences,” Charles said. So he took out the diamond folder secured in his briefs, sure to make an impression.

“The diamonds spilled out of the worn container and scattered on the floor amid the wood shavings,” he said. “It was a frantic moment. It took about 10 minutes to sift through the shavings and find the diamonds. I had never counted them and was afraid I might have missed some.” One of the British officers then pulled out a condom for Charles to put the diamonds into, and he returned them to his shorts.

After reuniting with his friend in Paris, he told Fred the story of the smuggled jewels. “I brought out the diamonds and sprinkled them on the bed,

saying they were paste, because that's what I still thought, but his response was 'You idiot – why would they bother with fakes?'"

The next day, Charles took the diamonds to the address of a physician friend of Julius and handed them over. "He took the diamonds, simply said 'Merci,' and closed the door," An anticlimactic conclusion to the story of the well-traveled gems.

After staying in Paris for a few days with Fred, Charles set off on what would be the last leg of his European journey, including Spain, the south of France and Italy again.

On his way to Spain, he stopped off in Biarritz in southern France, "a once fashionable town on the Bay of Biscay catering to British 'society.' I was sitting on the beach, thinking of my immediate future. Knowing how much I enjoyed New York City, I wrote to the School of Graduate Studies at Columbia University, saying I wanted to apply to study government and history." (The reply would be waiting for him when he returned to Beloit.) Then he continued his journey.

"Spain was a contrast to the devastation of Western Europe, as the damage from the Spanish Civil War wasn't as extensive as the destruction in British, French and German cities," he said. "I visited San Sebastian, Pamplona and Bilbao, which were opulent compared to what I had seen in Western Europe, with expensive cafes and shops. I felt guilty about visiting Franco's Spain and stayed only a few days."

He saw all the French Mediterranean cities, then the Italian Riviera and especially enjoyed Florence and Siena because of their abundant art and storied histories.



“Florence made me think of the ways of governing, with the merchant class once supporting artists,” Charles noted. “There was a lopsided distribution of power in those Italian cities, a contest between the ecclesiastical and the developing merchant class for political control. New forms of power suggest lively tensions in social structure. Those themes culminated in my later work on status, class and self.”

“I booked a steerage class ticket on a Gydnia liner, the Sobieski, for the voyage to New York,” he said. “Steerage class was occupied mostly by deported rabbis headed for Canada, one of the few countries that would accept them. I also met two young American women in second class who provided comforts along the way. We brought pickles, ice cream and oranges to the rabbis and their families. I also befriended an opera singer from Birmingham, Alabama, who had fallen in love with the ship’s purser. I would be their best man when they got married in New York.”

The Mediterranean was rough and the ship broke a propeller at Gibraltar. The Atlantic was also turbulent and the trans-Atlantic crossing took 12 days instead of the scheduled seven or eight.

The voyage didn’t make it to New York, thanks to international politics. “We were denied the use of the Port of New York because a suspected Soviet spy had escaped the U.S. on a Polish sister ship and the Gydnia line was being punished,” Charles explained.

The ship had no alternative but to change course for Nova Scotia, the destination of the rabbis. American officials met the ship in Nova Scotia and said

the ban on docking at an American port had been lifted and it was allowed to sail back to New York.

In the end, Charles spent three months in Europe paid for by the government. "I always lived very cheaply," he noted.

Along the way, he unwittingly smuggled a small fortune in diamonds, brought ice cream to deported rabbis in steerage class, helped an opera singer and a ship's purser get married, and was briefly cast back in international waters because of a Soviet spy. He was also able to read Henry Miller's novel, "Tropic of Cancer" in Paris because it had been banned in the United States and he wasn't allowed to bring it back with him (although he did).

And the letter he wrote to Columbia University while idly sitting on a French beach would set the rest of his academic career in motion.

## Chapter Seven: Columbia University & UW

When Charles returned to Beloit in December 1948, a letter from Columbia University had arrived, telling him he had been accepted as a graduate student and could take the Graduate Record Exam later.

“I worked in the drugstore during the Christmas rush, then went to New York and started at Columbia in January,” he recalled. “I had applied in government studies. My European experience got me interested in the philosophy of politics and I half-consciously envisioned a career in college teaching.”

He studied political theory with Franz Neuman and Robert McIvor. The political science courses turned out to not interest him that much – except for Henry Steele Commager’s constitutional law course.

He was in classes from early morning to early evening. He would often find himself auditing a course that was more exciting than those he was taking for credit. He attended classes taught by anthropologist Margaret Mead, literary critic Lionel Trilling, art historians Meyer Schapiro and Jacob Rosenberg and sociologists C. Wright Mills and Robert Lynd. “The best lecturer was Gilbert Highet. The least inspirational was Jacques Barzun. Across the street I could listen to Reinhold Niebuhr and, when his English could be deciphered, Paul Tilich. I had a lot of energy and I wanted to learn as much as I could. I had interests in literature, politics, sociology, art history and philosophy.”

“I felt that worlds were opening before me. Perhaps the most profound moment was a presentation by Neuman’s friend, Herbert Marcuse, on dialectics.

(Many years later, Marcuse would become my friend.) I decided my interest in social theory could best be pursued by focusing on intellectual history. It induced me to move from government study to history and I gravitated to Commager, author of 'The American Mind,' which would become a seminal book on American intellectual history along with Merle Curti's 'The Growth of American Thought.' I had studied with Curti at Wisconsin.

"I had been caught up in Commager's approach to literary and historical figures in American history, but he wanted me to weather something more rigorous and recommended that I write my master's thesis on James Coolidge Carter and the codification of New York common law." Instead, Charles ended up writing his master's thesis for another professor on "the sociology of legal philosophies of the Gilded Age and how changes in laws were related to the distribution of wealth and economic development.

"I went to a party at Commager's house in Rye, New York for his seminar students and remember stepping over piles and piles of books that littered the living room of his house," he said. "His wife greeted me by saying, 'You're Mr. Drekmeier, who wrote that lovely poem for my husband when he was ill.'" (I couldn't suppress my need to translate my 'reality' into poetry. The poem in this case centered on the locus of Commager's lectures, 'With Harkness in Darkness...'"

Charles also remembers sitting in Commager's office one afternoon when his mentor took a call from Walter Lippmann, "Behind Commager's office window, the apartment building on Amsterdam Avenue was flying a huge American flag, with a huge passenger plane flying over," Charles remembered.

“There it all was: Commager’s Americana, Lippmann, the flag and the symbol of American ingenuity. I remember thinking, ‘This is America with a vengeance.’”

Being in New York again gave Charles the chance to return to the opera and symphony. He also spent many Sunday mornings with a friend who loved choral music and they visited various New York churches with professional choirs.

“I took a girl from Skidmore on a date to hear Mahler’s 8<sup>th</sup> Symphony (“The Symphony of 1,000”) conducted by Leopold Stokowsky at Carnegie Hall,” he said. “There was an expanded orchestra, a brass choir and several hundred human voices distributed around the hall. The music was so overpowering I felt my date shudder. Maybe there are spiritual orgasms.”

Charles received his master’s degree after three semesters. His diploma was signed by Dwight Eisenhower, president of Columbia before he became *the* president in 1952.

“I could have stayed on at Columbia, but it was less expensive to continue my studies in Madison,” Charles explained. He also looked forward to working with Merle Curti.

His meandering academic career, which started at the University of Chicago, continued at the University of Wisconsin, and slowly jelled into focus at Columbia University, would again shift to Madison. It wasn’t all textbooks and lecture halls for Charles. He also had blue-collar jobs during summers to help make ends meet.

When Charles returned to the University of Wisconsin, he worked as a teaching assistant in an undergraduate core curriculum program called Integrated

Liberal Studies. His first teaching was a course on Keynesian economics, which by 1950 had become a prominent governmental and academic way of defining the economic world after the travails of the Great Depression and World War II. "I knew very little of Keynesian economics," he admitted, "so it was a challenge."

He also worked as a teaching assistant in a political geography course. He found out, through happenstance, that it is far more demanding to stand in a lecture hall before hundreds of students and give a cogent presentation than to sit with a dozen or so students and informally hash over the finer points of the subject matter.

"The most dramatic moment in that course came when Professor Hartshorne called me and said he had to leave campus because of a death in his family. He asked me to give the lecture the next day, which was on France's history and politics. He said, 'Just tell them everything you know about France.'"

After working much of the night to put together a coherent lecture, he felt he was as ready as one could be, given the compression of a thousand years of history in an all-night exertion.

"There were 300 students in the sharply steeped lecture hall," he recalled. "I was facing a mountain of expectations. No escape."

The experience was also noteworthy in an entirely different way. "Halfway through the lecture, I noticed, with some discomfort, my father sitting in the top row," he said. "After the lecture he told me my grandmother had died from a stroke the previous night."

“Those were kind of frenetic years,” he said. “But I did have good times drinking with friends, who were also teaching assistants, at the student union on the shores of Lake Mendota. They were in the integrated program, mostly teaching humanities.”

Just as a door to Columbia had opened for him when he was in France, another door opened for him while he was at Madison. “At Columbia, I had the presence of mind to register with the employment desk at Columbia Teacher’s College,” he explained. “Later, in Madison, I got a call from a Boston University professor looking for a teaching assistant on cultural anthropology and political economy. He asked if I would be available for the following academic year, beginning in September 1951. I wasn’t sure yet what I wanted to specialize in, so I jumped at the chance.”

## Chapter Eight: Boston University

Charles was hired as a lecturer at Boston University's College of General Education, teaching courses in political economy, social psychology and cultural anthropology, and at first, didn't feel entirely qualified, but quickly adjusted. "I had found the beginnings of my interdisciplinary destiny," he said. "There were four of us teaching from the same books on the same subjects for two core freshman and sophomore classes. Those may have been the happiest teaching years for me. It was a congenial group. We saw each other socially, too."

He was also "finding out more about what I didn't want to do than what I wanted. I enjoyed inculcating other young people with my off-beat ideas and revealing possibilities open to them regarding the nature of knowledge."

Boston University was different from Madison in that it was non-residential: all the students were commuters. Most of his BU students "knew little about the philosophical and historical roots of the country and European culture generally," he remembered, and couldn't afford to go to Boston College, let alone Harvard.

While Charles was teaching his students, he was learning from them about more worldly matters. "Many of my male students were returning veterans, some of them older than I. We became, in some cases, good friends and would meet at a dive called The Stables in Copley Square for beer and timely discussions. There was a sad side to all of this, too, as men found themselves outdistancing their wives intellectually, and some of their marriages didn't survive."



BU had a lot of Irish and Italian Catholic students, and personal issues like birth control, divorce and suicide were part of the curriculum. “I spent many hours thinking about the marriages that broke up, and the contradictions of culture and faith,” he noted.

Charles also reflected back to his childhood bout with scarlet fever and how that may have affected how he viewed some things, including social adaptation. “Scarlet fever increased my limitations and what would later be characterized as kinds of accommodation which impede action when social justice requires more,” he explained. “I was too young to know about all the intricacies of justice, but old enough to know when I was being unnecessarily inhibited.” That reflection wasn’t based on any experience at BU, which he generally greatly enjoyed. The social and intellectual effects of McCarthyism were pervasive.

Living in Boston, Charles was able to reconnect with his friend, Frank Sander, his fellow flutist. He had graduated from Harvard Law School and was working as a prosecutor for the Boston District Attorney’s office. “I was welcomed into the arms of Frank’s family. I became almost another son in the Sander household. We used to hear the Budapest Quartet play Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert and Mozart at Jordan Hall, and occasionally went to the theater in New York.”

In his second year at BU, Charles applied for a Fulbright Scholarship to study in India. “I realized I would need a PhD, but I wasn’t in any great hurry, and I liked teaching.” His application was accepted, and he would soon set sail for the Indian subcontinent.

## Chapter Nine: India

When Charles and the Fulbright contingent arrived in India in 1953, only a few years after its independence and partition with the newly formed Pakistan, it was a country still recovering from the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

Charles witnessed an ancient caste system, with four main groups and many subgroups, structured in social interactions. Enmity between Hindus and Muslims was still raw. Some 17 languages were spoken in India, Aryan-based in the north, Dravidian in the south. Poverty was widespread. A tropical subcontinent, India actually had few rain forests. Summer heat could be scorching. Monsoons could be devastating.

Charles set out to learn as much as he could about pre-colonial India, particularly the ancient period. His Fulbright scholarship paid all his expenses for one year. He was one of 14 or 15 Fulbright students in India that year – anthropologists, economists, political scientists and historians.

He was sent to the University of Nagpur, where he would receive guidance from a professor of political science. “Nagpur was a rail hub, with the north-south line connecting Delhi and Madras and the east-west line connecting Bombay and Calcutta, but it was more an agricultural center than a commercial city.”

He was lodged with the professor’s family and slowly acclimated to India. “The temperature rose to 105 to 120 degrees on summer days and I would be outside, hatless in the midday sun like the fabled English nobleman,” he recalled. “When the monsoons came after the spring drought, rats would come into my

room at Nagpur, climb up on the mosquito netting over my bed and inconsiderably urinate on me.”

At the University of Nagpur’s library, he was bewildered to find the books shelved not according to topic, but according to size. “But there were helpful texts – which is more than I could say for my professor.” He found the students at the university friendly. Almost all were male. “They would insist on holding my hand while walking around campus. Because they were discouraged from dating women, holding hands was perhaps the only affection they could show.”

He was also able to visit a nearby spiritual center founded by Gandhi. “The brother of my professor’s wife had been close to the great leader. He would occasionally visit and take me out to the ashram in Wardha, not many miles away. The ashram had a number of spinning wheels – the symbol of Gandhi’s efforts to make India less dependent on foreign textiles and other imports.”

He was making gradual progress with his research. “It became clear I would have to place more emphasis on religion than I had planned,” he realized. But work went slowly at the poorly organized library of Nagpur University.

“I decided after a couple of months that I would do better in Madras, having learned of the well-managed library at the university there, which had an American-trained head librarian,” he explained. “I suggested to the head of the Indian section of the Fulbright program that I be transferred to the University of Madras.” His request was granted and Charles relocated in Madras, getting a room in Armenian House in the China Bazar section, which housed mostly foreign students. The feet of his bed were in cans of water to discourage bedbugs.

“Madras had everything I needed for my studies of ancient law and politics, as well as religious movements,” he said. “I also discovered that the United States Information Agency library was a good place to work. It had a small but well-selected collection of books.”

While living in Armenian House was socially comfortable, it was also distracting. Within a few weeks Charles moved to Chesney Hall, located in a former British compound. “The food was partly Western and helped with my digestion,” he noted. “I had had bouts of intestinal difficulty in Nagpur, diagnosed as bacillary dysentery. I was assigned a small cottage, more like a hut, with dirt floors. There was a separate bathroom with a hole in the clay floor that served as the toilet.”

He kept his notes on 4"x6" index cards in neat little stacks on the floor of his room. But every night, little toads would enter the room and urinate on the stacks of cards. “They especially liked the Brahman pile. My ink took on an attractive chartreuse hue.”

Everyday street scenes could be disconcerting. “I found it unsettling to be stepping over bodies in the streets of Madras. Beggars would approach me carrying motionless infants and ask if I would give them money to bury the children. The children, I learned, were pretending to be dead. It was a horrifying experience. Almost as difficult for me was reflecting on what was happening to my own sensibilities.

“I had been critical of British callousness regarding the native population and I saw some of this immunity developing in me, too. Some European and American writers were able to cope with this desensitizing, but others like E.M.

Forster and George Orwell were scarred by their experiences in the colonies. When you move to another culture you begin to see yourself differently. I also began to see aspects of the caste system not immediately apparent and how some local populations were able to identify with colonizers.”

Later, after he returned to America, finished his dissertation, and it was published, he was chastised by an Indian guru. “He visited me and said I had done a disservice to the Bhagavad Gita, a cultural text of basic importance,” Charles explained. “I had written that the Gita was in part a rationale for the caste system. Indian scholars really didn’t like that. And more recently orthodox Hinduism has taken a defensive stance toward such a critical position.”

While in India, he also received an unusual job offer. “One day when I was having lunch with friends at Chesney Hall, I was approached by a stranger who said he was with the Rockefeller Foundation. He asked me if I would be interested in pursuing Sanskrit studies as my academic vocation. This would be a considerable commitment as it takes about three years to learn to read Sanskrit. No, I said, I was not a philologist at heart and was more interested in the history of ideas. Many years later, my daughter said, ‘Dad, you’ve lived a charmed life!’ It was, indeed, filled with such opportunities. This was the first of a number of invitations. My parents deserve credit for timing my birth to provide these postwar bounties.”

Charles made a number of trips to southern-most India, and to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), including one on a boat where the other passengers were sheep. “A friend and I journeyed from Colombo to the south-central part of the island which had a most remarkable collection of colorful birds and flowering trees and plants.

The colors were riotous: My visual spectrum had been anemic in comparison.” On Christmas Eve, 1953, the few hotels were full so they stayed at an “inn” which had large planks above the floor to sleep on.

“I’ll always remember how awestruck I was by the enormous statues of the reclining Buddha at Anaradhapura and Polonnaruwa,” he noted. “Those immense figures were at least 40 feet in length, and in the silence of the surrounding jungle I think I sensed the boundlessness of eternity.”

Leaving his friend in Ceylon, he boarded a ferry for the trip back to India only to discover he had failed to purchase the reentry document, not knowing one was needed. “So, I went back and forth on the ferry four times before I was allowed to disembark in India proper. The Indian coast south of Madras was home to a half-dozen ocean-engulfed monuments that would ‘mysteriously’ appear at low tide.”

But his most vivid memory was surviving ages-old enmity between some Hindus and Muslims. “I was on a south Indian train a few days after an American-Pakistani arms agreement was signed. Around midnight in a desolate area the train came to an abrupt stop. I could hear much shouting outside the train and almost immediately the Indians in the interclass carriage who had spread out their blankets near me hurriedly covered me. A dozen or so young Indians outside were shouting ‘Death to the Brits and Americans!’ They had blocked the tracks and come onto the train, looking especially for Americans. My fellow travelers saved me by covering me with their blankets and their bodies. I carry a debt of gratitude to my Indian friends for that protection. As it turned out, I was the only American on the train and might have been the last.”

He was also fortunate enough to meet the man called India's walking saint.

"While in Madras, I received a letter from Christopher Eckenstein, a Swiss friend I had known at Columbia, asking if we could meet in Calcutta and take a little trip. We joined up at a hotel bar and that afternoon took the train and then a bus filled with chickens and their owners through the scrub jungle of Bihar and Orissa. We were met in the middle of nowhere by Hallam Tennyson, grandson of Lord Tennyson. Christopher was determined to interview Vinoba Bhave and Hallam would be our contact. When Nehru inherited the political 'crown' from Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave was viewed as the spiritual successor. He had walked the length and breadth of India with a small retinue soliciting parcels of land for eventual development by landless lower castes. Most of these 'gifts' from wealthy landowners, the zamindari class, were of marginal value. Vinoba was often described as the largest landowner in India because these properties were held in trust in his name. But their value was probably not considerable." Hallam Tennyson would later write a book about Bhave, 'India's Walking Saint.'

"His 85-pound body was wracked with parasites and he lived on honey-laced milk," Charles said. "He was confined to a room in the encampment and was very ill. It began to seem we would not be able to see him. At one of our first evening meals I ate my sambar from a banana leaf that had been washed in a nearby well. I began to feel ill after three days and told Christopher I would have to return to New Delhi to see the Fulbright doctor assigned to us. Bhave did come out when he heard that one of his guests was leaving. He walked with the three of us across the parched land. It was at once clear that he was a scholar as well as an activist. He spoke 16 languages. I was surprised to learn he had very traditional

Hindu beliefs, including cow worship and opposition to birth control, remarkable cultural sophistication combined with Hindu convictions.”

Charles returned to New Delhi with a fever close to 103 degrees. He was diagnosed with paratyphoid fever, which was fortunately not difficult to cure. “Of my vicissitudes and afflictions this was probably the most dangerous,” he said.

“The strangest was not exotic. Although I hadn’t had a tonsil in my head since age 4, I came down with a case of tonsillitis after sitting on a granite floor for six hours watching, and sometimes enduring, a recital of Carnatic music and dance. Before leaving for India, my father had loaded me up an anti-malarial and I was able to avoid that disease. All in all, I stayed healthy. I’m not sure which of the Vedic deities – Siva, Vishnu or Brahma – I should also thank.”

“In thinking back on this mind- and sense-bending year, my memory cannot find a coherence in what we call ‘culture.’ There is not the ‘theme and variations’ of certain musical compositions nor the organization of the versatile facets of Gothic architecture. The soaring ‘gateways’ (gopurams) of Hindu temples, which outsiders are apt to mistake for the sanctuary itself, will probably continue to be what first comes to mind. Hundreds of sculpted bodies in ecstatic or fearful contortion must exercise fascination because voluptuousness adorned aspects of belief systems that advocated a turning from the world of sense experience – as witness the apsaras (female figures) that decorate the four entrances to Buddhist hemispheric stupas.

“From time to time, when I wanted to escape the routines or ennui of everyday life, I’d transmigrate my thoughts. To the hypnotic beat of Indian drums, I found myself in a bazaar inspecting hookahs or graceful Tibetan pitchers, or



swimming in the warm waters of the world's longest sand beach across from the University of Madras and wondering why I was the only one enjoying the waters, until I learned the sea was shark-infested, or lounging on a houseboat's deck in Kashmir and bargaining with a boy whose boat was so laden with flowers that the boat couldn't actually be seen, or meeting Nehru himself at a reception for visiting students..."

"It's possible that when the contexts of experience change dramatically, our memories aren't so sharply delineating (because our thinking is having to accommodate too much). But these memories, which I find a little difficult to structure, are of great value to me. Memories of the cacophony of the markets and death-revealing stillness of remote Buddhist monuments can't be translated into words. Conscious and yet not conscious in the sense of modern psychiatry."

Near the end of May, 1954, when the thermometers seemed intent on setting records, Charles put some finishing touches on his notes and began packing for the trip home. With some help from the Fulbright committee he arranged passage from Bombay to Port Said where he would make the short bus trip to Cairo. There he would visit the pyramids and the Sphinx in Giza. And then on to the Levant, as that part of the Near East was called.

It was a relief to learn that his trunk had arrived at the port (a small miracle, he was told) and that the crew of the P&O liner was anticipating calm seas to Karachi, Aden and Suez. At the time, Karachi was still the capital of Pakistan with a population of four and a half million, about half the size of Bombay. His fleeting impression, which was all he had time for, was that it was a city of dizzying commercial activity accentuated by the distinctive Muslim clothing of the

inhabitants. Aden, half the size of Karachi, had once been a governing center of Yemen on the southern shore of the Arabian Peninsula. The opening of the Suez Canal made it an important trading and refueling port. To Charles, in his brief exposure, it seemed dusty and relatively quiet. Viewed from the lethal commotion of the present century, its peacefulness seemed enviable.

The Red Sea was no less scorching than it had been a year earlier. But he was acclimated and the relentless sun had come to be a reliable companion in his journeys. From Port Said by bus to teeming Cairo, which at first glance had an unexpected French quality, he found an inexpensive hotel that didn't seem to be catering to tourists. "In retrospect, I marvel at my ability to negotiate in languages I didn't know but which were sprinkled with the necessary English words," he said. "Emboldened by my experience with a camel at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, I embarked on another ride courtesy of this temperamental but often patient animal. The Sphinx eyed us suspiciously."

But Charles' attempts at becoming Lawrence of Arabia weren't working. The baggy trousers he wore in India, accompanied by a colorful vest accessorized with various exoticisms he had collected along the way didn't fool anyone. It may be that the one thing that distinguishes Americans abroad is their transparency and inability to blend into the landscape. Or so he thought:

"Maybe we just speak more loudly. Or that we can't escape the habit, developed from too much artificial viewing experience (movies, TV and now computer screens and smartphones) of seeing the world as a panorama. It is 'out there' and our ability to 'participate' is hindered by the reluctance to learn other languages. Trapped in the idiocy of our own exceptionalism we never completely

leave home. Travel should be like good art – which awakens or enhances something inside us. The external enters the recesses of the consciousness and then can return in our ability to see the world anew and see ourselves. This is a seeing that penetrates the screens of the familiar and habitual and at least gives us pause before reducing the new to the banal. It may be comforting to find in Islamic architecture a resemblance to certain kitchen items. (The new can make us uneasy.) Saying goodbye to the timeless monuments across the Nile and the timely treasures of Cairo – the riotous streets and alleys, dives and many diversions – I threw caution to the winds (literally) and boarded a small ancient propeller plane headed to Amman.”

Leaving Egypt, one had to choose between Israel and Muslim countries. And if one chose Israel, travel to Muslim countries would not be possible. Charles made what he thought was the practical choice: one country, or several.

“It was a bumpy plane ride, but I and the other half-dozen passengers arrived safely. There wasn’t a lot to see in Jordan.” Traveling in that part of the world was problematic, and probably still is. Taxis seemed the best option and Charles, along with four fellow passengers from the plane trip, decided Homs and Damascus would have more to offer than the Kingdom of Jordan. The ride through the barren countryside caused Charles to marvel how such arid land could support the large Syrian population.

Actually, this area of oases was far more hospitable than the land to the east. “Maybe it was because I was sated with the wonders of Islamic architecture (remarkable structures, vibrant colors, exotic calligraphic substitutions for human figures forbidden in Islamic art), that my most vivid memory of Damascus was the

shameless display of an aging Blatz beer sign. This, in a prohibition-driven country advertising a beer that had gone out of existence.”

Charles traveled to Aleppo by taxi where he bought a train ticket to Ankara, the capital of Turkey. Aleppo was the largest Syrian city, modern and sophisticated, and in retrospect he wished he had spent more time there. But there was much ground to cover between Turkey and LeHavre, from where he would return to the United States.

His new travel companions on the train to Ankara persuaded him to change his ticket from Ankara to Istanbul, arguing that life was more exciting in that fantastic city which, like Venice, is unique in its location, its splendor and allure.

“Assuring me that the train would wait while I changed tickets in the station, I got off, wisely taking my rucksack with me. I changed my ticket in time to see the train chugging off without me. I was able to race, by taxi, to the next stop which wasn’t far, fortunately.”

We all know enough about Constantinople, its ancient name, and Istanbul, its modern name, to feel deprived if Charles doesn’t embellish the grandeur. “The famous bazaar had been restored after a fire – a mishap that happens periodically, I’m told. The blue mosque can envelop you in a strange consciousness (for us Westerners) that is, for want of a better word, a ‘mystique.’”

Charles then flew to Athens, reliving the many pictures, historic and geographic, that had occupied so large a part of his scholarly life. “The distance from Istanbul to Athens isn’t that great, but the Islamic and Christian cultures can seem worlds apart. We may tend to make too much of this, but there is a

conceptual distinction that is basic to our knowledge of ourselves and our history, not always serving us well, but enriching our aesthetic and spiritual experience.”

He then took the Balkan Express to Belgrade where, sleeping soundly with his head safely protecting his camera and rucksack as a substitute pillow, he was awakened in the wee hours of the morning by a young man who asked if he was an American and if he knew anything about song contests. Despite having minor knowledge of such contests, Charles was invited to a rehearsal at his university to prepare for a challenge from the Yale Glee Club.

“He explained that at the university he attended fraternities were organized by the students’ academic specializations and his was the engineering group. I was enthusiastically welcomed by his cohort, members of which hung on my every word, uninformed as those words were. I marveled at such energy because it was 2 a.m. Eventually, a young woman said, ‘Let me put you up for the night’ (or the Serbian embroidery of those words...). After tucking me in bed and complimenting me on visiting Yugoslavia, she left, only to return five hours later with an invitation to tour the city. Her hospitality affected me deeply. I toured the historic part of the city with four or five ‘guides’ who were about as sympathetic to Marshal Tito, the country’s leader, as the Czech students had been toward their occupying government. Slovenia, Croatia and a deeper surveillance of Athens would have to wait for a future time. (But by then I’d have a family in tow and the focal points would be different.)

“Several months earlier, in Madras, friends and I had taken in an American film, ‘Roman Holiday,’ starring Audrey Hepburn being driven around Rome on a motor-scooter by Cary Grant, with the motor-scooter fascinating me as much as

Hepburn. I had enough funding left to allow me to order a Vespa from Piaggio in Genoa, and now it was time to pick up this dazzling vehicle which had me as transfixed as the car-intoxicated toad of 'The Wind in the Willows.'

It would have made sense for me to head for France from the Savoy region of Italy but I had arranged to pick up a friend, Lois More, at a hostel in Switzerland. Although it was June, the alpine weather was bone-chilling. The gift of Serbian brandy I had been given (called slivovitz) came in handy on that trip north.

"I found Lois at the appointed place and time and we loaded up her belongings, which I had neglected to take into account. They didn't stay stacked on for long. To the amusement of the hostel clients we tried again and, after transferring a few of her possessions and trophies to cartons, we tried again and were on our way. In a southern German city, I asked Lois to remember the name of the street where our hotel was located. She wrote down something which turned out to have limited value: Einbahnstrasse (one-way street).

"Lois survived a week of sites and sights and then rejoined her research group. I went on to Paris and then to the Normandie, docked at LeHavre."

## Chapter Ten: Harvard

After returning from India, Charles resumed teaching at Boston University's College of General Education. He had finished most of his research for the Fulbright Foundation while still in India. But he was thinking seriously about renewing graduate school studies.

"I decided that BU was a dead-end while I was still figuring out my reactions to my India year. I decided to apply to Harvard and when I discovered there was a possibility for graduate students to design their own PhD programs with the sponsorship of three faculty members. And during my fourth year at BU I took several courses at Harvard while teaching full time." Sampling a few courses at Harvard sharpened his focus on what he wanted to study.

"I wrote the director of admissions saying I was interested in social science theories and in history with a philosophical bent. I also noted that my India experience had introduced me to institutional history and that I would like to study with political theorists Carl Friedrich and Louis Hartz, and especially with the sociologist Talcott Parsons."

His application to Harvard was approved and he began the 1955-56 academic year as Parsons' research associate and Friedrich's teaching assistant. Charles was one of just 16 interdisciplinary doctorate students in the years of the self-designed program at Harvard.

"In Cambridge, I found a basement apartment on Bennet Street not far from the MTA yards," Charles remembered. "There were always flashing lights from the street cars coming and going. On rainy nights, the yards took on a hellish

quality. The apartment, painted black and white, had been previously occupied by a series of architecture students who belonged to the 'ashcan' persuasion. It was on two levels separated by hanging leather strips and it had a suspended bookcase. The belongings left behind included black pillows, a Japanese lantern and a Chinese scroll. Mary Pendleton had been the most recent architecture student. She was soon to be married to a Stanford faculty member. When I later arrived at Stanford, she recognized in my apartment the items she had left behind in Cambridge."

Professor Parsons would become Charles' mentor. "One of Parsons' courses was a large seminar devoted to the 'functional imperatives' of the social system. Those imperatives were political, economic, educational and value maintenance. "I was among the many grad students hanging on his every word and went home after the first session in a flurry of enthusiasm. I stayed up all night relocating political philosophy from the late medieval period through liberal democracy in terms of Parsons' 'imperatives.'"

The next morning, Charles slipped his dozen pages under the door to Parsons' office. At the conclusion of the next meeting of the seminar, Parsons asked if a 'Charles Drekmeier' was present. "He invited me to his office and then to a party he was having the next week at his home in Belmont, a suburb of Boston. At the party, while stirring a punch bowl and entertaining his faculty colleagues, he asked me if I would be interested in co-authoring a book on society and politics with him. He was a Max Weber disciple and my only explanation for this remarkable turn of events is that he saw me as a reflection of Weber's theories on historical sociology as well as current politics."



He would meet with Parsons every Saturday morning, sitting in his office while listening to the Harvard Marching Band tune up outside Emerson Hall, the social sciences building, for that afternoon's football game. But before his first year at Harvard was completed, Parsons told Charles that their planned book would have to be postponed because, in anticipation of David Riesman's arrival at Harvard, he had accepted a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Studies at Stanford to prepare himself for a possible 'challenge' to his theories. That would prove fortuitous for Charles, although he was unaware of it at the time.

"It seemed to be the occasion for me to think more deeply about my interest in social theory. Under Parsons' tutelage was I moving too far from my University of Chicago moment of Marxian revelation? Are our social relations (the range of structures from the institutional to the personal attitudinal level) more influenced 'from below,' so to speak, from economic factors and forces, than 'from above,' our beliefs and other 'ideational' aspects of our lives? This distinction, which I would later question, had been germinating for more than a year.

"For reasons unclear to me I became fairly close to Parsons, a major figure in sociological theory. I would have said towering if his physical presence had been more considerable. We were both 'westerners,' Colorado and Ohio for him and Wisconsin for me, raised as Congregationalists – his father was a minister – tending towards Unitarianism. But he didn't know much about me and I concluded he needed a kind of a bridge to the outside world that the students who flocked to his seminars didn't have, at least without the wide-ranging humanism that I had acquired over the years. The Parsons I was getting to know

differed from the image of the highly abstract theorist and the gentle accommodation and kindness that Professor Rene Fox described in her profile of Parsons that appeared in the *American Scholar* in 1958.”

“When his many friends would visit him in Cambridge, I would be enlisted to help with the entertainment – especially for sons visiting with their fathers, like Professor Von der Gablentz’s son Otto who became a close friend in my graduate years at Harvard – eventually becoming German ambassador to Israel, a delicate position, and then the USSR. At Parsons’ request I guided Ved Mahta, whose commentaries on Oxford historians and philosophers were widely read in the ‘60s. He had said, ‘Mehta is blind and this will give you an opportunity to make us look good.’ I said something banal about the place looking all right and he, as the good social scientist, replied that appearances can be deceiving.”

“When his younger daughter was married, I was invited to be an usher, which involved accompanying the principals to the commitment part of the ceremony. At one point, Gardner Day, the Unitarian minister, said, ‘Dr. Parsons, your job is done.’ I could see how emotionally shaken he was as he stumbled out of the ring exchange. I steadied him on the way back to the pew. ‘Structures’ and ‘functions’ aren’t always there when needed.”

“That incident reminded me of another many years later when I was chairing a discussion of false consciousness which featured Herbert Marcuse and several others at Stanford. A half hour into the discussion Marcuse whispered, ‘There’s only water here. Can you produce some scotch?’ The hall was full and there were students squatting along the wall behind us. I motioned to one of the older ones, who came over. I asked if he was able to buy alcohol and gave him

\$10 for a small bottle of scotch. When he eventually returned – Stanford does not make such purchases convenient – Marcuse, refueled, continued on in great form.”

“In my final months at BU when I was caught up in Freudianism, I thought the College of General Education should join other universities that were celebrating the centenary of Sigmund Freud’s birth. But, as far as I knew, the only surviving member of the original Freud Circle was Ernest Jones; Harvard had already grabbed him (and Harvard could more easily manage the expense of bringing him from England.) I asked Professor Parsons, with whom I was then on familiar terms, if he would be willing to expand his thoughts on psychoanalysis (something of a departure for him but he had himself had ‘didactic analysis’) and he, always helpful, was willing to give a lecture on personality development. I also asked if he would be willing to share the stage with Herbert Marcuse, my sometime friend... Parsons thought that would make for an interesting evening (I wasn’t sure what that meant). Marcuse had responded to my enthusiasm over ‘Eros and Civilization,’ which had appeared earlier in synopsis form in a slender and short-lived review called ‘i.e.’ The two had never met – they moved in rather different circles – but they hit it off and the evening, a large and responsive audience in attendance, was a marked success. It was out of this tension between structural functionalism and ‘critical’ Marxism that my own resolution evolved. I became a ‘critical theorist.’”

Also fortuitous, in a different way, was Charles’ decision to host a party at his small apartment for India specialists of the American Historical Association. “One of them brought a date, a beautiful, slender woman with black hair wearing

a purple velvet dress. I was fixated. It was an echo of my father meeting my mother: she probably deserved someone more stylish. Margot had been an undergrad at Oberlin and was studying European intellectual history as a Harvard doctoral student, working with Crane Brinton. We became friends over time. Unlike the modern, more impulsive generation, we thought we had to establish ourselves before committing to anything permanent together and that she should accept a Fulbright opportunity to study French social history at the National Library in Paris.”

Then, on Memorial Day, 1958, Charles received a call from Professor Volkart, the chair of the Stanford Sociology Department, asking if Charles would be interested in coming to Stanford as an acting assistant professor. “Parsons had recommended me and Bud McCord, a Stanford dean who was someone I had known at Harvard, supported him. I told Volkart it was a very attractive offer but that I was working on my dissertation and needed a few days to think about the opportunity. And, at the time, Margot was still in France.

“Two days after the Stanford invitation I got a call from McGeorge Bundy, dean of the School of Letters and Sciences at Harvard, reminding me that I had not signed the oath to defend the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I told him that I had been teaching at BU which, like Harvard, was a private school, and I had never been asked to sign a loyalty oath while teaching there for four years. He replied, ‘Well, Mr. Drekmeier, you sign that oath or you’re out of here!’ I told him I didn’t know if I wanted to stay at Harvard on those terms and thought I was going to take a job elsewhere.

“I called Volkart and said yes, I would like to come to Stanford with my prospective bride.”

## Chapter Eleven: Marrying Margot & Heading West

In his final weeks at Harvard, Charles took his PhD oral exam with several faculty including Louis Hartz, David Owen in British imperial history and Alessandro d'Entrevres, a visiting political philosopher, who were assembled by Parsons. "They wanted me to show I had an understanding of institutional structures and development. I was asked to include European feudalism and Indian pre-colonial history, as well as modern social theory.

"My dissertation theme had been the ramifications of Freudian thought for American social science. Eventually, because of time constraints, I decided to change it to an expansion of the India work written for my Fulbright scholarship. Parsons agreed, but wanted me to include materials from Max Weber's treatise on Indian religion. He said he had never seen such a radical shift in dissertation projects."

One month after Charles agreed to teach at Stanford, he bought his first car. "It was a yellow Chevrolet convertible of ancient vintage. I paid \$200 for it and bought it so I could drive down to New York and bring back Margot when she returned from France on the Queen Elizabeth. On the drive back to Boston, we got a flat tire. We were sitting on a bench on the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut and I asked Margot, 'How would you like to teach history at Stanford?'" "What would that mean?" she wisely asked. "We would go to Stanford as husband and wife," Charles said and then explained how he had provisionally accepted an offer to teach at Stanford. Margot accepted his marriage proposal. She was told by her Harvard faculty advisor, Crane Brinton, that she could finish her PhD at Stanford, which was a hint that Stanford could use another Western Civilization instructor.

“Reflecting back, I realized how circumspect I had been in my relationships and probably had a hard time expressing myself emotionally. But I did express myself at her home in Swansea, Massachusetts, when her father, a Congregational minister, suggested I find a room for the night in a nearby motel. I declined, saying we were going back to Harvard that night. At the time, Margot’s mother was confined to a mental hospital in Augusta, Maine. I was never told the nature of her disease.”

“Margot’s family had a non-working farm in Maine about 90 minutes from Boston. We had marvelous evening swims with our friends in a lake near the farm. That pastoral setting was perfect for a marriage ceremony. Once it became clear we were going to California, Frank Sander’s father printed up wedding invitations for July 13, 1958. I wrote my parents and sister about the impending nuptials and invited them to the wedding. Because my parents had brought me up in the Congregational Church (Margot’s father’s church), I thought that would ease the abruptness.

“As I reminisce about those early summer months my thoughts become a little like one of those speeded-up movie sequences. Dizzying. Notes to collect, boxes to ship, friends to invite, the wedding to plan... The only problem was Margot’s father’s new wife. They had been married only a few months (or was it weeks?) and the bride was, understandably, unhappy about sharing her new life with these interlopers. She decreed ‘no alcohol – not even wine.’ (Which we ignored, of course.) There was little assistance from poor Rev. Ferdinand’s side of the matrimonial proceedings, but he happily officiated and provided the beautiful mise-en-scene under several large spruce trees. I don’t recall whether he or

Margot's brother 'gave the bride away' but I do recall opposing that terminology, along with some unnecessary Pauline theological passages in the liturgy."

"Fortunately, Margot's father and my mother hit it off. My bride and I weren't sure we liked the implications of our parents' mutual consolation, which amounted to 'we're glad they found each other, given their eccentricities.' One of those 'eccentricities' was almost enough to prevent my mother from attending the service. When she discovered that the as-yet-unmarried couple was cohabiting, she made it abundantly clear that such behavior was unacceptable. My sister's four-year-old son, my namesake, was part of the Wisconsin delegation, perhaps in anticipation of moments when only a small child can provide a break in tensions. He shouted, 'Hey! They've got their mattress right on the floor!' (My folks perhaps also thinking, 'Yes, along with the other creatures inhabiting the basement apartment.')

"Margot and I were too shy to invite Professors Parsons and Brinton, the trip from Boston to East Otisfield, Maine, being, we thought, something of an imposition. And the directions for getting there were complicated. Besides our parents and Margot's aunt (who lived nearby), the Sanders and a couple of Maine neighbors, our guests were fellow grad students (one of whom had lent me his white linen coat for the occasion). Margot had a simple white dress and carried a rose. She looked wonderful: elegant, beguiling, enticing. We of course had no 'wedding planner' and probably missed a hundred essentials. Even without guidance we had a good time: a wiener roast at Aunt Lil's and some guests went swimming in Pleasant Lake. Two days later, Margot was back working as Hans Kohn's teaching assistant in his 'Modern Intellectual History of Europe.'"



After the wedding, knowing the old Chevy was ill-equipped for a cross-country trip, Charles traded it in, plus \$1,000 (a wedding gift from his parents), for a VW camper van with a canvas top. The van was loaded with the remaining boxes of books and the Vespa scooter he brought with him from Europe. The newlyweds headed west.

“We got to Buffalo before we had transmission trouble and needed repairs. The 3,200 miles from Boston to San Francisco were an adventure. We stopped in Beloit to see my parents; they had doubts about the van making it all the way to San Francisco, but it did. There were some hair-raising moments. Coming out of the Badlands of South Dakota into Wyoming and the Rockies, we found ourselves at one point moving backward on a steep uphill grade. The driver behind us saw we were in trouble and he started backing up and blocking traffic while we backed into a narrow turnoff. Then we were able to turn around and resumed our journey downhill – pointed forward this time – and rerouted to a less steep ascent into Colorado.”

It took Margot and Charles four days to drive from Beloit to San Francisco. In the days when the interstate highway system was still being built, four days from Wisconsin to California in an old, decrepit van was a test of marriage devotion.

“We arrived in Palo Alto in September before the start of fall quarter. What impressed me first was the variety of trees. The Santa Clara Valley was the southernmost habitat of redwoods and the northernmost of palms.” The valley was a rich patchwork of orchards before the postwar building boom invaded the area. Palo Alto was also dotted with orchards south of Oregon Avenue (not yet an

expressway) before the continuing building boom eliminated them. Now, of course, it is Silicon Valley.”

“Bud and Joan McCord found us a one-bedroom apartment in the 800 block of Cowper Street near downtown Palo Alto for \$90 a month. (In 2017, it would go for almost \$3,000.) On our first day Margot and I went to the history department to see about the possibility of a job teaching in the Western Civilization program. William Bark, who chaired the program, liked Margot and hired her. It helped that she was a student of Crane Brinton.”

## Chapter Twelve: First Years at Stanford

After arriving at Stanford for the fall quarter of 1958, Charles was assigned a small room at the top of History Corner for his office, with the apology that it was all that was left. “It was like an aerie, out of the way, while Margot had a room in the basement.”

Stanford was still emerging from decades of students from affluent families, many with prep school backgrounds. Back then, each incoming class of 1,400 students was still limited to 500 women. The transformation was also to include more minorities. Stanford had been known as a regional university, drawing its students mainly from California and other western states, but that changed, too, under President Wallace Sterling, who was creating a university with a national reach while also recruiting new faculty from other schools, notably Harvard. Provost Fred Terman, meanwhile, was strengthening the engineering programs.

Charles faced a daunting teaching load in his first two years. “Professor Volkart dampened my spirits somewhat when he outlined my teaching schedule for the year. I was assigned six courses, including social psychology, which I hadn’t studied as a student, and sociological theory for fall quarter. During winter quarter I was to teach courses on bureaucracy and political sociology and during the spring a seminar on psychoanalysis and social structure, plus the sociology of religion. Six courses are a heavy load, but the several lecture courses were small. I had mostly sophomores and juniors.”

He taught the same courses his second year, with one significant addition. Charles, Margot, Bud McCord and two other faculty members went to Philip

Rhineland, the dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences, to propose a year-long interdisciplinary seminar, limited to 15 or 20 juniors, to be called "Social Thought and Institutions." It fit in with Rhineland's interest in interdisciplinary and innovative approaches. Students could major in it but most didn't. The Social Thought Program, as it became known, lasted 23 years and over the course of time involved more than 20 faculty members.

With Rhineland's approval, Charles and McCord wrote an article for the Stanford Daily recruiting students for the program. "We had a hard time winnowing the applicants down to 15. They were fascinated by the possibilities of a program that would take them beyond the basic disciplines." Charles also worked to include as many female students as he could, since they were outnumbered two to one by male undergraduates.

Each year, the Social Thought Program took one over-arching theme and explored aspects of it in different contexts. The first year's theme was "values." Themes in subsequent years included the nature of community, violence, social change, an exploration of self and society and the problem of individuality and its social basis. "The students were fascinated by the experience of four or five faculty members concerned about such issues, coming from different perspectives and sometimes in disagreement," he said.

The seminars could, and did, move in uncharted directions, a far cry from usual seminars. Charles, McCord, and the others invited other faculty members, like future Nobel Prize-winning economist Kenneth Arrow, for one-shot discussions. History Professor Richard Lyman participated the year the theme was totalitarianism. Noted theologian Robert McAfee Brown, eventually a close friend,

also participated but was sometimes discouraged by how the seminars could “go off in all directions,” as he later wrote in his memoir. But he became one of the seminar’s permanent members. The seminars were, in fact, “designed to go off in all directions,” which can be somewhat threatening to academic specialists.

“It was a labor of love, since we weren’t paid,” Charles said. Enhancing the informality of the seminars was that they were held either in the Drekmeier house or other faculty homes. “They enjoyed coming here to the house,” Charles told the Stanford Oral History Project. “They may have seen this as a second home. They would confide in me about things that were personal and had nothing to do with courses or with the materials at hand. They asked me for information that I really wasn’t prepared to give. Many were from homes where the parents were preoccupied with matters other than their children’s education.” Margot had a parallel experience, as a young female faculty member in a faculty with very few women. “Young women who were not all that much younger than she would ask for advice about dating and establishing a family.”

Many years later, Michael Waggoner, one of the early Social Thought students and later a law professor at the University of Colorado, wrote a glowing remembrance of Charles and Margot Drekmeier for the Stanford alumni magazine. “I regret that I cannot claim to be one of the stars, but that program added much to my education. Each week we read a great book. I particularly remember our discussions of Machiavelli and of the “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.” My image of professors was of intelligent, articulate and public-spirited people and I found many such professors at Stanford.” Waggoner noted that many faculty members “tended to be older, greyer and less cool” but

the Drekmeiers “added a special note of class. They were young and good looking, they dressed simply but well, they knew broadly of the world and culture and humor and traveled the U.S. in a VW microbus. They became pregnant, fascinating our female classmates in particular. They seemed to embody the spirit of the Kennedy years before the assassins hit.”

At the end of the year-long honors seminar, pondering large issues, psychological conditions, social concepts and the like, students would individually meet with two faculty members for a discussion of what had been learned and how such concepts and understanding would fit into their general education and possibly alter the way the student would view his or her future. “Margot and I were revisited over the years by former seminar students. Once in a while, there would be a small reunion.”

Charles and Margot, meanwhile had been adjusting to life in the Bay Area. “Margot and I decided we wouldn’t do any teaching on Tuesdays and went to the coast when the weather was inviting. From time to time on weekends we got into San Francisco to hear the symphony or chamber music. Unfortunately, if an opera was by Richard Wagner, I had to go by myself.”

They were also visited by Charles’ parents during spring of 1960, an inopportune time since Charles was rushing to complete his dissertation and both were teaching full-time. Margot was also working on her dissertation. It was a busy time for both, but they dutifully became tour guides, even driving down the coast to see the Hearst castle.

“In those days, the Western Civilization program, required of all first-year undergraduates, would bring in someone once a week from outside the program

and I was invited to lecture on the French Revolution. All of the Western Civ sections were present and the students filled Memorial Auditorium. It was kind of daunting but I went out of my way to consult the Western Civ instructors who were specialists in French social and political history.” This happened when his parents were visiting. The lecture went well. His mother was in the audience but his dad chose to stroll around the campus.

Near the end of his second year at Stanford, Charles received a call from his old friend, Frank Sander, in Boston. “He told me a Carnegie Grant was available at Harvard Law School for a budding social scientist interested in the possibilities of applying the case method of studying law to the study of social problems. It would be an opportunity to polish my dissertation and get it into book form, and for Margot to finish her dissertation on ecclesiastical figures who populated the salons of France in earlier times.” They asked for, and received, leaves to take a year off from teaching and go back to Harvard for the 1960-61 academic year.

Before Charles and Margot headed back to Boston, they were shaken by the divorce of two of their closest friends at Stanford, Bud and Joan McCord. “I had been close to both of them and spent time with each of them after their separation, drinking beer with Bud and bourbon with Joan well into the night.” At the time, Joan was a grad student in philosophy and they both participated in the Social Thought Program, Bud being a co-founder. “They thought it would be a good time for the program to explore how society should treat extreme forms of deviance. They both were criminologists and had progressive ideas of reform and brought a realism into a program that could easily become excessively

imaginative. Bud and Joan were two of the most aggressive minds I have ever known.”



## Chapter Thirteen: Boston, Again

Once in Boston, Charles and Margot settled into an apartment on Prentise Street. Charles went to a used bookstore and bought the necessary legal casebooks. “These were not books I would have otherwise chosen. I had to take a civil procedures class but was allowed to choose courses on contracts and criminal law. I tried to seclude myself in the back of the classroom hoping I wouldn’t be called on. I also took a jurisprudence course and a course on Russian law from Harold Berman, who was in charge of the Carnegie program. It turned out to be the most intriguing of the courses because of the peculiar slant the Russians took toward law in a collectivist society.”

One of Charles’ goals for the year in Boston was to turn his dissertation into a book. He never had to find a publisher since the Stanford University Press had already expressed interest in his India project. “I would send off a revised chapter of the dissertation to the editor assigned to me, Elaine Lasky. I was sending chapters every couple of weeks and then incorporating her suggestions. Later, Ms. Lasky would date the noted political economist Paul Baran, to whom I had introduced her.

“When I was in Boston, it occurred to me that what was absent from my discussion of ancient Indian politics was the dark presence of the caste system. My chapters may have doomed eventual broad distribution of my book in India.” An examination of the caste system was natural and obvious for a Western scholar to pursue, but the subject was largely taboo in India although constantly present. One Indian “guru” in the United States even sought out Charles to chastise him over his conclusions that the caste system was antithetical to the

development of a modern society. Particularly distressing was his treatment of the Bhagavad Gita and King Arjuna's caste-bound duties which anticipated 'might makes right' policies.

"But I also may have profited because I was later told by an Indian grad student that my book, 'Kingship and Community in Early India,' is the only book on ancient Indian political history by a Western author in the Jawaharlal Nehru University library, although I'm not certain this is still true. I finished my book while at Harvard. The reviews were good: a Cornell specialist called it "path breaking" in the Journal of Asian Studies. It won the 1962 Watumull Prize for books on Indian history, and was instrumental in my getting tenure at Stanford.

"Perhaps it is just as well that representatives of Hindu orthodoxy are not in the habit of reading U.S. Supreme Court cases where they might find an example of extreme punitive injustice," Charles noted. "Chief Justice William O. Douglas asked his clerk to find such an instance while deliberating over *DeFunis v. Odergaard* in 1974 and his clerk suggested a book by his former Stanford professor. In India, a lower-caste person could be punished, even lethally, for stepping on the shadow of a brahman."

While still in Boston, Charles received a potentially career-changing invitation. "During a class at Harvard, I was told I had a phone call and was directed to a public phone in the basement. John Gardner of the Carnegie Corporation had asked a friend for recommendations on hiring an assistant for him at Carnegie. At his request, I flew to New York. Gardner was looking for someone with innovative ideas to help direct the program towards useful ideas

for academic investment by the corporation. It was an attractive possibility, but I wanted to stay in teaching. I'm not an administrator."

Charles had a second interesting interlude while in Boston. "Midway through the year I got a call from the University of Texas asking me to participate in a seminar on the sociology of religion. It would be a three-day seminar for 60 people and sounded interesting, especially since I didn't know how I felt about the sociology of religion and would possibly find out. The other seminar leaders were Milton Yinger of Oberlin and Joe Kitigawa of the University of Chicago." The seminar was held in the Gov. Hogg room. Hogg, a former Texas governor of note, was a massive man. The furniture in the room that was scaled for the governor included his chair with shorter legs so Hogg wouldn't dwarf his visitors. The three speakers sat with their chins almost level with the oversized table they sat behind. At one point, Charles and his two seminar co-leaders found themselves locked in a restroom during a break and had to be rescued. "I could never again do justice to the sociology of religion without being haunted by this Texas experience."

While in Boston, Charles had sharpened his focus on what he wanted to teach at Stanford. Although he took a one-year leave for the Carnegie project with Stanford's approval, he was expected to return full-time to the sociology department. He had other ideas. "I wrote the Stanford Political Science Department, saying I was hoping to become a member of the department on a half-time basis, teaching political theory. Kurt Steiner, the assistant department chair, replied that yes, there was an opening. I had spent time mapping out a course on political philosophy, focusing on knowledge as virtue and knowledge as

power, from the Greeks to modern thinkers. The political scientists seemed to like the prospect.”

It worked well enough that when Charles returned to Stanford to teach the course, it was one of three political science classes required for political science majors. “It was a lecture course for 250-300 students and it received very good student reviews. This encouraged the department to make me a full-time member the following year.”

One of his students, Tom Putnam, later wrote a friend, saying that he had taken two political science theory classes taught by Charles during Tom’s senior year. “They were the deepest and most profound of all the political science classes I took at Stanford and shaped a lot of my future thinking. He was fantastic.”

## Chapter Fourteen: Civil Rights, Vietnam, et al

The Drekmeiers returned to a small house they had rented next to Matadero Creek near Middlefield Road. The following year they bought what would become the family home, in the Midtown area of south Palo Alto. It was one of 16 almost-identical three-bedroom Eichler homes. Except that theirs was a little different. The previous owner had added three rooms to accommodate his six daughters. "He kept adding rooms in the hope that he would eventually have a son," Charles explained. "I felt a little uncomfortable about all the space," Charles admitted. "It was advertised as having six bedrooms, but they were small rooms, quite easily converted into little offices. I felt somewhat guilty because the families in two of the three-bedroom houses had 10 children each. All told, there were 40 youngsters on the block."

Charles had finished his book and Margot had completed her dissertation as they resumed their teaching responsibilities, with Charles having one foot in the sociology department and the other in political science, while both continued in the Social Thought Program.

"The following academic year was probably the most exhausting but productive year of my life," he said. "I was designing political science courses and teaching large classes, microphone in hand. I handed out course outlines in advance to help the students in the political theory course cope with complicated ideas and difficult spellings. The class was intended for third-year undergraduates but the concepts were more philosophical than they were accustomed to. One year I thought I could soften the attendant anxiety on the final exam of the required lecture course by writing brief couplets about seven or eight major

thinkers and inviting a member of the class to sing these, accompanying himself on guitar.” The thinkers included Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx and John Stuart Mill. Some in a major key, some not.

The student reviews of the Social Thought Program, then in its third year, were positive enough to impress Robert Sears, dean of Humanities and Science. Some of his successors were less enthusiastic. The academy is essentially conservative and is suspicious of such departures. But the program had weathered the initial skepticism and discipline boundaries were blurring.

Charles also became immersed in academic politics, unwittingly. “I was invited to become a member of the executive committee of the Academic Assembly. I was fairly new to Stanford and in a somewhat vulnerable position not yet having tenure, but I was honored and felt I should make a contribution to the university. The committee had two positions reserved for junior faculty who were appointed by the three elected members. “Sandy Dornbusch from sociology was the other junior faculty member of the executive committee, chaired by Ernest Hilgard (psychology), who was wonderfully congenial and perceptive. It also included Herbert Packer, the ex-officio representative of the administration, who accused me of starting a ‘donnybrook’ when I suggested the university might want to investigate the activities of the Stanford Police because they had harassed two members of one of Margot’s classes in the hills above campus.

Charles quickly became involved in a debate over the Administration’s proposal to form a representative Faculty Senate instead of having the Academic Assembly meet periodically in Dinkelspiel Auditorium. The Administration’s argument was that the faculty had grown too large to fit into Dinkelspiel, but

Charles noted that there had always been empty seats for the assemblies, and he feared the administration, with its ex-officio members, would have too much sway over faculty discussions. His viewpoint did not prevail. Stanford now has an Academic Senate. Democracy became “representative.”

“What was frustrating were the requirements of a large university with bureaucratic systemizing which contrasted with the legacy of the self-governing guild system from which the university descended. The tensions between faculty and administration will probably always be present.”

The outside world and all its turmoil was also being felt on campus. “Before 1960, political speech was discouraged on campus. That was changed by David Packard who persuaded the Board of Trustees to let John F. Kennedy speak on campus during the 1960 presidential election.”

Charles’ voice was beginning to be heard as a counterpoint to the status quo. He wrote letters to the Stanford Daily challenging the positions of Fred Schwarz in his 1962 and 1963 campus appearances. Fred Schwarz was an Australian evangelistic conservative and head of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade. The right-wing group would, in fact, include Charles when it later published the “Biographical Dictionary of the Left,” a publication of the John Birch Society. “Drekmeier has been very prominent in leftwing activities in California,” the book stated. It cited his writing California’s attorney general to request an investigation of “police brutality” in San Francisco against those protesting a meeting of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), supported a 1963 campus meeting of socialist and peace groups, defended the Pacifica Foundation’s radio station and supported the Free Speech Movement at UC

Berkeley. “On the Stanford campus, he has been a leader of the leftwing peacenik groups in opposition to U.S. participation in the Vietnam war,” his entry concluded.

“UC Berkeley lost some distinguished faculty to Harvard and Yale over speech issues,” Charles noted. “The Tenney Committee was California’s version of HUAC, but Stanford, as a private university, was not within its purview. The Stanford environment was protective and, at most, we fought our battles over little things within our department. Bob North, my colleague, once said, ‘The reason that academic politics get so bitter is because the stakes are so small.’ But McCarthyism did take its quiet toll in the form of self-censorship.”

The Stanford Daily published a story in February 1963 quoting President Wallace Sterling as saying “Social action is not necessary for education” and also quoted Registrar Donald Winbigler as saying that the only thing that matters at a university is the pursuit of scholarly ideas. That prompted Charles to write a letter to the editor in reply. “A major function of the university is to teach people how to think critically and only through participation can students see through the ambiguities that are always involved in ideas,” he wrote, although he later thought he shouldn’t have written “always.”

Soon, he was speaking directly to students about politics and conscience. “My first public appearance as a political figure was when students organized a discussion of civil rights and race relations in the South. I was asked to speak because of my experience in the Army when I was briefly stationed near Birmingham, Alabama. The social distance between the races was something I hadn’t experienced before and I could only speculate about how blacks felt. I



remember wandering the streets of a large southern city and wondering if it was really possible to experience the struggles of another person.

“It turned out that speaking to the students, in retrospect, was a more profound experience than I realized at the time. Being stationed in the South was a turning point in my sensibility. I was beginning to think beyond the question of rights and understood that I belonged to a privileged community dependent upon the prejudicial treatment of others. Some problems can be traced back to the founding fathers when blacks were treated legally as property.”

Many Stanford students and faculty went to Mississippi in the summer of 1963 to help blacks register to vote. They were known as freedom riders. Three civil rights workers were killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan, triggering a massive FBI investigation and presence in Mississippi. “Many students were putting their lives on the line, including David Harris (later president of the Stanford student body and eventually a friend). I learned a good deal about the interaction between thinking and acting, a subject of my later seminars.

“Our faculty was becoming increasingly conscious of its underlying values. We were becoming divided along lines of moral principles and their expression. On the positive side, the restriction on female admissions was ending and the ‘Greek’ contingent seemed to figure less prominently in campus affairs. My own sentiments were bolstered by the thinking of some remarkable undergraduates, including Barrie Thorne, Peter Lyman, Fred Goff and Dennis Sweeney. My own interaction with students from increasingly varied backgrounds encouraged me in my own thinking, particularly in the problematic relationship between the self and the ‘other.’ My political sociology was taking a social interaction dimension.”

Soon, an event would deeply touch students and faculty. “In 1963, I found myself confronted with an unwelcome interruption. I had been lecturing to a very large class of 250 on Montesquieu, a French Enlightenment philosopher of law and government. Halfway through the lecture one of my graduate assistants who had a portable radio signaled me and said quietly, ‘There are stories coming from Dallas. It seems the president has been shot.’ ‘Was he killed?’ ‘No one knows yet.’ He sat in the front row to give me an update and a few minutes later he motioned me to come over and he said ‘Kennedy has been killed.’

“I said to the class something like, ‘Prepare yourself for some disturbing news. It appears President Kennedy was assassinated in his Dallas motorcade. Please go quietly to your rooms. There will be further announcements.’

“When I got home, the phone was ringing. Someone from the president’s office asked if I would be willing to talk to a student assembly with two other faculty members, Sandy Dornbusch and Otis Pease. I replied that I was still unnerved myself. I was told it would be at 7 p.m. at Dinkelspiel and the assembly would be mostly undergraduate students from Wilbur and Stern halls. I said I was chairing an oral PhD exam that afternoon, which would probably end at 5:30. I agreed to talk to the assembly although the prospect made me anxious.

“The student being examined was a woman who had taken my social psychology course in my first year. When it was my turn to question her, I said, ‘If you had been called by the administration and asked to produce some consoling words for freshmen, what would you say?’ She wasn’t much help and I could only sympathize with her.

“A heavy mist shrouded the afternoon. I didn’t even know the Stanford carillon had a death knell but there was this somber tone at long intervals – bong, bong, bong – as I walked across campus to the parking lot behind the library. I thought that this moment will always be with me. At the appointed time the three of us filed into the auditorium trying to compose our faces. Everyone was clearly in a state of shock, not knowing what to think.

“I was the wind-up speaker and I could only say that one of the thinkers in my field, Thomas Hobbes, once wrote that it takes a lot of people to build a creative and just world but only one to destroy it. I said we have to protect this remarkable achievement called society. Then I started choking up and just fell apart and couldn’t think of what else I should be saying. Some students were crying. I’d like to think it was the best thing the students could have seen – a vulnerable professor. It was a profound moment for me – too profound.”

At the end of the school year, Charles was asked to address the baccalaureate assembly of graduating seniors, an event held shortly before the commencement ceremony. Religion professor Bob Brown spoke before Charles. “He had everyone captivated by amending Genesis: ‘As Adam said to Eve, we live in an age of transition.’ I started my contribution saying, ‘I feel a little uncomfortable trying to improve on this wise theologian, but what Adam said was, ‘My dear, I’m not sticking my neck out.’ Then I mentioned the recent murder in New York City when 30 people heard the shouts of a young woman, Kitty Genovese, being killed but did nothing. I was talking about the need to stick our necks out when our values are threatened. I’m not sure how the parents heard that, but the students responded as I hoped they would.”

While 1963 and 1964 had been eventful because of the burgeoning civil rights movement and the passions it engendered, a new concern was growing in 1965 over the increasing American military involvement in Southeast Asia. “Vietnam was heating up but still in its early stages. What began to make me a little uncomfortable was a sequence of events leading up to the war accompanied by a moralistic undercurrent. It became more and more difficult for those of us on the progressive side to carry on conversations with faculty defending American interventionist policy seasoned with what became known as American exceptionalism.”

In the spring of 1965, University of Michigan students and faculty held a day-long teach-in on the war. This academic “participation” gained national attention. “Several of my colleagues heard about the movements at other colleges to provide information about American foreign involvement, particularly in Southeast Asia. More or less spontaneously, a committee formed at Stanford by those opposing the war to organize a discussion like the one at the University of Michigan. As shocking revelations were appearing with increasing frequency in the newspapers, it became clear that although the major bombing had not yet begun, the conflict was escalating and there were killings in ‘our’ name that could not be justified. Claud Buss, a China historian, and I were somehow maneuvered into positions as organizers of the teach-in.

“Anyone who was interested was welcome to make a contribution to a 24-hour program about the war and faculty were asked how they could make their classes relevant in our thinking and talking about such military operations. The teach-in was held at Memorial Auditorium in May, and classes were cancelled

throughout the university. We decided to invite Hans Morgenthau from the University of Chicago, one of the most outspoken critics of American foreign policy. We invited others with different views, including from the Hoover Institution, to join us, but had limited success.

“Memorial Auditorium filled and we placed loudspeakers outside for the overflow crowd. Morgenthau had two other speeches to give that day and couldn’t arrive in the Bay Area until 11 p.m. We sent students to the airport to get him and he arrived around midnight. As it happened, the Drama Department was preparing a production of ‘The Bacchae,’ and there were a number of almost naked young people encountered backstage on the way to the microphone. But Morgenthau made it through the actors and gave us a comprehensive talk. His appreciative audience had survived into the late hour. The teach-in continued until the next afternoon.”

While Charles helped organize antiwar activities, he also, at the suggestion of Nevitt Sanford, a colleague, wrote an essay on how we perceive others, which was published in a volume titled “Sanctions for Evil.”

When Charles took a sabbatical in the early 1970s, he had to find a replacement and was fortunate in securing Raymond Williams. “He was a remarkable theorist of dramatic tragedy, evocative social theory and illuminating histories of English civic and country life. The students, especially those leaning somewhat to the left, were enthusiastic, although some of my colleagues less so. He and his wife had long been active in the British antiwar movement and were eager to participate here. As the war was winding down, Margot and I and the Williamses, participated in the last Bay Area march. Our spirits were high as we

enjoyed the prospect of victory for the forces of peace and common sense. We ended up at a San Francisco pub where we discussed the Greek and Elizabethan overtones of a war coming to an end. Williams represented the combination of larger perspective and humanistic concern that I viewed as the best hope of the social sciences and their use of history and philosophy.”

Just as the Sutter Court house hosted many of the Social Thought seminars that Charles and Margot taught, it also entertained and provided a roof for faculty from other universities visiting Stanford over the years, a practice Charles and Margot started in Boston. Among their many distinguished houseguests over the years were Parsons, Louis Hartz, Erik Erikson, under whom Margot had studied, Carole Pateman, Raymond Williams, Marcuse, Paul Baran, who became a good friend for whom Charles snuck delicacies into his hospital room when he was recovering from an illness, Walter Weisskopf and Nevitt Sanford, among others.

## Chapter Fifteen: The Drekeimer Family Grows

Charles was standing outside a maternity delivery room at Stanford Hospital in April 1964 feeling helpless. “I could hear the agony from inside the room and I think I aged prematurely.” Nadja was being born, with difficulty, and her doctor was out of town. “She was a breech baby, requiring a caesarian section. It was a very difficult time for Margot. The birth took three or four hours.”

C-section babies, because they aren’t part of a birth struggle, can come out looking good, and Nadja had a full head of dark hair. Later, standing behind a window looking at the nursery of bassinets of newborns, Charles was joined by a woman, also gazing in. “Which one is yours?” she politely asked. Charles said the one with all the hair and her name is Nadja. “She does look Russian,” the woman replied.

Three days later, Charles dismissed a large lecture class a little early so he could get to the hospital before noon to take Margot and Nadja home without having to pay for another day of hospitalization. He still remembers that he had to pay \$500 in his insurance co-pay to take his babies home.

Charles’s mother soon arrived from Wisconsin to help Margot, the first-time mother. He also admitted, however, that his mother may have been a little concerned about whether her “sheltered” son and daughter-in-law were real-world competent enough to be adequate parents. “She wanted to make sure Nadja was getting the proper care.”

Peter would follow in 1965 and Kai in 1968.

“The most dramatic memory of Nadja’s early years has to be prefaced with a description of a 60,000-gallon surface swimming pool that was already here when we bought the house in 1962,” Charles explained. Some 40 children living on the cul-de-sac happily used the backyard pool with the stipulation that they could swim only if Charles or Margot was home at the time. The pool had been a constant headache, requiring cleaning and purifying several times a week because five eucalyptus trees surrounding it inconsiderately dropped their leaves into the pool.

“It all came to a dramatic conclusion when, one afternoon, Margot looked out a back window and saw Nadja climbing up the steps to the pool. She had found her way to the back end of the pool and managed to get inside the fence surrounding it. “Within an hour, I placed an ad in the Palo Alto Times reading “come take away a large surface pool.’ We could have sold it but I was desperate to get rid of it. By the time I had siphoned the 60,000 gallons out into the street the next day, the first of many responses arrived. A man with two husky teenaged boys drove up in a pickup truck. They collapsed the pool, disassembled the deck, rolled up the fence, and drove away.”

Peter was born in July 1965. “He was a very active child from the start. Even before he was walking, he attempted to join the youngsters in any way he could who were playing in the street. Within a year, Peter was extremely mobile. It was all I could do to catch up with him, even at a very early age.”

Help soon arrived. Dorothy Maggard on her bicycle. “The brightest moment in those early years of our parenthood was the introduction of Dorothy,” Charles noted. “I don’t remember how we met her but she was exactly the right person



for us as a babysitter. She lived in Barron Park and her children were older. She would ride her bike over and spend the day with the children, starting when Nadja was two and Peter was one. She spent eight hours each day lavishing affection and lots of little stories on our children, and enabled Margot to return to teaching. I have many fond memories of Dorothy at the kitchen table bending over children's books, helping with pronunciation and even acting out some of the stories. She was with us maybe 10 years, almost like a member of the family. Mrs. Maggard was a Unitarian and had all the progressive values that were important to Margot and me."

Margot was able to continue teaching up to a month before Kai's birth in 1968. Margot's third pregnancy wasn't planned but was very welcomed. "Before Kai was a year old, we enrolled all three in a neighborhood preschool at the Friends Meeting on Colorado Avenue nearby. We knew people who had sent their children there. We also had Mrs. Maggard to fall back on, so the children were never wanting for attention." The older children shifted to Montessori after preschool and before kindergarten, except for Nadja who didn't take well to Montessori and went to Harker School instead, which she didn't like – perhaps because it was part of a military academy for children.

Charles and Margot became more confident as parents. "We had a relaxed attitude towards Kai," Charles said. "Once you have your third child you realize that children don't break easily. However, parents can break." Charles was referring to several bicycle accidents. "In the most catastrophic, Nadja was in the front basket while I was cycling to the drugstore to get the Sunday paper. She managed to get her foot into the front-wheel spokes and I went over the

handlebars when the bike abruptly stopped. On the way down, I must have enveloped her because she emerged without a scratch, whereas her father was knocked unconscious. This was before people wore bike helmets. I was revived by water from an onlooker's garden hose. I had a broken tooth, scrapes and cuts on my face and many bruises." A neighbor was looking after the boys and Margot was in Boston at the time. In those days before mobile phones, Charles had trouble reaching her. "I drove myself to the Palo Alto Medical Clinic to get stitched. Margot was distraught when I was finally able to connect with her at the airport. A year or so later, when I took Nadja and a friend to a children's concert, Nadja bent over to me during an adagio movement and said, 'I'm sorry about that accident.' Her guilt had been festering all that time. I assured her it had long been forgotten and I was now healed."

"While most of our Sutter Court neighbors were conventional, the most exotic was the Declève household. Mr. D was employed by the Stanford waste management program but also seemed to be attached to one of the science departments. One afternoon, Alain, a Belgian, phoned and invited us to join him and his wife, Chantal, and some of their friends at a pool party. Margot, having a suspicious streak, demurred and I went by myself. I was greeted by a half-dozen young women and hosts, none of whom were wearing anything. There was no alternative to this Edenesque revelry and I dutifully participated. After a half hour of enthusiastic splashing, the doorbell rang and Alain went to answer it, returning with a young man in a three-piece tweed suit (the temperature was 90 degrees) carrying a stack of papers which we were told was the final draft of his doctoral dissertation. And wouldn't we all like to greet this accomplishment? One by one we emerged from the pool, bestowed our compliments, and without further ado

waved goodbye to the rapidly disappearing young man who appeared to be on the edge of a fainting spell.”

On a different level of experience, Charles’ next-door neighbor, Rich Castro, who worked at Apple, had warned people that his garage was off-limits to neighbors, not that Charles had ever tried to get in. It turned out that the forbidden garage contained a prototype of Apple’s Lisa computer, designed by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak.

One day, on the Fourth of July, Charles was leaving to go to a marriage in Wozniak’s home in the mountains. Wozniak’s nephew was marrying a former student of his. Castro was outside and asked Charles where he was off to. “To Wozniak’s,” Charles casually replied, giving Castro serious pause, wondering why Charles and his family had been invited to his boss’s house and he had not.

“The Wozniak house was on a mountaintop near the summit off Highway 17. It had a 360-degree view of the peninsula and an outdoor swimming pool which connected to an indoor swimming pool. On the second floor, Wozniak had a room full of dozens of video games and no other furniture.”

## Chapter Sixteen: Europe with Children

In 1968, Charles and Margot were asked to join Stanford's overseas campus program. They would teach in England during winter quarter and then move to Austria for spring quarter.

"Bob Walker, who ran the overseas program, had been after me for several years to join the program," Charles said. "Margot thought it would be a good time to go because Nadja would soon be starting school and we didn't want to interrupt that. Arriving in London on New Year's Eve, we located the au pair we had hired to help us with the children, bundled up Nadja, Peter, and infant Kai and took a train to the bitter cold of north England. We arrived at the town of Grantham, not far from Harlaxton Manor. Built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it's listed in the Pevsner architectural guide as one of the few remaining examples of 'Victorian Gothic.'" Stanford rented the estate from the Jesuit order, the current owner. The estate had been constructed by one Gregory Gregory, described as a merchant prince.

"It was rumored to be haunted by the ghost of a baby who had fallen from the third floor to the marble entryway 50 feet below. The child's ghost was accompanied by that of its nursemaid who, in despair, committed suicide. Her boyfriend, one of the groundskeepers, also took his own life."

The sprawling mansion was huge and very difficult to heat. A small railroad had been built in the basement to haul coal to the many furnaces. Charles lectured on English political thought, Margot taught a psychology course and Albert Guerard, an English professor, taught British literature. "I lectured the 60 Stanford undergraduates from the pulpit of the estate's chapel. The students

were probably not fascinated by John of Salisbury or the kings' disputes with powerful barons. Hobbes, Locke, Bentham and Mill fared better."

Faculty and students took a mid-winter time-out from the courses for a Paris vacation in February. "The Guerards and the administrators had gone on ahead to prepare for their arrival. In their wake, a raging snowstorm engulfed us, making it difficult for the students to leave the estate. Margot, the au pair and I and had to take responsibility for the exodus."

Two buses hired from a Nottingham company were able to get inside the manor through the drifting snow on the roads but the drivers feared they wouldn't be able to return that way and that the estate would be snowed in. "There was a rarely used, decaying wooden bridge over a creek bed at the side of the manor. I convinced the drivers to take the risk, knowing that this might be an unwelcomed historical moment for the overseas program. I held my breath as both vehicles eased across the rotting bridge and got us to the train station with our older children huddled together to keep warm while Kai was wrapped inside my coat. We then took a train from Victoria Station in London to an English Channel port and a ferry across to Calais for the one-week visit." The experience had exhausted Margot and she had the first of several traumatic relapses while in Paris.

After returning to England and finishing the term, Stanford closed the Lincolnshire campus and relocated near Oxford. The Drekmeiers, however, left for Vienna in the new VW bus they had ordered before leaving the states. "We allowed ourselves a week to travel around France and Spain. San Sebastian to Salamanca, Madrid to Cordova and the Mediterranean. Then Barcelona for

several days and, braving the deadly winds – the mistral – that welcomed us to France, to Germany and Austria.”

In Vienna, Stanford had found rooms for the Drekmeiers in a ‘Palast’ not far from the Opera House. “We saw many productions there, including modern avant-garde works, but men had to wear a suit and tie if they wanted to get inside. Vienna can be formal and orderly to a fault. Children weren’t allowed to play on the grass of the nearby park. The sense of order and decorum felt stifling after laid-back California.”

Charles taught Central European political and social theory, “from the Reformation to the Idealists, with a lot of Hegel and the Young Hegelians leading up to Marx and social democracy.” The other Stanford professor on campus was a German-born faculty member specializing in Kafka. Politically they had little in common.

“I was teaching below a practice room and I could hear the star pianists of the day, including Paul Badura-Skoda and Jorg Demos. They were particularly fond of Beethoven and Schubert sonatas. It was wonderful accompaniment, especially to the theories of Romanticism developing in Europe after Beethoven and Goethe.”

The Stanford contingent spent their break in Greece at Athens and other classical sites. “Under ordinary circumstances, I could only applaud the choice. But at that time the fascist military, known as ‘the colonels,’ were ruling the country and an informal international boycott was seeking to hinder that rule by whatever means possible. I talked with the Vienna campus administration about the dubious moral implications of Stanford students going to Greece, but nobody

was taking orders from me, although I had suggested a feasible Croatian or Italian alternative. I don't imagine an alternative was even suggested to the Overseas Program back at Stanford University."

"Off we went on another of my Balkan Express journeys. Margot, for reasons unclear, had loaded our miniscule compartment with a supply of limburger cheese and orange soda. It wasn't long before the soda had spilled and we were glued to the floor and suffocating from the unwelcome fumes of that miserable cheese. But the students on the train, knowing of Nadja's impending birthday, had brought along a cake and our more agreeable dispositions were restored."

"The Athenian junket provided us with a choice of side trips. We could go with a guide to Delphi and its sacred shrines or to Crete. Margot chose Delphi and I, excited by the thought of seeing the very ancient palace at Knosos, chose Crete. Wandering by myself where ancient footsteps had fallen 4,000 years ago was an experience that allows the human senses to defer to the slightly hallucinatory unconsciousness. You must be alone. The stillness is history."

"I took a bus over Mt. Ida to the south coast of Crete where I was told a collection of hippies inhabited caves above the Mediterranean. Nobody was home.

"There was an unhappy occurrence when students were having their vacation break in Athens. After the grimy train ride, I headed to a wash basin in the hotel where we were staying and Nadja followed along, climbing onto a stack of towels perched on a small stool, the better to see her soapy father. The towels, and Nadja, toppled to the hard floor. She landed head-first, badly gashing her

head which bled profusely. There was no doctor at the hotel and the drivers of the taxis parked out front didn't want to let a bloody little girl into their cars. But the last of the half-dozen drivers took pity on us and drove us to the hospital assigned to the 'free day' (hospitals take turns). It took the German-trained doctor, a nurse, an orderly, and me to hold a squirming Nadja steady while her wound was stitched. It happened to be her 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, so on the way back to the hotel, we had to buy an expensive present along with a feather she could wear in the bandage around her head."

What was happening back on campus in California was felt in Vienna, too. "Many of our students were active in the protest movement against the war in Southeast Asia and were on the phone with their friends in Palo Alto. They kept me up to date on what was a turning point – the April 3 Movement and student occupation of the Applied Electronics Lab on campus." The sit-in at the lab, which would be a watershed event of the campus protests, was conducted because war-related research was taking place at the lab. Tension was increasing.

"After German social theory, revolutionary politics and French existentialism had been put to rest, we packed up the VW bus and, with a new passenger – a young Palo Alto neighbor and now the au pair replacement, headed down the Dalmatian coast to Dubrovnik, camping along the way at Zaostrog, a decidedly international campground catering to a less prosperous eastern European clientele. The one luxury was a Hungarian restaurant featuring the renowned specialties of that country. Our children were less interested in the paprika than in the fact that many enjoying the shallow waters were doing so without their swimsuits. Kai, just 16 months at the time, was besieged by



grandmotherly types who insisted on kissing him and commenting, in one case, that there hadn't been a blond baby around since Achilles, although I don't recall the 'Iliad' mentioning hair. I doubt Achilles was fair-haired."

## Chapter Seventeen: Family & Our Mountain Refuge

“Through the years, my family has sustained me,” Charles noted. There have been times when I must have been a burden, or at least ‘a problem.’ I have always felt supported and appreciated, even when I had difficulties with myself.”

He singled out two ‘helpmates’ who provided great assistance over the years and became part of the household’s daily rhythms, paid for their time, of course, but quasi-family members in every other way possible.

“Margot and I couldn’t have managed our European trip in 1969 without Heidi, our Swiss au pair. She managed our English better than we were able to handle her German, but there was a deep understanding of the needs and wants of each other. She was always responsible and good with the children, who I think she really loved. They enjoyed her company. I don’t remember a single complaint from either side, although the children were of an age where it is tempting to be naughty if only to create a little excitement. And there was the indispensable Dorothy Maggard, who was with us for many years and was like a third parent to our children. Without Mrs. Maggard our lives would have been much more difficult – perhaps even unmanageable.”

The Drekmeiers would soon have a rustic cabin in the Santa Cruz Mountains for weekend getaways. “I was feeling more financially secure, having attained tenure, I thought it would be fun to have a weekend ‘escape.’ The cabins that appeared in the classified sections of local newspapers were either too expensive or too distant, until I came across a small notice in the San Jose paper announcing cabins at a remarkably low cost. They were part of a community of 60-some cabins plus a swimming pool and other recreational facilities, a community center

and a small store which was open when someone was in attendance. It was just an hour's drive away over the summit of Highway 17. I called the caretaker and arranged a meeting. The several available cabins I was shown were all suitable. I particularly liked a small A-frame with a loft, just 16 by 24 feet, with running water (though in the process of being further purified) but no toilet or shower. There was, however, a public facility just a short walk away. I paid \$1,700 for the cabin and \$3,000 for shares in the community-owned corporation. Our cabin stood alone on a knoll above the caretaker's cabin. From the deck, one could see the swimming pool and I envisioned calling the children for lunch. It was amid a cluster of oaks, madrones, acacias and aristocratic redwoods."

"The other shareholders were, to a large degree, Italianate. People who knew how to have a good time. But respectable. I asked if there was late-night adult swimming of the 'clothing optional' variety and was told 'if you like that sort of thing' there was another collective near Boulder Creek."

"To get to Enchanted Valley, as it was unfortunately named, one had to drive up the notorious Highway 17 to Summit Road, drive south for about 6 miles, turn onto Old San Jose Road for another 5 or 6 miles past a witch's house, then turn onto Olsen Road just past a stone wall. For a month or two, I spent most Tuesdays getting the place in shape. Margot was the only one I told about the cabin. She was in the therapeutic community of Stanford Hospital at the time, being treated for the bipolar disorder she had been diagnosed with after Kai's birth. She was either too ill or too conservative to co-sign for the \$1,000 loan I had to borrow for the purchase, but I was able to manage the payment without her. We were both somewhat into delayed gratification – or were 'cheapskates'

to use our children's later terminology. I had been a Great Depression baby while Margot had been a Protestant minister's daughter used to financial leanness."

"One Tuesday, I announced to Dorothy Maggard and the children that I had a big surprise for them and that it would require an hour-long car ride. They piled into the car with high hopes that it would be a day at the beach. The new family cabin didn't make much of an impression until I pointed out the swimming pool just beyond the trees. I'm not sure who decided the cabin should be named the Magic House, but it was appropriate because of our 'transformation' into forest-dwellers and the magically-induced exhilaration."

"I have many mostly fond memories of bundling the children already in their pajamas late on a Friday night and heading for the cabin. And then somehow carrying them in, managing the toilet dramaturgy and getting them up into the loft for a good night's sleep. And, in the morning, more inviting than a royal banquet, Margot frying the eggs and bacon, brewing the coffee and pouring the orange juice while I luxuriated in bed. Luxuriating may not be the right word because the bed, inherited with the cabin, was a skeletal collapsible demon. Illustrating, I suppose, the idea that pleasure, like most things, is relevant to one's condition."

Nadja was the oldest child, but wore that status lightly, Charles thought. "And she bravely endured the little challenges her brother, Peter, who at 4, was nearly as big as she, then 5 and a half. There were moments when she wanted to be alone and may have seemed a bit sad at times, but generally her mood was cheerful and she made others feel good. I don't remember that she ever made a negative comment about anyone."

At home, family life often revolved around the television, as it often does for families with small children. “But our television, in those days, wasn’t very reliable. We had to spank it mercilessly to get reception. During the Watergate hearings, I found myself at one point with three children on my lap while the former attorney general, John Mitchell, tried ineptly to fend off questions from hostile members of a Congressional committee. But the chair we were sitting on collapsed and down we all went. I emerged with a broken finger.”

But far from being passive TV-watchers, the children were good at creating their own entertainment. “One particular delight seems to have been the Social Thought seminar which usually met at our house. The children were not invited, but Peter and Nadja would curl up in the hall, just out of sight and – I’m speculating – chuckle over the revelations of Plato or Sartre or Freud or whomever.”

Peter, unlike his father, was an outdoors type. “At a fairly early age he was big enough and strong enough to cope with the Lilledahl boys who were part of one of the large families on the street. He learned everything he needed, and much he didn’t need, from their freely-offered advice and instruction. He gained a certain sophistication that elevated his status among peers in elementary school. He loved all his teachers and some years later organized a reunion of his grade-school classmates for their favorite De Anza Elementary School teachers.

“He especially liked field trips and those outings may have been the beginning of his fixation on things natural, especially amphibian. He and I went on several toad- and lizard-hunting excursions. He studied everything carefully and eventually his interests coalesced around water and its effect on our lives as well

as other creatures, plants and trees. Eventually, he would become a co-founder of Bay Area Action which, in time, would merge with the Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation to become Acterra, which continues as an environmental education and advocacy group in Palo Alto. Acterra has come a long way since Peter and other volunteers were pulling discarded tires out of San Francisquito Creek.”

Peter was also part of a group of environmentalists and others who challenged Stanford University’s development plans in 1999-2000 and later ran for and won a seat on the Palo Alto City Council, getting a higher vote total than all but one other candidate. A few years later, he was voted mayor by his colleagues. But he didn’t seek re-election. As Charles summarized, Peter didn’t like the accompanying tedium of paperwork. He and his wife also had a baby during the final year of his term. Peter later became the policy director of the Tuolumne River Trust.

“Living on a cul-de-sac – the end of Sutter Avenue with almost identical Eichler homes and their families – was an ideal environment for the children. Parents didn’t have to worry about speeding cars. Peter said the kids called it ‘the cool street.’ “There were many small wounds and bruises but also much breathless joy. In those years, Palo Alto was a more diverse city. All our neighbors, however, were parishioners at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, except for us, the Winet and Raman families. As yet, there were few Asians, although several families have joined us in recent years. Nearby Colorado Avenue had several apartment complexes with more diverse tenants. Our house cost just \$27,000.

Neighbors in recent years haven't been quite as social as they were in the 1960s and 1970s. But there is an occasional block party."

"When Kai was born, he was much smaller than Peter was at birth. He liked to tell his friends it was because his mother continued to smoke when he was in her belly. Kai, as I mentioned earlier, had the advantage of growing up when his parents learned not to be as protective as they had been when his siblings were very young. He developed a remarkable rapport with people of all sorts when he was still quite young. He and Ms. Maggard were fast friends and perhaps it was her influence that formed in him a sensitivity to the ways of the world, including a sense of boundaries and an understanding that informed his perceptions. He had a sister and brother, of course, four and three years older, to help him find his way. In his last year of high school, he was voted 'most caring' for helping other students who were falling behind academically."

"At the University of California, Santa Cruz, everyone seemed to be adjusting to new ways of thinking and doing. Accommodation could be difficult, especially with an uncompromising roommate. On arriving to begin Kai's college career, we were parked next to a family intent on showing off the latest model of an early computer before everyone had laptops. Their son would be one of Kai's four roommates in a residential suite. This young man was preoccupied with that computer. One can't argue with zealous study habits, but without any negotiating he went to the dean complaining of the noise his roommates made. The dean explained to Kai and the others that an action had to be taken when a student reports concern about interference with his or her studies. Kai thought the dean was a little uncomfortable in her role as a disciplinarian at an institution known

for its generous toleration. There was punishment but all survived and, in Kai's case, learned a little more about personal boundaries."

"Kai later helped a friend create a computer learning center called Score, where a student could pay \$30 a month for several hours with an assistant. Other Score centers opened throughout the country and eventually Kaplan, a large education corporation, bought them out. Kai then went on to co-found Inside Track, which employs a large number of recent college graduates to assist current college students with any academic difficulties they are experiencing as well as helping them with emotional problems they may have. In 2016, the Washington Monthly named Kai as one of the 16 "most innovative young people in higher education."

As the children reached young adulthood, Charles was proud that they became friends with their parents. "We could share our lives as equals," Charles said. He wishes Margot could have lived to enjoy their continuing companionship. She died on Feb. 26, 2008, of complications associated with Alzheimer's disease.

All three Drekmeier children married. Nadja married Harry May at about the same time she began a successful career in counseling. She lives in Chico. "I don't see them as often as I'd like," Charles said. Peter married Amy Adams (no, not the actress, a dermatologist) who kept her last name, settled in Palo Alto and they have a son Aidan, who was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in 2017. Kai and his wife, Sarah (nee Smith) live in Oakland and have two daughters, Beatrice and Emily, ages 10 and 13 in 2017.

After almost 50 years of marriage and just short of her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, Margot succumbed to Alzheimer's disease and its complications. She had been in



a nursing home for a few months and when she lost interest in eating, along with other indications of mortality, her doctor decided it was time for hospice supervision. “I believe she was able to recognize family members until the end, which came on Feb. 26, 2008,” Charles noted. “While she was at home, I had been her sole caregiver. The sadness of those final months seemed to further strengthen the bonds we had nurtured for half a century. Not that our relationship wasn’t tested from time to time, but we had enough differences in our interests and perceptions to make our marriage intellectually fruitful. We made demands on each other while always leaving plenty of space and opportunity for adjustments. (I had little patience for what I viewed as the stultifying potential of religion, but she remained a Congregationalist minister’s daughter.) Our three children were invariably supportive and, when our idiosyncrasies may have been a strain, always understanding.”

Excerpts of letters from two of her former students, both now professors, upon hearing of Margot’s death:

*“It has been part of my mental map of the world that ‘Charles and Margot’ would always be at the Eichler house at 831 Sutter; that the living room would always be watched over by that image of Freud glowering down; and that the books on the shelves would still preserve some echo of the discussions that took place there. For some reason I remember Margot best laughing uproariously at some skewering by one or the other of us of the...absurdity that we (I?) soon expected to sweep away. (No doubt she knew better.)*

*I don’t know what the good citizens of Palo Alto made of the mention in the obituary that Margot was a co-founder of the Social Thought program at*

*Stanford. But for those of us who experienced the program, her role in it was more noteworthy than the long list of titles and honors that accompany the obituaries of more conventional academics. It is no small thing to create a program that expresses an idea of education; for example, the University of Michigan where I now teach is constantly talking about “interdisciplinarity” but there is nothing here comparable to Social Thought.*

*“Now that I’ve experienced the reality of academe, it seems all-the-more extraordinary that you two kept it going for so long, especially in the absence of (as I presume) course reductions and the usual perks.”*

*Robert Fishman*

*“Margot Drekmeier is a light that still shines in my life, and I hope I’ve shared this light with several generations of my own students at the University of Massachusetts. The combination of her affection for people and her passion for mind and spirit allowed many of us at Stanford to locate an authentic orientation to ideas and their history, to political action and social responsibility, and perhaps most surprisingly, to the arts of graceful domestic life. She had mastery of it all, as a singularly intense and intelligent unity of mind, community, politics, friendship and family. She shared all of this most generously with her students and regenerated her sources year after year, and then shared it all again.*

*“We met often at the Drekmeier’s home at the year-long, interdisciplinary seminar on Change: Sources, Styles, and Dimensions.” Margot met us in the gracious, book-filled home she shared with Charles and her children, beneath the watchful portrait of Freud. She made you comfortable on cushions, with perhaps a small glass of sherry, before she asked, with piercing and slightly amused gaze*

*upon you, 'And Miss Huse, how did you find the Weber useful?' She meant the Max Weber, or the Sigmund Freud, the Erik Erikson, or the Maurice Merleau-Ponty; and it behooved one to locate the many ways that these thinkers might be of use and to bring this insight into conversation with an animated group of twenty. And if you couldn't quite pull that off, that was ok too, because Margot was a very kind person. She cared about the human being in each one and let us know it often enough that it became quite safe to think and write and speak in that company.*

*"It meant so much to me, then and now, that as a woman and a human being, Margot demonstrated that it was possible to dedicate your life to critical, creative thought, and indeed, that to do so is an elegant solution to the problem of how to create a balanced and graceful life.*

*"I have a picture of Margot standing next to Charles with Nadja on her back, perhaps aged one year. With her husband and first child, she had brought fifteen of us students to a retreat at Big Sur to think about our whole beings, body, mind and soul. She brought us so close to her thoughtful life that we could consider what it means to be fully intelligent in the context of husband and child, friend and colleague, ally and opponent, in the context of home and work, institution and community. Margot's recognition and way of being have been central in shaping my life and I am forever grateful to her."*

*Donna Huse*

*"All my grandchildren are talented and very smart. And they are always very kind to their grandpa."*

When Aidan was 3, he and a dozen assorted relatives went to the Pancake House in Los Altos with Charles for a late breakfast. “After we had eaten, Aidan came up to me and said, ‘Grandpa, I wish today was forever.’ I agreed.”

## Chapter Eighteen: Campus Turmoil

When Charles returned to the campus after Europe, Stanford's antiwar students had gone through a transformation, becoming more confrontational, which many faculty found disturbing.

While in Europe, he had heard bits and pieces from his students of what had transpired in April 1969. A group of students had formed the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Movement (A3M) determined to take action against campus war research. On April 9, several hundred students began a nine-day occupation of the Applied Electronics Laboratory. The occupation didn't end until Denis Hayes, the student body president, called for an all-day meeting of the student body held in Frost Amphitheater.

Meanwhile, the Faculty Senate voted to end classified government research on campus, which was one of the A3M demands. And the Stanford Board of Trustees voted to sever the university's ties with Stanford Research Institute.

"There had been years of social protests and students were beginning to feel that a measured response wasn't enough," Charles recalled. "They felt they had to do something really newsworthy. They called for the kind of movement that overwhelmed the Berkeley campus but never developed here with the same intensity."

David Harris and Denis Hayes were two student leaders whom Charles trusted to be sensible, but things had already escalated. On May 1, also while Charles was still in Europe, a group of students occupied Encina Hall, which included university administrative offices. When Provost Lyman saw students

hauling out file cabinets, he felt compelled to call the police, although he later admitted he might be fired as a result. The students occupying Encina Hall voted to leave just as police arrived, narrowly averting what could have been a violent confrontation.

Charles thought many student activists had shifted from a Gandhian philosophy of civil disobedience to a more direct approach. “I’ve always believed that violence begets more violence and it is ultimately counterproductive. Bruce and Jane Franklin, leaders of the confrontational faction, had guns in their home. I thought that Bruce had crossed the line and was threatening the integrity of the university. I’ve never owned a gun. I don’t even like violent sports and I’m sorry that most universities are so financially dependent on football games.”

As much as some of Franklin’s actions gave him pause, Charles still felt it was wrong for Stanford later to try to fire him for his role in encouraging campus protests and, in the view of the university, attempting to incite a riot. Following an incident which Stanford officials thought threatened the major university computer, Bruce and his supporters were stopped by police called to the scene. The hearings over Franklin’s fate lasted for several days in 1972. “I felt the dismissal of a tenured professor really required something more than a meeting of the Faculty Advisory Board to determine his future at Stanford.” Charles, with the help of several law students and faculty wrote an amicus brief in support of Franklin. Eighty-eight faculty signed the statement.

“Bruce did make some of us think more deeply about our positions. He was out there challenging our consciences. He was a brilliant teacher and scholar but sometimes his judgment lapsed. Bruce had a large poster of Stalin behind his desk

during his hearings, suggesting a certain recalcitrance. He could be unreasonable about some things and his arguments didn't always make sense in terms of strategy. But I don't think the bulk of the Stanford faculty was supportive of Stanford's attempt to fire him. It was a dangerous precedent. A slippery slope."

After several long days of contentious testimony, the Faculty Advisory Board voted to fire Franklin. Provost Richard Lyman endorsed the dismissal, which was then enacted by a 20-2 vote of the Board of Trustees. The students, meanwhile, held their own symbolic referendum of Franklin's dismissal, with 2,615 in favor of retaining him and 2,114 supporting the university's decision.

Charles wished he was able to find a copy of the Franklin brief. In it, he stated his conviction that Stanford should not have allowed researchers from the now-separated SRI to use university computers to map possible sites for an amphibian invasion of North Vietnam. He did write several letters to the Stanford Daily, stating in one of them "I don't know how long we can go on just doing things as usual."

In retrospect, Charles thinks that "if Stanford could have seen its way to deal with the protests without compromising basic freedoms and didn't allow things to come to a head in confrontations, we would have been better off. But that's easy for me say now."

## Chapter Nineteen: Academic Matters

In 1979, Charles applied to attend an extended, seven-week conference at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. “It was really a seminar,” he explained, “an occasion to get the other divisions of political science more interested in the relevance of political theory. The discussions drew together about 40 professors from universities around the country, including those teaching American politics, comparative politics and international relations.

It meant being away from home for a good part of the summer, but he had professional reasons for attending the conference. “I thought I should do this to get back into the more traditional professional mode. I had never joined the American Political Science Association. When I came up for tenure, I was told that the one qualified objection came from Heinz Eulau who said, ‘You know, he never joined the APSA.’ For a true professional, this kind of thing is heresy, but I thought the meetings too often became social events, distracting from the serious papers being presented. It sometimes ends up ‘I’ll scratch your back if you’ll scratch mine.’”

By 1979, “the Stanford students were a little different from those of our first days at the university. The department was becoming more known for comparative politics under the auspices of Gabriel Almond. The American politics field was reviving, but political theory was still seen as something more necessary to a department’s prestige than to the real world. Maybe today there is a little too much response to the real world, with faculty working as consultants and associated with ‘think tanks.’”



“I’m not sure there was a lot of interest in the history of values, which is why I taught political theory the way I did,” Charles told a Stanford Oral History Project interviewer. “For instance, the covenant versus the contract and its deep roots in how we think about law and love. Some students were really intrigued. They hadn’t thought about how important religion was before it took so many denominational forms and evangelistic departures. Or became insipid.”

The Social Thought Program, although a ‘department’ with relative independence, didn’t fit within the confines of departmental lines. The students who signed up for the lively give-and-take discussions were more interested in ideas, their origins and how they mattered. Charles had always blurred departmental lines in his academic studies and interests, and the Social Thought Program was the natural culmination of that process. Long ago, he had been drawn to interdisciplinary inquiries before academia began to shift in that direction, too. Research was changing the teaching tradition as universities competed for status and this emphasis narrowed professional interests, hindering much further cross-disciplinary development.

“The Social Thought program was spirited up until 1976 or 1977 but lost some of its aura when student interest in seeing where thoughts would lead began to fade,” he told the Stanford Oral History Project. “Economic pressures encouraged an emphasis on career preparation as opposed to a more general humanistic orientation. It affected many areas of Stanford.”

He admitted there always had been some resistance to the seminars because they were outside traditional academic lines – it was its own department. Some deans worried about “quality control” or oversight. Halsey Royden, a math

professor and dean of Humanities and Sciences in the '70s “would ask me to explain what was going on in the program. I always made a point of bringing several colleagues with me, especially St. Claire Drake from anthropology, a recent faculty appointment, who was particularly adept in standing up to authority. At least every other year, I would be called in to account for the program. Our grads were doing very well in the academic world, in politics and in nonprofit organizations. In later years, there were fewer applicants to choose from but we always had our quota of 15 superior students.”

The Social Thought program also attempted to present discussions relevant to current events in the world. During the Vietnam War, the program sponsored a number of one-time seminars featuring faculty members like Hal Holman in medicine and Ray Giraud in French, who would relate their special interests to issues raised by the war. “These small seminars would often center on the social responsibilities of universities and their students. They were probably not always fine-tuned but they assisted in breaking down the isolation of academic institutions. We tried all kinds of things in the program, depending on subject matter. We really were trying to get away from the disciplinary bondage and to move in and out of fields.”

In the early 1980s, the program “expired,” as Charles put it. Its denouement was linked to crossing one too many departmental lines, the last being that of the Athletics Department and its prerogatives. “A graduate student in education came to my office with the idea of a seminar for Stanford athletes. He wanted to confine it to members of varsity teams, but I told him that would not be allowed

and that we would first have to be accepted by the Athletics Department. He did get the needed approval somehow.”

George Pegelow, the instructor, felt the athletic programs were not addressing some of the major problems athletes would confront later in their lives. “He wanted to bring in physicians to talk about the effects of concussions and the general physical risks of sports. He also wanted to talk about the university’s responsibility for injuries sustained by student-athletes. I thought it was a good idea because there *are* many things students should know about their participation in sports. George had three or four books picked out that made substantial contributions to the field. He gave the course but the Athletics Department director evidently felt threatened by the possibility of future challenges to the program and complained to the dean of Humanities and Sciences. Stanford, like many colleges, depends to some degree on the money major sports bring in. The lack of bureaucratic support, along with cultural challenges and our own exhaustion conspired to terminate the seminars.”

The Social Thought program ended after 23 years. More than two dozen faculty members in disparate fields of studies had participated.

Before Charles became emeritus in 1995, he had been approached several times by other universities for teaching positions, besides the early offer to establish a Department of Political Science at Rice. The offers were from Brandeis, Stonybrook in the New York University system and Cal Arts in Southern California, where he would join Herbert Marcuse. “In fact, someone from Pitzer College asked if my wife and I might be interested in co-presidenting Pitzer, a fairly new

college named after the family of the Rice president. They thought it might be interesting to have a husband and wife as presidents.”

Not many university professors can say that their name also became the name of a student bowling team. One of Charles’ colleagues pointed out to him that he had seen students on campus wearing orange or purple T-shirts with “Drekmeier Drugs” inscribed on the front and “Praxis with a Smile” on the back. “And then a few days later,” he told the Stanford Oral History Project, “a collection of political science graduate students with their cohort from the English Department arrived with their ‘molls’ at my office. They introduced themselves as the Political Science/English Department Bowling Team and introduced one of their members.” The student – not one of Charles’ – had been visiting his family in Minneapolis during Christmas break and had driven through Beloit on his way to Chicago and saw a “Drekmeier Drugs” sign. He thought that would be a good name for the bowling team. The “drugs” part was especially appealing. They won their student bowling league title.

“My parents came out to visit us a few weeks later and we greeted them at the airport with the large winner’s cup. Peter was wearing a Drekmeier Drugs shirt that came down to his ankles and Nadja was carrying the trophy.” The trophy ended up the window of the drugstore in Beloit, which didn’t have a bowling alley, let alone a team, and the cup was the subject of much fascination.

“There was another example of my ‘borrowed’ athletic prowess. At a dinner party one night around 1980, Albert Guerard mentioned my remarkable achievements in Stanford Stadium that afternoon. I had no idea what he was talking about. It turns out that the Stanford Athletic Department had invited two

teams from the Palo Alto Pop Warner youth football league to scrimmage at halftime of the college game. Kai was quarterback for the Knights and in the middle of the action. But the stadium announcer hadn't been forewarned. Not knowing any names, he turned to the nearby Stanford Band for help. One of the musicians said that he had seen the quarterback at the Drekmeier home and that his name was Drekmeier. I was credited that evening with several completed passes. A moment of unearned glory."

A former student during the early days of the Social Thought program wrote a letter to the editor of the Stanford alumni magazine in 1994 addressing a point made by David Harris, former student body president and also a Drekmeier student. Remembering the activism of 1960s, Harris wrote (ironically) that the conservative actor John Wayne was a hero to many Americans. The student, Mark Lohman, gently differed.

"Maybe in Fresno (David's hometown), the 'Duke was a big deal, but at Stanford, Robert McAfee Brown, Charles Drekmeier, the brothers Kennedy and Martin Luther King were the heroes of the day," Lohman wrote. Charles thought it was wonderful to be in such company.

"It's true that political science was not considered a boundary-perforating area of study," Charles noted. "That is changing now. But I'm long gone. I may have represented aging forms of protest and social analysis. Who's to say? My children, my wife, my students and colleagues have helped me with the shifting perspectives required to move into the age of new quantifying and qualifying procedures and values. But I continue to drag my feet as I view the often

stultifying seduction of the so-called digital age. Modern financial capitalism has many siren calls. I'd like to think I'm still tied to the mast of Odysseus' ship."

## Postlude

I flirted with the idea of an “aftermath.” But aftermath sent me involuntarily back to grade school, where after math was recess. I disliked both. Perhaps because math was too bloodless and recess too much so. I would like to think that there are others like me who have gravitated to “theory,” perhaps suppressing an unfashionable utopianism. We want our hypotheses to shape the incongruities of human nature and obstreperous institutions that, we are told, concretize our “values” and even our consciousness. How easy it is to get carried away by the temptations of a memoir that nests these hopes in the ambiguities of a “life.”

I was moved to say this after reading a “solution” to the pervasive problem of inequality by a young social scientist who says we should think less about the ‘headwinds’ we have overcome and more about the boosts we get from “tailwinds.” The “we” is the reader of *The New York Times* who, we may assume, is successful. The message, somewhat obscured, is that we should be more appreciative of the opportunities that have come our way (the tailwinds) and more concerned about the “headwinds” that have impeded those less fortunate. True. But we need no more than the sacred texts to tell us that. And they give us answers that we have seen to be justifications for behaviors that don’t always fit with the message.

Looking back at these chapters I see that I have not provided the description that the windy theorist needs. I have only talked with you (a lop-sided conversation) about the “tailwinds,” the opportunities I’ve been blessed with. (“Blessed” doesn’t come easily to someone who locates the basis for gratitude in

a less religious perception.) And yet I'm not being honest without revealing headwinds that have helped me balance attitude and latitude and gratitude.

I talked about my extended bout with scarlet fever but might have said more about the inconvenience and suffering this imposed on others, as well as the physical infirmities that poisoned me on "recess." For what it's worth, I'll sprinkle some afflictions belatedly into what has been presented.

That extended recovery from scarlet fever seemed to inspire the thought, at too early an age, that happiness has to be achieved: it can't be expected. Fortunately, that didn't produce a dour outlook – just a protective coating that produced a more introverted life. An armor, one might say. I have had episodes of thyroid cancer (partial removal) and 38 radiation treatments for prostate cancer. And I have had epileptic seizures (the first of which came from watching the blinking lights on a Christmas tree) which were not of the grand-mal variety and are under control. (The aforementioned Belgian neighbor reassured me that I had now joined the "company of the gods": Socrates, Caesar, Dostoevsky and a half dozen others of more recent vintage.) And alcohol has been a problem for both me and my wife. Now also under control. The major difficulty has been my back. I had a four-hour spinal stenosis around the year 2000: the pain is gone but the problem, complicated by scoliosis, is balance. I get around with a walker and am finding myself increasingly isolated by the general loss of mobility. I no longer trust myself to drive. Which has meant leaving the Peninsula Symphonic Band, where I tooted for 15 years. My less than virtuosic performance has kept my ego in check over the years. (But I can still invent words – as above.)



Memoirs are basically stories. And they can mix the variety of narratives (myth to biography) in ways that may prevent our seeing patterns that are basic to storytelling. One that persists is the odyssey of the assertive individual (he or she is often a victimized or unusually adventurous type, confronting the obstacles of a culture calcified – usually to the advantage of a favored few). This picture of “agency” in opposition to societal structures persists in contemporary social theory. If your eyesight is intact and I have lived long enough to finish my project on this theme of struggle against the hidden constraints of latter-day capitalism and consumerism, I hope you will read it. Not a picaresque story – just an account of the systems in which we have entrapped ourselves. Max Weber’s “iron cage” of rationalization is now enlarged so as to obscure accountability while making us all responsible for our “situation.” We might wish to see Wall Street punished (perhaps replaced) for the crippling effects imposed on the lives of so many: packaged mortgages, inside trading and “takeovers” that inflate values, and nobody goes to jail. And, since so many of us have pension plans that are Wall Street-invested, we’re stuck. But there exists an abundance of prescription opiates and celebrities, with or without talent or intelligence, who perform (in the arena) for our entertainment and distraction.

All of which brings me back again to my preoccupation with what it means to put oneself and one’s past on paper. I spoke of shades and, perhaps of frames, that intrude not only on our memories but also on the actualities of writing. I’ve been so busy thinking about thinking about how I’m being read that I’ve neglected an essential aspect of this “program.” I’ve talked about how “memory” easily reinforces the frames and the implicit “perspectives” as well as other selective processes so habitual that they go unnoticed – as in the widespread

practice of racial profiling. History, which figures so prominently in memoirs, contributes to this distorted focus. And so, we ask if there is a kind of “knowing” that takes us beyond what we call cognition. Can we find it in that relatively accessible discussion in Hegel’s “Phenomenology of Mind [Spirit]” of the “master/bondsman” [lord and servant] relationship? Found in what is sometimes understood as a revaluation or reconstituting of the proletariat (or its preindustrial equivalent) and sometimes interpreted as a Stoic revival of the importance of the master in the “Bildung” education of his “apprentice,” but may also be seen as a revival of an ancient undercurrent of thought, that we really only know that which we have made? The master has removed himself too far from the reality of objects we produce and, in the seductions of civilization, has become himself an “object.” What better example of this artifice than the “self-made” man in the White House who, in his loss of self-control, his limited competence in dealing with affairs of state (as though governing is a matter of making deals, has lost the trust of most of those who have depended on his office for leadership). He has “made” nothing other than real estate transactions.

Has our nation replaced the farm, the factory and small retail with something that looks more like a casino? My thoughts on our national condition are shaped by the stages of my life and the scattered memories they hold. I couldn’t have made it to age 90 with some of this introspection and a web of selfhood rooted in my middle-class optimism. When my bundle of laundry falls apart as I remove it from the laundry shed my first reaction is, “Well, at least it isn’t raining!” But that larger thought is grounded in a larger implicit knowledge of a reliable dry earth. (And, ad nauseam, a larger unarticulated confidence in the predictability of climate. (!))

In this memoir as I worked through the years of my growing up, I have stumbled in this quandary of stages – the beginnings of consciousness, childhood, adolescence (the complications of a burgeoning awareness of sexuality and of “knowing”), departure from family, the new worlds of the Army and the threatening wonders of independence in music and philosophy, undertaking of a career (where did my “noncompliance” and assertion come from?), living no longer alone but now with a wife, falling into the life of routine teaching while holding onto a vision of how teaching could be more enlightening to me and to others, and eventually, having to contend with the digital revolution and the ambivalence it has brought to us in our self-understanding. I go to the mailbox with ingrained expectations of a letter from an old friend who, like me, doesn’t enjoy talking in the abbreviations that telephone conversations tend to produce. The letter isn’t there and the phone rarely rings. The old patterns of communication are dying, and the friends are dead. But, luckier than most, I have three attentive children who are sensitive to the fact that I live alone and am vulnerable. More and more of us in similar or less fortunate circumstances experience this existential crisis. Worsened, I know, by the bad faith that the profit motif and irresponsible privatization have encouraged.

There is a somewhat different aspect of the “self” that may have invaded these last pages but which provides us with another perspective (other than the transforming experience of our coming-of-age and finding our independence). This requires a return to the “two minds” about the laundry spill. Most of us, I assume, when watching a performance are experiencing two stages of action: There is the actor presenting him- or herself on stage and the stage in our heads as we ponder what the actors are experiencing other than their own roles. Has

the “Stanislavsky method” so identified the actor and role that at least for the moment, “self” has been retired to the wings? If we can’t see this tension in our self-perception (on the psychiatrist’s couch, in our dealings with bosses and “underlings,” institutions where we flirt with Sartre’s “bad faith”) it comes home with a certain vengeance when we confront the questions raised by children, especially adolescents asking us questions about identity we thought we might have buried. It is difficult when the hypocrisy so prevalent at most levels of our society seem to challenge the “presentational” self with the self behind those roles that have become so large a part of us – and which force us into questions of “truth.” For many teenagers caught up in the commercial appeal of a culture in which everything is for sale, “appearance” is reality. And, reality being in question by neuroscience and quantum physics as well as philosophies since Plato and before him many of the pre-Socratics, we parents either fall back on what we take from our own experience or repeat lessons of others that have withstood the test of time (whatever that test may be). In such uncertain times we may be advised to return to the suggestion that we can only know what we have made. This will be a challenge to our pedagogical training for creativity and responsibility without the crutches and clutches traditional schooling provides. Can we return to a pre-digital age, a time of direct communication and cooperation?

Hegel’s depiction of a base relationship which, at least for some readers, suggests the ambiguity of control, feeds Michel Foucault’s conception of the diffusion of power throughout the international and status/role configurations of industrial societies. [At the risk of premature disclosure, I see this departure from “official” descriptions of authority as ominous, while offering us a needed alternative to the “juridical” portrayal of people in liberal theory where “rights”

are anchored in the protection of property.] In the arrogance of our transcendent selves, restrictions are imposed on others, most of whom have not had the fortunate head-start (tailwinds).

The day will come, I'm sure, when much of our wealth and privilege are seen for what they are: exploitation of those who do the basic work. If we are paying attention, we know that the memoirs of refugees seeking sustenance are not those of people like ourselves. They don't figure in our accounts of our adventures and achievements. But they are a part of our lives and will become even more so. Has Foucault provided us with a different way of thinking?

This meditation on the self in its external and internal associations is an introduction to the thinking of a conception of the self that integrates the individual with the political state in a way that challenges the liberal emphasis on the rule of law and the juridical individual it implies. Be forewarned. The collective "we" will, at first reading of Foucault, have what could be called "totalitarian" implications. But you are already aware of the fears that "neoliberalism" (which is hard to distinguish from neoconservatism) instills in us anything suggestive of socialist collectivism. And yet we seem content to allow the suppression that governs our lives under the flag of the "market." Although finance capitalism, making money from money, is burying the "market," we find it hard to give up on individualism, based on competition and greed, in exchange for care (welfare). Foucault reminds us that in French and German history, this characterized the conception of "police." You and I who have been through infantry basic training know this conception of "policing the area." That is, taking care of our territory. This is a perception different from the way of thinking that enshrines protection –

especially the protection of property – at the expense of opportunities to realize individual potential. (“Negative” freedom as it has come to be called, as opposed to freedoms from want and fear.) More immediately, as I read Michel Foucault and this positive “policing” function of the state, I ask myself also if this ever-constituting “self” is produced in the act of writing. And, more broadly, are we always in the act of “objectifying” ourselves? [Sorry about these cautionary quotation marks. They signify my own difficulty in adapting to what is a different language of mind and body.]

He did not live to spell out the “political” rationale of the “administrative state” he opposes to the legalistic state, an Anglo-American tradition. It is in that huge body of literature, most of which has been written on the subject known as “the mirror of princes” (and known perhaps best for the staggering refutation of its presuppositions by Machiavelli) that the “care of the soul” has entered the discussion. The argument reduces to the belief that if the prince is trained in his ethical duties, he will inspire his subjects to live with honor and compassion.

Shortly before his death in 1984 Foucault announced this relatively new departure from his earlier preoccupation with the social controls of asylums, prisons and such. He was embarking on a new line of inquiry based in “care of the self.” (That phrase, sometimes referred to as “care of the soul” has a strange ring for most of us, and that in itself is strange.) His earlier writings had directed our attention to the manner in which scientific research had objectified the self. Now we must concern ourselves with how we turn ourselves into the “other.” This self-formation produces a certain confusion: he speaks of us becoming “subjects.” This transformation is rooted in objectification. This draws him closer to the

Frankfurt School of Horkheimer, Marcuse, et alia, but he prefers to find his location in the classical philosophies of the first and second centuries and in the spiritual exercises of the fourth and fifth centuries, where the self is formulated.

The emerging self is politicized in ways that could not be known to those classical and early Christian theorists. Augustine tells us about his deficiencies and waywardness but he is not intent on telling a life story. He is glorifying God by way of divine grace working on his spirit. The individuality that celebrates one's freedom (what we find most notably in Rousseau) is not available to description. In the modern age, writing – especially the memoir – becomes in Foucault's terminology a procedure of objectification: individual status has become a modality of power (see his "Discipline and Punish!"). The self is most clearly constituted in the act of writing. More broadly, we are always in the act of objectifying ourselves. The memoir can no longer rely on a "stream of consciousness."

We must place Foucault with those writers early in his century, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and a number of others who refused to base their analyses in terms of the enticing psychologies gathering strength at the time. The collection of Foucault's late lectures ("Technologies of the Self" contains a half dozen excellent essays by Vermont professors in attendance. Patrick Hutton, a cultural historian, contributes an essay on the "unstated presence" of Sigmund Freud, who is not directly discussed by Foucault. As with the Frankfurt School, the psyche finds its definition in the social institutions in which it is entwined – a "collective psychological milieu in which the individual mind is immersed." And yet culture is made.

The process is creative and prescriptive, implying directions and boundaries which, in Freudian theory, require constraint and repression. The structural apparatus of psychoanalysis provides a busy ego constantly trying to balance the constitutionally-given drives (id) with the demands of external reality and of conscience (super-ego). Coming to terms with precedents from the past, particularly childhood experiences, identities are formed. Memoirs, in this line of argument, often take the form of recalling formative experiences in the hope that this understanding will lead to a reconciliation of these conflicts. This “technology” can be likened to the art of memory, the retrieving of past experiences. Proust, Mann, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and many others have employed this art – and Freud says he has learned from the earlier literature of this genre.

Foucault, however, is interested in the social institutionalization of forms of mental conflict (as manifested in social behaviors). How did the definition of insanity emerge in the eighteenth century? The management of non-conformism is the subject of his studies of prisons, asylums and other institutions that serve to shape mental structures. Domination has taken new forms in the so-called age of enlightenment. The policing function had been an earlier interest of his and in his last years he returned to the more generalized need of societies to regulate behavior by means of public or partially public agencies. Policing techniques have been transformed to produce a more disciplined sense of self: the psyche is itself an idea formed to help in this design of appropriate behavior. Here he is joined by Norbert Elias’ elaboration of developing styles of behavioral manners. Old ways of acting come to be seen as “embarrassing.” This confusion of style of interaction is evidently always with us – as witness our uncertainty about the nature and extent



of our embarrassment over the bullying tactics of President Trump. [See New York Times, 6/18/17 for comments on the heritage of Erving Goffman on this subject.]

The establishment of boundaries of regulations and “open” activity contributes to a mentality of binary oppositions. The process produces forms through which people define relationships and also, as a byproduct, definitions of who we are. This interpretation provides us with an alternative to Freud’s conception of repression. Identity avoids reference to human nature. Or, better put, human nature is the collection of institutional and linguistic forms bequeathed to us. But of course, these may include vocabularies and formalities, etc., of segregation. The discourse may transcend the asylum walls and produce a stifling discipline of the larger society.

In this dissection we are left with two conceptions of the self: is it a subjective notion produced by our actions and behaviors or an objective reality that we describe in our writing? Are we continually remodeling ourselves in line with a process that Foucault reclaims from an older idea of “policing” as “care of the soul?” Penetrating this way of considering social interaction is the Nietzschean view of power – which, in Foucault’s adaptation shapes our self-knowledge. Power, in the expression of the collective power that makes the state, is there to be used for our “care” (I wish he had used a term like “well-being”). Hutton puts it this way: Whereas Freud asks how our past experience shapes our lives in the present, Foucault asks why we seek to discover truth in the formal rules that we have designed discipline life’s experiences. He calls on us to deconstruct “the formalities through which we endlessly examine, evaluate and classify our experiences.” We might have despaired of ever finding the

continuities that seem crucial to our autobiography or memoir but here cutting through the “formalities” we seem to be on more familiar ground.

We must keep in mind that memory is essential in Freud’s project of self-discovery. Memory is basic to identity. Foucault does not discard the psychoanalytic method but he sees this “archeology” of the self as a labyrinth that can get us lost. Memories provide only half-truths and these are of questionable value because the psyche delivers our own descriptions of ourselves. If this digging into our own past produces more discontinuities than a train of development it can provide insights into possibilities available to us. If there is an ending it is to be found in the belief that we can only know that which we have made. We are constantly creating forms that in turn provide the meanings essential to our human nature.

Gertrude Stein’s last words in response to her own question “What is the answer?” was reportedly “What is the question?” Most of us who are not “believers” tend to avoid this speculation – or disguise our answer in long-winded elaboration of manifold experiences and adjustments over our lifetimes. Foucault’s answer, which he thinks he shares with the philosophic tradition stemming from Kant actually takes the form of a question: What are we in our actuality? In studying the relation of thought and practice he had come to the conclusion that we achieve our actuality by means of the exclusion of certain others – the insane, the deviant and criminal. To borrow from Philip Slater, we flush them down the jail or the nursing home.

Foucault searches for a more positive context and finds a significant point of departure in a work dating from a decade before the French Revolution by a

German writer, J.P. Frank, “the first systematic program of public health for the modern state.” A duty of the state is the care of people’s lives – while admitting that the state also has the right to kill its criminals and enemies. This historical rationality, this life and death game, he calls “political rationality” and it has its origins in the rationale for the idea of a governing state. It embodies specific techniques of government which maintained order among its citizens. This concept, “reason of state,” was defined by Botero (a late 16<sup>th</sup> century writer) as a “perfect knowledge of the means by which states form, strengthen themselves, endure and grow.”

Although Foucault describes “reason for state” as a break from both Machiavelli and the Christian tradition, Foucault finds substance in Thomas Aquinas, a major author of “the mirror of princes.” The king’s government must be like God’s governing of nature, “he must lead man towards his finality.” That finality, says Aquinas, is not physical health, nor wealth and not even truth. The king is not a physician, a steward or a teacher. What he should be is a leader who will open the way to ultimate bliss through this earthly conformity to God’s rule. But this way of thinking no longer satisfies the early modern need for a conception of the state that is not a relation between prince and people, as persists in Machiavelli. What was needed were directions for reinforcing the *state* itself.

This can be seen as a first step toward more varieties in the composition of government. And in the literature of the time distinctive characters enter the stage. The modern memoir is also born. These “linkages” can perhaps be seen as this independent rationality of the state. The state as its own rationality

contributes, along with the Reformation movements of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to a search for self-knowledge after the Reformation broke the church's dominance over science and all other knowledge.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, politics could no longer find comfort in the rush for kingdoms to establish colonies for economic gain, subjecting native peoples to their rule. States now compete and governments must view their subjects as a means of reinforcing the whole. The other attributes and beliefs are of lesser concern. This integration of individuals doesn't take the form of an ethical community as in ancient Greek cities, where the idea of democracy and a participatory government was first born. It depends on new techniques which give form to this new political reality. The new "technology" of integration was called "police" in France, Polizei in German. Foucault reminds us that the English word is something far different. The French theorist, Louis Turquet de Mayenne, writing in 1611, says the task of the police is to foster civil respect and public morality. He proposed a collection of four boards – to look after the productive aspects of life (education and the examining aptitudes and tastes are general aspects), looking after the poor and other dependents (public health, natural disasters, putting people to work), the third dealt with commodity production (not the province of the first board but of controlling markets and trading), and, last, supervising private property and legacies, manorial rights, transportation, public buildings, and so forth). The police in fact embraced the judiciary functions, the military, the treasury – but from the perspective of their relationships – all that is necessary for the smooth operation of the state and the coexistence of the individuals who composed it. The former feudal power was based in juridical relations (family, status, etc.) but now government is dealing with individual

people as living men and women and not according to juridical status. People with sufficient inclination and talent can now write memoirs. At least in this initial phase.

This new “care of the soul” came to embrace religion, morals, health, the maintenance of public buildings and roads, public safety, the arts and sciences, trade, factories, workers and the indigent. (Foucault compiles this list from manuals intended for use by civil servants.) “That was the domain of the police, from religion to poor people, through morals, health, liberal arts and so on and so on. The author of one such manual sometimes limits the police to “everything regulating society.” Elsewhere Delamare says the police “take care of living” and everything pertaining to men’s happiness. The indispensable, the useful, and the superfluous. The technical project, according to Foucault, is “determining the correlation between the utility scale for individuals and the utility scale for the state.” (Sounds almost like the language of today’s social science.) In this “administrative state” happiness is a requirement for survival and growth.

I feel certain that the present incoherent state of American politics which, in our sham democracy appears almost self-destructive, will inspire a rethinking of the institutions that represent our values. A condition in which a quarter of children live in poverty in what is the wealthiest nation, and a small fraction of the wealthiest control most of the wealth is not a democracy in any sensible definition of the word. Values based in the perspective of individualistic self-interest no longer inspire the cooperative interaction needed to control air and water pollution and general sustainability. National “security” will come to be

understood in terms of the well-being of citizens and their environment and of future generations.

Present political leadership cautions us to be shy of assigning the safeguarding of the “soul” to the collective representation of the state. And yet we live lives that are controlled in multiple ways to which we have become inured. This subtle collectivism of corporate capitalism has been allowed to coexist with vulnerable democratic institutions. The competitive market that once provided justification for self-interested behavior and even provided the model for competitive communication (“the marketplace of ideas”) no longer makes any sense.

The welfare state, protective of our health and development, is coming. The crisis in health care policy is a harbinger. The Republican Party’s bill to retire or at least revise radically the present national health insurance system has produced only a stalemated Congress. Perhaps because it was seen by most as an ill-advised effort to transfer tax revenues from the poor to the wealthy. The time will come, if not already here, when the great corporations become more publicly aware of their dependence on “externals” (roadways, tax benefits, etc.) including efforts to cope with climate change even in cases where profits will suffer. As the well-being of members of our community come to be seen as basic to the nation’s security, we must be wary. There is money to be made in keeping us on pills and in therapies. The “health management” that has enriched corporations is not the health care we see in several Scandinavian countries.

The American people are deserving of a second emancipation. Let us hope it will come without the bloodshed of a century and a half ago.

The American Constitution can be amended but eventually a broad reconstituting may be necessary. The legalistic nature of the state will have to accommodate the well-being of citizens. There will then be prominence given to “tail-winds” in memoirs.

Given the aggrandizing spirit that now dominates the nation’s capital this may not be most propitious moment to champion the strong, facilitating state. We must, however, bear in mind that this is not the democratic state in either its classical or eighteenth-century location. Not that our founders share no responsibility for our present dilemmas: both the ancients and our own “fathers” were willing to overlook the fact that a majority of their populations would not be permitted to participate in making decisions that would affect their lives. We still invoke in our theory courses the justifying concept of the “social contract” while conceding to our fellow social scientists “the non-contractual nature of contract.” We admit that this was a “tacit” contract – perhaps because the legalistic basis of our companion capitalistic society requires a collective commitment, now lost in the clouds of hierarchical feudal layering of “allegiances.” The contractual basis of law had worked well in the transition to industrial society and the owner/laborer relationship, but the tension and the problem remains.

Does wealth allow more power at the voting booth? Do we have “one man, one vote?” or does this formulation serve to conceal the role that money plays? People once disqualified are now allowed to vote but hurdles remain. Some people don’t meet the often surreal requirements imposed on minorities.

We are, most of us, aware that the current administration is one dominated by moneyed interests. Their impact is less visible than the corruption of regimes

in which elected offices are used to make money, but the business mentality and the profiteering incentive still thrive. We are blinded in one way or another to the corporate power that has, through such devices as the redefining of the state along the lines of a business/entrepreneurial model, to the total control of our lives through financial complications, communication oligarchies, everyday workplace discipline, denial of needed health care, and more.

The liberal state has allowed freedom of expression and protections of privacy and property. These are essential political commitments. The state must not be allowed to restrict them by means such as “classification” that prevents the dissemination of information important to the needs of an informed citizenry. Constitutions are needed to reconcile these important freedoms with those other freedoms (from want and fear) that are life-enhancing. They are compatible with the well-being and resource sustaining purposes of a truly democratic state. Last century’s experience with fascist and Stalinist dictatorships has made us sensitive to the problems that come with large-scale governmental action. But we should bear in mind the ideological role that “totalitarianism” has played in reconciling us with the problems of aggrandizing individualism, of alienation and conformism closer to home. There are alternatives to our “condition” that avoid the suffocation of repressive dictatorships.

In the world to come there may be no need to tell about headwinds and tailwinds. Along with poignancy and self-celebration the memoir may be lost. Along with the need to ask questions which, in our actions we have answers.

Ulysses hesitates to arrive home. He is afraid of answers. It is interesting, at least to me, that we find our “answers” in his reluctance. Which is all well and



good. But our “condition” calls for more than Ulysses and Hamlet can contribute. Who will put the progressive case to music? Who will lead us out of the “swamp” that President Trump alluded to but found us deeper into its horrendous depths?

We, ourselves. Abandon those operations that promote the values of self-interest. Join the others who share freedom and opportunity and diversity. It doesn't work? It's too slow? There is a place for militancy. But not for violence. The killing kills.

My hope is that a younger person, perhaps in her or his late teens, will read this – at an age when answers and questions more easily coalesce. Be open to the possibilities that coexistence isn't always easy. Capitalism has provided comforting companionship of selfishness and general prosperity. Be aware: there is a serpent in the garden.

Charles Drekmeier, 2017